Caroline Roe
POLSCI201
Essay 1

The relationship between an individual and the state defines the ideals that both Locke and Aristotle describe in relation to citizenship, in this paper I will argue that this is because regardless of whether the political community is the result of natural relationships or individuals' exercising of vigilance and their natural rights, happiness can be attained through living well as a community. For Aristotle, the hierarchy of communities that form a natural city-state are the product of humans' natural desire to live well as a community. It is virtue and reason that allows for men to be natural 'political animals', and leaves the ruled classes with naturally subordinate demeanors reinforced by a social hierarchy. Aristotle's political community required active participation from those specifically capable of virtuous action in order to maintain self sufficiency for the polis and in order to attain happiness through virtuous action. Conversely, the reason men enter into society according to Locke was not their natural need to be governed, but rather the need for enforcement of laws allowing for the protection of every individual's natural rights. The key distinction between the two differing ideals of citizenship is Locke's assertion that the existence of natural rights not only allows for the possibility of consent of the governed, but also the responsibility of preventing tyranny being awarded to the entire citizenry. Aristotle's ideas about men being natural citizens with varying degrees of potential for virtuous action means some individuals are only capable of being subordinate, which contrasts with most of Locke's ideas about the need for vigilant citizens from all parts of the commonwealth social hierarchy. However, both shared a sense of naturalness regarding human societies and our desire to escape war, resentment, and anarchy by creating communities organized by law and enforced by rulers who represent their people's interests. In this paper I will argue that Aristotle's ideas on

citizenship reflect his community values and Locke's emphasis on vigilance reflects his high value for individualistic freedoms within the political community.

Aristotle's Political Community is defined by the conversation around naturalness that Locke's discussion also shared, however, the city state described in Politics requires a social hierarchy in order to allocate freedoms based on the assertion citizenship involves the cultivation and practice of virtue. Aristotle argues that for one to pursue happiness they must be actively pursuing virtuous activity. A state of virtuous action is what Aristotle asserts as the means of attaining happiness. One can acquire virtue through habituation, and he defines the exercise of virtue using both action and judgement and it is through these two parts that the essence of happiness is created. Habituation towards moderation is an important component as well, especially in relation to the argument he makes about the aim of life being happiness, flourishing, and well being. Virtuous action is therefore said to be happiness, a perpetual state of motion practically defined by Aristotle as good life and good action and when more elaborated, "With those who identify happiness with virtue or some one virtue our account is in harmony; for to virtue belongs virtuous activity." (Book I, Ch. 7 pg. 944 Nicomachean Ethics) Therefore happiness is not a passive state but rather a state of action, in accordance with reason or is a virtuous act.

Aristotle's discussion of citizenship focused on the political community, in *Politics* he lays out a political vision and hierarchy of communities defined by the idea that freedom is not only public, but a state of activity to be performed and exercised communally within the city state. The hierarchy of communities is a key building block in understanding the argument Aristotle makes about humans being political animals naturally, thus the city state is a natural

occurrence resulting from the need for security and self sufficiency as well as the desire for man to pursue "living well". This key distinction between living and and living well is what Aristotle describes as "natural"; both the hierarchies of power and the citizens' natural desire to actively participate in the polity is the reason the city state is so successful. The self sufficient nature of the ideal polis is also what allowed for virtuous actions of the rulers and willingly ruled to "originate in the bare needs of life, and continuing in existence for the sake of a good life." (3, Politics) Aristotle argues that the city state is natural, and exists by a state of nature because humans are by nature, political animals. The collective action of the polity is not only virtuous because it is self sufficient but also because virtue in practice always involves choice. Citizenship, however involves the practice and cultivation of virtue, requiring an active mental state and judgement and action. Aristotle maintains that happiness is the end of action and self sufficient, but also asserts that "Now by self sufficient we do not mean that which is sufficient for a man by himself, but also for parents, children, wife, and in general for his friends and fellow citizens, since man is born for citizenship." (942, 10 Nicomachean Ethics) Human good is the pursuit of more than one virtue, always requiring activity of the soul by exercising virtue via action and judgement.

Aristotle and Locke shared the perspective that society formed to serve men's higher purpose, whether that be property or virtue the community provides a context within citizenship can be actionable. Without the political community there would be no security or self sufficiency that the city state offered in exchange for a subordinate, virtuous citizenry reinforced by a social hierarchy. Furthermore, with no ability for humans to rule themselves based on our natural virtues we would descend into a state of chaos that Locke similarly eludes to in conversations

around the innate human tendency for revenge and reprisal. “The reason why men enter into society, is the preservation of their property; and the end why they choose and authorize a legislative, is, that there may be laws made, and rules set, as guards and fences to the properties of all the members of the society, to limit the power, and moderate the dominion, of every part and member of the society…” (Treatise of Government, Sect 222 pg 68) Aristotle’s position on citizenship revolves around virtue and a social hierarchy that reinforce the naturally subordinate relationships between the rulers and ruled in a city state. Locke argues that the people do not need the government, but rather the government needs the people. The individual maintains their ability to exercise freedom and should exercise citizenship using their natural rights, as they maintain watchful vigilance over the state. Freedom is non interference for Locke, whereas for Aristotle freedom is the ability to actively participate in politics, not the freedom to not be interfered with by the government. Locke goes into great detail regarding identifying and preventing tyranny, especially regarding usurpations of power and depravations of property.

These are two important concepts that Locke builds on when discussing a vigilant citizenrys role in maintaining their right to revolution, instances Locke described such as “whenever the legislators endeavour to take away, and destroy the property of the people, or to reduce them to slavery under arbitrary power, they put themselves into a state of war with the people, who are thereupon absolved from any farther obedience, and are left to the common refuge, which God hath provided for all men, against force and violence…”(John Locke, 2nd Treatise of Government, Sect 243 pg 75) Locke would argue that human flourishing is not because of the community, but rather it allows for the protection of property but allows for the creation of government, the only thing that can take an individual’s natural freedoms. This is

coupled by Locke's assertion that self defense is a part of nature, nor can it be denied to the community. (John Locke, 2nd Treatise of Government, Sect 243 pg 71)Active vigilance is to Locke as virtuous activity is to Aristotle.

The role of individual citizens in today's political climate cannot be more relevant to this paper's discussion of a citizen's "natural" place on a social hierarchy and a citizen's natural rights to demand revolution from governments who require the consent of the governed. We are becoming increasingly polarized as a country, our media outlets have turned news stories into 30 second sound bites and video clips so that politics can be on TV all day everyday with an eye catching headline. The ruler and ruled are not the same without one another, and interpretations of Locke's natural rights and Aristotle's active participation discussed above could be applied today in order to combat efforts to delegitimize global warming research campaigns, or LGBTQ+ rights, or any other divisive topic that pits people against their governments and each other. Remembering and applying interpretation(s) like the ones above regarding the pursuit of happiness through community and active participation would in my opinion, serve many people in this country well especially during the presidential election.