

Dialectical Method in the Aristotelian *Athenaion Politeia*

David L. Blank

BOTH CONTENT AND FORM of the *Athenaion Politeia*, as scholars have long observed, are in agreement with what Aristotle¹ says elsewhere, and are indeed what one might well expect an Aristotelian treatment of the Athenian democracy to contain.² The work consists of a history of the mechanisms of state, showing how one organ after another became in turn the most important,³ followed by a synchronic account of the state machinery in the late fourth century.⁴ The account of Solon as the μέσος πολίτης and consequently the consummate Athenian politician (*Ath.Pol.* 5.3, 11.2) squares with Aristotle's philosophy in general⁵ and with his political theory in particular.⁶ The *Ath.Pol.*'s insistence on this point, and others as well, suits the exemplary and didactic purpose Aristotle assigns to the collection and study of constitutions (*Eth.Nic.* 1181b6–9).

What is the historical methodology of the *Ath.Pol.*? I shall argue that certain aspects of the gathering, use, or neglect of source material in the historical part can be explained with reference to Aristotle's theory of scientific and philosophical method. In particular I shall address the *Ath.Pol.*'s 'contamination' and 'rationalizing correc-

¹ I use this name for the sake of convenience. It is immaterial to my argument whether the author of the *Ath.Pol.* was Aristotle himself or one of his pupils, a suggestion now revived by P. J. RHODES, *A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia* (Oxford 1981: hereafter 'Rhodes') 58–63.

² See for example K. von Fritz and E. Kapp, "The 'Constitution of Athens' and Aristotle's Political Philosophy," in *Aristotle's Constitution of Athens and Related Texts* (New York 1950) 32–66 (= J. Barnes, ed., *Articles on Aristotle II* [London 1977] 113–34). See also, for an extended and controversial treatment, J. Day and M. Chambers, *Aristotle's History of Athenian Democracy* (Berkeley 1962), and responses by K. von Fritz, *Gnomon* 39 (1967) 673–81; D. Kagan, *CP* 59 (1964) 187–90; F. W. Gilliard, "Teleological Development in the *Athenaion Politeia*," *Historia* 20 (1971) 431–35; Rhodes 10–13; E. Schütrumpf, *Die Analyse der Polis durch Aristoteles* (Amsterdam 1980).

³ Cf. *Pol.* 1278b8–11, 1308b25–31.

⁴ E.g. F. Jacoby, *Atthis* (Oxford 1949) 212; cf. *Pol.* 1252a24. See also J. J. Keaney, "The Structure of the *Athenaion Politeia*," *HSCP* 67 (1963) 115–46, and "Ring Composition in Aristotle's *Athenaion Politeia*," *AJP* 90 (1969) 406–23.

⁵ E.g. *Eth.Nic.* 1096a25, 1105b26ff.

⁶ *Pol.* 1295b4–96a7 (ὁμολογείται τὸ μέτριον ἄριστον καὶ τὸ μέσον).

tion' of sources. Both these techniques can be explained by taking into account what Aristotle is likely to have thought about historical 'facts' and sources, and about history and politics as sciences. One cannot find absolute certainty in historical investigation, nor complete agreement among historical sources. Aristotle's epistemology will therefore not recognize history as a science *stricto sensu*. It is not the analytical, but the dialectical method that informs the *Ath.Pol.* We may consider first the problematic aspects of its method, then the dialectical method itself, and finally an instance of its application.

Within a given section of his historical narrative, Aristotle often follows one main source, but will add at will items drawn from another source. He does this even when the second source has a tendency contradictory to the main source. He also makes up his own narrative of some parts of Athenian history, drawing individual data from various sources at once. The most extensive treatment of these procedures is that of G. Mathieu, who spoke of a tendency to 'mix' or also to 'reconcile' various historical sources with one another.⁷ Thus, for example, in chapters 14–15 the narration of the rise of Peisistratus derives mainly from Herodotus; Aristotle juxtaposes this narrative with a (disagreeing) chronology drawn from an Atthis, and adds some other matter as well. Thucydides is a main source of the narrative in chapters 29–33 on the Four Hundred and the Five Thousand, but an apologetic source, which will have cited documents, is also used. On the other hand, the author himself put together the account of the Thirty and the Ten from several sources.⁸

In a brief comparison of Aristotle's methods in the *Ath.Pol.* and in his biological writings, M. Pokrowsky drew attention to evidence that even the supposedly strict, empirical naturalist commingled his own observations with the reports of others. On occasion Aristotle even corrected such second-hand reports not on the basis of any observed evidence to the contrary but merely in order to make the reports more plausible. Pokrowsky called such changes "rein rationalistische Verbesserungen."⁹ For example, Aristotle (*Hist.An.* 502a13) repeats Herodotus' description of the hippopotamus (2.71, οὐρὴν ἵππου καὶ φωνὴν μέγαθος ὄσον τε βοῦς ὁ μέγιστος) but makes one change: it is not as large as an ox, but only the size of a donkey (μέγεθος δ'

⁷ G. Mathieu, *Aristote, Constitution d'Athènes: Essai sur la méthode suivie par Aristote dans la discussion des textes* (Brussels 1915) 11, 26f, 50f, 72, 115, 124; cf. Rhodes 27ff, 50, 55.

⁸ See Rhodes 191–99; 29, 365–68; and 420ff.

⁹ M. Pokrowsky, "Ueber das Verhältnis der *Ἀθπ.* zu den naturwissenschaftlichen Schriften des Aristoteles," *NJbb* 151 (1895) 465–76, at 466f.

ἔστιν ἠλίκον ὄνος). Herodotus' assertion that Ethiopians have black semen (3.101.2) is countered by Aristotle on the ground that Ethiopians do not have black teeth.¹⁰ Again, Aristotle repeats Herodotus' note that the crocodile is blind in the water (2.68), but he expresses himself less categorically (*Hist.An.* 503a11, βλέπουσι δ' ἐν μὲν τῷ ὕδατι φαύλως).

Similarly, in the *Ath.Pol.* Aristotle several times corrects or contradicts his sources on grounds of likelihood. He asserts that the second of the three original property qualifications, the cavalry, was "more likely" to have been determined by a measure of produce *en gros*, as was the case with the *pentakosiomedimnoi*, than by one's ability to keep a horse. The latter was the contention of some sources which adduced in evidence Anthemion's dedication of a statue of a horse upon becoming a knight.¹¹ Those who say that Solon's laws were purposely vague, so that the courts would have more power, are contradicted by Aristotle on grounds of likelihood (9.2, οὐ μὴν εἰκός). Likewise, Aristotle places the disarming of the population at the beginning of Peisistratus' third tyranny (15.4–5), in accordance with his general rules about the establishment of tyranny.¹² Then he is forced to contradict Thucydides' account of the disarming of the men in the Panathenaic procession by Hippias (Thuc. 6.56.2–3, *Ath.Pol.* 18.4).

How could Aristotle make so free with his sources as to mix them and play them off one against the other, accepting or rejecting data as he saw fit, without pausing to consider what doubt was thereby cast both on his sources and on his own account? The answer lies in Aristotle's conception of the nature of his enterprise and its limitations.

In the *Poetics* Aristotle contends that history, because it tends to deal with the particular rather than the universal, is less philosophical than poetry:¹³

¹⁰ *Gen.An.* 736a10: Ἡρόδοτος γὰρ οὐκ ἀληθῆ λέγει φάσκων μέλαιναν εἶναι τὴν τῶν Αἰθιοπῶν γονήν, ὥσπερ ἀναγκαῖον ὄν τῶν τὴν χροάν μελάνων εἶναι πάντα μέλανα, καὶ ταύθ' ὄρων καὶ τοὺς ὀδόντας αὐτῶν ὄντας λευκοὺς. See also the immediately preceding *a priori* polemic against Ctesias of Cnidus (736a2ff).

¹¹ *Ath.Pol.* 7.4: οὐ μὴν ἀλλ' εὐλογώτερον τοῖς μέτροις διηρηῆσθαι καθάπερ τοὺς πεντακοσιομεδίμνους.

¹² *Pol.* 1311a12–14. On the topographical and chronological improbability of Aristotle's account see U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Aristoteles und Athen* I (Berlin 1893) 289–92; Mathieu (*supra* n.7) 40f. The theory that this disarmament is an Aristotelian inference is strengthened by the fact that Aristotle has Peisistratus say almost the same thing after the disarmament (*Ath.Pol.* 15.5, οὐ χρῆ θαυμάζειν οὐδὲ ἀθυμεῖν, ἀλλ' ἀπελθόντας ἐπὶ τῶν ἰδίων εἶναι, τῶν δὲ κοινῶν αὐτὸς ἐπιμελήσεσθαι πάντων) as Herodotus does after the battle at Pallene (1.63.2, θαρσέειν τε κελεύοντες καὶ ἀπιέναι ἕκαστον ἐπὶ τὰ ἑωυτοῦ). See also Rhodes 213.

¹³ 1415b4–11. On this celebrated and puzzling passage see F. W. Walbank, "History and Tragedy," *Historia* 9 (1960) 216–34; G. de Ste. Croix, "Aristotle on History and

ἀλλὰ τούτῳ διαφέρει, τῷ τὸν μὲν τὰ γενόμενα λέγειν, τὸν δὲ οἷα ἂν γένοιτο. διὸ καὶ φιλοσοφώτερον καὶ σπουδαιότερον ποιήσις ἱστορίας ἐστίν· ἢ μὲν γὰρ ποιήσις μᾶλλον τὰ καθόλου, ἢ δ' ἱστορία τὰ καθ' ἕκαστον λέγει. ἔστιν δὲ καθόλου μὲν, τῷ ποίῳ τὰ ποῖα ἅττα συμβαίνει λέγειν ἢ πράττειν κατὰ τὸ εἶκος ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον, οὐ στοχάζεται ἢ ποιήσις ὀνόματα ἐπιτιθεμένη· τὸ δὲ καθ' ἕκαστον, τί Ἀλκιβιάδης ἔπραξεν ἢ τί ἔπαθεν.

This characterization of history means that, for Aristotle, history cannot be an investigation in which demonstration (*ἀπόδειξις*) and scientific understanding (*ἐπιστήμη*) figure (*Metaph.* 1039b27–40a7), for *ἐπιστήμη* is only of τὸ καθόλου. Moreover, in Aristotle's view there is no demonstration of what is not eternal and unchanging, nor is there any knowledge of it in an unqualified sense (*An.Post.* 75b21–26):

φανερὸν δὲ καὶ ἐὰν ὦσιν αἱ προτάσεις καθόλου ἐξ ὧν ὁ συλλογισμὸς, ὅτι ἀνάγκη καὶ τὸ συμπέρασμα αἰδίων εἶναι τῆς τοιαύτης ἀποδείξεως καὶ τῆς ἀπλῶς εἰπεῖν ἀποδείξεως. οὐκ ἔστιν ἄρα ἀπόδειξις τῶν φθαρτῶν οὐδ' ἐπιστήμη ἀπλῶς, ἀλλ' οὕτως ὥσπερ κατὰ συμβεβηκός, ὅτι οὐ καθ' ὅλου αὐτοῦ ἐστὶν ἀλλὰ ποτὲ καὶ πῶς.

If it is not a fit subject for strict scientific investigation, history will have to make do with premises that are less than certain and reach conclusions that are also only likely, not certain.

Besides dealing with particular occurrences, political history has other characteristics which make it an unfit subject for apodictic reasoning. It is about the doings and development of states, which are composed of parts which, in turn, are constituted by people. Wherever the actions of people are concerned, choice and deliberation figure among the explanatory factors.¹⁴ This is not true of an art or *techne*, which does not deliberate about its goals or methods (*Ph.* 199b28ff). Politics and the history of—or rather the explanation¹⁵ of the development of—politics in any state fall under the science of ethics.¹⁶

Aristotle has a particular methodology for dealing with subjects like ethics, where scientific accuracy and invariability are not to be ex-

Poetry," in *The Ancient Historian and His Materials, Essays in Honour of C. E. Stevens* (Farnborough 1975) 45–58; R. Weil, "Philosophie et histoire: La vision de l'histoire chez Aristote," in *La "Politique" d'Aristote* (Entretiens Hardt 11 [1965]) 162–63.

¹⁴ *Int.* 19a7–8; *Eth.Nic.* 1112a18ff, 1104a5–10.

¹⁵ Cf. e.g. *An.Post.* 71b9–12: ἐπίστασθαι δὲ οἰόμεθ' ἕκαστον ἀπλῶς . . . ὅταν τὴν τ' αἰτίαν οἰώμεθα γινώσκειν δι' ἣν τὸ πρᾶγμα ἐστίν, ὅτι ἐκείνου αἰτία ἐστὶ, καὶ μὴ ἐνδέχεσθαι τοῦτ' ἄλλως ἔχειν; and *Ph.* 184a12ff.

¹⁶ *Eth.Nic.* 1180a32ff, 1181b14ff.

pected¹⁷ in the premises or the conclusions of arguments. The method is called dialectic, and Aristotle describes it in detail in the *Topics*. This work, perhaps an instruction manual for the Academy's course on debating, gives a set of rules for solving 'dialectical problems', problems that result when the many and the wise disagree with one another or among themselves (*Top.* 100b21–23).

One such dialectical problem was that of ἀκρασία or weakness of the will. In his discussion of the conflicting opinions about *akrasia* (*Eth.Nic.* 1145f), Aristotle gives his clearest example of the dialectical method.¹⁸ He begins by explaining his method (b2–7):

δεῖ δ', ὥσπερ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων, τιθέντας τὰ φαινόμενα καὶ πρῶτον διαπορήσαντας οὕτω δεικνύναι μάλιστα μὲν πάντα τὰ ἔνδοξα περὶ ταῦτα τὰ πάθη, εἰ δὲ μή, τὰ πλείστα καὶ κυριώτατα· ἐὰν γὰρ λύηται τε τὰ δυσχερῆ καὶ καταλείπηται τὰ ἔνδοξα, δεδειγμένον ἂν εἴη ἱκανῶς.

Next he lists seven beliefs about weakness held by many people (ἔνδοξα), concluding with the words τὰ μὲν οὖν λεγόμενα ταύτ' ἐστίν. Then various problems arising from these beliefs in combination with one another or with other beliefs are set out (ἀπορίαι). Finally, he gives a solution (λύσις) of these problems, i.e. a theory of weakness which 'saves' as many of the common beliefs as possible. It is important to save as many of the ἔνδοξα as possible, because the opinions of the wise and the many are not likely to be wholly without truth.¹⁹ Indeed, whatever all agree upon is true.²⁰

It is not only in studies such as ethics that dialectic is useful. Aristotle says that dialectic is the method to be used in clarifying the 'starting points' (ἀρχαί) of every science, since no science can examine its own ἀρχαί (*Top.* 101a34–b4). These starting points include axioms and also general concepts, such as place (*Ph.* 208a27ff) and the eternity of the universe (*Cael.* 270b4ff). They will be examined on the basis of the opinions of the wise and of the many (ἔνδοξα). These include, for example, philosophical theories, concepts implied in our ordinary language, and the products of observation, both in our daily lives and in the pursuit of science (φαινόμενα κατ' αἴσθησιν, e.g. *Cael.* 306a16–17); all these data can be referred to as φαινόμενα or ἔνδοξα, and they will be different, as the subjects to be in-

¹⁷ *Eth.Nic.* 1094b11ff: because of the πλάνη and διαφορά in political matters, one ought not to look for τὰκριβές, but rather describe matters τύπω; cf. 1104a1–5.

¹⁸ Cf. J. Burnet, *The Ethics of Aristotle* (London 1900) xxxi–xlili.

¹⁹ Cf. *Metaph.* 993a30–b5, τίς ἂν θύρας ἀμάρτοι;

²⁰ *Eth.Nic.* 1173a1: ἄ γὰρ πᾶσι δοκεῖ, ταῦτ' εἶναί φαμεν· ὁ δ' ἀναιρῶν ταύτην τὴν πίστιν οὐ πάνυ πιστότερα ἐρεῖ. Cf. 1143b11–14.

vestigated will differ.²¹ We shall see that in history, too, various kinds of *ἔνδοξα* present themselves to the researcher for consideration.

Insofar as any inquiry is about the starting points of science or begins from observations which are not invariable and which may conflict, that inquiry will be dialectical. Characteristics of the observations and authorities themselves will determine, when there is a conflict, whether any particular 'phenomenon' is 'saved' or not. Does the observation cohere with what we already know? Is the authority trustworthy? These are the questions that one must ask. Thus, in many cases the beliefs of the wise will clearly take precedence over the beliefs of others,²² and of these the beliefs of the wisest will count for most.²³ Some of our beliefs are so secure that any datum or theory which contradicts them must be dismissed.²⁴

Political history is a dialectical inquiry in this sense. Its sources, especially for the earlier periods, were unreliable—οἱ μυθολογοῦντες, Aristotle calls them at one point²⁵—and often contradictory. Unreliable stories could at times be supported or contradicted by *σημεῖα*,²⁶ such as survivals of ancient practices in contemporary language or custom. Thus, the fact that the eponymous archon was the last of the three major offices to be instituted is shown by the circumstance that

²¹ Fundamental in this regard are: W. Wieland, *Die aristotelische Physik*² (Göttingen 1970) 65–95, and G. E. L. Owen, "Tithenai ta phainomena," in *Aristote et les problèmes de méthode*, ed. S. Mansion (Louvain 1961) 83–103 (= *Aristotle: a Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. J. Moravcsik [Garden City 1957] 167–90 [cited here]). A basic summary is found in J. L. Ackrill, *Aristotle the Philosopher* (Oxford 1981) 12ff, 107–15. M. C. Nussbaum has also made a valuable restatement of Owen's work and has carried it further: "Saving Aristotle's Phenomena," in *Language and Logos, Studies in Ancient Philosophy Presented to G. E. L. Owen*, edd. M. C. Nussbaum and M. Schofield (Cambridge 1982) 267–93. Nussbaum in my view overstates the dichotomy seen by Owen between scientifically observed phenomena and received opinions (note Owen's own linkage of the two at 174f), while underestimating the degree to which Aristotle actually differentiates these two sources of the pre-existing knowledge from which all understanding must come.

²² *E.g. Eth.Eud.* 1214b28–15a4: *πάσας μὲν οὖν τὰς δόξας ἐπισκοπεῖν . . . περιέρχων . . . τὰς δὲ τῶν σοφῶν ἐπισκεπτέον μόνας· ἄτοπον γὰρ προσφέρειν λόγον τοῖς λόγου μηδὲν δεομένοις, ἀλλὰ πάθους.*

²³ *Top.* 100b22f: *τοῖς σοφοῖς, καὶ τούτοις ἢ πᾶσιν ἢ τοῖς πλείστοις ἢ τοῖς μάλιστα γνωρίμοις καὶ ἐνδόξοις.*

²⁴ The most fundamental of all beliefs is the principle of non-contradiction (*Metaph.* 1005b19–34). One interpretation of Parmenides' theory of the One is dismissed (*Ph.* 185b19ff) on the grounds that it conflicts with this most basic axiom. *Cf.* Nussbaum (*supra* n.21) 283–89.

²⁵ *Pol.* 1312a3 on Sardanapalus: *εἰ ἀληθῆ ταῦτα οἱ μυθολογοῦντες λέγουσιν, εἰ δὲ μὴ ἐπ' ἐκείνου, ἀλλ' ἐπ' ἄλλου γε ἂν γένοιτο τοῦτο ἀληθές.* Compare Hecataeus *FGrHist* 1F1: *οἱ γὰρ Ἑλλήνων λόγοι πολλοὶ τε καὶ γελοῖοι.*

²⁶ *Cf.* Mathieu (*supra* n.7) 26; Rhodes (59) points out that this form of argument was not only Aristotelian.

he, unlike the basileus and polemarch, does not administer any of the *πάτρια* (*Ath.Pol.* 3.3, *σημεῖον*). The present-day venue of the marriage of the basileus' wife and Dionysus is used as a *σημεῖον* of the location of the basileus' original seat (3.5). That Peisistratus' party, the *diakrioi*, included those of impure descent is proved to Aristotle by the revision of the citizen's roll after the fall of the tyranny (13.5, *σημεῖον*).

The less reliable the *ἔνδοξα* from which the investigation begins, the less basic are the philosophical beliefs or theses which will be allowed to contradict or alter them. The opinion of an illustrious predecessor will only be altered if it conflicts with something of which the researcher is quite certain. The opinion of someone not well respected may be altered on less than compelling grounds. These alterations of *ἔνδοξα* will include the "rein rationalistische Verbesserungen" of Pokrowsky.

If, therefore, the accounts which the historian is trying to 'save' produce *ἀπορίαι* because they conflict with one another or with beliefs to which the historian is more attached, then the accounts must be altered in order to be saved. Sometimes a story could be shown to be inconsistent with uncontested fact, as the report that Solon and Peisistratus had been lovers was inconsistent with the dates of those two politicians (*Ath.Pol.* 17.2).²⁷ Sometimes a piece of evidence may be used silently to correct a datum. Thus, it is possible that the amount of Peisistratus' tax on produce is changed from five percent (Thuc. 6.54.5, *εἰκοστὴν μόνον*) to ten percent (*Ath.Pol.* 16.4) on the basis of the story about the 'tax-free farm', in which a tithe was mentioned (16.6, *τὴν δεκάτην*).²⁸ In other cases a generalization serves as evidence that a specific claim should be rejected. So the charge that Solon allowed some of his friends to enrich themselves, and may even have enriched himself, using advance information about the *seisachtheia* (6.2) must yield to the 'democratic' account, which is *πιθανώτερος*, because a man as moderate in all things as Solon is not likely to have sullied himself in such small and unworthy matters.²⁹ Here Aristotle's strongly-held general characterization of Solon resolves the *ἀπορία* presented by two opposing accounts.

²⁷ Rhodes 26 gives a complete list of places where Aristotle says why he prefers one account to another.

²⁸ Day/Chambers (*supra* n.2) 95. Rhodes 215 accepts the suggestion of K. J. Dover in Gomme, *et al.*, *Historical Commentary on Thucydides IV* (Oxford 1970) 329, that *δεκάτη* be interpreted as a generic term, which could include the more specific *εἰκοστή*.

²⁹ *Ath.Pol.* 6.3: οὐ γὰρ εἰκὸς ἐν μὲν τοῖς ἄλλοις οὕτω μέτριον γενέσθαι καὶ κοινόν . . . ἐν οὕτω δὲ μικροῖς καὶ ἀναξίοις καταρρυπαίνειν ἑαυτόν.

In the light of these examples, it is possible to argue that all the changes made by Aristotle in Thucydides' account of the assassination of Hipparchus were introduced in order to bring the incident into line with a single Aristotelian thesis about *stasis*. Aristotle believes, namely, that revolutions happen *from* trifles, but *about* great issues.³⁰ Political imbalances form the background for the political conspiracies which seize upon erotic happenstances and other incidents, using them as occasions for revolution.

Aristotle states that Hippias and Hipparchus controlled Athens after the death of Peisistratus,³¹ makes Hipparchus out to be a poorly-behaved fellow, lacking in seriousness, and then ascribes the insult against Harmodius' sister to the outrageous brother Thettalus (*Ath. Pol.* 18.1–2).³² Peisistratus had been a very moderate tyrant, and Hippias was well qualified to continue his father's long and peaceful rule (*φύσει πολιτικὸς καὶ ἔμφρων*), but the presence of the other two brothers, with their dubious characters, is bound to lead to trouble for the tyranny. For Aristotle is insistent on the fact that a long-lived tyranny is very much a result of the tyrant's moderate character and avoidance of scandal.³³ Aristotle's assignment of the actual insult to Thettalus, when Hipparchus was the victim of the ensuing conspiracy, shows that the conspiracy was, in his opinion, not designed primarily as revenge for the insult, but was rather aimed at all three tyrants and the end of their reign. Harmodius and Aristogeiton are made into the leaders of a political plot, in accordance with Aristotle's general theory about revolts.

There are four other differences over matters of fact between Thucydides and Aristotle in regard to the murder of Hipparchus. These also make most sense in the context of a politically motivated conspiracy.³⁴ First is the statement that Harmodius' sister was in-

³⁰ *Pol.* 1303b17–18: *γίγνονται μὲν οὖν αἱ στάσεις οὐ περὶ μικρῶν ἀλλ' ἐκ μικρῶν, στασιάζουσι δὲ περὶ μεγάλων.*

³¹ Cf. Jacoby (*supra* n.4) 332 n.7, "a compromise in regard to a most essential point of divergence between the contrasting versions of the tradition."

³² The literature on this passage is too large to note here; see the treatment in Rhodes *ad loc.* for a summary. I am unconvinced by attempts to delete parts of this passage (so J. M. Stahl, "Thessalos der Sohn des Peisistratos," *RhM* 50 [1895] 383–93, esp. 386–89, and C. Fornara, "The Tradition about the Murder of Hipparchus," *Historia* 17 [1968] 400–24, esp. 414–18), or to interpret away the differences from Thucydides (so U. Wilcken, "Thettalos," *Hermes* 27 [1897] 478–82).

³³ Cf. *Pol.* 1314b24: *ἔτι δὲ μὴ μόνον αὐτὸν φαίνεσθαι μηθένα τῶν ἀρχομένων ὑβρίζοντα . . . ἀλλὰ μηδ' ἄλλον μηδένα τῶν περὶ αὐτῶν*; see also 1315a15–24. Immoderate conduct makes the tyrant's subjects resentful and disposes them to use any small incident as an excuse to overthrow the tyranny: 1311b9–11.

³⁴ There were other accounts of Hipparchus' assassination in circulation, e.g. the pseudo-Platonic *Hipparchus* and (probably) the *Atthis* of Androton, but there is no

sulted at the Panathenaia (18.2), when Thucydides says that this occurred “in some procession” (6.55.1). Since the murder of Hipparchus took place at the Greater Panathenaia (*Ath.Pol.* 18.3 τοῖς Παναθηναίοις, Thuc. 6.56.2 Παναθήναια τὰ μέγαρα), Aristotle’s version makes the time elapsed between the insult and the murder four years (if both were at a different Greater Panathenaia) or one year (if the insult was at a Lesser Panathenaia, the murder at the Greater) or a few days (if both events occurred during the same festival). That the interval was relatively long is suggested by the second disagreement with Thucydides: Aristotle says that there were many co-conspirators with Harmodius and Aristogeiton (18.2), while Thucydides says there were not many, for security’s sake (6.56.3). The third conflict pits Aristotle’s statement that the Panathenaic parade was not, in those days, conducted in arms (18.4) against Thucydides (6.56.2–3, 58.2). Fourth, Thucydides states that Aristogeiton at first escaped but was later caught and roughly treated, while the other conspirators were discovered by Hippias’ ploy of disarming the citizens and then searching for those who retained their daggers (6.58.1–2). Aristotle disagrees explicitly, saying that the λεγόμενος λόγος³⁵ is untrue, but that Hippias was at first unable to discover the co-conspirators and was led to torture Aristogeiton for their names (18.4–6).

All these positions taken by Aristotle work well in the context of a political conspiracy. In that context it is reasonable to believe that the insult took place one or even four years before the murder, providing the impetus for Harmodius and Aristogeiton to found their conspiracy and allowing time for them to mobilize those dissatisfied with the tyranny and gather their many helpers. About Thucydides’ account, certain questions arise, which may have been seen by Aristotle. If the sole reason for the plot were the insult to Harmodius’ sister, why would anyone not personally connected with Harmodius join in the plot? Yet Thucydides’ statement allows not only that there were other conspirators, but that there would have been more, had security not dictated otherwise (6.56.3, ἦσαν δ’ οὐ πολλοὶ οἱ ξυνομωμοκότες ἀσφαλείας ἔνεκα). Furthermore, if life was so pleasant under the tyrants, why should the men in the procession, if they were armed, have supported the conspirators against the tyrants’ body-

reason to believe that Aristotle was following another source in his disagreements with Thucydides. Even if some or all of the *Ath.Pol.*’s corrections of Thucydides’ account did stem from another source, rather than from conjecture, Aristotle’s reasons for preferring that source to Thucydides may have been the ones argued here.

³⁵ Cf. *Eth.Nic.* 1145b20, cited *supra* 279: τὰ λεγόμενα.

guards (6.56.2)? Thucydides' account of the murder, as is clear from the overall similarity and coincidences in vocabulary, was the basis of the *Ath.Pol.* narration. It seems likely that Aristotle saw the problems in Thucydides' version and decided that the murder of Hipparchus was not just an ἀλόγιστος τόλμα ἐκ τοῦ παραχρῆμα περιδεοῦς, but had been part of a comprehensive, politically-inspired conspiracy. This theory also was consistent with Aristotle's view that erotic happenstances give rise to, but are not really the issue in, revolutions.

As a result of these two types of ἀπορία, internal inconsistency and disagreement with a basic Aristotelian theory, Aristotle 'saved the phenomena' (*i.e.* the bulk of the report he inherited from Thucydides) by altering certain details of Thucydides' report, and thereby altering its tenor. According to the basic theory of dialectic, the method here employed, all one has to go on in history are one's own general principles and reports which may well be faulty. That the reports and the principles, when combined, may contradict one another and have to be altered or partially dropped cannot be allowed to cast the resulting synthesis in an unfavorable light. The opinions of the wise and the many are unlikely to miss the truth completely, and we often have nothing better to offer.³⁶

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES
August, 1984

³⁶ My early work on this topic benefited from the advice of Professors R. S. Brumbaugh, H. von Staden, and D. Kagan; it is a pleasure to thank them for their help.