DISTORTED SOULS: 
THE ROLE OF BANAUSICs IN ARISTOTLE'S POLITICS

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In the Politics Aristotle considers the factors involved in the rule of the many. While he argues that they are not suited to rule directly he does believe that there are two reasons for allowing their participation in politics under certain circumstances; these are a belief in the possibility of the collective wisdom of the people and the belief that in some areas the user of a thing is a better judge of its value than the expert that crafted it. He is, however, a critic of extreme democracy because he believes that the inclusion of banausics in politics will inevitably lead to a perverted form of government. The aim of my paper is twofold: (1) to show that Aristotle claimed that the condition of the banausic is distinct from that of women and slaves in that he is not in a natural condition; and (2) that the banausic's unnatural state comes about because his original potential for ἐνδυματία has been destroyed due to the type of habituation which he has undergone. I argue that Aristotle maintains that such a failure on the part of an individual to fully actualize his potential can be understood as the result of a failure on behalf of the polis to fulfil its function of properly habituating its populace.

Though Aristotle brings forward important arguments in favour of the many he is far from an unconditional supporter of democracy as he does, of course, follow Plato in grouping it
among the deviant constitutions. He believes that extreme democracy fails because it gives political power to those who are ill-equipped to use it, namely the banausics (from the Greek βάναυσος). As he notes in the Politics book III they are no longer able to become good citizens and they should not, therefore, be permitted to hold citizenship if this is at all feasible. This means that, in Aristotle's view, they are unable to properly carry out the functions appropriate to the citizen of a polis; namely, holding office. The form of rule banausics would likely impose is unnatural due to their perverted conception of equality and freedom. They are sure to implement a system that is based on numerical equality which will permit the inferior to rule over their superiors. This results in a system in which there is little or no place for merit and this is obviously contrary to what is truly just. For how can it be just for a good man to be ruled by a base man? In Aristotle's view this can never really be justified. The banausic also goes wrong in his belief that liberty is "doing what one likes". This view is devastating for it is based solely upon self-interest and encourages the individual to work "according to his desire." This is entirely mistaken in Aristotle's opinion as it leads to a misconception of the true end of human endeavours, the life of εὐδαιμονία. Therefore, the banausics must not be allowed to rule as they will follow their selfish concerns permitting demagogues to take over and, thereby, impede all members of the polis from fulfilling their natural purpose.

Aristotle insists that in considering constitutional recommendations one must take into account the composition of the populace in question. He does, therefore, argue that there may be situations in which it is necessary and perhaps even