The nature and role of political participation have in recent years been the center of discussion with reference to both the American system of government and the more general concepts of political science. The patent indifference of the Founding Fathers of the American republic to participatory democracy seems to have left them open to the charge of undemocratic tendencies. This article argues that such criticism ignores the more basic question of why participatory democracy should be desirable. For a clearer understanding of the principles and problems involved the author refers to Aristotle’s analysis of political systems, examining his reasons in favor of democratic participation and speculates as to how participation can be reconciled with its unarticulated premises.

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When political scientists and historians of political philosophy read Aristotle today, they are understandably tempted to speculate what he might have said about a political problem with which we Americans are vitally concerned: participatory democracy. If our own thoughts about participatory democracy were clear, it might be unnecessary to consult Aristotle; but contemporary analysis tends to be, at best, of little help to democratic politics and, at worst, insufficient for a coherent political science. Virtually all political scientists today advocate—even if in varying degree and for various ends—participation in politics because it is “dem-
ocratic.” 1 All but some radicals agree that participatory democracy makes for inefficient government, while these radicals can only hope that they will be shown correct. Consequently, citizens' participation must be desired for some other reason than to secure efficient government. All do admit, however, that a degree of participation is useful to make government secure: To keep even an inefficient and imprudent government functioning it may be necessary to permit at least minimal participation. Most agree that participation is justified in part because it satisfies individuals who, by participating, can force the ruling “elite” to meet their substantive demands. Since these demands are chiefly economic, the benefits of modern technology are more widely and equally distributed. At the same time, loyalty to the elite, hence stability, is purchased. Finally, many contend that participation itself is good for the participants because it brings psychic satisfaction, combating mental illnesses such as alienation. Thus, contemporary political scientists contend that participatory democracy is bad or qualifiedly good for democratic governments and unqualifiedly, if vaguely, good for democratic citizens.

The failure of American political scientists to come to grips with the problem of participation reflects the ambivalence of the Founders toward democracy. Historically ours is the first polity intentionally constituted as a democratic republic. Yet what the Declaration of Independence promises is to secure our lives, our liberty, and our pursuit of happiness, not our right to deliberate about whether our children should be bused to an integrated school. Our government is deemed just because its actions are consented to rather than participated in. According to The Federalist we have a democratic republic because we have a representative democracy. 2 Citizens consent every few years to be governed by electing representatives and a president; and this, in the judgment of the Founders, was the proper extent of democratic participation. Democratic in theory and in rhetoric, our government was to be a mix of democracy with aristocracy and monarchy in practice.

1. A very useful survey and bibliography of the current political science literature on democracy and participation can be found in Dennis F. Thompson, The Democratic Citizen (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970), and “Political Participation,” A Perennial Issue Paper for the Division of Educational Affairs of the American Political Science Association (Washington, D.C., 1977). Thompson puts the literature in perspective by treating not only the acknowledged points of disagreement among contemporary political scientists and theorists, but also the premises tacitly shared by them. The central issues of the current dispute are also reflected in Carole Pateman, Participation and Democratic Theory (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

Since the democratic republic is said by its framers to be the product of a new science of politics, modern political practice can be said to originate in modern political theory. Modern political practice gives us democratic participation once removed from actual deliberations, and this only rarely. We participate only in reflecting on what incumbents have done in office and in evaluating what candidates propose to do. We put ourselves in their places in order to choose whom to put in our places. Similarly, modern political theory gives us democratic participation by teaching us that government is legitimate only if it originates in the consent of the governed. But the social contract that institutes government signifies the surrender of our natural rights to govern or not to govern ourselves as we choose. The government we establish has as its end securing the preconditions of happiness that we would have sought for ourselves, and it allows each to define happiness for himself, so long as he is not made happy by defining happiness for others. In other words, modern democratic theory gives us civil, not political, liberty; we do not regularly deliberate and make judgments about the public or common good. Hence the theory makes no promises of participation that American practice has not kept.

Of course some modern political theorists do recommend participation, most notably Jean-Jacques Rousseau and his followers. But their theories had no significant influence on the designs of our Founders, a fact to which the complaints of their anti-Federalist opponents are testimony. Today, those who seek support in modern political thought for their own advocacy of participatory democracy do not at the same time appeal to or applaud the American Founders.

Since the modern political theory, in which our political practice has its origins, recommends democracy so long as it is nonparticipatory, it is no wonder that contemporary political scientists find it difficult to speak clearly about participatory democracy. To do so, it is necessary to formulate the best argument for participatory democracy and then evaluate it honestly. Because the rhetoric of modern political theory obscures the issue, we might do well to begin with a premodern analysis of democracy, such as the one found in Book III of Aristotle's *Politics.*

I

Unfortunately, Aristotle is now often either abused for his antidemocratic prejudices or mistreated by being made to appear more sympa-

3. Ibid., No. 9, pp. 72–73.
thetie toward democracy than he really was. Aristotle, of course, lived in a democracy and acknowledged that democracy was the most likely regime for his day. He judged democracy the least bad of defective regimes, inferior to some rare types and superior to the likely alternatives of oligarchy and tyranny. This judgment reflects neither antidemocratic prejudice nor prodemocratic sympathy. In fact, Aristotle presented arguments against as well as for democracy. My contention is that his arguments were formulated to show what a coherent defense of democracy would have to be. To be more specific, near the center of Book III of the Politics, he asserts that a certain kind of democracy is just, while near the end of that book he makes the identical assertion for a certain type of monarchy. I shall argue that this apparent contradiction is merely to articulate the premises on which the case for democracy must properly rest, and at the same time, to bring to light the actual shortcomings of democracy in terms of its own premises.

First, let us make clear what we mean by democracy, beginning, as does Aristotle, by defining a citizen. To speak of citizens is necessarily to bring politics, hence the problem of political participation, to the forefront. At the beginning of Book III, Aristotle asks what a citizen is, and an answer is supplied and then modified. In the final, modified form, a citizen is defined as “one who has the right (power) to share in the office of deliberating and judging with skill” (1257b18–19). When this final definition is offered, Aristotle points out that the initial attempt at definition had succeeded only in defining a democratic citizen. We, however, are more interested in the initial attempt for that very reason.

According to that attempt, a citizen is “one who participates in judging and ruling” (1257a23). The formula seems so obvious as to appear uninteresting. We can learn more from considering what the citizen is said not to be. First, this citizen is not a “made” citizen created by some human act, nor is he one who “chances” to be a citizen; therefore, he is naturally or fittingly a citizen. Second, he is a citizen not merely by dwelling someplace, like someone with the status of a resident alien; thus, sharing in the benefits of economic prosperity is not the same as participating politically. Third, he is not a citizen by virtue of having access to the courts for the enforcement of his rights against others; hence even enjoying civil rights is not the same as participating politically. Fourth, he is not a citizen if he is too young or too old, like someone who is too young to be drafted and to vote and run for office. Someone who is the right age would likely be in the prime of manhood, hence in the fulness of his being. Such a man is a citizen who deliberates in the assembly (as do our elected representatives in Congress) and judges (as do our jurors on duty and our elected or appointed judges in courts). Deliberating and
judging in this first definition, then, are the acts not only of citizenship, but of humanity.

When Aristotle speaks at greater length about democracy, he clarifies the democrat's reasons for supposing that every human being ought to engage in political activity:

Now a fundamental principle of the democratic form of constitution is liberty—that is what is usually asserted, implying that only under this constitution do men participate in liberty, for they assert this as the aim of every democracy. But one factor of liberty is to govern and be governed in turn; for the popular principle of justice is to have equality according to number, not worth, and if this is the principle of justice prevailing, the multitude must of necessity be sovereign and the decision of the majority must be final and must constitute justice, for they say that each of the citizens ought to have an equal share; so that it results that in democracies the poor are more powerful than the rich, because there are more of them and whatever is decided by the majority is sovereign. This then is one mark of liberty which all democrats set down as a principle of the constitution. And one is for a man to live as he likes; for they say that this is the function of liberty, inasmuch as to live not as one likes is the life of a man that is a slave. This is the second principle of democracy, and from it has come the claim not to be governed, preferably not by anybody, or failing that, to govern and be governed in turn; and this is the way in which the second principle contributes to egalitarian liberty.4 (1317a40–1317b17)

The first principle of democracy is equal political participation, by which is meant not "one man, one vote" as an equal say in who ultimately can make choices, but an equal say in what is chosen and for what end. According to Aristotle's account, the partisan of democracy demands political equality because he believes that the exercise of freedom is a worthy choice for man. The defense of the democratic principle of equal participation is not made in terms of governmental efficiency or stability or the psychic satisfaction it provides, but rests on the belief that being a whole human being means being a political participant of this sort. Democracy is demanded not for the sake of a right to do my own thing, but because of an obligation to live as a man ought. If the democratic partisan's conclusion—equal political participation—follows from the premise that

being a man means engaging in the activity of freedom, then the case for participatory democracy seems to rest on compelling grounds.

The partisan of democracy alleges that freedom is found only in a democratic regime and that democracy must therefore be the best regime, since living freely is how a man wishes to live. He further alleges that all men participate in freedom (1280a5). But we are led to suspect either that he does not know what it means to be free or that he does not argue in good faith. When Aristotle first presents the democratic slogan, he presents it as just that: a slogan. Aristotle was neither the first nor the last political scientist to notice that the two most obvious rivals for political authority are the rich and the poor and that they use their authority to keep or make themselves rich. The political slogan of the rich, by which they propose to secure their own exclusive authority, is that those who contribute to the city ought to be given a proportionate say in determining how resources are to be used (1280a22–23). They imply that citizen participation requires some ability or virtue and that what is meant by virtue is what contributes to the common benefit. They may well err in taking wealth to be both a sign of virtue and the good most needful to the community (1280a25–36 with 1281a4–40); but the rich may have other useful qualities in addition to their wealth: the responsible habits of businessmen, the admirable manners found among men of old wealth, a better education (1283a29–37). Democrats, who are noteworthy neither for their virtue nor for their contributions to the community, nonetheless assert that they are “free.” Compared to the rich man’s assertion, theirs strikes us as a barely civil way of demanding an opportunity to put their hands in the public till (1281a11–16).

The democrat’s demand, which appears to neglect any consideration of the citizen’s merits, has an additional undesirable, not to say unjust, consequence. If equality were given to each man, poor free men would virtually always constitute a majority in opposition to a minority of rich free men. The majority’s overriding interest in ameliorating their poverty would override the interests of wealthy men. On the basis of the oligarchic principle of equality according to worth, not number, it would be difficult to argue on behalf of democracy that poverty is a sign of human excellence, because of which the demotic should be accorded what is, in effect, a greater than equal say. But even if we began with the democratic principle that all free-born citizens are equally entitled to participate for the sake of living as each would wish, a modification or moderation of majority rule would be required. The democrat who takes freedom for each man seriously does not intend a tyranny of the majority. Therefore he intends, if necessary, a regime which accords a seemingly greater than equal say to minorities in order to permit each exponent of a minority
interest to live as freely as the man who espouses the interest of the largest class.

How the equality of each is to be secured is a practical problem with which we are not concerned for the moment. The theoretical difficulty that interests us is why the democratic partisan believes that it is sound reasoning to make numerical equality, not merit or contribution to the common good, the measure for distributive justice.

Let us briefly recall how modern political science demonstrates that all men are equal, for today our defense of democracy stems chiefly from the teaching of Thomas Hobbes, the self-proclaimed founder of modern political science, and his followers. Any just regime claims to secure the common benefit, and according to Hobbes, we can ascertain the benefit that is common, by which he means universal, when we examine the parts of the whole as they are in themselves. We know what a political whole is and what its end ought to be when we know what the parts naturally are and why they move together to form a whole. This we learn by imagining men in the state of nature, that is, in their natural condition. Hobbes says that each man is naturally a body in motion, although the human body in particular is moved by its passions. It is moved especially by the fear of violent death at the hands of another man, who may similarly be in motion and even on a collision course. Each man can reason that he best preserves his nature when he lives within a commonwealth making it possible for him to maintain his freedom of movement under a sovereign at whose hands he and his fellow travelers can fear violent death should they make a wrong move. The end of commonwealth, preservation of the whole, reflects if not the deepest desire, then the fundamental aversion of each of the parts, which is to cease motion. The whole, generated by the parts manifesting their natures, is like, or represents, each of the parts and is the cause of a universal benefit. Accepting Hobbes's definitions of man and commonwealth, no citizen could doubt the justice of the Leviathan.5

Hobbes finds similarity in the parts,6 and we today tend to use his teaching about equality in the state of nature as a justification for political equality. Hobbes, of course, was not a partisan of democracy, but of monarchy. He insists on the equal natural right of each to contract or consent to be governed because in the state of nature each has an equal ability to kill another, or to resist government. In commonwealth each

does not retain the right to deliberate and judge, that is, to rule rather than to consent to be ruled, because, we might surmise, Hobbes can assert equality of prudence only as a thinly disguised joke.\textsuperscript{7} While he shows that a defense of political equality properly begins with an argument about equal strength and equal prudence, he himself uses his teachings about the state of nature as a justification not for democracy, but for a government that is as indifferent as possible to the various ends pursued by citizens.\textsuperscript{8} His purpose in inventing and emphasizing the state of nature, characterized by a universal fear of violent death, is to avoid having to consider the parts as different, as they would be if they were considered with reference to the different ends they might desire when not preoccupied with mere preservation.

It has been observed that in constituting their political orders, men tend to look for a natural model to imitate. Such a model can command their respect because they tend to suppose that what exists independent of human creation must have originated in tremendous power and, they hope, benevolence. Such suppositions are the themes of religion and religious controversy. Hobbes believed that when political order is intended as an imitation of a whole completed by a \textit{sumnum bonum}, it is the source of continuous disagreement leading to disorder, and fails to secure the one minimal good on which everyone is agreed: peace or preservation. Men inevitably contend about the meaning of the highest good, either because there is no one correct definition or because men cannot be expected to concede its correctness.\textsuperscript{9} Hobbes intended to discourage questions about the bases on which men claim to merit a share in government and the ends for which they might govern, because answers to such questions depend on the prior resolution of disputes about the good. Even those who reject Hobbes for Rousseau, contending that participation is required because all men are free and because freedom is the end, deny that government is properly concerned with defining the content of freedom.\textsuperscript{10} However we might judge Hobbes's intention, the truncated mode of political discourse advocated by him has prevented contemporary political science from defending with clarity the goodness of equal political participation.

An alternative procedure, acknowledged but not followed by Hobbes, would be to begin by taking seriously the claims made by men about their

8. Ibid., Chap. 21, p. 109; Chap. 21, p. 113; Chap. 30, pp. 181–182.
9. Ibid., Chap. 11, p. 47; Chap. 5, pp. 18–19.
10. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, \textit{The Social Contract}, Bk. 1, Chap. 6. The end of the association created by the compact is defense and preservation of original freedom.
individual merits and about the common benefit they intend to secure by means of their rule. To understand this alternative and its implications we must return to Aristotle.

II

In the central portion of Book III of *The Politics*, Aristotle makes his most explicit prodemocratic statement: “It is probably true that the multitude, rather than the few best, ought to be sovereign (1281a40–42). He offers several arguments in support, but the only unobjectionable one given is that the many, taken altogether, are better in the same way that a common meal is better than a meal provided by one expenditure. How it is better is clarified later: “A collective banquet is more beautiful than a single, simple one.” For the same reason, we are told ironically, a *mob* judges better than any one of them, arbitrarily chosen, might. Similarly, many are more incorruptible, or indestructible, than a few, as is more rather than less water (1286a29–33). Hence we might infer that the many are as good or better because they can provide greater quantity or bulk at a pot-luck supper. In fact, their presence is soon compared to the addition of impure food to pure (1281b36–38). No satisfactory proof is given that they have either good taste or sound judgment about nutrition. 11 It is, however, our burden to prove that objections to base tastes and to wrong judgments are reasonable, or that we can properly speak of good taste and right judgment at all (1282b8–13).

More to the present point, the argument for universal and equal par-

11. The arguments made to establish the sufficiency of the taste and judgment of the many, as distinguished from the few good, are obviously inadequate. The many are said to be able to judge the whole well, for we can suppose that among them are individuals each of whom knows a part well. Not only can we ask why the total result will be the sum of noble and correct rather than base and ignorant judgments, but we can ask whether a whole is not more than the sum of its parts, as are the poems and musical works given as examples here. Aristotle’s reference to the many’s coming together like a man with *many* hands and feet suggests that he thinks the result will be monstrous. He then indicates that the many must be given a say not because they will say well, but because they will oppose a regime which does not give them a hearing. The argument that one need not be a doctor to judge the work of other doctors, by which “some” might attempt to solve the difficulty, does not solve it. Aristotle begins with the problem of ensuring that rulers will choose well; he ends with a questionable argument that users can judge the work of makers. This argument establishes at most that the many are capable of calling their rulers to account, not that they themselves are capable of ruling. Even their ability to assess elected officials is questioned in the final passage of this section. The goodness of democracy is not established insofar as the nobility and wisdom of democratic judgments are ultimately not defended.
ticipation rests on an assertion about the equality of the human body. The democrat wants to argue for the sovereignty of all in the legislative assembly and to say that such equality is just according to the kind of measure that permits us to make a total out of each of the pots at the supper. In referring to wholes other than political wholes, he attempts to make nature his standard—a nature intelligible as a totality of bodies. Of course the democrat must mean a totality of self-moved bodies, for he intended to make an argument for equal freedom, not unfreedom. In speaking of the sovereignty of the demos in the legislature, he reminds us that human bodies can be found seated in assemblies, where they presume to legislate their own laws of behavior, or motion.

When Aristotle responds to an hypothetical objection that the base, who constitute a numerical majority, ought not to be sovereign over more important matters than are the respectable or reasonable, he does contend that democracy is nonetheless right and just. He says, however, that this political solution is right in that each is a part of the assembly, the council, and the courts. In other words, he deems it right, that is, correct according to nature, that this city is a whole comprised of partial wholes, defined by their characteristic political works. It is just, according to him, because the demos is sovereign in the assembly, while within it and from it deliberators and judges are distinguished as special parts of the whole. Justice presumably requires—as we concede in the framing of our own political institutions—that the respectable or reasonable, specialists in deliberating and judging, be granted special authority. The whole contains all, not as a totality of undistinguished bodies, but as a collection of defined multitudes. Indeed, the human multitude must be distinguished from the nonhuman, just as within it those who personify its distinguishing faculties of deliberation and judgment are distinguished, for it alone is a multitude of the free. A democracy of free men needs a better defense than the democratic partisan has given. It needs a demonstration that the demos is properly sovereign in the assembly and that the human multitude does indeed legislate for itself.

The practical solution reached at this point in Aristotle’s text strikes us as more or less adequate. Justice requires a democracy, perhaps not as democratic partisans would have it, but a democracy in which all factions have their fair say. Each man, base or respectable, is assured a fair say by adding to the democratic assembly high offices for which only the

12. The word used is the noun, epieikēs or equitable man, which stems from epieikēta, or equity. For the relation of equity to justice, cf. Aristotelis, Ethica Nicomachea, ed. L. Bywater (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1894), 1137a31–1138a3.
rich and respectable are eligible and by teaching how the council and the courts can be used to guide and check the assembly. How this modified, moderated democracy can be justified is the theoretical difficulty that remains. Man has a unique place and a "democratic" law of nature does not do justice to human nature. Aristotle's point, we suggest, is to show that an argument for democratic equality, established by means of an abstraction from the qualities that make human beings political beings, would not be an argument for (or against) political participation. He leads us to infer that these arguments can be made only on the basis of a political science that clearly articulates and defends the distinctive quality of a political being.

To speak of man as political means to define him not by what makes him a mere part of the natural whole, but by what makes him a distinctive part. This, we are told, is his coming together in a community of free men (1278b17–25, 1279a21). The democratic partisan, arguing about justice as if men were equal because roughly equal in body (in contrast to oligarchs who at least want to argue about merits and contributions to a common benefit), cannot speak of justice for free men. Aristotle, however, has referred to an hypothesis, presumably his own, according to which man is a citizen in a special way (1277b7–9, 1278a2–5, 1278b15–30). Man must make himself a man and a citizen to become a part of a whole that encompasses the fullest human possibilities. Man's capacities may be given by nature, but his being is the actuality of which he is a cause, and in this sense he is free. On reflection, then, the democrat who attempts to defend his notion of justice by implying that it is "right according to nature" perhaps need not proceed as he does to make a compelling argument, or meet the requirements of "science." For scientists seek to know the cause or causes of being, and one might best learn how to speak intelligibly about causes of being by studying free men. In other words, a science that investigates free men and the wholes of which they make themselves parts—political science—is at least autonomous in respect to natural science and at most paradigmatic for it. Hence Aristotle makes the following assertion introducing his discussion of how a political regime might be justified:

Since in all the sciences and arts the end is good, and the greatest and most final is (the end) of the most sovereign of all, the political capacity is this same thing, and the just is the political good, and this is the benefit (bringing together) in common.13 (1282b14–18)

13. To sympheron means not only "the beneficial," but "the bringing together," from sympherō, "to bring together."
As we shall see, the just which is the political good and the one common thing into which all are brought together is the first principle of Aristotle's hypothesis about man's possible perfection.

The democratic principle of freedom is not wrong, and the assertion of freedom by each and every man not inconsequential. But since freedom is meant to be a term of distinction and especially since the political claim based on freedom is a response to the oligarchic claim that wealth is a sign of excellence, we might ask what obvious distinctions are comprehended in the term freedom and to what kind of excellence they point. Most men who speak of freedom wish to be free from necessities, but are not. Surely a poor man who must toil incessantly to ensure his physical survival or a base man who cannot resist gratification of his every desire is not a "free" man, but a slave to his body's needs and desires. Being free, we might grant, means at least having the wherewithal, economic and moral, to combat bodily necessities, as do the wealthy and virtuous. Thus an analysis of the claim of freedom forces us to concede the reasonableness of the claims of the non-democratic partisans. Furthermore, this is to acknowledge that certain qualities, such as wealth and virtue, are generally esteemed or honored and that men tend to measure their excellence by them. Perhaps this is why Aristotle has said that honors, as well as freedom, are a first principle (1281a31), and why he now asserts that a city is put together of the free and "those who bear estimates" (1283a17–18). (He puns on the connection between meeting a property qualification and being esteemed or honored.) Wealthy and respectable men are, in effect, images of the qualities which all men who value freedom, including democrats, must esteem.14 A modified democracy is, so to speak, a "mixed" regime, mixing human bodies with the principles that can rule their bodies. Perhaps one could then argue that these principles ought to be embodied or institutionalized in a certain non- or antidemocratic recognition of men who exhibit them in a democracy.

The rightest laws, Aristotle says, are equally right, that is, of benefit to the whole city and to what is common to citizens (1283b35–1284a3). The city is a whole as the sum of free men, equal in their assertions of freedom. But in order to find them so equal we must abstract from an evaluation of the ways in which men claim to be free and of the qualities of the claimants. Granted that there would be no dispute about honors if men did not presuppose their freedom to make their own whole; in this sense freedom is a first principle or beginning (archē). But this beginning

14. In The Politics free men are most frequently discussed in terms of their virtues or even compared to virtues: 1258b18–1260b18, 1277b7–25, 1283a33–37, 1286a36–b1.
is incomplete because when the democrat asserts that he is free, he means to say that he has some excellence or virtue. Furthermore, men deem a particular quality a virtue insofar as it contributes to the attainment of some end held to be good. Just as men’s cultivation of virtue presupposes freedom, so it implies some end intended. But men tend to acknowledge as their intention only what they deem honorable. This point emerges from Aristotle’s observation that some men are authoritative because they are strong, coupled with his failure to list any men who claim strength as the goal or title of rule. Men inevitably use their strength to make some respectable end or first principle authoritative, so that they can live for themselves and with others on the basis of what is commonly honored. To do this is to make a regime. A city is incomplete without a regime, and every actual city has one (1283a42–1283b9). Men’s assumptions about what gives all things and human qualities worth are thus the causes of regimes. Given this, to speak of “what is common to citizens” requires a statement about the particular form these assumptions take in each regime. To speak of politics in this way, bringing to light the variety of regimes, seems no less reasonable than to consider all citizens as similar. In this way we consciously adopt the perspective of political men, who tend to see all things in the light of their fundamental political opinions.\footnote{Judgments in accordance with one’s self-interest both result from and support total views, or “wholes” (1280a14–25). Similarly, the first attempt at defining a citizen simply was exposed as one that succeeded in defining only a democratic citizen.} We differ from political partisans in acknowledging that each particular perspective may be limited and in continuing to ask by what measure, by what comprehensive first principle, the different opinions about worth can be compared to one another.

Aristotle’s assertion at this point is that justice, or “virtue in associating,” makes the human virtues a whole (1283a37–40). He proposes that in order to understand how the various human qualities deemed good are ranked and ordered, we must consider how the virtues would be unified in the justice of the best man. This best man comes to sight at the end of an analysis of the qualities by means of which human beings distinguish themselves from one another and from the rest of nature, or are free as human beings. The best man exemplifies the sovereignty of the human multitude over bodily nature, and therefore a consideration of his example enables us to come to speak of a justice befitting all free men. To repeat, we contend that a case for equal political participation cannot be made until we have articulated the standard by which to measure the various claims of those who demand to be treated as free. It is, however,
no longer strictly correct to speak in terms of freedom rather than virtue, since the standard which men respect and by which they measure themselves is understood by them to be worthy of respect precisely because it is not merely of human making. The self-made virtues are deemed virtues in the light of a principle men have not made.

Thus Aristotle argues that men’s claims to honors constitute the substance of political disputes, and he asserts his intention to resolve such disputes, at least in principle, by teaching about the justice of the best man, or man par excellence. There follow a brief observation on the threat posed to regimes by very excellent men and a lengthy examination of kingship, which seem to reflect the following train of thought. Claims to honors imply opinions about causes in the light of which certain human qualities are properly deemed virtues, as well as about causes of virtue. For example, to say that courage is virtue and a characteristic of a free and honorable man is to imply that man’s situation is such that he ought to combat or resist certain forces, human or natural. To say that courage is a virtue is also to tempt us to ask what makes human beings capable of it; that is, what natural conditions and what human capacities and opinions enable men to perform the acts we recognize as courageous. For the sake of attaining clarity we might raise these questions, which in everyday political discourse no longer appear problematical. Thus we must return to a consideration of nature, as well as freedom, but we now conceive of nature as that which makes man’s freedom or virtue necessary and possible, not something indifferent to it. We might wish to speak of the first principles of such a nature as “monarchs” (mon-archai, unitary first principles). It can then be said that the movement of Book III of the Politics is from an assertion about equality and freedom, or self-rule, for all to an examination of what must be supposed to be the actual rule of one. What causes this movement is our reflection on the meaning of the claim to be a free man.

When we think of the causes enabling men to do as they choose in politics, we are likely to think first of strength, wealth, and influential friends (1284a20–22). This, however, is insufficient, for men’s actions are also affected by their desires and by speech or reason, or by the combination of these two in their opinions about what is good. Opinions, as much as physical strength, are a cause of the actions of free men. Hence, also, speech addressed to others has strength in politics as rhetoric. Ultimately, strong words must be based on a knowledge of human beings, their passions and their modes of reasoning, and also of what is possible, since the purpose of such speech is to move men. We might note that when Aristotle first speaks of political rule, he distinguishes free or political men by their virtues. The examples given are the free man who has
the courage of a man and the one who has the moderation, or discretion in speech, of a woman (1277b17–23). Now he asks what is to be done with very good men, and he shows how democracies and tyrannies tend to exclude manifestly superior men from their cities. In considering the causes of such behavior (1284a18, 1284a23–24, 1284a25, 1284a31), Aristotle speaks of a tyrant, Periander (the name means “All-Around Man”), who rules a city by force and was once understood (synnoeō) by another tyrant without having uttered a word. Aristotle maintains that it is “not simply right” to censure such tyrants, because the causes by which men move, the principles of political deeds, are strength of body and the strength which wisdom affords to opinion. (Strength of body might well be used in the rejection of excellence, but it is, of course, no less necessary in the defense of excellence.) The tyrants, or monarchs, mentioned here embody the principles or causes of the virtue manifest in politics, and their presence is implied, but not always obvious, in political virtue. Thus taking the claim of freedom very seriously leads us to Aristotle’s joke about hermaphroditic tyrants, like the “All-Around Man” Periander. They personify political virtue as tyrants, or free men par excellence. Nonetheless, if censure of such tyrants is “not simply right” for the mentioned reason, it is right in the sense that the tyrants combine the “extremes” of bodily and intellectual strength without the saving phenomenon of the “mean” of politics and political discourse, which is most characteristic of man, the political animal.

Taking human tyrants seriously might lead us to ask whether wholes other than cities are ruled in the same way. In other words, just as Periander here advised Thrasyboulos to rule over a city of men made visibly equal like a level field of corn, are there causes in nature whose power we do not see, but which nonetheless rule over the visible whole as do the tyrants? In this same passage, Aristotle speaks of men too good to be a part of any city, men who are a law (1284a13–14) and images of a god among men (1284a10–11). In considering what they are, we can imagine what a god or a first cause reminiscent of Plato’s Good would be like. We are told by Aristotle (1284b30–34) that these images of a god ought to be made kings; kings, not tyrants. The tyrants, in ruling whole cities of men impress us with their amazing, suprahuman, skills. They rule not only with force, but by making nature intelligible to themselves as the rule of force. In so doing, they make away with or abstract from (aphaireō) the best man for the sake of uniformity; hence Aristotle’s comparison of tyrannical rule to democratic ostracism. But kings and images of gods emerge from among the best in the best regime (1284b25–34), and such monarchs can be “in harmony” with cities. A king is not only a cause, but he is presumably a cause in the same way that the best part
of human nature is a cause of political deeds, and his rule is compatible with political freedom. What remains to be seen is how such a monarch is in harmony with a community of free men and why his rule is necessary.

A king looks after the common good and is thereby distinguished from a tyrant, who rules for his own benefit (1279a33–34, 1279b6–7). A king, then, is the epitome of a free man who participates in politics for the common good. (In this respect he fulfills the claims of both democrats and oligarchs.) It is about him that political scientists who wish to justify participation need to know.

Aristotle tells us that there are several kinds of kings. As political scientists, strictly speaking, it might seem that we need not concern ourselves with the king who is said to have greater strength than “each and one and all together,” but is not held to be superior to the multitude (of free men) (1286b35–37). Briefly, this king is similar to the best man, but in showing why the rule of a human king would not be preferable to the rule of a multitude of free men, Aristotle enables us to see what a divine being, who surpasses the best human being, would have to be like.16 His being is like a human soul, but better. The best human soul, like the Egyptian doctors here who move things, is characterized by an eros toward some end. The best human soul also legislates and lays down or underlies laws.17 He combines eros and thymos on the level of humanity, and in intending to make his nobility manifest, he generalizes from his own noble soul to set a standard for other human beings. Equally with other free men who give laws to themselves or are laws for themselves, he is one in a multitude that is manifold in body and unitary in soul, and for whom ruling and being ruled thus are virtually interchangeable. His noble passions as well as his reason are the cause of his virtue. Yet because he has the passions made possible by man's bodily nature, he cannot be expected to be either selfless or immortal; so perhaps he should rule only in a multitude. Then, were we still to insist that a king's rule is beneficial, we would have to imagine a king completely devoid of selfish passions because devoid of body, but therefore also devoid of will. He would be perfect reason. To the extent that he had “bodily strength” over each and one and all in order to guard his rule, that strength would be nothing more than each and one and all's being what they are in a nature ruled by the regularity we call a law of nature.

To “set down” such a king, Aristotle says, is the work of a good man.

17. Ibid., 1113a31–33.
The reign of this king was "prior," and he was replaced by men of virtue, who happened to become numerous. He is not the cause of human excellence, but is prior in the sense that there is no defense of the strivings by which man attempts to overcome his baseness if he does not suppose that perfection is in principle possible. Such a king is believed to exist and to be beneficial or to bring things together by those who seek laws that "give commands about what befalls one" and compare politics to an art (1286a9–12). To live by the law of men who deliberate nobly is to suppose that virtue is possible and good, or prudent. When we connect freedom with choice, we necessarily connect it with good choice because we also connect freedom with unimpeded action. An action which is not impeded might be said to be according to nature. So even the freest action must be chosen with some knowledge of what nature permits. Taking seriously man's desire to be free thus leads us to postulate that nature is ruled neither by mere force nor by a moral being who gives commands, but by a rational being: a perfect artisan, a soul superior to human soul in lacking all passions, a perfect judge, incorruptible or eternal. He is the god of which the philosopher is an image. He is not the same as the free man moved by the desire to do well, although such a desire leads us to formulate a rule compatible with freedom (1287a28–30). Political men participate by making their own order within an orderly nature, which they can suppose to be ordered in such a way as to permit them to act well. Political philosophers participate by making this necessary premise of freedom or virtue explicit.

We seem to have overstepped the bounds of academic propriety in suggesting that political scientists participate by becoming teachers of natural science and theology, but Aristotle's point is that this seeming impropriety is, in fact, both proper and necessary. This is not to say that we ought to neglect politics in the narrower sense usually assigned to it. Hence we should return, by means of a brief consideration of Aristotle's solution, to the more specific question of what political scientists can do about participatory democracy.

III

With Aristotle, we have attempted to ascertain whether and how participatory democracy might be justified. We have contended that in order

19. At 1275b1–3, Aristotle promises a clarification of the manner in which right regimes are prior. In the Metaphysics, we are reminded that temporal priority is only one kind of priority. Aristotle, Metaphysics, trans. Hugh Tredennick (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1935), 1018b9–29.
to ascertain the justness of democracy or any other regime, we need to measure specifically political equality and inequality.

Aristotle presents us with a democratic citizen, who initially argues that judging and ruling are somehow connected with manifesting the complete human being and also that every citizen, but only a citizen, is capable of judging and ruling. He identifies human and political being. Yet this spokesman tries to establish the justice of democracy in particular by invoking arguments to prove that democracy is by nature right because a human city is properly modeled on a nature composed of bodies, each of which is a “one” and an equal. In so arguing, he forgets about his humanity altogether. Man resembles bodily nature when one abstracts from what distinguishes him from other beings, that is, his freedom, or his capacity to be the cause of his own being insofar as he can determine his end and act in accordance with his determination. This is not to suggest that the body can be forgotten, but that emphasizing it distracts the democrat from making the relevant argument. How can it be said that citizenship contributes to the ability to do well and that the citizen necessarily has this ability, establishing that citizens are equal as free men? This argument is attempted by Aristotle on behalf of the democrat in the context of his statement on kingship.

Aristotle writes in a democracy, but holds that democracy is not inevitable. He, too, is conscious of the problem of would-be antidemocratic “democratic elites.” Their presence is indicated early in Book III in the correction of the first definition of a citizen, for they provoke the statement that a citizen is one who has the power to judge and deliberate with skill. Power and skill do not always, but might coincide. Aristotle demonstrates the good citizenship of the political philosopher. While he attempts to make the powerful more capable and defends their power only insofar as it is defensible, he reconciles the more skilled to their relative powerlessness.20 This he does by arguing in a certain way that democracy is just. His way makes democracy more just and at the same time provides an explanation of alternatives superior to democratic citizenship. It shows when and why democratic participation should be chosen.

What we are shown is “that according to which the king who does everything according to his own intention rules” (1287a8–10). That according to which a king rules is an “each” (an individual) who rules by judging, and the king’s own rule is constituted by judging. We offer the following explanation of the meaning of Aristotle’s absolute kingship.

20. Contrast Aristotle’s defense of democracy with his immoderate attack on immoderate democracy in Book IV, at 1292a4–38.
The democrat's necessary argument, that citizenship contributes to a man's ability to do well and that a citizen has this ability, is best made with reference to the manner in which a judge or juror makes judgments (1287a25–27, 1287a41–b3, 1287b15–17, 1287b23–24, 1287b25–29). When one judges in a court of law, he supposes that he judges in accordance with law and accepts the authority of the law and of the government that has made it. In the words of one such judge:

Judicial power presupposes an established government capable of enacting laws and enforcing their execution, and of appointing judges to expound and administer them. The acceptance of the judicial office is a recognition of the authority of the government from which it is derived.21

The judge or juror does not suppose that he makes laws. Rather, in judging he is confronted with a contradiction either between the law and someone who has broken it, as did Socrates, for example, or between citizens who have some claims against each other. Yet in the face of an objection to the law, one is forced to reaffirm or reject it, and in applying it to a case presently not covered by it, to expand the law. In fact, then, he does legislate when he judges. He does so in a way that reminds us of the procedure of a scientist who examines his own working hypothesis, deliberately revising his laws as he tests them in the face of manifest exceptions and omissions.

In a democracy, democrats take apparent similarities and equalities too seriously. This defective perception coincidentally serves the interest of each democrat, who is thereby enabled to perceive democratic equality as right. In legislating, democrats make general rules for the many like themselves. In judging, however, a democrat might better disregard himself and the many like himself, either because the judgment is between the interests of others or because the interest opposed to the law is given equal weight in court. This participation makes democrats more able citizens, and participatory democracy is made better because the participants are made better. Participation is best justified for both democrats and democracies in this way, and for this reason Aristotle emphasizes participation by judging. Rather than giving a specious defense of democratic judgment or denying its sufficiency altogether, despite the obvious ability of the demos to assert itself with force if necessary, Aristotle states the problem of democracy in such a way as to facilitate its solution. The statement is not inconsistent with his opinion that democracy is only the least bad of defective regimes, for to say that democratic judgment can

be improved is not to say that it is sufficient or that there are no better judges.

When one participates by making a judgment about the solution of the practical problem of democracy, he also comes to justify philosophy. The political philosopher who, for the benefit of all free men, articulates the premises by which political participation is made intelligible must speak authoritatively about the whole and man’s place in it. In order to do so, he must suppose that the whole is intelligible like a political whole. Philosophers, too, judge like judges. If science is to be more than hypothetical, man’s intellect must find laws, not make them arbitrarily. Yet only the judge, in pronouncing his judgment, pronounces the law. The lawmaker is sovereign in theory, but the judge is sovereign in practice, and only he appears to participate. If there is a first cause, its being is articulated only by man, who speaks. Political philosophy can demonstrate that philosophy is possible and necessary if the whole is ruled politically. Philosophy learns this defense from philosophizing about politics. But politics, the participation of free men, ultimately requires the defense emerging from the attempt to establish the reasonableness of the philosopher’s concern for intellectual perfection.

Thus the necessary first principle, or end, of politics is completed wisdom, or contemplation, for the sake of man’s perfection. It is this end that men who worry about participation and make claims about their freedom must intend. For even if this end is not seen by political men, it alone justifies and makes intelligible man’s efforts to demonstrate his freedom or to distinguish himself. This first principle Aristotle sometimes calls “the god.” Despite the fact that the end is human perfection, Aristotle acknowledges that most men need to conceive of a human excellence, which they will never experience, as suprahuman or divine. He can consistently speak of such a god without depriving man of his freedom and his responsibility for his virtue insofar as he can demonstrate that this cause does not make politics, the human determination of law, unnecessary or unimportant.

Hobbes tells us of Aristotle’s teaching about “Entities and Essences” that he may have known it “to be false Philosophy; but writ it as a thing consonant to, and corroborative of their Religion; and fearing the fate of Socrates.” This is said in the context of his criticism of the use made of Aristotle by the Christian Church. To modern political philosophy, it no longer seemed possible to assert that man’s freedom was in accordance with a divine nature. There could be no nature according to

22. *Metaphysics*, 995b3–5. The metaphysician is likened to a judge.
which man's politics, his deliberations and judgments about the human good, were free and by which he was befriended. The modern defense of politics is either tyrannical or democratic in form. If man is free, he must rebel against a willful God, proving himself a greater tyrant, or prince. Or, if there is to be justice and rule by law instead of tyranny, politics is no longer assimilated to the measure of divine beasts. Instead, the existence of any kind of being other than body is denied, and the law of bodily nature made the measure. Aristotle's mixed regime is reconstituted on a democratic foundation, and politics becomes the work of an immanifest and unjustified elite. Science becomes physics or like physics. Political science, the science of the human soul, loses its place as queen of the sciences, and political scientists are deposed as kings.

The defense of participatory democracy originally intended by modern political theory was no less qualified than Aristotle's. But it was thought that the qualifications could not be made explicit because the standard in the light of which the qualification was intelligible had come to be confused with the Christian God. The qualification and the standard which could not be publicly defended have come to be publicly forgotten. So has a sensible answer to the question: "Why participatory democracy?"