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## IN WHAT SENSE EXACTLY ARE HUMAN BEINGS MORE POLITICAL ACCORDING TO ARISTOTLE?<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

According to Aristotle, human beings are by nature political animals. It is now common knowledge that being political is not a human privilege for him: bees, wasps, ants and cranes are other political species. Although they are not the only political animals, human beings, for Aristotle, are still *more* political than the other political animals. The present article investigates the precise sense of this comparison; and it claims that the higher degree of human politicalness is *not* to be explained by reference to those exclusively human features like having capacity for speech and moral perception. It is claimed that human beings are more political rather because they live in a multiplicity of communities differing in form.

### KEYWORDS

Aristotle, political animals, language, nature

### Introduction

One of Aristotle's most widely known ideas is: man is, by nature, a political animal. Before Aristotle, Plato used the term "political animal" in the *Phaedo* (82a–c). But it is not until the second chapter of the first book of Aristotle's *Politics* that we find the most elaborate version of the idea. That chapter starts with an historical account of the birth of the *polis* out of more elementary communities, like the family and the village.<sup>2</sup> As the conclusion of this narrative, Aristotle states that the *polis* exists by nature and that man is a political animal by nature (*Pol.* I.2, 1253a1–4). A few lines later, he adds to this conclusion, saying that human beings are *more* political than any other gregarious animal (1253a7–9). According to Aristotle, being political is a specific form of being gregarious. In the *History of Animals*, he defines political animals as those gregarious animals "for whom the work of all is some one and common thing". This characteristic, says Aristotle, "is not the case for all

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1 This article draws from my Ph.D thesis written at the University of Paris I Panthéon Sorbonne (December 2013) and it presents the core idea. The title of the thesis is *L'homme le plus politique des animaux: Essai sur les Politiques, I. 2.*

2 Whether this is meant to be a historical or an analytical  *récit*  is a matter of dispute. I think both is true. If the remnant fragments are to be admitted to give a genuine idea about Aristotle's lost dialogue *On Philosophy*, it is clear that Aristotle had a historical interest in the development of human societies.

gregarious animals. Such political animals are the human being, the bee, the wasp, the ant, and the crane” (*HA* I.1, 488a7–488a10).

Thanks to the increasing contemporary interest in Aristotle’s zoological works, it is now common knowledge among students of Aristotle that being political is not a human privilege for him: human beings are not the only political animals, but they are just *more* political than the other political animals. Much ink is currently being spilt, however, to explain the superior degree of the human being’s political character: how are we supposed to understand this comparison?<sup>3</sup>

All past and present commentators on Aristotle’s *Politics* explain the superiority of human politicalness by reference to one or both of the following human features: being capable of rational speech and having a sense of what is just and unjust. The strength of this traditional approach is that it seems to have textual support. Immediately after saying that human beings are more political than other political animals, Aristotle adds: “Nature makes nothing in vain, as we say, and no animal has speech except a human being” (1253a9–10). This is followed by a passage explaining the function of speech:

[S]peech is for making clear what is beneficial or harmful, and hence also what is just or unjust. For it is peculiar to human beings, in comparison to other animals, that they alone have perception of what is good or bad, just or unjust, and the rest. And it is community in these that makes a household and a city-state.<sup>4</sup> (1253a14–18)

In what follows, before presenting what I consider to be the adequate explanation of human being’s higher degree of politicalness, I shall first show that despite the apparent textual support, all the extant explanations I know of the superiority of human politicalness as Aristotle saw it are flawed in at least one of the following ways:

- 1) Some of them beg the question. They don’t explain anything to us.
- 2) Some do not conform to Aristotle’s theory of animal classification. They carve nature at the wrong joints.
- 3) None of them adequately understands Aristotle’s use of the teleological principle that “nature makes nothing in vain”.

Without denying the fact that human being’s capacity for rational speech and moral perception amounts to irreducible qualitative differences between our political life and that of the other political animals, the following discussion is meant to be an argument for the idea that from an Aristotelian perspective the human being’s higher degree of politicalness cannot be accounted for with reference to these qualitative differences.

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3 Jean-Louis Labarrière’s work is by far the most insightful of all. Besides his several articles, see especially Labarrière 2014; 2016. A recently published collection of articles on the question of political animals in Aristotle is Güremen and Jaulin 2017.

4 C.D.C Reeve’s 1998 translation.

## Begging the question

Trevor J. Saunders translates the phrase “*ho anthropos phusei politikon zōon estin*” as “man is by nature an animal fit for a state”. He claims that this translation also gives us a clue in understanding the human being’s superiority in politicalness:

‘Fit for a state’ renders *politikon*. [...]. But no animal lives as a member of a state, so the sentence [that man is an animal fit for a state to a fuller extent] sounds absurd. The point is that animals have two characteristics which are necessary but not sufficient for life in a state: the sensation (*aesthesis*) of pleasure and pain, and ‘voice’, *phônê*, with which to ‘indicate’ them to each other. The same is true of men; but men have also a sense/perception of benefit and harm etc., as listed, and ‘speech’, *logos*, to express them. [...] In sum, to pursue their common task (whatever that is), bees etc. have sensation of pleasure and pain, plus voice; to pursue theirs men have in addition a sense of good and bad, just and unjust, plus speech. Men are thus ‘fit for a state to a fuller extent’: they are better *equipped*, in such a way as to be able to live in the complex association, *koinônia*, which is the *state*. (1995: 69)

A very similar explanation comes from C. D. C. Reeve:

[H]uman beings are more political than [the other political animals], because they are naturally equipped for life in a type of community that is itself more quintessentially political than a beehive or an ant nest, namely, a household or polis. What equips human beings to live in such communities is the natural capacity for rational speech, which they alone possess. (2008: 513)<sup>5</sup>

Saunders recognizes the strangeness of comparing the human being and *all the other* political animals in terms of their capacity to fit into a State (which is exclusively a human community), yet he attributes this strangeness not to his own interpretation but to Aristotle! Other political animals would be less political because they are not sufficiently equipped to fit into a State.

The problem with this interpretation is the following: The other political animals are destined to lose this competition right from the beginning. This competition is designed for them to lose. According to Saunders, “being more political” is “being fit for a State”; and “being fit for a State” is defined by possessing all of the following features: pain, pleasure, voice, moral perception and language. It turns out (surprisingly!) that human beings are the only ones among political animals to possess all these. Then, we can conclude, according to Saunders, that human beings are more political, because they are the only ones to satisfy the definition of being fit for a State. In order to explain the human being’s being more political, Saunders starts by taking the human being as the criterion of being more political. However, for a real explanation, what we need is not to *suppose* that pain, pleasure, voice, moral perception and language all together make human beings more political; but we need to explain why this is so. The specious explanatory power of this circularity seems to lead Saunders to the mistake of attributing voice to bees: bees are deaf, they have no voice and Aristotle knew these facts.<sup>6</sup> In fact, the bees

<sup>5</sup> See also Reeve 1998: xlvihi.

<sup>6</sup> See especially *HA* IV.9, 535a27–b14. For a detailed analysis of the semantics and physiology of animal voice in Aristotle see Labarrière 2014: 19–59. Ömer Aygün is defending an unorthodox view about the capacity for hearing in bees. Relying on two passages from

- the other paradigm political animal for Aristotle - have no place in the hierarchy Saunders is eagerly trying to establish among political animals, simply because such a hierarchy does not exist.

C. D. C. Reeve seems to be better off than Saunders because he explicitly takes as one of his premises the fact that communities like a household and *polis* are more political. However, if we look closer, Reeve is not saying that human beings are more political because they constitute such communities which are by nature more political. He is rather saying that these communities are more political *and* human beings are so adequately equipped for living in these communities that they prove to be more political.<sup>7</sup> There is, however, nothing surprising in the fact that human beings are so adequately equipped for living in these communities, because it is already the same human beings who constructed these communities in this particular way, in accordance with their own natural capacities. In other words if these communities require rational speech, this is because a rational and speaking animal constructed them this way. There is nothing more surprising and explanatory here than seeing, for instance, a bee fitting into the beehive created by its own colony: it is constructed this way for it to fit.

A more subtle version of this circularity, concerning, this time, our capacity for moral perception, can be found in Fred D. Miller. According to Miller (1995), the fact that human beings are able to create households and cities on the basis of a partnership in good and bad, just and unjust is evidence that human beings are more political than any bee or any other gregarious animal. This evidence shows that human beings are adapted for political activity to a fuller extent than the other political animals. For this idea, says Miller, Aristotle invokes one of his principles of natural teleology, according to which “nature does nothing in vain”. That is, insofar as life in *polis* is necessary for human beings to attain their natural ends, nature adapted the human beings for a life in *polis* by giving them not only speech but also a capacity for moral perception. In other words, since a *polis* is not possible without moral perception (because such a life requires co-operation in pursuit of goods, like virtues, which are higher than pain and pleasure) nature endowed human beings with such a perception with the purpose of making the *polis* life possible for them.<sup>8</sup> Miller formulates his position as follows:

The invocation of teleology at the beginning of this argument [the argument at 1253a1–18] presupposes that humans have natural ends and innate potentials necessary for attaining these ends. In this context humans have the innate capacity to perceive and express justice and injustice because this is necessary in order for them to attain their natural ends. For humans must engage in cooperative forms of social

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HA. IX. 40 (namely, 625b9-10 and 627a24-28) Aygün claims that Aristotle thinks bees to be capable of hearing, but what they hear is “not *psophos* in the sense of noise, nor voice as such, but a counterpart of voice, namely the buzz” (p. 343). Aygün also suggests that this peculiar kind of hearing has some political function in the life of bees.

7 I am not sure if the above quoted passage from Reeve would be his most considered position on this question. However, this makes it more interesting for my case here because it testifies to how naturally and immediately we take it for granted that our qualitative differences with the other animals are also the ones which make us more political.

8 For the details of this argument see Miller 1995: 30–35.

and political organization in order to fulfill their nature, and these forms of cooperation require a conception of justice. (1991: 294)<sup>9</sup>

Miller's reconstruction of the Aristotelian argument supposes that life in *polis* requires a capacity for moral perception, and that human beings are so adequately adapted by nature for this life that they have such a capacity. This sounds explanatory, but it shares the same vice with Saunders' and Reeve's positions. The question is again: why does life in *polis* require a capacity for moral perception in the first place? When Aristotle states that human beings have a perception of good and bad, just and unjust, he uses the same generic name as pain, pleasure and the five senses: *aesthesis* (*Pol.* I.2, 1253a14–18, passage quoted above). So, when he is asserting that human beings are morally perceptive, Aristotle does not seem to mean that they *always* and *naturally* have a true opinion about moral questions. This requires education and virtue. Rather, he seems to mean that human beings are never without opinion, right or wrong, about questions of good and bad, just and unjust, etc. They always have *whatever* opinion, not necessarily a true one. This, actually, is why life in *polis* requires a capacity for moral perception. Not only *polis*, but each and every community built by human beings requires such a capacity because this is a natural fact that the human being brings with itself. Things, therefore, are not as put by Miller but the other way around: human beings do not have the capacity for moral perception because life in *polis* requires such a capacity, but life in *polis* requires this capacity because human beings have moral perception. The question of justice is an inextricable question in human communities because human beings are naturally inceptive about this question; not *vice versa*. *Pace* Miller, therefore, moral perception is not given to human beings to fit into the life in *polis*. Such a supposition leads to a circular argument.

### Carving nature at the wrong joints

As for the problem concerning the violation of certain principles of an adequate Aristotelian division of natural kinds, the following passage from Wolfgang Kullmann can be considered:

It follows from the description of man as *zōon* that 'political' above all describes a biological condition of a group of animals. So, the precise connection of this human characteristic with the essence of man, as it is expressed in the definition, becomes clear. The definition of man includes the *genus*, animal (*zōon*), and differentia, having reason (*logon echon*) [...] [O]nly the special degree to which the political element is found in man may be traced to this specific differentia of man. [...] According to the text, the greater degree to which man is political is due to the fact that as a being endowed with reason he has a perception of the beneficial and harmful and hence, as Aristotle infers, also of the just and the unjust. (1991: 101)

According to Kullmann, the phrase "the political animal that has a perception of the just and the unjust" does not give us the definition of man, but it derives

<sup>9</sup> In the context where this citation comes from, Miller is not especially discussing the question of human being's higher degree of politicalness. But it is evidently this very same perspective, as it is put here, which informs his discussion in Miller 1995: 30–35.

from it in the following way. “Political”, as a biological feature, derives from being an animal. This is a factor that we commonly share with other political animals, whereas our perceptiveness about questions of justice derives from our capacity for reason. For Kullmann, it is this rationally-based perception of the just and the unjust that accounts for the higher degree of human beings’ political character. Kullmann, therefore, explains the human being’s political existence by separating the biological aspect (i.e., being political) from the rational aspect, which he considers “an additional” (or “the second”) factor (1991: 103, 102). On this account, human beings are more political than other political animals because, *in addition* to the common biological aspect, human beings possess an *extra* feature, of which other political animals (indeed, all other animals) are deprived. Human beings are more political than all other animals because they are not simply biologically political, but they are *also* rationally perceptive about issues of justice. Human beings’ being more political is not, therefore, a form or a specification of the biological aspect itself. It is explained by human beings’ going *beyond* what is biologically political, and having *extra* non-biological, yet politically pertinent, features. In this account, human beings are political as animals but more political *otherwise* than animal, *otherwise* than biologically.

The main problem with this way of explaining human being’s higher degree of politicalness is the following. For Aristotle, differences according to *the more and the less* between animals have nothing to do with adding up heterogeneous features. The formula of an animal’s being more political cannot be: politicalness (biological constant) *plus* rationality *plus* moral perception *plus* language, etc. This is not how nature is structured according to Aristotle.<sup>10</sup>

Comparing animals according to *the more and the less* is one of two ways of comparison that Aristotle appeals to in his biological treatises in order to single out sameness and difference between animal features. The other is the comparison by analogy. These methods of comparison are usually employed in analyses of animal *parts*. For example, we can compare the wings of birds according to how long or short they are, or how much feathering they have, and so on. Analogy, on the other hand, is the method for comparing features of different kinds: as, for example, fish spines are analogous to bones.

However, these methods of comparison are not limited to *parts* of animals. Aristotle thinks that all animal features can be grouped under four principle types of *differentia*, namely *parts*, *ethos*, *bios* and *praxis*.<sup>11</sup> This is to say that all animals differ from each other in these four principle ways. In the *History of Animals*, Aristotle explicitly applies comparisons according to *the more and the less* to the other three (besides parts) principal types of animal difference—namely, their *ethos*, *bios*, and *praxis*.<sup>12</sup> Both gregariousness and politicalness are considered by Aristotle under “differences with respect to *bios* and *praxis*” (*HA* I, 487b32ff).

Now, the differences of *the more and the less* result *from* the differences between animals of the same kind. In other words, they result from the specific form

10 For this point and on the general question of the differences according to the “more and the less” in Aristotle’s biology, the principal reference is Lennox 2001.

11 See *HA* I, 1–6 as an introduction to this theme.

12 On this point, see Leunissen and Gotthelf 2010: 328.

a feature takes in species. The wings of birds, for instance, are longer/shorter, broader/narrower, more/less feathered, etc. It is on account of the specific form that being winged takes that a bird's wings will differ by *the more and the less* from the wings of other birds. Put more abstractly: differences by *the more and the less* between biological features—be it parts, *ethos*, *bios*, or *praxis*—result from the specific form that biological feature takes in different animals.

From these considerations, the following can be concluded about political animals: If “being political” is a biological feature, then the differences, by *the more and the less*, between political animals must be the result of the specific form this feature takes in different animals. If political animals differ among themselves by *the more and the less*, this must be the result of differentiation within the biological aspect itself, *as* the biological aspect it is, and not the result of the addition of an extra-biological aspect, as Kullmann suggests. Accordingly, the greater degree of the human being's political character must be accounted for on the basis of its animality and as a differentiation of its political *praxis*, understood as a zoological feature. It is not “otherwise than animal,” but *as an animal* that the human being is more political.

Let us recall Aristotle's definition of political animals: they are those animals “for whom the work of all is some one and common thing” (*HA* I.1, 488a7–8). This definition taken into account, we can conclude that insofar as having some moral perception and having a capacity for rational speech are not specific forms of “having some one and common work” with the other members of the species, we cannot account for human being's being *more* political with reference to these features.

If the foregoing criticisms are sound, then, from a befitting Aristotelian perspective, differences by *the more and the less* between political animals must be due to the specific form their having “some one and common work” takes.

### Being more political: Possessing a plurality of communities differing in form

What specific form, therefore, does the human political *praxis* (that is, the human “having some one and common work”) take? After I elaborate on this question, I am going to address the question whether language can be the reason why human beings are more political. My answer will be no.

Now, *Pol.* I.2 gives us a clear idea about the specific form that the human “having some one and common work” takes. That's why, I suggest, the higher degree of human politicalness is also affirmed in this chapter of the book. The higher degree of the human politicalness is just a result of the specific form that its political *praxis* takes. How does Aristotle's argument in *Pol.* I.2 support this interpretation?

The most manifest and distinct idea demonstrated in *Pol.* I.2 is that the human being possesses *a plurality of communities*, which differ from each other in form, and in which it shares some one and common work with other members of its species. My contention is therefore that the human being is more political because it is *an animal of multiple communities*, differing in form.<sup>13</sup> Starting already from the

13 The idea that the human being is an animal of multiple communities has not escaped the attention of commentators (see esp. Bodeüs 1985 and Labarrière 2016: 150). I am not claiming

first chapter, Aristotle's argument is organized around this idea. In chapter 1, Aristotle's project is to introduce the reader to the idea of the specificity of statesmanship in relation to other forms of power, namely, the household manager (father), the master, and the king. Aristotle says that these forms of power differ in form because the communities to which they correspond differ in form: a city is not an enlarged family, says Aristotle. It is not by magnitude or number, but by form that the communities, to which these different forms of power correspond, differ.

This perspective continues in the second chapter. Aristotle rhythmically reiterates, in the second chapter, a formulation, namely ἐξ ὧν, which develops the idea that a *polis* comes to be *out of* a plurality of communities, and that it continues to encompass those communities as its parts.<sup>14</sup> As is well known, he starts with the family. He analyses the husband-wife, and the master-slave, relationships as parts of the family, and concludes that “the first thing to emerge from these [ἐκ μὲν οὖν τούτων] two communities [the communities of husband-wife and master-slave] is a household.” (1252b9–10). Next, he analyzes the village, saying: “the first community constituted out of several households [ἐκ πλείονων οἰκιῶν] for the sake of satisfying needs other than everyday ones is a village.” (1252b15–16). And, finally, he addresses the *polis*: “The community finally composed of several villages [ἐκ πλείονων κομῶν] is the *polis*.” (1252b27–28). The family, the village and finally the *polis* are like “emergent communities” which cannot be reduced to their component sub-communities. Therefore it comes out, already at the outset of Book I, that the outstanding characteristic of the human being's *praxis* as a political animal is to compose, and to constitute, different communities - *in the plural*.

To the question of knowing why the human being develops *that much* politicalness, Aristotle provides an explicit answer: the need for self-sufficiency. Especially in *Pol.* I.2, the lack of self-sufficiency is depicted as another biological fact about human beings. For Aristotle, human beings are naturally disposed to live with other members of their species<sup>15</sup>, but if their political *praxis* develops and differentiates in such a way as to build up several different communities to the point of founding a *polis*, this is because of their natural lack of self-sufficiency. He who does not need such a community because he is self-sufficient, says Aristotle, must be a god, not a human being.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, it is another biological fact about human beings that they naturally *need* to develop all the multiple communities that constitute their political life.

It's worth noting here that the *Nicomachean Ethics* shares the same perspective about the human *politikon*. At *EN* I.7, 1097b8–11, Aristotle says:

Now by self-sufficient we do not mean that which is sufficient for a man by himself, for one who lives a solitary life, but also for parents, children, wife, and in general for his friends and fellow citizens, since man is by nature political.<sup>17</sup>

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originality with this idea. But that this fact about the human being must be the explanation for its being more political, to the best of my knowledge, has not been noticed before.

14 On this point see also Saunders 1995: 61.

15 The human being has an *hormé* for a communitarian life, see *Pol.* I.2, 1253a30.

16 *Pol.* I.2, 1253a28–29.

17 D. Ross's translation in The Revised Oxford Translation of the *Complete Works of Aristotle*.



The types of relations mentioned in this passage all correspond to different types of friendship that Aristotle distinguishes in *EN VII*. Yet, according to Aristotle, every kind of friendship corresponds to a kind of community<sup>18</sup>; and in the above passage, just like in *Pol. I.2*, he affirms that this multiplicity of communities is indispensable for the human being to be self-sufficient.

## The role of language

Now I can address the question whether language can be the reason why human beings are more political. My answer is no. For those who give a positive answer to this question, the ultimate evidence comes from the following passage:

It is also clear why the human being is more political than the bees and any other gregarious animal. For [γάρ] nature does nothing in vain, as we say, and no animal has speech except the human being. (*Pol. I.2*, 1253a7–10)

According to the rest of this passage, language is not in vain because it is useful in manifesting the good, the bad, the just and the unjust. How exactly are we to understand this assertion?

The first thing to notice is that insofar as there are political animals which lack such a linguistic capacity, there cannot even be a correlation between possessing such a linguistic capacity and being a political animal. Besides, human beings could have been non-political solitary animals, and still have experienced problems in their casual encounters with each other, so that language could still have had a function: manifesting the problem. Language is, therefore, neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for being a political animal.

A more plausible approach is to appeal to what Aristotle says as his *conclusion* about the role of language:

[I]t is peculiar to human beings, in comparison to the other animals, that they alone have perception of what is good or bad, just or unjust, and the rest. And it is community in these that makes a household and a *polis*. (1253a15–18)<sup>19</sup>

Commentators interpret this idea as follows: human beings establish families and city-states, because they *can* communicate about justice. Other animals would therefore be less political because, since they cannot communicate about justice, they are unable to make households and *poleis*.<sup>20</sup> But as I've tried to explain so far, there is no non-circular way of making this explanation function, unless we suppose that the other animals are also supposed, by nature, to make households and cities and yet fail to accomplish this "work" (*ergon*). This is not true. Moreover, the fact that human beings *can* establish these communities does not explain why they *do* establish them. Saying that human beings establish these communities because they *can* would not conform to Aristotle's most basic principles of teleology:

18 *EN VIII.9*, 1159b32.

19 For the last two passages quoted from Aristotle's *Politics*, I use Reeve's 1998 translation with slight modifications.

20 C. D. C. Reeve's and Fred D. Miller's positions would be, among many, two examples of this approach.

animals do not accomplish “works” (*erga*) because they have the means and capacities to do so. Things are the other way around: animals have such means and capacities because they have such “works” to accomplish.<sup>21</sup>

This perspective must be applied to our capacity for language too. Aristotle’s use of the teleological principle that “nature does nothing in vain” in explaining language suggests that according to him human beings have language because they are naturally destined to establish all this multiplicity of communities; not the other way around.

In his zoological writings Aristotle uses the principle “nature does nothing in vain” to provide an explanation for the *presence* or the *absence* of some biological features in animals. In both cases, this principle functions the same way: by using it, Aristotle invites us to make a counterfactual reasoning. That is: he invites us to imagine the opposite scenario where the feature that is *now* present (or absent) is absent (or present). And the observable consequences of this reversed scenario will point towards the cause(s) of the presence of the biological phenomenon in question, because this counterfactual reasoning makes the observer see the problems that the animal would have experienced had it lacked the capacity in question.<sup>22</sup> To give one example from *De Anima* (III.12, 434a30–b8): all those animals which are able to move have at least one distance sense (like hearing, smelling, and sight) because if they hadn’t any, they would never be able to move successfully and they would never be successful in regularly reaching their food. So this is why moving animals have distance senses, while the unmoving ones lack them.

Now, as for the language, the scope of Aristotle’s use of this principle is not limited to saying that language is for communicating our perceptions of justice. The *ultimate* point Aristotle is making about language is that communicating our perceptions of justice has also its own function, and discovering this function will make it clear for us why the human being is a more political animal. So, the communication of our moral perceptions is only the half of Aristotle’s point about language. Aristotle says something more.

So far, we’ve seen Aristotle establishing the following: Human beings are those political animals which are naturally in need of going beyond their domestic spheres and of founding a multiplicity of other communities, which finally make up a *polis: the community of communities*.<sup>23</sup> Once he makes this clear, Aristotle continues with the following as his second point in this chapter (*Pol.* I.2): as the human beings will incessantly have a perception of the good, the bad, the just and the unjust at every single stage of their communitarian activity (that is, in each community, from family to *polis*), there will always be a question of justice to settle in their life. Even the most elementary groupings (e.g. the husband-wife relation) require the observance of justice. So, from family to *polis*, justice will be *the* political problem in human life. Without settling these problems of justice, their political activity will never achieve its natural development. They would never achieve being the political animal they are since they will fail to establish the communities they need to establish. It is therefore in this precise sense that “it is community in these [moral

21 See *Parts of Animals*, Book I.

22 A detailed analysis of this counterfactual reasoning can be found in Leunissen 2010.

23 I borrow this expression from Labarrière 1993: 14.

notions] that makes a household and a *polis*”. However, settling the problems of justice, so as to make household and *polis* possible, is impossible without language. Human beings need language, because they are naturally destined to found all the communities they found as a political species. Put in a more Aristotelian style, language is hypothetically necessary. That is, *if* the human being is to be *that* much political, then the capacity for language is a prerequisite.

It comes out, therefore, that language is present not only for the communication of moral notions. It is rather present for the communication of such notions *with the purpose of* establishing all these communities, from family to the *polis*. This is how Aristotle leads us to discover the function of manifesting our moral perceptions. The human beings need to communicate their sentiments of justice, because they need a multiplicity of communities for a self-sufficient life. Therefore, according to Aristotle, language follows the needs and the activities of the political animal the human being is, it does not create them.

## Conclusion

All the extant explanations I know of human being’s higher degree of politicalness according to Aristotle are flawed, because some of them start by taking the human being as their criterion for being more political; some do not conform to Aristotelian division: they do not consider “being more political” as resulting from the specific form that this biological aspect, “being political”, takes in human beings; and they do not understand adequately the teleology of language: language is present not only for communicating the just and the unjust. It is rather present as assistance to the political animal the human being *already* is: a gregarious animal of multiple communities which is at the same time perceptive of moral questions.

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## Refik Guremen

### U kom smislu su tačno ljudska bića više politička prema Aristotelu?

#### Apstrakt

Prema Aristotelu, ljudska bića su po prirodi političke životinje. Sada je već opštepoznato da bivanje političkim prema njemu nije privilegija ljudi: pčele, ose, mravi i ždralovi su takođe političke vrste. Iako nisu jedine političke životinje, ljudska bića su, prema Aristotelu, ipak više politička u odnosu na druge političke životinje. U članku se ispituje precizno značenje ovog poređenja; i iznosi se tvrdnja da se veći stepen ljudske političnosti *ne može* objasniti ukazivanjem na isključivo ljudske osobine, kao što su posedovanje kapaciteta za govor i moralno opažanje. Umesto toga, iznosi se tvrdnja da su ljudska bića više politička zato što žive u mnoštvu zajednica koje se razlikuju po formi.

Ključne reči: Aristotel, političke životinje, jezik, priroda