Democratic Freedom and the Concept of Freedom in Plato and Aristotle

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GIVEN THE MODERN OBSESSION with the concept of freedom and the almost inevitable link between freedom and democracy it is no wonder that classical scholars show renewed interest in the ancient Greek concept of *eleutheria* and its relation to the modern concept of freedom. Two foci of attention are (1) democratic *eleutheria*, in particular the Athenians' understanding of political freedom, and (2) the philosophers' alternative conception of *eleutheria*, in particular Plato's and Aristotle's understanding of what freedom is really about.[1]

The Different Meanings of Freedom in Classical Sources

In earlier studies I have treated *eleutheria* in the Athenian democracy.[2] But since *eleutheria* is a word with several meanings and many uses I will open my discussion with a survey of the different senses in which the noun *eleutheria* and the adjective *eleutheros* are used in classical Greek authors.[3]

[1] The two outstanding recent contributions to the study of freedom in ancient Greece are Kurt Raaflaub, *The Discovery of Freedom in Ancient Greece* (Chicago 2004), covering the Archaic and early Classical period, and Peter Liddel, *Civic Obligation and Individual Liberty in Ancient Athens* (Oxford 2007), covering the Classical period from ca. 450 to ca. 320 B.C.

[2] M. H. Hansen, *Was Athens a Democracy? Popular Rule, Liberty and Equality in Ancient and Modern Political Thought* (Copenhagen 1989); "The Ancient Athenian and the Modern Liberal View of Liberty as a Democratic Ideal," in J. Ober and C. Hedrick (eds.), *Demokratia. A Conversation on Democracies, Ancient and Modern* (Princeton 1996) 91–104.

[3] This section is a revised and expanded version of Hansen, *Demokratia* 93–94.

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1. The oldest and throughout antiquity most common meaning of *eleutheros* is "being free" as opposed to "being a slave" (*doulos*). It is the only meaning attested in the Homeric poems,[4] and if a Greek in antiquity was asked what *eleutheria* was, the presumption is that first of all he would think of the opposition between *eleutheria* and *douleia* and say that a free person (*eleutheros*) was his own master by contrast with a slave (*doulos*) who was the possession of his master (*despotes*).[5] In this context a few attestations of the opposition *eleutheros-doulos* will suffice: In 406 the Athenians launched a fleet manned with all those of military age, both slaves and free.[6] And according to Demosthenes an essential difference between slaves and free is that slaves, but not free, can be exposed to corporal punishment.[7] "Evidently, this general notion of *eleutheria* is not the notion of political liberty,"[8] and it is not particularly democratic since slaves existed in every *polis* regardless of its constitution. But in a metaphorical sense the opposition between free and slave was used in political discourse and that brings us to the next meaning.

2. When status was at stake *eleutheros* often had the meaning of being free-born in the sense of being a born citizen. In such a context one would expect *eleutheros* to denote both citizens and free foreigners as opposed to slaves, and such a meaning of the adjective is indeed attested,[9] but there are more attestations

[4] ἐλεύθερον ἦμαρ ἀπούρας Hom. *Il.* 6.455; Raaflaub, *Discovery* 23–37.

[5] Arist. *Pol.* 1253b4, 1254a12–13; *IG* II² 1128.19–20. Y. Garlan, *Slavery in Ancient Greece* (Ithaca 1988) 40–45.

[6] Xen. *Hell.* 1.6.24: οἱ δὲ Ἀθηναῖοι … ἐψηφίσαντο βοηθεῖν ναυσὶν ἑκατὸν καὶ δέκα, εἰσβιβάζοντες τοὺς ἐν τῇ ἡλικίᾳ ὄντας ἅπαντας καὶ δούλους καὶ ἐλευθέρους.

[7] Dem. 24.167: τί δοῦλον ἢ ἐλεύθερον εἶναι διαφέρει;. For a non-Athenian example see *SEG* XXIII 498.13-16: τὸμ μὲν δοῦλον μαστιγοῦν ἐν τῶι κύφων[ι] πλ[ηγα]ῖς πεντήκοντα, τὸν δὲ ἐλεύθ[ε]ρον ζημιοῦν δραχμαῖς [δ]έκα κτλ. (Delos, III B.C.).

[8] J. Barnes, "Aristotle and Political Liberty," in R. Kraut and S. Skultety (eds.), *Aristotle's Politics. Critical Essays* (Lanham 2005) 185–201, at 190.

[9] [Xen.] *Ath.Pol.* 1.12; Xen. *Hell.* 7.3.8. At Pl. *Lach.* 186B foreigners (ξένοι) are opposed to citizens (Ἀθηναῖοι) and subdivided into slaves (δοῦλοι) and free

of the noun *eleutheria* denoting citizenship by descent[10] and the adjective *eleutheros* denoting citizens to the exclusion of free foreigners.[11] This type of *eleutheria* was a specific democratic value and formed the basis of one view of democratic equality:[12] according to Aristotle democrats believed that since they were all *eleutheroi* (by descent) they ought to be equal in everything (*Pol.* 1301a28–35).

3. *Eleutheria* was regularly invoked as a basic democratic ideal in debates that contrasted democracy and tyranny. The opposite of this form of *eleutheria* was being enslaved in a metaphorical sense, i.e. being subjected to a despotic ruler.[13] The concepts of freedom and slavery are transposed from the microcosmos of the household (*oikia*) to the macrocosmos of the city-state (*polis*) and used in a metaphorical sense. In Athenian political rhetoric the metaphorical opposition between democratic freedom and slavery under a tyrant is commonly invoked in connection with three historical situations in which it is particularly relevant: the expulsion of the tyrants in 510, the wars against Persia in 490 and 480–479, and the wars against Philip of Macedon in the mid fourth century.

Herodotos (5.78) contrasts the weakness of the Athenians under tyranny (τυραννευόμενοι) with their military strength when they had achieved freedom of speech (ἰσηγορία), and his explanation is that the Athenians shirked when they were oppressed believing that they were serving the master of a slave (δεσπότῃ) whereas, after the liberation (ἐλευθερωθέντων), everyone was eager to advance his own interests.

(ἐλεύθεροι).

[10] E.g. Arist. *Pol.* 1280a4–5, 1281a6.

[11] Dem. 57.69; Aeschin. 3.169; Cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1283a33, 1290b10, 1291b26, 1301a28–35. On *Ath.Pol.* 42.1, I follow W. Wyse, *The Speeches of Isaeus* (Cambridge 1904) 281, *contra* P. Rhodes, *Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia* (Oxford 1981) 499.

[12] Pl. *Menex.* 239A, ἡ ἰσογονία ἡμᾶς ἡ κατὰ φύσιν ἰσονομίαν ἀναγκάζει ζητεῖν κατὰ νόμον.

[13] *Anon. Iambl.* 7.12 (D.-K. II 404.16–20); Dem. 6.24–25.

In the *Third Philippic* (9.36–40) Demosthenes contrasts the Greeks' former devotion to liberty (ἐλευθερία) with their present compliance with being enslaved (δουλεύειν). The earlier period is, of course, the Persian War when the Greeks prevailed over the Persians' wealth and set Hellas free (τοῦ Περσῶν ἐκράτησε πλούτου καὶ ἐλευθέραν ἦγε τὴν Ἑλλάδα). In those days the orators and generals did not take bribes but distrusted tyrants and barbarians (τοὺς τυράννους καὶ τοὺς βαρβάρους). The present situation is the power struggle against Philip of Macedon in which the Greeks are paralysed because of the corruption of their political leaders.

This topic is further pursued in the *Fourth Philippic* (10.4): in the Greek *poleis* there are two opposed factions: those who want neither to rule others against their will (μήτ' ἄρχειν βίᾳ βούλεσθαι μηδενός) nor to be slaves (δουλεύειν ἄλλῳ) but to live as citizens in liberty and equality under the rule of law (ἐν ἐλευθερίᾳ καὶ νόμοις ἐξ ἴσου πολιτεύεσθαι), and those who support Philip and want tyranny and domination (οἱ τυραννίδων καὶ δυναστειῶν ἐπιθυμοῦντες).[14] They prevail everywhere in Hellas and Athens is almost the only stable democracy still in existence (πόλις δημοκρατουμένη βεβαίως).

In the two passages from Demosthenes (9.36-40 and 10.4) as well as in a number of other sources (e.g. Isoc. 20.10, Lys. 26.2), the opposition is between democratic citizens who want to be free and traitors who want to rule their fellow citizens as tyrants by betraying the *polis* to an outside power. In so far as their power over their fellow citizens depends on sacrificing the *autonomia* of their *polis*, these sources belong under (7) *infra*.

4. In some passages *eleutheros* does not denote just any citizen but specifically the poor citizen. In such contexts the free are identified with the poor and opposed to the rich,[15] and the

[14] τυραννίδες are tyrannies, δυναστεῖαι narrow oligarchies, as duly pointed out by Henri Weil, *Les Harangues de Démosthène* (Paris 1873) 369 *ad loc.*: "δυναστειῶν. Ce terme doit être pris ici dans le sens précis de gouvernement tyrannique exercée en commun par un petit nombre d'hommes ou de familles. Cf. Thukydides, III, 62."

[15] Arist. *Pol.* 1281b22–25, 1294a16–17.

opposition between rich and poor is juxtaposed with the opposition between oligarchy and democracy. According to Aristotle, for example, a constitution is a democracy when the *polis* is ruled by a majority of free and poor whereas it is an oligarchy when a minority of rich and well born are in power.[16] The same juxtaposition of freedom, poverty, and democracy as against slavery, wealth, and oligarchy is attested in a dictum ascribed to Demokritos: "Poverty under a democracy is preferable to so-called prosperity under dynasts (*dynastai*) to the same extent as freedom (*eleutheria*) is preferable to slavery (*douleia*)."[17] In these passages the opposite of democratic liberty is not slavery under a tyrant but under an oligarchic government. In Athenian political rhetoric the opposition is attested in Demosthenes' speech *On the Liberty of the Rhodians* where he argues (15.17–21) that oligarchically ruled *poleis* such as Chios, Mytilene, and Rhodes have been reduced to slavery (*douleia*) while democratic Athens is the only *polis* that defends freedom (*eleutheria*). At Lycurg. 1.61 Athenian freedom is opposed to slavery both under the tyranny of the Peisistratids and under the narrow oligarchy of the Thirty.

5. In classical Athens all citizens were both entitled to and expected to participate in the running of the democratic institutions; not, as one might have expected, as voters in the Assembly, but rather by taking turns in filling all the magistracies.

[16] Arist. *Pol.* 1290a40–b3, 17–18; 1294a16–17.

[17] 68 B 251 D.-K.: *ἡ ἐν δημοκρατίῃ πενίη τῆς παρὰ τοῖς δυνάστῃσι καλεομένης εὐδαιμονίης τοσοῦτόν ἐστι αἱρετωτέρη, ὁκόσον ἐλευθερίη δουλείης*. This dictum of Demokritos is usually understood as an opposition between democracy and tyranny: D.-K. translates "Fürsten"; M. Gagarin and P. Woodroff, *Early Greek Political Thought* (Cambridge 1995) 58, "dictator" in the singular. But in my opinion such an interpretation is unwarranted. *δυνάσται* in the plural denotes not a tyrant but a narrow group of oligarchs, cf. Thuc. 3.62.3; Pl. *Grg.* 492B, *Pol.* 291D; Arist. *Pol.* 1292b5–10, 1293a30–34; *Ath.Pol.* 36.1; Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.46; Andoc. 2.27; Aeschin. 3.220; Dem. 60.25 and n.14 *supra*. Poverty in a democracy implies *e contrario* that the *εὐδαιμονία* under the dynasts is wealth and that supports the interpretation that the opposition is between democracy and oligarchy.

"To rule and be ruled in turns" was described as *eleutheria* and conceived of as a kind of freedom to be found in democracies only.[18]

6. The most controversial form of democratic liberty, however, was the ideal that everybody had a right to live as he pleased (ζῆν ὡς βούλεταί τις) without being oppressed by other persons or by the authorities.[19] It is sometimes stressed that a person's *eleutheria* in this sense was restricted by the (democratic) laws (e.g. Hdt. 3.83.3); other sources emphasise that the principle *zen hos bouletai tis* applied to the private and not to the public sphere of life.[20] A specific aspect of this form of freedom was freedom of speech, i.e. one's right to speak one's mind, often referred to by the term παρρησία,[21] sometimes by ἰσηγορία.[22]

7. *Eleutheria* often denotes the independence of a *polis*. In this sense *eleutheria* is used synonymously with *autonomia* about *poleis* that are not dominated by others.[23] The opposite of free states (*eleutherai poleis*) or self-governing states (*autonomoi poleis*) is dependent states (*hypekooi poleis*)[24] which sometimes are described as

[18] Eur. *Supp.* 406–408; Isoc. 20.20; Arist. *Pol.* 1317b2–3, see 13 *infra.*

[19] Hdt. 3.83.3; Thuc. 2.37.2, 7.69.2; Pl. *Resp.* 557B; Isoc. 7.20, 12.131; Arist. *Pol.* 1310a32–34, 1316b24, 1317b11–17, 1318b39–41, 1319b30. See *infra* and M. H. Hansen, "Ancient Democratic *Eleutheria* and Modern Liberal Democrats' Conception of Freedom," in M. H. Hansen (ed.), *Athenian Demokratia – Modern Democracy: Tradition and Inspiration* (Entr. Fondation Hardt 56, forthcoming).

[20] E.g. Thuc. 2.37.2–3 and 7.69.2 where I agree with Simon Hornblower's rendering of δίαιτα by "daily life": *A Commentary on Thucydides* III (Oxford 2008) 692. See Hansen, *Athenian Demokratia*.

[21] Dem. 9.3. *Parrhesia* is linked with *eleutheria* at Pl. *Resp.* 557B.

[22] [Xen.] *Ath.Pol.* 1.12. *Isegoria* is linked with *eleutheria* at Hdt. 5.78 and Dem. 21.124.

[23] Xen. *Hell.* 3.1.20; *IG* II² 43.20–23, 126.16. M. H. Hansen, "The 'Autonomous City-State'. Ancient Fact or Modern Fiction," in M. H. Hansen and K. Raaflaub (eds.), *Studies in the Ancient Greek Polis* (Stuttgart 1995) 21–43, at 25–28.

[24] Eur. *Heracl.* 286–287, οὐ γὰρ Ἀργείων πόλει ὑπήκοον τήνδ' (πόλιν, viz. Athens) ἀλλ' ἐλευθέραν ἔχω; Thuc. 4.108.2–3; Xen. *Hell.* 3.1.3. Hansen, *Studies* 38.

enslaved states (*douleuousai poleis*).[25] This form of freedom is associated with the external sovereignty of the *polis* regardless of its form of constitution, and it is different from the democratic freedom which concerns the internal sovereignty.[26] *Eleutheria* in the sense of *autonomia* applied to oligarchies—and sometimes even to monarchies (Hdt. 1.210.2, 3.82.5)—as well as to democracies. It was the freedom *of* the *polis*, whereas democratic liberty was freedom *within* the *polis*.[27] Demosthenes claimed that the war against Philip of Macedon was a war for freedom just as the war against Persia had been a century before (18.99–100, 208). But many of the *poleis* that fought in these wars were oligarchies.[28] Freedom in the sense of independence might even be opposed to democracy. When in 404 the Spartan admiral Lysandros had entered the harbour of Piraeus and started the demolition of the walls the common opinion was that that day was the beginning of freedom for Greece.[29] The implicit point is that the freedom of the Greeks had been won by defeating the state that always boasted of having fought for freedom against the Persians, viz. democratic Athens.

8. In Plato's dialogues and in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* freedom is occasionally described as self-government in the sense of self-control.[30] The argument is that human beings are invariably caught in a struggle between rationality and the wish to fulfil their desires. If human beings allow their desires to

[25] Isoc. 6.43, 14.41; Lycurg. 1.50; Pl. *Resp*. 351B.

[26] M. H. Hansen, *Polis and City-State. An Ancient Concept and Its Modern Equivalent* (Copenhagen 1998) 77–83.

[27] Cf. Raaflaub, *Discovery*, on the concept of freedom in interstate relations (118) and freedom within the *polis* (203).

[28] In 479/8 the Greeks set up in Delphi the Serpent-Column (Meiggs/Lewis 27) on which are listed 27 communities "that saved the Greek *poleis* from servitude" (δουλοσύνης στυγερᾶς ῥυσάμενοι πόλιας, Diod. 11.33). Either indisputably or presumably at least the following nine were oligarchies: Lakedaimon, Corinth, Tegea, Sikyon, Aigina, Eretria, Chalkis, Elis, and Ambrakia.

[29] Xen. *Hell*. 2.2.23, cf. Thuc. 8.64.5.

[30] E.g. Pl. *Phd*. 115A, *Tht*. 172C, *Phdr*. 256B, *Def*. 412D, 415A; Xen. *Mem*. 4.5.2–5. See *infra*.

dominate their way of life uncontrolled by rationality, they become slaves of their desires and are no longer free. A key aspect of the democratic concept of freedom is the right to live as one likes. When that is understood in the sense of doing what one desires, rational freedom understood as self-control becomes the opposite of democratic freedom. *Eleutheria* in the sense of rational self-control is not far from some modern philosophers' view of what they call "positive freedom,"[31] but though Plato and Aristotle often focus on self-control they hardly ever take it to be a kind of *eleutheria*,[32] and furthermore, *eleutheria* in this sense has no bearing on political and especially on democratic freedom.[33]

9. Finally, there is freedom in the sense of leisure. Plato states that the difference between politically active citizens and people who have practised philosophy from youth corresponds to the difference between slaves (*oiketai*) and free persons (*eleutheroi*): the freedom of the philosopher presupposes the necessary leisure time (*schole*).[34] Similarly freedom is described as leisure in Aristotle's discussion of the purpose of life. He distinguishes between what we do for its own sake and what we do to obtain something else, and this distinction is linked to the distinction between being occupied and being free, in Greek the distinction between *ascholia* and *schole*: we do our work in order to have leisure time but want leisure for its own sake. In this context freedom (*eleutheria*) is identified with leisure (*schole*), whereas work (*ascholia*) is identified with physical work performed by craftsmen and labourers (*banausoi*). We come close to the first sense of freedom (sense 1, *supra*) according to which the free is opposed to the slave.[35]

Only five of these nine uses are specifically connected with democracy (nos. 2–6) and they can be distinguished from one

[31] I. Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford 1969) 131–134. See Hansen, *Athenian Demokratia*.

[32] See 16, 19–20, 24–25 *infra*.

[33] Arist. *Pol.* 1325a19, referring to the philosopher who is essentially *apolis*.

[34] Pl. *Tht.* 172C–D, 175E.

[35] Arist. *Eth.Nic.* 1177b1–26, *Rh.* 1367a30–33, *Pol.* 1337b5–17.

another as follows: *eleutheros* (a) in the sense of being a free-born citizen in a democratic *polis* (no. 2), sometimes one of the poor citizens as opposed to the rich (no. 4), (b) in the sense of being entitled to participate in the running of the political institutions (no. 5), (c) in the sense of living as one pleases (no. 6), and (d) in the sense of not being subjected to a despotic ruler (no. 3) or a narrow group of oligarchs (no. 4). The different uses can in fact be reduced to two: (1) the right to participate in political decision-making is inextricably bound up with being a full citizen by birth (nos. 2, 4–5, cf. Dem. 9.3). (2) The right to live as one pleases is often opposed to being ruled, especially by a tyrant, and any kind of interference by others in one's private life is rejected as illegitimate and undemocratic (nos. 3 and 6, cf. Hdt. 3.83).

From this survey of the different meanings of *eleutheria* in Classical sources I move to an examination of the concept of freedom in Plato and Aristotle. What did they think about the various senses in which the democrats spoke about *eleutheria*? and did they themselves have an alternative explanation of what *eleutheria* was? The first thing to note is that they did not share the same view of *eleutheria*. There are some overlaps but some significant differences as well both in the way they criticise democratic freedom and in their own conception of what freedom really was. To bring out these differences I prefer to treat them in reverse chronological order and start with Aristotle.

Aristotle's View of Eleutheria

First a brief survey of where and how the concept of freedom is treated in Aristotle's ethical and political writings.

Neither in the *Eudemian* nor in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is there any discussion whatsoever of the free person or the concept of freedom. There is no occurrence of the adjective *eleutheros*, and the noun *eleutheria* is attested only once in the *Nicomachean Ethics* in a passage where Aristotle asserts (1131a27–28) that for democrats the basic value is freedom (*eleutheria*), for oligarchs it is wealth (*ploutos*). What we do find in both the *Ethics* is a discussion of *eleutheriotes* in the sense of generosity and its

opposite *aneleutheriotes* in the sense of lack of generosity which is due to illiberality of mind.[36]

Nor does Aristotle in the *Politics* betray any serious interest in the concept of political freedom. In Book 1 he treats the household (*oikia*) which comprises husband, wife, children, and slave(s). In this context *eleutheros* is used conventionally and uncontroversially about the freeborn members of the family in contrast to the slave (*doulos*) who is the unfree (*aneleutheros*) member of the household.[37] In Book 1 there is just one attestation of *eleutheroi* conceived as citizens and equals.[38] In all of Book 2 *eleutheros* occurs just once in the sense of citizens of equal status (1261a32).

In Books 3 to 6 the citizen (*polites*) is the focus and the household is only mentioned in passing.[39] The opposition between free and slaves disappears from the discussion,[40] whereas in these books *eleutheros* is used frequently and consistently to denote the adult male citizen of a *polis*,[41] and it is in democracies in particular that the status of free citizen is a sufficient criterion for the possession of political rights.[42]

The most important treatment of freedom is the long passage in Book 6 where *eleutheria* is defined as the basic value of democracy and is subdivided into two aspects: the opportunity to

[36] *Eth.Eud.* 1215a–1217a; *Eth.Nic.* 1119a22–1123a34, 1127b33–1128b9.

[37] *Pol.* 1253b4, οἰκία δὲ τέλειος ἐκ δούλων καὶ ἐλευθέρων. In Book 1 altogether a dozen attestations of ἐλεύθερος signifying free persons as opposed to slaves.

[38] 1255b20, referring to rule over free and equal [i.e. citizens]. The juxtaposition of free and equal [i.e. citizens] is repeated at 1261a32, which happens to be the only reference to *eleutheroi* in Book 2.

[39] M. H. Hansen, "Aristotle's Two Complementary Views of the Greek *Polis*," in R. W. Wallace and E. M. Harris (eds.), *Transitions to Empire* (Norman 1996) 195–210, at 196–203.

[40] In all three books there are only two attestations of the opposition, viz. at 1295b21–2 and—more importantly—at 1317b12–13.

[41] The passages in which ἐλεύθεροι denotes the citizens to the exclusion of free foreigners include 1261a32, 1279a21, 1281b23–24, 1283a17, 34, 1283b20, 1286a36, 1290b1–3, 1290b18, 1292b39, 1294a11, 17, 20, 1299b27.

[42] 1281b23, 1290b1, 1291b34, 1292b39, 1294a11, 1299b27, 1301a30.

be ruled and rule in turn and the opportunity to live as one likes, an opportunity of which the slave was deprived.[43] In this passage Aristotle reports the democrats' conception of freedom,[44] but on both points his criticism shines through (see *infra* 13–16).

Aristotle's own utopia in Books 7 and 8 conveys a much broader and more varied picture of freedom. The opposition between slave and free is attested in several passages.[45] We are also told that the European cold fosters men who love freedom but are lacking in intellect whereas the Asian heat promotes the inhabitants' intellect but makes them slaves by nature. Only Hellenes can combine freedom and intellect because they inhabit a zone with a temperate climate (1327b20–33). In other chapters *eleutheros* denotes the citizens of a *polis*: in Thessalian *poleis* they have a "free market" (*eleuthera agora*), i.e. a market from which all *banausoi* are banned and trade is prohibited (1331a31–5), and in another chapter we learn that the marines on board the men of war are citizens, viz. *eleutheroi* recruited from the infantry (1327b9–11). In these books the key passage is Aristotle's discussion of whether the free person (*ho eleutheros*) is the philosopher—who is outside the *polis* and therefore can devote all his time to contemplation—or the politically active citizen—who is kept busy participating in the political institutions of his *polis*.

In the light of this survey Aristotle's treatment of the concept of freedom can be summed up as follows. The opposition between freedom and slavery is essential for his analysis of the household and of the *polis* as an economic and social community.[46] When Aristotle analyses the *polis* as a political community he takes the adjective *eleutheros* to designate the citizens,

[43] 1317a40–b17, cf. 1310a30, 1318a10.

[44] W. L. Newman, *The Politics of Aristotle* IV (Oxford 1902) 494; Barnes, *Aristotle's Politics* 192.

[45] 1325a28–30, 1327b25–8, 1330a33, 1333a6, 1337b11.

[46] Sense 1 *supra*, cf. e.g. *Pol.* 1253b4.

either all citizens as against foreigners and slaves,[47] or the poor citizens as against the rich.[48] In both cases the *eleutheroi* are first of all the citizens in a democracy and they are contrasted with the citizens in a tyranny who, metaphorically speaking, are like slaves owned by a cruel master,[49] or with the citizens in an oligarchy who are the subjects of a ruling class of rich citizens.[50] Democratic *eleutheria* is described partly as political participation by ruling and being ruled in turn,[51] and partly as the opportunity to live as one likes.[52] *Eleutheria* in the sense of leisure appears in Book 7 in the important discussion of whether true human happiness is to live as a philosopher detached from the *polis* or as a politically active citizen.[53]

With one exception *eleutheria* as the independence of the *polis* goes unmentioned in the *Politics* simply because Aristotle focuses on the *polis* seen in isolation and has next to nothing to say about the relation between *poleis*.[54] Finally, by contrast with Plato, Aristotle does not take a person's rationality and self-control to be a form of *eleutheria*.[55]

As with Plato, democratic freedom takes pride of place in Aristotle's discussion of *eleutheria*, but here we must distinguish between his report of the democratic view and his own criticism of such a view. That distinction is particularly important in the longest and most explicit description of democratic freedom in all our sources, Aristotle's in *Politics* Book 6 ch. 2 (1317a40–b17):

> Freedom is the foundation of a democratic constitution. That is what they say arguing that it is only under this constitution that people enjoy freedom since, as they hold, every democracy aims

[47] Sense 2, e.g. 1290b10, 1301a30.

[48] Sense 4, e.g. 1281b22–25.

[49] Sense 3, e.g. 1295a15–23.

[50] Sense 4, e.g. 1281b22–25.

[51] Sense 5, e.g. 1317b2–3.

[52] Sense 6, e.g. 1317b10–13.

[53] Sense 9, *Pol.* 1325a18–34.

[54] Sense 7. The exception is 1310b35–38.

[55] Sense 8, see 19 *infra*.

> at freedom. One form of freedom is to be ruled and rule in turn. And democratic justice is arithmetic equality, not equality according to merit. With such a conception of justice the majority must be supreme and what the majority decides is final and constitutes justice. For they say that every citizen must have an equal share. It follows that in democracies the poor prevail over the rich because they are in the majority and because decisions made by the majority are final. This is one characteristic of freedom which all democrats lay down as their definition of the constitution. Another characteristic is "to live as one likes". For this they say is the result of being free just as "not to live as one likes" is the result of being enslaved. This is the second definition of democracy. From that has come [the wish] not to be ruled, preferably by nobody at all, or failing that, to take turns, which furthers a freedom based on equality.

In this passage Aristotle reports not his own but the democrats' dual conception of freedom.[56] On both points, however, his criticism shines through: (1) the democratic concept of political freedom, i.e. to be ruled and rule in turn, is bound up with the arithmetic concept of equality: all are equal and therefore entitled to an equal share of everything.[57] (2) The wish to live as one likes amounts in the end to a wish not to be ruled at all, but—as Aristotle notes—that entails anarchy (1317b14–16).

(1) Aristotle's explicit criticism of these two aspects of democratic freedom is stated in Book 5. His criticism of arithmetic equality comes right at the beginning of the book:

> Democracy arose from the idea that those who are equal in any respect are equal absolutely. All are alike free, therefore they claim that they are all equal absolutely. Oligarchy arose from the assumption that those who are unequal in some one respect are completely unequal. Being unequal in wealth they assume themselves to be unequal absolutely. The next step is when the democrats, on the ground that they are equal, claim equal par-

[56] Newman, *Politics* 494; Barnes, *Aristotle's Politics* 192. See nos. 5–6 *supra* 5–6.

[57] *Pol.* 1317b3–10, 16–17. On equality in Aristotle, see F. D. Harvey, "Two Kinds of Equality," *ClMed* 26 (1965) 101–146, at 113–120.

> ticipation in everything; while the oligarchs, on the ground that they are unequal, seek to get a larger share, because larger is unequal.[58]

Aristotle holds that both the democrats and the oligarchs are right in some respects but wrong in others. He is inclined to describe equality as justice and justice as equality,[59] but points out that one must distinguish between two types of justice: corrective justice (which applies in cases before the courts),[60] and distributive justice (which applies whenever something has to be distributed among people).[61] Similarly one must distinguish between two types of equality, one based on number and one on merit.[62] According to arithmetic equality, all are equal and each counts for one. According to equality based on merit, people are different.[63] Arithmetic equality is democratic, equality according to merit is oligarchic.[64]

The arithmetic equality applies when it is a matter of equality before the law, i.e. when corrective justice is involved. All must suffer the same punishment for the same offence.[65] Here Aristotle sides with the democrats. But equality according to merit applies in the distribution of common goods among the citizens. Here the better citizens deserve to obtain a larger share than the less meritous.[66] According to Aristotle the democrats are wrong when they hold that all are equal in all

[58] 1301a28–35 (transl. Saunders), cf. 1280a22–25, 1301b35–39.

[59] 1280a11: δοκεῖ ἴσον τὸ δίκαιον εἶναι. 1310a30: τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἴσον δίκαιον δοκεῖ εἶναι.

[60] *Eth.Nic.* 1131b25–1132a6: τὸ διορθωτικὸν [δίκαιον]. See R. Kraut, *Aristotle. Political Philosophy* (Oxford 2002) 148–150.

[61] *Eth.Nic.* 1131b28, 1132b24: τὸ (δια)νεμητικὸν δίκαιον. See Kraut, *Aristotle* 145–148.

[62] *Pol.* 1301b29–30, ἔστι δὲ διττὸν τὸ ἴσον· τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἀριθμῷ τὸ δὲ κατ' ἀξίαν ἐστίν. Cf. 1317b3–4. Equality based on merit is also called τὸ κατ' ἀναλογίαν ἴσον, *Pol.* 1301a27, cf. *Eth.Eud.* 1241b32–33.

[63] 1301b29–35, 1281a4–8.

[64] 1280a8–13 and 22–25, 1301b35–40.

[65] *Eth.Nic.* 1131b32–1132a10.

[66] *Eth.Eud.* 1241b32–38, *Eth.Nic.* 1131a20–29, *Pol.* 1301b35–1302a8.

respects and accordingly want to apply the arithmetic form of equality when common goods have to be distributed among the citizens,[67] and in his description of freedom in Book 6 he points out that the democratic form of rotation in office is an example of a mistaken application of arithmetic equality.[68] Aristotle admits that rotation between rulers and ruled is necessary in any *polis*,[69] but he does not approve of annual rotation. In his best *polis* citizens are ruled when young and rulers when becoming old and wise.[70]

Similarly in assemblies, to which all citizens are admitted. Since in almost all *poleis* the poor constitute the majority of the citizens they will be able to control everything if the arithmetic equality is applied. But according to Aristotle there ought in the *polis* to be a balance between rich and poor. That can be obtained, e.g., by having political decisions made in an assembly manned with an equal number of rich and poor. The democratic principle one man/one vote inevitably entails rule by the poor.[71]

(2) Aristotle's criticism of democratic freedom in the sense of each citizen's wish to live as he likes is advanced in a discussion of how one can protect and preserve a given type of constitution, viz. by exposing the young to an education which makes them conform to the constitution they will have to live under when grown up (*Pol.* 1310a12–22). But what they do in a radical democracy is inexpedient, and the reason is a wrong understanding of freedom. Democracy is defined by two criteria: majority rule and freedom (1310a25–30). Majority rule is associated with equality and justice whereas "freedom is what a person wants to do; so that in such democracies everyone lives as he likes, and 'as he desires', as Euripides says; but that is

[67] *Pol.* 1301a28–35, quoted 13–14 *supra*.

[68] 1317b2–4, 15–17.

[69] 1261a32–34: οὐχ οἷόν τε πάντας ἄρχειν, ἀλλ' ἢ κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν ἢ κατά τινα ἄλλην τάξιν χρόνου. Cf. 1259b4–5.

[70] 1329a2–17, 1332b12–1333a16; cf. 1259b14–17.

[71] 1317b4–10; cf. Eur. *Supp.* 353, τήνδ' ἰσόψηφον πόλιν.

wrong. Because to live in accordance with the constitution must not be seen as a form of slavery but as salvation."[72] Later in Book 6 he states that "the opportunity to do whatever one wants is unable to restrain the badness inherent in every human being."[73]

Apart from democratic freedom the most important treatment of *eleutheria* is Aristotle's discussion of freedom in relation to the choice between a political and a philosophical way of life: there are some who claim that it is not the politically active citizen who is free (*eleutheros*), but the philosopher. The political life (*politikos bios*) is incompatible with freedom since there is nothing particularly valuable about being the *despotes* of a slave (*doulos*) and spend one's time issuing orders. In this context *eleutheria* is conceived as leisure, i.e. the time required if one wants to become a true philosopher. The opposing view is that happiness (*eudaimonia*) cannot be the passive life of a philosopher. Happiness presupposes some form of activity and consequently the active political life is preferable to the contemplative philosophical life. Aristotle admits that it is not freedom to be the master of a slave, but he holds, on the other hand, that the rule of free men is as different from the rule of slaves as freedom is different from slavery. He insists that happiness (*eudaimonia*) must be some form of activity (*praxis*) and that it is a mistake to prefer a passive contemplative lifestyle to an active life.[74] So in the *Politics* Aristotle holds that the political

[72] 1310a25–36: *ἐν δὲ ταῖς δημοκρατίαις ταῖς μάλιστα εἶναι δοκούσαις δημοκρατικαῖς τοὐναντίον τοῦ συμφέροντος καθέστηκεν, αἴτιον δὲ τούτου ὅτι κακῶς ὁρίζονται τὸ ἐλεύθερον. δύο γάρ ἐστιν οἷς ἡ δημοκρατία δοκεῖ ὡρίσθαι, τῷ τὸ πλεῖον εἶναι κύριον καὶ τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ· τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἴσον δίκαιον δοκεῖ εἶναι, ἴσον δ' ὅ τι ἂν δόξῃ τῷ πλήθει, τοῦτ' εἶναι κύριον, ἐλεύθερον δὲ* [*καὶ ἴσον*] *τὸ ὅ τι ἂν βούληταί τις ποιεῖν· ὥστε ζῇ ἐν ταῖς τοιαύταις δημοκρατίαις ἕκαστος ὡς βούλεται, καὶ εἰς ὃ χρῄζων, ὡς φησὶν Εὐριπίδης· τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶ φαῦλον· οὐ γὰρ δεῖ οἴεσθαι δουλείαν εἶναι τὸ ζῆν πρὸς τὴν πολιτείαν, ἀλλὰ σωτηρίαν*. Cf. Pl. *Leg*. 715D.

[73] 1318b39–41: *τὸ γὰρ ἐπανακρέμασθαι, καὶ μὴ πᾶν ἐξεῖναι ποιεῖν ὅ τι ἂν δόξῃ, συμφέρον ἐστίν· ἡ γὰρ ἐξουσία τοῦ πράττειν ὅ τι ἂν ἐθέλῃ τις οὐ δύναται φυλάττειν τὸ ἐν ἑκάστῳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων φαῦλον*.

[74] 1325a16–34; cf. R. Kraut, *Aristotle Politics Books VII and VIII* (Oxford 1997) 70 and 125–127.

life is the best form of life and compatible with freedom.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, however, Aristotle takes the contemplative life to be the summit of human happiness. True happiness presupposes leisure (*schole*), and the politically active person is too preoccupied with work (*ascholos*) to become an accomplished philosopher (1177a27–b26). The freedom of the philosopher comprises freedom from political participation and Aristotle's view of this form of freedom matches his view that the true philosopher stands aloof from the *polis* and is essentially *apolis*.[75]

It is worth noting that it is only in the *Politics* that the concept of freedom (*eleutheria*) is involved in Aristotle's way of presenting the problem. Discussing the relation between the political and the philosophical life in the *Nichomachean Ethics* Aristotle avails himself of the concepts of *schole* and *ascholia* and there is no indication that *schole* in this context is seen as a form of freedom (*eleutheria*). Conversely, only the concept of *eleutheria* appears in the *Politics*. The champions of the philosophical lifestyle conceive of *eleutheria* as leisure but without availing themselves of the concepts of *schole* and *ascholia*.

To sum up. Aristotle agrees with the democrats that a *polis* is a political community of equals who take turns ruling and being ruled. But by contrast with the democrats he does not allow all *eleutheroi* in the sense of citizens to participate in politics. Wage earners (*thetes*) and others who have to work as craftsmen or traders are excluded from his model *polis*.[76] Nor does he want an annual rotation. His citizens shall have to be ruled when they are young and to rule when they become old and experienced.[77] Aristotle dislikes the democratic freedom to

[75] A life of contemplation is incompatible with the political life (*Eth.Nic.* 117b4); it is a life for gods or demigods (177b26 ff.) and a life in isolation (*Pol.* 1324a28). Admittedly, the philosopher lives in a society and respects its laws (*Eth.Nic.* 1178b5–7), but he is not a member of the *polis,* he is essentially *apolis* (*Pol.* 1253a2–4), and it is undoubtedly the philosophers Aristotle has in mind when in *Historia Animalium* (488a7) he asserts that not all men are *politika zoa*.

[76] *Pol.* 1328b39, 1329a20, 28–29, cf. 1278a8.

[77] *Pol.* 1332b12–41, in particular b35–38.

live as one likes. People should rather live in accordance with the constitution, which in his opinion is not a kind of freedom but a form of salvation. There is no trace in the *Politics* of the Platonic conception of freedom as self-determination in the sense of self-control: the rule of reason and rationality over emotion and appetite. And Aristotle states his disagreement with those who identify freedom (*eleutheria*) with the leisure time (*schole*) that is necessary for a person who wants to become a philosopher.

Aristotle is critical of the democratic concept of freedom but does not develop an alternative conception of freedom as a positive political value. He seems uninterested in any other form of freedom than the generally accepted and fundamental conception of freedom as a desirable good by contrast with the evil of slavery, which may be beneficial to the slave but, of course, only to the natural slave (*Pol.* 1255a1–3, b6–7).

Nevertheless some students of ancient political thought credit Aristotle with a positive conception of political freedom as an alternative to the democratic conception that he rejects. For us who live in modern democracies it seems unbelievable that a political philosopher can ignore freedom as an ideal. As Richard Mulgan says: freedom "carries too many commendatory overtones for it to be safely yielded to one's opponents."[78]

According to Mulgan, Aristotle's alternative definition of *eleutheria* is "in terms of rule in the interest of the ruled." The problem is that what is defined in the passages interpreted by Mulgan (1259a39–40 and 1333a3–6) is not "freedom" (*eleutheria*) but "rule over free men," i.e. citizens (*arche eleutheron*: *eleutheros* no. 2) by contrast with rule over slaves.[79]

[78] R. G. Mulgan, "Aristotle and the Democratic Conception of Freedom," in B. F. Harris (ed.), *Auckland Classical Essays presented to E. M. Blaiklock* (Auckland 1970) 95–111, at 98.

[79] Mulgan, *Auckland Classical Essays* 98: "Both kingly and constitutional rule are described as free rule or rule over free men, on the grounds that they are both in the interest of the ruled." The passage referred to is 1259a39–40: *καὶ γὰρ γυναικὸς ἄρχει καὶ τέκνων, ὡς ἐλευθέρων μὲν ἀμφοῖν, οὐ τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ τρόπον τῆς ἀρχῆς, ἀλλὰ γυναικὸς μὲν πολιτικῶς τέκνων δὲ βασιλικῶς*. There is no mention of "free rule" but only of "rule over free persons," i.e. persons of

Roderic Long takes a different line.[80] As evidence of Aristotle's positive view of freedom he quotes the passage 1310a30–6: "It is thought that … doing whatever one wishes counts as being free (ἐλεύθερον). Thus in democracies of that sort, each person lives as he wishes; … But this is base; for one should not deem it slavery, but rather salvation (*soteria*),[81] to live according to the constitution." Long suggests the following interpretation of the passage: "Note that Aristotle is not saying that the democrats are mistaken in valuing liberty. Rather, he is saying that they have the wrong conception of liberty; they think that subjection to the constitution is incompatible with liberty, whereas Aristotle thinks it is perfectly compatible, so long as that subjection is voluntary."[82] But that is not what Aristotle says. It is significant that Aristotle does not take living according to the constitution to be a kind of freedom, but salvation. The substitution of salvation (*soteria*) for freedom (*eleutheria*) shows that Aristotle is not only contrasting "to live as one wishes" with "to live according to the constitution" but also "freedom" with "salvation."[83]

In his recent monograph Peter Liddel argues that Aristotle's description of democratic freedom in Book 6 (1317a40–b17), at least in part, matches his own conception of political freedom. It is the principle to rule and be ruled in turn which Liddel sees as Aristotle's own understanding of what political freedom is. It is a manifestation of being a *politikon zoon* and thus of *politike*

citizen status, cf. 1277b15–16. The other passage is 1333a3–6: ἔστι δὲ ἀρχή, καθάπερ ἐν τοῖς πρώτοις εἴρηται λόγοις, ἡ μὲν τοῦ ἄρχοντος χάριν ἡ δὲ τοῦ ἀρχομένου. τούτων δὲ τὴν μὲν δεσποτικὴν εἶναί φαμεν, τὴν δὲ τῶν ἐλευθέρων. What is defined is not "freedom" (*eleutheria*) but "rule over free men."

[80] R. T. Long, "Aristotle's Conception of Freedom," *Review of Metaphysics* 49 (1995) 775–802.

[81] Following Barnes and Barker Long renders *soteria* as "salvation." A preferable translation would be "self-preservation" (Saunders) or "safety" (Simpson).

[82] *Review of Metaphysics* 49 (1995) 795. Same interpretation in S. Ringen, *What Democracy Is For* (Oxford 2007) 193.

[83] Pointed out by Mulgan, *Auckland Classical Essays* 106.

arete, which consists in active participation in political decision-making.[84]

My problem with Liddel's interpretation of the passage is that Aristotle explicitly states that he reports what the democrats say. It follows that Aristotle's description of democratic freedom in Book 6 ch. 2 cannot be adduced as evidence of his own conception of political freedom.[85] On the contrary, the passage includes an explicit criticism of what it involves to rule and be ruled in turn. According to the democrats, to take turns ruling and being ruled is seen as freedom because it entails that all citizens = all *eleutheroi* participate in ruling the *polis*. Such a view is associated with the arithmetic concept of equality which Aristotle rejects (see 14–15 *supra*), and it entails that a majority of poor citizens come to rule a minority of wealthy citizens, and here again Aristotle disagrees. In a well-governed state *banausoi* and others who have to perform menial work must be excluded from citizenship or at least from having political rights. But such a view is incompatible with the views of political freedom held by the democrats. Quoting the passage 1317a40–b17, Liddel has omitted lines b3–10 and 16–17 which contain Aristotle's criticism of the democratic understanding of "ruling and being ruled in turn" as a kind of freedom which all *eleutheroi* = all citizens possess, i.e. a privilege that presupposes the arithmetic kind of equality. Aristotle insists on a narrower citizenry, one that excludes *banausoi*, and he does not approve of annual rotation. In his view the old shall rule and the young must obey. Liddel is right in his analysis of Aristotle's understanding of political participation as the meaning of life for the typical human being; but, in my opinion, there is no evidence that Aristotle sees this lifestyle as a form of freedom or that he himself combined rotation in office with *eleutheria*.

Plato's View of Eleutheria

From Aristotle I will go backwards in time and examine what

[84] P. Liddel, *Civil Obligation and Individual Liberty in Ancient Athens* (2007) 325–331. For a similar interpretation see Kraut, *Aristotle* 452–453.

[85] See n.56 *supra*.

his mentor Plato has to say about freedom in general and, in particular, about the democratic concept of freedom. Most of Plato's thoughts about *eleutheria* are to be found in the *Republic* and in the *Laws*. There is nothing of any importance in the *Statesman* and scattered references to the concept in other dialogues can be subsumed under Plato's treatment of freedom in the two major political dialogues. As in the case of Aristotle, some scholars hold that "the idea of freedom plays a key role in Plato's moral and political thought."[86] Like Malcolm Schofield[87] I am sceptical and want to argue that freedom does not play a major role in the *Republic* and that the conception of freedom advanced in the *Laws* bears no resemblance to what we normally understand by freedom. At most it matches what Isaiah Berlin calls "positive liberty" which, in his view, is the opposite of "negative liberty."

In the *Republic*, by far the most important passage is in Book 8 where Plato describes democracy as the third among the deviations from the ideal constitution, the so-called *kallipolis* (557B–564A). The constitutional reforms are described as a progressive decay: democracy is developed from oligarchy and will develop into tyranny.

In the rest of the dialogue freedom is mentioned only sporadically and mostly in a context where it is not a specific democratic value. Thus, free persons (*eleutheroi*) are repeatedly contrasted with slaves (*douloi*, *oiketai*)[88] and in one passage Platon states that the guardians must be released from all other crafts in order to be expert craftsmen of the freedom of the *polis*. In this passage the guardians are the defence force of the *polis*, and the freedom Plato has in mind is the *polis*' independence of other *poleis*.[89]

In the last part of Book 8 and the first part of Book 9 the

[86] R. F. Stalley, "Plato's Doctrine of Freedom," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 98 (1997/8) 145–158, at 145.

[87] M. Schofield, *Plato. Political Philosophy* (Oxford 2006) 74–89.

[88] E.g. *Resp*. 351D, 431C, 433D: *eleutheros* no. 1.

[89] *Resp*. 395B–C, δεῖν εἶναι δημιουργοὺς ἐλευθερίας τῆς πόλεως.

freedom at issue is the democrats' conception of *eleutheria*. In contrast to Aristotle Plato does not attempt to give an account of the democrats' own view of freedom. He is critical all the way through, in part directly by enumerating all the damaging effects of such a form of freedom and in part indirectly by making ironic remarks comparing a democratic constitution to a gaily coloured dress embroidered with all kinds of flowers (557C). Like Aristotle he writes about democracy and democratic freedom in general but in contrast to Aristotle he hints that it is the Athenian democracy he has in mind (563D).

Plato's account of the democratic constitution is subdivided into two main sections: one about the democratic constitution and one about the democratic man. Each section is subdivided into two subsections: one about the development and one about the nature of the democratic constitution and the democratic man respectively. Thus, the structure of the section is: (1) The development of the democratic constitution from the oligarchic (555B–557A), (2) the nature of democracy (557A–558C), (3) the development of the democratic type of man from the oligarchic (558C–560C), (4) the nature of the democratic type of man (560C–564A). The ensuing sections about the development of tyranny and the tyrannical type of man include some retrospective observations which shed further light on democracy and the democratic concept of freedom (564A–580A).

Plato opens his account of the nature of democracy by stating that the fundamental value is freedom (*eleutheria*), in particular freedom of speech (*parrhesia*) and the right to live as one likes.[90] Everyone can arrange his private life as he pleases.[91] The freedom to do as one likes entails that the democratic *polis* is like a patchwork dress of different types of person (558C6–7), and if one endeavours to establish a new *polis* the democratic *polis* can serve as a marketplace of constitutions

[90] 557B4–6: *οὐκοῦν πρῶτον μὲν δὴ ἐλεύθεροι, καὶ ἐλευθερίας ἡ πόλις μεστὴ καὶ παρρησίας γίγνεται, καὶ ἐξουσία ἐν αὐτῇ ποιεῖν ὅτι τις βούλεται.*

[91] 557B8–10: *ἰδίαν ἕκαστος ἂν κατασκευὴν τοῦ αὐτοῦ βίου κατασκευάζοιτο ἐν αὐτῇ, ᾗτις ἕκαστον ἀρέσκοι.*

from which one can choose (557D8). In a democracy there is no obligation to rule nor to be ruled.[92] One does not have to join the others going to war or keeping the peace (557E4–5), and one does not have to obey the laws that debar one from serving as a magistrate or a juror (557E5–6). Convicted persons are treated leniently (558A4–8), and even persons sentenced to death or exile can appear in public. Democratic freedom is, in fact, anarchy.[93]

Democracy is characterised by contempt for the principles on which Plato's own utopia is based: noble nature and good education. Regardless of qualifications anyone can meddle in politics. It suffices that one declares his loyalty to the people;[94] and equality is bestowed on equals and unequals alike.[95]

Comparing Plato's and Aristotle's account we can detect a shift in emphasis between the two aspects of freedom: the political freedom which consists in the right to rule and be ruled and the individual freedom which consists in the right to live as one likes. The democratic freedom to participate in politics is mentioned by Plato, but only in passing (558B6–7). The kind of freedom in which he is interested is the democratic citizen's right to do as he likes (557B5–6) and his opportunity to organise his private life as he pleases (557B8–10). What is the result? According to Plato the human soul has three parts: reason, spirit and appetite (440E–441A). If one lives in accordance with the democratic ideal of doing whatever one wants,[96] the consequence is that the appetitive part of the soul comes to prevail over the rational (560B7–11). Man becomes dependent on his desires and is in fact turned into a slave of the

[92] 557E2–4: *μηδεμίαν ἀνάγκην … εἶναι ἄρχειν ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ πόλει, μηδ' ἂν ᾖς ἱκανὸς ἄρχειν, μηδὲ αὖ ἄρχεσθαι, ἐὰν μὴ βούλῃ.*

[93] 560E2 and 5: *ἐλευθερία* as *ἀναρχία*. 558C4: *δημοκρατία* as an *ἄναρχος πολιτεία*.

[94] 558B6–7: *οὐδὲν φροντίζει ἐξ ὁποίων ἄν τις ἐπιτηδευμάτων ἐπὶ τὰ πολιτικὰ ἰὼν πράττῃ, ἀλλὰ τιμᾷ, ἐὰν φῇ μόνον εὔνους εἶναι τῷ πλήθει.*

[95] 558C5–6: *ἰσότητά τινα ὁμοίως ἴσοις καὶ ἀνίσοις διανέμουσα.*

[96] 561C6–E2, in this context described both as *eleutheria* (D6) and *isonomia* (E1).

appetitive part of his soul (559C–D, 564A). By such a line of thought democratic freedom is converted into its opposite. The person who is a slave of his desires is no longer free but unfree,[97] and his enslaved status both as a person and as a citizen is most clearly seen when democracy has been converted into a tyranny (577B–E).

This fundamental view of rationality and appetite underlies Plato's description of the democratic freedom to live as one likes, and the theme is already present in Book 1: the old Kephalos reports a conversation between the old Sophokles and a person who asks him whether he can still have sex. Sophokles considers himself lucky to have escaped such a cruel master (*despotes*). Old Kephalos agrees and is thankful that old age has brought him peace (*eirene*) and freedom (*eleutheria*) from sexual needs and similar desires that rule mankind as a master his slave (329B–D).

So man must allow the rational part of his soul to govern his desires. To allow upbringing and education to guide his behaviour brings freedom from being a slave of his desires. The result is freedom to do his duty. Democratic freedom is in fact unfreedom, a misunderstanding of one's purpose in life which is to fill one's place in society. What the democrats call to be a slave of the law[98] and unfreedom[99] is in fact the true form of freedom in so far as it entails the dominance of rationality over the other two parts of the human soul. Plato has turned the concept of freedom upside down: he has turned freedom into dominance and dominance into freedom.[100]

The core of Plato's account of democracy in Book 8 is his criticism of the democratic concept of freedom as the right to live as one likes. He writes next to nothing about his own concept of freedom: the dominance of the rational part of the soul. The key passage comes towards the end of Book 9: a young person can only be set free when one has ensured, by

[97] 577D3: *ἀνελευθερίας γέμειν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ*.

[98] 563D6 *δουλεία*, 562D7 *ἐθελοδούλους*.

[99] 560D5 *ἀνελευθερία*.

[100] T. Samaras, *Plato on Democracy* (New York 2002) 67–68.

the right education, that the rational part of his soul is in control (590E–591A). Plato's freedom is not freedom from interference. On the contrary, it is freedom from evil appetites which must be held under control by one's rationality or by other persons, if that part of one's soul is underdeveloped (590D5).

Plato is not interested in freedom, and in the *Republic* he does not "accord any explicit recognition to freedom as a fundamental value needing to be built into the basic design of the *politeia* of the good city."[101] In his opinion it is better to be enslaved if only one is a slave of what is best in man, viz. rationality governed by reason.[102]

It is essentially the same view we find in *Laws*. Apparently, Plato takes a much more positive position on democracy and freedom in this dialogue. A good constitution has to be a mixture (756E) of two archetypal forms of state: *monarchia* and *demokratia*. In monarchy the dominant value is wisdom (*phronesis*), in democracy it is freedom (*eleutheria*) (693D). Among earlier constitutions which have succeeded in mixing both values Plato singles out the Persian monarchy under Kyros (694A–B) and the Athenian ancestral democracy (698A–700A). In the Persian monarchy the dominant value was wisdom, in Athens it was freedom (693D, 694D). But in both cases the constitution fell into decay. In Persia freedom was suppressed and kingship developed into a tyranny (694C–698A). Contrariwise, in Athens, freedom now prevails to such an extent that democracy has developed into lawlessness and licence (698A, 700A–701D). The Athenian freedom in the age of Plato is similar to the democratic freedom which Plato criticises in the *Republic*,[103] whereas the form of freedom Plato favours is the one that

[101] Schofield, *Plato* 81.

[102] *Resp.* 562D, 563D, and in particular 590C–D. Only in *Phdr.* 256A–B is the dominance of rationality described as a combination of enslaving κακία and setting free ἀρετή.

[103] *Leg.* 698B, 699C–701A, 701A–B.

existed in Athens in the age of Solon,[104] and when Plato describes the characteristics of this freedom it is invariably servitude to the laws he emphasises.[105] Again, true freedom turns out to be a kind of slavery. The mitigating aspect is that under the ancestral form of democracy it was voluntary (700A).

So, according to Plato freedom has servitude as its inescapable complement. Democratic freedom amounts to being enslaved by one's desires. Rational freedom amounts to being enslaved by the laws. Whatever kind of freedom you prefer its essence is its opposite: to be enslaved. The difference between the good and the bad form of freedom depends on who is your master (*despotes*): your rationality which instructs you to obey the laws, or your desires which tempt you to indulge your inclinations.

Conclusion

My overall conclusion is that we must free ourselves of the anachronistic conviction that a political philosopher must have a positive conception of political freedom and that, consequently, Plato and Aristotle must have developed their own notion of true *eleutheria* in order to replace or at least modify the democrats' erroneous understanding of the concept. As a political value, *eleutheria* seems to have been inseparably bound up with *demokratia*. Plato and Aristotle seem to have had no problem rejecting democratic freedom as a mistaken ideal without developing an alternative understanding of political freedom. In this respect there is an important difference between freedom and equality. Plato and Aristotle did develop an alternative concept of equality, namely proportional equality instead of the simple form of arithmetic equality which they imputed to the democrats.[106] In the case of democratic liberty

[104] The reference to the four census classes at *Leg.* 698B indicates that what Plato has in mind is the Solonian democracy, see G. R. Morrow, *Plato's Cretan City* (Princeton 1960) 83–84.

[105] *Leg.* 698B–C, 699C, 700A, 701B; cf. Schofield, *Plato* 78–80.

[106] See 14–15 *supra*. That at least the Athenian democrats did not cherish the arithmetic concept of equality is argued in Hansen, *Was Athens a Democracy?* 22–25.

Plato and Aristotle simply rejected the concept. When they speak approvingly of *eleutheria* it is in the ordinary and literal sense of being a free person—preferably a citizen—and not a slave owned by a master. They consigned *eleutheria* in a positive sense to the social sphere, and they have next to nothing to say about *eleutheria* in the sense of a *polis*' independence of other *poleis*. In Plato self-control and rationality are occasionally referred to as a form of freedom, but in such contexts *eleutheria* is interpreted as *aneleutheria* and self-chosen servitude to the best part of human nature.[107]

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