INTRODUCTION TO THE ESSAYS ON POLITICAL ARISTOTELIANISM.

Here are five texts on political Aristotelianism published between 2003 and 2024.

The **first text,** published in the *Boletim do CPA. Revista de Estudos Filosóficos e Históricos da Antiguidade. Year VIII No. 15 Jan/June 2003,* deals with the Aristotelian doctrine of natural slavery. The Greek *polis* was divided into two distinct spheres: the *oikos* (the home) and the *ecclesia* (the assembly). The *oikos* was the place of inequality: in it, the man dominated over his wife, children and slaves; while in the assembly, held in the *agora* (square), all those who had the right to be citizens were considered free and equal. Slavery was of two types: legal or natural; legal when practiced by right of war, or to pay a debt, in which case it could be temporary because it didn't concern the nature of men. While natural slavery was something permanent and linked to the nature of each person: "some are born to command and others to be commanded". Aristotle tries to justify the characteristics of these slaves by nature but finds no convincing arguments and so this figure remains empty, sometimes applied to all barbarians, sometimes to peoples who live outside the civil context and are like beasts, without finding a clear historical reference and using arguments that contradict Aristotelian anthropology itself.

The **second text,** published in 2021 in TOSI, G. *Aristotle and the New World*. The controversy over the conquest of America (1510-1573). Rio de Janeiro: Lumen Juris, 2021 addresses the "epistemological and political revolution" promoted by the discovery of the *corpus Aristotelicum* in the universities in the 13th century: political Aristotelianism would clash with, and over time prevail over, the "political Augustinianism" dominant until then. The essay analyses the role played by the theory of natural slavery in justifying the conquest of America: the Crown's theologians and jurists had found the historical referents of slaves by nature: the indigenous people of the New World, justifying the "just war" against them. This opened up an extensive debate between the apologists for the conquest, such as Sepúlveda, and the defenders of the indigenous people, such as Bartolomé de Las Casas. By comparing the indigenous people of the new world to slaves by nature, the first "proto-racist" doctrines emerged, which considered these peoples "barbarians" because they practised cruel and inhuman customs such as human sacrifice and cannibalism. By refusing to apply the doctrine of slaves by nature to the indigenous people of the New World, the scholastics of Salamanca such as Vitoria and the Dominican Bartolomé de Las Casas appealed to Christian universalism and universal brotherhood and justified overcoming "barbaric" customs through education because all men are born free and equal, thus anticipating the modern doctrines of human rights.

The **third essay** was published in 2022 in: DUERMAIER, A. T. (et alii). *Philosophical Trails. A guide for students*. João Pessoa: Editora UFPB, 2022, p.169-193. The question that is debated is whether human rights are present in Aristotle's political thought and the answer is negative if we consider the "universal" principles of freedom (against slavery) and equality (against discrimination); but it affirms that Aristotle's political thought offers us current contributions to the theory of human rights. "Neo-Aristotelian" conceptions of human rights are discussed, such as those

of Marta Nussbaum and Amartya Sen, who propose not just equal opportunities, but the sharing of an idea of the good and the "good life"; a proposal that presupposes a critique of modern individualist anthropology and the return to Aristotelian anthropology of man as a social and political being by nature, a being of reason and language and an ethical being, because he shares the values of a given community.

The **fourth essay** is unpublished in the first part (dedicated to forms of government), the second part was published in TOSI, G. - GUIMARÃES, R. *Democracia e Elitismo dos An antigos e dos modernos*. (Ensaios). Curitiba: CRV, 2020, p. 79-102. English edition: *Democracy and Elitism of ancients and moderns*. (Essays). Curitiba: CRV, 2024.
The essay analyses the famous and influential Aristotelian distinction between forms of government: the correct ones are Monarchy, Aristocracy and "*Politia*", the deviant ones are Tyranny, Oligarchy and Democracy; and proposes a reading of Aristotle that is more favourable to democracy. In Aristotle, the fundamental distinction is not so much between *democratia*, in a pejorative sense, as opposed to *politia*, but between *democratia*, in a positive sense, as opposed to *demagoguery*. The fundamental criteria for this distinction are: respect for the common good, which is typical of all correct forms, the government of laws and not of men, the existence of broad freedom and equality among those who had the right to be citizens, a citizenship in which the vast majority of free citizens participate, including those in the humblest professions. Aristotle attributes political competence to the multitude (*plethos, demos, polloi*) as capable of governing and being governed, of choosing (by lot or by election) the highest political offices and overseeing them. In doing so, he tries to overcome the "natural" mistrust of aristocrats (of all times) towards the multitude, defending the political competence of citizens, and placing himself closer to the democratic theses of Protagoras than to the aristocratic theses of his master Plato.

The **fifth text** was published in Italian in the magazine FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS N. 2/2024 - PAPER 1 and promotes a detailed and philological reconstruction of the main passages in Aristotle's work relating to natural law (*phúsei dikaion*) in the *Rhetoric,* the *Magna Moralia and* the *Nicomachean Ethics*. After comparing the main meanings of the concept, in its various definitions and nuances, the research concludes that Aristotle does not defend a "strong" conception of law or natural law. By "strong" conception I mean that expressed by Sophocles' *Antigone*, which is the archetype of natural law founded on norms that are intrinsic to human nature and present in all men, which sink their roots in the immemorial times of the customs of peoples and which were not put in place by men, but by a divine will. This conception would be that of the Stoics, who influenced Cicero's Roman *jus gentium*, and Paolo's Christian universalism, which fuelled the dream of a universal brotherhood.
Aristotle is the philosopher of the *Polis* and not of the *Cosmopolis*, and he cannot conceive of the existence of rights "outside" the *polis* (a thesis that will also be Hegel's in his critique of jusnaturalism): "*extra civitatem nullum jus*", we could say paraphrasing Augustine. The *polis* in Aristotle is not the place of freedom and

equality for all, but of an unequal society, where the master dominates over the slaves, the father over the children, the husband over the wife, the Greeks over the barbarians.

Faced with this, the question arises spontaneously: has "humanity progressed for the better" from an ethical point of view, as Kant predicted in his philosophy of history? Or are we moderns simply more hypocritical by "solemnly" proclaiming human equality, freedom and fraternity in declarations of rights, while promoting the treatment of human beings, labour analogous to slavery, immense economic inequalities, the exodus of millions of stateless people and the wars that are leading humanity to its destruction?

Happy reading!