Peace And War In Plato And Aristotle*

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Among the few generalisations that one can safely make about the ancient Greeks as well as about us moderns is that none of us, with the exception of some certified lunatics, loves war for its own sake and prefers it to peace. But when it comes to the question of what war is and why human nature is susceptible to it, there are rather profound differences between their perceptions and ours. The best way to observe these differences is to raise a question that is probably most central to our thinking about war and peace: is war a necessary evil with which we must live, for better or for worse, or can war be eradicated from among mankind?

The generations which, in our twentieth century, created first the League of Nations at the end of World War I, and then the United Nations at the end of World War II must have had some measure of faith in the possibility that war can be avoided. Yet the events that followed the upheavals of 1989 in many parts of the world have, to say the least, undermined this faith. They have rather raised the question why the demise of autocratic régimes — external in the case of colonial powers and internal in the case of such totalitarian states as the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and others — which we should have expected to homogenize different cultures and different populations and bring them under one political system, failed to keep together what had been united, brought old hostilities to the fore again, and often resulted in war. Hope in the efficacy of the United Nations has, at best, shifted from the avoidance of war as such to the avoidance of "unjust" wars, in which the terms "just" and "unjust" are left undefined.[1] If war cannot be avoided, we seem to believe, the factors that produce it on any given occasion can, nevertheless, be manipulated and regulated in such a way that only wars "justifiable" in the eyes of a majority of peoples are waged.

While this may be a fair way to define our own crucial concerns with war, I do not think that any Greek before the advent of Christianity would have posed the problem in these terms. What views we find expressed in Greek literature

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1 For an excellent discussion of this age-old problem, see Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* , 1977.

and philosophy on war and peace universally take it for granted that war is as much part of the human condition as is disease or death. Some moderns seem to share this general view, for example Reinhold Niebuhr in his thesis that the sinful nature of man is the cause of war.[2] For if sin is part of human nature, war can only be avoided if, as is unlikely to happen, the nature of man changes. Still, to show how far removed even this kind of thinking is from that of the Greeks, we have only to recall the statements of some Greek thinkers who actually welcomed the inevitability of war as part of a creative process in mankind. Heraclitus attributed to war the differentiation between gods and man, free and slave,[3] and with his keen sense of the paradoxical he called it a ξυνόν.[4] And for Empedocles, Strife is one of the two principles at work among the elements without which cosmic change could not be explained. In other words, Niebuhr's view of the ineradicability of war is premised on a Judaeo-Christian view of the sinfulness of human nature.

There is, as far as I can see, nothing analogous to this in Greek thought or action. The Greeks regarded war as part of a cosmic process and tended to accept it as a given fact of human existence; there may have been an age of Kronos in the distant past in which there was neither war nor civil strife[5] and it was possible for them to imagine a happy city, living isolated under just laws, unconcerned with war and dominion over others,[6] but as far as present actualities are concerned, they regarded the possibility of eradicating war in any shape or form as totally unrealistic. This is shown not merely in the positive approaches to war which, as we have seen, could be taken by thinkers such as Heraclitus and Empedocles, but also in that ἀνδρεία, a courage that has predominantly military connotations, remained an integral part of even the shortest list of cardinal virtues which any pre-Christian Greek could compose. At times one even gets the impression that war was regarded as a more normal condition in the relation between states than peace; the pseudo-Platonic *Definitiones,* for example, defines "peace" negatively as the absence of war.[7]

This is the barest cultural background into which we have to set what little Plato and Aristotle had to say on the subject of war and peace. Neither of these philosophers ever articulated a coherent doctrine on war and peace, so that their views must be patched together from isolated statements, usually made incidentally and in contexts primarily concerned with other matters, concentrated in the case of Plato mainly in the *Republic,* the *Politicus,* and the *Laws,* and in the case

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2 Most accessible in *Reinhold Niebuhr on Politics*, edd. H.R. Davis and R.C. Good, 1960, 139-51.

3 Heraclitus 22B53 (DK[6]): πόλεμος πάντων μὲν πατήρ ἐστι, πάντων δὲ βασιλεύς, καὶ τοὺς μὲν θεοὺς ἔδειξε τοὺς δὲ ἀνθρώπους, τοὺς μὲν δούλους ἐποίησε τοὺς δὲ ἐλευθέρους.

4 Ibid. B80.

5 Plato, *Politicus* 271e2.

6 Aristotle, *Politics* 7.2, 1324b41-1325a5; cf. also the "city of pigs" in Plato, *Rep.* 2.372d1-3.

7 Plato, *Definitiones* 413a6: Εἰρήνη ἡσυχία ἐπ' ἔχθρας πολεμικάς.

of Aristotle almost wholly confined to the *Politics.*[8] It is remarkable how little contradiction there is in the scattered remarks of each, and how well the two authors complement each other, diverging, as we would expect, mainly in their emphasis on different points.

Neither Plato nor Aristotle shared our optimistic hope that war might be avoidable in the kind of world in which we now live, but while Aristotle simply unself-consciously accepts the fact that all political life is divided into war and peace,[9] Plato sees the unavoidability of war as rooted in the dual nature of man, composed as it is of body and soul: "as long as we have a body and our soul is kneaded together with an evil of this sort, we shall never adequately attain what we desire, and the object of our desire is, we affirm, the truth. For the body afflicts us with innumerable troubles because of the necessity to feed it. Moreover, any diseases that befall us impair our pursuit of true Being; the body fills us with all manner of appetites, fears, and fancies and with much nonsense, so that, in the real and true sense of the saying, it does not even let us think. The body alone and its appetites afflict us with war, faction, and battles. For all wars originate in the acquisition of things we need, and we are constrained to acquire what we need because of our body, enslaved as we are to its service."[10]

The idea that wars are caused by the acquisition of things we need for physical survival (ἐπὶ χρημάτων κτῆσιν) occurs also in the *Republic,* but with a slight difference in emphasis. In the passage just quoted from the *Phaedo,* the feeding of our bodies is an ineluctable necessity (ἀναγκαίαν τροφήν) which in turn imposes on us the necessity to acquire things (ἀναγκαζόμεθα κτᾶσθαι διὰ τὸ σῶμα). In the *Republic,* on the other hand, the most primitive society in which all the needs of the body are met, the "city of pigs," lives in peace and health;[11] war comes into being only when the primitive grows into a luxurious state. For when the original boundaries become so narrow that the state expands into the

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8 This may explain why there has been no coherent and comprehensive scholarly treatment of the subject of their attitudes to war and peace, either in the form of articles or books. G. Zampaglione, *The Idea of Peace in Antiquity,* tr. R. Dunn, devotes 10 pages (54-64) to a superficial discussion of Plato and Aristotle; Pearl L. Weber, "What Plato said about war," *The Personalist* 22, 1941, 376-83, has a useful (but incomplete) summary of Plato's views on war.

9 Aristotle, *Politics* 1.5, 1254b31-32; 7.14, 1333a30-32.

10 Plato, *Phaedo* 66b5-d2: ἕως ἂν τὸ σῶμα ἔχωμεν καὶ συμπεφυρμένη ᾖ ἡμῶν ἡ ψυχὴ μετὰ τοιούτου κακοῦ, οὐ μή ποτε κτησώμεθα ἱκανῶς οὗ ἐπιθυμοῦμεν· φαμὲν δὲ τοῦτο εἶναι τὸ ἀληθές. μυρίας μὲν γὰρ ἡμῖν ἀσχολίας παρέχει τὸ σῶμα διὰ τὴν ἀναγκαίαν τροφήν· ἔτι δέ, ἄν τινες νόσοι προσπέσωσιν, ἐμποδίζουσιν ἡμῶν τὴν τοῦ ὄντος θήραν. ἐρώτων δὲ καὶ ἐπιθυμιῶν καὶ φόβων καὶ εἰδώλων παντοδαπῶν καὶ φλυαρίας ἐμπίμπλησιν ἡμᾶς πολλῆς, ὥστε τὸ λεγόμενον ὡς ἀληθῶς τῷ ὄντι ὑπ' αὐτοῦ οὐδὲ φρονῆσαι ἡμῖν ἐγγίγνεται οὐδέποτε οὐδέν. καὶ γὰρ πολέμους καὶ στάσεις καὶ μάχας οὐδὲν ἄλλο παρέχει ἢ τὸ σῶμα καὶ αἱ τούτου ἐπιθυμίαι. διὰ γὰρ τὴν τῶν χρημάτων κτῆσιν πάντες οἱ πόλεμοι γίγνονται, τὰ δὲ χρήματα ἀναγκαζόμεθα κτᾶσθαι διὰ τὸ σῶμα, δουλεύοντες τῇ τούτου θεραπείᾳ.

11 Id. *Rep.* 2.372d1-3: καὶ οὕτω διάγοντες τὸν βίον ἐν εἰρήνῃ μετὰ ὑγιείας.

neighbor's land, the neighbors, in their turn, will "dash forth into the unlimited acquisition of what they need, trespassing the boundary of what is necessary,"[12] and thus create war. While, as in the *Phaedo,* the origin of war is here attributed to our need to acquire things for physical survival, in contrast the desire for acquisition is described as "unlimited"; that is, it exceeds the procurement of the basic necessities requisite for life. Plato explicitly shelves the question whether the effects of war are good or evil,[13] never to take it up again, and confines himself to the statement that the origin of war, whenever it occurs, has been discovered in appetites "from which more ills public and private come to cities than from any other source."[14] This indicates that he regarded the appetitive element in man, without which he cannot satisfy the needs of the body but which is indispensable even when its desires exceed what is required for mere survival, as the ineradicable cause of all war.

Aristotle criticised Plato for failing to introduce a military element into the primitive state. He believed that even a rudimentary organisation of four or more producers requires someone to adjudicate differences that might arise among the producers, and that a military element, here equated with an element entrusted with the administration of justice, as well as a deliberative element, is essential for even the most elementary social organism.[15] What is remarkable about this criticism is that neither here nor elsewhere does Aristotle betray any interest at all in the problem of the origin of war. Not war as such but the military element in the state commands his attention, and since he conceives of the state as a living organism that is prior to the parts of which it is composed, he derives the need for the existence of a military element in the state from the very beginning not from the physical needs of its inhabitants, but from the psychological requirement that the *polis* is an organism that must be as capable of defending itself as it must be of adjudicating differences within it and of deliberating about public affairs. Plato, on the other hand, raises in the *Republic* the more basic question of the physiological and psychological foundations of society, in order to find in them the definition of justice, and in doing so he does not take even the physical existence of the *polis* for granted. Rather, he builds up a model of the state piece by piece, and this leads him to see in human desires, determined by the body, the origin of war as such.

A similar difference between Plato and Aristotle can be observed in their treatment of acquisition as a motive for war. For Plato, as we saw, acquisition is *the* motive; Aristotle, on the other hand, relates war to acquisition only in his discussion of slavery — perhaps naturally so, since slaves were acquired through war — and he does so by describing the *art* of war (πολεμικὴ τέχνη) rather than war as such (πόλεμος) as part of the *art* of acquisition (κτητικὴ τέχνη) rather than of acquisition itself (κτῆσις).[16] We shall return to these passages, but for

12 Ibid.373d9-10: ἐὰν καὶ ἐκεῖνοι ἀφῶσιν αὐτοὺς ἐπὶ χρημάτων κτῆσιν ἄπειρον, ὑπερβάντες τὸν τῶν ἀναγκαίων ὅρον.

13 Ibid. 373e4-5: μήτ' εἴ τι κακὸν μήτ' εἰ ἀγαθὸν ὁ πόλεμος ἐργάζεται.

14 Ibid. 373e6-7.

15 Aristotle, *Politics* 4.4, 1291a22-33.

16 Ibid. 1.7, 1255b37-39; 1.8, 1256b20-26.

the moment let it suffice to note that Aristotle looks at the *polis* as a known entity, whose functional parts he lays bare by close analysis. One of these parts is the art of securing the materials necessary for the survival both of the household and of the state, and since some such materials are secured by war, the art of war (πολεμική) becomes for him that part of the art of acquisition (κτητική) which provides slaves or "natural subjects" for the state. Plato, however, is interested in war as the expression of an innate human instinct, of a part of man's soul, which explains why wars come about and what formative influence they have on the origin of the state in the first place.

That military preparedness is necessary to secure the survival of the state was, according to Plato, recognized already by Protagoras, who in his myth on the origin of society makes the art of war part of and coeval with the development of the πολιτικὴ τέχνη, the art of living in society.[17] In his own program for a state, erected on the principle of division of labor, Plato acknowledges this necessity by assigning to a military class the sole function of defending the state,[18] and the guardian class, to whom the entire management of the state is to be entrusted, must have a warlike as well as a philosophical temperament.[19] The insight that a state cannot be well governed without due attention to war also characterizes Plato's later political works. Of the three subsidiary arts which, in the *Politicus,* are to serve the royal art of politics, one is the military art (στρατηγική or πολεμική),[20] and in the *Laws* one of the reasons given for setting the number of the landholders at 5040 is its divisibility in 59 ways,[21] which is most useful εἴς τε πόλεμον καὶ ὅσα κατ' εἰρήνην πρὸς ἅπαντα τὰ συμβόλαια καὶ κοινωνήματα.[22]

Aristotle's recognition of the central importance of preparedness for war takes several forms. In his discussion of ideal constitutions he censures theoreticians such as Phaleas for not having made sufficient allowance for the need to equip his projected state with military strength (πολεμικὴ ἰσχύς);[23] he believes that the choice of a site for the city should take into consideration that it is militarily defensible,[24] and that a body to deliberate about questions of war and peace is an essential element in its structure.[25] Moreover, the best possible form of government, the πολιτεία, is to be based on a large military class (πλῆθος

17 Plato, *Protagoras* 322b5.

18 Id. *Rep.* 2.374b1-d7; 3.397e4-9.

19 Ibid. 7.525b3-c7; cf. 8.543a1-6.

20 Id. *Politicus* 304a-305a.

21 Id. *Laws* 5.737e1-738b1; 6.771a5-c7. There may also lurk behind this number a mystical belief in the fact that it is the product of 1 x 2 x 3 x 4 x 5 x 6 x 7.

22 Ibid. 5.738a1-b1: "for war as well as every peacetime activity, all contracts and transactions."

23 Aristotle, *Politics* 2.7, 1267a17-27.

24 Ibid. 7.11, 1330b32-31a18.

25 Ibid. 4.14, 1298a4; cf. 7.9, 1329a2-6. Note also that in *Rhetoric* 1.4, 1359b3-60a5 the discussion of war and peace is one of the five possible subjects of deliberative debate.

πολεμικόν) that has the capability to rule and be ruled under a code of laws in which offices are distributed on the basis of merit to the well-to-do.[26] The reasons for this give us a first glimpse at Aristotle's view of the function of war in the good state. He is less concerned with military preparedness in a physical sense, for if he were, he would not have to insist that his military class be recruited from among the well-to-do. His true concern is that the state implement a life of virtue, and since in his view the military are of all virtues the most widely spread, the excellence of the state can best be realized when it is based on those endowed with this virtue, and these have to be the well-to-do who have a stake in the country and are at the same time able to provide their own arms.[27]

What measures can a state take to ensure that it has a military element capable of defending it? To some extent nature helps out in that it has endowed some individuals or even societies[28] with a warlike temperament. Plato selected from those endowed with a natural temperament of this kind the Guardian class of his *Republic.* The more purely warlike of these are later separated to become Auxiliaries,[29] while only those who are philosophical as well as warlike become Guardians in the narrow sense.[30] A second expedient is to accustom and train the young, from childhood, in the pursuits of war. This had apparently already been part of conventional Greek education, administered by the παιδοτρίβης,[31] but Plato extended it not only by requiring it also of women[32] but also by enjoining the female Guardians in the *Republic* to take their children along to war to accustom them as early as possible to those sights and experiences in which they would have to engage as adult warriors.[33] Further educational measures are proposed in the *Laws:* since a man must be trained from childhood by play as well as by serious application in those pursuits in which he will have to show his mettle as a man, his martial prowess must be trained by playing with horses;[34] young men are to be exposed to praise of the life of war in order to prepare them for military service;[35] even for adults war games are to be conducted in peacetime at least once a month, accompanied by sacrifices, prizes, and songs which celebrate valour, in order to safeguard the good life of the city and prevent it from being injured by an enemy.[36]

The heavy stress on war in the education of the young is alien to the educational values dear to us. Modern educational values emphasise cooperation rather than conflict; living together peacefully, and developing an understanding

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26 Ibid. 3.17, 1288a8-15. At 1288a13 the reading πλῆθος πολεμικόν makes more sense and is closer to the manuscripts than Ross's γένος πολιτικόν.

27 Ibid. 3.7, 1279a39-b4.

28 Ibid. 2.9, 1269b23-27.

29 Plato, *Rep.* 2.347b1-d7; 3.397e4-8.

30 Ibid. 7.525b3-c7.

31 Id., *Protagoras* 326b6-c3.

32 Id., *Laws* 7.814c2-5.

33 Id., *Rep.* 5.466c6-467c8: τοὺς ἄνδρας πολεμικοὺς ἐσομένους.

34 Id., *Laws* 1.643c4-8.

35 Ibid. 12.943a1-3.

36 Ibid. 8.819a3-c5.

of cultures other than our own rather than defending our way of life against external enemies. Our perception of the cruelty and senselessness of war going on in various parts of the world makes abhorrent the thought that our children should be subjected to intensive preparation for it. An important reason for that is that while our attitude is shaped by the doctrine of the intrinsic value of the individual, for the ancients — and not merely for Plato and Aristotle — man was a ζῷον πολιτικόν, a being whose identity and worth become intelligible only in the context of the society in which he lives. And being an integral part of a society saddles each individual with a greater responsibility for its survival and for its defense than we are prepared to acknowledge.

This is not to deny that both Plato and Aristotle were keenly aware of the dangers inherent in an exaggerated emphasis on war, and that both gave thought to the problem of how the dominance of the military must be controlled or at least inhibited. This comes out most clearly in the criticism both have to offer of the constitution and institutions of Sparta and Crete, which are geared entirely to war, on the ground that "what the majority of mankind call 'peace' is only a name; in fact the natural condition is an everlasting unheralded war of all states against all states."[37] As we shall see later, Plato uses the view of life as war as the point of departure for his demonstration that the prevention of internal dissension and faction is a more desirable goal for the establishment of a good state than preparation for war. Aristotle criticises Sparta for devoting all her efforts to the creation of military excellence (ἀρετὴ πολεμική) alone, an excellence that may indeed be conducive to establishing dominion over others, but which becomes useless once dominion has been attained and the citizens are confronted with the problem of how to use their leisure.[38]

Furthermore, both Plato and Aristotle also sensed the danger inherent in the presence in the state of a naturally warlike temperament, useful though this temperament might be for purposes of defense: what is to prevent natures inclined to war from turning against their own government? Aristotle's awareness of this problem is shown in his — perhaps mistaken — criticism of the Guardian-state sketched in Plato's *Republic:* the fact that the Guardians are installed as permanent rulers made him apprehensive lest the spirited and warlike element in the state might grow restive, challenge the rulers, and thus cause civil strife.[39] That Plato was not oblivious to this possibility can be seen in that he attributes the fall of the perfect state to the rise of "spirited and less sophisticated men, whose nature inclines more to war than to peace."[40]

Measures must, therefore, be taken to keep the military element within proper bounds, and foremost among such measures is moral and intellectual

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37 Ibid. 1.625e5-626a5, esp. 626a2-5: ἣν γὰρ καλοῦσιν οἱ πλεῖστοι τῶν ἀνθρώπων εἰρήνην, τοῦτ' εἶναι μόνον ὄνομα, τῷ δ' ἔργῳ πάσαις πρὸς πάσας τὰς πόλεις ἀεὶ πόλεμον ἀκήρυκτον κατὰ φύσιν εἶναι.

38 Aristotle, *Politics* 2.9, 1271b2-6; cf. 7.14, 1333b37-34a10.

39 Ibid. 2.5, 1264b6-10.

40 Plato, *Rep.* 8.547e1-538a3; 548e4-549a7: ...ἐπὶ δὲ θυμοειδεῖς τε καὶ ἁπλουστέρους ἀποκλίνειν, τοὺς πρὸς πόλεμον μᾶλλον πεφυκότας ἢ πρὸς εἰρήνην.

education. The Guardian must be trained to be not only πολεμικός but, first and foremost, φιλόσοφος.[41] The study of arithmetic and geometry is prescribed as the first stages in the education of the philosophic ruler, not so much for its usefulness in war as for its ability to direct the mind from the realm of Becoming toward thinking and the realm of Being.[42] In the *Laws* we are told that expertise in war (πολεμικὴ ἐπιστήμη) is not a sufficient qualification for military command, if the expert does not also possess the requisite virtue to go with it,[43] and elsewhere bravery in war is given a less high rating than steadfast loyalty amidst the horrors of civil war (πιστότης ἐν τοῖς δεινοῖς), because it manifests self-control and perfect justice in addition to courage.[44] The superiority of moral and intellectual excellence over military values is also evident when the pleasures of the φρόνιμος are said to be of a higher order than those of the πολεμικός and the φιλότιμος;[45] when the ordinance of Adrasteia in the *Phaedrus* lays down that the highest stage of incarnation goes to the soul of a lover of wisdom and beauty, while law-abiding, warlike, or lordly kings are assigned only to the second rank;[46] and when in the *Laws* honours given for military excellence rank below those given for honouring the rules written down by good lawgivers.[47] But educational schemes such as those proposed in the *Republic* and in the *Laws* are insufficient if they are not implemented by other legislation. In the *Politicus,* Plato expresses the fear that the gentle and the warlike temperament, if left uncontrolled, will bring about the enslavement of the state; the gentle because of its love of the quiet life and its desire for peace at all costs, the warlike by reason of its aggressiveness and provocation of stronger powers.[48] As a remedy he suggests the enactment by the statesman of strict marriage regulations through which the gentle and the warlike will be brought into harmony with one another in order to prevent the state from being torn asunder in faction and enmity.

The purpose of these marriage regulations is thus twofold; they are to prevent the state from disintegrating internally, and they are to strengthen it against external enemies. In other words, their aim is the inhibition of στάσις as well as preparedness for war (πόλεμος). For Plato these conditions are merely different kinds of war (εἴδη δύο πολέμου), of which στάσις is the more disastrous because it is between citizens of the same stock and of the same state.[49] To treat faction as a kind of war is obvious to us, who, ever since at least the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s, know that a civil war may well pave the way to interna-

41 Ibid. 7.525b3-c7.
42 Ibid. 7.522c10-523a4; 526c10-e5.
43 Id. *Laws* 1.639b5-11.
44 Ibid. 1.629a1-630d3.
45 Id. *Rep.* 9.583a8-9.
46 Id. *Phaedrus* 248d2-5.
47 Id. *Laws* 11.921d4-922a5.
48 Id. *Politicus* 307e2-308b9.
49 Id. *Laws* 1.629c6-d5. For a full discussion of *stasis,* see H.-J. Gehrke, *Stasis. Untersuchungen zu den inneren Kriegen in den griechischen Staaten des 5. und 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.* (= *Vestigia* 35), 1985, excellently summarized at pp. 355-59.

tional conflict. Yet this kind of linear relation was almost certainly not on Plato's mind, even though a reading of Thucydides tells us that he could have said something about it, if he had wished. In fact, the nature of στάσις, covering as it does the whole range of internal conflict within a state, from irreconcilable differences between parties about policy to armed violent conflict between them, makes it more difficult for a Greek to draw this line than it does for us. It can be no accident that Aristotle, who has much to say about στάσις and its causes, especially in the fifth book of the *Politics,* nowhere brings it into any relation with war but treats the two as entirely different phenomena.

In what terms, then, does Plato see a relationship between the two? The best way to answer that question is, I believe, to start with that passage in the *Laws* in which the Athenian Stranger extends the Spartan and Cretan view of life as a continuous war of all against all to a war which pits not only state against state but also village against village, household against household, individual against individual, and even the individual against himself.[50] In view of what we have learned in the *Phaedo* about the loves, appetites, fears, and fancies of the body as causing war and faction,[51] we need not be surprised to have now all conflict, whether within the individual or between any large or small groups, subsumed under the name war. For, as we saw in that same passage in the *Phaedo,* the acquisition of the necessities for the nurture of the body is the root of all war and faction, and this need exists alike for the individual and for the state.

Plato is remarkably consistent in maintaining that our acquisitive instinct is the cause of στάσις as it is of war. The absence of any personal property of any kind, including even of wives and children, is credited in the *Republic* with the peace and freedom from faction (ἀστασιάστοις) in which the Guardians live,[52] a peace which is jeopardised only when the metals in the soul are mixed.[53] Similarly, we are told that a city will prosper so long as it is ruled by those who have a vision of a life better than ruling, because they are the truly rich, not in gold but in a good and intelligent life; "but if beggars, men hungering for private goods, go to the public coffers supposing them to contain the good that they must seize... ruling becomes the object of contention, and such a war — domestic and internal — destroys these men themselves, and the rest of the city as well."[54] We will not go far wrong in interpreting this hunger as embodied also in the desire to acquire material goods, for of what other goods should these "beggars" have a vision?

The *Republic* relies for the prevention of this "internal war" (οἰκεῖος πόλεμος) on the superior nature of the philosophic ruler and his vision of the Good; by the time Plato wrote the *Laws,* he had lowered his sights and commended πιστότης ἐν τοῖς δεινοῖς ("steadfast loyalty amidst the horrors" [of civil war]) as that perfect civic virtue (δικαιοσύνην τελέαν), which in combining

50 Ibid. 1.625d7-626e5. Cf. n. 37 above.
51 Id. *Phaedo* 66b5-d3; see n. 10 above.
52 Id. *Rep.* 5.464c5-465b7.
53 Ibid. 8.547a2-4.
54 Ibid. 7.520e4-521a8.

justice, self-control, and wisdom with courage constitutes the best safeguard against the disruption of the state by στάσις,[55] to which he looks for preserving the cohesion of the state.

The lack of this cohesion is for Plato one of the hallmarks of a democracy. Democracy is a form of government in which everyone does as he pleases: there is no constraint on any individual to go to war when his country is at war, or to keep peace when everyone else enjoys peace.[56] Plato does not speak of στάσις in his discussion of democracy, but he does say that democracy is not one but many states,[57] and he attributes to its indifference to the public good the rise of tyranny.

If στάσις is a perverse kind of war, directed at fellow citizens *with* whom, rather than *against* whom, one should join to fight external enemies, the wars waged by a tyrant are perverse because they are fought for immoral reasons. On this point both Plato and Aristotle agree. Both call the tyrant a warmonger (πολεμοποιός) who constantly stirs up war in order to create in the people the need for his own leadership.[58] To preserve his rule and gain respect he must affect one virtue alone, namely that of a military man.[59] He restores by oppression and violent means the cohesiveness which democracy has eroded, and he enslaves the masses. If, after eliminating his enemies, he still suspects anyone of harbouring thoughts of freedom, he thinks up ways of putting him at the mercy of the enemy to get rid of him, and this is another reason why he is constrained to wage constant war.[60]

This raises an interesting question: even if we had no explicit statement to the effect, it would be reasonable to assume that both Plato and Aristotle would regard any defensive war waged for the protection of one's country as good and just; but are there any offensive wars that can be so described? What comes closest to an answer is to be found in a passage of the seventh book of the *Politics,* in which Aristotle discusses the kind of education to be inculcated by the lawgiver: "The purpose of training for war should not be to enslave those who do not deserve it, but (1) to prevent men from becoming slaves to others, (2) to seek leadership to be exercised for the benefit of the ruled, but not overlordship over all, and (3) to be masters over those who deserve to be slaves."[61] These purposes leave an ominous ring in our ears. We will readily concede that war is justified to prevent our enslavement to others. But will that also justify an offensive war against those *we think* want to enslave us? Aristotle does not

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55 Id. *Laws* 1.629a1-630d3; see above, nn. 44 and 49.

56 Id. *Rep.* 8.557e2-558a2.

57 Ibid. 8.557d4-9.

58 Ibid. 8.566e6-10; Aristotle, *Politics* 5.11, 1313b28-29.

59 Aristotle, *Politics* 5.11, 1314b18-23.

60 Plato, *Rep.* 8.567a5-9.

61 Aristotle, *Politics* 7.14, 1333b38-34a2: τήν τε τῶν πολεμικῶν ἄσκησιν οὐ τούτου χάριν δεῖ μελετᾶν, ἵνα καταδουλώσωνται τοὺς ἀναξίους, ἀλλ' ἵνα πρῶτον μὲν αὐτοὶ μὴ δουλεύσωσιν ἑτέροις, ἔπειτα ὅπως ζητῶσι τὴν ἡγεμονίαν τῆς ὠφελείας ἕνεκα τῶν ἀρχομένων, ἀλλὰ μὴ πάντων δεσποτείας· τρίτον δὲ τὸ δεσπόζειν τῶν ἀξίων δουλεύειν.

address himself to this problem, but seems to assume that the intentions of the enemy are knowable and, once established, justify warlike action. The same assumption underlies the second purpose. To be sure, Aristotle rules out any imperialistic war aimed at mere dominion over others for its own sake; but who is to say what constitutes "leadership for the benefit of the ruled"? Would that not justify a policy of, for example, the "white man's burden"? And, worse still, who is to determine who deserves to be slave and who master? On what basis can that sort of thing be known?

To understand Aristotle's reasoning, we must start with some views in which Plato prefigured him. We had occasion earlier to refer to the distinction made in the *Laws*[62] between στάσις and war proper, but we have not yet taken due note of that part of the statement in which war proper is described as one waged for cause "against external enemies who are of different descent" (πρὸς τοὺς ἐκτός τε καὶ ἀλλοφύλους...δια- φερόμενοι). The hint here that war of Greeks against Greeks would not qualify as war proper but rather as a kind of στάσις that ought to be avoided is made explicit in a passage in the *Republic,* in which, too, war proper is differentiated from στάσις: the latter is a domestic conflict between men related to one another (οἰκεῖον καὶ συγγενές), while πόλεμος is fought against foreign outsiders (ἀλλότριον καὶ ὀθνεῖον).[63] But Plato takes a further step: after defining the Greek race (τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν γένος) as belonging to the first group, and everything non-Greek (τὸ βαρβαρικόν) as members of the second, he continues: "Then we shall speak of war when Greeks fight with foreigners, whom we may call their natural enemies. But Greeks are by nature friends of Greeks, and when they fight, it means that Hellas is afflicted by disease and faction, which ought to be called στάσις."[64] It is extraordinary to see assigned to nature (φύσει) not merely the differentiation of mankind into Greek and non-Greek but also the mutual hostility resulting from this differentiation. For if Greeks and non-Greeks are enemies by nature, this would automatically explain and probably even justify wars waged between them, because the laws of nature cannot be altered or avoided.

We can soften Plato's statement by pointing out that its edge is aimed not at the encouragement of war against barbarians but rather at lamenting the seemingly unending wars which ravaged the Greek world in the fourth century B.C.E., when Athenians, Spartans, Thebans, and finally Macedonians vied with one another in bloody wars for hegemony in Greece.[65] Still, the attempt to inhibit this kind of hostility by channelling it against outsiders on the basis of racial (or better: cultural) differences is hard for us to swallow. That it was

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62 Plato, *Laws* 1.629c6-d5; see nn. 44, 49 and 55.

63 Id. *Rep.* 5.470b4-8.

64 Ibid. 5.470c5-d1, tr. Cornford, adapted: Ἕλληνας μὲν ἄρα βαρβάροις καὶ βαρβάρους Ἕλλησι πολεμεῖν μαχομένους τε φήσομεν καὶ πολεμίους φύσει εἶναι, καὶ πόλεμον τὴν ἔχθραν ταύτην κλητέον· Ἕλληνας δὲ Ἕλλησιν, ὅταν τι τοιοῦτον δρῶσιν, φύσει μὲν φίλους εἶναι, νοσεῖν δ' ἐν τῷ τοιούτῳ τὴν Ἑλλάδα καὶ στασιάζειν, καὶ στάσιν τὴν τοιαύτην ἔχθραν κλητέον.

65 Ibid. 5.469e7-470b3; 470d3-471c1.

acceptable to Plato's contemporaries is shown by a passage in the *Menexenus,* in which the eulogist praises the Athenians for having spared the Lacedaemonian prisoners of Sphagia (= Sphakteria) "on the grounds that one must wage war against those of the same descent (πρὸς τὸ ὁμόφυλον) until victory is won, ... but against non-Greeks until they are destroyed."[66] In short, we can do no more than accept the differences between the classical Greek outlook and the general climate of our own times, perhaps deploring Plato's shortcoming in that he did not in this instance rise above his own times. We may also note that, like Aristotle, Plato does not provide the means to answer the question whether aggressive warfare is justified against non-Greeks.

Did Aristotle share Plato's views in this matter? Specifically, did Aristotle think of Greeks as lording it over barbarians by reason of their superior nature, when he justified military training for the purpose of establishing mastery over those who deserve to be slaves?[67] There is one piece of evidence which suggests that the answer is an unequivocal "yes." Plutarch credits Alexander the Great with having ignored Aristotle's advice "to treat Greeks as a leader and non-Greeks as a master";[68] however, in the first place, it is by no means certain that the attribution of this advice to Aristotle is correct, since Eratosthenes did not attach Aristotle's name — or any other name, for that matter — to his quotation of a very similar bit of advice alleged to have been given to Alexander,[69] and secondly, the advice, if given by Aristotle, may have been addressed to a specific situation, so that it would not necessarily reflect Aristotle's general outlook.

A more promising approach is to start with a passage in which Aristotle discusses the art of acquisition (κτητική) in its relation to the art of providing the wherewithal for household management; it needs to be quoted in full in order to be seen in proper perspective: "If then nature makes nothing without a purpose or in vain, it necessarily follows that nature has made all [animals] for the sake of man. For that reason, too, the art of war will somehow be an art of acquisition (for the art of hunting is part of it) to be used against wild beasts and against those humans who, though meant by nature to be ruled, refuse [subjection], convinced that a war of this sort is by nature just."[70] The statement sounds more callous and cruel to our ears than in fact it is: to apply the epithet "just" to a war

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66 Id. *Menexenus* 242d1-4: πρὸς μὲν τὸ ὁμόφυλον μέχρι νίκης δεῖν πολεμεῖν, καὶ μὴ δι' ὀργὴν ἰδίαν πόλεως τὸ κοινὸν τῶν Ἑλλήνων διολλύναι, πρὸς δὲ τοὺς βαρβάρους μέχρι διαφθορᾶς.

67 Aristotle, *Politics* 7.14, 1334a2.

68 Plutarch, *Moralia* 329b (*De fortuna Alexandri*): τοῖς μὲν Ἕλλησιν ἡγεμονικῶς, τοῖς δὲ βαρβάροις δεσποτικῶς χρώμενος.

69 Eratosthenes *apud* Strabo 1.49: τοῖς μὲν Ἕλλησιν ὡς φίλοις χρῆσθαι τοῖς δὲ βαρβάροις ὡς πολεμίοις.

70 Aristotle, *Politics* 1.8, 1256b20-26: εἰ μὲν οὖν ἡ φύσις μηθὲν μήτε ἀτελὲς ποιεῖ μήτε μάτην, ἀναγκαῖον τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἕνεκεν αὐτὰ πάντα πεποιηκέναι τὴν φύσιν. διὸ καὶ ἡ πολεμικὴ φύσει κτητική πως ἔσται (ἡ γὰρ θηρευτικὴ μέρος αὐτῆς), ᾗ δεῖ χρῆσθαι πρός τε τὰ θηρία καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὅσοι πεφυκότες ἄρχεσθαι μὴ θέλουσιν, ὡς φύσει δίκαιον τοῦτον ὄντα τὸν πόλεμον.

fought against people who refuse subjection opens the floodgates to a dangerous kind of thinking. However, sober reflection on this passage in its immediate context and in the context of Aristotelian political thought will show that it is not as brutal as it appears on the surface. The kind of war discussed here is predicated on a certain view of "nature" and Aristotle is careful to modify the adjective δίκαιον by adding φύσει ("by nature") to it. Plato, too, appealed to nature in differentiating war from faction and in basing conflict between Greeks and non-Greeks on their "natural" enmity, although he did not go as far as Aristotle in calling war between these two "just." This brings us back to the heart of our question: did Aristotle have the barbarians in mind when he justified war against those who refuse to accept the inferior role assigned to them by nature?

To answer this question it is necessary to digress briefly to explain some of the factors relevant to an understanding of the role nature plays in Aristotle's political thought. In his view, any social relation (κοινωνία) is possible only because each participant in it is endowed by nature with certain qualities which require for their fulfillment the presence of another participant whom nature has differently endowed. On the lowest level, for example, the minimum requirement for the existence of a family is the presence of male and female,[71] neither of whom can fulfill its natural function without the other. Other relationships similarly structured are master-slave,[72] man-animal,[73] and body-soul.[74] Moreover, in these relationships nature has marked out one side to be the dominant or ruling element and the other to be ruled by it;[75] however, although the ruling element is the better of the two,[76] it cannot do without the ruled element any more than the ruled element can do without it, since both are necessary for survival.[77] Accordingly, the relationship is beneficial to both elements.[78] This means that slavery exists by nature and is beneficial to master and slave alike. There is no difficulty in defining a natural slave: "All men who differ from others as the soul from the body and a man from an animal... are by nature slaves, and it is better for them, since it is so also in the other relations mentioned, to be ruled in this relationship";[79] and from this it follows that natural slavery is both beneficial and just for the slave.[80] Still, it is less easy to determine in a particular instance which individual is a natural slave, since, contrary to the situation in the male-female or man-animal relationship, nature has not

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71 Ibid. 1.2, 1252a26-28.

72 Ibid. 1.2, 1252a31-b9.

73 Ibid. 1.5, 1254a25-28.

74 Ibid. 1.5, 1254a34-36.

75 Ibid. 1.5, 1254a28-32, b2-16.

76 Ibid. 1.5, 1254a25-28, b10-14.

77 Survival (σωτηρία) at 1.2, 1252a30-34; 1254b10-13; necessity (ἀναγκαῖον) at 1.5, 1254a21-24, b15.

78 Ibid. 1.2, 1252a34; 1254a21-24, b6-9.

79 Ibid. 1.5, 1254b16-20: ὅσοι μὲν οὖν τοσοῦτον διεστᾶσιν ὅσον ψυχὴ σώματος καὶ ἄνθρωπος θηρίου ...οὗτοι μέν εἰσι φύσει δοῦλοι, οἷς βέλτιόν ἐστιν ἄρχεσθαι ταύτην τὴν ἀρχήν, εἴπερ τοῖς εἰρημένοις.

80 Ibid. 1.5, 1255a1-3; 1.6, 1255b6-15.

marked out the ruling element from the ruled by giving it different physical or social characteristics.[81]

Moreover, it is a fact of experience that natural slaves and natural freemen are not always actual slaves or actual freemen.[82] Slavery is also a legal status to which those have been reduced who have been taken as prisoners of war: is it just that such people should be slaves? Aristotle devotes an entire chapter[83] to this question, in which he discusses and criticises the arguments on both sides of the issue, but comes to no conclusion himself beyond stating that the debate itself really constitutes an attempt to discover what a natural slave is.[84] There is no need for us to rehearse the various arguments here, except to mention one point relevant to our purposes: against those who defend the justice of enslaving war prisoners on the grounds that the law of war makes it just that the conquered be the property of the victors, Aristotle argues that someone reduced to slavery in a war whose original cause is not just does not deserve to be a slave and is, therefore, a slave unjustly.[85] This statement, implying as it does that a war may be just or unjust, also serves to explain the grounds on which Aristotle later describes as naturally just a war waged against those who refuse to accept the role of subjects which nature has assigned to them.[86]

This brings us back to the question whether Aristotle regarded all non-Greeks as natural subjects, a war against whom would be just. The answer is not simple, but I believe it adds up to a negative. In the passage on legal *vs.* natural slavery, which we have just discussed, Aristotle notes that those who defend the slavery of prisoners of war as just never think of themselves as possible slaves but only of non-Greeks, and he criticises them for being driven to the conclusion that all barbarians are *ipso facto* slave, and all Greeks inherently free.[87] In short, he dissociates himself from this view. Elsewhere, however, he seems to come close to regarding non-Greeks as natural slaves. Among non-Greeks, he asserts, the female and the slavish are of the same order, because they lack a naturally ruling element, so that marriage becomes the union of one slave with another: he cites a line from Euripides as pointing in the same direction: "it is proper that Greeks should rule barbarians,"[88] that is, as indicating the natural identity of non-Greek and slavish.[89] But here, too, it is worth noting that the conclusion that Greeks should rule non-Greeks is not Aristotle's own but attributed by him to a kind of thinking prevalent in ancient Greece. In his own name he never goes beyond saying that there is no naturally ruling element among the barbarians. In yet another passage he states merely that in their character non-Greeks are by nature more slavish than Greeks (δουλικώτεροι εἶναι τὰ ἤθη φύσει οἱ μὲν

81 Physical: ibid. 1.5, 1254b27-55a1; social: 1.3, 1253b18-23; 1.6, 1255b1-4.
82 Ibid. 1.6, 1255b4-5.
83 Ibid. 1.6.
84 Ibid. 1.6, 1255a30-32, 1255b4-15.
85 Ibid. 1.67, 1255a24-28.
86 Ibid. 1.8, 1256b20-26. See above, nn. 16 and 70.
87 Ibid. 1.6, 1255a28-1255b4.
88 Euripides, *IA* 1400.
89 Aristotle, *Politics* 1.2, 1252b5-9.

βάρβαροι τῶν Ἑλλήνων), but he merely uses this observation to explain that non-Greeks accept as legal and traditional a kind of kingship which resembles tyranny, because they can endure despotic rule without grumbling;[90] he does not draw from it the conclusion that Greeks should try to subject them by warlike means.

To sum up this part of our discussion: for both Plato and Aristotle war is the manifestation of natural differences among mankind; but while Plato sees these differences in ethnic terms as evoking a conflict between Greeks and non-Greeks, Aristotle, on the basis of a more extensive and searching analysis of what constitutes "nature", regards as "just" a war waged for the establishment of the natural condition in which the naturally ruling element dominates that which is meant but refuses to be ruled.

Neither for Plato nor for Aristotle is war ever an end in itself. It may be inevitable, but it is always deplorable. There are hints in Plato which suggest that he may have looked upon war as one of the less attractive by-products of civilisation. In the *Republic,* it does not exist in the "city of pigs," the rudimentary state, but comes into being as an evil only with the evolution of the luxurious state;[91] and later it is said to come about as a degeneration from the perfect into the timocratic state.[92] In the *Politicus,* too, a society without war is retrojected into the mythical paradisiacal age of Kronos.[93] And yet, if civilisation has brought us war, it has also, both in Plato's view and in Aristotle's, enabled us to find the means of trying to control the uses of war through legislation and education in such a way that the virtues of peace can flourish. This aim is most clearly stated in Plato in a passage in the *Laws* which constitutes his final response to the Spartan view that a good constitution ought to be geared to war:

> The best condition, however, is neither war nor faction, and we must pray that there will never be a need for them, but peace and friendliness toward one another. And this means, it seems, that the victory of a state over itself is not the best but an indispensable condition. One might as well regard a sick body which has been purged by a physician as being in the best possible shape and pay no attention to a body that has no need of treatment at all. Similarly, when we think of the happiness of a state or of an individual, no one will ever be a proper statesman, if foreign warfare is his only and primary concern, nor a consummate lawgiver if he does not design his legislation on war as an instrument for peace rather than his legislation on peace as an instrument for war.[94]

The passage is self-explanatory, but it should be pointed out that war is not regarded as avoidable but merely as something the need for which ought to be averted by prayer (ἀπευκτόν). For that reason war-games are made an essential part of the education of the city that is to live a good life, in order to ensure that it inflict no wrong on others or sustain wrong at the hands of others. A good city will live a life of peace, an evil city a life of external and internal war; therefore,

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90 Ibid. 3.14, 1285a18-24.
91 Plato, *Rep.* 2.372d1-3, 373d4-374a2.
92 Ibid. 8.547a2-4, e1-548a3.
93 Id. *Politicus* 271e2. See n. 5 above.
94 Id. *Laws* 1.628c9-e1.

each citizen must ready himself for protecting his state by preparing for war in peacetime and not wait until war breaks out.[95] As a later generation put it: *si vis pacem, para bellum:* preparedness against the possibility of an external attack is the only justification for military training. Without this preparedness a good life is impossible.

Preparedness for war as a means toward the good life is also an important theme of book seven of Aristotle's *Politics,* where it is first stated, as it was in Plato's *Laws,* as part of the criticism of the military aspect of the Spartan constitution. Our image of a happy state living undisturbed by itself and under good laws, Aristotle says, would not be of a state organized with a view to war or the conquest of enemies. "It follows," his criticism continues, "that while we must clearly count all military pursuits as noble, we must bear in mind that they are not the highest purpose. A good lawgiver is one who has the vision of how a state or human kind or any other social group can have its share in a good life and in that measure of happiness which it is possible for it to attain."[96] From this position, Aristotle goes on to develop what seems to me to be the most profound statement of the role of war in human affairs that has come down to us from classical antiquity. War must be subordinated to the end for which the state exists, and that is the quest for the good life. Through legislation and education the statesman must implant the conviction that the end alone — the good life — is noble (καλά); the means to attain that end are merely necessary and useful (ἀναγκαῖα καὶ χρήσιμα) and are, therefore, not pursued as ends in themselves. In short, war is no more than a means to the attainment of peace, just as business is no more than the means toward that leisure which makes up the good life.[97] The lawgiver must do everything he can to ensure that his legislation concerning war and all his other measures are designed to create an atmosphere in which peace and the leisure requisite for it can thrive: war must never be waged to enslave those who do not deserve it; its only purposes, as we have seen, are the prevention of one's own slavery, to give leadership to those who can benefit from it, and the establishment of mastery over those who deserve to be slaves, since, in Aristotle's view, the last mentioned will not be enabled to fulfill their place in the scheme of things, that is, they will not be able to live a good life, unless they have the master whom their condition naturally requires.[98]

There is one further way in which war may be useful. The leisure and peace which are a precondition for a good life can be maintained only if the state has those qualities or virtues which will enable it to make intelligent use of what prosperity it possesses. The most important of these qualities is love of wisdom (φιλοσοφία) which enables the state to enjoy what goods it has. But love of wisdom needs the support of self-control and of justice (σωφροσύνη καὶ δικαιοσύνη), which happen to be qualities as essential in war as they are in peace, especially since self-control requires the presence of courage and

95 Ibid. 8.829a1-c5.

96 Aristotle, *Politics* 7.2, 1324b41-25a10..

97 Ibid. 7.14, 1333a30-b5; cf. 7.15, 1334a11-16.

98 Ibid. 7.14, 1333b38-34a10.

endurance (ἀνδρείαν καὶ καρτερικήν), without which the state could easily be enslaved by any aggressor. Left to itself, the enjoyment of prosperity will make men overbearing, but war, Aristotle believes, will bring out precisely those virtues of self-control and justice which will provide the underpinning of that love of wisdom which the state needs for a good life of peace and leisure. And the greater the abundance of goods, the greater will be the need for love of wisdom, self-control, and justice, so that these goods may be enjoyed in leisure and peace.[99]

Aristotle's view of the function of war as a means to the end of a good life is thus not very different from Plato's, although his explanation is considerably more subtle and sophisticated. Plato had proposed war-games to inculcate this kind of military preparedness in the state. Aristotle makes no specific suggestion beyond emphasising the need for physical training; but he is more concerned about its possible excesses than about its positive content.[100] In sum, Plato and Aristotle take the existence of war for granted as an unalterable fact of the human condition in the world in which we live. A world free from war may have existed in a distant mythological past and may exist in our imagination. No measures are proposed by either philosopher to avoid war altogether, but both try to harness it into the service of the good life — τὸ εὖ ζῆν — which is the true end of human existence.

The nature of the evidence for my subject has compelled me to dwell at greater length on war than on peace. Yet a picture of peace, on which both Plato and Aristotle would agree, has now emerged from our discussion. It is not a utopian state of affairs in which the differences that separate man from man will be obliterated, and it is not a messianic age in which the lion will lie with the lamb. In fact, such conditions, when hinted at all, are branded as unrealistic by being relegated to a mythical past, and not, as in the messianic vision of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, projected into the future. What we do get is the idea that peace exists in a society which, guided by law and trained by education, pursues excellence in the use of the goods it has, a society which knows that leisure is needed for the good life, but also that this leisure is imperilled if men are not prepared at all times to defend it by military means.

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99 Ibid. 7.15, 1334a11-40.

100 Ibid. 8.4.