

Reflections and Implications of Discipline and Civilisation in the Political Thought of Aristotle

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Abstract: *The existence and enormous potentials of the state as a force for good or evil have prompted philosophic reflections, from the earliest of times, on its origin and nature, and on how it can be better organised to serve the interests of its humanity. From Socrates to Plato, and down to contemporary times, the content of the exploration has remained almost the same, with variations only seen in the nature and manner of the investigations. However, Aristotle continues to stand out as unique in that he laid the foundation for scientific contemplations in political thought. Any wonder then why his writings remained so influential throughout the Middle Ages and up to the present day. This paper is an attempt to go back in time to trace the influence and substance of that era many political thinkers would agree was indeed the 'Golden Age' of philosophical thought. The paper contextualizes broad issues deemed critical in the cognition of Aristotle's political thought. The focal point, however, is on the notions of discipline and civilisation as portrayed in Aristotelian tradition, their nexus and implications on contemporary political practice*

Keywords: *Best moral life, civilisation, common good, discipline, Ethio-Egypt, statecraft and virtues.*

I. Introduction

In today's world there is so much disparity in the standard of living and level of social cohesion and participation in civic and public life amongst different peoples. While in some places these indicators of a civilized life in contemporary times are high, in other places they are abysmally low. Although a plethora of scholarly works abound which try to explain the reasons for these apparent inequalities, Aristotle continues to stand out as unique in that he laid the foundation for their scientific contemplation. This paper is an attempt to go back in time to trace the influence and substance of the era. It examines issues deemed critical within the context of Aristotelian thought-content.

Against this background, this paper relies on documentary instrument of data generation and descriptive tool of analysis and examines the idea of discipline and civilisation in Aristotelian political thought. This is with a view to finding out what the concepts really meant for him, the nexus, if any, between them and the lessons that can be drawn from such inquiries with respect to contemporary attempts at statecraft for the common good. In specific terms, how does Aristotle conceptualize discipline and civilization? What is the nexus or interface between the two concepts in Aristotelian political thought? What implications or lessons are derivable from Aristotle's notion of discipline and civilisation in contemporary political practice?

In response to the foregoing anchor questions, this study is divided into six interrelated parts. Following this brief introduction is part two which contextualizes broad issues that are critical in the appreciation of Aristotle's political thought. Parts three and four conceptualize discipline and civilization respectively in Aristotelian political thought. The nexus between discipline and civilization as well as the implications on contemporary political practice were examined in part five. Part six contains the summary, conclusion and some considered recommendations

II. Contextual Issues

Aristotle (384-322 BC), emerged from Plato's Academy where he stayed for 20 years, "as a student and then as a teacher," [1] and as one of the brightest philosophical minds of all times. Like his teacher, Plato (427-347 BC), he wrote on a wide range of subjects including Ethics, Medicine, Physics, Logic, Metaphysics and Politics [2]. Among his most famous works are *Politics*, the *Nichomachean Ethics*, the *Athenian Constitution*, and a host of others. Although it has widely been canvassed that his background in the physical sciences - through his father, who was a medical doctor - influenced the manner and quantum of his investigations; our evidence hold that his greatest asset was his tutelage under the philosopher-priests of the Ethio-Egyptian mystery school and matters relating to it.

As buttressed in many noteworthy accounts, much like those before him, especially Socrates and Plato, issues canvassed by Aristotle are rooted in his 'largely unsung life experiences': his ancient Egypt – also called Ethio-Egypt - Mystery school system experience [3], [4], [5], [6] and [7]. The Mystery school system instituted by King Menes reached outstanding heights by circa 2000 BC. The domain of critical thinking within the period belonged to the philosophers-priests who were attached to the various temples. They studied and excelled in various subjects and disciplines. These groups of discipline often referred to as “the wisdom of Egyptians” were later to form the subject matter of both Plato’s *Dialogues* and Aristotle’s basic works [8].

In obvious contrast to what obtains in his home Greece, Aristotle points to the fact that it was possible for the priestly cast in Egypt to have all the time necessary to deepen theoretical thoughts and exercise in speculation and the analysis of synthesis of ideas because theirs was a life of leisure, far from material preoccupation [9]. In specific terms, in his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle attests to the validity of this as he vividly explains that: “The sciences which do not aim at a giving (physical) pleasure or the necessities of life were discovered and first in the places where men began to have leisure. That is why the mathematical and (sciences of precise knowledge or philosophy) were founded in Egypt, for there the priestly castle was allowed to be at leisure” [10].

As a matter of fact, virtually all the early philosophers of Greek traditions - and this includes political inquirers - owe their thought to the Egyptian mystery school system. Beside Socrates, Plato and Aristotle; Thales of Miletus (625-547 BC), the universally acclaimed father of philosophy is another typical example. The import of this is that rather than the Greeks, it is to the Ethio-Egyptian mystery school system, that the cradle and therefore the first substantive, speculative and critical thought; or what has been referred to as “self-conscience reflection about man and his social relationship”[11] should be traced to. We say this because origination of the doctrines, ideas and theories, which Thales, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle have been identified with, strictly speaking belonged to the philosopher-priests.

Besides benefitting from attending the Mystery system school, Aristotle’s thought-content were largely influenced and enriched by Alexander the Great’s pillage of ancient Egypt. As pointed out elsewhere [12], Alexander the Great’s ten years pillage from 332 to 323 during which he looted Egyptian libraries and appropriated their other learning and culture, gave impetus to and actually propelled ascendancy. As Alexander’s teacher from childhood, Aristotle had the rare opportunity of perusing and digesting the wisdom of the ages organically articulated by Ethio-Egyptian scholarship and steered by the philosopher-priests. The point being made here is that:

Whereas the mystery system of Ethio-Egyptian epoch centered on philosopher-priests whose learning emerged and grew autochthonously, and matured while attached originally to various temples, political inquiry during the Greek epoch was borrowed, detached and should we say unpopular. It excited a few, such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle who, during their journeys for knowledge benefited from the Ethio-Egyptian mystery system, indeed were tutored by the Ethio-Egyptian philosopher-priests themselves. Properly interpreted, a great portion of the Greek population remained uninterested and grossly uninfluenced by the borrowed writings and ideas of their [returnee] philosophers [13]

In the case of Socrates for instance, he died after being accused of corrupting the youths with strange ideas; his students did not weaver. Thus, armed with borrowed or strange and new ideas, Socrate’s student Plato, and later Aristotle strove diligently all though life to generate or bring about the ideal framework for their envisioned perfect and possible political orders respectively. It is against this background that one can truthfully reflect and appreciate not only Aristotle’s treatise on discipline and civilization, but his other ideas alongside those of his teacher (Plato) and grand teacher (Socrates).

Aristotle’s pragmatic approach to philosophy allowed for wide-ranging reflections on the questions of group life and organisation. This quality separated him from his predecessors like Plato, who would rather ‘tear down’ the existing political order of his time and put up a new one: the ‘Ideal State’. For Aristotle, the political community which we have all been born into is an accepted fact. Therefore questions about its total overhaul are no more important than what needs to be done to make it better-attuned to the problems of group life and organisation. The whole bent and bias of his thought must be toward the view that the ideal, while conceded to be an effective force, must still be a force within the actual current of affairs and not dead against it. The wisdom inherent in custom must, so to speak, be a guiding principle that takes advantage of such plasticity as actual conditions include to lift them to a better conformation [14]. Hence, Aristotle draws our attention to the fact that the ingredients needed for the sociopolitical re-engineering of the state do not lie elsewhere, as Plato would have us believe in the *Republic*, but are very much around us, and can be arrived at through careful observations and investigations.

Taking cognizance of the foregoing – including the fact that Aristotle’s thought-content is rooted in Ethio-Egyptian Mystery school system - our central argument in this study is that there is immense interface between Aristotelian discipline and civilization and that the two concepts have implication on contemporary

political practice. Accordingly, we hypothesized that there is a nexus between discipline and civilization in Aristotle's political thought and that the duo have implications for contemporary political practice.

III. Conceptualizing Discipline in Aristotelian Political Thought

It is not uncommon for political theorists to anchor their investigations into the nature of the state on the nature of the human being. For instance, Plato derived his theory of the Ideal State through a careful examination of human nature. He identified three elements of the human soul namely: the appetitive, which is the part of the soul that desires only material or bodily gratifications; the spirit, which helps to keep our yearnings in check; and the rational, which has wisdom or reason and therefore should rule other parts. Consequently, an ideal state should be one in which the ruling class must be comprised of those who are ruled by the rational part of the soul; those who are ruled by the spirit element partake in rationality only to the extent that they subject themselves to the lead of those in the ruling class, for they are dominated by an impetuosity that would rather make them better soldiers than leaders; and finally, those who are governed by the appetitive element of the soul are better suited to be the producers, furnishing the state with the everyday goods and services it requires for sustenance.

Aristotle gave a similar analogy. But unlike Plato, he identified only two parts of the soul: the rational and the irrational. The former he further sub-divided into two other parts namely: the speculative or deliberative and the practical elements, while the latter also has two parts which are the vegetative and the appetitive elements. For Aristotle, the rational speculative is wholly rational because it carries reason within itself and therefore provides direction to other elements such as the rational practical and the irrational appetitive which take part in rationality only to the point that they are able to identify with the dictates of the rational speculative element. This leaves us with one last element: the irrational vegetative, of which Aristotle presents as completely irrational and as a quality possessed by all living things, which tends only towards sustenance and growth. The implication of all this philosophic reflections becomes clearer when Aristotle compares the rational speculative element of the soul to the 'citizens' of the state, while the rational practical elements are possessed by 'slaves,' whose usefulness only depends on the instruction they receive from the former [15].

Although it is not the aim of this paper to present an in-depth account of the works of ancient theorists, postulations as the ones we have seen above clearly reveal how central human nature is to understanding the nature of the state. This is particularly true when it is viewed against the backdrop of the Aristotelian idea of teleology which maintains that everything in nature has a design and purpose, and that "...the explanation of, or justification for, a phenomenon or process is to be found not only in the immediate purpose or cause, but also in the "final cause" - the reason for which the phenomenon exists or was created" [16]. Hence, Aristotle argues that the design of Man as an individual has a purpose which is best understood when it is fully realized in the establishment of a state. Differently stated, "...the state is assumed to be merely the individual 'writ large'" [17]. This theory of the state in relation to the human being as put forward in the works of Plato and later by Aristotle is useful in understanding why political theory is also concerned about the ethical nature of the human person, and especially about the concept and role of discipline in human nature. For Aristotle believes that: "A state is an association of men for the sake of the best moral life. The type of life which a group of men will live in common depends upon what kind of men they are and what ends they design to realize, and reciprocally the end of the state will determine who can be members of it and what kind of life they can individually live"[18].

From the foregoing, we do not only see why the nature of Man is fundamental to the understanding of the nature of the state, but also a two-pronged notion of discipline: the first being the type men develop internally as they relate with other men in the society and the second being that which the state enforces in order to keep its members from straying. It is worth mentioning here too that the latter, which has been described as external discipline [19], is not developed in a vacuum, but from the conventions and mores of the people. Consequently, Aristotle argues and, quite rightly too, that discipline is living in a way that conforms to the norms of the society. This broad view to the concept of discipline by Aristotle takes us to the next question, which is to consider what the right components of a disciplined life are for the philosopher.

In this regard, discipline, for Aristotle, is more or less living a life of restraint or moderation devoid of over-indulgence or underperformance. Thus a disciplined life can be found in the middle path, that point between the two extremes of excess or deficiency of virtues. This kind of postulation is also espoused in Oriental philosophy by the followers of Buddha who believe that the path to enlightenment is one which avoids the extremes of indulgence and asceticism [20]. However, for Aristotle it is to be found in his theory of the mean. In this theory, it is observed that "Aristotle detested excess of any kind. He also detested deficiency or lack. This is to say that for him, the extremes should be avoided in every possible circumstance. Moderation ought to be the watch-word. His point is that somewhere between the two extremes lies the mean-the acceptable point of moderation" [21]

As a matter of fact, in one of his famous works on ethics titled *The Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle presents a list of some good qualities which he termed 'practical virtues,' or 'moral virtues' as seen in some translations,

and what their extremes might be. This list is replicated in the accompanying Table 1 below. In his tabulation every virtue has excess and deficient counterparts. Nevertheless, he also notes that there are certain actions such as spite, shamelessness, envy, adultery, theft and murder, which are bad in themselves and, therefore, should be avoided in their entirety since there is no point or stage at which they can become good or acceptable [22].

Table 1: ARISTOTELIAN TABLE OF MORAL OR PRACTICAL VIRTUES

The List of Practical (Moral) Virtues.		
Virtue	Excess	Deficiency
Courage	Rashness	Cowardice
Temperance	Licentiousness	Insensibility
Liberality	Prodigality	Illiberality
Magnificence	Vulgarity	Pettiness
Great-souledness	Vanity	Pusillanimity
Proper ambition	Ambition	Unambitiousness
Patience	Irascibility	Lack of spirit
Truthfulness	Boastfulness	Understatement
Wittiness	Buffoonery	Boorishness
Friendliness	Flattery	Surliness
Modesty	Shyness	Shamelessness
Righteous indignation	Envy	Malicious enjoyment

Source: *The Eudemian Ethics*, in Aristotle, 1962

Having established what constitutes discipline, Aristotle goes on to talk about how it is attained. In this regard, he first observes how difficult it is to arrive at, which is why "...good conduct is rare, praiseworthy, and noble." [23]. Notwithstanding the apparent difficulty, he advises that the best way of attaining a disciplined life is by practicing the right actions and avoiding extremes that are most opposed to right conduct: "For a given kind of activity produces a corresponding character. This is shown by the way in which people train themselves for any kind of contest or performance: they keep practicing for it. Thus, only a man who is utterly insensitive can be ignorant of the fact that moral characteristics are formed by actively engaging in particular actions"[24]. Although Aristotle tries to make a distinction between practical and intellectual virtue in Book Two of his *Nichomachean Ethics*, in which he described the former as a product of habit, and the latter as gained through teaching, and expertise developed over a period of time, he surely underscores the need for knowledge acquired through proper education and upbringing as a sine qua non in developing the right habits necessary to participating in the political life of the state.

IV. The Concept of Civilisation in Aristotelian Political Thought

Defining civilisation today has become somewhat challenging as a result of the many connotations associated with its meaning [25]. For Preiswerk and Perrot three major concepts of civilisation, namely monopolistic, restrictive and pluralistic conceptions are easily identifiable [26]. For some others, civilisation is to be understood in material terms, in terms of the numerous products of modernity such as the well-paved roads, pipe-borne water, improved health-care, fanciful clothing, efficient transport systems, etc, as obtained in modern times. This way of looking at civilisation has led many scholars and theorists to classify some people as having a higher civilisation than others, and some others as having no civilisation at all. These scholars and theorists have also gone on to fashion out many constructs and ideas aimed at explaining why there is a disparity in the level of civilisation in some climes, while in others civilisation appears to have taken roots, and spreading very fast. Studies like this have always formed the core of the analysis of Western scholarship on Africa and other peoples of the so-called 'developing world' or Third World countries. In many researches, these peoples have been described as lacking the necessary elements that make for societal advancement, expansion and growth.

A case in point is seen in McClelland's 'The Achieving Society' published in 1961 [27]. Another example is seen in the writings of the German Sociologist, Ferdinand Tonnies, who tried to locate the problem of growth and advancement in the nature of the social ties that exist among people in society. On the basis of this, he identified two types of social milieus: the first governed by primordial or simple ties and sentiments which he called the *Gemeinschaft* (often translated as community), and the second governed by modern and complex networks of relationships he called the *Gesellschaft* (often translated as society, civil society or association) [28]. Consequently, civilization gradually begins to take roots in backward countries of the world as they make steady progress from the form of society which stifles it to that which promotes it. Similar notions

also appear in the works of social scientists like W.W. Rostow, Lucian Pye, Gabriel Almond, G. Bingham Powell, etc. The obvious biases in these studies in favour of Western civilisation and scholarship make it difficult to rely on them as objective tools of analysis. This paper, will however, attempt to find out what civilisation really means, especially, for Aristotle.

Civilisation has also been seen as an "advanced state of a society possessing historical and cultural unity" [29]. We can infer from this definition that what make up a civilisation are not just the material aspects of life, but the sum-total of a people's way of life, including non-material aspects as norms, mores, customs, etc. In the discourse on civilisation, therefore, what matters is that the society in question has been able to devise for itself, over a period of time, a system of living in an organised way. Civilisation in this view is akin to the role of politics which is to maintain equity and equilibrium in the society. For this reason, we can say that when a group of people learn to relate with each other in a rational way, they can be seen as civilized. This way of looking at civilisation not only transcends the biases of modern-day scholarship, but also helps us to appreciate the numerous achievements of ancient civilisations in African and world history. But not only that, it will help us understand too what civilisation means for Aristotle.

For Aristotle, the meaning of civilisation is very much linked to the essence of politics and the state. He sees politics as the master science for the simple reason that it is concerned with how best the state can be organised for the common good. The essence of the state is, therefore, the attainment of a particular good for man. And the 'good,' according to him, is Eudaimonia, which has been translated as 'happiness,' 'living well,' or 'human flourishing' [30]. Consequently, civilisation results when a group of people are able to organise the state through politics to secure or realize a pleasant life for all. But we must note too that the core of the meaning of civilisation in Aristotelian thought is not material but moral. The latter takes precedence because without it we cannot even begin to contemplate the former. As Sabine and Thorson aver that for Aristotle, "A state is an association of men for the sake of the best moral life" [31] It is, therefore, within the context of the state that civilisation is realized, for outside the state, man is either a beast or a god [32]. Aristotle's view that civilisation first develops in a moral sense and within the context of a state is also shared by the trio of social contract theorists made up of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau. But unlike these philosophers, Aristotle believes that the state which is an instrument of an individual's self-perfection, is not "artificially or contractually created," but "evolved naturally" as the inevitable consequence of the development of man who by nature is "a political animal, making the state necessary and desirable" [33].

Now we shall turn to what actually constitutes civilisation in Aristotelian thought, or put differently, what might the 'best moral life' look like? For the purpose of this paper, the 'best moral life' or the 'best life for a state' is taken to also mean the highest form of civilisation attainable by human society or the state. To do justice to this, we shall have to refer to one of Aristotle's seminal works on the theory of the state: the *Politics*. It is in this book which is said to be a replica of Plato's *Laws* that we see a great deal of Aristotle's thought on the nature of an ideal state and how life is organised in such a state, (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy:104). In the *Politics*, Aristotle tried to relate what is good for the individual with what is good for the state. In other words, he avers that the best way of life for a state, which we have taken here to mean civilisation, can only be understood in terms of what is best for the individuals who make up the state [35]. According to him:

He who would duly inquire about the best form of a state ought first to determine which is the most eligible life; while this remains uncertain the best form of the state must also be uncertain; for, in the natural order of things, those may be expected to lead the best life who are governed in the best manner of which their circumstances admit. We ought therefore to ascertain, first of all, which is the most generally eligible life, and then whether the same life is or is not best for the state and for individuals [36].

To this end, Aristotle tried to identify the components of what might constitute the best way of life that is objective to all and not open to dispute. He classified these components into three namely: External Goods, which correspond to "...what we may define as property, that is a person's share of the world of things," Goods of the Body, which "correspond to good health," and Goods of the Soul which "include courage, moderation, justice and wisdom" [37]. Although Aristotle believed that these goods must be in the possession of the man who will have the best life, he also predicated the best form of life for an individual on the ability of the individual to keep to certain reasonable limits in his actions. He must act, especially, in the acquisition of External Goods, with moderation or temperance. This principle of the mean, as we saw earlier in this paper, must also apply in determining whether the collective way of life of citizens within a state is for good or bad as the kind of life citizens choose to live also influences the form of government they get and the nature of laws which govern them [38]. Thus, for Aristotle, a civilized state must be one which is "happy and does well." For "to do well is impossible unless you do right, and there can be no doing right for a state, any more than there can be for an individual, in the absence of goodness and wisdom [39].

Ndu further argues that, "One thing that is clear about Aristotle's best state is that it must be seen to be a political organisation in which all kinds of men will be able to attain their best and live happily together"[40] Aristotle also identified other elements of civilised life within a state as comprising a population, which must

not be too small as to jeopardize the number required for effective participation in public life or too large as to frustrate the ability of the state to enforce its laws; a territory, which produces all kinds of crops, so that the inhabitants lack nothing (self-sufficiency), and must be moderate in terms of extent and size so as to permit citizens to live pleasantly and support military strategy; a people who are naturally endowed with both the qualities of spirit and intelligence, the one quality makes them free, while the other makes them attain the highest level of political advancement; a social structure which properly differentiates between those who are citizens and, therefore, eligible for participation in public life either as soldiers, lawgivers, judges or priests, and those whose only function is to furnish the citizens with the sustenance they need to be at their best at all times; and finally a constitution which vests the power to rule in a middle class because it is the only class which is free from the contradictions inherent in the other two classes; the upper class, who are very rich and are always anxious about their position, and the lower class, who are very poor and always want more. Aristotle refers to this level of civilisation in the political advancement of a state as a Polity [41].

V. Nexus between Discipline and Civilisation and Implications for Contemporary Times.

Having seen the meaning of discipline and civilisation as held in Aristotelian thought, it should not be difficult to see that there exists a very strong link between the two concepts. In fact it does appear that while discipline brings about civilisation, the latter helps to define what the content of the former would remain. For as a state continues to grow and advance, so will the nature of what constitutes discipline for it continue to change.

Aristotle constantly draws our attention to the nexus between discipline and civilisation through the analogy between the nature of the state and the nature of the individuals who inhabit it. It follows from this comparison that since the nature of the state reflects the nature of its citizens, a state which has a greater percentage of disciplined citizens should expect to see more civilisation than that which does not. Any wonder then why Aristotle not only recommended a middle class rule but also advised that that class should be large enough in order to ensure stability in a state. The reason for this is that of the classes which make up the state, Aristotle believed, and we think rightly too, that the middle class is most disciplined since they have none of the contradictions bedeviling the two other classes; the one at the very top and the other at the very bottom. These two other classes cannot engender the best moral life in a state because they are always in contention with each other, with the very rich at the top always anxious to secure their position and wary of the aspirations of the poor who in turn are jealous of the rich and eager to be like them. This apparent lack of discipline in the two classes will lead to strife in the state which will eventually result in its collapse.

Taking cognizance of the foregoing, Aristotle proposed a middle class rule as the stabilizing element in the state because citizens in this class are neither rich nor poor. They are as Ndu puts it "...superior then in principle to the very rich and the very poor. In terms of the structure of the society, they blur the vision of the other classes to each other. In themselves, looking up, they see those who have more but whom they do not envy; looking down, they see those who have nothing which they want" [42].

The point we are trying to make here is that discipline and civilisation in Aristotelian thought as in any other are variables which influence and define each other. For it takes the one to stimulate the other and the other to define what constitutes the one. The question then is what this knowledge holds for contemporary times. The answer to this question is not far-fetched. To begin, we defined discipline as living in a way that conforms to the norms of the society, and that it is only when this is done that we can expect to see the rapid changes which civilisation brings with it in a state. Discipline, in the course of our discourse, was classified into two: the one which we develop internally as we interact with other members of the society, rightly called self or internal discipline, and the other which is imposed on us by the state as it plays its regulatory role, which is the external discipline. In either case, we noted that the end is to ensure that citizens conform to the norms or mores of the society which is an essential, if not the most important attribute of civilisation.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the essential attribute of civilisation, that is, discipline, is lacking in both civil and public life in many parts of the world today. Using Nigeria as an example, the absence of discipline was captured by an American journalist, Karl Maier as follows:

Colonial Nigeria was designed in 1914 to serve the British Empire, and the independent state serves as a tool of plunder by its country's modern rulers. Nigerians spend a good part of their lives trying to get the better of the government for their own benefit or that of their family, their village, or their region. Rare is the head of state who acts on behalf of the entire nation [43].

The apparent lack of discipline in Nigeria accounts for why she is widely perceived in some quarters as a weak or even a failed state. In fact despite the fact of her richness in natural and human resources, she is still far from being considered as one of the fast-developing economies in the world. By contrast, in the developed world, we see a markedly different attitude to civic and public life which continuously translates to improved social and economic conditions of peoples. This fact is also true of the rapidly emerging economies of East Asian countries. A particular case in point is Singapore which was transformed from "...a tiny colonial outpost into a thriving, global economic center" under one of its dynamic leaders, Lee Kwan Yew [44]. It was possible

to achieve the feat because “while the people were willing (to accept more government control, give up some individual rights and work hard, the government would create the environment that would deliver prosperity and a better quality of life” (Baker in Igwe : 105). We must note here too that at the heart of the Singaporean miracle was the role of discipline in the life of its citizens and leaders which made it possible for the people, notwithstanding the glaring differences in their social lives, to tend "towards similar values, especially- the recollected life that placed community first before self" [45].

The final issue that deserves our attention in this discourse is the place of the middle class in underdeveloped countries like Nigeria. Aristotle preferred a middle class rule which he called a polity to any other because he believed this class would make better leaders since they were neither too rich to become anxious for their wealth nor too poor to desire more wealth. Hence they created a stabilizing effect in the society. But in underdeveloped countries like Nigeria, the middle class is almost completely gone as a result of bad leadership and crushing economic policies. With the disappearance of the middle class, what we have left are the two contending classes Aristotle spoke of: the class of the very rich and that of the very poor. Should it then surprise anyone why the crime rate seems to be on the increase in Nigeria, from the looting of public treasury perpetrated by the class of the very rich in order to secure their position, to the numerous cases of ritual killings, prostitution, armed robbery, kidnapping, etc., perpetrated by the class of the poor in their crass eagerness to become rich.

Again when we compare the situation with the developed world, we observe that policies are often tailored to promote a thriving middle class life. The United States government is particularly good at this. Through liberal policies like student loans, Medicaid, unemployment benefits and tax cuts, they continue to make middle class life not only accessible to their citizens, but also fashionable [46]. Can this not be responsible for the seemingly organised life in such countries?

VI. Conclusion

This paper set out to look at the concept of discipline and civilisation in Aristotelian thought. We posited that much more than Socrates [47] and Plato [48] that Aristotle benefitted from Ethio-Egyptian attainments. In the main, we pointed out that discipline for Aristotle means to live in a way that conforms to the norms of the society, while civilisation refers to a phase in human progress when a group of people learn to relate with each other in a rational way. For Aristotle, the phase appears to be complete when a state achieves for itself 'the best moral life.'

However, it is the view in this paper that while it is true that discipline and civilisation are crucial to the political organisation of state, no state can truly claim to have attained 'the best moral life,' at least in the sense that Aristotle meant it. But while the arguments on what should be the best moral life rages, it is imperative for states to focus on that which is both possible and practicable, which is to entrench discipline into their body-politic in order to realize higher levels of civilisation in accordance with their own choices and values. For in the end, the "determining factor in any state would be the ethical values which the association of citizens was designed to realize; the moral purposes of the citizens in living together would be the essential thing that they had in common and hence, so to speak, "the life of the state"[49].

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