

# Carthage: Aristotle's Best (non-Greek) Constitution?

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At first glance, Aristotle's political writings do not appear to be a fruitful source for the reception or circulation of knowledge from non-Greek, that is "barbarian" peoples.<sup>1</sup> Plutarch infamously reports that Aristotle counseled his student Alexander to rule Greeks in the fashion of a ruler (ἡγεμονικῶς), but non-Greeks in the fashion of a master (δεσποτικῶς).<sup>2</sup> Aristotle clearly recommends the use of a "non-Greek underclass" (βαρβάρους περιοίκους) to provide a force of disenfranchised agricultural labor in his best constitution<sup>3</sup> and identifies a species of monarchy as "barbarian" precisely because its autocracy is uncontested by its non-Greek subjects. Most infamously, Aristotle recommends that his best constitution draw upon only Greeks rather than non-Greeks for its first generation of settlers.<sup>4</sup> Such comments suggest that Aristotle both embraces a radical division between Greeks and non-Greeks and posits a non-Greek inferiority that implies that non-Greek peoples and political institutions have nothing to teach Greeks.<sup>5</sup> It is thus rather astounding that in his analysis of the best constitutions in the *Politics* (*Pol.*) Book II, Aristotle not only includes an analysis of the constitution of Carthage, but he appears to rank Carthage's constitution as superior to those of Sparta and Crete, Greek political institutions perennially thought of as superlatively good.<sup>6</sup> That Aristotle thinks that the presumably Greek audience of his *Pol.* can learn from northern African political institutions suggests a note of caution with respect to the question of what he thinks Greeks can learn from non-Greeks.

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<sup>1</sup> The Greek term βάρβαρος (and the cognate term βαρβαρικός) is contested both in Aristotle's time and in our own. See, for instance, Hall (1989); Rosivach (1999); Isaac (2004); and Gruen (2010). Throughout the paper I translate βάρβαρος as "non-Greek", although as audiences who have heard my paper acknowledge, this decision is an imperfect solution since we do not know if Aristotle ultimately thought of Carthage as a "barbarian" society (although rather clearly it was non-Greek with respect to linguistic and cultural practices). For the list of references in this chapter, see *infra* p. 000.

<sup>2</sup> Plut., *Alex.* 1, 6. Saunders (1995) 161 suggests that if in fact Aristotle offered such advice, it was far before Aristotle sat down to compose his treatise on Carthage.

<sup>3</sup> Arist., *Pol.* VII 10, 1330a25–33 (unless mentioned otherwise, all references are to Aristotle's works). Translations are my own, based on Ross (1957), but informed by Reeve (1998).

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* VII 7, 1327b29–30.

<sup>5</sup> My paper is limited to Aristotle's analyses of non-Greek social or political institutions. But Aristotle also recognizes non-Greek intellectual achievements, such as the Egyptian invention of mathematics (*Met.* I 1, 981b13–25) and Babylonian achievements in astronomy (*Cael.* II 12, 292a7–9; cf. *id.* I 3, 270b6–10). In several places Aristotle recommends "periegetic literature", namely that of travelers who can attest to non-Greek customs (e.g., *Rh.* I 4, 1360a30–8, *Pol.* II 3, 1262a18–21). The *Vita Menagiana* reports that Aristotle authored a single volume on νόμιμα βαρβαρικά (fr. 18 Rose = 26 Gigon). See further Segev in this edited volume, p. 000 *supra*.

<sup>6</sup> Although many scholars have recognized the novelty of Aristotle's praise for the Carthaginian constitution, none have explored it adequately. See further Newman (1887) 401–408; Strauss (1964) 30; Barceló (1994); Saunders (1995) 161–166; Isaac (2004) 237; Nagle (2006) 115; Gruen (2010) 119–120; Pangle (2013) 93–97; and Feeney (2017).

The status of non-Greek peoples and institutions raises the larger issue of the relationship between Aristotle's political science and his notion of φύσις and the environment. Aristotle appears to attribute certain natural characteristics to Greek and non-Greek peoples based at least in part on environmental causes. Indeed, in the *Physics* Aristotle reports that "in general, in some cases art completes what nature cannot carry out to an end; in others, art imitates nature".<sup>7</sup> Thus Mariska Leunissen, for instance, argues that Aristotle's political science should be conceived of as completing or perfecting nature.<sup>8</sup> But Aristotle's political science is significantly more interested in the legislative and institutional choices available to the lawgiver, choices that he treats as largely independent of nature. Indeed, although Aristotle claims that people become good by nature, reason, and habit, he also claims that "people often act contrary to their habits and their nature because of reason".<sup>9</sup> The praise Aristotle bestows on the Carthaginian constitution, perhaps especially in juxtaposition with the criticisms he makes of the constitutions of Crete and Sparta, appears to underscore the limited role that environmental characteristics play in Aristotle's political science.

My paper first examines Aristotle's characterizations of non-Greeks and their social and political institutions in general in order to deny the claims that Aristotle categorically distinguishes Greeks and non-Greeks and systematically disparages the latter. Such a denial finds support in a careful examination of Aristotle's remarks on natural slavery, non-Greek self-government, and non-Greek natural characteristics. After having shown that Aristotle is not categorically critical of non-Greeks, in the second part of my paper I consider at length his analysis of the constitution of the non-Greek city of Carthage. Aristotle thinks both that Carthage's political and social institutions transmit valuable lessons to a Greek audience and that its constitution is ultimately superior to the Greek constitutions of Sparta and Crete. Aristotle's analysis of the Carthaginian constitution also illustrates more generally the broad range of sources he uses in his political science. Thus, in the conclusion of my paper I argue that although Aristotle incorporates into his political science elements derived from his understanding of the natural characteristics of Greeks and non-Greeks, his political science is methodologically committed to a trans-cultural storehouse of human (rather than Greek or non-Greek) political wisdom. Aristotle believes the political scientist must draw upon the institutional insights of all cultures and peoples throughout history and across the arbitrary and porous divide between Greeks and non-Greeks.

## The opposition of Greek and non-Greek in Aristotle's *Politics*

Jonathan Wolff, in his recent *Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, states the commonly accepted view of Aristotle's account of the βάρβαρος or the non-Greek other. He writes that Aristotle defends the assertion that there are "slaves by nature"

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<sup>7</sup> *Phys.* II 13, 199a15–16; cf. id. II 2, 194a21–23.

<sup>8</sup> Leunissen (2017) xxiv, 116.

<sup>9</sup> *Pol.* VII 13, 1332a39–40 and b6–7.

by claiming that non-Greeks have lower powers of deliberative rationality than Greeks, and they are more likely to be ruled by their bodily appetites. Non-Greeks are therefore not suited to the same level of freedom and should become slaves of Greeks.<sup>10</sup>

Wolff, of course, is not offering scholarship on ancient philosophy but rather a critical account of virtue ethics. And yet classical scholar Denise Eileen McCoskey, among many others, also asserts that Aristotle “proposed that barbarians, as opposed to Greeks, were inherently servile”.<sup>11</sup> Such comments suggest a consensus that Aristotle both embraces a categorical division (perhaps even a racial one) between Greeks and non-Greeks and thinks that the former are inherently superior to the latter. Although such a consensus is loosely based on Aristotle’s assertions that non-Greeks are slaves, tolerate despotic rule, and lack intelligence and/or spiritedness as natural traits, I argue that these passages are regularly misinterpreted and do not exhaust what Aristotle has to say about non-Greek political institutions.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, some of the most important political institutions in Aristotle’s best constitution, such as communal meals and the identification of a military class, derive from non-Greek political communities.<sup>13</sup> Aristotle’s comments about non-Greek peoples and institutions show that he neither posits a categorical opposition between Greeks and non-Greeks nor categorically views Greeks as superior to non-Greeks.

The claim that Aristotle posits a categorical opposition between Greeks and non-Greeks that disparages the latter finds, firstly, in his remarks about slavery. So, for instance, in his account of the constituent communities (κοινωνία) of the polis in *Pol.* I 2, Aristotle distinguishes spousal rule from despotic rule as part of an extended argument against those who claim that ruling is not qualitatively differentiated.<sup>14</sup> Just as the female and the male cannot exist without each other and come together for the sake of procreation, he claims that

a natural ruler (ἄρχον δὲ φύσει) and what is naturally ruled do so for the sake of survival. For if something is capable of rational foresight (τὸ μὲν γὰρ δυνάμενον τῇ διανοίᾳ προορᾶν), it is a

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<sup>10</sup> Wolff (2018) 228.

<sup>11</sup> McCoskey (2012) 24, provides no textual support in support of her claim. By contrast, Jensen (2018) 69, claims that Aristotle “defined all barbarians as natural slaves fit to be ruled over by Greeks”; he supports his claim with a footnote that states (without exegesis) “Aristotle, *Politics* 1.1252b, 1.1254a, 7.1327b”. More substantive treatments of Aristotle’s account of non-Greeks include Rosivach (1999) 142–148; Isaac (2004) 70–73, 175–181; Frank (2005) 26–32; Ward (2007); Heath (2008); Dietz (2012) 283–285; Cherry (2014); Teisserenc (2014) 121–128; and Leunissen (2017) 5–9, 42–54. Cherry (2014) 632–633, n. 2–3 and 5 catalogs the views of the previous generation of Aristotle scholars on this question.

<sup>12</sup> *Pol.* I 2, 1152b6–7; III 15, 1285a21–23; VII 7, 1327b23–30; VII 10, 1330a25–33. I follow Frank (2005) 30–32, and Leunissen (2017) 48–54, in isolating the accounts of natural slavery, autocratic government, and natural characteristics as the most prominent sources for the claim that Aristotle categorically distinguishes Greeks and non-Greeks. Ward (2007) 20–28 overlaps a great deal with my analysis, although she neglects discussion of “non-Greek kingship”. Aristotle also claims that there is a higher incidence of bestiality amongst non-Greeks (*EN* VII 1, 1145a30); that some non-Greeks function without reason, i.e., only using sensation (id. VII 5, 1149a11); and that non-Greeks practice προσκονήσεις (*Rh.* I 5, 1361a36).

<sup>13</sup> Aristotle also recognizes non-Greek intellectual achievements, such as the Egyptian invention of mathematics (*Meta* 1.1.981b13–25) and Babylonian achievements in astronomy (*Cael.* II 12, 292a7–9; cf. I 3, 270b6–10). In several places Aristotle recommends “periegetic literature”, namely that of travelers who can attest to non-Greek customs (e.g., *Rh.* I 4, 1360a30–8; *Pol.* II 3, 1262a18–21). The *Vita Menagiana* reports that Aristotle authored a single volume on νόμια βαρβαρικά (Rose 18/Gigon 26). See further Segev, *supra* p. 000.

<sup>14</sup> Schofield (1999) 101–124 and Deslauriers (2006) decisively show that *Pol.* I 1–7 is devoted to refuting the Socratic claim (found in Plat., *Pol.* 258e–261a and Xen., *Mem.* III 4, 12; III 6, 14) that rule is not qualitatively differentiated, *viz.* that ruling a polis is qualitatively the same as ruling a slave (*Pol.* I 1, 1252a7–18; I 3, 1253b18–19; I 7, 1255b16–20).

natural ruler (ἄρχον φύσει) and master, whereas whatever can use its body to labor is ruled and is a natural slave (φύσει δοῦλον). That is why the same thing is beneficial for both master and slave. There is a natural distinction, of course, between what is female and what is servile [...]. Among non-Greeks, however, the female and the servile occupy the same status. The reason is that they do not have anything that naturally rules (τὸ φύσει ἄρχον); rather their community consists of a male slave and a female slave. This is why (διό) our poets say “it is proper for Greeks to rule non-Greeks”, implying that non-Greek and slave are in nature the same.<sup>15</sup>

*Pol.* I 2 looks like the “smoking gun” that proves that Aristotle thinks non-Greeks categorically are inferior to Greeks because the former are categorically natural slaves. The claim that non-Greeks (both males and females) lack something that “naturally rules” appears to entail that they are incapable of “rational foresight” (τῆ διανοίᾳ προορᾶν)<sup>16</sup> and thus are natural slaves.

I would like to argue that it is wrong to ground a categorical distinction between Greeks and non-Greeks based on *Pol.* I 2. First, the text theorizes different forms of rule rather than supplies an argument about natural slavery and it is not immediately clear that the account of despotic rule in *Pol.* I 2 maps on to the account of natural slavery that Aristotle provides in *Pol.* I 4–6.<sup>17</sup> For instance, whereas *Pol.* I 2 characterizes natural slaves in terms of a cognitive deficiency (the incapacity of foresight), the definition of natural slavery characterizes such a being in terms of parts and wholes.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the definition of a natural slave (*Pol.* I 4) and Aristotle’s examples of ruling and being ruled, such as soul/body, human/animals, and male/female,<sup>19</sup> make no reference to non-Greeks.<sup>20</sup> Secondly, *Pol.* I 2 provides an origins story and “non-Greek” in the passage may describe a form of primitivism rather than an ethnicity or racial grouping, which is how Aristotle regularly uses the adjective βαρβαρικός, including when he describes Greeks as being “barbaric”.<sup>21</sup> For instance, in his criticisms of Hippodamus’ constitution, Aristotle claims “The laws or customs of the distant past were exceedingly simple and barbaric (ἀπλοῦς...καὶ βαρβαρικούς). Indeed, the Greeks (οἱ Ἕλληνες) used to carry

<sup>15</sup> *Pol.* I 2, 1252a30-b1 and b5–9. Aristotle’s claim about non-Greek households echoes Plat., *Leg.* VIII, 850d-e.

<sup>16</sup> *Pol.* I 2, 1252a31–32.

<sup>17</sup> Kamtekar (2016) 158 notes that the dialectical context of Aristotle’s account of natural slavery is two-fold, namely it engages both the question of the unity of rule and the question of whether slavery is conventional or natural (id., p. 158). Arguably, *Pol.* I 2 speaks to the first question and *Politics* I 4–6 speaks to the second one.

<sup>18</sup> *Pol.* I 4, 1254a9–11 and 13–17. Nonetheless, *Pol.* I 5 does characterize the natural slave in terms of “sharing in reason to the extent of perceiving it it” but not having it (I 5, 1254b22–23; cf. I 13, 1260a12–14). Heath (2008) 253 persuasively argues that the natural slave’s incapacity consists in an impairment of practical deliberation about global matters which detaches “an individual’s conception of intrinsic value from executive control of his behavior”. Although Heath and Leunissen concede that Aristotle fails to identify all non-Greeks as slaves, nonetheless Heath implies that non-Greeks who are not natural slaves would be an exception to a general rule (id., p. 245 n. 6). Leunissen (2017) 53–54 claims that the only hope for a young non-Greek male is to change his address and undergo a lot of extra effort (assuming he is still young enough). By contrast, Rosivach (1999) 142–145 argues that Aristotle represents, in philosophical form, the “binary Greek way of thinking” which claims that non-Greeks without exception are natural slaves and Isaac (2004) pp. 46, 74 and 178 claims that Aristotle espouses “proto-racist” views which characterize all non-Greeks as natural slaves.

<sup>19</sup> *Pol.* I 5, 1254b2–25.

<sup>20</sup> Karbowski (2013), is the most recent, most detailed analysis of the argument for natural slavery in *Pol.* I 4–6. It is striking that it makes almost no mention of non-Greeks (except for the passage *Pol.* I 6, 1255a28–30, which I discuss next) and yet understandably so, since the concept of “non-Greek” does almost no work within the argument as a whole.

<sup>21</sup> See, for instance, Aristotle’s discussion of barter, which he reports many non-Greeks still use (*Pol.* I 9, 1257a22–27); cf. Ward (2007) 19–20.

weapons and buy their brides from one another”.<sup>22</sup> If Greeks can practice “non-Greek” laws or customs, then the distinction between Greek and non-Greek seems more a matter of degree than categorical. As this chapter will show at length, Aristotle recognizes a broad range of levels of sophistication among non-Greek societies and it seems difficult to support the claim that he aims to characterize all of them within his theoretical analysis of community and rule in *Pol.* I 2. Finally, although Aristotle repeats Euripides’ line that “it is proper for Greeks to rule non-Greeks”, he fails to endorse the claim.<sup>23</sup> Aside from the Euripides’ citation, the *Politics* never characterizes non-Greeks as deserving to be ruled by Greeks, although it regularly discusses hunting slaves in just war.<sup>24</sup> No doubt, Aristotle’s doctrines of natural slavery and just war are repellent and wrong, but there is no textual basis to suggest that they were grounded in the distinction between Greeks and non-Greeks.

Aristotle’s second discussion of slavery and non-Greeks falls within his examination of natural slavery. But commentators who take the discussion to indicate that Aristotle thinks that non-Greeks are natural slaves fail to notice that Aristotle’s dialectical argument includes positions which he himself clearly rejects. To wit, he describes “conventional slavery”, whose proponents claim that

Enslavement in war is just. But at the same time they imply that it is not just. For it is possible for wars to be started unjustly, and no one would say that someone is a slave if he did not deserve to be one; otherwise, those regarded as the best born would be slave or the children of slaves, if any of them were taken captive and sold. That is why indeed they are not willing to describe the best-born, but only non-Greeks, as slaves.<sup>25</sup>

Proponents of conventional slavery think that enslavement by warfare is just, but deny that it is just to enslave well-born Greeks (such as themselves) by warfare; rather, Aristotle thinks that what they really mean is that the enslavement of non-Greeks by warfare is just.<sup>26</sup> But Aristotle clearly rejects conventional slavery, bases his own account upon the natural characteristics of individuals, and – outside *Pol.* I 2 – never connects cognitive deficiency with the category of non-Greeks.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, it is likely that Aristotle’s theory of natural slavery would justify the enslavement of some (perhaps many) individual Greeks and the emancipation of many non-Greeks unjustly enslaved through warfare.<sup>28</sup> Although it is true that Aristotle recommends a non-

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<sup>22</sup> *Pol.* II 8, 1268b39–41.

<sup>23</sup> Ambler (1987); Frank (2005) 30–31; Dietz (2012) 284–285, and most recently (and exhaustively), Cherry (2014) argue that careful examination of Aristotle’s quote calls into question whether he (or Euripides) agreed with the words put into Iphigenia’s mouth (see *IA* 1400–1401). By contrast, Teisserenc (2014) 121: “Aristote s’est servi du fait barbare pour fournir occasionnellement les exemples consensuels (pour l’époque) d’une réflexion sur l’esclavage”. Monteils-Laeng suggested to me, I think correctly, that such a position warrants Aristotle’s use of Euripides’ language without endorsing it.

<sup>24</sup> *Pol.* I 7, 1255b36–38; I 8, 1256b23–26; VII 2, 1324b37–39; VII 14, 1333b38–1334a1.

<sup>25</sup> *Pol.* I 6, 1255a28–30.

<sup>26</sup> Millett (2007) 194 notes that based on the evidence of social history, Athenian slaves were overwhelmingly non-Greek. If so, Aristotle’s rejection of conventional slavery is a direct attack on the social practices of his adopted polis. As noted by Dietz (2012) 277–279, it is not even clear that Aristotle himself (who was raised in Macedonian Stagira) identifies unambiguously as Greek.

<sup>27</sup> See *infra* n. 18, p. 000.

<sup>28</sup> Ambler (2007); Simpson (1998) 42; and Dietz (2012) 284, offer variants of the claim that Aristotle is undermining rather than endorsing the position of “conventional slavery”, *i.e.*, slavery justified by defeat in inter-poleis warfare (*Pol.* I 6, 1255a4–6, 23–32). Rosivach (1999) 144–145 argues that by conventional slavery Aristotle means instead the fourth-century Macedonian practice of enslaving Greeks (e.g., as in the case of the destruction of

Greek underclass for the agricultural labor force in his best constitution, that is actually his “second choice”; he first recommends that the labor force be filled by non-spirited and heterogeneous Greeks.<sup>29</sup> Greeks can be as servile as non-Greeks. Thus, although Aristotle disparages (some) non-Greeks in his account of slavery, he fails to establish a categorical opposition between Greeks and non-Greeks.

A second place where Aristotle appears to endorse a disparaging Greek/non-Greek categorical opposition are his remarks on a form of constitutional monarchy that he likens to the “kingships of the non-Greeks” (βασιλεῖαι τῶν βαρβάρων). He describes it as follows:

There is another kind of monarchy besides [the Spartan one], which is like kingships that exists among some non-Greeks (παρ’ ἐνίοις). The powers all these have are very like those tyrants have, but they are based on law and heredity. Because non-Greeks are by nature more slavish in their character (τὸ δουλικώτεροι εἶναι τὰ ἤθη φύσει) than Greeks, those in Asia being more so than those in Europe, they tolerate rule by a master without any complaint. So for this sort of reason these kingships are tyrannical, but they are stable because hereditary and based on law. Their bodyguards are kingly and not tyrannical for the same reasons. For the citizens guard their kings with their weapons, whereas a foreign contingent guards tyrants.<sup>30</sup>

Elsewhere in the *Politics*, Aristotle distinguishes kingship from tyranny based on the consent of the ruled.<sup>31</sup> Non-Greek kingship in effect blurs the distinction. Although such a king exercises a form of “despotic” rule over subjects (like a tyrant), his or her subjects consent to such a rule and indeed are willing to guard and protect such a ruler (unlike the tyrant, who has to rely upon foreign mercenaries to populate his guard). Presumably, Aristotle has in mind Persian obedience to the Great King.

Although Aristotle explicitly claims that non-Greeks are “more slavish” than Greeks, he limits his claim to some (παρ’ ἐνίοις)<sup>32</sup> non-Greeks and context suggests that he has in mind Asian rather than European non-Greeks. As the next section of my paper will show, European non-Greeks are the antithesis of such “slavishness”. But such heterogeneity within the category of “non-Greeks” undermines any categorical claims about non-Greeks in opposition to Greeks. Furthermore, Aristotle also notes that historically Greeks themselves have often lived under so-called “Heroic” kingships and elective tyrannies that do not appear to be significantly different from the “kingship of the non-Greeks”.<sup>33</sup> Finally, Aristotle’s account of absolute kingship (παμβασιλεία) presumably is also a superlative constitution for both Greeks and non-Greeks.<sup>34</sup> Kingship is neither a uniquely non-Greek political institution nor does its historical use categorically disparage non-Greeks.

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Thebes in 335 BCE), which Aristotle objected to on the grounds that Greeks (or at least Macedonians) were enslaving Greeks. The key problem for Rosivach’s argument is Aristotle’s claim that the proponents of conventional slavery incorrectly think it only applies to non-Greeks, which Aristotle rejects (*Pol.* I 6, 1255a28–29). Were Rosivach right, Aristotle should be criticizing the very practice of enslaving Greeks, which he never does.

<sup>29</sup> *Pol.* VII 10, 1330a25–27.

<sup>30</sup> *Pol.* III 14, 1285a16–27.

<sup>31</sup> *Pol.* IV 10, 1295a16–18 and 23–25.

<sup>32</sup> *Pol.* III 14, 1285a17.

<sup>33</sup> Aristotle characterizes non-Greek kingship as hereditary, law-based, tyrannical rule with kingly (rather than tyrannical) body-guards; Aristotle omits whether such rule is “voluntary” (*Pol.* III 14, 1285a17–28). Heroic kingship is characterized as hereditary, law-based, rule over willing subjects (*Pol.* III 14, 1285b4–8). Aristotle’s discussion of tyranny suggests that non-Greek kingship is similar to Greek elective tyranny (*Pol.* IV 10, 1295b11–14).

<sup>34</sup> *Pol.* III 13, 1284a3–17, 1284b25–34; III 15, 1285b29–33; III 16, 1287a8 ff.; III 17, 1288a14–17.

Aristotle's discussion of natural characteristics is a third place that purportedly supports a categorical opposition of Greeks and non-Greeks. Aristotle claims that one can identify what natural characteristics the initial colonists in his best constitution should have

by looking at those Greek city-states that have a good reputation, and at the same way the entire inhabited world is divided into nations.<sup>35</sup> The nations in cold regions, particularly Europe, are full of spirit but somewhat deficient in intelligence and craft knowledge. That is precisely why they remain comparatively free, but are apolitical and incapable of ruling their neighbors. Those in Asia, on the other hand, have souls endowed with intelligence and craft knowledge, but they lack spirit. That is precisely why they are ruled and enslaved. The Greek "race" (τὸ τῶν Ἑλλήνων γένος), however, occupies an intermediate position geographically, and so shares in both sets of characteristics. For it is both spirited and intelligent. That is precisely why it remains free, governed in the best way, and capable, if it chances upon a single constitution, of ruling all the others.<sup>36</sup>

Aristotle's discussion of national characteristics has received significant scrutiny and it seems relatively uncontroversial to assert that this passage describes human traits, prior to habituation, that are the result of environmental causes such as excessive climatic heat or cold.<sup>37</sup> Thus, the word "natural" is slightly paradoxical: such characteristics are hardly immutable or natural essences transmitted through what we might call "genetics".<sup>38</sup> Rather, the "natural characteristics" in question are species-specific pre-habitation traits influenced by environmental differences.

Aristotle seeks to identify natural characteristics that "should be present in the nature of people if they are to be easily guided (εὐαγώγους) to virtue by the legislator";<sup>39</sup> he identifies the "Greeks"<sup>40</sup> as a preeminent example of such characteristics because they possess the proper blend of spirit and intelligence.<sup>41</sup> Although the lack of intelligence and craft knowledge impedes the ability of European peoples to coordinate their actions or act "politically" (either for self-organization or inter-tribal organization), the crucial term in the discussion is spiritedness, the presence of which anchors the freedom of the Europeans and the absence of which is the cause of

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<sup>35</sup> What "well esteemed" polis might Aristotle have in mind? At the conclusion of his analysis of Carthage, Aristotle claims that Sparta, Crete, and Carthage "are justly held in high esteem" (δικαίως εὐδοκίμοῦσι, *Pol.* II 11, 1273b26; cf. II 1, 1260b32), but his criticisms of Sparta and Crete are merciless and he commences his analysis of the best constitutions by pointing out that "the currently available constitutions are not in a good condition" (τὸ μὴ καλῶς, *Pol.* II 1, 1260b34–35).

<sup>36</sup> *Pol.* VII 7, 1327b20–33.

<sup>37</sup> See, for instance, Isaac (2004) 70–73; Heath (2008) 253–258; Lefebvre (2011); Monteils-Laeng (2019), 47–50. Leunissen (2017) 45–48 provides an account of the material causation underlying Aristotle's blend based in large part on Aristotle's analysis of the character of non-human animals in the *Historia Animalium*.

<sup>38</sup> Thus, although Frank (2005) 31, is correct to claim that there is no "immutable feature about the Asian soul", Aristotle's climatic model of causation seems to imply that any human being exposed to a life-time of excessive "Asian" heat will develop persistent "Asian" traits. The relevant contrast is between "immutable essences" and "environmental influences".

<sup>39</sup> *Pol.* VII 7, 1327b36–37.

<sup>40</sup> Aristotle refers to the Greeks as both a γένος and as organized into τὰ ἔθνη (*Pol.* VII 7, 1327b29, 33–34); translators have expressed γένος as "race", "family", and "stock". Isaac (2004) 74, argues that Aristotle embraces a "proto-racist" view insofar as he identifies peoples with specific environmental traits. I tend to follow Leunissen (2017) 5, n. 6, and refrain from ascribing to Aristotle a modern notion of race.

<sup>41</sup> Aristotle contrasts Asians and Europeans with respect to "craft knowledge", but fails to ascribe it explicitly to Greeks (who are said to possess "both" [ἀμφοῖν 1328b30]). Presumably τέχνη is incorporated into intelligence.

Asian subordination.<sup>42</sup> “Ruling and being free invariably derive from this capacity” Aristotle says, “for spirit is both imperious and indomitable”.<sup>43</sup> As other texts show, Aristotle thinks that the characteristic of spiritedness is closely allied to the development of courage, the desire for self-assertion and self-government, and even the basis for forming friendship.<sup>44</sup> Such a capacity reacts with anger to insults or domination and Aristotle attributes the lack of such a capacity to those who live under despotic rule without complaint.<sup>45</sup>

Although the significance of Aristotle’s blend is clear, there are two reasons why this passage fails to establish a categorical and disparaging opposition between Greeks and non-Greeks.<sup>46</sup> First, although Aristotle privileges the Greek people, he immediately adds that “Greek nations also differ from one another in these ways. For some have a nature that is one-sided, whereas in others both of these capacities are well-blended”.<sup>47</sup> The blend of spirit and intelligence that Aristotle seeks can go wrong in at least two very different ways (namely the target population could possess too little spiritedness or too little intelligence), and Greek peoples exhibit one-sided mixes just like the non-Greeks. If Aristotle embraces the doctrine of environmental determinism, clearly it is a “soft” version of the doctrine: the same environmental causes do not uniformly produce the same effects. Climatic causation fails to establish a categorical distinction between Greeks and non-Greeks.<sup>48</sup>

Secondly, it is unclear that one should afford much weight to the opposition of Greek and non-Greek natural characteristics. Clearly, Aristotle’s account of the best constitution specifies what he calls the “suitable material” (τὴν οἰκείαν ὕλην)<sup>49</sup> of the polis of our prayers, and such “matter” includes both the size and character of its population, alongside the expanse and location of its physical territory.<sup>50</sup> It is also rather clear that Aristotle would draw upon Greeks rather than

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<sup>42</sup> Although *Pol.* VII 7 clearly privileges spirit and intelligence, Aristotle says very little about intelligence and instead uses the remainder of the text to discuss spirit (through a critique of Plato’s characterization of spirited guardians in the *Rsp.*). Within Aristotle’s psychological taxonomy, spiritedness is one of three forms of desire and appears to be especially connected to anger or the response one has to being slighted. See further Lefebvre (2011) 128–134.

<sup>43</sup> *Pol.* VII 7, 1328a6–7.

<sup>44</sup> *EN* III 8, 1116b30–32; *Pol.* VII 7, 1328a6–7, 1327b40–41. See further Heath (2008) 255–258; Leunissen (2017) 48–51.

<sup>45</sup> See, for instance, *Pol.* V 10, 1312b25–33; V 11, 1315a27–31.

<sup>46</sup> Although Aristotle explicitly invokes Greeks in his discussion, strictly speaking he does not oppose Greeks and non-Greeks, but locates Greeks as a kind of mean between Europeans and Asians. As Lefebvre (2011) 111–112, notes, throughout Aristotle’s treatment of the “natural given” of the best constitution, he specifies conditions which embody a mean. Thus, the population size of the best constitution is neither too many nor too few citizens and the polis size is neither too large nor too small. Ward (2007) argues that Aristotle’s contrast is not with Greeks and non-Greeks, but rather between people who dwell in a polis and those who are organized into “nations” (*i.e.*, ἔθνη).

<sup>47</sup> *Pol.* VII 7, 1327b34–36.

<sup>48</sup> Monteils-Laeng (2009) 42 claims that “Le raisonnement d’Aristote s’appuie en un sens sur ce qu’on appelle le ‘déterminisme environnemental’, il n’implique cependant pas une forme de providentialisme”. Pellegrin (2017) 151–152, and Lefebvre (2011) 120, by contrast, appear to embrace an element of providentialisme in their accounts of *Pol.* VII 7.

<sup>49</sup> *Pol.* VII 4, 1326a4.

<sup>50</sup> *Pol.* VII 4–12 specifies the “suitable matter” of the best constitution, including not only questions about the city’s population and territory, but even issues like its climate, street lay-out, and location of markets and temples. But he concludes his discussion of “suitable matter” by noting that such details (like the location of temples) “are not hard to think out, just hard to do. Speaking about them is a task for ideal theory; the task of good luck is to bring them about” (VII 12, 1331b19–21; cf. VII 13, 1332a28–32). Cherry (2014) 651–655, makes this point also as part of his argument that ethnicity is insufficient for excellence.



non-Greeks for such a population. But immediately after specifying the “natural given” of his best constitution, Aristotle claims that habit and reason can offset nature.<sup>51</sup> Such a claim seems to minimize the weight or importance of natural characteristics in general. One concludes that the opposition between Greek and non-Greek natural characteristics is neither categorical nor does it seem especially important.<sup>52</sup>

Aristotle’s disparaging remarks about non-Greeks not only fail to ground a categorical opposition between Greeks and non-Greeks, but they are at odds with Aristotle’s complimentary remarks about non-Greek political institutions. For instance, in his reflection on superlative political institutions, Aristotle writes that

Those who philosophize about constitutions, whether nowadays or in recent times, seem not to be the only ones to recognize that a polis should be divided into separate classes and that the military class should be different from the class of farmers. For it is still this way even today in Egypt and Crete, Sesostrius having made such a law for Egypt, so it is said, and Minos for Crete. Messes also seem to be an ancient organization; they arose in Crete during the reign of Minos, but those in Italy are much older [...]. The separation of the political multitude into classes, on the other hand, originated in Egypt, for the kingship of Sesostrius is much earlier than that of Minos.<sup>53</sup>

In contrast to the disparaging remarks that Aristotle previously made about the social and political institutions of non-Greek peoples, here we find him praising such institutions. The communal messes that feature so prominently in the Spartan and Cretan constitutions are ultimately Italian (*i.e.*, European) in origin; the partite division of political community by functional task is ultimately Egyptian (*i.e.*, Asian or Libyan) in origin. Aristotle’s best constitution incorporates both features.<sup>54</sup> Admittedly, non-Greek peoples are different from non-Greek political institutions and most scholars have focused on non-Greeks as a race or ethnographic category rather than an institutional one. But institutions embody the decisions and insights of a people, and if we ask whether Aristotle thinks that non-Greeks can teach Greeks, rather clearly he thinks that students of political science can learn from non-Greek institutions.

Although Aristotle contrasts Greeks and non-Greeks in numerous places, these passages establish neither a categorical opposition between Greeks and non-Greeks nor do they uniformly disparage non-Greeks. Rather, Aristotle finds diverse positive and negative characteristics amongst both Greeks and non-Greeks. As a matter of contingent fact, some non-Greeks may be slavish or viable candidates for natural slaves, but Aristotle suggests that so too are some Greeks. Although it is true that Aristotle recommends a non-Greek underclass for the agricultural labor force in his best constitution, that is actually his “second choice”; he first recommends that the labor force be filled by non-spirited and heterogeneous Greeks.<sup>55</sup> Such a ranking of recommendations suggests that as a class, Greeks (especially those separated from their own “nations”) can be as servile as non-Greeks. Some non-Greeks live without complaint under autocratic rule, but so too have some Greeks. If Aristotle embraces a version of climatic or environmental determinism, it is a weak version and one which has minor importance for his

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<sup>51</sup> *Pol.* VII 13, 1332a39-b8.

<sup>52</sup> By contrast, Leunissen (2011) 53 “environmental factors have quite dramatic impacts on the individual natural character of people and thereby on their political and moral lives. Living a happy or virtuous life constitutes the perfection of human nature, but, evidently, realizing this kind of perfection is easier for some than for others, and easiest for those – typically, Greek – men who are by nature already disposed to courage and intelligence.”

<sup>53</sup> *Pol.* VII 10, 1329a40-b8, b23–25.

<sup>54</sup> *Pol.* VII 10, 1330a2–9; VII 8, 1328b2–24.

<sup>55</sup> *Pol.* VII 10, 1330a25–27.

political science insofar as natural or ethnic characteristics provide a very weak basis for the legislator who aims to produce good citizens. An examination of Carthage's constitution makes clear that non-Greeks are quite adept at both designing institutions and raising a population capable of producing a flourishing political community.

## The Non-Greek Constitution of Carthage (*Pol.* II 11)

According to Aristotle, 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”, it is necessary to investigate

other constitutions, both some of those used in city-states that are said to be well governed, and any others described by anyone that are held to be good, in order to see what is correct or useful in them [...]. Let it be held, instead, that we have undertaken this inquiry because the currently available constitutions are not in good condition.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, Book II of the *Politics* examines both existing constitutions, such as those of Sparta and Crete, and proposed constitutions, such as those of Plato, Phaleas, and Hippodamus. *Pol.* II is also closely linked Aristotle's own account of the best constitution or “city in accord with one's prayers” in *Pol.* VII–VIII. Almost every chapter in *Pol.* VII–VIII adverts back to discussions in *Pol.* II, and in some instances – such as his account of private property – Books VII–VIII essential cut and paste, as it were, conclusions arrived at in Book II.<sup>57</sup> Clearly, the contents of *Pol.* II provide valuable lessons to a Greek audience considering how to establish a superlative colony in the fourth century.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, it is somewhat surprising to find in *Pol.* II 11 an extended analysis of the Carthaginian constitution.<sup>59</sup> Fourth-century Carthage was a Northern African commercial empire that was founded by and retained the cultural and linguistic practices of Phoenicia, a decidedly non-Greek nation that Cyrus the Great incorporated into the Persian empire in the sixth century BCE.<sup>60</sup> Aristotle reports that:

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<sup>56</sup> *Pol.* II 1, 1260b30–35.

<sup>57</sup> In Lockwood (2015), I examine the connections between *Pol.* II and VII/VIII and identify the instances where the latter books “cut and paste” conclusions from the earlier book.

<sup>58</sup> Although an earlier generation of scholars treated Aristotle's account of the best constitution as an exercise in youthful Platonism, the scholarly consensus now takes *Pol.* VII/VIII to be Aristotle's practical blue-print for potential colonists eyeing new settlements in Asia Minor following Alexander's territorial expansion in the fourth century BCE. See Kraut (1997) 51–53, and Ober (1998) 339–351.

<sup>59</sup> Isocrates, in his oration “Nicocles or the Cyprians”, puts a pro-monarchical spin on the Spartan and Carthaginian practice of being led by kings while on military campaign (although ruled by oligarchies at home). He describes them as “the best governed people of the world” ([τοὺς ἄριστα τῶν ἄλλων πολιτευομένους] *Nic.* 24). Writing over a century later, Polybius claims that Sparta and Carthage are the only rivals to Rome's claim for the best constitution (VI 47, 51–52).

<sup>60</sup> Quinn (2019) surveys textual evidence about the nature of Carthage during Aristotle's time. Isaac (2004) and Gruen (2010) 115–122 survey Greek stereotypes about Phoenicia and Carthage, although Isaac overstates the case that the most persistent stereotypes attached to Phoenicians and Carthaginians are those of “guile, unreliability, and treacherousness” (Isaac, id., p. 328). Gruen is a good corrective, reminding us that Herodotus depicts Phoenicia as loyal to its colonists at Carthage and Carthaginians as fair and honest traders (*Hdt.* III 19, IV 196). Barceló (1994) in general supports Gruen, showing that Greek historiography on Carthage was generally positive prior to Rome's

The Carthaginians also are thought to be well governed, and in many respects in an extraordinary way 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 (δῆμος) willingly stick with the way the constitution is organized, and that no faction even worth talking about has arisen among them, and no tyrant.<sup>61</sup>

Aristotle examines Carthage within his consideration of existing constitutions reputed to be well-governed, namely alongside Sparta and Crete, both of which share structural similarities with Carthage. Examination of Carthage's constitution gives us an extended and detailed glimpse of how Aristotle analyzes non-Greek political institutions. Carthage consistently embodies the *opposite* of the characterizations that Aristotle allegedly ascribes to all non-Greeks.

Aristotle repeatedly claims that Carthaginian institutions are superior to their parallel institutions in Sparta and Crete.<sup>62</sup> Although Sparta, Crete, and Carthage all incorporate communal meals into their political communities, Aristotle argues that the Spartan system, which lacks public support, is inferior to the publically funded communal meals found in Crete and Carthage.<sup>63</sup> Sparta, Crete, and Carthage all share analogous political offices, *viz.* an executive oversight board (the overseers in Sparta, the order keepers in Crete, or the 104 in Carthage), a senate, and kings; Aristotle judges Carthage as having the best organization of each office in all three cases.<sup>64</sup> Aristotle faults all three constitutions for neglecting or leaving to chance, rather than legislative design, key institutions. The Spartan legislator neglects women's education, the Cretan legislator relies upon its location as an island to avoid faction, and Carthage mitigates faction through "sending some part of the people out to other cities to get rich".<sup>65</sup> Admittedly, Carthaginian stability rests upon the continued prosperity of its commerce and trade. But such a situation seems less precarious than Spartan "shortage of citizens" (ὀλιγανθρωπία)<sup>66</sup> and Cretan dynastic succession and suspension of rule of law.<sup>67</sup> Clearly, Carthage is Aristotle's best non-Greek constitution; but it also appears to be his best "existing constitution", eclipsing the merits of Sparta and Crete.

In light of Aristotle's account of natural slavery and the claim that non-Greeks fail to recognize natural rulers, it is worth underscoring that Aristotle characterizes Carthage as a polis in which both the people and the wealthy consent to a dual or hybrid criterion for rule, namely a mix of excellence and wealth. Aristotle writes that

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engagement with Carthage. The Hippocratic *Aër.* 13 unfortunately possesses a textual lacuna where its author discussed the conditions of the Egyptians and Libyans.

<sup>61</sup> *Pol.* II 11, 1272b24–25 and 29–33.

<sup>62</sup> I have examined some of these details previously in my Lockwood (2015). As Newman (1887) 401 notes, at the time that Aristotle was writing the *Pol.* Sparta and Crete were going into decline whereas Carthage was in its ascendancy. Lockwood (2018) examines Aristotle's extended critique of the Sparta constitution.

<sup>63</sup> See *Pol.* II 9, 1271a26–36; II 10, 1272a13–22; II 11, 1272b33–34.

<sup>64</sup> Aristotle judges the Spartan overseers as superior to the Cretan order keepers, and the Carthaginian 104 as superior to the overseers (*Pol.* 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 (id. 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). Drews (1979) 45–58, based on admittedly meager evidence, speculates that the Carthaginian constitution may have influenced the Spartan constitution. Aristotle claims instead that the Spartan constitution was derived from Crete (II 10, 1271b20–26).

<sup>65</sup> See *Pol.* II 9, 1269b12–19; II 10, 1272b15–17; and II 11, 1273b18–23; cf. VI 5, 1320b4–7.

<sup>66</sup> *Pol.* II 9, 1270a36.

<sup>67</sup> *Pol.* II 10, 1272b8–10.

The major deviation of the organization of the Carthaginians away from aristocracy and toward oligarchy is their sharing a view that is held by the many: that rulers should be chosen not solely on the basis of their merit, but also on the basis of their wealth, since poor people cannot afford the leisure necessary to rule well. Hence, if indeed it is oligarchic to choose rulers on the basis of their wealth, and aristocratic to choose them on the basis of their merit, then this organization, according to which the Carthaginians have organized matters related to the constitution, will be a third sort. For they elect to office with an eye to both qualities, especially in the case of the most important officials, the kings and the generals.<sup>68</sup>

To be clear, Aristotle thinks that such a principle of election is mistaken and deviates from the purely aristocratic principle that rule be apportioned by merit.<sup>69</sup> And yet the constitutional error is based in another Aristotelian principle, namely that rulers require leisure. The mistake of the Carthaginian legislator consists in thinking that the distribution of leisure to those who rule approximates the distribution of wealth (hardly an unreasonable assumption). The Carthaginian community recognize and abide by a principle of rule, but they ground it in the Hamiltonian principle, as it were, that those who succeed in commerce are best suited to rule a political community.<sup>70</sup> Such a principle seems profoundly unlike those governing natural slaves.

In light of Aristotle's characterization of non-Greeks as those who willingly endure and live under autocracy, it is worth underscoring that Carthage is a vibrant participatory political community (indeed, one that is ultimately too democratic for Aristotle's tastes). Although the Carthaginian constitution is oligarchic, the people willingly support it because of the popular participation it insures.<sup>71</sup> As noted above, both the people and the wealthy concur about the criteria of office. But the constitution provides the people with the power to bring matters before the assembly in the case that their kings and senators lack unanimity. Absent such unanimity,

the people have authority over these matters. Moreover, when they make proposals, the people not only are allowed to hear the officials' resolutions, but have the authority to decide them; and anyone who wishes may speak against the proposals being made. This does not exist in the other constitutions.<sup>72</sup>

Although Carthage is clearly a non-Greek community, Aristotle clearly thinks that its δῆμος is fundamentally "democratic" and insistent upon participation. Indeed, Aristotle calls the arrangement in which the people exercise a form of sovereign authority over the constitution unprecedented. The Carthaginian people seem to be the antithesis of those non-Greeks who willingly live under non-Greek monarchy.

In light of Aristotle's characterization of Asian non-Greeks as lacking θυμός as a natural characteristic, it is worth underscoring that Aristotle commends Carthage's martial virtue and

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<sup>68</sup> *Pol.* II 11, 1273a21–30.

<sup>69</sup> *Pol.* II 11, 1273a31–35. In his analysis of aristocracy Aristotle elaborates that Carthage looks to the criteria of wealth, virtue, and the people in determining political participation (*Pol.* IV 7, 1293b7–18).

<sup>70</sup> One wonders if Aristotle distinguishes Carthage from oligarchy because of its mercantile or commercial orientation. Perhaps oligarchs appear to be the hereditary wealthy rather than the commercially wealthy (although the distinction is hardly absolute).

<sup>71</sup> Aristotle notes elsewhere that the people do not participate in judicial cases which are decided by officers rather than juries (*Pol.* III 1, 1275b5–12), which is an aristocratic feature of the constitution (*Pol.* II 11, 1273a16–20).

<sup>72</sup> *Pol.* II 11, 1273a7–12.

documents their empire.<sup>73</sup> Fourth-century Carthage established a commercial empire that stretched throughout the western Mediterranean, but they were hardly only traders. The Aristotelian *On Marvelous Things Heard* reports that

In the sea outside the Pillars of Hercules they say that an island was discovered by the Carthaginians desolate, having wood of every kind and navigable rivers, and admirable for its fruits besides, but distant several days' voyage from them. But, when the Carthaginians often came to this island because of its fertility, and some even dwelt here, the magistrates of the Carthaginians gave notice that they would punish with death those who should sail to it, and destroyed all the inhabitants, lest they should spread a report about it, or a large number might gather together to the island in their time, get possession of the authority, and destroy the prosperity of the Carthaginians.<sup>74</sup>

The Aristotelian treatise reports similar domination of the island of Sardinia.<sup>75</sup> Even if such stories are entirely fanciful, they are proof that Carthage possessed a reputation for being a ruthless and dominant power within the Mediterranean region. But whereas fourth-century Sparta and Crete fell into the trap of organizing their constitutions around the principles of domination and territorial accumulation, Carthage's emphasis upon commercial wealth suggests a very different view, namely that of "conquering" the Mediterranean through trade rather than through arms (although with arms at ready).<sup>76</sup> But it seems very difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile Aristotle's remarks about spiritless non-Greeks with his own testimony about Carthaginian expansion and empire.

Aristotle's analysis of the Carthaginian non-Greek constitution, thus, quite clearly requires us to reject the claim that he categorically thought Greeks were superior to non-Greeks. But I suspect that Aristotle was interested in Carthage in part because it represented a *sui generis* constitutional form, namely that of an expansionist commercial empire that shares similarities with oligarchy and aristocracy (and with the mixed regime for that matter), but is ultimately a unique solution to the problem of regional hegemony, a solution that Aristotle partially incorporated into his own account of the best constitution.<sup>77</sup> The basic question which the Carthaginian constitution raises is: how should the best constitution incorporate wealth and inter-polis commerce into its social and political institutions? Almost all of Aristotle's criticisms of Carthage are based on its attitude towards wealth. For instance, he writes that

One of the most important things is to see to it from the outset that the best people are able to be at leisure and do nothing unseemly, not only when in office but in private life. But even if one must look to wealth too, in order to ensure leisure, still it is bad that the most important offices, those of king and general, should be for sale. For this law gives more esteem to wealth than to virtue, and

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<sup>73</sup> II 9, 1271a41-b9; VII 2, 1324b3-15; VII 14, 1333b6-33. Aristotle notes that Carthage uses armlets to recognize the number of military campaigns its soldiers participate in (VII 2, 1324b13-15).

<sup>74</sup> Ps.-Aristot., *Mir.* 84, 836b30-837a6.

<sup>75</sup> *Mir.* 100, 838b13-29.

<sup>76</sup> Carthage was hardly immune from exercising dominion by force. The *Poetics* reports that the battle at Himera (between Carthage and the Sicilian army of Gelon) coincided with (and perhaps was coordinated with) the Persian defeat at Salamis in 480 BCE (*Po.* 23, 1459a26). Aristotle appears to be alluding to a tradition, written by the historian Ephorus and preserved in Diodorus Siculus (XI 1, 4), which claimed that Xerxes sought to open a "second front" in his war on Greece and proposed to Carthage an alliance which would coordinate their attacks on both the Greek mainland and Greek western colonies.

<sup>77</sup> Aristotle incorporated into his own "best constitution" other insights or lessons from Carthage, namely the use of public messes (cf. *Pol.* II 11, 1272b33-35 with VII 10, 1330a2-8) and the need of leisurely activity for citizens (cf. II 11, 1273a31-b7 with VII 15, 1334a23 *sq.*; VIII 3, 1337b33-38a12).

makes the entire city-state love money (τὴν πόλιν ὅλην φιλοχρήματον). For whatever those in authority esteem, the opinion of the other citizens too inevitably follows theirs. Hence when virtue is not esteemed more than everything else, the constitution cannot be securely governed as an aristocracy.<sup>78</sup>

Whereas the Spartan lawgiver mistakenly used love of honor as a principal mechanism within the constitution,<sup>79</sup> the Carthaginian lawgiver used an analogous love of money or wealth.<sup>80</sup> Aristotle concedes that Carthaginian love of money has not brought about constitutional change;<sup>81</sup> he also notes that the opportunity to send out citizens to make money is one of the mechanisms that Carthage has used to dissipate faction.<sup>82</sup> Nonetheless, “this is the result of luck, whereas Carthage ought to be free of faction thanks to their legislator”.<sup>83</sup> What is Aristotle’s alternative in his own best constitution?

The “preface” to Aristotle’s best constitution makes clear that the best way of life for both an individual and a polis is one which includes the external goods necessary for flourishing.<sup>84</sup> But when he turns to the issue of “what it is to be well off where property is concerned (τῆς περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν εὐπορίας)”, Aristotle laments that, “there are many disputes about this raised by those who urge us to adopt one extreme form of life or the other: penury in the one case, luxury in the other”.<sup>85</sup> The closest Aristotle comes to discussing the problem is his consideration of whether his best constitution should have access to the sea through proximity to ports.<sup>86</sup> He writes that

There is much dispute about whether access to the sea is beneficial or harmful to well-governed cities. For it is said that entertaining foreigners as guests who have been brought up under

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<sup>78</sup> *Pol.* II 11, 1273a32–41.

<sup>79</sup> *Pol.* II 9, 1271a12–17.

<sup>80</sup> Aristotle’s attitude towards “love of money” (φιλοχρηματία) is sophisticated. On the one hand, he repeatedly criticizes Spartan “love of money” (*Pol.* II 9, 1269b19–24; 1270a14; 1271b17) and asserts that love of money is one of the major causes of voluntary wrongdoing (*Pol.* II 9, 1271a18). On the other hand, he criticizes Socrates (in the *Rsp.* VII, 555d *sq.*) for simplistically saying that love of money is the cause of oligarchy. Rather, Aristotle claims that a constitution changes into an oligarchy “because those who are far superior in property holdings think it unjust for those who do not own anything to participate equally in the polis with those who do” (*Pol.* V 12, 1316a37–b3). Indeed, Aristotle cites Carthage as an example of a polis whose officials engage in acquiring wealth but do not bring about change in their constitution (V 12, 1316b5–6). Aristotle suggests that loving money, like love of self, becomes problematic when it is loving more than one should (*Pol.* II 5, 1263b3–5).

<sup>81</sup> *Pol.* V 12, 1316b5–6.

<sup>82</sup> *Pol.* II 11, 1273b18–20; cf. VI 5, 1320b4–7.

<sup>83</sup> *Pol.* II 11, 1273b20–21.

<sup>84</sup> *Pol.* VII 1, 1323b40–42; cf. VII 4, 1325b37.

<sup>85</sup> *Pol.* VII 5, 1326b34–39. Newman (1887) 352, suggests the contrast is between Pythagoreans, Cynics, and Spartans on the one hand, and Aristippus on the other hand. Lord (2013) 196 n. 25, speculates that Aristotle may have had Carthage and Sparta in mind (an interpretation I would endorse). Kraut (1997) 87 argues that Aristotle’s condemnation of “luxuries” elsewhere (e.g., *Pol.* IV 4, 1295b13–19; V 10, 1311a8–11), shows that he is against the latter option, but that seems to take his term “luxury” (τρυφή) far too literally; I take the contrast to be one between Spartan austerity and Carthaginian affluence. Aristotle offers an apparently unfulfilled promissory note to discuss the problem of wealth. Commentators note that although Aristotle has discussions of property elsewhere in the *Pol.* (e.g., II 4, 1262b37–63a40; II 6, 1265a28–38; II 7, 1266b24–31) or the acquisition of external goods (*Pol.* I 8–11), he fails to provide an account of how much property citizens in the best constitution should own. *Pol.* VII 10, 1329b36–30a24 takes up how property should be distributed in the best constitution, but does not discuss the size of such distributions.

<sup>86</sup> Aristotle also provides for two “marketplaces” (ἀγορά) in his best constitution, a free-one (open only to citizens and which excludes merchandise) and one concerned with necessities, which is located away from the free marketplace and convenient for collecting goods distributed from both land and sea (*Pol.* VII 10, 1331a30–31b3).

different laws is detrimental to good government, and that the overpopulation which results from having a multitude of traders (ἐμπόρων) who use the sea for importing and exporting is contrary to being well governed. But if those consequences are avoided, it is clear that it is better for a polis and its territory to have access to the sea.<sup>87</sup>

After explaining the advantages of possessing a navy and exercising the foreign policy of a regional hegemon,<sup>88</sup> Aristotle addresses the concerns about trade:

City-states must also import the commodities that are not available at home and export those of which they have a surplus. For a city-state should engage in trade (ἐμπορικὴν) for itself, not for others.<sup>89</sup> Those who open their market to everyone do so for the revenue. But a city-state should not be involved in this sort of acquisitiveness (πλεονεξία) and should have no market of this sort.<sup>90</sup>

Aristotle rejects the notion that the best city should open a port for general trade so that it could impose duties or taxes upon traders in order to establish a revenue stream. Aristotle is also quite clear that the citizens of his best constitution not only should not pursue trade or commerce themselves, but rather should assign the task to a non-citizen class which are kept separate from citizens.<sup>91</sup> Aristotle incorporates commerce and trade into his best constitution only to obtain what it lacks and to sell its surpluses.<sup>92</sup>

Nonetheless, I submit that Aristotle's policies on ports, markets, and commerce in his best constitution are informed by the lessons he takes from Carthage's constitution. On the spectrum between "penury" and "luxury" as ideal amounts of external goods, Aristotle clearly falls in the middle given his commitment to the claim that happiness for both the individual and the community requires external goods and his belief that his best constitution will develop a regionally powerful navy; but his proposals for markets and commerce suggest he leans towards Carthaginian luxury, with its openness, commerce, and wealth, rather than Spartan penury, with its secrecy, narrow-minded focus on martial virtue, and its undeveloped poverty. Carthage's openness to trade and wealth for its citizens rather clearly seems less mistaken than the Spartan alternative. Although it is true that within the framework of household management (the subject of *Pol. I*), that Aristotle is critical of commerce, it does not follow that Aristotle excludes commerce from his best constitution. Rather, his key insight is to permit non-citizen traders to practice commerce on behalf of the city, and then assure that citizens are insulated from such non-citizens (in much the same way that Aristotle citizens do not practice servile labor, which instead is performed by disenfranchised non-citizen classes). Aristotle justifies locating his best constitution near a port only on the conditions that the negative influences of trade and commerce are mitigated. Aristotle's proposal for dual "marketplaces" is an attempt to allow a city to engage in and reap the benefits of commerce while insulating it from its negative influences.

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<sup>87</sup> *Pol.* VII 6, 1327a11–18.

<sup>88</sup> My Lockwood (2019) argues that Aristotle's "best way of life" for a *polis* is a proposal that the best constitution practice regional hegemony as a foreign policy.

<sup>89</sup> Kraut (1997) 89 notes that Aristotle may be responding to Isocrates' *Pan.* 42, which argued that Athens conferred a great benefit on the world by maintaining the Piraeus as a port for all.

<sup>90</sup> *Pol.* VII 6, 1327a25–31.

<sup>91</sup> *Pol.* VII 5, 1327a7–16, 35–39; cf. IV 4, 1291a1–6; VII 9, 1328b39–41.

<sup>92</sup> Aristotle's analysis of the accumulation of external goods concludes that trade exists for the sake of exchange rather than as a means to wealth (*Pol.* 1.9.1257a16–20). Aristotle characterizes commerce (τὸ καπηλικόν) as a kind of unnatural accumulation of wealth, which he juxtaposes unfavorably with household management (*Pol.* I 9, 1257a41-b10; I 10, 1258a38-b8).

Carthage's embrace of commerce and wealth has, through good fortune, provided it stability, prosperity, and power, arguably more so than any other city-state examined in Aristotle's *Politics*. But as we know from history, the system of commercial empire which Carthage established was hardly impervious to other regional hegemony such as Rome. Nonetheless, Aristotle's willingness to praise, with qualifications, a non-Greek constitution as superior to Greek constitutions embodies a theoretical attitude which transcends (and problematizes) the distinction between Greeks and non-Greeks.<sup>93</sup> In the final section of this chapter, I would like to explore further the theoretical attitude of Aristotle's political science towards non-Greek political lessons.

## Non-Greek political lessons and Aristotle's political science

I would like to step back from Aristotle's analysis of the Carthaginian constitution and explore its ramifications for the underlying methodology of his political science. Clearly, Aristotle thinks that there is a place within political science for understanding the natural world and its ramifications for political institutions. Indeed, Aristotle models his taxonomic analyses of different constitutions on the model of parts and wholes which Aristotle uses elsewhere in his treatises on botany and zoology.<sup>94</sup> Further, Leunissen, *From Natural Character*, makes a strong case that underlying Aristotle's account of natural character, habituation, and eugenic breeding are principles and mechanisms which he posits elsewhere in his natural scientific corpus. Nonetheless, is it correct to think that Aristotle's political science "imitates" or somehow "perfects" the teleological underpinnings of the natural world?<sup>95</sup>

Book VII of *Pol.* provides an extended discussion of the relationship between nature and legislation in the case of the best constitution or city of our prayers. After stipulating that happiness requires external goods, Aristotle writes that

It follows then, from what has been said, that some goods must be there to start with, whereas others must be provided by the law-giver. That is why we pray that our city-state will be equipped with the goods that luck controls (for we assume that luck does control them). When we come to making the city-state excellent, however, that is no longer a task for luck but one for scientific knowledge and deliberate choice.<sup>96</sup>

The remainder of Aristotle's *Pol.* which we possess is devoted to education and the formation of virtue through reason, habit, and briefly through nature (in the discussion of eugenic breeding). In his account of the best constitutions (both in *Pol.* II and VII–VIII), Aristotle repeatedly chastises

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<sup>93</sup> Although Dietz (2102) 275 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".

<sup>94</sup> See further Johnson (2015) 45–57.

<sup>95</sup> Monteils-Laeng (2019) 12, in her analysis of Aristotle's finalisme (or teleology), argues that "il semble que la nature comprise comme finalité ne dispose pas de ce genre de latitude par rapport à l'organisation de la matière: elle vise le meilleur dans les limites de ce qui est possible." What she leaves unanswered, though, is the provocative claim of Leunissen (2017) namely that art or science is what allows nature to achieve her goals. Such a position radically reorients Aristotle's political science around that at which nature aims.

<sup>96</sup> *Pol.* VII 13, 1332a27–35.



law-givers (including the Carthaginian one) who leave the determination of political institutions to chance.<sup>97</sup> And yet at the same time, the city of our prayers is nothing other than the city whose prayers have been answered with respect to external goods (including the natural characteristics of its first generation of citizens). Even if Book VII does specify the conditions which chance could supply, Aristotle's emphasis is primarily on the reorganization of nature rather than its imitation. And the reorganization of nature is the job of social and political institutions.

Indeed, it is telling that *Pol.* VII 7 and 14 are the sole discussions of natural characteristics in the *Politics* although obviously there are extensive discussions of legislative or institutional proposals for the best constitution in books II, VII, and VIII of the *Politics*. But whereas Aristotle articulates natural characteristics in terms of Greek and non-Greek origins, his discussion of legislative or institutional proposals eschews such distinctions and is instead profoundly catholic and inclusive. At one point in his criticism of Socratic communal ownership in the *Republic*, Aristotle objects that

And we must not overlook this point, that we should consider the immense period of time and the many years during which it would not have gone unnoticed if [Socrates'] measures 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.<sup>98</sup>

The unprecedented novelty of Socrates' communal ownership is the source of an objection simply on the grounds that in the storehouse of human history, it has no successful precedent. Although such a criticism sounds "conservative" (proposal x is bad simply because no one else has tried proposal x), the criticism is based on the notion that if all institutional specifications have been tried, an unprecedented novelty is as such questionable.

Aristotle reiterates the same point in his account of the best constitution in an example that makes clear that such a storehouse of human history includes both Greek and non-Greek exemplars. In an ethnographic reflection, Aristotle writes that

We should take it, indeed, that pretty much everything else too has been discovered many times, or rather an infinite number of times, in the long course of history. For our needs are likely to teach the necessities, and once they are present, the things that add refinement and luxury to life quite naturally develop. Hence we should suppose that the same is true of matters pertaining to constitutions. That all such matters are ancient is indicated by the facts about Egypt. For the Egyptians are held to be the most ancient people, and they have always had laws and a political organization. Therefore, one should make adequate use of what has been discovered, but also try to investigate whatever has been overlooked.<sup>99</sup>

Aristotle appears to consider human (including both Greek and non-Greek) history as a storehouse of institutional arrangements. Since that history is ultimately cyclical, and thus without beginning or end, all potential institutional arrangements have at some point in time been actual. It is the political scientist's responsibility to be familiar with such institutional histories (which of course Aristotle's school documented prodigiously in their research on constitutions). My paper

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<sup>97</sup> Aristotle chastises the Spartan lawgiver for neglecting female education (*Pol.* II 9, 1269b19–21), the Cretan lawgiver for relying upon its distance from other cities to mitigate faction (*Pol.* II 10, 1272b14–16), and the Carthaginian lawgiver for using colonization as a safety valve to mitigate faction (*Pol.* II 11, 1273b18–23).

<sup>98</sup> *Pol.* II 5, 1264a1–5.

<sup>99</sup> *Pol.* VII 10, 1329a39–1329b35. Commentators note that Aristotle's claim is grounded in his belief in the eternity of human existence and the cyclical development and restoration of human civilization. See, for instance, *Met.* 352b16–17; *GA* 731b24–732a3, 742b17–743a1; *de An.* 415a25–b7.

has documented that Aristotle includes in that storehouse of institutional arrangements reflection on the political and social practices of Greece, but also those of Asia, Libya, Egypt, and Europe. Non-Greek peoples and their institutions, such as the Carthaginian constitution, are clear examples that Aristotle is a firm believer in the value of non-Greek knowledge and his *Politics* is a vehicle of its circulation.<sup>100</sup>

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