

# Diego Pérez de Mesa's 'Política o razón de Estado' and the Medieval Commentary Tradition on Aristotle's *Politics*

Autor:  
Lidia Lanza

Revista:  
Patristica et Mediævalia  
2017, 38, 33-52



Artículo

**DIEGO PÉREZ DE MESA'S *POLÍTICA O RAZÓN DE ESTADO* AND THE MEDIEVAL COMMENTARY TRADITION ON ARISTOTLE'S POLITICS**

LIDIA LANZA\*

**Diego Pérez de Mesa's Work on Politics**

The historiography devoted to early modern political thought tends to see the emergence of the literary genre of reason of state in relation to the end of medieval "Political Aristotelianism"<sup>1</sup>. Yet, in the work of the Spaniard Diego Pérez de Mesa, entitled *Política o razón de Estado sacada de Aristóteles* (that is *Politics or Reason of State Taken from Aristotle*), reason of state is strictly yoked to the *Politics* of Aristotle.

Mathematician, astronomer and historiographer, Diego Pérez de Mesa composed this work almost certainly between 1623 and 1625, long after his retirement from his academic position as professor of mathematics and astronomy at the Universities of Alcalá and Seville<sup>2</sup>. In both his scientific and historical works, Pérez de Mesa shows a pragmatic approach to the subject he is dealing with: whenever possible, he adduces his personal observations and

\* Universidade do Porto.

<sup>1</sup> See for instance the essays collected in Artemio Enzo Baldini (ed.), *Aristotelismo politico e ragion di stato: atti del convegno internazionale di Torino, 11-13 febbraio*, Olschki, Firenze 1995. Given the limited length of this article, the bibliographical indications are rather reduced.

<sup>2</sup> For his biography, see Diego Pérez de Mesa, *Política o razón de Estado*, ed. by L. Pereña and C. Baciero, with the collaboration of V. Abril, A. García, F. Maseda, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Madrid 1980, pp. XIII-XXXI. But see also the more recent José María Ortiz de Zárate Leira, "Manuscrito con obras atribuidas a Diego Pérez de Mesa en la Biblioteca Histórica de la Universidad Complutense", in Francisco A. González Redondo (ed.), *Ciencia y técnica entre la paz y la guerra. 1714, 1814, 1914*, Sociedad Española de la Historia de las Ciencias y de las Técnicas, Madrid 2015, Vol. 2, pp. 1141-1148.

experience either to confirm or to disprove earlier theories and opinions. Scholars have already pointed out how much this attitude is consistent with the trend fostered by Philip II in the teaching of mathematics-related subjects<sup>3</sup>. When employed with regard to historical matters, this approach reveals itself to be all the more significant to understand the use made in the *Política o razón de Estado* of theories taken from Aristotle's *Politics*.

In composing the *Política o razón de Estado*, Pérez de Mesa benefits from the vast historical information he had previously gathered while he was preparing the expanded and revised version of Pedro de Medina's *Libro de las grandezas y cosas notables de España*<sup>4</sup>. Besides this, he also draws on his own personal political experience. As counsellor to Cardinal Gaspar Borja y Velasco, who was the Spanish Ambassador in Rome on more than one occasion and Viceroy of Naples in 1620, Pérez de Mesa spent a long time in Italy. Pérez de Mesa knew well Italian political history, which is evident from the high number of examples he adduces from Italian history, almost equivalent to the high number of examples taken from Spanish history. Contemporary Italian and Spanish history supply Pérez de Mesa with examples of regimes and political changes which he employs to update the conclusions of Aristotle. We can thus conclude that his career permitted him to gain experience related to the political processes that are at the core of the *Política o razón de Estado*, namely the causes that enable different political regimes (monarchy, republic, oligarchy and so on) to remain stable over long periods of time and the discussion about the forces that can undermine or even dissolve each of those regimes.

It is not hard to grasp how all this content fits in a work belonging, as is clear from its title, to the literary genre of reason of state, that is, a group of works mainly written in Italy by the early seventeenth century which bear in their title the expression *ragion di stato*. Pérez de Mesa's *Política* displays the main features of the

<sup>3</sup> Victor Navarro-Brotóns, "The Cultivation of Astronomy in Spanish Universities in the Latter Half of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century", in Mordechai Feingold and Victor Navarro-Brotóns (eds.), *Universities and Science in the Early Modern Period*, Springer, Dordrecht 2006, pp. 83-98.

<sup>4</sup> Pérez de Mesa's rewriting of Pedro de Medina's *Libro de las grandezas y cosas notables de España* amounts to almost twice the number of pages of the *editio princeps* of Medina's work, issued in 1548. In his revision, Pérez de Mesa moves between an obsequious reverence towards the text he is reworking and an attempt to correct it with the fresh historical evidence he brings.

standard characterisation of this genre: it is a reflection on political power, intended for princes and their advisers, grounded in experience and history, and as such dismissive of any reflection that may be regarded as lacking practical usefulness<sup>5</sup>. But precisely because Pérez de Mesa bases his work on the *Politics* of Aristotle, which is explicitly acknowledged in the title, the question that arises is to which extent is his practical aim consistent with the purposes, method and topics that are found in Aristotle's *Politics*.

The aim of this article is therefore to analyse to which extent the text of the *Politics* supplies the theoretical grounds on which Pérez de Mesa constructs his work and justifies his assertions. The *Politics* has been used by different authors in a wide range of contexts and with different purposes since its translation into Latin in the 1260s, but as yet no study has concentrated on how it might have been used in a reason-of-state work. This inquiry may permit us to assess to which extent and in which way we should connect the end of "Political Aristotelianism" with the appearance of the reason of state.

It suffices to look at the titles and order of the chapters of the *Política o razón de Estado* to notice the similarity between this work and the *Politics*. Thus, the question is whether Pérez de Mesa limits himself to following the order of the topics he finds in Aristotle's work and, if so, whether he merely fills the template with content taken from other sources and from his own political experience. This would in turn give rise to a further question, namely to which extent Pérez de Mesa remains faithful to the principles and approach of the authoritative text he relies on or whether he adjusts it according to his own agenda.

Such questions are not unique to Pérez de Mesa but can be extended to any medieval and early modern author who advanced

<sup>5</sup> Here I draw on the recent entry: Harro Höpfl, "Reason of State", in Henrik Lagerlund (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy. Philosophy between 500 and 1500*, Springer, Dordrecht – Heidelberg – London – New York 2011, pp. 1113–1115. The bibliography on the reason of state is legion. In addition to the volume mentioned in note 1 and to the bibliography collected in a website specifically dedicated to the reason of state and updated to 2007 (<http://www.filosofia.unina.it/ars/bibrds.pdf>, last retrieved in April 2017), see the following studies where further bibliography may be found: Michael Stolleis, *Staat und Staatsräson in der frühen Neuzeit: Studien zur Geschichte des öffentlichen Rechts*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1990; Maurizio Viroli, *From Politics to Reason of State. The Acquisition and Transformation of the Language of Politics 1250-1600*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992.

political standpoints based on Aristotle's *Politics*. Unlike the commentators on Aristotle's *Politics* who had to focus principally on interpreting the text of the *Politics*, an author who made use of the *Politics* for his own purposes and with his own agenda needed to adapt the *Politics* to his own time and aims<sup>6</sup>. In doing so, he might select some sections—theoretical assertions, historical examples—while dropping others and he might add or change the material he found in the *Politics*. As far as the *Política o razón de Estado* is concerned, it is precisely these kinds of strategies that resulted in the effects described below.

Pérez de Mesa drops that which has no relevance to an understanding of the Aristotelian theory of the state, or at least that which appears as not immediately related to that. In this sense, he leaves aside the entire Book II of the *Politics*, wherein Aristotle discusses the political regimes existing in his own time (Sparta, Crete and Carthage) and the regimes proposed in the works of previous authors (Plato, Phaleas of Chalcedon and Hippodamus of Miletus). Pérez de Mesa also discards Book VI, in which Aristotle adds further elements to the analysis of the different kinds of democracy and oligarchy. Most likely, Pérez de Mesa might have thought that Book VI does not bring anything that could not be found in Books III and IV<sup>7</sup>.

With regard to the remaining books of the *Politics*—whose content is followed and quoted to a smaller or greater extent—Pérez de Mesa relies completely on Aristotle. The analysis of the work's arrangement shows that Pérez de Mesa also follows the order of the books of the *Politics*. Exceptions to this order are few, one of the most remarkable being the discussion on the acquisition of wealth and on how it should be done—in which conditions such acquisition is good, necessary or useful, and in which conditions it is a misapplication of natural resources aiming to a goal which is a goal in itself and not a means towards a further goal. While in Aristotle's *Politics* this discussion occurs in Book I, Chapters 8 to 11, in Pérez de Mesa's work the acquisition of wealth is discussed in connection

<sup>6</sup> On the medieval reception of the *Politics* and more specifically on the commentary tradition on this work, see Lidia Lanza, 'Ei autem qui de politia considerat'. *Aristotele nel pensiero politico medievale*, FIDEM, Barcelona-Madrid 2013 and the bibliography quoted there.

<sup>7</sup> See Diego Pérez de Mesa, *Política*, cit., capp. XXI-XXII, pp. 134-139, where Diego Pérez de Mesa deals with the different species of democracy and oligarchy basing his statements on Books III and IV of the *Politics*.

with the best political regime (which in turn is addressed in Book VII of the *Politics*)<sup>8</sup>.

These kinds of changes are not problematic: after all, a similar rearrangement is common practice among all authors who rely and make use of an authoritative text but not for the purpose of producing a commentary on it. Moreover, in this specific case, namely that the acquisition of wealth is not discussed in relation with the topics of Book I but rather with Book VII of the *Politics*, the displacement is even less problematic, because in the *Politics* the discussion on the material conditions required for establishing the best possible polity entails a discussion on the population (on its number and on the disposition of the citizens) and on the region in which the regime is to be established (namely, on the size and features of the land). The fact that a given territory falls short of all that is necessary to the population of the best polity implies that the city needs to promote trade and exchange activities. This explains why the study of the best polity involves a consideration of issues connected with the acquisition of wealth, risks and benefits of trade and exchange activities, and the role of wealth in such activities.

However, apart from this and other minor changes, Pérez de Mesa's work follows the order of Aristotle's *Politics*. But beyond this closeness between the arrangement of the *Politics* and that of the *Política o razón de Estado*, it is apparent that for the main tenets of his work Pérez de Mesa relies not only on Aristotle, but also on "Aristotelianism". I mean Aristotelianism and not solely Aristotle, because the fact that the structure of the *Política o razón de Estado* is based on the *Politics* does not tell us of itself that Pérez de Mesa draws directly on the text of the *Politics*; Pérez de Mesa might have used an intermediate text, through which lens he might have read the *Politics*. In this case, we should ask which the intermediate text or texts are and to which extent they shape the reading of Pérez de Mesa. There is a more or less implicit scholarly position that the *Politics* was accessed directly by its medieval and early modern readers; in fact, numerous studies dedicated to the assessment of the impact of the *Politics* fail to consider the importance that the commentary tradition on the *Politics* might have had. It is beyond any doubt that, during the Middle Ages and at least until the end of the sixteenth century, the most important commentary on the *Politics* was the thirteenth-century commentary started by

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 305-312.

Aquinas and finished by Peter of Auvergne. This commentary was far more influential than the commentary produced by Albert the Great. It was quoted, reproduced or used, explicitly or not, by later commentators such as Guido Vernani da Rimini, Walter Burley and Nicole Oresme. It was also extensively used by Marsilius of Padua and William of Ockham. In the Renaissance, the Aquinas–Peter of Auvergne commentary was greatly used by authors from two geographical areas in which Pérez de Mesa made his career: Spain and Italy. By way of example, it was used by Alfonso de Cartagena in his moral works and by Pedro de Osma and Fernando de Roa, two fifteenth-century Salamanca professors who produced a significant commentary on the *Politics*. In Italy, the Aquinas–Peter of Auvergne commentary was the source of later commentaries, such as that by Donato Acciaiuoli, written in Florence between 1472 and 1474, and that by the Dominican Crisostomo Javelli, master in the *studium* of Bologna<sup>9</sup>. Furthermore, beyond either the university commentary tradition or the practice of teaching in the *studia* of religious orders, it was also used, for instance, in a variety of works in vernacular which rearranged the text of the *Politics* and which were aimed at broader audiences, beyond higher-education readership<sup>10</sup>. The Aquinas–Peter of Auvergne commentary was even used in the work *Trattati o vero discorsi sopra gli ottimi reggimenti delle repubbliche antiche e moderne*, composed by the Florentine author Bartolomeo Cavalcanti. Intended to sustain republican ideals, this work can be defined as a mid-term between a rearrangement of and a commentary on the *Politics* and on other ancient authors, such as Plato and Polybius<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> On the influence of this commentary, see Lidia Lanza, “The *Scriptum super III-VIII libros Politicorum*. Some Episodes of its Fortune until the Early Renaissance”, in Christoph Flüeler – Lidia Lanza – Marco Toste (eds.), *Peter of Auvergne. University Master of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin – New York 2015, pp. 255-319.

<sup>10</sup> This is the case of the works written in vernacular by Bernardo Segni, Lodovico Dolce, Antonio Scaino, Jason Denores, Felice Figliucci, Nikola Vitos Gučetić (Niccolò Vito di Gozze), Francesco Piccolomini and Panfilo Persico, produced in Italy between 1549 and 1627. On these works, see Marco Toste, “Evolution within Tradition: The Vernacular Works on Aristotle’s *Politics* in Sixteenth-Century Italy”, in Gianluca Briguglia and Thomas Ricklin (eds.), *Thinking Politics in the Vernacular. From the Middle Ages to the Renaissance*, Academic Press Fribourg, Fribourg (Suisse) 2011, pp. 189-211.

<sup>11</sup> On Cavalcanti, see Lidia Lanza, “Firenze e la lezione degli antichi: i *Trattati* di Bartolomeo Cavalcanti”, in Briguglia and Ricklin (eds.), *Thinking Politics in the*

Pérez de Mesa might have used any of these texts in his reading of the *Politics*. However, of all these authors, he refers explicitly to only two: Thomas Aquinas and Bartolomeo Cavalcanti. Cavalcanti is quoted just once, in a short remark on the differences between Aristotle's and Plato's views regarding the parts which every state necessarily consists of. Despite its brevity, this mention suffices to assert that Cavalcanti is one of Pérez de Mesa's sources<sup>12</sup>. Significantly, Cavalcanti and Pérez de Mesa share some similarities in their approach to Aristotle's *Politics*<sup>13</sup>. By contrast, the Aquinas–Peter of Auvergne commentary plays a major role in Pérez de Mesa's text. It is not merely quoted: it is used as *the* essential tool to understand Aristotle's text.

A clarification is necessary here: Pérez de Mesa quotes the commentary just mentioned under the name of Thomas Aquinas and he never refers to Peter of Auvergne. This is because, as is well known, the whole commentary was printed, from its first printing edition in 1492 and in all successive editions, under the name of Aquinas. Therefore, the name of Peter disappeared as the author of the commentary on the greater part of Book III and on Books IV up to VIII<sup>14</sup>. If we recall that Pérez de Mesa disregards the second book of the *Politics*

---

*Vernacular*, cit., pp. 167-188. The critical edition of Cavalcanti's work is found in: Bartolomeo Cavalcanti, *Trattati o vero Discorsi sopra gli ottimi reggimenti delle repubbliche antiche e moderne*, ed. Enrica Fabbri, Franco Angeli, Milano 2007.

<sup>12</sup> The reference to Cavalcanti occurs in the passage in which Pérez de Mesa asserts that the judges must be included among the necessary parts of the state. For Pérez de Mesa, the reason that Socrates via Plato had adduced for their exclusion—a reason mentioned by Cavalcanti—is not convincing: "La sexta parte son los jueces, porque, aunque Sócrates en la *República* de Platón no los pone, no se puede excusar con la salva de Cavalcanti y outros autores"; cf. Diego Pérez de Mesa, *Política*, cit., cap. XXX, pp. 189-190. The passage of Cavalcanti referred to occurs at *Trattato terzodecimo*; cf. Bartolomeo Cavalcanti, *Trattati o vero Discorsi*, cit., p. 202.

<sup>13</sup> Both works can be considered a sort of condensed commentary on *Politics*, both use Peter of Auvergne's commentary as *the* commentary and both focus principally on Books IV-V of the *Politics*. Bartolomeo Cavalcanti draws on these books in his attempt to explain why republicanism in Florence came to an end and gave place to the authoritarian rule of Cosimo I de' Medici; by contrast, Pérez de Mesa has before him a political reality in which all countries aim to expand their boundaries; therefore, they need, on the one hand, to block revolutions and internal seditions (even cultural diversity is seen as a risk to the state's stability) and, on the other hand, to avoid any possible attack from other countries.

<sup>14</sup> In their *Préface* to the critical edition of Thomas Aquinas' commentary on Aristoteles's *Politics*, which covers only Books I-III.8 of the Aristotelian text, Antoine Dondaine and Louis-Jacques Bataillon carefully investigate the different



and that he only touches on a few topics from the first book, namely the definition of the state, the parts that constitute the household and the political community, the naturalness of human association and the definition of slave<sup>15</sup>, then we can conclude that he draws far more on Peter of Auvergne's commentary than on Aquinas'.

Pérez de Mesa quotes explicitly Peter's commentary (under the name of Thomas Aquinas) just a few times (the work's index records just six entries). However, a comparison between the two works offers a totally different picture, since it is through the commentary of Peter that Pérez de Mesa accesses Aristotle's *Politics*. Evidence of this is found with regard to both the content and the arrangement of this content: Peter's commentary supplies the philosophical substantiations found in Pérez de Mesa's text and the presentation of Aristotle's lines of reasoning is made according to the arrangement made by Peter. What is more, Pérez de Mesa reproduces word by word entire sections of Peter of Auvergne's work without referencing it. Here I shall point out just a few examples of this use of Peter's commentary.

Chapter 14 of the first part of *Política o razón de Estado* deals with the end which forms the aim of civil laws, and with the practice of ostracism<sup>16</sup>. This chapter is a representative sample of the multiple ways in which Pérez de Mesa uses Peter's commentary, since it is almost completely made of assertions taken from Chapter 12 of Book III of Peter of Auvergne's commentary. Only one assertion is

---

editorial phases which Aquinas' commentary passed through (their examination includes the commentary of Peter of Auvergne which covers Books III-VIII); cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia libri Politicorum. Tabula libri Ethicorum*, ed. Antoine Dondaine and Louis-Jacques Bataillon (*Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P.M. edita*, t. 48), ad Sanctam Sabinam, Roma 1971: *Préface*, pp. A15-A21. For many of their assertions they draw on the previous investigation carried out by Conor Martin; cf. Conor Martin, "The Vulgate Text of Aquinas's Commentary on Aristotle's *Politics*", *Dominican Studies* 5 (1952) 35-64. These studies have shown that numerous passages of the Aquinas-Peter of Auvergne commentary have been suppressed or modified according to humanist standards from the 1492 edition onwards. The edition usually used by scholarship depends on these earlier editions and for this reason it is not reliable (Sancti Thomae Aquinatis *In octo libros Politicorum Aristotelis expositio*, ed. Raimondo M. Spiazzi, Marietti, Torino - Roma 1951, <sup>2</sup>1966). I have been preparing the critical edition of Peter's commentary which will appear under the title Petrus de Alvernia, *Scriptum super III-VIII libros Politicorum*, ed. Lidia Lanza, Reichert Verlag, Wiesbaden 2018. All the references to Peter's commentary are based on my edition. However, since it is still forthcoming, I shall indicate between brackets the corresponding page and numbers of Spiazzi's edition.

<sup>15</sup> Diego Pérez de Mesa, *Política*, cit., capp. I-IV, pp. 11-36.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, cap. XIV, pp. 90-100.

presented as a direct quotation, while all the others are reproduced as if they were conclusions drawn by Pérez de Mesa himself. The topic debated in this chapter regards the case of the most excellent man who exceeds all others in virtue and the related questions as to whether such a man should be elected as ruler of the political community and whether such a man should be included among the citizens. Before presenting his own solution, Peter of Auvergne states that a man who exceeds all others in virtue must not be considered a citizen because such a man is likely to be almost a god. In fact, he can reach a degree of moral virtue which is more divine than human; to substantiate this, Peter makes use of the Aristotelian notion of heroic virtue found in Chapter 1 of Book VIII of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1145a18-30). For Peter,

someone can attain to perfect virtue and act for himself in two ways: either through the common condition of human beings, or beyond the common manner or condition of human beings. This comes about through heroic virtue. Virtue is heroic when someone, by means of moral and intellectual virtue, attains the operation of any virtue that is above the common human condition. This is something divine because it comes to exist in a human by means of something divine, which is the intellect; so the Philosopher here says. Such a man, so surpassing all others, he says, exists as a god<sup>17</sup>.

If such a man exists, surpassing all others in virtue,

he should not to be driven out of the city, or transported elsewhere: for this is against reason, because he is the most virtuous man [...]. Nor should he be appointed to the ruling office as others are, so that he would rule at one time and not at another. It would be as if we wanted Jove to rule at one time and not at another, and this is

<sup>17</sup> I have taken the English translation of this passage from *Medieval Political Philosophy. A Sourcebook (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)*, ed. by Joshua Parens and Joseph C. Macfarland, 1<sup>st</sup> edition edited by Ralph Lerner and Muhsin Mahdi, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY – London, 2011, p. 302. The translation is based on my forthcoming edition: “aliquis potest attingere ad uirtutem perfectam et actum ipsius dupliciter: uno modo secundum statum commune humanum; alio modo ultra commune modum uel statum humanum: hoc autem fit per uirtutem eroycam. Est autem uirtus heroyca secundum quam aliquis per uirtutem moralem et intellectualem attingit ad operationem cuiuslibet uirtutis supra commune modum hominum; hoc autem est aliquod esse diuinum, quia fit per aliquid diuinum in homine existens, quod est intellectus: sic loquitur hic Philosophus. Talem enim hominem, et sic excedentem omnes alios, dicit esse sicut deum” (Petrus de Alvernia, *Scriptum*, cit., III, cap. 12; cf. Spiazzi <sup>2</sup>1966, p. 165, nr. 463).

ridiculous. And thus what is left, when such a man is the best, what is just and worthy, is for all to obey him joyfully so that he would be king; or, if there were several, that they would be kings and rulers, not sometimes so and sometimes not, but always<sup>18</sup>.

Pérez de Mesa repeats this line of reasoning, but with no reference to his source<sup>19</sup>.

There is still another way in which, in this same chapter, Pérez de Mesa draws on Peter, namely by using his terminology. Like other commentators on the *Politics*, such as Aquinas, Peter makes extensive use of the distinction between what is good or true *simpliciter* and what is so only *secundum quid*. Expressed in these terms, such a distinction is absent from the text of the *Politics*, but it became the tool medieval authors used to resolve many controversial issues found in the text of Aristotle<sup>20</sup>. Pérez de Mesa employs this distinction with the same purpose. This occurs in the chapter devoted to the definition of citizen<sup>21</sup> and in the account of

<sup>18</sup> *Medieval Political Philosophy*, cit., p. 304. "Non enim dicendum est quod debeat expelli a ciuitate et transferri ad alium locum: hoc enim est contra rationem, ex quo est optimus, quare nullo modo est expellendus; iterum, non est assumendus ad principatum sicut alii, ut quandoque principetur quandoque non: simile enim esset ac si uellemus principari Iouem aliquando et aliquando non: hoc enim derisorium est. Et ideo relinquitur quod, cum talis sit optimus, quod dignum et iustum est quod omnes sibi letanter obediunt et ut sit rex uel, si sint tales plures, quod sint reges et principantes, non aliquando sic aliquando non, sed semper" (Petrus de Alvernia, *Scriptum*, cit., III, cap. 12; cf. Spiazzi <sup>2</sup>1966, p. 166, nr. 473).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>20</sup> This occurs for instance with regard to the notion of prudence. The commentators on the *Politics* came to establish a *prudentia secundum quid* which may be detached from the moral virtues, involves wicked acts and therefore differs from the prudence *simpliciter*, which is always necessarily connected to the moral virtues. On this, see Marco Toste, "Virtue and the City: The Virtues of the Ruler and the Citizen in the Medieval Reception of the *Politics*", in István P. Bejczy and Cary J. Nederman (eds.), *Princely Virtues in the Middle Ages, 1200-1500*, Brepols, Turnhout 2007, pp. 75-98.

<sup>21</sup> Diego Pérez de Mesa, *Política*, cit., cap. V, p. 39: "[...] todos estos sobredichos absolutamente [= los muchachos y las mujeres y los que por alguna enfermedad o por decrepitos o faltos de juicio no pueden exercitar algún cargo público] no son ciudadanos sino *secundum quid*, esto es, con adición de alguna palabra restrictiva, como ciudadano imperfecto y ciudadano en el nombre". For the corresponding text of Peter of Auvergne see Book III, cap. 1. Peter's first six chapters are not included in Spiazzi's edition; they are edited in: *The Commentary of Peter of Auvergne on Aristotle's 'Politics'. The Inedited Part: Book III, less. I-VI. Introduction and Critical Text*, ed. Gundisalvus M. Grech, Desclée - Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, Rome 1967 (see p. 78, ll. 1-4).

the justice which is specific to each form of government: in some regimes there is a justice *secundum quid* and not *simpliciter* good; in this kind of regime ostracism of the most virtuous man may be beneficial in order to preserve the state, even though this procedure is not *simpliciter* good.

Still in the same chapter, there are other implicit references to Peter's commentary. In the closing lines of the chapter, Pérez de Mesa replies to some possible objections regarding the lordship of the most excellent man. Should such a man hold power alone, all other citizens would feel disregarded (*resterían sin gozar de aquella honra*, in Latin *dishonorati*), since they would not have access to the highest public office (note that the word *honor/timé* is the term used in the Greek text to denote both the political office and the honour that anyone holding such an office deserves). However, for Pérez de Mesa, such a risk does not occur, since the political regime in which the most excellent man holds the highest office is the best political regime, which is constituted according to moral virtues. In such a regime, therefore, everyone recognises his own moral rank and the honours that he deserves according to his own merit and therefore accepts that a superior man may receive a higher honour. In this sense, no man is dishonoured. This line of reasoning is taken almost verbatim from Peter of Auvergne and again silently: both the objections and its solutions are given as considerations of Pérez de Mesa himself<sup>22</sup>.

In other cases, Pérez de Mesa approaches the text of Peter in a different way. On occasion, he explicitly mentions Peter (or rather Aquinas) and on a number of occasions to criticise him.

<sup>22</sup> Diego Pérez de Mesa, *Política*, cit., cap. XIV, p. 100: "Y tampoco repugna que teniendo el supremo gobierno uno solo, los otros todos siendo libres y hábiles a la pública administración, resterían sin gozar de aquella honra; porque se responde a esto que con la república bien ordenada, la cual se gobierna con virtud y todos usan de ella, cada caso se mide prudentemente y se contenta con aquel cargo y honra que se debe a su grado, y gusta que el que tiene más altos quilates de merecimientos goce de mayores dignidades y honras sin que en eso haya fastidio, envidia notable o quejas". Peter of Auvergne expressed this idea as follows: "Nec ualet quod secundo obiciebatur, quod, si unus uel plures principarentur, quod omnes alii essent inonorati, quia in politia recte ordinata quilibet diligit statum et gradum proprium et gradum alterius, et ideo uult honorem sibi secundum gradum suum et uult alii honorem secundum gradum illius, nec uult sibi honorem alterius. Et ideo, si sit unus excellens omnes in uirtute, omnes uolunt sibi honorem qui debetur ei, et ideo non sunt inonorati, quia quilibet habet honorem qui debetur ei" (Petrus de Alvernia, *Scriptum*, cit., III, cap. 12; cf. Spiazzi <sup>2</sup>1966, p. 167, nr. 473).

This is noticeable once again in the same chapter, where he deals with the case of the most excellent man and his role in the political community. Pérez de Mesa refers to Peter's commentary when he recalls the objection raised by Aristotle: if such a man shall have a supreme and perpetual rule, then dissension may arise in the city, because all others, excluded from access to lordship, may feel disregarded. This is in fact one of the main causes of any dissension<sup>23</sup>. Pérez de Mesa retells Peter of Auvergne's solution, which occurs in a lengthy *notabile* of Peter's commentary where Peter argues in favour of kingship as the best political regime. Peter reasons that kingship is the regime which "comes nearer to natural lordship [*principatus naturalis*] and to the lordship of the universe [*principatus universi*]", because both animals and the universe are governed by one ruler: the animal body is ruled by the heart, because it is from the heart that the entire body and each of its individual parts receives its strength; likewise, in the universe there is only one ruler, on which the entire universe depends<sup>24</sup>.

Referring to this line of reasoning, Pérez de Mesa acknowledges his source, but states that Peter's argument is useless. It is useless to recall the organisation of the universe to substantiate the superiority of one man over others, he affirms, since everybody intuiti-

<sup>23</sup> Aristotle's *Politics* III, 1281a32-34. Peter of Auvergne underscores the risk of upheavals when the highest honour is assigned to a few or to a single man: "non expedit unum uirtuosum ualde principari, quia, si unus ualde uirtuosus domineatur, plures erunt inhonorati, <quia priuantur> honore principatus. Sed hoc est inconueniens: ex hoc enim sequuntur dissensiones in ciuitate et turbationes, sicut dictum est" (Petrus de Alvernia, *Scriptum*, cit., III, cap. 8; cf. Spiazzi <sup>2</sup>1966, p. 147, nr. 420). Some lines earlier, Peter had underlined that same risk with reference to the rulership of the virtuous men, be they many or just a few: the cause that triggers dissension is always the disregard felt by those excluded from the public offices (= *honours*) and, consequently, from the honour which follows from these offices (= *honor*): "si soli uirtuosi principentur, omnes alii erunt inhonorati, quia non attingunt ad honorem principatus, quia principatus honores sunt: sunt enim *premium uirtutis*, et hoc est *honor*, sicut dicitur primo et 4° Ethicorum; ergo qui non attingit ad principatum non attingit ad honorem. Principantibus igitur uirtuosis, remanent alii inhonorati; sed hoc est inconueniens. Est enim hoc causa dissensionis: omnes enim appetunt honorem naturaliter, propter quod appetunt honorari a bonis et sapientibus, qui melius et rectius possunt iudicare. Si ergo auferatur eis honor, sequitur dissensio et multa mala in ciuitate. Quare non est iustum uirtuosos dominari" (Petrus de Alvernia, *Scriptum*, cit., *ibid.*; cf. Spiazzi <sup>2</sup>1966, p. 147, nr. 419).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, III, cap. 12; cf. Spiazzi <sup>2</sup>1966, p. 167, nr. 473. Diego Pérez de Mesa, *Política*, cap. XIV, pp. 96-97.

vely acknowledges and tacitly gives consent (*por instinto y tacito consentimiento*) whenever someone surpasses others in one domain, and this holds for every human activity. It is no coincidence, says Pérez de Mesa, that Aristotle is regarded as *the* Philosopher par excellence, just as in astrology the prominence is given to Ptolemy, in medicine to Hippocrates and Galen, in poetry to Homer and Virgil, in military art to the Romans, and in knowledge and skill in arms and duelling to Carranza—here Pérez de Mesa mentions one example from his contemporary reality<sup>25</sup>. For the same reason, says Pérez de Mesa, the men who reached the highest degree of moral virtue are venerated as saints, by common people and kings alike, irrespective of whether they have or have not been canonised by the Pope<sup>26</sup>.

To sum up: for Pérez de Mesa, excellence is self-evident in any kind of activity and is immediately acknowledged. The same holds for the city: the man who is superior prevails and on account of his prominence ought to be made the supreme ruler<sup>27</sup>: there is no need to substantiate this superiority by providing sound arguments and in this way turning it into a philosophical question, when it is a simple matter-of-fact question.

### “El rey ideal de Aristóteles”

This slight criticism does not change the fact that for Pérez de Mesa, as well as for Peter of Auvergne, monarchy is the best political regime. This criticism is rather an indicator of the gap between Pérez de Mesa's and Peter of Auvergne's conceptions of ruler. As the most important commentator of the medieval commentary tradition on Aristotle's *Politics* (concerning Books III-VIII), Peter of Auvergne defends monarchy as the most perfect form of government, provided

<sup>25</sup> This is Jerónimo Sánchez de Carranza, whose work on fencing and military art, entitled *De la filosofía de las armas y de su destreza y la aggression y defensa cristiana*, was issued in 1569.

<sup>26</sup> Diego Pérez de Mesa, *Política*, cit., cap. XIV, pp. 96-100.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99: “De manera que por instinto y consentimiento común de todas las gentes la virtud eminente tiene el imperio, y todos los demás grados inferiores de ella se le sujetan de suyo, la obedecen y reverencian. Demás de esto, en todo género de cosas, lo que es más levantado y excelente y más llegado a la suprema perfección de aquel género gobierna y rige todos los inferiores grados, como fácilmente se prueba [...]”. See *ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

that one key criterion is met: *if* there is a man who has reached the highest degree of moral perfection, then he should be made king; if not, another political regime should be adopted. Which kind of regime (*forma*) depends upon the material components (*materia*) the legislator has at his disposal—the degree of virtue of the citizens and a complex variety of cultural, historical, geographical, and even climatic circumstances.

The king depicted in Peter's commentary, as well as in the bulk of the medieval commentary tradition on the *Politics*, implies an exceptional degree of moral virtue. Precisely for this reason it risks remaining an empty class: being almost a divine man—Peter uses the word *semideus*—his perfection proves almost unattainable in reality and comes to be perceived as a theoretical fiction. Such a difficulty is already tackled in Giles of Rome's mirror for prince; writing at almost the same time as Peter of Auvergne, Giles copes with this difficulty and portrays the king's virtue with more realistic strokes<sup>28</sup>. Pérez de Mesa stresses this difficulty even more than Giles of Rome: his pragmatic attitude of grounding his affirmations in experience and history leads him to characterise the "Aristotelian king" as completely unrealistic. In discussing the third cause of the conservation of hereditary monarchies, which is identified with the attempt to make the heirs acquainted with a ministerial and not with a patrimonial conception of kingly power and which entails ruling in conformity with the law, Pérez de Mesa argues that any attempt to raise the king's heirs to the highest degree of virtue and to provide them with all the means to reach Aristotle's ideal king is useless, because such an ideal cannot be achieved, even if one lived for 200 years<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> On this, see Diego Quagliani, "Regimen ad populum e regimen regis in Egidio Romano e Bartolo da Sassoferrato", *Bullettino dell'Istituto storico italiano per il Medioevo e Archivio Muratoriano* 87 (1978) 201-228. I have underlined this aspect of Giles of Rome's conception of the king's virtue in Lidia Lanza, "I commenti medievali alla *Politica* e la riflessione sullo stato in Francia (secoli XIII-XIV)", in Ead., 'Ei autem qui de politica considerat', cit., pp. 115-137 (see esp. pp. 136-137). This characterisation becomes apparent in the section in which Giles discusses the means and stratagems which, according to Aristotle, tyrants should use in order to preserve their power, irrespective of their moral goodness (these are the so-called *cautelae tyrannicae*). See Aegidii Romani *De regimine principum libri III*, per Fr. Hieronymum Samaritanum Senensem, apud Bartholomaeum Zannettum, Romae 1607, III.2, cap. 14, p. 488.

<sup>29</sup> Diego Pérez de Mesa, *Política*, cap. XXXIV, p. 228: "Y no es necesario lo que hacen muchos políticos de este tiempo, los cuales con doctrina pretenden hacer los hijos de rey sumamente prudentes, sabios, justos, cautos, inteligentes, doctos,

Although the king portrayed in Pérez de Mesa's text draws on many elements of the medieval Aristotelian tradition, such a portrayal owes much to the historical and political reality in which Pérez de Mesa lives. Unsurprisingly enough, some of the main concerns addressed in the *Política o razón de Estado* are related to such questions as how can the state last, how can it get stronger by expanding its borders without risking its stability or its very existence, how can it succeed in facing confederations of small states, and how can it strengthen itself within its borders by averting or annulling the effects of contrary forces (among such forces, religion is the most deleterious).

Clearly, in both the medieval commentary tradition on the *Politics* and in Pérez de Mesa, stability is the foremost aim to be pursued<sup>30</sup>. Thus, for both Pérez de Mesa and the medieval commentators, the aim of a good ruler is to ensure the conservation of the state rather than to increase his power at any cost. However, to assure such an aim, Pérez de Mesa considers that the perfect and ideal ruler described in Peter of Auvergne's commentary is completely impractical.

It is by examining the different features the two authors focus on when describing the ideal ruler that we can observe the gap between their visions. For Peter of Auvergne, reason and will are indistinguishable in the ideal ruler, since his will cannot be but coincident with his reason; by contrast Pérez de Mesa describes the ruler's will merely in terms of personal will. Accordingly, while for Peter the ideal ruler is as the guardian of justice, so that turning into him is the same as turning to living justice (*iustum animatum*)<sup>31</sup>, for Pérez de Mesa appealing to the ruler's will entails the

---

valientes, y con tantos otros adminículos y juntas que vengan a ser el rey ideal de Aristóteles; lo cual moralmente hablando es imposible hacer en un muchacho que apenas entiende lo que significan los nombres de aquellas cosas y es imposible poder imprimir todas aquellas perfecciones en un hombre, aunque viva doscientos años".

<sup>30</sup> It should be noted that Pérez de Mesa does not neglect happiness as the aim to be achieved in the political community. Significantly, the chapters on happiness in the *Política o razón de Estado* hinges on Peter's commentary. See Diego Pérez de Mesa, *Política*, capp. XLIV-XLVI, pp. 259-276 and the corresponding pages of Peter of Auvergne's commentary (Petrus de Alvernia, *Scriptum*, cit., VII, capp. 1-2; cf. Spiazzi <sup>2</sup>1966, pp. 337-350).

<sup>31</sup> "Et dicit <Aristoteles> quod officium regis est esse custodem iustitiae. Et vult custos esse iusti. Et ideo recurrere ad regem est recurrere ad *iustum animatum*. Et hoc apparet quia rex intendit bonum commune custodire et servare. Hoc autem non potest nisi sit custos iusti" (Petrus de Alvernia, *Scriptum*, cit., V, cap. 8; cf. Spiazzi <sup>2</sup>1966, p. 284, nr. 849).



risk of relying on personal impulse and unpredictable decision<sup>32</sup>. The ruler's will must be regulated and restricted by the laws, this being the sole way to safeguard the stability of the state. Even in the case the king were a stone, if he would abide by the laws he would not jeopardise the preservation of his state<sup>33</sup>. Peter of Auvergne's ideal ruler rules over his state not like a private person, but according to reason; on the contrary, Pérez de Mesa's ruler is just a private person, unable to rule by himself: only if his actions and decisions rely on the State Council (*Consejo de Estado*) and he forms a unity with the council, will he be able to rule in conformity with justice and equity. The State Council, and not the prince, is the supreme authority, because the power of the State Council is the only power whose action does not consider only one or few parts of the state, but all of them together.

As noted earlier, Peter does not conceal that it is hard to find the most virtuous man, but he is more concerned in stressing that a particular *matter* needs to be receptive to a particular constitutional *form*<sup>34</sup>. For Pérez de Mesa such a man simply does not exist: the perfect ruler of the Aristotelian tradition represents an abstract, unattainable ideal. Yet, while such perfection does not exist in one single man alone, it nevertheless exists in reality: it occurs when the ruler acts together with the State Council. Pérez de Mesa thus transfers to this supreme power what Peter of Auvergne had assigned to the single perfectly virtuous ruler: *if* the ruler acts in concord with the State Council, he becomes the Aristotelian ideal and divine ruler, having all the perfections and virtues suitable to

<sup>32</sup> Diego Pérez de Mesa, *Política*, cit., cap. XXXII, pp. 212-213: "Y como cada príncipe es de su humor y juzga de las cosas diferentemente, nace que lo que hoy se condena mañana se aprueba por bueno o se disimula. De lo qual nacen grandes inconvenientes".

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, cap. XXXIV, p. 228: "En suma, aunque el rey sea una piedra, como la que representaba en un carro al Conde Fernán González de Castilla, con que gobierne con las leyes de su reino y no quiera tomarse más dominio, se conservará en su Estado".

<sup>34</sup> "[...] ad legislatorem, cuius est bonum ciuitatis procurare, pertinet considerare ipsam ciuitatem et quantum ad fortitudinem que est ex situ et quantum ad ordinationem politie, et etiam modum hominum, quem habent ex naturali inclinatione, et aliam communicationem eorum ad inuicem et alios, scilicet ad quam uitam ordinabiles sunt ex natura: omnibus istis pensatis, siue sit optima simpliciter siue optima hiis, et tunc ordinare leges et statuta per que poterunt attingere ad hanc optimam uitam et felicitatem conuenientes sibi" (Petrus de Alvernia, *Scriptum*, cit., VII, cap. 2; cf. Spiazzi <sup>2</sup>1966 p. 347, nr. 1073).

his heroic majesty; for this reason he deserves to be obeyed, loved and respected by his subjects<sup>35</sup>.

In this way, Pérez de Mesa subverts the medieval distinction between *regimen regale* and *regimen politicum*: he does not say it explicitly, but by framing kingship in terms of rule of law, he identifies it with a *regimen politicum*. This does not mean that he rejects Aristotle and medieval Aristotelianism, because here he is simply proceeding as numerous authors did before him: he is merely adjusting the Aristotelian text to his own purposes<sup>36</sup>.

### The Highest Risk for the Stability of the State: "tentar novedades"

In Chapter 54, Pérez de Mesa offers his definition of reason of state, which for him consists "in ruling according to justice over subjects who submit themselves voluntarily to the ruler, according to the form of government they follow and they have chosen to adopt"<sup>37</sup>. Simple as this definition may seem, it gives rise to some questions. First, what does it mean "to rule according to justice"; second, what is the sense of the specification "according to the form of government they follow and they have chosen to adopt"? The answer to these questions can be found, once again, in the commentary tradition on the *Politics*. Actually, these two assertions can be associated, because as Aristotle underlines in Chapter 9 of Book V each form of government has its own specific justice. As noted earlier, the medieval commentators made sense of this by

<sup>35</sup> Diego Pérez de Mesa, *Política*, cit., cap. LIV, p. 314: "Pero el Consejo de Estado es general y superior a todos, porque no mira una sola parte de aquéllas sino todas juntas. Y así este Consejo es el ánima del príncipe supremo que debe saber todo lo que el príncipe sabe y todo lo que ignora, sin el cual Consejo el príncipe sería como un hombre particular inepto al gobierno. Pero con este Consejo, siendo el que debe, el príncipe viene a ser aquel rey divino o ideal de Aristóteles de virtudes perfectas y majestad heroica, digno de ser de todos obedecido, amado y reverenciado".

<sup>36</sup> As is well known, the translation of the *Politics* into Latin gave rise to a tradition of thought which was not homogeneous, but which integrated different elements and which originated contrasting views. For instance, the *Politics* was used to support kingship but also the republic as the best regime. On this, see Gianfranco Fioravanti, "La *Politica* aristotelica nel Medioevo: linee di una ricezione", *Rivista di storia della filosofia* 52 (1997) 17-29.

<sup>37</sup> Diego Pérez de Mesa, *Política*, cit., cap. LIV, p. 313.

using the distinction between *simpliciter* and *secundum quid*. The criteria employed to allocate goods within the community and the aims specific to a given form of government may not be *simpliciter* good, but they are still just *secundum quid*. Each form of government has therefore a form of justice—either *secundum quid* or *simpliciter*—and thus each form has its own reason of state too. In this regard, Pérez de Mesa follows the Italian authors who wrote on the reason of state.

As we have seen, for Pérez de Mesa the ideal monarchy depicted by Peter of Auvergne is unattainable. This along with the assumption that different regimes may seek for different kinds of realisation of justice explains why stability becomes dominant in Pérez de Mesa's text (and also in the commentaries on the *Politics*). In this sense, it is unsurprising that he concentrates on Book V of the *Politics*, the book in which Aristotle examines all the causes that drive the parts of the commonwealth (whether individual or social groups) to dissension. Just like other authors of the reason of state, Pérez de Mesa stresses that the major threat for the political community is the introduction of novelties (*novedades*): it does not matter whether those innovations are good or bad; in any case they introduce an element which can potentially subvert the order of the state. In this regard, the ruler should never concede privileges to courts or to any other group or guild, because it may bring disparities; furthermore, the ruler must not allow that a social group or corporation acquire too much power<sup>38</sup>; if this happens, it is necessary to find another group that may serve as counterweight, because only in this way will it be possible to avoid a situation in which either group may cause *novedades*. Pérez de Mesa adds here examples from his own time: the balance between Franciscans and Dominicans and the equilibrium between the Genovese families (the Marquis Spinola raised by the king of Spain in order to counterbalance the power of the Doria family)<sup>39</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., cap. XXXI, p. 205: "A este capítulo de la negligencia se puede reducir asimismo el poco advertimiento que algunas veces tienen los principes en conceder ciertos privilegios a diferentes tribunales, colegios o comunidades, por causa de los cuales privilegios aquellos tribunales se encuentran y vienen a inquietar y causar escándalos y tumultos importantes en el pueblo, con que viniendo a las armas dan ocasión de pésimas consecuencias, máxime cuando el Estado o algunos poderosos esperan semejante ocasión para tentar novedades".

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., cap. XXXII, pp. 219-220: "Si alguna comunidad por su grande potencia se ensoberbeciere y no procediere bien, se le deben ir quitando los favores y honras que tiene o suele recibir, y con ellas se ha de levantar y contrapesar otra comunidad o parcialidad para que ni la una ni la otra puedan con la grande potencia causar

The exhortation that the ruler ought not to introduce innovations is found in Botero's *Della ragion di stato*<sup>40</sup> and runs through the works influenced by Botero<sup>41</sup>. Pérez de Mesa shares many elements with some of the treatises of the reason of state, principally with those written by Pietro Andrea Canonieri, Scipione Chiaramonti, Lodovico Zuccolo and Lodovico Settala. This is because, as in Pérez de Mesa's text, the structure of the works of these authors owes a great deal to the *Politics*. Pérez de Mesa had possibly one (or more) of these works upon his desk and might have drawn on it just as he drew on Peter of Auvergne's commentary. Thus far no scholar has carried out a comparative analysis between Pérez de Mesa and those authors. It is clear in any case that what I have shown here with regard to the *Política o razón de Estado* should be extended to the texts of those authors, namely that they also need to be studied against the background of the commentaries on the *Politics*.

## Conclusion

It is not easy to characterise the work of Pérez de Mesa: is it a reason-of-state treatise, a sort of commentary on the *Politics*, or a sort of abridgment of it? Irrespective of our characterisation, the *Política o razón de Estado sacada de Aristóteles* can be fully considered as an example of how the *Politics* and its most successful commentary, written in the Middle Ages by Aquinas and Peter of Auvergne, were received. On account of the evidence provided in this article, the connection that scholars have established between the end of "Political Aristotelianism" and the emergence of reason of state should be redefined, or at least qualified. This is not to suggest that works such as the *Política o razón de Estado* are a mere continuation of the medieval commentaries on the *Politics*; it suffices to recall that Pérez de Mesa has to deal with issues that are totally absent from the text of the *Politics* (take the case of religion as the

novedades. Con levantar el rey de España al Marqués Espínola se ha templado y contrapesado la demasiada potencia de la familia de los Dorias, sospechosa a genoveses. El decreto de Gregorio XV en la cosa de la Concepción ha oprimido y contrapesado a los dominicos con los franciscanos".

<sup>40</sup> It is precisely the title of chapter 9 of the second part of Giovanni Botero, *Della ragion di stato libri dieci*, in Venetia: appresso i Gioliti, 1589, p. 72.

<sup>41</sup> On this, see Gianfranco Borrelli, *Non far novità. Alle radici della cultura italiana della conservazione politica*, Bibliopolis, Napoli 2000.

most dangerous cause of sedition; the problem of heresy; or the controversies opposing the different religious orders). What is important to stress here is that in the early seventeenth century Pérez de Mesa still drew on a medieval scholastic and university text—a commentary on the *Politics*—to construct a practical treatise on the conservation of power for an audience broader than the university. It is remarkable that he turned to a medieval text to cope with the most pressing question of the seventeenth century, that is, how to conserve power and to avert political turmoil. This tells us that the division between medieval and early modern is more complex than has usually been assumed in the scholarship. Moreover, throughout the whole reception of Aristotle's *Politics* from the late thirteenth century onward, the insertion of elements which are in no way related to Aristotle, and the adaption of Aristotle's ideas to different contexts, is perfectly common; in fact, it was these two factors that assured the *Politics* its importance during those centuries.

#### RESUMEN

A obra *Política o razón de Estado sacada de Aristóteles*, escrita por Diego Pérez de Mesa, não apenas é amplamente baseada na Política de Aristóteles, como o seu título o reconhece abertamente, mas também no mais influente comentário medieval à Política, ou seja, o comentário iniciado por Tomás de Aquino e finalizado por Pedro de Auvergne, algo, a propósito, que Pérez de Mesa deixou de reconhecer. Neste artigo, eu mostro os modos diversos em que Pérez de Mesa se baseia nesse comentário: algumas vezes, ele o reproduz verbatim ou tira linhas de raciocínio a partir dele, ao passo que em outras ocasiões ele o critica, particularmente com respeito ao delineamento que o comentário oferece sobre o governante ideal. Para Pérez de Mesa, o governante ideal tem origem na unidade formada entre o governante e o Conselho de Estado, devendo haver regência de acordo com a lei, e não, como Pedro de Auvergne tinha sustentado, de acordo com a própria vontade e o próprio intelecto do governante. Apesar da crítica que Pérez de Mesa faz à representação que Pedro de Auvergne fizera do governante perfeito, é notável que um tratado sobre razão de estado se fundamente tão fortemente em um comentário aristotélico medieval. O vínculo entre razão de estado e o fim do "Aristotelismo Político" deveria, portanto, ser reconsiderado.