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Translating Aristotelian Political Morphology into Medieval Latin: The Cases of Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas and Dante Alighieri

Abstract: In the 13th century the Aristotelian political science started to become known to the Latin Middle Ages. Translations and commentaries made the effort of understanding and receiving in Latin language the rigorous Aristotelian science of politics. Among other things there was the classifications of the governmental forms that put the interpreters in great difficulty. The aim of the following paper is to illustrate this struggle of the commentators in the course of their reception of the Aristotelian political morphology. The main issue addressed here in the cases of Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, and Dante Alighieri is the idea that their difficulties lay in a model (which is called “the henological constant” in the present paper) that predetermined their approach to Aristotle’s theory of constitutions.

Keywords: Political Morphology, Aristotle, latin commentaries, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Dante Alighieri, henology

1. Aristotelian Politics in Mediaeval Context

The discovery of the theory of political morphology in the Latin Middle Ages (i.e. of the theory regarding the plurality and the classification of political regimes) was essentially made once with the translation of Aristotle’s *Politics* into Latin around the year 1260 by Guillaume de Moerbeke (Fortin 1996, 177 calls it “the Aristotelian revolution”). Consequently, not just commentaries on this long forgotten political work started to appear, but also different versions of reception and understanding of the political categories employed in Greek by Aristotle. It is not less true that the reception in a short form of the ancient theory of political forms has been already done in the Middle Ages before the translation and commentaries of Aristotle’s *Politics* by means of a passage from Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* (VIII, 10, 1160 a31-b22) that exhibits a short classification of the political regimes. Therefore due to this passage Aristotelian political science appeared in the Latin Middle Ages a few decades earlier than the discovery of Aristotle’s *Politics* (Molnár 1998).

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The *Nicomachean Ethics* was translated starting with the second half of the twelfth century, but its most wide-spread version was the one accomplished in 1246 by Robert Grosseteste, which has eventually become the canonical translation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Thus, the gap between the reception of the *Politics* and the reception of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is of twenty years, provided we accept that the first commentary to Aristotle's *Politics* was written by Albert the Great just after 1264. But this antecedence is not neutral from a theoretical perspective, because the reception of Aristotle's political morphology and the revitalization of the discussions on the identity, plurality, structure and the criteria for distinguishing political regimes will all be affected by the simplified and concise system exposed by the theory of political regimes found in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

However, due to this historical antecedence, the system of political morphology developed almost on the entirety of the *Politics* was read with a harmonizing tendency towards the passage from the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the commentaries referring to the system of political forms or regimes from the *Nicomachean Ethics* as to the most known and clear place where a theory of this kind appears in Aristotle. Then, because of the same antecedence, a decision has been taken regarding the language expressing political concepts at a time when, along with translations and commentaries, the Latin political language had to integrate a system of political concepts that in Greek language was coming from an astonishing philosophical tradition with an extraordinary force of cohesion.

However, the reception of this political language is not an absolute novelty in Latin. In the first century B.C.E., Cicero already undertook in his dialogue *De re publica* (aprox. 50 B.C.E.) the attempt of taking over into Latin the political morphologies developed in Greek philosophy – mainly those advanced by Plato, Aristotle and Polybius (2nd Century B.C.E.). His effort could not have been, however, decisive for the takeover of the system of political morphology into the Latin thought. It is admitted that Cicero's treatise was unknown in the Middle Ages, and some parts of the six books of the *De re publica* are still lost today. Nevertheless, it is also known that the manuscript was retrieved from a palimpsest and, therefore, it is possible that parts or fragments to have circulated as sources in the Middle Ages.

Surely, the last part of Cicero's dialogue was one of the main sources for the medieval political thought. This part, titled *Somnium Scipionis*, survived by its transmission in the *Commentary* of Macrobius (*In somnium scipionis* – the fifth century CE.), a work of interest not just from an astronomical or cosmological perspective, but also politically, because Cicero in this *dream of Scipio* – in a way a pastiche of the Myth of Er from the end of Plato's *Republic* – talked about a reward that awaits the political leader after death (*gloria, beatitudo*) and, finally, about the eschatological meaning of the human political organization. Whether other passages survived so that they would

have oriented at least the late reception of Aristotle's morphological system, this could be indicated only by a textual analysis of the language employed in the commentaries and, eventually, by the way of retracing references to the *De re publica*. However, to accomplish this, it is first necessary to account for the political morphology in the way it has been adapted to the Latin language through the first political works of the Middle Ages written by Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas and Dante Alighieri.

2. Albert the Great and the Reception of the Political Morphology from *Nicomachean Ethics* (VIII, 10)

Robert Grosseteste's translation (Aristoteles Latinus 1973) provided Albert the Great with a text which, following its correction by an unknown author and besides the morphological arrangement of the species of political regimes, fundamentally established Albert's terminology. First of all, we are talking about a solution for the Greek concepts of constitution (*politeia*) and community (*koinonia*). The second concept was translated by *communicatio*. With regard to the first, R. Grosseteste's translation (in its corrected versions, i.e. *recensio recognita*) uses for *politeia* the phrase *politice species*, but also *urbanitas* which is an etymological solution trying to accomplish in Latin the relation of etymological derivation existing in Greek between *polis* and *politeia*: *polis* being translated by *urbs* (*civitas*), it follows that *politeia* has to be translated by *urbanitas*. In his commentary on *Ethics*, Albert the Great uses *urbanitas* whenever he refers to the political regimes, but sometimes he also engages *politica urbanitas* or an entirely surprising word, namely *politexa*, which is an interpretative clarification of *politeia* via Greek language, adjoining *polis* (city-state) with *taxis* (order) and obtaining thus, in a single word, the concept of *political order*, which he equates explicitly with *urbanitas* and with *politicae species*. Another variant for naming the political regimes is *genera politiarum*, where *politia* represents a calque from the Greek *politeia*. It is remarkable that Albert the Great uses *politia* only a few times before his commentary on the *Politics*, where it would become his favorite form and he never uses it with the synonymy established by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* between timocracy and *politeia*. These terminological vacillations can constitute a probable evidence for the novelty this ancient political theory represented for an intellectual such as Albert the Great, an ancient political theory brought to him by the texts of Aristotle with their bewildering conceptual coherence that forced the Latin language to translate it and to give birth to political concepts never met before.

The passage from the *Nicomachean Ethics* succinctly bases the division of the political regimes on the numeric criterion of those in power (one – few – many) and on a value criterion (good – bad) dividing the regimes according to the direction of rule: in the interest of the ruled or, because of

corruption, in the interest of the rulers. This is how Aristotle’s morphology looks like in a comprehensive table according to the original text:

Numeric criterion	Good Authentic Forms	Bad Corrupted Forms
One (monarchy)	Basileia (Royalty)	Tyranny
Few	Aristocracy	Oligarchy
Many	Timocracy or Politeia	Democracy

In this manner, Aristotle conveys a political morphology with six forms (but with seven names for them, because timocracy is also called by the generic name of *politeia*). Another difficulty consists of the fact that, for Aristotle, monarchy, taken as the rule of one (*monos-arche*), is at the same time a categorial concept containing both regality and tyranny and it appears also sometimes as a species of constitution, namely the good one, in so far as it is synonymous to regality and opposed to tyranny.

A first oversight on the reception of Aristotle’s position can be found in Albert the Great’s commentary on Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, in *Super Dionysium De caelesti hierarchia*, where we can find (maybe the first) a reference to the political morphology of the *Nicomachean Ethics*:

“Item, sicut dicit Philosophus in Ethicis, res publica tribus modis regitur: **regno**, ubi unus praeficitur in plena potestate, et hoc regnum corrumpitur tyrannide; regitur etiam quandoque **aristocratia**, quando plures ad regnum eliguntur propter virtutem ipsorum, sicut fuit olim in Romana re publica, et hoc regnum corrumpitur **democratia**, quando rectores dant se vitiis; tertium regnum est **timocratia**, quando plebeii propter divitias praeficiuntur, quod est vilissimum genus regiminis. Cum autem in hoc ordine non sit unus, sed plures regentes propter meritum virtutis, videtur regnum eorum potius esse aristocratia quam regnum, et ita non debuit removeri ab eis, quae corrumpit regnum, sed **democratia**.” (Albertus Magnus, 1993, 32-45, Pars I, cap. 8, Circa tertium)

In what follows Albert refutes the possibility that the angelical hierarchy could be organized as an aristocracy based on merit, maintaining the position that it is more likely a functional order (of officials, as are the consuls and senators) within a divine royalty to which it participates as to a *dominium*. From a linguistic point of view, we can observe the occurrence of the “Ciceronian” solution to translate *politeia* (constitution in general) by *res publica* as well as a possibly “Ciceronian” specification regarding the illustration of the aristocracy by using the example of the Roman Republic (constitution), an example which is not, in any case, to be related to Aristotle. Further one can notice the usage of the term *regimen* for *politeia* and, in the same way, of the term *regnum*, which on the one is the Latin

equivalent to royalty, i.e. *basileia*, and, on the other hand, it is the equivalent, again, of the Greek concept of *politeia*, meaning regime or government.

However, what we are rather interested in here is the defective reception of Aristotle's morphology from the *Nicomachean Ethics*. It is possible that Albert the Great had an unclear translation available and he gave this translation an understanding in conformity with the knowledge he had about political regimes from before his acquaintance with the *Ethics*. This argument can be sustained by the fact that R. Grosseteste's revised translation contains an error (and the error belongs to the person who made the correction, a correction which could have been itself made in conformity with what the reviewer knew from another source). In this Latin translation, after the enumeration of the positive species (*regnum, aristocratia, timocratia seu politica*), the following affirmation appears: "harum autem optima quidem regnum, pessima autem democratia – of these, regality is indeed the best, while the worst is democracy." (Aristoteles Latinus 1973, 533)

There was, thus, a linguistic glide between timocracy and democracy and, in our hypothesis, this was not noticed as erroneous because a coherence was produced with what was already known, eventually from a Ciceronian source, namely that the three good regimes are monarchy, aristocracy and democracy and that the worst *among them* is democracy. But neither according to the Ciceronian morphology nor according to Aristotle's is democracy the worst possible form. Likewise, the corruption of aristocracy into democracy does not belong to Aristotle's morphological system because, at least in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the positive counterpart of democracy is timocracy or *politeia*: only in Albert's reading, with the linguistic glide mentioned above, becomes democracy the most corrupt form in which a positive constitution can exist (*regnum*).

In his first commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, i.e. *Super Ethica. Commentum et questiones* (Albertus Magnus 1987), Albert the Great designates the political forms by *species politicarum*, but also calls them *urbanitates* as well as *civilitates* or *species regiminis*. At this point he knows better Aristotle's text and he re-corrects "the correction" that caused the linguistic glide between timocracy and democracy.

Albert the Great gives in this intervention a first global interpretation of the political morphology presented in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. First of all, Albert questions the logical status of the division that differentiates political forms as a sort of species. His conclusion would be that in so far as they do not refer equally to a genus which is divided by them, the political forms are not really *species*. In the end, Albert also attenuates the notion of political species, referring more likely to *moods* and presenting explicitly Aristotle's position in the sense in which he "ponit modos, quibus tota res publica administrari potest" (he sets moods in which the entire political community can be administered). Thus, Albert's answer is that *divisio non est univoci, sed*

analogi (Albertus Magnus 1987, Liber VIII, Lectio X). The analogical division, then, would be the basis of the division of political forms into species: this means that the first figure of political organization is that one which, in fact, embodies the plenitude of political government (*urbanitas ratio*), while the others would be situated in a succession of descending value, without being species of a common genus, but figures which are removing themselves from this prime plenitude.

Therefore, royalty is considered by Albert as being this plenary sense of the constitution, while the other two forms are still legitimate, but with a weaker quality of being *species*. The motive invoked by Albert is that “quia multi non ita concordant sicut unus ad seipsum”, i.e. many cannot reach an agreement among themselves in the same way one can reach an agreement with himself. *Concordia*, a figure of agreement and of being one, is, thus, the value which differentiates the advantage of monarchy in front of the other two positive forms. This time, Albert reads Aristotle’s *Ethics* correctly, proceeding with the positions of aristocracy and timocracy. While aristocracy is understood correctly by Albert via its etymology (*aris-cratos*), which in Latin becomes *virtus-potestas*, again timocracy presents him difficulties. In its etymology, *timus* is translated by Albert with *divitiae* (wealth) *potestas* (*cratos*). This way timocracy becomes the regime of the rich, with an interpretation which makes timocracy to linguistically glide again, this time towards oligarchy. In his short reference, Aristotle explained *timocracy* as being the equality of the many that possess a census, namely a government of those who have an income. But from here all the way to the *power of wealth*, which, actually, characterizes oligarchy, there is a great distance all the more because timocracy, in the way defined by Plato in his *Republic*, designated the power of honor accompanied by equalitarian warlike values.

The relation between oligarchy and timocracy is understood by Albert as the relationship between the rule of the few and wealthy (oligarchy) and the rule of the many and wealthy (timocracy). But this interpretation represents an intuitive comprehension of a relation that was already explicitly stated by Aristotle in his *Politics* in the form of an *aporia* between democracy and oligarchy, where the numeric criterion has to be doubled by the criterion of wealth, so that the ones that rule on the basis of their wealth, despite of being few or many, will always constitute an oligarchy, and the poor, few or many, when in power, will always constitute a democracy (*Politics*, III, 8, 1280a). Albert’s confusion certifies eventually that Aristotle’s *Politics* was not yet available to him and that the Latin reception of Aristotle encountered a major difficulty when it came to understand timocracy as a political species.

The comparison of political forms and the relation between the good and the bad forms are subjects to a separate analysis in Albert’s commentary.

However, once again the Aristotelian relations are slightly disturbed by a surprising interpretation. For Albert the Great tyranny does not represent the worst form of government, as it actually appears understood throughout the Platonic theoretical tradition (of which Aristotle is part). Here Albert breaks from Aristotle affirming that (Albertus Magnus 1987, Liber VIII, Lectio X):

“(...) *democratia est simpliciter peius quam tyrannis, quia in tyrannide saltem manet ordo ad unum superiorem et manet ordo potestatis, quamvis ille abutatur. Sed in democratia nihil manet, quia totus ordo civilitatis confunditur, quia plebs non est subdita et sic plebs non-plebs efficitur et ideo etiam magis nocet communitati, quamvis minus noceat alicui privato; sed secundum quid tyrannis est peior, secundum quod est oppositum maiori bono.*”

In his assumption there is a legitimacy of power constituted as an irradiance of the one and this order of the one seems to Albert sufficient to affirm that democracy and not tyranny is *per se* the worst political form, although Aristotle's text, even in Latin, says explicitly: *minimum autem malum est democratia*. Albert's difficulty consists in conceiving, in the way Plato did it in the *Republic*, that a single individual could become intrinsically much plural than a multitude. The difficulty lays in the representational assumption that an individual due to the fact that is perceived as being one *per se* appears more like one than a multitude so that he couldn't be envisaged as a multiplicity bigger than that of a rampant crowd. Here it can be observed how a Platonic ideal of valuing a substantial understanding of the one and a predetermined adhesion to the ultimate valuation of monarchy leaves their mark on the interpretation of tyranny itself in the shadow of unity and of a “monarchical” valuation. Therefore, in Albert's interpretation the tyrant may be indeed a corrupt king, but he is still as one king.

In the last intervention Albert the Great had on the morphological system from the *Nicomachean Ethics*, i.e. his later commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Albertus Magnus 1891, vol. VI, *Ethica*), his ideas exposed in *Super Ethica* change in the sense of a greater conformity to the Aristotelian text. From the perspective of the language used to designate the different species of constitutions, Albert resumes the usage of the terms *urbanitas*, *regimen*, but we also find *gubernatio civium* or the already known calque *politexa* (on the basis of *polis* and *taxis*). Only in this commentary Albert properly records all the denominations of the political forms that appear in the passage from Aristotle's *Ethics*. Thus, only three *politexae species*, i.e. species of political order, are taken here to be fit for a *urbanitas perfecta*, which means a proper constitution. Nevertheless, Albert considers that only two, namely *regnum* and *aristocracy* are *simpliciter* species of *urbanitas* defined as “righteous power in respect to the regime of justice”. Here Albert

distinguishes between a part of *urbanitas* which is concerned with the essential goods that serve happiness and another part that deals with the external goods regarding the exercitation of power in order to provide the best government of the citizens. According to this, as a third form following monarchy and aristocracy, timocracy is defined in the next terms:

“Tertia autem quae a facultate pretiorum est et exteriorum bonorum, secundum aliquid species urbanitatis est, quam conveniens est dicere timocratiam. Hanc enim quamvis non sit urbanitas secundum ea quae essentialia sunt felicitati, tamen quia est in his sine quibus cives ad felicitatem non reguntur, plures consueverunt eam apelare *politexam* sive *urbanitatem*.”

As described, timocracy seems to be a constitution relative only to the outer good, and because the outer good was largely perceived as the wellbeing of the citizens in a state conditioning the minimal conservation of the state it received the generic name of *constitution*, even though it was also named *timocracy*. Therefore, Albert finally gets the Aristotelian equivalence of timocracy with *politeia*.

Now, if *regnum* is the best regime which consists of “the ordering of all in relation to one in conformity with the most perfect rule of justice”, timocracy remains to be the bad one, but, as Albert continues, a bad form only in as much as it has the least content of reason of goodness and unity from all the other positive constitutions. Timocracy is, finally, correctly understood by Albert in the Aristotelian morphological system as being “the rule of those who govern over valuable things, as are those who rule over the finances, the army’s food or the production of weapons”, and “those who rule in timocracies by honor are all equals and desire to be equals”.

Thus the clarification of the relation between timocracy and democracy leads to a proper arrangement of the relations between the species of constitutions and their transgressions; between a positive form and its corresponding negative form. In addition, Albert also grasps the fact that tyranny and royalty are actually forms of monarchy (the rule of one), but that tyranny *corruptio est monarchiae*, and being thus improperly called monarchy. On account of that, he does not repeat the error of understanding tyranny, as he did in *Super Ethica*, as a form of *ordinatio ad unum*, but he accepts now that tyranny by perverting the act of regality, *ideo pessima est, quod satis congruit* (is the worst, as it is sufficiently proved). On the other hand, democracy is now correctly understood (in contrast with the confusion from the previous commentary) as *minimum malum inter transgressiones*, namely as the least evil between the corrupt forms. Also aristocracy is rightly put in the relation with its negative counterpart, namely oligarchy. In this commentary, the arduous road of Albert the Great towards understanding the morphological

system from Aristotle's *Ethics* finds its end; its difficulties appeared partly on account of another source of structuring the political forms which by the examples that illustrate the *romana republica*, are probably to be found in the vicinity of Cicero's morphology, but essentially his struggle was provoked by what may be defined as "the henological constant" that consisted in the largely accepted assumption that what holds a substantial unity is always better than a unity in multiplicity, i.e. that the good derives from the one. Therefore, in Albert's case the reception of Aristotle's political morphology was made according to a (neo)platonian source which imposed "the henological constant" in its Latin expression as the *reductio ad unum*. The arguments in favor of monarchy had their foundation in this law that equates the one with the good.

3. Thomas Aquinas' Reception of the Aristotelian Political Morphology in *De regno ad regem Cypri*

In his commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Thomas Aquinas makes extended references to the *Politics* in such a manner that the commentary of the 8th book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is made in close connection to the ideas from *Politics*. At linguistic level, Thomas Aquinas refers to the species of constitutions using as terms *species politicae communicationis* or *civitates*. However, the exposition follows without much deviation the letter of Aristotle's text which he only summarizes. Instead, the exposition from the treatise *De regno ad regem Cypri* does not restrain itself to the same neutrality.

Thomas Aquinas was already familiar with the monarchist position of Albert the Great. The reception of the Aristotelian *Ethics* made by the latter constituted for Thomas Aquinas the point of departure in his own argumentation regarding the political regimes. Written between 1271 and 1275, his treatise *De regno* (Thomas de Aquino, 1979, Tomus XLIII) is conceived right after the assimilation of Aristotle's *Politics*, reentered into the medieval intellectual circuit by the translation from about 1260 made by Guillaume de Moerbeke. However, surprisingly, Thomas Aquinas leaves aside the complexity of the morphological system from the *Politics* and literally repeats the exposition from the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

He follows, thus, Albert the Great in arguing that monarchy is the best regime, but Thomas' argumentation is marked by his insistence in stressing that tyranny is the worst possible regime – this being a probable reply to Albert's stumbled argument that a tyrant would still be a king. Thomas had also taken over the Platonic structure of "the henological constant" through Albert's *reductio ad unum*, but he eventually gave it a more subtle linguistic formula as he modified it into an *appropinquatio ad unum*, probably in virtue of the fact that he was already aware of the criticism made by Aristotle in the *Politics* on the reduction of the state to one individual in the case of

Plato's ideal constitution and probably due to his deeper understanding of the fact that unity should not be understood *reductively* (as something to which the city-state should reduce itself), but *approximately* (as something that should always be approximated by the city-state).

In the first book, Thomas acknowledges the morphology of the *Ethics* by adding several corrections to Albert's perspective. First of all, he begins by enumerating the corrupt forms, which are kinds of *regimen iniustum*: tyranny, oligarchy and democracy. The positive forms are kinds of a *regimen iustum*: *politia*, aristocracy and royalty (*regnum*). But Thomas doesn't mention the notion of timocracy anymore naming instead with new word its synonymous form, namely *politia*, which in Albert was called *politexa* or *urbanitas*. At the same time, the source regarding the roman republic appears more evident in *De regno*; the origin of the "Ciceronian" intrusion seems to be Augustine with his *De civitate dei* and some fragments from Cicero (or Sallust), that can be identified, at least in the case of Thomas, in the last part of *De re publica*, more precisely in Macrobius' *In somnium Scipionis*. In the table below, it can be seen how the Aristotelian political morphology appears in Thomas Aquinas' *De regno*:

The number of rulers	Regimen iustum Bonum commune	Regimen iniustum Bonum privatum
Per unum	Monarchia	Tyrannis
Per plures	Aristocratia	Oligarchia
Per multos	Politia	Democratia

The henological constant or the ordering law of *appropinquatio ad unum*, a formula not only political but also representing an universal principle, cosmic and ontological, is put at work in structuring the social domain as a natural principle: *natura operatur quod optimum est* (nature does what it's best) and *omne naturale regimen ad uno est* (every natural regime is according to one). For Thomas Aquinas the finality of politics in the field of human government is that of bringing *salus* (salvation and security), a concept which takes its essential meaning from the *unity of peace* (*unitas pacis*), meeting thus *unitas* as the supreme value of governing. By setting the scene in this way, Thomas gains confidence in exploiting the Aristotelian political concepts within a Christian context, concepts which are now clearer to him than they were to Albert at the beginning of the reception of Aristotle's political thinking.

Thus Thomas prepares here the demonstration on monarchy as the best regime but without the kind of reasoning that takes the king to be one *per se* – an issue which, as we have seen, forced Albert in the *Super Ethica* to argue that tyranny is not the worst, because the tyrant is still one *per se*. Instead of this Thomas argued that only when ruled by a king does the political

community achieve the *appropinquatio ad unum* and its *unitas pacis* that count as the authentic finality of the politics. Consequently, because the tyrant does not pursue the common good, he also cannot fulfill the role of keeping the unity of peace, and thus he does not represent a figure of unity, but rather one of arbitrariness consisting in the accidental multiplicity of his abusive desires.

With all this apparent reply to Albert the Great, Thomas is not consistent throughout his work. For instance, in the fifth chapter of *De regno*, he argues in a perfect Albertist fashion (from the *Super Ethica*) that “a lesser evil is produced when monarchy turns into tyranny than when the plural regime of the optimates is corrupted” (*minus malum est cum monarchiam in tyrannidem convertitur quam cum regimen plurimum optimatum corrumpitur*). Thomas’ argument suggests that the transition from royalty to tyranny is less bad than the transition from aristocracy to oligarchy and consequently that oligarchy would be worse than tyranny. The conclusion is a kind of “albertism” to the extent that Albert himself considered democracy to be worse than tyranny. Thomas’ argument is obviously of a different sort of inconsequence, but still in the manner of the latter:

“Dissensio enim quae plerumque sequitur ex regimine plurium contrariatur bono pacis quod est praecipuum in multitudine sociali; quod quidem bonum tyrannidem non tollitur, sed aliqua particularium hominum bona impediuntur, nisi fuerit excessus tyrannidis quod in totam communitatem desaeuiat. Magis igitur praecoptandum est unius regimen quam multorum.”

As Thomas plainly argues: the corrupt form of the optimates’ regime (oligarchy) is worse than the corrupt form of royalty whenever the tyranny that results from royalty is not *exactly* tyrannical! The argument is meant for keeping the structure of the argumentation in favor of monarchy by using the simple numerical multiplicity as a sign of deficiency in ruling and as distancing from the *appropinquatio ad unum*. We no longer have to emphasize that the way in which Thomas had just defined this political rule according to the *unity of peace* made such a reasoning structure devoid of any sense. Along with grasping the persistence of a henological model that was grafted on the reception of Aristotle’s morphology, one could also read here a bit of a reverence towards Albert the Great.

4. The *Monarchia* of Dante Alighieri

At the beginning of the fourteenth century this morphological structure brought by Aristotle’s reception appears to have been finally well established and clearly understood. One of the most important political works of the period where Aristotle’s political view is not simply

commented but philosophically used is Dante's *De monarchia*. In this work Dante proves himself as someone who navigates at ease through Aristotle's political theory with an astonishing precision and with full consciousness of Aristotle's limits. The novelty of *De monarchia* consists in using Aristotle's political concepts for a new visionary theory which concerns the political purpose of humanity as a whole. Passing through the series of purposes produced by nature which always inscribes the particular purpose into a different purpose when it comes to integrate the prior term into a larger structure, Dante arrives at the question of a final and universal integration of all purposes for which humanity is brought together in various kinds of associations. The series of human associations is taken by Dante from Aristotle's *Politics* but it is enlarged first by the concept of *regnum* (as a concept for the social extension of a kingdom the word appears already in Thomas Aquinas' *De regno* along with the roman concept of *provincia*) and secondly by what he calls the ultimate kind of political community, namely the *monarchia temporalis*. According to this logic of inclusion, a concept of social extension is inscribed into the more extended next one by shifting its own purpose; for instance, individuals change their finality as individuals when they associate into a household, a household (*domestica communitas*) when takes part into a larger community (*vicinia*), a larger community when is a part of a city (Aristotle's last concept of social extension is *polis (civitas)*, which he considers to be the final and the perfect community), a city when is a part of a kingdom (*regnum*) and, at last, a kingdom when, by Dante's theory, is a part of the purpose of the final community designed by nature (that is by God's art D.M. I, 3, 2) for all mankind. This ultimate kingdom takes the name of *monarchia temporalis* or *imperium*. By adding the two concepts of social extension to the classical Aristotelian series which ends with *polis (civitas)*, Dante brings a fundamental shift in the known system of political morphology and also in the argument concerning the best regime.

While in Aristotle the discussion on the formation of the political community is fairly independent of the question of governing the political body of citizens as long as the political regimes (which are compared with souls) apply to a political body existing by nature, in Dante's account the supreme meaning of monarchy is originating in *universitas humana's* nature and definition so that the political development of human kind remains unfulfilled until *monarchia temporalis* will not rule over all the other forms of government. Not only that *civitas* is not the perfect end of human political community, but not even *regnum* as a kingdom composed by different cities would not suffice to cover the extension of the human sense of politics. This expansion of the politics at the universal scale of whole mankind forces a reinterpretation of Aristotle's political morphology which is done in a paragraph of the first book of *De monarchia* (Cassel 2004, 123-124, *De monarchia* I, 12, 9):

“Only under the rule of the monarch does humankind exist for itself and not for the sake of something else, for only then are perverted forms of political order—such as democracies, oligarchies, and tyrannies, which force mankind into slavery—rectified, as is clear to anyone who checks through them all—and only then do kings, aristocrats (who are named ‘best’), and those with zeal for the people’s liberty set the policy. For, since the monarch loves the people in the greatest degree, as we have already shown, he wills all men to be good—an impossibility among those who play at crooked politics.”

These lines take into account Aristotle’s morphology from the *Politics* referring to the distinction between perverted forms of government (*politiae obliquae*) and just forms of government (*politiae rectae*). The fact that Dante refers to the bad regimes using the plural instead of singular (“*democratiae scilicet oligarchie atque tyrannides*”) indicates that Dante understood that in *Politics* (unlike the table from *Nicomachean Ethics*) Aristotle had developed a classification of political forms where each form is a kind under which there are some more determinate species of the same political form. Therefore, Dante preserves Aristotle’s political morphology but enriches it with his concept of monarchy (or *imperium*) as a form that governs all these regimes which rule smaller social extensions within the human kind. The imperial monarch is said to be a kind of universal guardian of good who sets right the perverted forms of government and who makes possible only the rule of the righteous regimes (Dante is using the verb *politizare* invented for translation purposes by William of Moerbeke and also used by Thomas Aquinas.). The image of Dante’s morphological table can be therefore represented as follows:

Monarchia temporalis universitatis humanae seu totius humanae civilitatis	
Politiae regnorum et civitatum et nationum	
Rectae	Obliquae
Reges (kingdoms)	Democratiae
Aristocratici seu optimates (aristocracies)	Oligarchiae
Zelatores populi libertatis (timocracies or polities)	Tyrannides

The relation between the imperial monarch and all the other smaller units of governance is said to be analogous to that between a universal cause and the lower causes which are causes only by virtue of the more universal cause (Dante quotes in support of the idea from *Liber de causis*). Therefore, the monarch is not meant to take decisions that concern the politic life at the level of the righteous regimes unless a war bursts among them or one of them tends towards a bad political form; otherwise the almighty ruler intervenes only in matters of interest for all human kind (*quae omnibus*

competunt). It seems that Dante distinguishes two kinds of politics: one local, organizing policies according to various conditions of their habit and one that exercise the politics of universal unity and one universal, regulating the legitimacy of the lower regimes and their relationship.

5. Conclusion

As it has been already noticed by his critics, the key point of Dante's argumentation depends on the acceptance of the analogy of the human genre with a body which once conceded turns itself into an allegory of the political body of humanity including individuals and smaller social extensions (kingdoms, city-states of various political regimes) as its organic parts. The corporal allegory eventually entitles the necessity of a unity for the body politic and a unity as such can only be established through the rule of one supreme monarch who embodies once more what we have identified so far as "the henological constant".

Therefore, humanity's whole body is in the monarch's care and reciprocally the "other" body of the monarch is nothing else than this corporeal humanity. The importance of this idea was sufficiently stressed by Ernst Kantorowicz in his renowned work on *The King's Two Bodies* but the birth of the corporal allegory as an argumentational model and its theoretical background are far from being historically explicit. This allegory was a common place in the medieval tradition and its roots can be traced back, as we have shown in the cases of Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas, to some (neo)platonist sources that surely prove to be much older than Aristotle's images of an universal Prime Mover or that of soul as functional unity for the entire body.

But once Aristotle's theoretical political morphology became largely known this trope (or the henological constant) was enhanced with the authority of the new found political science and consequently was preserved and continued being widely used by theorists in their political arguments in favor of monarchy (for instance, it appears near a century later in Jean Gerson's sermons – Sălăvăstru 2016, 105) and also in their interventions on the papacy debate. Finally, Aristotle's neutral and theologically unoriented model of political morphology was fully read and understood in the light of a henological structure of reasoning ironically almost the same against which he argued in his *Politics* focusing on Plato's morphological model from the *Republic*.

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