

Music in Aristotle *Politics* Book VIII
Introduction and chapters 1–3 (1337a–1338b7): PART 1

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Introduction

The writings handed down to us under the name of Aristotle are numerous and extremely important for many different aspects of Western history of science, although the works surviving from antiquity were not designed by the philosopher for publication, but as lectures for his teaching in the Lyceum (most of which were not even organized by Aristotle himself, but assembled only later on)¹. None of them is specifically concerned with music: according to some sources, the philosopher of Stagira had devoted a treatise to the topic of music (titled *Peri mousikes*, in one book)², but most probably such a writing, if it ever existed, has completely disappeared³. Nonetheless, we may find many musical allusions and references scattered throughout his material. Such mentions are, for the most part, concerned with the study of musical phenomena as they appear to the evidence of the senses (in line with Aristotle’s conceptual framework) and with the educational and social aspects of the subject.

On the other hand, his approach to the analyses of perceptual experiences and concrete objects of the sensible world was of outstanding importance for the development of a scientific enquiry on music also in a different way, especially if we consider the great influence this has exercised on his pupil Aristoxenus, the Peripatetic philosopher traditionally regarded as the major musical authority of the ancient world. The Aristoxenian conception of Harmonics as “theoretical science” (*theōrētikē epistēmē*) concerning audible *melos* (an element which exists in nature as a continuous becoming, hence it is object of what Aristotle would call a ‘physical’ enquiry)⁴ relies on

¹ For a general but useful introduction to Aristotelian philosophy, see E. Berti (cur.), *Guida ad Aristotele*, Roma-Bari 1997.

² Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 5.26.

³ Some editors (for instance Otto Immish, Teubner editor of the *Politics*) believed himself to have found an excerpt from it in Book 8 of the *Politics*. I will discuss this possibility later on (although I dismiss it).

⁴ According to Aristotle, the three branches of theoretical science were physics, mathematics and metaphysics (or *prōte philosophia*, as he called it). If metaphysics is mainly interested in inanimate and eternal things and mathematics is concerned with abstractions of certain aspects of the concrete things (like points, lines, surfaces) which present themselves as immobile elements, physics deals instead with mutable objects (*Metaph.* 1026a 12), that is to say concrete things which are in the natural world and have

clearly identifiable Aristotelian grounds. The same thing may be said for Aristoxenus' methodology of investigation, which adopts the Aristotelian apodictic demonstration, that is, the scientific procedure which follows the formal demonstrative logic of Aristotle's *Analytics*: while discussing the arrangements of pitched sounds which form the basis of musical melody and the principles which govern them, Aristoxenus insists repeatedly that conclusions about such matters must be provided with *apodeixeis*, explanatory demonstrations, derived from principles (*archai*) which are not themselves demonstrable but are reached through induction (*epagōgē*) grounded in observation. No such technical concerns on music, however, seem to have ever been developed by Aristoxenus' master and, if they were, there is no evidence of them in Aristotelian surviving works.

The most extended digression on music we may read in Aristotle's writings is certainly in the *Politics*⁵, a collection of lectures in which the philosopher expounds his view on the naturalness of the *polis* and states his famous claim that man is a political animal by nature. Within the treatment of political issues, of which I will give a general overview during this morning's lecture, he places great importance on the education of Greek citizens, more specifically on their 'musical' *paideia*, according to the assumption —widespread among the Greeks— that music could influence the "character" (*ēthos*) of those who hear it in virtue of its 'psychagogic' power (lit. "leading" or "persuading" the soul). For this reason it was believed to be essential for the formation of good members of the society.

Before tackling the issue of the role of music within the Aristotelian political project, however, and of his views about musical ethics and aesthetics, I think it is important to summarize presuppositions and mechanisms by which music was regarded to be so powerful in antiquity. After this, I will give some information on the actual role of music in education between the fifth and fourth century BC, in Athens and elsewhere, in order to place Aristotle's account of the subject in its cultural setting.

an innate tendency to movement and change (*Phys.* 192b 13 ff.). Hence, for Aristoxenus, harmonics is a 'physics' (in this Aristotelian sense) concerned with musical melody, an element of the natural world which is perceived by the ear through its audible active representation, the *phōnē melodikē*.

⁵ The Greek text of the *Politics* adopted throughout these pages is the text of W.D. Ross (ed.), *Aristotelis politica*, Oxford 1957 (repr. 1964). The translations of Aristotelian works, unless otherwise indicated, are all from Loeb Editions (for the *Politics* see Aristotle, vol. 21, translated by H. Rackham, Cambridge, MA-London 1944; for *Nicomachean Ethics*, see vol. 19, translated by H. Rackham, Cambridge, MA-London 1934).

The psychagogic and educational value of mousikē in ancient Greece

In ancient Greek culture, the belief that music could influence the human soul is very old: long before becoming explicit in philosophical writings, it is emblematically attested also by musical myths, such as the one concerning the mythical bard Orpheus who, through the sweetness of his melodies, was able to charm and placate elements of the natural world.

The first elaboration of a musical therapy based on precise correspondences between melodies and rhythms, on the one hand, and specific human habits and affections, on the other hand (which came to be called “the *ēthos* theory of music” by modern scholars)⁶, is usually ascribed to the Pythagoreans, even if the scarcity of information concerning early Pythagoreanism makes the detailed reconstruction of such an old tradition on the basis of later sources controversial. As a matter of fact, the main evidence for such a reconstruction is in Iamblichus’ *On the Pythagorean Life* (3rd–4th cent. AD), whose several sources have not yet been identified with absolute certainty, so that we have no secure proof that this work reflects early Pythagorean practices. According to Iamblichus (or to his source), Pythagoras “corrected” (ἐπανορθούμενος) psychic and physical *pathē*, bringing them back to virtue (πρὸς ἀρετήν) through the most suitable music (*VP* 64)⁷. Within this conceptual system, the efficacy of music on psychic and physical diseases (if really practiced) could probably find its roots in the affinities recognized by the Pythagoreans between music and the human soul, since both take part in the universal *harmonia*⁸.

The most ancient and authoritative source on the psychagogic power of music is Plato, who deals with the education of the soul through music quite extensively (though in slightly different ways) in two of his works: the *Republic* and the *Laws*. In a famous passage of Book 3 of the *Republic* (398d–400d), he relies on the authority of Damon of

⁶ F. Woerther, *Music and the education of the soul in Plato and Aristotle: homoeopathy and the formation of character*, «CQ» 58 (2008), pp. 89–103.

⁷ See also the «correction of human characters and lives through music» (τὴν διὰ τῆς μουσικῆς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἡθῶν τε καὶ βίῳ ἐπανόρθωσιν) quoted in chs. 114–15 of the same work.

⁸ The doctrine that the soul is a harmony is usually ascribed to Pythagoreans, more specifically to Philolaus, based on the evidence of Macrobius (DK 44A23), who perhaps relied on the doctrine presented by Simmias (described as a pupil of Philolaus) in Plato’s *Phaedo*. On this controversial argument see C.A. Huffman, *Philolaus of Croton: Pythagorean and Presocratic. A commentary on the fragments and testimonia*, Cambridge 1993, pp. 323–32, and, more generally, C.A. Huffman, *The Pythagorean conception of the souls from Pythagoras to Philolaus*, in D. Frede, B. Reis (eds.), *Body and soul in ancient philosophy*, Berlin-New York 2009, pp. 21–43.

Oa, the adviser to Pericles, as the musical expert to be deferred to concerning the details of the musical selection for the education of the guardians, focusing on the social and political consequences of such musical choices: «styles of music (μουσικῆς τρόποι) — he says— are nowhere altered without change in the greatest laws of the city: so Damon says, and I concur» (Plato *Resp.* 424c). According to his view (which it would be misleading to trace back entirely, as it appears in his writings, to the shadowy figure of Damon), affinities between musical structures and types of characters, virtues and vices may be explained through the mimetic quality of music, which is able to represent moral qualities by means of words, rhythm and melody. Therefore, the human soul may be naturally affected by music. In fact, the soul, though not identifiable as *harmonia*, nevertheless ‘possesses’ it, and hence has structural analogies with musical tunings:

A man must not suffer the principles in his soul to do each the work of some other and interfere and meddle with one another, but [...] he should dispose well of what in the true sense of the word is properly his own, and having first attained to self-mastery and beautiful order within himself, and having harmonized (συναρμόσαντα) these three principles, as we usually do with the three boundaries of the musical *harmonia*, i.e., the lowest (νεάτη), the highest (ὑπάτη) and the middle (μέση), and all others there may be between them, and having linked and bound all three together and made of himself a unit, one man instead of many, self-controlled and in unison (ἡρμοσμένον), he should then and then only turn to practice [...] (Plato *Resp.* 443d–e)⁹.

In the *Laws* (655a–d), where, differently from the *Republic*, musical education pays considerable attention to the notion of “pleasure” (ἡδονή, which exercises a certain influence on the irrational part of the soul), Plato restates that what is said, sung or represented through music and dance (μελωδηθέντα ἢ χορευθέντα) should imitate a good (καλόν) model, since καλὰ σχήματα (good postures) and καλὰ μέλη (good melodies) are a vehicle to lead people to good dispositions of the soul, such as courage (ἀνδρεία) and temperance (σωφροσύνη). For this reason, the musical practices in the city should be closely controlled and regulated, and the people in charge of such a task should receive suitable training to enable them to judge correctly.

Certainly Plato’s attitude towards musical education cannot be simply taken as a reflection of its actual usage in fourth century Athens or, more extensively, Greece. As a

⁹ Transl. adapted from *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vols. 5 & 6 translated by P. Shorey, Cambridge, MA-London 1969.

matter of fact, Plato elaborated the common belief of Greeks in the psychagogic power of music according to his quite complex and sophisticated theory of *mimēsis*, thanks to which he gave the educational value of music a precise and explicit theoretical elaboration and explanation (whose assumptions, it is opportune to anticipate, will be crucial also for the Aristotelian approach, as it will be evident reading chapter 5 of *Politics*, Book 8, where Aristotle refers to *mimēsis* and develops his personal model of such a theory).

Nevertheless, Plato's remarks on music were deeply involved in the cultural and religious context in which he lived, since his musical criticism had clearly the purpose of restoring a pedagogical ideal that he felt in danger (let's think, for instance, of the attention he pays to the fundamental function of 'chorality' in Greek religious and social life, most probably in decline in this period). In fact some of the precepts described by Plato are clearly based on the model of Spartan and Cretan public education, while his interest in creating a large citizen-community, which gives scope for a high degree of artistic expression and philosophical enquiry, seems to point more to the Athenian model¹⁰.

And it is exactly at these two models that we will turn now our attention, in order to better introduce Aristotle's account on the place of music education in his 'ideal'¹¹ *polis*.

Music education in the Greek world: the Classical period

In ancient Greek world, the culture of *mousikē* (whether we talk about the oral storytelling of epic singers or the lyric performances of the Archaic and Classical periods) has always been one of the most effective means through which the Hellenes convey and reinforce the values shared by their communities. Symbolic of the ideal educator was the Centaur Cheiron, master of Achilles, whose fields of expertise covered many arts, such as hunting and healing, music as well as gnomic and moral wisdom. Such a mythical character clearly embodied the double values of doctor-healer and wise

¹⁰ See M. Schofield, *Religion and philosophy in the Laws*, in S. Scolnicov, L. Brisson (eds.), *Plato's Laws: From Theory into Practice. Proceedings of the VI Symposium Platonicum, Selected Papers*, Sankt Augustin 2003, pp. 1–13.

¹¹ I will clarify later on at what extent we should consider the Aristotelian model of the *polis* in the *Politics* an 'ideal' one.

man-educator, providing evidence for the inextricable links existing between the psychagogic and therapeutic power of music and its educational value in social life.

Information about the education system of the two main Greek *poleis* of the Classical period may be inferred from both literary and iconographic sources (mainly vases), although these types of evidence may produce some uncertainties about their accuracy and reliability. Indeed, on the one hand, it seems likely that historical facts have been at least partially manipulated by the philosophic ideas and opinions of the two main writers who, in fourth century, gave an account of music education, that is, Plato and Aristotle; on the other hand, iconography cannot simply be interpreted as reflecting real practice, since such a medium tends to simplify and to adapt its visual representations to the needs of the customers to which its contents are addressed¹². Nevertheless, both of them may certainly contribute to outline a picture of music education in Classical time.

The most important difference among the Spartan and the Athenian education system was its ‘public’ or ‘private’ organization model: in Sparta the education was identical for all, public (that is, organized by the state) and collective (i.e., organized in groups according to age-categories); in Athens, instead, it was private and individual.

Concerning Sparta, our information comes mainly from Plato’s *Laws* (though confirmed by later sources), whose organization of the schooling courses clearly resembles the Spartan one¹³: its commencement at six/seven years old, the age at which the sexes are separated; the importance of physical exercises and the handling of arms; the exceptional place accorded to *mousikē* and the active participation of citizens in city’s festivals; the establishment of three choirs, one of children (‘choir of the Muses’), one of young men (‘choir of Apollo’) and the third of citizens between thirty and sixty years old (‘choir of Dionysos’), which have to take part in festivals in this order¹⁴. What, perhaps, more precisely indicates a Spartan or more generically Doric influence

¹² As a general approach to ancient iconography, see the useful remarks of F. Lissarrague, *Image and Representation in the Pottery of Magna Graecia*, in M. Revermann, P. Wilson (eds.), *Performance, iconography, reception: studies in honour of Oliver Taplin*, Oxford 2008, pp. 439–449.

¹³ On Spartan education in antiquity, see J. Ducat, *Spartan Education. Youth and Society in the Classical Period*, transl. by E.J. Stafford [et al.], Swansea 2006.

¹⁴ Cf. the passage in Plutarch’s *Lycurgus* (*Lyc.* 21.2), from which we know that three choirs—corresponding to the three ages: *paides*, *akmazontes* and *gerontes*—performed at Spartan festivals: «They had three choirs at their festivals, corresponding to the three ages, and the choir of old men (ὁ μὲν τῶν γερόντων) would sing first: “We once did deeds of prowess and were strong young men”. Then the choir of young men (ὁ δὲ τῶν ἀκμαζόντων) would respond: “We are so now, and if you wish, behold and see”. And then the third choir, that of the boys (ὁ δὲ τρίτος ὁ τῶν παίδων), would sing: “We shall be sometime mightier men by far than both”».

is the strictly traditional and conservative character which Plato assigns to each of the items which constitute *mousikē*. Probably the state organization of music education in Doric states had been felt as necessary since the Archaic age in order to better train the choruses which had to sing and dance in the many occasions of Doric social and religious life.

Like Plato, Aristotle too approves the fact that, at Sparta, education is organized by the city. On this, see the beginning of Book 8 of the *Politics* (8.1, 1337a 23 ff.): «it is manifest that education also must necessarily be one and the same for all and that the superintendence of this must be public, and not on private lines [...] matters of public interest ought to be under public supervision». The text ends with a praise of the conduct of the Spartans: «on this point too we might praise the Lacedaemonians, for they take the greatest care of children and make this a communal concern» (8.1, 1337a 31–32). In another passage, however, the author had said that it is not enough that the education system should be organized and directed by the state for it to be good: it must also be designed for a good purpose (*pros to beltiston telos*)¹⁵ and Spartan education has the good neither as its objective nor as it results, since it prepares only for war (while, according to Aristotle, the end of a good life is peace).

If we now devote our attention to Athens, literary sources tell us that boys were sent by their families to a ‘lyre-man’ (*kitharistēs*) and a physical trainer (*paidotribēs*). See the description the comic poet Aristophanes makes of the *archaia mousikē* in his *Clouds* (first represented in 423 BC, then revised between 420 and 417 BC):

All right, I'll set out how we organized
 our education in the olden days,
 when I talked about what's just and prospered,
 when people wished to practise self-restraint.
 First, there was a rule—children made no noise,
 no muttering. Then, when they went outside,
 walking the streets to the music master's (*kitharistou*) house,
 groups of youngsters from the same part of town
 went in straight lines and never wore a cloak,
 not even when the snow fell thick as flour.
 There he taught them to sing with thighs apart.
 They had memorize their songs—such as,
 "Dreadful Pallas Who Destroys Whole Cities,"
 and "A Cry From Far Away." These they sang

¹⁵ Arist. *Pol.* 7.14, 1333b 7.

in the same style their fathers had passed down.
 If any young lad fooled around or tried
 to innovate with some new flourishes,
 like the contorted sounds we have today
 from those who carry on the Phrynis style,
 he was beaten, soundly thrashed, his punishment
 for tarnishing the Muse. At the trainer's (*paidotribou*) house,
 when the boys sat down, they had to keep
 their thighs stretched out, so they would not expose
 a thing which might excite erotic torments
 in those looking on. And when they stood up,
 they smoothed the sand, being careful not to leave
 imprints of their manhood there for lovers.
 Using oil, no young lad rubbed his body
 underneath his navel—thus on his sexual parts
 there was a dewy fuzz, like on a peach.
 He didn't make his voice all soft and sweet
 to talk to lovers as he walked along,
 or with his glances coyly act the pimp.
 When he was eating, he would not just grab
 a radish head, or take from older men
 some dill or parsley, or eat dainty food.
 He wasn't allowed to giggle, or sit there
 with his legs crossed (Aristoph. *Nub.* 961–985)¹⁶.

The *kitharistēs* taught young boys to sing and play songs from the established repertoire, while a teacher of letters (*grammatistēs*, or simply *didaskalos*) was soon established as a separate figure beside the music teacher:

After this they send them to school and charge the master to take far more pains over their children's good behavior than over their letters and lyre-playing (γραμματῶν τε καὶ κιθαρίσεως). The masters (οἱ δὲ διδάσκαλοι) take pains accordingly, and the children, when they have learnt their letters and are getting to understand the written word as before they did only the spoken, are furnished with works of good poets to read as they sit in class, and are made to learn them off by heart: here they meet with many admonitions, many descriptions and praises and eulogies of good men in times past, that the boy in envy may imitate them and yearn to become even as they. Then also the music-masters (κιθαρισταί), in a similar sort, take pains for their self-restraint, and see that their young charges do not go wrong: moreover, when they learn to play the lyre, they are taught the works of another set of good poets, the song-makers, while the master accompanies them on the lyre; and they insist on familiarizing the boys' souls with the rhythms and scales, that they may gain in gentleness, and by advancing in rhythmic and harmonic grace may be efficient in speech and action; for the whole

¹⁶ Transl. by Ian Johnston, (see <http://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/aristophanes/clouds.htm>).

of man's life requires the graces of rhythm and harmony. Again, over and above all this, people send their sons to a trainer (παιδοτρίβου), that having improved their bodies they may perform the orders of their minds [...] (Plato *Prot.* 325d–326b)¹⁷.

One of the best-known pieces of iconographic evidence for our knowledge on Athenian educational practices is the famous Douris cup (dating from the early fifth century BC)¹⁸, now in the Berlin State Museum, where the main subjects of Athenian education are well displayed. The scenes represents boys at school with their teachers in the same house. On the one side (**fig. 1**), we may see the typical master-pupils scene, that is, a bearded lyre player and a boy sit facing one another while they are playing; a cup and a lyre are hanging above. Beside, the same bearded man holding a book roll open (so that we can read it)¹⁹ is joined by another, seated frontally with legs crossed, and by a standing boy (basket, pipes case, lyre and cup hang above). On the other side (**fig. 2**), a seated older boy plays the pipe while a younger one, standing, prepares to sing; another shows his charge how to hold the writing kit, and an older seated man turns around to watch (lyre, writing case, etc., hang above). Of course this cup is important in virtue of the fact that it shows one of the early visual records of the spread of literacy in early fifth century Athens: but it also represents the centrality of music lessons in the Athenian paideutic program.



Fig. 1

¹⁷ Transl. adapted from W.R.M. Lamb (*Plato in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 3*, Cambridge, MA, London 1967).

¹⁸ Berlin F 2285. Inside the cup, there is an athlete removing his sandals, with the inscription *Douris egraphasen*.

¹⁹ The epic verse says: «Muse to me, I begin to sing about wide flowing Scamander».



Fig. 2

Soon after the middle of the fifth century BC, however, scenes of musical instruction cease to occur, at least on vase-paintings²⁰: the decline of music in education may have been accelerated by the changing civic, social and religious function of music as such, and by the increasing growth of professionalism. It was firmly resisted, however, by conservative philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, as their persisting on the importance of music *paideia* clearly shows. The heated debate on the value of music for education during the fourth century is clearly still echoed in Aristotle's *Politics*: «at present there are differences of opinion as to the proper tasks to be set: for all people do not agree as to the things that the young ought to learn» (*Pol.* 8.2, 1337a 36 ff.).

The aims which, however, these philosophers more broadly assign to education are not essentially the inculcation in the youth of a certain amount of basic knowledge, but their preparation as good citizens entirely devoted to their city. We should bear in mind that the literary contexts where such information appears are treatises mainly concerned with political issues (philosophical dialogues in Platonic examples, a collection of papers for teaching purposes in Aristotle's case). Such an aspect evidently affected (and may so explain) their treatment of the topic.

The next step of our introduction, then, will necessarily be the description of the main contents of the *Politics* of Aristotle as a whole, in order to better set Book 8 and its treatment of musical education in the wider context of Aristotelian political thought. A history of its reception, in late antiquity and beyond, will be given only tomorrow, to finally complete this general presentation.

²⁰ F.A.G. Beck, *Album of Greek Education*, Sydney 1975.

*The Politics of Aristotle: aims and contents of Aristotelian political theory*²¹

Although Aristotle was not born in Athens, but in Stagira, in Thrace, at the northern end of the Aegean (near Macedonia), his political writings are full of concerns about the Athenian political system. As a matter of fact, he spent most of his life in Athens: firstly from 367 to 347 BC, when —at about the age of eighteen— he came to study at Plato’s Academy and stayed in Athens twenty years until his master’s death²²; then when, in 335 BC, he came back as a resident alien in the Attic city to establish there his own school, the Lyceum, where he conducted courses for the next twelve years. It is during this period that he is believed to have composed many of his works (of which, as I have already said, only the notes used for his lectures have survived). Aristotle, then, definitely left Athens the year after the death of Alexander the Great, which occurred in 323 BC, when anti-Macedonian sentiment flared once again and he was scared for his own life; but he died of natural causes in Euboea within the same year (in 322 BC).

In the years Aristotle spent at the Academy, he could have many opportunities to get used to Platonic interest in political themes, on which his master had extensively written. In the fourth century BC, Greek inquiry on political themes had in fact achieved a certain level of awareness, outlining the fundamental elements of the political debate: questions such as what a constitution is, what a citizen is, what their purposes are, and so on had been repeatedly made and discussed in Platonic school. It was, then, only natural for Aristotle to deal with these topics, also in virtue of the fact that, just in the same years, he could have observed the decline of the ancient Greek model of the *polis*, and he would have very soon witnessed the rise of a completely different world, shaped by the imperialistic politics of his former pupil Alexander.

Within Aristotelian philosophy, ethics and politics (two fields which for Aristotle are strictly connected, as we will see better later on) are examples of ‘practical’ sciences, that is, disciplines whose aim is not that of seeking knowledge for its own sake, but as a means to action. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he says that «our present study (in the

²¹ On Aristotle’s political theory, see ch. 8 (by C.C.W. Taylor) of J. Barnes (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*, Cambridge 1995, pp. 233–258.

²² Five years after Plato’s death, Aristotle took a position as tutor to King Philip of Macedonia’s thirteen years old son Alexander. It is not clear what impact, if any, Aristotle’s lessons had, but Alexander, like his father, was a great admirer of Greek civilization. In fact, when his father Philip died in 336 BC, Alexander did his best to spread Greek civilization as far as he could.

opening chapter the term *politikē* is applied to the whole subject)²³, unlike the other branches of philosophy, has a practical aim, for we are not investigating the nature of virtue for the sake of knowing what it is, but in order that we may become good (ἀγαθοί), without which result our investigation would be of no use»²⁴.

For human beings, the achievement of a good life is an aim which, given their social nature, cannot be achieved outside of the context of a political society. In Aristotle's view, the role of the state is precisely that of enabling the individual to realize his potential to achieve his individual good, impossible without an active participation in a political community. Such a political organization is the city-state (*polis*), which exists by nature: in *Politics* Book 1, Aristotle clearly states that «the city-state is a natural growth (φύσει ἡ πόλις ἐστὶ), and that man is by nature a political animal (ὁ ἄνθρωπος φύσει πολιτικὸν ζῷον)» (*Pol.* 1.2, 1253a 2 ff.). A *polis* is first of all a community of citizens (*Pol.* 3.1, 1274b 41: ἡ γὰρ πόλις πολιτῶν τι πλῆθος ἐστίν) and a citizen is defined as one who is able to participate in the deliberative and judicial areas of state government (3.1, 1275b 18–20: «What constitutes a citizen is therefore clear from these considerations: we now declare that one who has the right to participate in deliberative or judicial office is a citizen of the state in which he has that right»)²⁵.

As far as we know, Aristotle dealt with political themes also in other works: in his catalogue, Diogenes Laertius mentions, for instance, a *Περὶ πολιτικοῦ* in two books²⁶, a dialogue on colonization titled *Ἀλέξανδρος ἢ ὑπὲρ ἀποίκων*²⁷, two summaries of Plato's political dialogues (*Τὰ ἐκ τῶν νόμων Πλάτωνος α β γ, Τὰ ἐκ τῆς πολιτείας α β*)²⁸, four books of *Laws* (*Νόμων α β γ δ*)²⁹ and a series of accounts of the *Constitutions*

²³ *Eth. Nic.* 1.1, 1094a 27 ff.: «But such is manifestly the science of Politics; for it is this that ordains which of the sciences are to exist in states, and what branches of knowledge the different classes of the citizens are to learn, and up to what point; and we observe that even the most highly esteemed of the faculties, such as strategy, domestic economy, oratory, are subordinate to the political science. [...] This then being its aim, our investigation is in a sense the study of Politics» (τοιαύτη δ' ἡ πολιτικὴ φαίνεται τίνας γὰρ εἶναι χρεῶν τῶν ἐπιστημῶν ἐν ταῖς πόλεσι, καὶ ποίας ἐκάστους μαθάνειν καὶ μέχρι τίνος, αὕτη διατάσσει ὁρῶμεν δὲ καὶ τὰς ἐντιμοτάτας τῶν δυνάμεων ὑπὸ ταύτην οὔσας, οἷον στρατηγικὴν οἰκονομικὴν ῥητορικὴν [...] ἢ μὲν οὖν μέθοδος τούτων ἐφίεται πολιτικὴ τις οὔσα).

²⁴ *Eth. Nic.* 2.2, 1103b 26 ff.: Ἐπεὶ οὖν ἡ παροῦσα πραγματεία οὐ θεωρίας ἐνεκά ἐστιν ὥσπερ αἱ ἄλλαι (οὐ γὰρ ἵνα εἰδῶμεν τί ἐστὶν ἡ ἀρετὴ σκεπτόμεθα, ἀλλ' ἵνα ἀγαθοὶ γενώμεθα, ἐπεὶ οὐδὲν ἂν ἦν ὄφελος αὐτῆς), ἀναγκαῖον ἐπισκέψασθαι τὰ περὶ τὰς πράξεις, πῶς πρακτέον αὐτάς [...].

²⁵ τίς μὲν οὖν ἐστὶν ὁ πολίτης, ἐκ τούτων φανερόν· ὃ γὰρ ἐξουσία κοινονεῖν ἀρχῆς βουλευτικῆς καὶ κριτικῆς, πολίτην ἤδη λέγομεν εἶναι ταύτης τῆς πόλεως.

²⁶ Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 5.22.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 5.22.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 5.22.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 5.26.

(Πολιτεῖαι) of 158 states organized *kat' eidē* (δημοκρατικάί, ὀλιγαρχικάί, τυραννικάί, ἀριστοκρατικάί)³⁰, among which only the *Athēnaiōn Politeia* has survived (discovered in 1890 in two Egyptian papyruses). All this information gave him ample material to draw on when analyzing and evaluating the different political organizations that were possible among human beings. In the *Politics*, in fact, Aristotle lists and discusses their most common forms, as well as the means useful for their preservation or destruction. Such forms are, firstly, kingship (βασιλεία), aristocracy (ἀριστοκρατία) and constitutional government (πολιτεία), which are the “correct” (*orthai*) ones; then «deviations from the constitutions mentioned are tyranny corresponding to kingship, oligarchy to aristocracy, and democracy to constitutional government» (*Pol.* 3.7, 1279a–b)³¹. This classification seems to come directly from Plato’s *Statesman*: «We said that monarchy comprised royalty and tyranny, and the rule of the few comprised aristocracy, which has a name of good omen, and oligarchy; but to the rule of the many we gave then only a single name, democracy; now, however, that also must be divided [...]»³².

The two most extensively treated kinds of government are, of course, democracy and oligarchy (the most common political organization among Greek *poleis*), on which many historic examples are given and discussed by the author. Regarding the constitution that is ideal or, more literally, “according to prayer” (κατ’ εὐχὴν, that is, “what we would *pray for*”), in Book 2 Aristotle criticizes the views of his predecessors (including Plato, who embraced a system of communism that, according to his view, is impractical and inimical to human nature) while, in Books 7 and 8, he offers a rather sketchy outline of his own. In Aristotle’s “best constitution” (ἀρίστη πολιτεία), each and every citizen will possess moral virtue and the equipment to carry it out in practice, and thereby attain a life of excellence and complete happiness, which is the highest human good (*Pol.* 7.13, 1332a 32–8). All the citizens will hold political office and possess private property because «one should call the city-state happy not by looking at a part of

³⁰ *Ibid.* 5.27. Aristotle collected analogous material also for foreign constitutions: the Νόμιμα βαρβαρικά were an account of the institutions of non-Hellenic peoples.

³¹ παρεκβάσεις δὲ τῶν εἰρημένων τυραννὶς μὲν βασιλείας, ὀλιγαρχία δὲ ἀριστοκρατίας, δημοκρατία δὲ πολιτείας.

³² Plato *Pol.* 302d: Ἐκ μὲν τῆς μοναρχίας βασιλικὴν καὶ τυραννικὴν, ἐκ δ’ αὐτῶν μὴ πολλῶν τὴν τε εὐδώνυμον ἔφαμεν [εἶναι] ἀριστοκρατίαν καὶ ὀλιγαρχίαν· ἐκ δ’ αὐτῶν πολλῶν τότε μὲν ἀπλήν ἐπονομάζοντες ἐτίθεμεν δημοκρατίαν, νῦν δ’ αὖ καὶ ταύτην ἡμῖν θετέον ἐστὶ διπλήν.

it but at all the citizens» (*Pol.* 7.9, 1329a 22–3)³³. Moreover, there will be a common system of education for all the citizens, because they all share the same end: «Matters of public interest ought to be under public supervision; at the same time we ought not to think that any of the citizens belongs to himself, but that all belong to the state, for each is a part of the state, and it is natural for the superintendence of the several parts to have regard to the superintendence of the whole» (*Pol.* 8.1, 1337a 26 ff.)³⁴.

The analysis of the best constitution, Aristotle clarifies at the beginning of Book 7, is necessarily linked to the best life the citizens may live: «The student who is going to make a suitable investigation of the best form of constitution must necessarily decide, first of all, what is the most desirable mode of life (αἰρετώτατος βίος)» (*Pol.* 7.1, 1323a 14 ff.)³⁵. One of the central theses of his ethico-political system, in fact, is that the aim of the *polis* is the promotion of good life for its citizens. As a further step —Aristotle continues— we have to discover «what life is most desirable (αἰρετώτατος) for almost all men, and after that whether the same life is most desirable both for the community and for the individual, or a different one» (*Pol.* 7.1, 1323a 20 ff.)³⁶.

Of course the two items turns out to be coincident, since for Aristotle a good life is necessarily a social life. Such a good life must be directed by *phronēsis* (that is, by practical wisdom, which is typical of a good man when he is in government), and the most perfect exercise of *phronēsis* is the practical application of that virtue to the common good of a community:

now it is held to be the mark of a prudent (φρονίμου) man to be able to deliberate well about what is good and advantageous for himself, not in some one department, for instance what is good for his health or strength, but what is advantageous as a means to the good life (πρὸς τὸ εὖ ζῆν) in general» (*Eth. Nic.* 6.4, 1140a 25 ff.)³⁷.

³³ εὐδαίμονα δὲ πόλιν οὐκ εἰς μέρος τι βλέψαντας δεῖ λέγειν αὐτῆς, ἀλλ' εἰς πάντας τοὺς πολίτας.

³⁴ δεῖ δὲ τῶν κοινῶν κοινήν ποιῆσθαι καὶ τὴν ἄσκησιν. ἅμα δὲ οὐδὲ χρῆν νομίζειν αὐτὸν αὐτοῦ τίνα εἶναι τῶν πολιτῶν, ἀλλὰ πάντας τῆς πόλεως, μόνιον γὰρ ἕκαστος τῆς πόλεως· ἢ δ' ἐπιμέλεια πέφυκεν ἑκάστου μορίου βλέπειν πρὸς τὴν τοῦ ὅλου ἐπιμέλειαν.

³⁵ Περὶ δὲ πολιτείας ἀρίστης τὸν μέλλοντα ποιήσασθαι τὴν προσήκουσαν ζήτησιν ἀνάγκη διορίσασθαι πρῶτον τίς αἶρε τώτατος βίος.

³⁶ [...] Περὶ δὲ πολιτείας ἀρίστης τὸν μέλλοντα ποιήσασθαι τὴν προσήκουσαν ζήτησιν ἀνάγκη διορίσασθαι πρῶτον τίς αἰρετώτατος βίος.

³⁷ δοκεῖ δὴ φρονίμου εἶναι τὸ δύνασθαι καλῶς βουλευσασθαι περὶ τὰ αὐτῶ ἀγαθὰ καὶ συμφέροντα, οὐ κατὰ μέρος, οἷον ποῖα πρὸς ὑγίειαν, πρὸς ἰσχύν, ἀλλὰ ποῖα πρὸς τὸ εὖ ζῆν ὅλως. [...]

As we will see while commenting on the text of Book 8 of the *Politics*, the centrality of the *politēs*, an essential member of the community, and of the virtues he ought to acquire in order to fulfil the good life —not only for himself but for the whole society— is an essential theme of Aristotle’s political philosophy, which has strong connections with his ethical theory and his natural philosophy. In such a picture, the education of all the *politai* (and not, anymore, of a selected part of the community, that is, its rulers, as in Plato)³⁸ comes to be crucial for the realization of the Aristotelian ideal state, whose common goals are peace and concord. The role of music, which is of outstanding importance in Aristotle’s educational and social system, may be understood only within this complex picture, and is intimately connected with social and political changes which occurred during the fourth century BC, as we will see tomorrow.

But now let’s start with the reading of Book 8 of the *Politics*.

³⁸ But let’s notice that for Aristotle the status of ‘citizen’ may be applied only to those people which may potentially hold a position (deliberative or judicial, cf. *Pol.* 3.1, 1275b 18–20) within the *polis*.

Setting the agenda: what constitutes education and what is the proper way to be educated?

Politics as we have it nowadays contains eight books. The actual sequence of books is certainly not Aristotelian, but simply reflects the assemblage —made afterwards by one of his pupils or by a librarian— of self-contained parts (most probably corresponding to different papyrus scrolls) which treated different items of Aristotle’s political theory³⁹. Scholars have identified basically three sets of lectures: the first set, where the theory of the state in general and a classification of the varieties of constitution are exposed, runs from Book 1 to 3; the second includes Books 4, 5 and 6, and deals with the nature of existing constitutions and principles for their good government; finally, we have Books 7 and 8 (most probably the earlier material, left unfinished), where a description of the best state and its structural elements are displayed. I am not going to discuss the proposals made by philologists in the past for changing the transmitted sequence of books in order to have a more consistent progression of ideas (Prof. Pöhlmann will give us an overview of such proposals during the next few days), since these efforts did not take into account that the *Politics* had not been conceived as a coherent literary work. Nevertheless, I will try to connect Aristotle’s remarks on musical education to his political and ethical theory (whose ideas were, of course, not all developed at the same time, but display some crucial key-elements which stayed constant in Aristotelian thought), because I believe that we can only explain certain peculiarities in Aristotle’s discussion of the social function of music in his ideal *polis* if we take into account his wider vision of ‘state’ and ‘virtue’.

The beginning of Book 8 takes up some questions raised at the end of Book 7 (let’s notice that, in the first Latin translation of the *Politics* made by William of Moerbeke in 1260, Book 8 exactly starts from here)⁴⁰:

First therefore we must consider whether some regulation in regard to the boys ought to be instituted, next whether it is advantageous for their supervision to be conducted on a public footing or in a private manner as is done at present in most

³⁹ For modern comments on Aristotle’s *Politics* see M. Davis, *The Politics of Philosophy. A Commentary on Aristotle’s Politics*, Lanham (Md.) 1996, and P.L. Phillips Simpson, *A Philosophical Commentary on the Politics of Aristotle*, Chapel Hill and London 2002.

⁴⁰ William of Moerbeke (ca. 1215–1286) was a prolific medieval translator of philosophical, medical, and scientific texts from Greek into Latin. His translations were highly influential in his day, when few competing translations were available.

states, and thirdly of what particular nature this supervision ought to be (*Pol.* 7.17, 1337a 2 ff.)⁴¹.

The first question is immediately answered: «Now nobody would dispute that the education of the young requires the special attention of the lawgiver. Indeed the neglect of this in states is injurious to their constitutions» (*Pol.* 8.1, 1337a 11 ff.)⁴². The importance of educating the citizens in order to make them ‘persuadable’ by the legislator had already been pointed out earlier in Book 7.13, 1332b 8 ff.: «we have already defined the proper natural character of those who are to be amenable to the hand of the legislator; what now remains is the task of education, for men learn some things by practice, others by precept»⁴³.

In this same passage, we also find the explicit connection between the Aristotelian view of the state’s virtue as resulting from the virtues of its citizens, and the definition of the ways through which a citizen may become virtuous (*ἀγαθὸς καὶ σπουδαῖος*), that are: φύσις, ἔθος and λόγος.

But then the virtue of the state is of course caused by the citizens who share in its government being virtuous; and in our state all the citizens share in the government. The point we have to consider therefore is, how does a man become virtuous? For even if it would be possible for the citizens to be virtuous collectively without being so individually, the latter is preferable, since for each individual to be virtuous entails as a consequence the collective virtue of all. But there are admittedly three things by which men are made good and virtuous, and these three things are nature, habit and reason. For to start with, one must be born with the nature of a human being and not of some other animal; and secondly, one must be born of a certain quality of body and of soul. But there are some qualities that it is of no use to be born with, [1332b] for our habits make us alter them: some qualities in fact are made by nature liable to be modified by the habits in either direction, for the worse or for the better. Now the other animals live chiefly by nature, though some in small degrees are guided by habits too; but man lives by reason also, for he alone of animals possesses reason; so that in him these three things must be in harmony with one another; for men often act contrary to their acquired habits and to their nature because of their reason, if they are convinced

⁴¹ πρῶτον μὲν οὖν σκεπτέον εἰ ποιητέον τάξιν τινὰ περὶ τοὺς παῖδας, ἔπειτα πότερον συμφέρει κοινῇ ποιεῖσθαι τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν αὐτῶν ἢ κατ’ ἴδιον τρόπον (ὃ γίγνεται καὶ νῦν ἐν ταῖς πλείσταις τῶν πόλεων), τρίτον δὲ ποίαν τινὰ δεῖ ταύτην εἶναι.

⁴² Ὅτι μὲν οὖν τῷ νομοθέτῃ μάλιστα πραγματευτέον περὶ τὴν τῶν νέων παιδείαν, οὐδεὶς ἂν ἀμφισβητήσῃ· καὶ γὰρ ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν οὐ γιγνόμενον τοῦτο βλέπτει τὰς πολιτείας.

⁴³ τὴν μὲν τοίνυν φύσιν οἴους εἶναι δεῖ τοὺς μέλλοντας εὐχειρώτους ἔσσεσθαι τῷ νομοθέτῃ, διωρίσμεθα πότερον· τὸ δὲ λοιπὸν ἔργον ἤδη παιδείας. τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἐθιζόμενοι μαθάνουσι τὰ δ’ ἀκούοντες.

that some other course of action is preferable (*Pol.* 7.13, 1332a 32 ff., cf. *ibid.* 7.15, 1334b 7 ff.)⁴⁴.

Apart from nature, which is inherent in human beings, the other two elements (habit and reason) may be fully developed —Aristotle says— only through ‘education’. But education doesn’t achieve its goals only by means of precepts, but also through habituation: τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἐθιζόμενοι μαθάνουσι τὰ δ’ ἀκούοντες (*Pol.* 7.13, 1332b 10 f.)⁴⁵. We will see tomorrow how significant are the connections of this statement with the theories displayed by Aristotle in his best known work on ethics: the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Leaving aside for a while the mechanisms through which education is capable of instilling virtue in human beings, let’s briefly conclude this morning’s lecture by restating the Aristotelian answer to his second question raised of the end of Book 7: «[...] whether it is advantageous for their supervision to be conducted on a public footing or in a private manner as is done at present in most states». As I have already said, in Aristotle’s best state, education must be matter of public concern. It is easy to read here, between the lines, a critical attitude towards the Athenian private system of education:

and inasmuch as the end for the whole state is one, it is manifest that education also must necessarily be one and the same for all and that the superintendence of this must be public, and not on private lines, in the way in which at present each man superintends the education of his own children, teaching them privately, and whatever special branch of knowledge he thinks fit (*Pol.* 8.1, 1337a 21 ff.)⁴⁶.

⁴⁴ ἀλλὰ μὴν σπουδαία γε πόλις ἐστὶ τῷ τοὺς πολίτας τοὺς μετέχοντας τῆς πολιτείας εἶναι σπουδαίους· ἡμῖν δὲ πάντες οἱ πολῖται μετέχουσι τῆς πολιτείας. τοῦτ’ ἄρα σκεπτέον, πῶς ἀνὴρ γίνεται σπουδαῖος, καὶ γὰρ εἰ πάντας ἐνδέχεται σπουδαίους εἶναι, μὴ καθ’ ἕκαστον δὲ τῶν πολιτῶν, οὕτως αἰρετώτερον· ἀκολουθεῖ γὰρ τῷ καθ’ ἕκαστον καὶ τὸ πάντας. ἀλλὰ μὴν ἀγαθοὶ γε καὶ σπουδαῖοι γίνονται διὰ τριῶν. τὰ τρία δὲ ταῦτά ἐστι φύσις ἔθος λόγος. καὶ γὰρ φῦναι δεῖ πρῶτον, οἷον ἄνθρωπον ἀλλὰ μὴ τῶν ἄλλων τι ζῶων· οὕτω καὶ ποιόν τινα τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν. ἕνια δὲ οὐθὲν ὄφελος [1332b] φῦναι· τὰ γὰρ ἔθη μεταβαλεῖν ποιεῖ· ἕνια γὰρ εἶσι, διὰ τῆς φύσεως ἐπαμφοτερίζοντα, διὰ τῶν ἐθῶν ἐπὶ τὸ χεῖρον καὶ τὸ βέλτιον. τὰ μὲν οὖν ἄλλα τῶν ζῶων μάλιστα μὲν τῇ φύσει ζῆ, μικρὰ δ’ ἕνια καὶ τοῖς ἔθεσιν, ἄνθρωπος δὲ καὶ λόγῳ· μόνος γὰρ ἔχει λόγον· ὥστε δεῖ ταῦτα συμ φωνεῖν ἀλλήλοις. πολλὰ γὰρ παρὰ τοὺς ἐθισμοὺς καὶ τὴν φύσιν πράττουσι διὰ τὸν λόγον, ἐὰν πεισθῶσιν ἄλλως ἔχειν βέλτιον.

⁴⁵ Cf. *Pol.* 8.1, 1337a 18 ff.: «Moreover in regard to all the faculties and crafts certain forms of preliminary education (προπαιδεύεσθαι) and training (προεθίζεσθαι) in their various operations are necessary so that manifestly this is also requisite in regard to the actions of virtue» (ἔτι δὲ πρὸς πάσας δυνάμεις καὶ τέχνας ἔστιν ἃ δεῖ προπαιδεύεσθαι καὶ προεθίζεσθαι πρὸς τὰς ἐκάστων ἐργασίας, ὥστε δῆλον ὅτι καὶ πρὸς τὰς τῆς ἀρετῆς πράξεις).

⁴⁶ ἐπεὶ δ’ ἐν τῷ τέλος τῇ πόλει πάση, φανερόν ὅτι καὶ τὴν παιδείαν μίαν καὶ τὴν αὐτὴν ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι πάντων καὶ ταύτης τὴν ἐπι μέλειαν εἶναι κοινήν καὶ μὴ κατ’ ἰδίαν, ὃν τρόπον νῦν ἕκαστος ἐπιμελεῖται τῶν αὐτοῦ τέκνων ἰδίᾳ τε καὶ μάθησιν ἰδίαν, ἣν ἂν δόξη, διδάσκων.

Finally, the answer to his third question («of what particular nature this supervision ought to be») will be matter at issue from chapter 2 onwards, where we will find the most important treatment of musical education. But we will begin our discussion of this section tomorrow.