

chapter 4

Politics II: Political critique, political theorizing, political innovation

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The second book of Aristotle's *Politics* is generally taken to examine *politeiai* or constitutions that either exist in cities that are said to be well governed or were proposed by theoreticians and are thought to be well organized (II.1, 1260b30–32; II.12, 1274b26–28).¹ Prominent are Aristotle's examinations of Plato's *Republic* and the constitution of Sparta; but Aristotle also devotes chapters to the examination of Plato's *Laws*, the proposed constitutions of Phaleas of Chalcedon and Hippodamos of Miletus, and the existing constitutions of Crete, Carthage, and Solon's Athens.² Prominent, also, is scholarly analysis of Aristotle's remarks about the *Republic* and Sparta – whether his criticisms of Plato are insightful and fair or whether his remarks about Sparta are historically accurate and hit upon the causes of Sparta's fourth-century decline.³ Far less prominent, though, is scholarly discussion of Aristotle's remarks about the other constitutions analyzed in *Politics* II, how *Politics* II as a whole is organized, or what light – if any – the book sheds on the *Politics* as a whole.⁴

¹ Unless otherwise noted, parenthetical references within my paper refer to book, chapter, and Bekker page numbers of the *Politics*. Translations are my own, based on Ross (1957), but are significantly informed by the translations of Reeve (1998) and Saunders (1995).

² Although Aristotle's analysis of the *Republic* is the longest in *Politics* II and takes up 223 Bekker lines of text, that is only one-fifth of the book as a whole (which comprises 1134 Bekker lines of text). The discussion of Sparta is the next longest passage (189 lines), followed by those of Hippodamos (132 lines), the *Laws* (127 lines), Phaleas (112 lines), Carthage (86 lines), Crete (85 lines), the investigation of property (72 lines), and Solon (35 lines). *Politics* II.12 takes up, in rapid succession, the proposals of seven additional legislators, each for only a line or two. In this chapter I focus primarily on Aristotle's critiques within *Politics* II, but he has extensive critiques of both the *Republic* and Sparta outside of *Politics* II; see, for instance, Saxonhouse (Chapter 10 in this volume) and my unpublished "Servile Spartans and Free Citizen-Soldiers in Aristotle's *Politics* 7–8."

³ Bornemann (1923–24) is the landmark work critical of Aristotle's treatment of Plato; Mayhew (1997), Stalley (1991), and Simpson (1991) and (1998) provide extended analyses and defenses of many of Aristotle's remarks about the *Republic*. Schütrumpf (1994) presents a judicious overview of the debates that Aristotle's remarks about Sparta have generated and Rubin (2012) is the most recent study of Aristotle's treatment of Sparta.

⁴ Bertelli (1977) is the sole book-length study of *Politics* II in its entirety. Although Morrow (1960b) and Schofield (2010) both address Aristotle's critique of the *Laws*, the 50-year gap between them

Such scholarly neglect is unfortunate for at least two major reasons. First, *Politics II* claims that since the *Politics* proposes to study which political community is best of all for people who are most able to live in accord with one's prayers (*kat' euchên*), it is necessary to investigate other constitutions reputed to be best (*II.1, 1260b27–29*). Such a claim suggests a close link between *Politics II* and *Politics VII/VIII*, but such a link needs elaboration. In what way does *Politics II* prepare the way for *Politics VII/VIII*?⁵ Second, *Politics II* contains not only criticism of other constitutions, but also substantive political theorizing – most noticeably about the organization of property in the best regime, the problem of political innovation, and the relationship between political theorizing and chance. Aristotle's critiques of Plato's *Republic*, the constitution of Hippodamos, and the constitution of Carthage generate a series of substantive theoretical reflections about the problematic nature of political innovation and political theorizing that rise above mere examinations of the views of his predecessors.⁶ Viewing *Politics II* solely as a repository of criticism loses sight of the theoretical insights Aristotle offers therein, self-conscious insights about the very nature of political theorizing.

The vantage point that makes visible the relationship between political critique and political theorizing is the structural analysis of

speaks for itself (so too the gap between Balot [2001] and Lana [1950] in the case of Phaleas). Aristotle's remarks on Hippodamos have received more attention (in part because of his importance as a city planner), for instance, see Boyer (2008), Gorman (1995), Hogan (1959), and Lana (1949); but Huxley (1971) is a rare study of Aristotle's remarks on Crete and an appendix to Newman (1887–1902: 2.401–408) is the sole study I can find devoted to Aristotle's remarks on Carthage. Kraut (2001), Kraut (2002), and Lisi (2008) provide semi-complete analyses of *Politics II* as a whole; Pangle (2013), Saunders (1995), Schütrumpf (1991–2005), and Simpson (1998) provide running commentaries on the entire book. Nichols (1992), Davis (1996), and Garver (2011) each provide a more or less selective chapter on *Politics II*; Miller (1995) and Frank (2005) include chapters devoted almost solely to the issue of property in *Politics II*.

⁵ Although the last two books of Aristotle's *Politics* present a number of textual problems – including their incompleteness, unfulfilled forward references, and the fragmentary nature of *Politics VIII.7* – the division of the text into two “books” (i.e., *Politics VII* and *Politics VIII*) is arbitrary and interrupts a clear division of analysis (articulated most clearly at *VII.4, 1325b33–26a4; VII.13, 1331b23–32b10; and VIII.2.1337a32–37b2*). Thus, I refer to *Politics VII/VIII* as a unified text throughout my paper. On the problems concerning the textual status of *Politics VII/VIII*, see Kraut (1997: 169).

⁶ Schofield (2010) reflects on the disconnect between Aristotle's criticisms of Plato's *Laws* in *Pol. II.6* and his unacknowledged but extensive borrowing from the *Laws* in *Politics VII/VIII* and writes that “whether this is because [*Pol. VII/VIII*] constitute a stratum of the *Politics* earlier than Book 2, or because Aristotle does criticism and construction in entirely different modes, almost as if they had nothing to do with each other, is a question to which one might return on another occasion” (15). Although I do not address the situation of Aristotle's apparently inconsistent approaches to the *Laws*, I do nonetheless want to explain the relationship between how he “does criticism and construction,” especially in the final part of this chapter.

Politics II. The way that the book is organized – both with respect to the order in which constitutions are examined and with respect to what I will call the philosophical excurses Aristotle incorporates therein – underscore Aristotle’s self-conscious reflection on the way in which political theorizing itself is both politically salutary and politically problematic.⁷ Politics II as a whole exhibits a reoccurring rhetorical or argumentative structure: An initial critique of one of Aristotle’s predecessors (e.g., is Hippodamos right to reward people who propose changes to the constitution?) gives rise to a more general philosophical excursus (e.g., should we replace existing laws when better ones are available?).⁸ Although the excurses originate in critique, they go beyond mere criticisms and taken together, the excurses on property, political innovation, and the relationship between chance and theorizing problematize the very practice of political critique, political theorizing, and political innovation (which is, of course, the subject matter of Politics II, a book devoted to the thoughts and actions of previous political theorists). Scholarly focus on individual critiques in Politics II – for instance, those of the Republic or Sparta – have failed to notice such excurses since they only become clear from the overall structure of Politics II as a whole. A structural analysis of Politics II also shows how and why many of the proposals articulated in Politics VII/VIII have their origins in Politics II. Although most of the criticisms in Politics II are briefer, aporetic anticipations of more developed discussion in the last two books of the Politics – similar in function to the endoxic surveys that often begin Aristotle’s treatises – most striking are the theoretical resolutions that take place within Politics II and that Politics VII/VIII presupposes. The first part of my chapter provides a structural analysis of Politics II as a whole. The second part argues that political innovation is the central problematic of the book by focusing on those excurses in which Aristotle goes beyond political criticism to substantive political theorizing. The final part locates the place of Politics II within the Politics as a whole.

⁷ Pace Stalley (1991), who claims that Politics II “does not look like a finished work” but is rather “a set of notes” (186).

⁸ Although I agree with Pangle that “Aristotle’s public theorizing about political practice is a highly self-conscious form of political practice” (2013: 1) – one in which he uses the structural organization of passages or carefully interrelated *aporiai* or puzzles to occasion thought in his reader – what I call “structural analysis” does not presuppose or endorse any sort of esotericism or veiling of Aristotle’s thought.

The internal structure of Politics II

At first glance, the second book of the Politics is divided between what Kraut (2001) calls “failed utopias” – namely, the constitutions of Plato, Phaleas, and Hippodamos – and those existing constitutions that are reputed to be “well governed” (*eunomeisthai*) – namely those of Sparta, Crete, Carthage, and Athens; Politics II opens and closes by invoking such a bipartite division of the text (II.1, 1260b30–32; II.12, 1274b26–28).⁹ Nonetheless, Aristotle problematizes the bipartite division of Politics II in two ways. First, Aristotle also distinguishes constitutions based upon the experience of the person proposing or legislating the constitution. Thus, in II.12, before examining the constitution of Solon, Aristotle notes that

some of those who have had something to say about a constitution took no part in political actions (*praxeôn politikôn*), but have always lived privately (*idiôteuontes ton bion*).¹⁰ About them, pretty much everything worth saying has been said. Others became legislators (*nomothetai*), engaging in politics themselves (*politeuthentes autoi*), some in their own city-states, others in foreign ones as well. (1273b27–32)

At first glance, the division remains the same: Plato, apparently Phaleas, and Hippodamos lived private lives and are not themselves legislators;¹¹ Lycurgus, Minos, and Solon actually participated in politics and had experience in making laws.

However, Aristotle further problematizes the division between constitutions proposed by private persons and actual legislators. At II.7, he prefaces

⁹ That Politics II is organized around the twofold division between proposed and existing constitutions is commonplace in secondary literature. See, for instance, Saunders (1995: xi, 104), Kraut (2002: 306–07), Simpson (1998: 72), Newman (1887–1902: 2.226), and Rubin (2012: 12). Davis (1996: 35–37) seems alone in recognizing three divisions within the text (although he and I do not identify the same three subsections).

¹⁰ Newman notes that Aristotle uses the notion of the *idiôtês* in two senses: either as a “private” person – in opposition to one in office (e.g., II.11, 1273a35; II.12, 1273b29; III.4, 1277a24; IV.16, 1300b21) – or as a “layperson” – in opposition to one possessing expert knowledge (e.g., III.1, 1282a11; VII.2, 1324b1). I concur with Newman that in II.7–8, Aristotle brings the two senses together, suggesting that the “failed utopias” of Phaleas and Hippodamos were the result of their layperson ignorance about the affairs of office (Newman 1887–1902: 2.281–282).

¹¹ Plato, of course, is reputed to have travelled to the court of the Syracusean tyrant Dionysius II; but even if one trusts the report of the Seventh Epistle (326B–330B), he was denied an opportunity to serve as any sort of a legislator. Since Aristotle is the sole source for our knowledge of Phaleas, it is uncertain whether he lived a private or political life (see further Lana [1950], Schütrumpf [1991–2005: 1.238–40], and Balot [2001: 33–34]). But as Saunders notes, “the sweeping and somewhat naïve simplicity of his proposals” suggest that he was neither a practicing statesman nor a philosopher (1995: 135).

the transition between his analysis of Plato's proposed constitutions (in the *Republic* and the *Laws*) and that proposed by Phaleas with the following remarks:

There are other constitutions, too, proposed either by private individuals or by philosophers and statesmen (hai <politeiai> men idiôtôn hai de philosophôn kai politikôn [1266a31–32]). But all of them are closer to the established constitutions under which people are now governed than either of Plato's. (II.7, 1266a31–34)

Aristotle's use of the *men/de* construction makes clear that although philosophers may in fact be private individuals, nonetheless they form their own class distinct from "mere" private individuals and are more like statesmen (a point *Politics* II.8 underscores by noting that Hippodamos was the first person to propose a constitution even though he himself had never participated in politics [1267b29–30]). Constitutions proposed by philosophers (i.e., those found in the *Republic* and the *Laws*) thus constitute a third grouping – a grouping that presumably also includes Aristotle's own best regime, since he was a philosopher who lived the private life of a metic.¹² It would seem, then, that *Politics* II is divided into three parts: constitutions proposed by a private citizen who is a philosopher (*Politics* II.2–6), constitutions proposed by non-philosophers who are private citizens (*Politics* II.7–8), and constitutions legislated by statesmen or lawgivers (*Politics* II.9–12).

A second structural feature of *Politics* II reinforces the claim that Aristotle divides *Politics* II into three parts. Three times in *Politics* II Aristotle undertakes an analysis that, while related to the section in which it is placed, is a sort of excursus or independent analysis within the critique of constitutions. In the first division of the text – namely, that devoted to analyzing a philosopher's proposed constitutions – *Politics* II.5 provides a sustained analysis that resolves the question of how property should be organized in the best regime. *Politics* II.5 begins by stating that "the next topic to investigate is property, and how those in the best constitution should arrange it. Should it be owned in common or not? One could investigate these questions even in isolation from the legislation dealing with women and children" (II.5, 1262b37–41). The section in question, which runs from 1262b37–63b29, occupies almost three Bekker pages and although it obviously "fits" within the critique of the community of women, children, and property in Plato's

¹² Compare Saunders (1995: 140–41), who sees a strong resemblance of Aristotle in his depiction of Hippodamos. For the relevance of Aristotle's metic status, see Whitehead (1975).

Republic, the excursus on property in the best regime makes no reference to Socrates' proposal.¹³ The section's conclusion – that “evidently (phaneron), then, it is better for property to be private and its use communal” (II.5, 1263a37–39) – is stated in a provisional fashion, which is understandable since Aristotle will return to the same discussion in his analysis of the best regime in *Politics* VII.10 (at 1329b36 and following). The passage in question is not political criticism of the Republic, but political theorizing about the nature of property as such in the best regime.

The second section of *Politics* II – namely, that concerning the constitutional proposals of private individuals with no experience in politics – includes another excursus. Hippodamos, the first non-statesman to propose a constitution (1267b29–30), sought the enactment of a law that honored those who had discovered something beneficial to the polis (II.8, 1268a6–8). Aristotle criticizes the law – on the grounds that it would encourage sycophancy and repeated changes in the constitution (II.8, 1268b24–25) – but notes that its evaluation is part of a different problem and inquiry, namely whether it is beneficial or harmful for cities to change their traditional laws if some other law is better (1268b26–28). Aristotle spends the remainder of *Politics* II.8 considering aporetic arguments in favor of and against changing laws in an excursus that is far more general in scope than the criticisms of Hippodamos. As I will discuss later in the next part of this chapter, Aristotle's excursus on the costs and benefits of constitutional change stands at the heart of *Politics* II, since it theorizes the dangers political criticism poses for existing constitutions, including presumably the criticisms within *Politics* II.

Aristotle's examination of the constitution of Carthage is itself an analogous excursus, which falls at the end of the third section of *Politics* II, namely that part of the book that considers existing constitutions (*Politics* II.9–12). The first two sections of *Politics* II concerned “cities in speech,” as it were, and the excurses those sections occasioned were similarly theoretical or abstract. However, the last section of *Politics* II concerns actual constitutions, and the excursus that this section generates is itself an examination – or more accurately, the juxtaposition to Sparta and Crete – of an actual constitution, namely that of Carthage. That the analysis of Carthage is an excursus that stands apart from the

¹³ As Saunders puts it, the remarks in the excursus “are entirely general, and in their urbane shrewdness could practically stand alone as an independent essay in the manner of Addison or Lamb” (1995: 116).

analyses of Sparta and Carthage is indicated by several unusual features in the text. Politics II.9 – which serves as the transition between the second and third parts of the text – makes explicit reference to a consideration of the constitutions of Sparta and Crete, but it omits reference to Carthage (II.9, 1269b29–30), and generally treats Sparta and Crete as a pair.¹⁴ As Newman points out, Carthage differs from Sparta and Crete in that during Aristotle's lifetime, Carthage was approaching its prime, whereas both Sparta and Crete were going into decline (Newman 1887–1902: 2.401).¹⁵ Remarkable, also, is the fact that Carthage is a Phoenician or non-Greek polis, one that Aristotle's readers would have considered as "barbarian." Although Aristotle identifies Lycurgus and Minos as the almost-divine legislators of Sparta and Crete, he identifies no such legislator for Carthage.¹⁶ However, most remarkable is the fact that although Aristotle offers criticism of Carthage's constitution, the criticism is mild and on the whole his remarks are praiseworthy.¹⁷ Aristotle begins II.11 by noting that

The Carthaginians also are thought to be well governed,¹⁸ and in many respects in an extraordinary way (perittôs [1272b25])¹⁹ compared to others . . . Many of their arrangements work well for them, and it is an indication that their constitution is well organized that the people (dêmos) willingly stick with the way the constitution is organized, and that no faction

¹⁴ Indeed, although Politics II.9 (the analysis of the Spartan constitution) and II.10 (that of the Cretan constitution) make numerous cross references to each other, the two chapters contain no reference to Carthage (although II.11, 1272b33–1273a2 draws "similarities" [paraplêsia] between Carthage and Sparta).

¹⁵ Aristotle explicitly notes the decline of Sparta in his allusions to the Theban invasion of Epaminondas in 369 BC (II.9, 1269b36–39) and Sparta's defeat at the battle of Leuctra in 371 (II.9, 1270a30–34; VII.14, 1333b20–25). Aristotle is one of the only surviving sources for our knowledge of the political organization of Carthage in the fifth and fourth centuries BC. For further discussion, see Scullard (1955).

¹⁶ For the possible religious significance of Minos in Aristotle's Politics, see Bartlett (1994: 145–46) and Pangle (2013: 85–88). Nichols (1992) notes that Aristotle fails to identify any legendary lawgiver for Carthage, but seems wrong to take such an omission to imply that "Carthage, in effect, has not had the care of a lawgiver" (47).

¹⁷ Pangle goes so far as to claim that Carthage is "the best regime in human history of which Aristotle knows" (2013: 93); cf. Strauss (1964: 30). Isocrates in Nicocles or the Cyprians claims that the Spartans and Carthaginians are the best governed people in the world (23–24).

¹⁸ As Aristotle notes at the end of II.11, the constitution of Carthage is rightly esteemed as being well governed (II.11, 1273b26).

¹⁹ Perhaps coincidentally, Aristotle uses the same word (perittôn – "out of the common") to describe the Socratic dialogues (II.6.1265a11), Hippodamos' lifestyle (II.8.1267b22–28), and Carthage's constitution. Davis (1996: 37) points out that Aristotle claims (II.3, 1261b29–30) that the term peritta ("odd" as opposed to even) can be used equivocally and thus is the source of eristic argumentation.

even worth talking about has arisen among them, and no tyrant. (II.11, 1272b24–25, 29–33)²⁰

By contrast, Aristotle describes Sparta as a poverty-stricken oligarchy that suffers from *philochrêmata* and *oliganthrôpia* and whose men are ruled by their women; he hesitates to claim that Crete even has a constitution given its dynastic tendencies and regular suspension of the rule of law.²¹ Carthage appears to be the “best” best regime of *Politics* II. Aristotle’s presentation of Carthage as a non-Greek institution, which eclipses the legendary Greek constitutions of Sparta and Crete, is the capstone of the three excurses within *Politics* II, one that brings out his willingness to innovate and openness to trans-Hellenic political institutions.

The central problem(s) of *Politics* II

Is there a central theme or problem that runs through or unifies Aristotle’s remarks about individual constitutions in *Politics* II? Francisco Lisi has recently argued that “the relations of property” is “the main perspective in Aristotle’s consideration of other constitutions” (2008: 8).²² Although the issue of property is central to Aristotle’s criticisms of the community of possessions in the Republic, the egalitarian leveling of property in Phaleas’ constitution, the status of women and societal inequality in Sparta, and the importance of the communal messes found in Sparta and Crete, property relations are at best peripheral to the analysis of the Laws, and the constitutions of Hippodamos, Carthage, and Athens. More reasonable is Richard Kraut’s suggestion that *Politics* II has several major themes, including “how citizens are to be integrated into a single community and kept from dividing into hostile factions,” how to derive stability from the mixing of different constitutions, and the problem of traditional institutions (Kraut 2002: 307–08).²³ Kraut also seems correct to identify a

²⁰ As Susemihl and Hicks note (1894: 307), the discussion of the apparent exception of the tyrant Annon (V.2, 1307a2–5) actually confirms Aristotle’s point, since the people of Carthage thwarted his tyranny.

²¹ See II.9, 1269b23–35, 1270a11–15, 29–34; II.10, 1272b1–3, 9–11.

²² Lisi’s claim is a commonplace: see Miller (1995: 308–09), Frank (2005: 74–75), Garver (2011: 44–45), and Nielsen (2013: 69–70). For support, Lisi cites Mayhew (1997) – which does indeed identify property as the central concern in Aristotle’s criticisms of the Republic. However, the analysis of the Republic takes up less than a quarter of *Politics* II.

²³ Kraut (2001) is a much briefer – although in some places verbatim – version of Kraut (2002: 306–56). See, more recently, Deslauriers (2013) who claims that “*Politics* II is dominated by questions of commonality – what we should have in common in the best city-state, but also what we should not share” (117).

plurality of major themes in *Politics* II, even if the question of property predominates in the first half of the book. More problematic, though, is Kraut's claim that Aristotle embraces a sort of conservatism in *Politics* II, namely, an approach that rejects untried changes and embraces what he calls "social practices of great antiquity – assemblies, courts, marriage, property, common meals, music, gymnastics, and so on" (Kraut 2002: 352). Although Kraut is correct to say that in *Politics* II Aristotle relies upon previously practiced social institutions, the excurses in *Politics* II suggest that if Aristotle is a conservative, he is not adverse to embracing radical change in contemporary institutions.

Although each excursus in *Politics* II has its own focus, they are united by the problem of political innovation and change.²⁴ Consider the first excursus on property in *Politics* II.5: It considers three options – that land could be owned individually but used communally, owned communally but used individually, and owned and consumed communally (II.5, 1263a3–8) – but it ignores the option that prevailed in Aristotle's own time, namely private ownership and private use.²⁵ Thus, when Aristotle endorses private ownership and public usage, he is advocating a radical departure from the way that his contemporaries organized property in Greek city-states.²⁶ Aristotle notes that his arrangement is a "present practice" (*nun tropon*), one that "is already present (*nun ton tropon*) in outline form in some city-states" – by which he means in Sparta, Crete, Carthage, and Tarentum.²⁷ Even if Aristotle can find precedent for the institution his arguments support, it remains a major renovation of contemporary Greek practice.²⁸ Indeed, one wonders if Aristotle articulates his major innovation

²⁴ I agree with Garver (2011: 58) that a unifying thread of *Pol* II is "that all previous attempts at visualizing an ideal state get the idea of constitution wrong – wrong because they conceive of politics as *technê*, not as practice. They consequently attempt to get property arrangements, the constitution, and laws to do a job that only education and virtue can accomplish." However, as I discuss in the third part of this chapter, Garver goes too far in reducing *Politics* II solely to criticism and fails to appreciate its close connection with *Politics* VII/VIII.

²⁵ See Saunders (1995: 117) and Pangle (2013: 78).

²⁶ As Nielsen (2013: 86–87) notes, Aristotle's proposal harkens back to a period when the institution of public liturgies was one of "voluntary public service" rather than "compulsory philanthropy" (to use Matt Christ's term for the way that the Greek liturgical system evolved in the fourth century BC).

²⁷ For private ownership and public use in Crete (where it first takes place among Greek cities), see II.9, 1271a26–37 and VII.10, 1329b5–23; for Sparta and Crete, see II.5, 1263b40; for Carthage, see VI.5, 1320b4; and for Tarentum, see VI.5, 1320b9.

²⁸ Would it be accurate to call such a reform progressive? On the one hand, Aristotle's proposals would radically rearrange the contemporary ownership patterns of landed wealth (consider, for instance, his proposal that private land be organized so that every citizen have two plots – one near the frontier, the other near the city – so that each citizen would confront the prospects of foreign invasion equally [VII.10, 1330a9–15]). On the other hand, Aristotle limits property to the citizen class and has no illusions about extending property (or the franchise) to "the people" (VII.9, 1329a18–26;

concerning property against the backdrop of Plato's community of women, children, and property since Aristotle knows that his own innovation for the communal use of property will appear less radical in contrast with the almost unprecedented communism of the Republic (on which see II.7, 1266a34–36).

The second excursus of Politics II theorizes political innovation itself, namely whether it is beneficial or harmful to a polis to change its traditional laws if some other law is better. The proposals advanced by Phaleas and Hippodamos raise this problem, since although they appear beneficial, they come off as rather naïve and poorly thought through. In the former case, Phaleas sought to make property and access to education equal in order to prevent faction (II.7.1266a38–40, 1266b31–34). Although Aristotle notes that leveling property is not without precedent – Solon and others had incorporated it into their laws (1266b16–18) – he claims that such an innovation introduces faction (since people will become poor after previously having been rich) and fails to mitigate faction (since people resort to faction and injustice over many other things besides bare necessities) (1266b13–14, 38–40).²⁹ People who experience such a land redistribution are prone to becoming “revolutionaries” (neôteropoiôi [1266b14]), a term close to Aristotle's decidedly negative term for “innovation” or “stirring up change,” namely neôterizein.³⁰

It is the latter case – the innovations of Hippodamos – that provides the immediate context for Aristotle's excursus on innovation in general; like in the case of Phaleas, Hippodamos' political innovations seem to evince his layperson's inexperience with politics. Aristotle's presentation of Hippodamos (including unusual remarks about his sartorial affectations)³¹

VII.10, 1329b36–38). Regardless of whether one characterizes such a change as progressive or reactionary, it would certainly be a major departure from contemporary practice.

²⁹ Aristotle's main problem with Phaleas' constitution is that it is guilty of what Simpson calls “political materialism,” namely, it thinks that human behavior can be changed solely through the arrangement of institutions and neglects that it is the desires (epithumiai) in need of education that are the real causes of faction and injustice (1998: 103); cf. Garver (2011: 58–59).

³⁰ Aristotle unequivocally characterizes neôterizein negatively; see II.4, 1262b3; V.7., 1307b19; V.8., 1308b20; VII.10, 1330a28; VII.14, 1332b29; cf. the term's Socratic range: Rep. 424B, Euthphr. 2A.

³¹ Aristotle notes that Hippodamos adopted a rather extraordinary (perittoteros) lifestyle due to his love of honor (including wearing his hair long and expensive ornaments) and aspired to understand nature as a whole (II.8.1267b22–28). Lord claims that such “character” remarks are unique in Aristotle's works (2013: 42, n. 62), although that seems to go too far; in II.12 Aristotle incorporates Philolaus' love escapades into his account of Philolaus' legislation (1274a31–b1). Saunders claims that in his remarks about Hippodamos, Aristotle is “perhaps sailing (whimsically?) close to the wind: [Aristotle] himself dressed stylishly (D.L. V.1), took no part in running at any rate Athens' constitution (he was a resident alien), yet had a lot to say about the best state, and indeed about nature” (1995: 140). I would argue that Aristotle is showing a kind of eidôlon of himself – but one that

as an honor-loving but politically inexperienced city-planner highlights the pitfalls of innovation.³² For instance, Hippodamos' (perhaps Pythagorean) fascination with the number three leads him to delimit law to just three categories, namely laws against hubristic behavior, against injury to persons or property, and against killing. Such a reform would curtail the educational force of Greek law and delimit justice to violations of the harm principle (Susemihl and Hicks 1894: 332–333). However, it is Hippodamos' proposal that those who discover something beneficial to the polis should receive honor that raises the question of Aristotle's second excursus in *Politics* II.

Aristotle's excursus on political innovation takes the form of an inquiry organized around an *aporia*, namely whether it is beneficial or harmful to change a community's traditional laws for better laws (II.8, 1269b27–28).³³ Although Aristotle presents a number of arguments in favor of and against replacing traditional laws with better laws – both of which include qualifications about what “seems” to be the case (1268b33, 1269a14) – the central impediment to resolution concerns the similarity between the political art and other *epistêmai* and *technai*. On the one hand, one might argue that the arts of medicine and other crafts have progressed over time, and if statesmanship (*politikê* [1268b37]) is like those arts, then it too should progress from the simplistic and barbaric practices of tradition (II.8, 1268b34–38).³⁴ On the other hand, one might argue, the model (*paradeigma* [1269b19]) drawn from the arts is unlike that of the case of laws, since the law has no basis to secure obedience except through habits, and change weakens the power of law (II.8, 1269b19–24).³⁵

underscores the difference between innovations proposed by philosophers and non-philosophers (cf. Pangle [2013: 84]). Aristotle also critiques Hippodamean city planning in his own account of the best regime (see VII.11, 1330b22–30 and VII.10, 1330a9–13).

³² For Hippodamos' prowess as a city planner, see Burns (1976), Gill (2006), and Wycherley (1964).

³³ Aristotle claims that he will return to the question of whether to change traditional laws with better laws at a more opportune time. Brunschwig (1980) argues that the problem of *Politics* II.8 is an “une veritable *aporia*,” one incapable of resolution – and thus “il est des promesses qu'il est d'un philosophe de ne pas tenir” (530, 540). By contrast, Saunders and Simpson take Aristotle to have resolved the *aporia* with a qualified notion of progressivism (Saunders [1995: 147], Simpson [1998: 110–112]). For Aristotle's treatment of *aporetic* inquiry elsewhere in the corpus, see *Top.* I.2, *Metaph.* III.1, and *EN* VII.1.

³⁴ Nussbaum (1988: 37–39) presents a paradigmatic reading of what one might call the “progressive” Aristotle who would endorse this side of the *aporia*. Destrée (Chapter 11 in this volume) also leans toward this reading.

³⁵ Strauss (1964: 21–25) presents a paradigmatic reading of what one might call the “Burkean” Aristotle who would endorse this side of the *aporia* (which also appears to echo Kleon's speech in the Mytilenean debate [*Thuc.* III.37]). Pangle (2013: 8) correctly notes that Aristotle holds together both “Burkean” and “progressive” sides of the problem.

Aristotle's excursus lays out quite persuasively both sides of the question about innovating laws. If Aristotle's promissory note to resolve the issue theoretically remains unfulfilled, nonetheless his willingness to innovate politically resolves the question on a practical level: The statesman must propose change as and when needed. In addition to his proposal for a radical reform of Greek property arrangements, Aristotle also praises Solon's innovation of auditing legislators (II.12, 1274a14–17; III.11, 1281b30–35) and innovative responses to siege warfare (VII.11, 1331a1–18).³⁶ Aristotle also claims to be the first person to discover what is distinctive about political rule and the mixed regime of polity.³⁷ Nonetheless, in an important sense truly novel innovation is rare.³⁸ In his criticisms of Socrates' property proposals, Aristotle notes that

we should consider the immense period of time and the many years during which it would not have gone unnoticed if [Socrates' proposals] were any good. For practically speaking all things have been discovered, although some have not been collected, and others are known about but not used. (II.5, 1264a2–5)³⁹

The form of communal property Aristotle advocates – public messes – is an ancient institution (VII.10, 1329b5–33). However, the ancient origins of the property arrangement Aristotle proposes do not make it any less a radical change to his contemporary audience.

Aristotle's first two excurses on property and innovation clearly are based on, but stand apart from, the theoretical proposals of Socrates and Hippodamos; the first excursus results in a theoretical proposal about the organization of property and the second excursus results in the actual practice of proposing innovation. Aristotle's third excursus is analogous. Sparta and Crete present historically existent institutions that embody a perspective on the extent of the legislator's domain; Carthage's constitution is also a historically existent institution, but one that surpasses the constitutions of Sparta and Crete in almost every way, including the extent to which the legislator should leave political

³⁶ Aristotle's debate with Plato's *Laws* (778B–779D) about whether cities should use defensive walls is an excellent textual example of "progressive" Aristotle: He explicitly notes that it is "old fashioned" (*archaiôs* [VII.11, 1330b33]) for a polis to pride itself on having no walls and encourages the discovery of inventions for defensive arrangements (1331a16).

³⁷ Pol VI.2, 1317a40–b17; IV.7, 1293a40–41; cf. IV.11, 1296a36–38. I explore these claims at greater length in Lockwood (2006).

³⁸ I am grateful for Richard Kraut for suggesting this contrast to my interpretation.

³⁹ Commentators note that Aristotle's claim is grounded in his belief in the eternality of human existence and the cyclical development and restoration of human civilization. See, for instance, Mete. 352b16–17; GA 731b24–732a3, 742b17–743a1; de An. 415a25–b7.

matters to chance.⁴⁰ The problem of chance figures most prominently in Aristotle's treatment of female education in Sparta. Although Sparta is one of the sole city-states to adopt a regimen of public education for its citizens (the famous *agôgê*), according to Aristotle its focus upon martial virtue for male citizens neglects female education; such neglect made Spartan women licentious and resulted in the inculcation of a love of money (*philochrêmatia* [1270a14–15]), a habit that wives transmit to their families (both husbands and children).⁴¹ Elsewhere in the *Politics* Aristotle makes clear that since women make up half the polis, legislative neglect of their situation is ruinous.⁴² In the case of Sparta, such legislative neglect ultimately led to Sparta's decline.

Aristotle's analysis of the Cretan constitution also underscores the folly of leaving what is the domain of political theorizing to the vicissitudes of chance. He identifies the most prominent feature about Crete as its island location, something that makes it "beautifully situated to rule the Greek world" (II.10, 1271b32–33). And yet its chance location is apparently the sole source of Crete's reputed claim to being well governed. Crete, unlike Sparta, solved the problem of its subject population, but the solution was the result of its island location rather than any planning or design (II.9, 1269a38–40; II.10, 1272b17–19). Although Sparta incorporated the people (*dêmos*) into its constitution by making the office of the *ephoreia* or "overseers" open to all citizens,⁴³ in the case of Crete "the fact that the people remain quiescent even though they do not participate is no indication that it has been well organized. For unlike the overseers, the order keepers⁴⁴ have no profit, because they live on an island, far away at least from any who might corrupt them" (II.10, 1272a39–72b1). Location is also what saves Crete from external stasis during its dynastic successions, since its distance keeps foreigners away (II.10, 1272b16–17). Although Crete's public messes – its only redeeming legislative accomplishment – were the result of "much philosophizing" (*polla*

⁴⁰ Nichols (1992: 46–47) makes a similar observation, although she denies the contrast I articulate between Sparta and Crete, on the one hand, and Carthage, on the other hand; cf. Rubin (2012: 26–28).

⁴¹ II.9, 1269b12–24, 1269b39–1270a15. The historical accuracy of Aristotle's remarks about Spartan women is the source of much disagreement. Plutarch, writing in the first century AD, already contested the accuracy of Aristotle's remarks about the education of Spartan women (see *Life of Lycurgus*, 26.2–3). See Cartledge (1981) and Pomeroy (2002: 159–60).

⁴² Aristotle's remarks about Spartan women making up half the polis in II.9, 1269b18–19, appear to be an allusion to I.13, 1260b19; Aristotle's own remarks about women's education are scattered through VII.16 (including explicit guidelines for physical education for men and women, see 1335b10–11).

⁴³ Aristotle also notes that such inclusion of the parts of the polis is crucial to the health and stability of a constitution. See II.9, 1270b17–32; cf. IV.12, 1296b14–16; V.9, 1309b16–18; VI.5, 1320a14–17.

⁴⁴ *kosmoi* – or the Cretan equivalent to the *ephoreia*; see II.10, 1272a4–6.

pephilosophêken [II.10, 1272a22–23]), Crete is an example of what happens when chance takes the place of political theorizing.⁴⁵

Aristotle contrasts the neglectful theorizing of the Spartan and Cretan legislators with the constitution of Carthage, which epitomizes forethought and stability. Aristotle repeatedly claims that Carthaginian institutions eclipse their parallels in Sparta and Crete. Politics II.9 initiates a comparison concerning the status of subject or working populations in each polis; although Sparta and Crete exhibit problems with their populations, the treatment of the Carthaginian subject population is a source of friendly feeling in the city.⁴⁶ Sparta, Crete, and Carthage all share analogous political offices, namely an executive oversight board (the overseers, order keepers, or the 104), a senate, and kings; Aristotle judges Carthage as having the best organization of each office in all three cases.⁴⁷ In several places Aristotle criticizes the “underlying principle” or hypothesis of Sparta and Crete because they are focused on military virtue and its object of domination; Aristotle makes no such claim about Carthage.⁴⁸

Unlike Sparta and Crete (at least in Politics II), Aristotle identifies Carthage as an aristocracy – albeit one with both oligarchic and democratic deviations. Unique to Carthage is the democratic practice of giving the people authority over matters about which the kings and senators are incapable of agreeing to and the power to speak against their proposals (II.11, 1273a8–11). Carthage elects its officers on the basis of merit and wealth, rather than on the basis of lot or seniority, since office requires leisure to rule well (II.11, 1273a23–30). Aristotle explicitly criticizes Carthage’s legislator for legislating such a deviation from aristocracy (1273a31–32); but the error springs from an appreciation that ruling requires leisure (a belief that oligarchs and the people actually agree

⁴⁵ Although I omit discussion of Aristotle’s treatment of the Solonic constitution, it illustrates Aristotle’s point in reverse. Although Aristotle claims that Athens became the worst sort of democracy following its success after the Persian wars, he attributes that decline to an “accident” (apo sumptômatos [II.12, 1274a11–12]) rather than Solon’s deliberate choice. Aristotle attributes the demagoguery that plagued Periclean democracy on the elevation of the dêmos following its naval supremacy (1274a12–13; cf. V.4, 1304a17–24). Aristotle’s reflection on Athens’ naval empire informs his own treatment of the question of naval power in his best regime; see VII.6, 1327a40 ff.

⁴⁶ See II.9, 1269a36–b12, and II.11, 1273b18–20; cf. VI.5, 1320b4–7.

⁴⁷ Aristotle judges the Spartan overseers as superior to the Cretan order keepers, and the Carthaginian 104 as superior to the overseers (II.10.1272a27–35; II.11.1272b34–36); he makes extended criticisms of the Spartan and Cretan senates, but his criticisms of Carthage’s senate are minor and ultimately he praises it as aristocratic (II.9, 1270b36–71a8; II.10, 1272a35–39; II.11, 1273a13–18); and he judges the Carthaginian office of king better than that of the Spartan office (II.11, 1272b37–1273a1).

⁴⁸ See II.9, 1271a41–b9; VII.2, 1324b3–15; VII.14, 1333b6–33. Aristotle does note that Carthage uses armlets to recognize the number of military campaigns its soldiers participate in (VII.2, 1324b13–15); see further Newman (1887–1902: 2.403).

upon [1273a24–25]). The legislator's error consisting in thinking that leisure should be distributed in society by chance in the same fashion that wealth is distributed in society.⁴⁹ Such an error appears far less serious than those found in Sparta and Crete, and indeed it is an error that Aristotle's own constitution will rectify by proposing a property arrangement that provides all citizens with leisure by design rather than by chance (a proposal far more audacious than those found in an existing constitution).

Whereas the constitutions of Sparta and Crete illustrate the problem of letting chance, rather than deliberation, organize a polis, the examination of Carthage is an excursus on how an existing constitution approximates the proper balance between deliberate innovation and the domain, in Aristotle's terms, of prayer or hope (VII.13, 1332a28–33). Aristotle's willingness to praise, with minor qualifications, a non-Greek constitution as superior to the best theoretical and existing Greek constitutions embodies a theoretical attitude that transcends (and problematizes) the distinction between Greeks and "barbarians." Aristotle's willingness to look beyond Greek institutions for models of the best constitution shows his appreciation for the institutional changes of the fourth-century Mediterranean world.⁵⁰

The place of Politics II within the Politics

Aristotle's examination of constitutions is connected to the Politics by numerous cross-references and allusions. In addition to apparent allusions to the text in the transitional sentences in Nicomachean Ethics X.9 and Politics I.13,⁵¹ implicit and explicit references within Politics II clearly connect it to the remainder of the Politics, including Politics I.⁵²

⁴⁹ Aristotle also notes that Carthage used colonization as a safety valve to alleviate faction, an effect that stabilized its constitution. However, he claims that such a "cure" was the result of luck rather than thanks to the legislator (II.11, 1273b18–23; cf. VI.5, 1320b4–7).

⁵⁰ Although Dietz (2012) does not consider the case of Aristotle's endorsement of Carthage, it supports her claim that the Politics actually undermines what she calls "hegemonic Greek binary oppositions" (275). Frank (this volume) makes a similar point in her account of Aristotle's use of "middle-voice" persuasion to discuss Greek/barbarian oppositions.

⁵¹ EN X.9 claims that the subject of legislation has been neglected (1181b12–17), but Politics II identifies numerous individuals who have proposed legislation or laws, and indeed Aristotle faults Plato for speaking too much about legislation (II.6, 1264b28–65a2). The transitional sentence between Politics I.13 and Politics II omits reference to inquiry concerning existing constitutions (1260b23–24). See further Newman (1887–1902: 2.225–26), Schütrumpf (1991–2005: 2.92–93), Saunders (1995: 104), and Simpson (1998: 72, n. 1).

⁵² Claims in Politics II that implicitly draw upon Politics I include that the polis is a self-sufficient community (II.2, 1261b10–15; cf. I.2, 1252b27–1253a1), that the love each person feels for himself or

However, the largest number of implicit cross-references within Politics II connect it to Politics VII/VIII; indeed, almost every chapter of Politics VII/VIII (excluding those on music) discuss topics already raised in Politics II. That there is a link between Politics II and Politics VII/VIII is unsurprising since both texts are concerned with the nature of the best regime; but elucidating that link is more difficult. Generally, Politics II presents shorter, incomplete criticisms of topics, which Politics VII/VIII then treats at greater length and specification.⁵³ The exceptions to this generalization underscore the problematic nature of political theorizing.

Consider the case of population size in the best regime, a topic taken up in both Politics II.6 (in the discussion of the Laws) and in VII.4. Comments in the former text are brief and the question of optimum population size is unresolved. Thus, in his critique of the size of the population in Plato's Laws (i.e., a city with 5,000 weapon owners [II.6, 1265a9–10]), Aristotle writes

Consider, for example, the multitude just mentioned. We must not forget that it would need a territory the size of Babylon or some other unlimitedly large territory to keep five thousand people in idleness, and a crowd of women and servants along with them, many times as great. We should assume conditions that can be prayed for, to be sure, but nothing that is impossible. (II.6, 1265a13–18)

By contrast, Aristotle's discussion of ideal population size in Politics VII.4 is philosophically richer and arrives at an answer. The discussion in Politics VII.4 begins by noting that he has previously discussed various constitutions (VII.4, 1325b34),⁵⁴ and then echoes the claim in II.6 that although preexisting conditions can be "ideal" (euchomenous), they cannot be impossible (1325b39). Politics VII.4 then argues that the sign of a "megalopolis" is not

herself is not without purpose but natural (II.5, 1263b1; cf. I.1, 1253a10; I.3, 1256b20), or that there is no natural limit to desire (II.7, 1267b1; cf. I.8, 1256b32; I.9, 1257b40). Explicit cross-references include: the discussion of population size and poverty (II.6, 1265b16–17 refers to VII.16, 1335b19–26); the analysis of the mixed regime in Plato's Laws (II.6, 1266a13–25 refers to IV.7–9); and the discussion of the Spartan kingship (II.9, 1271a18–25 refers to III.14). The discussion of political innovation in II.9 (1269a28) and that of male homosexuality in II.10 (II.10, 1272a24–25; but cf. VII.16, 1335b37–42) are both unfulfilled promissory notes.

⁵³ Garver's claim (2011: 62) that all the thinkers of Politics II are guilty of thinking of politics as the application of technê rather than an exercise in praxis seems incapable of making sense of the continuities between Politics II and Politics VII/VIII.

⁵⁴ Kraut (1997: 150) suggests that Aristotle's reference may be to the constitutions collected by Aristotle's school (of which the Athenian Constitution is the sole survivor); but given the immediate implicit reference to Politics II.6, it seems more likely that Aristotle is adverting back to the study of the best constitutions in Politics II. As Peter Simpson has pointed out to me, determining the location of Aristotle's reference here may have significant ramifications for the ordering of the books in the Politics.

its overall population size but rather the size of those who are truly a part of the city, that a criterion for proper population size is beauty, and that ultimately ideal population size is determined by the fact that in a good participatory government, the population cannot be so large that people are unfamiliar with those whom they are electing or judging in lawsuits.⁵⁵ Although Aristotle's remarks about population size in Plato's *Laws* problematize the issue and stipulate an important principle (e.g., that impossibility is a constraint on theorizing), the topic is decisively resolved only in *Politics* VII.4.

Aristotle's treatment of property in *Politics* II and *Politics* VII/VIII provides a very different pattern. Aristotle's complete discussion of the public versus private distribution of property in *Politics* VII.10 consists in a few lines, which state

We do not agree with those who claim that property should be communally owned, but it should be commonly used, as it is among friends and no citizens should be in need of sustenance. As for messes, everyone agrees that it is useful for well-organized states to have them. (VII.10, 1329b41–1330a4)⁵⁶

As we have seen earlier, *Politics* II.5 provides an extensive and self-contained excursus on the distribution of property that lays out the various options for the distribution of property, considers contemporary examples of communal use of property, and presents extended arguments – based in a discussion of self-love – for the superiority of private ownership and communal use. The pattern found in the discussion of population size is reversed: It is the discussion in *Politics* II that is far more expansive and philosophically rich, whereas the discussion in *Politics* VII/VIII is terse and unphilosophical.

We thus have two different models for the division of labor between *Politics* II and *Politics* VII/VIII: I call the first model (i.e., that found in the analysis of population size) “aporetic” because although *Politics* II raises a problem about how to organize the best regime, the solution of the problem is found in *Politics* VII/VIII. I call the second model (i.e., that found in the analysis of the distribution of property) euporetic because *Politics* II not only raises a problem, but it largely resolves it independently of *Politics* VII/VIII. The aporetic model certainly predominates: Topics such as whether a polis should aim at domination, the proper use of leisure, the ideal extent and location of territory, the political status of agricultural

⁵⁵ See II.6, 1326a20–25, 1326a33–35, 1326b14–20.

⁵⁶ Aristotle goes on to note that the reasons for agreeing with the desirability of messes will be stated later (1330a4–5), although that promise is unfulfilled in the *Politics* as we have it.

or artisan populations, the relationship between chance and political science, and the place of education in the best constitution are all raised aporetically in *Politics* II and resolved in *Politics* VII/VIII. There are a couple of euporetic exceptions. For instance, the relationship between population size and the problem of poverty is raised and solved in *Politics* II: Aristotle raises the question in his critique of the Laws, discusses historical solutions to the problem, and stipulates that the issue of economic equality is less a problem of property distribution and more an issue of population and the number of children per estate (something he subsequently also points out in his critiques of Phaleas and Sparta).⁵⁷ Although the discussion in II.6. includes an explicit cross-reference (1265b17) to Aristotle's treatment of the problem in *Politics* VII.16, the discussion of population control in VII.16 is largely stipulative and takes for granted the philosophical solution offered in *Politics* II.6. If I am correct to say that Aristotle's excursions on political innovation both propose and resolve a question practically (i.e., Aristotle proposes a political innovation while appreciating its problematic nature), then *Politics* II.8 is also euporetic: It raises the problem of innovation, explores both sides of the issue, and then proposes a major innovation, namely communal use of private property.⁵⁸

Even if there are important exceptions to the aporetic model in *Politics* II, nonetheless the aporetic model predominates and thus allows us to elucidate the connection between *Politics* II and *Politics* VII/VIII. Within the *Politics* as a whole, *Politics* II for the most part performs an aporetic function, namely a survey of reputable constitutions – either those only proposed in theory or those actually enacted by legislators – which is analogous to the survey of endoxa or “reputable opinions” elsewhere in Aristotle's writings. It is not the function of *Politics* II (for the most part) to resolve the problems it raises, but it does problematize what will be the central issues for Aristotle's analysis in *Politics* VII/VIII. The case of education and the use of leisure illustrate the point. In *Politics* II, Aristotle notices in several places that education (*paideia*) is a central tool for the legislator: It is what the legislator should use to dispose people properly to the communal use of property, to form their desires to avoid acquisitiveness, and to prepare persons for the proper use of leisure.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ See II.6, 1265a39–17; II.7, 1266b7–14; II.9, 1270a34–70b7.

⁵⁸ Pace Brunschwig (1980), which claims that Aristotle cannot resolve the problem. Admittedly, I propose that Aristotle resolves the problem on a practical level (i.e., he proposes an innovation), not a theoretical one.

⁵⁹ See, for instance, II.5, 1263a35–40; II.7, 1267b4–8; II.9, 1271b3–6. On this point, Garver (2011: 52) and I are in agreement.

Further, Aristotle faults Socrates, Phaleas, Lycurgus, and the constitution of Carthage in a number of places for their failure to make use of education within their constitutions.⁶⁰ Although the reader of *Politics* II will sense that education and the use of leisure are topics Aristotle's predecessors have dealt with problematically, it is only when one arrives at *Politics* VII/VIII (more specifically, *Politics* VII.13–VIII.7) that the reader sees that proper education – both in preparing a citizen for the regime in which he lives and in preparing that citizen to use leisure properly – is the solution to some of the apparently insoluble or aporetic problems of *Politics* II.⁶¹

Conclusion

Although *Politics* II assembles the reputable opinions and institutional examples relevant to an inquiry about the best regime, it is much more than a survey of opinions. First and foremost, the fact that most of the proposals Aristotle incorporates into his account of the best regime have their institutional antecedents – either in theory or practice – is itself a reason (albeit necessary rather than sufficient) for their adoption or incorporation into the best regime. As Aristotle notes at one point, the political scientist “should make adequate use of what has been discovered, but also try to investigate what has been overlooked” (1329b33–35). *Politics* II is precisely the first part of that exercise, and the numerous connections between *Politics* II and *Politics* VII/VIII illustrate the importance Aristotle places on that exercise.

Second, my analyses suggest that *Politics* II is a self-conscious reflection on the very activity of political critique and innovation. In different ways, each of the excursuses I have analyzed, theorizes, as it were, political theorizing. The first excursus in *Politics* II.5 presents a philosophical argument for a reform that, although arising out of a critique of the community of women, children, and property in Plato's *Republic*, is independent of that critique. The second excursus in *Politics* II.8 presents a philosophical analysis of the positive and negative political consequences of political innovation that, although arising out of a critique of a law proposed by

⁶⁰ See II.5, 1263b36–37; II.5, 1264a30; II.7, 1266b33; II.9, 1269b19 ff.; II.11, 1273a31–1273b8.

⁶¹ See VIII.1, 1337a10–20 and VIII.3, 1337b29 ff. I thus endorse Kraut's suggestion that it is generally helpful to read *Politics* II with the hindsight provided by *Politics* VII/VIII (for his use of the principle, see Kraut [2002: 322, 325, 327–29, 335]). Although it goes beyond the extent of my argument, the tight connection between *Politics* II and *Politics* VII/VIII suggest that Aristotle may be using the literary device of “ring construction.” For further discussion of the phenomenon, see Lockwood (2014).

Hippodamos, is independent of that critique. The third excursus of *Politics* II.11 presents an analogous case study: Whereas the analyses of the Spartan and Cretan constitutions show the problems obtained when political science abdicates its responsibility to chance, the Carthaginian constitution is an example of an almost perfect mix of deliberate choice and natural circumstances. Although the analysis of Carthage's constitution emerges in juxtaposition to those of Sparta and Crete, its non-Greek status simply underscores – to Aristotle's Greek audience – the almost limitless domain of radical political theorizing.

However, although Aristotle can note that “practically speaking all things have been discovered” (II.5, 1264a3–5) or indeed that “pretty well everything has been discovered many times, or rather an infinite number of times, in the long course of history” (VII.10, 1329b25–26), political innovation – and more generally, political theorizing – is hardly limited to recycling previous discoveries. Aristotelian political theorizing sees in previously existing and proposed constitutions elements that have been misunderstood, misapplied, or underappreciated. As Aristotle makes clear – perhaps with intended rhetorical force – his most radical innovation, the arrangement for the communal use of property in public messes, is also one of the oldest political institutions in human memory (VII.10, 1329b5–23). How and when the political theorist needs to bottle afresh such old wine is the theoretical lesson that rises above the political critique of Aristotle's predecessors in *Politics* II – and remains equally relevant to the neoAristotelian political theorist today.⁶²

⁶² I am grateful for comments on my chapter from fellow contributors to this volume who offered both oral comments (at our conference in Boulder) and written remarks, including those by Thanassis Samaras, Pierre Destrée, Eckart Schütrumpf, Arlene Saxonhouse, John Mulhern, and Marguerite Deslauriers. I am also grateful to Richard Kraut, Peter Simpson, and Gene Garver for reading my chapter and providing stimulating comments.