The Main Ideas In The Politics By Aristotle

What is the first thing that comes to your mind when someone talks about natural places for humans? You probably have received many different answers. When we think of the natural place for human beings, everyone has their own beliefs on what may or may not be the most natural place for us humans. When reading The Politics and the first half of the Book of Genesis, we grasp that naturality is only really present in “The Politics” by Aristotle.

First, we should know what a city is and how they are created. Aristotle states “it is clear that all communities aim at some good, and that the community that is most authoritative of all and embraces all the others does so particularly and aims at the most authoritative good of all. This is what is called the city.”(Aristotle1252a5) Cities come into being in 3 stages. The first stage is the creation of households, which consist of men, women, and slaves. Aristotle combines us in pairs because he states “First, then, must of necessity be a conjoining of persons who cannot exist without one another: on the one hand, male and female, for the sake of reproduction; on the other, the naturally ruling and ruled on account of preservation.” (Aristotle1252aLine25) The second stage is the creation of villages, which is just households coming together to create a village, and then the third stage is just villages coming together to create a city.

While we know how a city came into being, we should also know how God created the Garden of Eden. God first created light, and then separated it from darkness, which he then called light day and the darkness, night. Continuing into God’s creation he then created the sky, the earth, and the water. There was no agricultural features like growing grass on the empty fields and field shrubs. God has nobody to take of the grounds, but had a stream watering the fields. So, God created man from dust, and after God created man, he then created a garden in Eden, which is where God placed man.

Aristotle really has four main points on why a city is natural. First argument Aristotle has on why the city is natural is what we stated with the steps of the creation of a city. When Aristotle talks about master and slave and them coming together for self-preservation, he explains that a master naturally uses his knowledge, so that he can rule, and the natural part of a slave is used for work. With the male and female being created for reproducing and the ruling and ruled (man) being created for self-preservation we have the natural creation of a household. Aristotle then explains that the creation of a village is natural. “The first community arising from several households and for the sake of non-daily needs is the village. By nature, the village seems to be above all an extension of the household (1252b15). Multiple villages conjoined together creates a natural city-state, which is where Aristotle explains it being the natural living space for man and woman due to it being made for living well.

Aristotle explanation of why the city is a natural place for humans continues when he explains the dependency of cities for humans. The city is seen as natural because a city is an end and with a city being an end, so is nature. It serves as an end, due to the fact that alone a city can achieve self-sufficiency. “Again, that for the sake of which a thing exists, or the end, is what is best; and self-sufficiency is and end and what is best.” (1253a13) Aristotle continues his argument on cities being natural when he explains that a city is before individuals, because human’s cannot function outside a city. Aristotle defends this statement by stating “for if the

whole body is destroyed there will not be a foot or a hand, unless in the sense that the term similar, but the thing itself with be defective.”(1253a20-23) He states, this to explain that if the whole body is destroyed a body part cannot function. So, this is like a person leaving a city and if they leave, they won’t be able to function fully, because just like stated above the city is the only place, we can achieve self-sufficiency.

Aristotle carries onto another term he identifies humans as and that is “Political Animals”. He states, “From these things it is evident , then, that the city belongs among the things that exist by nature, and that man is by nature a political animal.” (Aristotle1253a1) What Aristotle means by this is that humans have the ability to use their speech, which was given them by nature. Aristotle explains that this gift of speech given of nature allows us to understand what is good and what is evil. “But speech serves to revel the advantageous and the harmful, and hence also the just and the unjust”

From the understanding of the Book of Genesis, we find that naturality has succumbed through laws and customs. What we can understand from this is that nothing is natural to God, and the only way to be really self-sufficient and virtuous is through following Gods laws and if we don’t evil/punishment is and can be brought upon us. We can see that naturality has succumbed through laws and nature when we read about Adam and Eve, The Tower of Babel, and the story of Noah. God ordered Adam and Eve to just take care of the land of the Garden of Eden and that they can eat from any tree, except the Tree of Knowledge. However, they were influenced/tricked by the serpent to eat from the tree, and when they did God punished them. In the Tower of Babel, the people of the city had the idea of building this tower and all coming together to live in one city would satisfy God, but it infuriated God, because they did not follow his rule, so he punished them and scattered them across the world, which shows that nature is succumbed through laws and customs. God has the ability to destroy “nature” if his laws are not followed and we can see that in the story of the Flood. Noah was a true follower/disciple of God, so we can say that he was rewarded with a warning of the flood by God and ordered Noah to build an ark. The ark is seen as a reward due to Noah being a righteous person of God’s rule.

We can see that in Politics, a city is the only place for us to be self-sufficient and to live well, but in the Book of Genesis to live well, we must follow God’s rule, or we are at the risk of being punished by God.