THE POLITICS OF ARISTOTLE.

INTRODUCTION.

The Politics linked to the Nicomachean Ethics—the transition from the latter treatise to the former examined.

ARISTOTLE'S treatment of the science of πολιτική falls, unlike Plato's, into two distinct parts, and extends over two treatises, the Nicomachean Ethics and the Politics. The fact is significant, and we are not surprised to find that the two sections show, as we shall see hereafter, a certain tendency to draw away from each other. They stand, however, in the closest mutual relation: the Ethics comes first in order, the Politics second. The Ethics naturally precedes, as it mainly analyses happiness in the individual, and Aristotle's principle is that the study of the part (τὸ ἐλάχιστον, τὸ ἀσύνθετον) should precede the study of the whole. Other reasons for the precedence of the Ethics will be pointed out elsewhere.

The transition from the one treatise to the other, however, is by no means as smooth and easy as we might expect. We are told in the last chapter of the Ethics that it is not enough for the student of Practical Philosophy to know what happiness and virtue and pleasure are without seeking their realization in practice, and that they can hardly be realized in practice without the aid of Law. The State, Aristotle continues, should use Law with a view to their realization, but the Lacedaemonian State is almost the only one which does this systematically, and which exercises a supervision over the rearing and life of its members. The head of the household is almost everywhere left to himself by the State and allowed to rule his household as he

pleases. He is, in fact, a lawgiver on a small scale, and hence it is desirable that he should learn to use Law scientifically for the purpose of making those he rules better, or in other words, that he should acquire the art of Legislation. He will hardly learn this art from persons versed in political life; still less will he learn it from the Sophists: Aristotle will therefore himself take in hand the subject of legislation, and indeed the whole topic of constitutional organization, in order that, as far as may be, his philosophy of things human[1] may be brought to completion.

'First, then,' he proceeds, 'let us try to notice anything of value on the subject, which has been said by those who have gone before us, and then to learn from a comparison of constitutions what things are preservative of, or destructive to, States, and what are so to each separate constitution[2], and for what reasons some constitutions are good and others bad: for when we have considered all these matters, we shall perhaps be better able to discern both what form of constitution is the best, and how each form must be ordered, and with what laws and customs, to be what we should desire it to be[3].'

When Aristotle wrote these, the concluding sentences of the Ethics, he evidently intended to deduce the true structure of the best and other States from a study of various constitutions and from a study of the causes which tend to the preservation or decay of States and of each constitution. This is, in fact, to some extent the plan followed by Plato in the Laws, though he does not go on to draw conclusions as to the true form of every constitution,

[1] This expression is apparently inherited from Socrates (Xen. Mem. I. 1).

[2] This inquiry would seem to involve a study of the history of the States themselves—a matter, however, into which Aristotle does not propose to enter.

[3] As much doubt has been thrown, not without good ground, on the authenticity of many of the references, backwards or forwards, to be found in the writings which bear the name of Aristotle, it may be as well to remark that this programme would hardly have been forged by any one who had the Politics before him either in its traditional order or perhaps in any conceivable order.

but confines himself to tracing the outline of one ideal community. He reviews in the Third Book the Lacedaemonian, Persian, and Athenian constitutions, noting the causes of the failure or success of each, and then proceeds to construct his State. The Politics, however, is arranged on a different plan. The Second Book, which contains the review of constitutions, does not commence the work, nor does it include or introduce an inquiry into the things which preserve or destroy States or constitutions. This is reserved for a book which, wherever we place it, must come much later. The first book of the Politics deals with a subject not marked out for consideration in the last chapter of the Ethics: it seeks to establish and emphasize a distinction between the householder and the statesman, the household and the State. We hear no more of the notion that the individual householder can, by acquiring the legislative art, in some degree make up for the State's neglect of education.

In some respects, no doubt, the close of the Ethics and the opening of the Politics are in harmony. The one implies what the other emphatically asserts—the natural supremacy of the State over the household and the individual. So again, the programme in the Ethics correctly foreshadows the scope of the inquiries of the Politics. It prepares us for an inquiry, not merely into the best constitution, but into every constitution. Both treatises agree that the true lawgiver will be capable of organizing all constitutions aright, and not merely of devising a best constitution. Still the fact remains that a track is marked out in the Ethics for the investigations of the Politics which they certainly do not follow. There is no need to imagine any other cause for Aristotle's departure from his programme than a simple change of plan on his part. The Politics was probably not only not written, but also not fully conceived, when the paragraph in the Ethics was drawn up, and the paragraph had not been amended when Aristotle died.

Nature of the distinction drawn by Aristotle between Theoretic, Practical, and Productive Science: the *πολιτικὴ ἐπιστήμη* falls under the second head.

Our first step must be to discuss as briefly as we may the somewhat thorny question, what is the nature of the science of *πολιτική* and its relation to other sciences. Is it a science in the sense in which Physics is a science, and how far is it related to sciences such as Physics?

If we follow the division of Science which we find in the Metaphysics (E. 1. 1025 b 18 sqq., E. 2. 1026 b 4) into theoretic, practical, and productive Science, *πολιτική* as a whole appears to fall within, or to be identical with, Practical Science, the kind of Science which serves as a guide to right action.

The groundwork of this classification of the Sciences seems to have been laid by Plato. Plato had already classified sciences by their subject-matter. In the Philebus (55 C sqq.) we find sciences contrasted in respect of the degree of truth attained by them, and this proves to vary according to their subject-matter, as does also the method employed. Sciences concerned with sensible things (*τὰ γιγνόμενα καὶ γενησόμενα καὶ γεγονότα*, 58 E sqq.) ask the aid of Opinion and attain only a low degree of truth: whereas the science dealing with Being and that which really is and that which is unchangeable is far the truest (58 A). This is Dialectic, which is thus distinguished from Physics (59 A). Πολιτική is not here mentioned, but would no doubt be distinguished by Plato from both, though we know not whether he conceived it as less or more exact than Physics: he describes it in the Gorgias (464) as 'ministering to the soul for its highest good,' and as comprising two parts, the art of legislation, which does for the soul what gymnastic does for the body, and justice, which does for the soul what medicine does for the body.

The distinction between Theoretic and Practical Science, again, is inherited by Aristotle from Plato, who distinguishes in the Politicus (258 E) between Cognitive (*γνωστικαί*) and Practical (*πρακτικαί*) Sciences, but the Practical Sciences of Plato correspond more nearly to the Productive Sciences of Aristotle, and the Political or

Kingly Science is classed by him among Cognitive Sciences: it is said to belong to that species of Cognitive Science which does not stop short at judging, but also rules (260 A–D). Plato seems to merge Ethical Science in πολιτική[1], for he has no separate name for it, and as his Political Science always has an ethical aim, he is quite consistent in closely connecting the two sciences of Ethics and Politics. Indeed, he not only relates Ethics more closely to Politics than Aristotle, but also makes the link between Dialectic and the less exact sciences a closer one than that which exists between the Theoretic Science of Aristotle and the other sciences. He seems usually to treat Political Science, at all events, as inseparably bound up with philosophy (Rep. 473 C, 501). A knowledge of the Ideas is as much a condition of true virtue and true statesmanship as it is of true knowledge[2].

Aristotle, on the other hand, though he describes the 'First Philosophy' in a remarkable passage of the Metaphysics (A. 2. 982 b 4 sqq.) as 'the most sovereign of the sciences, determining for what end everything is to be done,' appears in the Ethics to derive the first principles of Ethical, and probably also of Political, Science, not from the First Philosophy, but from Experience. He commonly speaks in the Ethics as if Practical Science sprang from a different root from Theoretic Science. It is to Opinion that he appeals in the First Book, not to the First Philosophy, when he seeks to discover what is 'the good for man' (τὸ ἀνθρώπινον ἀγαθόν)[3]. It is from correct minor premisses furnished by experience that the end of moral action is obtained.(Eth. Nic. 6. 12. 1143 b 4), or, as we read

[1] Cp. Euthyd. 291 C–D, where πολιτική is called ἡ αἰτία τοῦ ὀρθῶς πράττειν ἐν τῇ πόλει.

[2] See Zeller, Plato E. T., pp. 152, 218; and cp. Rep. 517 C, δεῖ ταύτην (τὴν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέαν) ἰδεῖν τὸν μέλλοντα ἐμφρόνως πράξειν ἢ ἰδίᾳ ἢ δημοσίᾳ. Plato does not seem even to arrange for any special training of his guardians in Political Science: all he appears to do in this direction is to give them fifteen years' practical experience in military command and in offices suited to young men (Rep. 537 D sqq.).

[3] Cp. Eth. Nic. 1. 5. 1097 a 28, τὸ δ' ἄριστον τέλειόν τι φαίνεται: 30, τελειότερον δὲ λέγομεν: 34, τοιοῦτον δ' ἡ εὐδαιμονία μάλιστ' εἶναι δοκεῖ.

elsewhere, in somewhat different language, from virtue rooted in the character by habituation.

Theoretic and Practical Science are regarded by him as differing (1) in subject-matter, (2) in aim, (3) in the faculty employed, and (4) in method [1].

1. The *subject-matter* of Theoretic Science is either 'things self-existent, unchangeable, and separable from matter' (this is the subject-matter of the First Philosophy), or 'things unchangeable and separable from matter only in logical conception' (the subject-matter of Mathematics), or 'things inseparable from matter and subject to change' (the subject-matter of Physics): see Metaph. E. 1. 1026 a 13 [2]. The subject-matter of Physics is in close contact with that of Practical Science, though it is marked off from the latter by the fact that its principle is within and not outside itself (ἐν αὑτῷ, not ἐν ἄλλῳ). Man is a subject of Physics, so far as he has a soul which is the source of nutrition and growth (de Part. An. 1. 1. 641 a 32 sqq.: Metaph. E. 1. 1026 a 5), but at the point at which he commences to act, he ceases to be a subject of Physics and becomes the subject of Practical Science. So suddenly does the field of Physics break off and that of Practical Science begin. Both 'things done' (τὰ πρακτά), which are the subject of πολιτική, and 'things produced' (τὰ ποιητά) have their originating principle (ἀρχή) outside themselves in an agent or producer (Eth. Nic. 6. 4. 1140 a 1, τοῦ δ' ἐνδεχομένου ἄλλως ἔχειν ἔστι τι καὶ ποιητὸν καὶ πρακτόν: cp. Metaph. E. 1. 1025 b 22, τῶν μὲν γὰρ ποιητικῶν ἐν τῷ ποιοῦντι ἡ ἀρχή, ἢ νοῦς ἢ τέχνη ἢ δύναμίς τις, τῶν δὲ πρακτικῶν ἐν τῷ πράττοντι ἡ προαίρεσις). It is thus that 'things done' lie as it were passively at the disposition of the agent, just as 'things produced' do at the disposition of the producer. They are therefore said to be in our power (ἐφ' ἡμῖν, Eth. Nic. 3. 5. 1112 a 31), and we are said to deliberate about things

[1] In dealing with this subject I have found more than one of Teichmüller's works useful.

[2] Cp. Eth. Nic. 6. 2. 1139 a 6, ὑποκείσθω δύο τὰ λόγον ἔχοντα, ἓν μὲν ᾧ θεωροῦμεν τὰ τοιαῦτα τῶν ὄντων ὅσων αἱ ἀρχαὶ μὴ ἐνδέχονται ἄλλως ἔχειν, ἓν δὲ ᾧ τὰ ἐνδεχόμενα.

which 'come to pass by our agency, but not always uniformly' (1112 b 3). The defective exactness (*ἀκρίβεια*) of practical science is perhaps regarded by Aristotle as partly due to this subjection of 'things done' (*τὰ πρακτά*) to human *arbitrium*, but it is still more due to the fact that practical science, being concerned with action, is concerned with particulars. The Universal of Practical Science is only roughly exact. It cannot supply the place of a keen insight into particulars.

2. It follows from the modifiability both of the subject-matter of action and of the agent that the *purpose* of practical science is different from that of theoretic science. However much it may inquire, it never loses sight of the aim of promoting right action (Eth. Nic. 2. 2. 1103 b 26 sqq.). This need not, indeed, be its sole aim: cp. Pol. 3. 8. 1279 b 12, *τῷ δὲ περὶ ἑκάστην μέθοδον φιλοσοφοῦντι καὶ μὴ μόνον ἀποβλέποντι πρὸς τὸ πράττειν οἰκεῖόν ἐστι τὸ μὴ παροραῖν μηδέ τι καταλείπειν, ἀλλὰ δηλοῦν τὴν περὶ ἕκαστον ἀλήθειαν*: and Eth. Eud. 1. 1. 1214 a 10, *τὰ μὲν αὐτῶν* (sc. *τῶν θεωρημάτων*) *συντείνει πρὸς τὸ γνῶναι μόνον, τὰ δὲ καὶ περὶ τὰς κτήσεις καὶ περὶ τὰς πράξεις τοῦ πράγματος*. Nor should it be forgotten that even in the interest of right action it is desirable to arrive at conclusions as scientifically accurate as possible (Eth. Nic. 10. 1. 1172 b 3, *ἐοίκασιν οὖν οἱ ἀληθεῖς τῶν λόγων οὐ μόνον πρὸς τὸ εἰδέναι χρησιμώτατοι εἶναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸς τὸν βίον· συνῳδοὶ γὰρ ὄντες τοῖς ἔργοις πιστεύονται, διὸ προτρέπονται τοὺς ξυνιέντας ζῆν κατ' αὐτούς*).

3. Non-theoretic science differs from theoretic also in respect of the *faculty* employed in it. The rational part of the soul (*τὸ λόγον ἔχον*) is divided into two parts, the scientific and the calculative: *λεγέσθω δὲ τούτων τὸ μὲν ἐπιστημονικὸν τὸ δὲ λογιστικόν· τὸ γὰρ βουλεύεσθαι καὶ λογίζεσθαι ταὐτόν, οὐδεὶς δὲ βουλεύεται περὶ τῶν μὴ ἐνδεχομένων ἄλλως ἔχειν* (Eth. Nic. 6. 1. 1139 a 11). Both *τέχνη*, the faculty which operates in productive science, and *φρόνησις*, the chief virtue of the Practical Reason (Zeller, Gr. Ph. 2. 2. 655. 1), belong to the calculative part. In strictness *φρόνησις* deals with the individual and his welfare, *πολιτική* with that of the

State (Eth. Nic. 6. 7. 1141 b 23 sqq.), but they are so nearly the same that we need not attend to this distinction. The faculty concerned in moral action would seem to be in Aristotle's opinion the same as that which deals with the science of moral action. The deliberation which precedes a moral act and which is expressed in the practical syllogism is apparently regarded by him as a repetition on a small scale of the process which ends in the construction of practical science. In both operations the act of deliberation, as we shall see, is conceived to follow the same path[1].

The ends, or at all events the ultimate ends, of action are held by Aristotle to be given by the character, the true end by moral virtue: it remains for *φρόνησις* to determine the means, under which term we must probably include the intermediate ends. *Φρόνησις* conducts the whole process of deliberation, till it lights on the actual step which must be taken in order that the end may be attained: this is the last point reached in the deliberation, and the point at which action begins (Zeller, ibid. 650. 2). As these means must be morally correct, or in other words, as *φρόνησις* has to adjust its choice of means to the end suggested by moral virtue, *φρόνησις* needs to be completed by moral virtue, just as moral virtue is incomplete without *φρόνησις*. Its close connexion with moral virtue relates it to the passions and even to man's physical nature, and separates it from speculative virtue (Eth. Nic. 10. 8. 1178 a 9 sqq.). It belongs to the more human part of man's nature, as that to the more divine. Its genesis is also different. Moral virtue, from which it is inseparable, is the outcome of correct habituation: the germ of it only, an undeveloped perception of the good and the bad, the just

[1] We note, however, in Eth. Nic. 6. 8. 1141 b 22 sqq. the recognition of two forms of *φρόνησις περὶ πόλιν*: one *ἀρχιτεκτονική*, the other more distinctly *πρακτικὴ καὶ βουλευτική*, and therefore more impressed with the characteristics of *φρόνησις*, for *φρόνησις* is essentially *πρακτικὴ καὶ βουλευτική*. Thus it would seem that the *φρόνησις* of the *νομοθέτης* is to some extent different from that of the practical statesman and less characteristically *φρόνησις*. We should have been glad of some further treatment of the subject, but we do not seem to learn anything more about it from Aristotle.

and the unjust (Pol. 1. 2. 1253a 15), is born with us and comes by nature. Φρόνησις, again, is mainly, though not exclusively (Eth. Nic. 6. 7. 1141 b 14), concerned with particulars (τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα). Its particular judgments need to be correct, and this they can hardly be without experience: experience, though it arrives at a sort of Universal, never wanders far from particulars. It is evident, then, that the faculty which is concerned with practical science, is to be developed in life and in life only. Its beginning lies in habituation, its growth in experience. The young fall short in both respects. It is a faculty which cannot be passed from hand to hand. Hence, though the sphere of Contingency (and this is the sphere of Practical and Productive Science) is that which is most amenable to human influence, the faculty which is concerned with it can only be produced by a circuitous and indirect process beginning in infancy—a slower process than that by which speculative virtue comes into being, though intellectual virtue generally, which includes speculative virtue no less than φρόνησις and τέχνη, is said to 'stand in need of experience and time' (Eth. Nic. 2. 1. 1103 a 15). Thus the faculty which presides over conduct was once for all parted off by Aristotle from the speculative faculty. The two faculties might be and should be possessed by the same person, but they were different. The Greek language already distinguished between γνώμη and σοφία, and Aristotle reasserted the important truth embodied in this distinction.

4. Lastly, non-theoretic science differs from theoretic in *method*. Θεωρία finds a place in the methods of both; but the θεωρία of the one is not the same as the θεωρία of the other. In theoretic science, the object is simply to analyse: in practical and productive science, to bring into being. Τὸ ὄν is to the former what τὸ ἐσόμενον is to the latter (de Part. An. 1. 1. 640 a 3). Theoretic Science takes a given fact or thing and inquires into its cause. Thus 'the plan of Aristotle's biological treatise on the Parts of Animals is to take the parts in succession and inquire what share Necessity and the Final Cause respectively have

in their formation[1].' Practical science, on the other hand (and productive science also), starts from an end to be attained, and inquires into the means of attaining it, till it arrives at a means which it lies within the power of the inquirer to set in action. Cp. Metaph. Z. 7. 1032 b 6, *γίγνεται δὴ τὸ ὑγιὲς νοήσαντος οὕτως· ἐπειδὴ τοδὶ ὑγίεια, ἀνάγκη, εἰ ὑγιὲς ἔσται, τοδὶ ὑπάρξαι, οἷον ὁμαλότητα, εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, θερμότητα· καὶ οὕτως ἀεὶ νοεῖ ἕως ἂν ἀγάγῃ εἰς τοῦτο ὃ αὐτὸς δύναται ἔσχατον ποιεῖν. Εἶτα ἤδη ἡ ἀπὸ τούτου κίνησις ποίησις καλεῖται ἡ ἐπὶ τὸ ὑγιαίνειν.* (The illustration here is taken from productive science, not practical, but in this point there is no difference between the two: cp. Eth. Nic. 3. 5. 1112 b 12 sqq.) In practical and productive science the analysis is pressed forward till we reach 'that which we have it in our power to do.' The man of practical science who wishes to produce happiness inquires into its cause, which he finds to be mainly virtue, then he inquires into the cause of virtue and finds it to be law; the framing of law, however, is a thing which lies in his power; hence here his analysis stops, and the question which he has to solve is, how should laws be framed so as to produce virtue? Thus, while both in theoretic and non-theoretic science there is a search for the cause, in the former we search for the cause which will explain a given thing or fact, in the latter for the cause with the aid of which we can attain a given end.

It is easy to see how different the plan of the Politics would have been if Aristotle had identified the methods of physical and political study. We should have had the actual phenomena presented by the life of States accepted as normal, and the problem would have been to refer them to the Material or the Final Cause. As it is, happiness is the starting-point of Political Science, and the object of the inquiry is to discover some line of action lying within the power of the inquirer—the correct way of framing laws, in fact—which will bring it into being to the utmost extent possible in each particular case.

The difference which exists between the problem of

[1] Ogle's translation, p. xxxv.