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RH: Montecatini on Human Sociability

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Human Sociability in Antonio Montecatini's (1537–99) Commentary on Aristotle's *Politics*

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Abstract: The present article delves into the history of political philosophy by discussing human sociability in Antonio Montecatini's (1537–99) commentary on Aristotle's *Politics*. The focus is on a philosophical analysis of three interrelated ideas that Montecatini discusses: (1) Aristotle's dictum that human beings are political animals by nature; (2) naturalness of the household; and (3) the nature and origin of political communities. Montecatini's views are briefly related to those of John Case (ca. 1546–1600), and they are also contextualized within the late medieval commentary tradition on the *Politics*, but the main aim is to clarify Montecatini's philosophical position and examine the ways in which he deviates from Aristotelian naturalism in political philosophy. This paves the way to a deeper understanding of the developments that led to early modern innovations.

Keywords: Aristotelian tradition, Renaissance Aristotelianism, Antonio Montecatini, John Case, sociability, political community, household, human nature

<AHD>Introduction

<TEXTNOINDENT>It is nowadays commonly acknowledged that the transition from the middle ages to the early modern period was more of a gradual shift than a revolutionary process. Many early modern ideas in the fields of natural philosophy, philosophical psychology, and moral philosophy are rooted in medieval and Renaissance discussions and conceptual frameworks.¹

Researchers have also paid attention to continuities and developments in political thought with promising results.² For instance, when Annabel Brett analyzes views about the state of nature and the origins of the political community from the late fifteenth century to Thomas Hobbes, she points out that

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every early modern commentary on the *Politics* that I have read incorporates the voluntary and elective aspect of human agency into its account of the formation of the city and distinguishes it from the natural. This voluntary aspect does not necessarily make the city *unnatural*, but it demands a complex explanation that involves both natural communicative instinct and an act of the will.³

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My aim in the present essay is to take up the challenge of providing such an explanation through a detailed analysis of the relation between natural sociability of human beings and the voluntary dimension of human action. However, given the number of extant works—already Charles Lohr’s incomplete survey of Latin Aristotle commentaries from the period between 1500 and 1650 includes sixty-three works on {AQ: perhaps ‘the *Politics*’ to match the usage above? the *Politics*⁴—and the fact that Renaissance Aristotelians were a motley crew, it is impossible to offer a comprehensive overview of philosophical positions that were defended during this period in just one essay. Instead, I have adopted a more modest aim: I concentrate on one prominent author, Antonio Montecatini (1537–99).

Montecatini was a professor of natural philosophy at the University of Ferrara from 1567 to 1594.⁵ He wrote several commentaries on Aristotle’s works, including three extensive commentaries, respectively, on the first three books of the *Politics*.⁶ His interest in Aristotle is not surprising in itself, since sixteenth-century natural philosophy was still by and large dominated by the works of the old master. But the fact that he wrote commentaries on Aristotle’s

practical philosophy calls for some explanation. The University of Ferrara had had a regular professorship in moral philosophy for a few decades, but it was discontinued in 1567. Supposing that Montecatini's commentaries were occasioned by his teaching (which we do not know), he must have taken over the teaching of moral philosophy at Ferrara. It was a normal practice that a professor in natural philosophy would also occasionally teach moral philosophy, which included the *Politics* in addition to the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the pseudo-Aristotelian *Oeconomics*.⁷ However, we know that Montecatini was into political philosophy because he also left behind a commentary on Plato's *Republic* and an epitome on the *Laws*. His interest in Plato was undoubtedly strengthened, if not incited, by Francesco Patrizi, who was appointed as a professor of Platonic philosophy at the University of Ferrara in 1577. In addition to his academic pursuits, Montecatini worked as a secretary and diplomat for the Duke Alfonso II d'Este.⁸

Although known as a critic of Jean Bodin,⁹ Montecatini is rarely discussed in modern scholarship. There are studies on certain aspects of his thought, but his political philosophy has not been subjected to a detailed study, presumably because his commentaries are both extensive and arduous.¹⁰ Also, the perceived lack of originality may have diminished his value in the eyes of modern readers. While he may not be among the most original figures in the history of political philosophy—his interpretations often, but not always, follow some of the paths that were laid down in the medieval commentary tradition (which itself was far from unified¹¹)—he occasionally shows both exegetical and philosophical acuity. He notices philosophical problems in earlier interpretations, most notably in those of Thomas Aquinas, and comes up with solutions to them. Moreover, even when he follows earlier authors, his works can be seen as historically significant, since they communicated and disseminated these ideas in the Renaissance intellectual world.¹²

The ultimate reason to focus on Montecatini is, however, that his conception of different aspects of human sociability and political nature represents well the manner in which Aristotle's ideas were used and transformed in the commentary tradition during a time when they faced serious challenges on various fronts.¹³ The essay provides a detailed analysis of the philosophical

foundations on which Montecatini builds his theory of the household and the political community, and of the relation between voluntary action and the concept of nature. As such, it paves the way for evaluating his relation to his medieval predecessors, on the one hand, and to later authors, on the other. However, this kind of historical comparison is not the main concern in the present paper.¹⁴ Montecatini's view is philosophically interesting and historically significant and thus deserves to be studied on its own.

Studying Montecatini also serves the historical aim of making sense of what has been called "political Aristotelianism." As Christoph Flüeler has aptly pointed out, the meaning of this term is much debated, and to properly understand the development of premodern political thinking, more work must be done on the commentary tradition—which, as I already mentioned, should not be taken as monolithic.¹⁵ The present essay provides new material that can be used to draw a more comprehensive picture of the late fate of Aristotle's political philosophy; however, it goes without saying that a brief essay that focuses on only one author cannot draw that picture alone.

The essay is divided into three sections, and each of them focuses on one aspect of Montecatini's view of the social dimension of human life. The first section discusses his arguments for the social nature of human beings and shows that his view is based on a sharp division between the social and political aspects of human life. Section 2 focuses on the simplest and most fundamental form of human community, the household, and its relation to human sociability. The final section examines the political nature of humans, the origins of political community, and Montecatini's view of the complex relation between natural instinct and the human will. It was precisely in relation to these three topics that human sociability was discussed in premodern political philosophy.

<TEXTNOINDENT>Early modern and Renaissance discussions concerning human sociability must be understood against the preceding tradition. They form an integral part of a continuum that reaches directly back to the mid-thirteenth century and that is deeply rooted in antiquity. This does not mean that the continuum would be smooth and without sometimes radical differences, but there are also unifying factors: in particular, Aristotle's works played an important role well into the seventeenth century, either because his views were accepted (often in modified form) or because they were a target of criticism.

Medieval scholastics gained access to Aristotle's *Politics* in the latter half of the thirteenth century, and although it never became as important a text as the *De anima* or the *Nicomachean Ethics*, a considerable number of commentaries on the *Politics* were written during the following centuries.¹⁶ These commentaries do not repeat the original ideas in their pristine form, however. It has been shown that Augustinian and Ciceronian influences were important already in the early stages of Aristotle's reception,¹⁷ and Renaissance philosophers drew abundantly from other ancient works as well. Aristotle's views were understood partially in light of these sources.¹⁸ A clear representative of this trend is Joachim Périon's (ca. 1498/99–1559) *Aristotelis De republica qui Politicorum dicuntur*. Périon explains Aristotle's ideas by referring abundantly to Cicero's works, to the extent that it often seems that he is explaining Cicero rather than Aristotle. What is important is that he does not see any differences between the views of these two authors. (Périon, *Aristotelis De republica*, 269–78.¹⁹)

A significant new element in the Renaissance is the influence of Plato, whose political ideas were used occasionally, for instance, to support monarchy over republican rule. Quite often, his views (especially concerning the common ownership of women, children, and property) were found highly problematic; even so, they became part of the theoretical discourse on political matters.²⁰ It is not always clear to what extent Platonist elements were drawn directly from Plato, since sometimes they could be found also in the earlier commentary tradition on Aristotle's practical philosophy.²¹ Nevertheless, there was a general tendency to reconcile ideas from Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* with Aristotle's *Politics*, a tendency that can be clearly seen in

Montecatini's works. For instance, when Aristotle criticizes the idea that the power of a king is similar to the rule that a master exerts over his slaves (Aristotle, *Pol.* 1.1, 1252a7–16), Montecatini refuses to believe that the argument is aimed at Plato. He claims that Aristotle is criticizing confused interpretations of Plato's view and that the difference between these two authors disappears if their views are understood correctly (Antonio Montecatini, *In Politica*, ch. 1, text 2, 7–8).²²

Moreover, medieval authors did more than merely combine different strands from ancient philosophy. They also gave their own twists to the material. In this connection, the most important idea was related to the role of human will and choice in explanations for human sociability. Medieval authors tended to conceive of human beings as agents who are fundamentally free in a psychological sense.²³ The idea that the formation of the political community is partly voluntary and that individual human beings are free to choose a solitary life became an important part of the commentary tradition already in the thirteenth century.²⁴ This interpretation of Aristotle's view made room for claiming that although human beings are political animals by nature, human nature alone does not fully explain why and how they come together to form a political community.²⁵

Despite these influences, human sociability was analyzed within the general Aristotelian framework and with Aristotelian terminology. Commentators accepted the key elements of Aristotle's political philosophy and endeavored to show that human beings were political animals by nature. Often their principal aim was to unravel the true meaning of Aristotle's text, instead of trying to use it for analyzing contemporary politics, but it is clear that they did not think that Aristotle was wrong in his claims about human nature. That is to say, the project of sixteenth-century commentaries was not antiquarian: they tried to explain what Aristotle meant, but in doing so they provided a vocabulary and framework that could be used to understand the philosophical aspects of their own political reality—even when they themselves did not put it directly to that use.²⁶ When they accepted Aristotle's naturalism, it was because they regarded it as a true view of human nature.

And they did accept it, at least on the surface. Commentators repeatedly affirmed Aristotle's assertion that human beings are political animals by nature, and Montecatini was not exceptional in this regard. He argues that human beings have a natural inclination or desire to live with other people:

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Political community could not exist by nature, unless human beings were political animals, that is, unless they had a certain natural instinct and impulse to a political society, from which the political community arises. . . . Acciaiolus claims to prove that [1] humans are political animals by nature from the fact that [2] they naturally desire political society—as if these would not signify the same thing! (*In Politica*, ch. 5.2, text 20, 61–62, trans. of Montecatini mine)²⁷

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Montecatini follows Aristotle in claiming that while the political community provides material goods and enables a good life and happiness, the inclination is so strong that humans would desire to live together even if that would not be beneficial for them (*In Politica III*, ch. 6.1, text 41, 82–84).²⁸ By identifying the political nature of humans with this psychological drive, he rules out another possible interpretation of Aristotle's view, namely, that the claim about the political nature of humans is a description of their actual way of life.²⁹ Humans are political because they have this psychological drive, which means (in principle) that it is possible to be a political animal without actually participating in political life.

Montecatini considers this proof as definite. He uses it to criticize Aquinas's interpretation of the relation between human sociability and the political community. Aquinas begins his analysis by establishing the naturalness of the political community on the basis of the so-called genetic and teleological arguments, which account for the development of the political community from more basic forms of human association (the association between woman and man, the household, and the village), and which state that the political community is the final

goal of this development, respectively. After this, he claims that humans are political animals by nature because the political community is nothing but an association of human beings (Thomas Aquinas, *Sent. Pol.*, book 1, ch. 1b, 78a–b/*Commentary on Pol.*, 15–16).³⁰ According to Montecatini, this argument fails. It tries to prove an obvious fact (that humans are political animals) on the basis of something that is difficult to know (that the political community is natural). As such, this would not be a serious problem, but Montecatini also claims that the argument is circular. The naturalness of the community is based on the political nature of humans, and therefore it cannot be used to prove that humans are political animals. (*In Politica*, 5.2, text 20, 61–62.)

Although Montecatini’s critical remark targets the structure of Aquinas’s argument, it is not completely clear that it hits its target. Aquinas proves that humans are political animals by nature on the basis of the naturalness of the political community, but he also appeals to the human ability to use language and speak about what is just and what is unjust (*Sent. Pol.*, 1.1b, 78b/*Commentary on Pol.*, 16–17). This gives him an independent ground for claiming that humans are political animals. However, Montecatini’s remark is philosophically perceptive in the sense that Aquinas’s first proof works only if the naturalness of the political community is not grounded on the political nature of humans. Whether this is the case is a complex question that cannot be addressed here. What is important is that Montecatini’s argument stems from his own conception of the relation between the political nature of humans and the naturalness of the political community. He suggests that Aquinas’s argument should be turned on its head: the political community can be natural only if humans are political animals by nature (*In Politica*, 5.2, text 20, 62).

This approach places the emphasis on the anthropological claim that humans are political animals. To see in detail what Montecatini means by ‘political animal,’ we may look at what he writes about political animals other than humans.

As is well known, Aristotle argues in the *Politics* that “a human being is *more* of a political animal than a bee or any other gregarious animal” (*Pol.* 1.2, 1253a8–10, emphasis

mine). It is not altogether clear how the comparison to other animals should be understood, and scholars have pointed out that there are at least two different interpretations. According to one reading, humans are the only political animals in the proper sense because no other animal species forms a *polis*, a special kind of community that aims for a good life and is based on rational considerations of what is just and what is unjust. The difference between humans and other animals is not a matter of degree but of kind. Another possibility is that Aristotle is using ‘political animal’ in a broader biological sense, which appears also in the *Historia animalium* 1.1, 488a7–10. On this reading, there is no radical difference between human beings and other political animals, such as ants, bees, and cranes, which collaborate in order to achieve a common aim. Human beings are rational and use language, which enables more complex forms of collaboration and makes the political life of human beings more sophisticated, but the difference is only a matter of degree. Many animal species live in organized communities, which involves collaboration and aiming for a common goal. For that, they can be called “political” in the same sense but to a lesser degree than humans.³¹

Whatever Aristotle meant, it is clear that Montecatini saw a radical difference between the political nature of human beings and that of other animals. He defended the first reading, as can be seen in the following text that distinguishes two possible meanings of ‘political’ and ‘apolitical’ (*civilis* and *incivilis*³²):

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These terms are taken in two ways: in the first way, properly, and in this way they refer to a certain association of life between human beings, which is properly and truthfully called a political association and a political community [*civilis communio ac civitas*]; in the second way, metaphorically and due to a similarity to the first way, and in this way they refer to the whole community and society of human beings or of other animals, which belong to one species and which nature has instructed to pursue the necessities of life together. Only human beings are called political, that is, suitable for real political communities, in the first way; not only human

beings but also bees, ants, cranes, and many other animals are called political, that is, social and gregarious, in the second way. (*In Politica*, 5.2, 59–60)³³

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In effect, Montecatini claims that only human beings are political, properly speaking; other animals are political merely in a metaphorical sense. Although these two ways of being political differ quite radically from each other, Montecatini does not make a clear and systematic terminological difference between them. Rather, he often uses the same concept ‘political animal’ to designate both human beings and those animals that are political in the metaphorical sense of the term. That said, he occasionally hints at a terminological distinction—for instance, he writes that nonhuman political animals are “social and gregarious,” and in another context he argues that “the human being is a political and social animal” (*In Politica III*, 6.1, text 16, 83). Moreover, he proposes that the concepts ‘social’ and ‘political’ are related in such a way that the latter is a subclass of the former: all political animals are also social, but not the other way round.³⁴ He holds that one of the main purposes of the *Politics* 1.2 is to show that human beings are *both* social and political animals, while other animals, about which Aristotle has more to say in the *Historia animalium*, reach only the level of social life and are not political in the proper sense of the word (*In Politica*, 5.2, 60; and 5.2, text 22, 71). Thus, although Montecatini does not always do so himself, we may adopt a more systematic terminology for the sake of clarity: bees, ants, and other similar species are *social animals*, whereas human beings are *political animals*.³⁵

The distinction between social and political animals is not an invention of Montecatini. He sides with, for instance, Albert the Great, who occasionally claims that, properly speaking, humans are the only political animals there are. However, Albert does not use the terminology systematically, as he applies the term ‘political’ to nonhuman animals (and ‘social’ to humans) quite freely.³⁶ More importantly, he does not explicitly point out that the term ‘political’ is equivocal. Thus, although Montecatini’s view is not original, his way of arguing against the political life of nonhuman animals can be seen as a strong indication that such a separation has

become part of the political framework by the mid-sixteenth century, and that Aristotle's biological conception has been set aside.

Obviously, the distinction between the proper and metaphorical senses of 'political animal' requires that human beings are political in a way that differs from the social behavior of other animals. As we would expect, Montecatini argues for a conception of 'political' that is linked to a life in a real political community or to participation in such a life in some way. Social animals do live together, but they do not live political lives, because their communities are not political in the proper sense of the word. Montecatini writes,

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Therefore, in a broad sense *ta politika zōa* (that is, political animals) will be understood to mean those who tend to live and dwell together in the same place. This is common to human beings and many other animals, which (to use a different vocabulary with the same meaning) . . . are called gregarious and social. However, properly and deliberately speaking, political and civil animal is understood to mean those who are born into a political community—which is truthfully and properly called such—in order to live in a civilized manner and according to reason. Only a human being is such among the living beings [*animantium*], because a multitude of human beings, brought together under a certain order and certain institutions and standing consistently together, is a true and proper political community [*civitas*]. (*In Politica*, 5.2, text 22, 70)³⁷

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Montecatini is once again reluctant to make a clear terminological distinction between those animals that are political in the proper sense of the word and those that are so only derivatively; but he does not hesitate to accept this distinction. Gregarious and social animals live together, but, unlike humans, they do not have organized political communities. Aristotle thought that living together in herds without any kind of collaboration did not count as a political life (*EN* 9.9, 1170b13–14),³⁸ but Montecatini makes a more radical move by claiming that even a life that

involves collaboration for the sake of a common goal is not political in the proper sense. Given that this interpretation goes against what Aristotle writes in the *Historia animalium* 1.1, 488a8–10, it is not surprising that when Montecatini analyzes the mutual relations of the concepts *civile*, *solitarius*, and *congregabile* in relation to the relevant passage in Aristotle’s work, he argues that the original meaning must have been altered by an uninformed scribe because the classification does not seem to make any sense (*In Politica*, 5.2, text 22, 71).³⁹ In the end, Montecatini argues that if collaboration and a common goal were the decisive factors—as they are for Aristotle’s biological conception—then bees, ants, and other so-called political animals would, in fact, be *more* political than human beings. In other words, he sees a difference between the biological and proper senses of the expression ‘political animal,’ and he suggests that Aristotle’s use of the concept in his biological works is not the same as in the *Politics* and that the former should be taken as metaphorical. To be truly political, one must live in a real political community. We will see below what this requirement means in detail, but it is important to note that the key issue is justice, which is lacking in other communities but is an integral feature of a real political community. Montecatini focuses on this aspect of Aristotle’s view instead of biological traits.

<AHD>2. Sociability and Household

<TEXTNOINDENT>Aristotle distinguishes three different types of human community. The first of these in order of emergence is the household, which consists of relations between a husband and wife, a father and son, and a master and servant. All these relations were considered to be natural. When the household expands and children grow up, they move out and establish their own households. This process is also natural, and the resulting community of several households is a village. Finally, a political community is established from several villages. (*Pol.* 1.2, 1252a24–1253a1; *In Politica*, 2.1, text 4, 15; and ch 4, text 16, 46–47.)

In the commentary tradition, the middle level, the village, was regarded as a natural transition from the household to a full-fledged political community. The village was mentioned in the context of the genetic argument for the naturalness of the political community,⁴⁰ and usually commentators emphasized that there is a radical difference between these two types of communities.⁴¹ Montecatini's position stands out in comparison to this view because he thinks that the village is not essentially different from the political community: "There are two principal and perfect communities and unions of human beings: one is the household, the other, the political community [*civitas*]. Accordingly, a village which attains to the form of union does not differ at all from a political community, and it is certainly a kind of a small political community." (*In Politica*, 1, text 2, 9)⁴²

On another occasion, Montecatini claims that villages differ from perfect political communities because they are not completely self-sufficient and do not aim at a good life, but he does not think that the difference is categorical. Rather, political communities come in different sizes, and only some of them are perfect in the sense that they promote the good life. The development of a city is a two-stage process. In the first stage, human beings establish a community, a kind of a primitive city, to defend themselves from external harms and to enable life simpliciter. The perfect city is, by contrast, governed by laws, and it exists for the sake of a good life in accordance with virtue. (*In Politica*, 4, text 16, 46–50.)⁴³ Whether Montecatini means to equate primitive cities with villages is unclear—at any rate, he does not do so explicitly—but his discussion shows that the middle level, the Aristotelian village, has lost its significance almost completely, as it is not considered to be an independent level in the development; instead, it is either an incomplete and imperfect political community, or a small but formally perfect one. The focus is on the relation between the household and the *civitas*.

One might assume that the distinction between social and political aspects would go nicely together with the bipartite division of human communities, so that the household arises from the social nature of human beings, and the political community results from their political

nature. To some extent, this is true. Montecatini thinks that a person who does not live in a political community is not political in the proper sense of the word, and that households result from a social nature that is common to both human beings and other animals living in groups. To be more precise, he maintains—as was usual in the middle ages and Renaissance—that the naturalness of the household is due to a natural impulse or appetite that drives human beings and other animals to live a social life with other members of the same species. This appetite was understood as being common to all living beings, including plants. (*In Politica*, 2.1, text 5, 18–19; and ch. 4, text 16, 49.)⁴⁴

Yet if we look at Montecatini's explanation for the existence of the household, we see that he does not consider it to be fully natural in the same way as, say, a tree and a beehive are natural. He makes two moves that in effect turn the household into an artificial and voluntary association. In the first place, he explains that the relations that constitute the household—a husband and wife, a father and child, a master and servant—have a double origin. Although they are based on human nature, they also stem from voluntary choices: “There are two reasons why the household coalesces from these three associations only and not from any others. First, just as a household is partly from nature, partly from the mind and the will . . . so the associations from which it is joined must be partly natural and partly voluntary. Only these three are like that.” (*In Politica*, 7, text 30, 106)⁴⁵

This combination of natural and voluntary may seem a strange hybrid, especially if we consider it in light of Aristotle's well-known distinction between natural substances and artifacts, which he develops in the *Metaphysics* and the *Physics*. According to this distinction, natural substances have an internal principle of movement and change, and they develop without an external efficient cause (an acorn grows into an oak), while artifacts are created by an agent who actualizes the form of the artifact, which exists first in the agent's mind, in external matter (*Metaph.* 7.7, 1032a11–b1; 12.3, 1070a6–7; 12.4, 1070b30–33; *Ph.* 2.7, 198a22–27). Aristotle's conception of nature is a complex one—sometimes he explains it in a rather different way, as

analogous to art (see e.g. *Ph.* 2.8, 199a10–19)—and therefore it is likely that he did not mean to apply this distinction to human associations. Yet, he leaves the door open for philosophical scrutiny, as he never explains in a detailed and unambiguous way how the naturalness of human associations should be understood.⁴⁶ Montecatini's strategy is to interpret the naturalness of the household (and the political community, as we will see below) in such a way that it does not exclude human action and rational design. Voluntary decisions are compatible with nature, because the word 'natural' is understood in a broad sense.⁴⁷

The voluntary aspect can be easily understood in the relation between a husband and wife: nature drives us toward this association, but whether or not we follow that drive is up to us, and we also may choose the person with whom we actually establish this relationship (at least in principle).⁴⁸ The voluntary aspect in the relation between a father and children is less obvious. However, this relation can be taken as voluntary on the part of the father, because he may decide not to have children at all. Finally, when Montecatini claims that the relation between a master and slave is voluntary, he probably has in mind the practice of selling oneself to slavery for a fixed period. In this case, both parties agree (more or less) voluntarily to form the relationship.⁴⁹

The crucial element in Montecatini's view is that the household is partly a voluntary association. This brings us to the second of Montecatini's moves, which distances the household from its natural origins. While the first move was related to the origins of this association (natural vs. voluntary), this second idea pertains to the character of the household itself. Montecatini argues that even though it results from a natural process, which is based on natural tendencies that belong to the human species, the actual form that the household takes is culturally and historically contingent. Montecatini's view is, in other words, that the household is partly a human institution regardless of its natural origins. As such, it bears similarity to the associations of other animals, although it also contains aspects that are proper to it.

The common feature between human households and animal communities is that both are based on the biological drive to preserve the species. This drive, which ultimately accounts for the association between a man and a woman and thereby the existence of the household, is

shared by all living beings. They have a natural appetite, as Aristotle puts it, “to leave behind something of the same kind as themselves” (*Pol.* 1.2, 1252a29–30). Renaissance authors occasionally linked this principle to the Platonic idea of a personal desire for individual immortality.⁵⁰ We are mortal beings, and the only way to reach immortality in this world is by generating offspring who are like us. As the humanist Loys Le Roy (1510–77), who wrote several political and historical works and was appointed a professor of Greek in the Collège de France in 1572,⁵¹ puts it in the commentary section of his translation of the *Politics*:

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The human race cannot achieve immortality by nature. Everyone desires this greatly by nature, bearing in mind that there is no one who does not desire to preserve his name among the future generations. Thus, the human race, immortal in this way, seeks to be eternal; though, in leaving behind children, one acquires immortality by generation. . . . And therefore, because the living may not always exist and obtain the divine condition by continuing in existence (bearing in mind that transient and mortal things do not remain the same and numerically one), everyone endeavors to participate in eternity and the divine condition as much as it is possible for them.

(*Les politiques d’Aristote*, book 1, ch. 1, 7, trans. mine)⁵²

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Even though this drive is in principle similar in all living beings, Renaissance authors also perceived significant dissimilarities between human beings and other animals in this respect—and in doing so, followed a medieval tradition that goes all the way back to Grosseteste.⁵³ Thus, Montecatini points out that animals reproduce and raise their offspring but that leaving behind something similar to oneself requires more than this in the case of human beings. Children need to be educated, for otherwise they will not reach human perfection and will not be similar to their parents. Education takes time, and therefore the association between a male and a female lasts longer in human beings than in other animals: “In the human race, three things are necessary in

order that we may leave behind something similar to ourselves: namely, the procreation, upbringing, and education of children. All these, especially education, take a good deal of time. For this reason, among all the animals, the males and females of the human race are united for the longest time.” (*In Politica*, 2.1, text 5, 18)⁵⁴

Yet, although raising children and educating them takes quite a long time, it does not take a lifetime. The association between a man and a woman is natural, but marriage is not, and the human institution of marriage marks a radical difference between human beings and other animals. Marriage is an additional organizing principle that shapes the natural association that aims for reproduction (of oneself and the species), and the precise way it does that is determined by laws and customs:

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the origin and perfect cause [of the union between a man and a woman] is that natural desire, which I mentioned, to leave behind something similar to oneself. But this same desire is not in the same way the perfect cause of true marriage—which is defined as a union of suitable and legal persons, a man and a woman, which restrains the individual form of life. For, indeed, that desire does not demand a perpetual partnership, but only for as long as is sufficient to produce and bring up the children. (*In Politica*, 2.1, text 5, 18)⁵⁵

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This institutional level of the association between a man and a woman is organized differently in different cultures, and nature does not determine it. Nature only leads human beings to raise their children together, whereas marriage is based on an agreement and shaped by human rational planning and custom (*In Politica*, 2.1, text 5, 18–19).⁵⁶ Thus, Montecatini distinguishes between natural and artificial aspects of the most basic form of association that functions as the core of the household. This move (which Montecatini attributes to Ulpian and the glossator Accursius⁵⁷)

implies that the household is partially a human institution, which is directly affected by the political level, as in most societies laws regulate how marriage is organized.

Montecatini's way of analyzing different aspects of the household is in sharp contrast to some of his contemporaries, who defend a more traditional view. Take, for instance, John Case (ca. 1546–1600), who wrote several influential commentaries on Aristotle's works during his career at Oxford, including the creatively titled commentary on the *Politics*, the *Sphaera civitatis*.⁵⁸ He claims in this work that the household is completely natural and lasts for a lifetime. After explaining the main principles of the two other relations that constitute the household (a husband and wife, and a master and servant) he continues:

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From these two associations arises a third, namely the household and the family, in which the relation between the father and son is most visible, not because the family consists only of this relation, but because in it the image, as it were, of the man and the wife is perpetually preserved. For, the son is the image of the father, in which the interred father lives. Since nature in all things strives for eternity and something similar to oneself, it was proper that nature created in man a power by which he chooses a wife, procreates sons, and enlarges, feeds, and maintains a family. The family is, therefore, a composite association, created and constituted by nature, not for the present but for all the days of one's life. (*Sphaera civitatis*, book 1, ch. 1, 12, trans. D. Sutton, modified)⁵⁹

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There are no traces of the distinction that Montecatini makes between the natural instinct to beget offspring and the institutional and cultural level that supervenes on the natural one.

<AHD>3. Political Community

<TEXTNOINDENT>Humans are not only social beings who live in families but first and foremost political animals. A political community, *civitas*, was considered to be the most perfect of human societies. Following Aristotle, medieval and Renaissance commentators argued that the political community is natural; but they also took heed of those suggestions of his that distinguish it from natural entities. In effect, there were commentators who emphasized that even though the political community is natural, it must be established by human reason and art. Moreover, some authors suggested that establishing a political community is a matter of choice.⁶⁰

This relative emphasis on the artificiality of the political community—which is not that far from certain aspects of early modern social contract theories—is based on many elements. One of them can be derived from the *Politics* 1.2, where Aristotle writes, “Hence, though an impulse toward this sort of community [that is, *polis*] exists by nature in everyone, whoever first established one was responsible for the greatest of goods” (*Pol.* 1.2, 1253a30–31). How this statement fits with Aristotle’s genetic and teleological arguments for the naturalness of the *polis* is a puzzle that modern scholars have tried to solve.⁶¹ Aristotle does not give us much to work with, and some Renaissance authors underlined that he writes next to nothing about the person who first established the political community. For instance, Hubert van Giffen (1534–1604) points out that various groups have claimed this honor for themselves. Rhetoricians, lawyers, politicians, and poets have been praised as benefactors, but according to van Giffen, the most likely candidate for this position is God, and he finds support for his view from Cicero, who “rightly gives this honor to God in *De officiis* 3” (van Giffen, *Commentarii in Politicorum*, book 1, ch. 2, 36).⁶²

As is well known, medieval philosophers often understood the idea about the benefactor in light of Cicero’s explanation of the origins of the political community in the beginning of *De inventione*, where he argues that human beings lived scattered for a long time before a wise

rhetorician convinced them of the usefulness of living together in an organized political community (Cicero, *De inventione*, book 1, §2–3).⁶³ The emergence of the political community is thus viewed as a kind of voluntary contract, which immediately raises the question concerning its naturalness. As Marco Toste has shown, medieval philosophers shifted the focus toward the political nature of human beings when they argued that the community is natural only in the sense that it is based on a natural inclination to live together—much in the same way as marriage was considered natural and nevertheless partially a matter of human choice.⁶⁴

Importantly, this medieval interpretation of Aristotle’s statement suggests that human action is necessary for the emergence of a political community. Montecatini provides a clear example of this Ciceronian reading of the *Politics*, and he finds additional support for the idea that humans once lived dispersed, without any political organization, in Plato’s *Protagoras* (*In Politica*, 4, text 16, 49–50). He explains that when Aristotle writes about the first person who established a political community, we should not think that he had in mind someone who “first introduced a political society generally, as if before him there never was any political society. . . . Rather, [we should] understand [this statement as referring to] a person who first brings about *some* political society, gathering together a number of people in one place, so that they inhabit and live together, and constituting justice and laws for them—as Romulus and Theseus did.” (*In Politica*, 6, text 28, 99, emphasis mine.)⁶⁵

When Aristotle speaks about such benefactors, Montecatini claims, he is thinking of those figures who actually established political communities by bringing many human beings together and providing them with laws. The rhetorical element in this process, which is prominent in Cicero, is not emphasized here, but otherwise the picture is very similar. The emergence of political communities does not happen, as it were, by itself. The process is radically different from the development of natural substances, which do not need any external cause to actualize their nature. Humans have a natural inclination to live with each other, which brings them together but does not explain the existence of a political community in the

institutional sense. The final step that actualizes a political community depends on human action. (*In Politica*, 4, text 16, 49–50.)

There are two important aspects in the theory that Montecatini defends. First, it is based on the aforementioned view that there are two kinds of political community. A primitive city counts as a political community of a sort, but to be a perfect *civitas*, a community needs to be governed by laws. The benefactor is thus understood not so much as a person who brings people together, but as one who unites them under civil laws and justice. (*In Politica*, 6, text 28, 93–94, and 98–99.) Second, Montecatini emphasizes the role of human reason and invention in the process of creating a perfect *civitas*. One of the most striking passages to convey this idea appears in a context where he discusses the meaning of the expression ‘to be from nature.’ According to him, many things can be said to be from nature, and the common denominator between them is that nature functions as their efficient cause. However, even though *civitas* is counted among these things, it “is said less properly to exist from nature” (*In Politica*, 5, 52)⁶⁶ than natural substances, the existence and development of which do not require any other explanation than nature. In the case of the *civitas*, nature is the efficient cause only in a peculiar sense:

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Finally, some things have their beginning and conservation from nature, but their development and perfection come from somewhere else, for instance, from imitation. The desire, delight, and eagerness to imitate are implanted in us and in each one of us by nature. . . . We imitate more or less, one thing or another, in one way or another, and following one or another standard—all this depends on reason and choice [*delectu*] according to differences in natural capacity, education, and learning. The political community also belongs to this type [*formam*] of natural things. And the Philosopher teaches that it is so, and that it exists by nature, [and] that in every human being (excluding some who deserve instead to be called savages or else gods) there is a natural instinct and an impulse to seek out, and wish to be embraced by, a political society. . . . Human beings,

seized by this desire (in addition to the utility) . . . first came together, shared their residences, and united their minds, in order to live together: these could already be called cities in some way. And then, little by little, though still uneducated and uncivilized, they formed and perfected the most beautiful laws by reason and prudence, which is the companion of reason. Nature is, therefore, the beginning of cities, and reason brings them to perfection. And, in this way, they are said to exist by nature; for they proceed originally from nature (that is, from a natural instinct) and are conserved by it. (*In Politica*, 5, 52–53)⁶⁷

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Here Montecatini explains the origins of the political community by using roughly the same framework that he applied to the household. Nature functions as an efficient cause for the emergence of the political community by implanting in us a natural instinct to seek the company of other people and a desire to imitate. The natural instinct alone does not explain the emergence of the political community, however, since human beings must decide to live together and devise laws by imitation. Both of these processes are subject to rational considerations, which may be taken to mean that the political community is as much a product of human reason as it is of nature—or that the dichotomy between nature and reason (between natural substances and artifacts) cannot be applied to it.⁶⁸

Montecatini's argumentative strategy much resembles the one that we find in medieval commentators,⁶⁹ and he uses it to overcome the *prima facie* incompatibility of Aristotle's political naturalism and the idea that political communities result from the rational action of human beings. In effect, he does not see any problem in making Aristotle look a lot like Cicero, and he depicts the emergence of a true *civitas* as a process of continuous improvement.⁷⁰ Decidedly, the true *civitas* is not identical with the need-based community, which is only a city *of some kind* and exists for the sake of life. As Brett puts it, the proper end of the true political community—the good life—is an additional goal that is sought only after the material needs and protection from external harms have been secured in original communities that she calls

“societies for the sake of living.”⁷¹ Human nature leads to the emergence of the original community, because that is a practical necessity, and even if this does not require much reasoning, turning it into a true *civitas* by imitating and devising more or less good laws obviously does.

Although the position that Montecatini defends may not be that different from what Aristotle meant, many ideas that he defends are present in Aristotle only latently—if at all, since the interpretation of Aristotle is controversial, to say the least. In particular, Aristotle claims that it is *the same* community that “comes to be for the sake of living, but remains in existence for the sake of living well” (*Pol.* 1.2, 1252b28–29). Montecatini seems to hold that these two levels are not altogether the same, since the first of them is not a real political community: there is an ontological difference between the two, if you will.

Since Montecatini and other Renaissance authors thought that human action plays a crucial role in the establishment of the political community, as well as in the relation between an individual and an already existing community, it is hardly surprising that they used voluntarist language in their analyses. It is not out of the question that medieval discussions concerning the freedom of the will had an impact on the commentary tradition, given that medieval voluntarists, in particular, were careful to argue that human nature does not limit our freedom to determine the course of action that we take.⁷² This emphasis on freedom goes together nicely with the Ciceronian strand: human beings may establish a political community, but their political nature does not oblige them to do so.

An especially clear example of introducing voluntary elements and language into Aristotle’s theory is represented by John Case, who, after having argued that human beings are political animals by nature, raises a possible objection: “Voluntary and natural are opposites; but being a political animal is voluntary; therefore, it is not natural. The major premise is proven because the will acts by freedom, nature by necessity. The minor is shown because those who lead a solitary life choose solitude rather than the political community.” (*Sphaera civitatis*, 1.2.6, 26 trans. D. Sutton, modified)⁷³

Already Thomas Aquinas had raised a similar objection: that humans cannot be political animals, because if they were, there would not be solitary people. His answer was that these people are exceptions in the sense that they are not really humans. They are either beasts or gods, and therefore they do not tell against the political nature of humans (*Sent. Pol.*, 1.1b, 78b/*Commentary on Pol.*, 16). Case's answer is different: "Response: the will and nature are not always and in all things contradictory, for we choose many things which are natural, such as life and health. Therefore, I respond that being a political animal is in a certain way voluntary, and yet it is also natural. For even if Thales should choose solitude instead of the political community, the aptitude to be a political animal remains. Heraclitus did not laugh, and yet he could." (*Sphaera civitatis*, 1.2.6, 26 trans. D. Sutton, modified)⁷⁴

Case appeals to the familiar distinction between two aspects of the political nature of humans—the inclination and its perfection—and argues that solitary individuals are similar to their social counterparts in all respects, except that they choose not to follow their natural inclination. Case uses ostensibly voluntarist language, and he interprets this problem (like many scholastics before him⁷⁵) as a possible opposition between what might be seen as a voluntary and a natural explanation for the existence of the *civitas* and for the political nature of human beings. Individual humans can choose to live in solitude because they are free agents; human nature does not necessitate even perfect representatives of the species to lead a political and social life.

The central aspect of Case's answer is that he refuses to accept the opposition between voluntary and natural. He thinks that nature provides the basis and that the voluntary layer is added to it. Human political life and the existence of the political community are both natural and voluntary. Given that Aristotle made a sharp contrast between artificial and natural entities, we might expect his commentators to be more reluctant to claim that the political community can be at the same time natural and created freely by humans.⁷⁶ Yet Case raises the problem just to dissolve it. He is content to say that what is natural for us is not necessary for us but can be a matter of free choice.

Although Montecatini does not argue for the voluntariness of political life and the community as explicitly as Case does, his view is basically the same. As we have seen, he argues that political communities emerge from two factors. On the one hand, they result from social inclination, which explains why they can be considered natural. On the other hand, they become political communities in the proper sense only if they have a constitution and laws, and since these are products of the human mind and in a fundamental sense freely made, the political community is also a voluntary association.⁷⁷

<AHD>Conclusion

<TEXTNOINDENT>Antonio Montecatini's interpretation of the social and political nature of human beings follows, by and large, the general lines that Aristotle lays down in his *Politics*. In particular, he acknowledges that human beings are political animals by nature and that the household and the political community are natural. A detailed analysis of his argumentation reveals, however, that he places a strong emphasis on the voluntary aspect of human associations. This move is philosophically significant because it makes conceptual room between full-fledged political naturalism and social contract theories—or, if you will, because it expands the scope of naturalism by incorporating rational design and voluntary choice—in a coherent, systematic, and profound manner.

Whether this move constitutes a break with Aristotle depends on what the exact view of the Stagirite was, but it is safe to say that Montecatini's position is one of the several possible interpretations of certain key passages in the *Politics*. As far as I can see, the main reason he endorses this interpretation is that he considers it to be the correct reading of Aristotle's text. After all, questions concerning human social and political nature, as well as the foundations of various forms of social life, have only a limited direct bearing on day-to-day political matters. Another reason is that Montecatini is not alone in defending this interpretation. Its roots can be

traced to various ancient sources (above all to Cicero), and it was developed already in late medieval commentaries. Although Montecatini makes certain original moves in relation to them, as we have seen, it is a fair assessment that he is not the most innovative commentator. Yet, he does not just repeat what he finds from earlier authors. He uses the tradition creatively and draws more radical conclusions regarding several issues that are central for human sociability.⁷⁸

Moreover, originality is not the only reason to appreciate a historical author. The margins of our current canon deserve to be studied also because of their historical significance. Montecatini is one of the authors who promoted Aristotelian political ideas in a time when dissatisfaction toward them was on the rise. It may be unlikely that Hobbes and his epigones ever read Montecatini's commentary, but nowadays it is generally acknowledged that late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Aristotelianism is an important part of the intellectual landscape against which new ideas were presented. Montecatini contributed to this landscape, and by examining his arguments, we can draw a more nuanced picture of later developments.

At this stage, it is too early to say whether there is a connection between Renaissance Aristotelian commentaries and the outright rejection of the naturalness of social and political institutions by Hobbes. However, the preceding analysis gives rise to a hypothesis: when the naturalness of the political community is justified by appealing to an inclination that humans have toward a social and political life, and the decision to actualize this inclination is portrayed in a decidedly voluntarist manner (as Montecatini clearly does), it is just a small step to say that the political community is *not* a natural association—reject the existence of the inclination, and the naturalness of the community loses the only foundation it had.⁷⁹

It is important to keep in mind that neither Montecatini nor any other author whom I have examined here questions the naturalness of the political community. In their eyes, the fact that it stems partially from the human will and rational design does not undermine its naturalness. Soon after Montecatini's time, things changed, but much work needs to be done before we can demonstrate where exactly lies the break between Renaissance Aristotelians and early modern social contract theorists. The present essay contributes to that aim without claiming to be the

final word. Further research on Renaissance political philosophy is not only a desideratum; it is a necessity.⁸⁰

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¹ See e.g. Leijenhorst, *Mechanisation of Aristotelianism*; Pink, “Suárez, Hobbes and the Scholastic Tradition,” 127–55; Pickavé and Shapiro, *Emotion and Cognitive Life*; Kraye and

Saarinen, *Moral Philosophy*; Pasnau, *Metaphysical Themes 1274–1671*. For a historical overview, see Schmitt, *Aristotle and the Renaissance*.

² See e.g. Brett, “Matter,” 72–102; Becker, “Bodin on Oeconomics and Politics,” 135–54; Becker, “Individual,” 538–60; Dreitzel, *Protestantischer Aristotelismus*; Senellart, *Les arts de gouverner*; Skinner, *Foundations of Modern Political Thought*; Strosetzki, *Ethik und Politik*.

³ Brett, *Changes of the State*, 121. See also Brett, “Matter,” 73–81; Becker, “Individual,” 539–43.

⁴ Lohr, “Renaissance.”

⁵ For the historical, institutional, and intellectual context of the University of Ferrara, see Grendler, *Universities*, 99–106, 267–313.

⁶ Antonio Montecatini, *In Politica; Aristotelis Politicorum; In Politica III*.

⁷ Grendler, *Universities*, 398–402.

⁸ Grendler, *Universities*, 300–302; Lohr, “Renaissance: L–M,” 595; Palumbo, “Montecatini, Antonio”; Nardi, *Saggi sull’Aristotelismo*, 421–23.

⁹ Becker, *Gendering*, 122–23, 218–21.

¹⁰ See Dubouclez, “On the Time of the Intellect,” 1–26; Spruit, *Species Intelligibilis*, 2:192–95. Montecatini’s political thought has been briefly discussed in Brett, “Matter,” 78–80, 86–87; Brett, *Changes of the State*, 118–19; Becker, “Individual,” 539–43.

¹¹ Late medieval commentaries (and other works related to the *Politics*) have been analyzed more than their Renaissance counterparts, and several scholars have shown their diversity. See e.g. Flüeler, “Politischer Aristotelismus,” 1–13; Fioravanti, “La *Politica* aristotelica nel Medioevo,” 17–29; and the works by James Blythe, Roberto Lambertini, Cary Nederman, Marco Toste, and Lidia Lanza. It should be noted that when I speak of the commentary tradition, I do not imply that there were no differences between the commentators, or that the interpretations of Aristotle would have remained unchanged over time. Rather, I use the term ‘tradition’ because the practice of commenting on Aristotle’s *Politics* and trying to say something relevant in relation to, and on the basis of, it can be seen as a loose continuum.

¹² See e.g. Löther, “Bürger-, Stadt- und Verfassungsbegriff,” 90–128.

¹³ One should of course be cautious in generalizing the views of any particular author to the whole period (as has been pointed out by e.g. Schmitt, *John Case and Aristotelianism*, 218–19). My intention is not to claim that the details of Montecatini’s view would represent general trends, but there are undeniable similarities between him and those of his contemporaries whom I have examined in any detail. For an overview of the reception of Aristotle’s practical philosophy in the Renaissance, see e.g. Lines, “Humanistic and Scholastic Ethics,” 304–18.

¹⁴ I will indicate a few prominent ideas for which Montecatini is clearly indebted to the earlier medieval tradition, but this should not be taken as an attempt toward a systematic and comprehensive comparison.

¹⁵ Flüeler, “Politischer Aristotelismus,” 9–10.

¹⁶ For an overview, see Dunbabin, “Reception and Interpretation,” 723–56; Skinner, “Political Philosophy,” 389–452. The role of the earlier Aristotelian tradition in John Case’s thought has been discussed in Schmitt, *John Case and Aristotelianism*, 139–90.

¹⁷ Nederman, “Nature, Sin and the Origins,” 3–29.

¹⁸ Annabel Brett has recently argued that Thomas Hobbes’s view has much in common with Renaissance commentaries on Aristotle’s *Politics*, which are influenced by Cicero’s works. For instance, Brett claims that Pietro Vettori, Loys Le Roy, and Antonio Montecatini establish a strong link between justice and the political community and, by doing so, depict the human condition before the establishment of a *civitas* in terms that resemble the Hobbesian state of nature. See Brett, “The Matter,” 73–81.

¹⁹ On Périon’s Ciceronianism, see Schmitt, *John Case and Aristotelianism*, 74–79.

²⁰ Plato started to influence political thought from the fifteenth century onward. See Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, 1:105–92; Mahoney, “From the Medievals to the Early Moderns,” 198–203.

²¹ For instance, Quentin Skinner, “Political Philosophy,” 428–30, suggests that Platonism contributed to the Renaissance emphasis on the value of contemplative over political life.

However, it has been argued that this idea was present already in the thirteenth-century commentaries on the *Politics* and the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Toste, “Nobiles, Optimi Viri, Philosophi,” 269–308).

²² Montecatini’s effort to reconcile Plato and Aristotle has been discussed in Nardi, *Saggi sull’Aristotelismo*, 421–23.

²³ As is well known, the concept of the will as a distinct power of the soul was developed during the middle ages. The literature concerning medieval conceptions of the free will is voluminous. A good starting point is Hoffmann, “Intellectualism and Voluntarism,” 414–27.

²⁴ See e.g. Peter of Auvergne, *QPol.*, book 1, q. 9, fol. 277rb; Nicholas of Vaudémont (ps.-John Buridan), *Quaestiones*, book 1, q. 4, fol. 5va; Toivanen, “Extending the Limits,” 38–41.

²⁵ For a discussion, see Toste, “Naturalness of Human Association,” 121–56.

²⁶ This way of reading the commentary tradition is discussed by Lambertini, “Burley’s Commentary on the Politics,” 347–73. See also Del Punta, “Genre of Commentaries,” 138–51; Kuhn, “Aristotelianism in the Renaissance,” §1. To be sure, in many cases, theoretical treatises on political philosophy were written with an eye to having a concrete effect on the politics of the time (see e.g. Loys Le Roy and John Case below).

²⁷ “Sed non posset civitas existere a natura, nisi homo natura esset animal civile, id est, nisi haberet naturalem quendam instinctum impetumque ad civilem societatem, unde exoritur civitas. . . . Acciaiolus ait probari hominem esse natura animal civile ex eo, quod appetat naturaliter civilem societatem, quasi haec non idem significant.” Montecatini writes also that “in omnibus, qui vere homines sunt, inest natura appetitus et impulsus ad societatem civilem” (*In Politica*, 5.4, text 27, 91). This inclination was considered a central element of the political nature of humans already in thirteenth-century commentaries. See Toste, “Naturalness of Human Association,” 118–37.

²⁸ Cf. Aristotle, *Pol.* 3.6, 1278b19–21: “That is why, even when they do not need one another’s help, people no less desire to live together”.

²⁹ For this reading, see Depew, “Humans and Other Political Animals,” 156–81; Labarrière, *Langage, vie politique et mouvement*, 61–127.

³⁰ For the complexities and various interpretations concerning the division and identification of Aristotle’s arguments, see Keyt, “Three Fundamental Theorems,” 65–78; Trott, *Aristotle on the Nature of Community*, 42–64; Miller, *Nature, Justice, and Rights*, 30–56. For Aquinas’s position, see Kaiser, “Omnis civitas natura est,” 100–107.

³¹ Aristotle’s view has been discussed e.g. in Mulgan, “Aristotle’s Doctrine,” 438–45; Cooper, “Political Animals,” 222–25; Miller, *Nature, Justice, and Rights*, 30–32; Depew, “Humans and Other Political Animals,” 156–81; Labarrière, *Langage, vie politique et mouvement*, 63–127.

³² I translate *civilis* as ‘political,’ *incivilis* as ‘apolitical,’ and *civitas* as ‘political community’ because translations deriving from the word ‘city’ would be incorrect in the context of Montecatini’s political philosophy. When he explains the meaning of *civitas*, he explicitly says that the concept may also refer to larger political units, which consist of several cities (*In Politica*, 1, text 1, 4). As the term *civitas* includes different kinds of political communities, the statement that a human being is *civilis* by nature is a general claim about the political nature of the human being.

³³ “Accipiuntur haec vocabula [viz. civile et incivile aut non civile] duobus modis: uno modo proprie, ut referuntur ad certam quandam inter homines vitae communionem, quae civilis communio ac civitas vere, proprieque nominatur: altero modo ex translatione, ac similitudine modi prioris ut referuntur ad communitatem, societatemque universam sive hominum inter se, sive aliorum animalium eiusdem generis, quae idonea vitae simul degendae natura finxerit. Ex primo modo soli homines civiles, idest ad veras civitates idonei nominantur: ex secundo non solum homines, sed etiam apes, formicas, grues, et multa alia animalia civilia, idest sociabilia, et congregabilia appellant.” See also *In Politica*, 5.2, text 22, 70. For the idea that Aristotle may have used the term ‘political’ metaphorically, see Labarrière, *Langage, vie politique et*

mouvement, 99–127. For the complexities of rendering *ex translatione* as ‘metaphorically,’ see Ashworth, “Metaphor and the Logicians,” 311–27.

³⁴ This classification was presented in the fourteenth century (Nicholas of Vaudémont, *Quaestiones*, 1.4, fol. 5rb; Anonymous of Brussels, *Quaest. Pol.*, fol. 406va). The same suggestion appears in John Versor, *Libri Politicorum Arestotelis*, book 1, q. 3, fol. 3vb.

³⁵ It has been argued that the concept of *animal civile* was replaced by *animal sociale* during the reformation. See Rus Rufino, “El Hombre,” 211–42.

³⁶ Nonhuman animals are not political but humans are social: Albert the Great, *Quaestiones super De animalibus*, book 1, q. 8, 86. Nonhuman animals are political: Albert the Great, *De animalibus libri XXVI*, book 1, tract. 1, ch. 3, 15. For discussion, see Toivanen, *Political Animal*, 241–62.

³⁷ “Latius igitur *ta politika zōa*, hoc est civilia animalia intelliguntur, quae una vivere et versari eodem loco solent. Atque hoc quidem homini commune est cum multis aliis animalibus, quae alio vocabulo, eiusdem significationis . . . gregalia, socialiaque nuncupantur. Proprie autem, ac presse intelligitur politicum, et civile animal, quod ad civitatem eam, quae vere, proprieque sic nominatur, natum est, ut in ea, et secundum eius modum, ac rationem vivat. Talis est homo solus omnium animantium: propterea quod hominum multitudo certo ordine, certisque institutis congregata, et constans est civitas, quae vere, proprieque dicitur.” Note that people who live in the countryside may also be political because they participate in city-life in their own manner (Montecatini, *In Politica*, 5.2, text 21, 64).

³⁸ See Depew, “Humans and Other Political Animals,” 169–70.

³⁹ David Depew (“Humans and Other Political Animals,” 157–62) has argued against this reading, which is common also among modern scholars. See also Labarrière, *Langage, vie politique et mouvement*, 86–93.

⁴⁰ I have found one author who explicitly claims that there are only two kinds of human communities: “Est autem societas duplex: una est domestica quae necessaria est ad esse . . . alia [est] politica quae necessaria est ad per se sufficientiam, quam una domus omnino non perficit”

(Anonymous of Milan, *Quaest. Pol.*, fol. 1va). Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Sent. Pol.*, 1.1a, 72b65–67/*Commentary on Pol.*, 8.

⁴¹ See e.g. Thomas Aquinas, *Sent. Pol.*, 1.1a, 76a/*Commentary on Pol.*, 13; and esp. Marsilius of Padua, *Defensor pacis*, Dictio 1, ch. 3, §4, 14–15.

⁴² “Duae sunt praecipue perfecteque communitates et consociationes humanae: una domus, altera civitatis. Siquidem vicus, quod ad formam consociationis attinet, nulla re differt a civitate et plane exigua quedam est civitas.”

⁴³ The two-stage model has been pointed out by Brett, “The Matter,” 78–80; Brett, *Changes of the State*, 118–19.

⁴⁴ For discussion, see Becker, “The Individual,” 540–43; Blažek, *Mittelalterliche Rezeption*, esp. 309–32.

⁴⁵ “Cur vero ex nullis aliis societatibus, nisi ex his tribus, domus coalescat, duae causae sunt: una quod sicut domus partim a natura est, partim a mente, et voluntate, quemadmodum supra est declaratum; sic societates, ex quibus iungitur, partim naturales esse decet, partim voluntarias: sunt autem huiusmodi hae tres tantum; quando etiam procreationis filiorum partem sibi natura vindicat, partem voluntas: caeterae omnes ex toto vel naturales, vel voluntariae.”

⁴⁶ The problem is raised in Keyt, “Three Fundamental Theorems,” 57–59. Many scholars today think that the opposition between art and nature should not be applied to *polis*. See e.g. Miller, *Nature, Justice, and Rights*, 27–66; Johnson, *Philosophy and Politics*, 29–43.

⁴⁷ The growing recognition of the voluntary aspect is part of a long development in the commentary tradition, and its origins can be traced to the thirteenth century (see Toste, “Naturalness of Human Association,” 165–68). However, Montecatini emphasizes it (arguably) more than medieval authors.

⁴⁸ For medieval views on the voluntariness of marriage, see Blažek, *Mittelalterliche Rezeption*, 315–32.

⁴⁹ The relation between a master and slave is (according to Aristotle) beneficial for both parties (*Pol.* 1.4–5), and from this perspective, it makes sense to say that individuals are prone to

enter it. However, since Aristotle's point is to argue that this relation is *natural* (unless the slave happens to be a prisoner of war), it is not clear whether its voluntariness can be derived from his analysis.

⁵⁰ It should be noted that according to Aristotle, the desire to leave behind something similar to oneself is also a form of self-preservation (Lennox, "Are Aristotelian Species Eternal?," 131–59).

⁵¹ For biographical details, see Gundersheimer, *Life and Works of Louis Le Roy*, 9–28.

⁵² "Par quelque nature l'humain genre obtient aucunement immortalité. Ce que chacun par nature desire grandement, attendu qu'il n'y a celuy qui ne desire perpetuer son nom envers les hommes à venir. Ainsi le genre des hommes immortel en ceste maniere, persevere d'estre sempiternel, pourtant qu'en laissant enfans des enfans, un mesme tousiours acquiert immortalité par generation. . . . Puis donc que les vivans ne peuvent tousiours estre, et par continuation obtenir condition divine (attendu que les choses caduques et mortelles ne demeurent tousiours mesmes et unes en nombre) chacun tasche tant qu'il luy est possible, se rendre participant d'eternité et condition divine, l'un plus, l'autre moins: et ne demeure pas le mesme, ains tel qu'il est non un en nombre, ains en espee." Le Roy begins by appealing to Plato's *Laws*, but he also refers to Aristotle's *De anima* and *De generatione animalium*. See also Montecatini, *In Politica*, 2.1, text 5, 18–19; Vettori, *Commentarii*, book 1, 5.

⁵³ The following ideas are familiar from medieval commentaries, as has been pointed out by Toste, "Naturalness of Human Association," 130–31; see e.g. Peter of Auvergne, *QPol.* 1.7, fol. 276va.

⁵⁴ "In hominum autem genere, ut alios nobis similes relinquamus, tria sunt necessaria, nempe procreatio, educatio, institutioque liberorum: quae omnia, praesertim institutio, multo indigent tempore. Quapropter ad plurimum tempus inter omnia animalia coniugant mares et foeminae humani generis."

⁵⁵ "Principium et causa perfecta est naturale illud desyderium, quod diximus, relinquiendi alterum sibi simile. Neque tamen eodem modo illud idem desyderium est perfecta causa veri

matrimonii, quod matrimonium definiunt esse coniunctionem idonearum, legitimarumque personarum, viri, ac mulieris, retinentem vitae consuetudinem individuum. Illud namque desiderium non perpetuam vitae societatem exposcit, sed tanti temporis duntaxat, quantum est satis ad effectiorem, perfectionemque liberorum.”

⁵⁶ Some medieval authors acknowledged that marriage has different forms in different cultures; see Blažek, *Mittelalterliche Rezeption*, 328. Aristotle acknowledges this too, but he argues that there is a certain (natural) form, which is based on the natural age at which people enter marriage and the age when they lose fertility. See *Pol.* 7.16, 1334b29–1335a35. Peter of Auvergne, for example, follows this view (*QPol.* 1.7, fol. 276va). On Montecatini’s view on the relation between man and wife, see Becker, *Gendering*, 218–20.

⁵⁷ “Ius naturale vocat [Ulpianus] instinctum et desiderium naturae, quod notavit etiam Accursius. . . . Recte Ulpianus distinguit matrimonium tam a coniugatione maris et foeminae, quae in cunctis animalibus cernitur, quam a iure instinctuque naturali. . . . Alii quidam iurisconsulti confundunt haec” (*In Politica*, 2.1, text 5, 19.) Cf. Ulpian, *Institutiones*, book 1, ch. 2. Montecatini was acquainted with Roman law, and his interpretation of Aristotle may be directly influenced by this tradition; however, this line of research must be set aside here.

⁵⁸ Schmitt, *John Case and Aristotelianism*, 77–105.

⁵⁹ “Ex hisce duabus societatibus oritur tertia, nimirum domus et familia, in qua maxime patris et filii relatio cernitur; non quod ex hac ea solum constet, sed quia in ea veluti imago viri et uxoris perpetuo conservatur. Est enim filius imago patris in qua pater sepultus vivit. Cum ergo natura in re qualibet tam aeternitati quam suae similitudini studeat, consentaneum fuit eam a natura homini ingenerari facultatem ut uxorem eligat, filios procreet, familiam augeat, alat et conservet. Est ergo familia societas composita eademque non ad tempus sed in omnes vitae dies a natura parta et constituta.”

⁶⁰ The first idea was rather popular in the commentary tradition, and it can be found e.g. in Peter of Auvergne’s continuation of Aquinas’s commentary on the *Politics*: “Civitas vero est aliquid eorum quae secundum aliquid est a natura et secundum aliquid ab arte” (*Scriptum*, book

7, ch. 1, 354b1099). See also Giles of Rome, *De regimine*, book 3, part 1, ch. 6, 413–14; and 3.2.32, 541. Choice is mentioned e.g. by Walter Burley: “Primo modo nec domus nec civitas est naturalis sed artificialis, quia fiunt et complentur per artem. Et etiam non fiunt uno modo apud omnes—et que sunt a natura, fiunt uniformiter in maiori parte. . . . Sed accipiendo domum et civitatem secundo modo, scilicet pro communitate seu societate hominum, ita tam domus quam civitas est a natura inchoative et est complete ab electione. Per electionem enim hominum complentur huiusmodi societates seu communitates” (*Expositio*, fol. 5ra.).

⁶¹ See e.g. Trott, *Aristotle on the Nature of Community*, 42–64; Miller, *Nature, Justice, and Rights*, 37–40; Keyt, “Three Fundamental Theorems,” 59–60.

⁶² “Melius *Cic.lib.3.Offic.* Deo hanc laudem tribuit.”

⁶³ See Nederman, “Nature, Sin and the Origins,” 3–29.

⁶⁴ Toste, “Naturalness of Human Association,” 121–56.

⁶⁵ “Primum intellige non eum, qui generaliter primus civilem societatem introduxerit, quasi ante eum nusquam fuerit ulla civilis societas. . . . Sed eum intellige, qui primus *quanque* civilem societatem effecit, congregans multitudinem in unum locum ad simul habitandum et vivendum, eique iura et leges constituens, ut fecerunt Romulus et Theseus.”

⁶⁶ “minus proprie dicuntur existere natura”.

⁶⁷ “Alia denique generationem et conservationem qualem qualem a natura habent; incrementum et perfectionem aliunde, quemadmodum imitatio. Cuius quidem imitationis cupiditas et oblectatio et studium insita nobis et unicuique nostrum a natura sunt. . . . Ut vero magis et minus; has aut illas res; hoc illo modo, et norma imitemur; istud ex ratione pendet, delectuque nostro, pro ingeniorum, educationis, consuetudinis, varietate. Ad hanc formam rerum naturalium etiam pertinet civitas: et eam sic esse, existereque natura Philosophus docebit, ut in omnibus hominibus, uno, vel altero excepto, qui aut ferae, aut Dei magis, quam hominum nomen mereantur, naturalis quidam instinctus, impulsusque sit ad civilem societatem quaerendam, et amplectendam. . . . Hoc rapti desiderio, praeter utilitatem . . . primum convenerunt homines, habitationesque, atque animos coniunxerunt, ut simul viverent: iamque civitates quoquo modo

appellari poterant: deinde vero rudes etiamnum et inconditas paulatim ratione, ac prudentia, quae rationis est comes, pulcherrimis legibus formarunt, ac perfecerunt. Inchoat igitur natura civitates, consummat ratio: et hoc pacto proprie dicuntur illae esse, existereque natura; quoniam a natura, idest ab instinctu naturali primum proficiscuntur et ab eodem conservantur.” See also *In Politica*, 5.4, text 27, 91, and ch. 6, text 28, 98.

⁶⁸ This approach challenges the fundamental difference between political naturalism and social contract theories, which are based on the idea that the political community is a convention. For instance, Fred Miller, Wolfgang Kullmann, and Dominic O’Meara argue that Aristotle’s naturalistic approach was directed against conventionalist views. See, respectively, Miller, *Nature, Justice, and Rights*, 37; Kullman, “Man as a Political Animal,” 107; and O’Meara, “Man as Political Animal,” 1–8.

⁶⁹ See e.g. Nicholas of Vaudémont, *Quaestiones*, 1.3, fol. 4ra–b. For the medieval roots of the idea that human action is required for establishing a political community, see Toste, “Naturalness of Human Association,” 121–56.

⁷⁰ In this respect, there is a clear affinity to Marsilius of Padua, who suggests in his *Defensor pacis* that legislation is a process that requires accumulated experience of several generations of people, but even Marsilius does not propose the two-stage model. See Mulieri, “Marsilius of Padua and Peter of Abano,” 276–96; Marsilius of Padua, *Defensor pacis*, 1.11.3, 54.

⁷¹ Brett, *Changes of the State*, 118–19; see also Löther, “Bürger-, Stadt- und Verfassungsbegriff,” 103–8.

⁷² For a general overview, see Hoffmann, “Intellectualism and Voluntarism,” 414–27.

⁷³ “Voluntarium et naturale sunt opposita; sed esse animal civile est voluntarium; ergo non est naturale. Maior probatur, quia voluntas ex libertate, natura ex necessitate agit. Minor docetur, quia solitariam agentes vitam eligunt potius solitudinem quam civitatem.”

⁷⁴ “Responsio: Voluntas et natura semper et in omnibus non pugnant, multa enim optamus, que sunt a natura, ut vitam et sanitatem. Respondeo igitur, quod sit quodammodo voluntarium, et

tamen naturale esse animal civile. Nam et si Thales eligat solitudinem potius quam civitatem, haec tamen aptitudo ut sit animal civile manet. Non risit Heraclitus, et tamen potuit.”

⁷⁵ See e.g. Nicholas of Vaudémont, *Quaestiones*, 1.4, fol. 5ra.

⁷⁶ As mentioned above, it is far from obvious that Aristotle meant to apply this dichotomy to the *polis*.

⁷⁷ Unlike John Case, Montecatini does not emphasize that humans choose to become political animals. He writes that many saints choose to flee political life and live in solitude, but he emphasizes that they are not human beings properly speaking (*In Politica*, 5.3, text 26, 88). As John P. Doyle points out, Francisco Suárez also argues that the political community is both natural and voluntary (“Hispanic Scholastic Philosophy,” 259).

⁷⁸ I have compared Montecatini mainly to late medieval commentaries, and obviously more work on Renaissance Aristotelians must be done before we can judge whether Montecatini differs from them significantly.

⁷⁹ It is notable that the rejection of the political nature of humans is one of the premises that allow Hobbes to defend his social contract theory; see *De cive*, ch. 1, §2, 90.

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