

# Π Η Γ Η / F O N S

Revista de estudios sobre la  
civilización clásica y su recepción



I  
(2016)

Universidad Carlos III de Madrid  
Instituto de Estudios Clásicos “Lucio Anneo Séneca”

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- Universidad Carlos III de Madrid -

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# Π Η Γ Η / F O N S

Revista de estudios sobre la civilización clásica y su recepción

Instituto de Estudios Clásicos sobre la la Sociedad y la Política  
“Lucio Anneo Séneca”

## I (2016)

LA FILOSOFÍA  
PRÁCTICA DE  
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ARISTOTLE'S  
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MICHELE CURNIS (ed.)

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## *Presentación*

Es innecesario subrayar la importancia de la Antigüedad Grecorromana como fuente de la que surge la corriente de pensamiento que alimenta la civilización occidental y delimita su horizonte cultural. Su estudio y la investigación de los momentos que han contribuido a la formación de los valores esenciales de nuestra cultura, en especial los de libertad, justicia, igualdad, imperio de la ley y democracia, han estado en el centro de la preocupación de los intelectuales que, a lo largo de generaciones, han contribuido con su pensamiento a la construcción de nuestra forma de pensar y vivir. Estos valores constitutivos esenciales del pensamiento europeo han llegado a ser la contribución más importante de Europa al acervo universal. Han impregnado no sólo el pensamiento filosófico, sino que han encontrado también su expresión en todos los ámbitos del conocimiento humano, en el arte y las religiones que se originaron en Europa.

La publicación que inauguramos se propone no sólo coadyuvar a la investigación de la civilización clásica en su sentido más amplio, sino también al estudio de su recepción en todas las etapas históricas, especialmente en el mundo contemporáneo. De esta manera pretendemos contribuir a llenar un vacío entre las publicaciones especializadas, poniendo especial atención en la historia de las ideas. Asimismo aspiramos a que los trabajos aquí publicados puedan ayudar a clarificar problemas teóricos que afectan de lleno a la crisis presente en las convicciones de nuestra sociedad europea y universal. Conocer sus raíces y su evolución es una tarea a la que estará dedicada nuestra revista.

La publicación tendrá una periodicidad anual y sus números estarán organizados temáticamente. Los trabajos que ofrezcan para ser sometidos a la evaluación por pares podrán estar escritos en castellano, inglés, francés, alemán, italiano, portugués, catalán o gallego. Eventualmente podrán aceptarse trabajos en otras lenguas, siempre y cuando vayan acompañados de un resumen apropiado en castellano e inglés que permita que el lector conozca de manera clara los aspectos esenciales del contenido.

Francisco L. LISI

## ¿Quién es el “político”, según Aristóteles? Introducción al primer número de la revista «Pegé / Fons»

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MICHELE CURNIS

El último párrafo de la *Ética a Nicómaco* (X 9) está dedicado a la relación entre la ética y la política, a partir de la cuestión de lo que se origina la práctica de las virtudes (y, a la inversa, de lo que inhibe la práctica de acciones reprobables). Aristóteles cree que existe un tipo de carácter adecuado a la virtud, capaz de amarla como para practicarla; sin embargo para este carácter, aún más que para su enseñanza (es decir, los aspectos teóricos, en que se basa la redacción de la misma *Ética*), es esencial la existencia de leyes que determinen las actividades y la educación de la juventud. De hecho, «los actos más virtuosos se hacen sobre la base de las buenas leyes» (*EN* X 9, 1180a 34 s.): es gracias a estas leyes que los hombres se vuelven virtuosos (1180b 25). El razonamiento conduce a la conclusión de que sólo el titular de los conocimientos de la ley y la legislación, es decir el político, puede preservar el conocimiento de la virtud y de su enseñanza. Es en este sentido, precisamente, que surge la cuestión de su formación política, ya que debe actuar, en lugar de enseñar, y que, por eso, rara vez logra transmitir a los demás su *τέχνη* específica. Así como no se convierten en médicos con sólo el estudio de los manuales, de la misma manera - dice Aristóteles - no se convierten los hombres en políticos con sólo el estudio de las leyes existentes. La *τέχνη πολιτική* es, por tanto, anómala en sus dos frentes: es difícil de aprender y es difícil identificar quién puede enseñarla. El estudio de la legislación se convierte en el nuevo objetivo del filósofo en las páginas finales de la *Ética a Nicómaco*, como enlace entre el conocimiento de la virtud y de su práctica en el ámbito social. En términos más generales, la perspectiva de

Aristóteles quiere lograr un análisis completo del *modus vivendi* del animal social, y este es el objetivo de su escritura política.

No es una técnica cuyo tratamiento sea exclusivo de la política, puesto que ya en el primer libro de la *Retórica* Aristóteles le exige al orador saber «tutta la gamma dei regimi politici, e insieme delle abitudini, delle tradizioni, degli interessi che a ciascuno di essi si correlano»; y además de *πολιτεῖαι* y *νόμιμα*, «il terzo elemento di cui il retore deve essere ben consapevole è costituito da ciò che è utile al regime politico in vista della sua conservazione»<sup>1</sup>. Sobre la base de estas observaciones, no es de extrañar que el final del tratado dedicado a Nicómaco se convierta en el preludio del análisis político, es decir, en el comienzo de otro tratado; las últimas líneas de la *Ética* marcan realmente el comienzo de la *Política* sin solución de continuidad. Sin embargo, la lectura sinóptica de las últimas páginas de *Ética Nicomachea* y *Política* no permite establecer una efectiva continuidad temática o metodológica, muy probablemente porque el primer libro actual del último tratado mencionado no fue el principio real de la obra aristotélica original. Más allá de los problemas de composición y desplazamiento de los libros, de todas maneras, cabe destacar que la causa última de la redacción de la *Política* ha de ser rastreada en la investigación ética y que la *τέχνη* correspondiente al nuevo tratado es especial en comparación con las otras por más razones.

En el marco de una lectura intertextual y actualizada a los últimos avances de los estudios aristotélicos, la revista «Pegé / Fons» dedica su primer número a una colección de estudios sobre la *Política* y algunos problemas que suscita su lectura. Estos estudios son el resultado de un congreso internacional del “Collegium Politicum” que se celebró en

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<sup>1</sup> Las dos citas proceden de Aristotele, *Retorica*. Introduzione, traduzione e commento di S. GASTALDI, Carocci Editore, Roma 2014, 404; véase la reseña del libro en este fascículo (163-168).



Madrid en 2012<sup>2</sup>, pero pueden ocurrir como una tendencia general de las investigaciones exegéticas internacionales acerca de la obra. En los últimos años el tratado de Aristóteles, de hecho, ha sido un foco creciente de interés, como resulta de reuniones científicas<sup>3</sup>, nuevas ediciones<sup>4</sup>, conferencias y sobre todo estudios e investigaciones específicos<sup>5</sup>. Sería demasiado fácil, y sin duda simplista, interpretar este “renacimiento” de

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<sup>2</sup> XII Meeting of the “Collegium Politicum”. Madrid 25-26<sup>th</sup> May 2012, Instituto de Estudios Clásicos “Lucio Anneo Séneca” - Universidad Carlos III de Madrid.

<sup>3</sup> Cabe destacar, por ejemplo, el congreso internacional “La armonía del conflicto. Los fundamentos aristotélicos de la política”, Madrid, 8 y 9 de octubre de 2008, Instituto de Estudios Clásicos “Lucio Anneo Séneca” - Universidad Carlos III de Madrid.

<sup>4</sup> Cf., e.g., Aristoteles, *Politik. Buch I*, übersetzt und erläutert von E. SCHÜTRUMPF, Akademie Verlag, Berlin 1991; Aristoteles, *Politik. Buch II und Buch III*, übersetzt und erläutert von E. SCHÜTRUMPF, Akademie Verlag, Berlin 1991; Aristoteles, *Politik*, III, Buch IV-VI, übersetzt und eingeleitet von E. SCHÜTRUMPF, erläutert von E. SCHÜTRUMPF und H.-J. GEHRKE, Akademie Verlag, Berlin 1996; Aristoteles, *Politik*, IV, Buch VII-VIII, über die beste Verfassung, übersetzt und erläutert von E. SCHÜTRUMPF, Akademie Verlag, Berlin 2005. Ediciones con discusión crítica (aunque mínima) del texto griego son: *Aristotle's Politics*, Translated and with an Introduction, Notes and Glossary by C. LORD, University of Chicago Press, Chicago-London 2013<sup>2</sup> (1984); Aristotele, *Politica*, Introduzioni di L. CANFORA e R. KRAUT, Traduzione di R. RADICE e T. GARGIULO, Commento di T. J. SAUNDERS e R. ROBINSON, Fondazione Lorenzo Valla - A. Mondadori, I-II, Milano 2014-2015.

<sup>5</sup> Véanse, por ejemplo, sólo en el siglo XXI, R. KRAUT, S. SKULTETY (eds.), *Aristotle's Politics. Critical Essays*, Rowman & Littlefield, Oxford 2005; L. E. GOODMAN, R. B. TALISSE (eds.), *Aristotle's Politics Today*, State University of New York Press, New York 2007; J. A. SWANSON, C. D. CORBIN (eds.), *Aristotle's Politics*, Continuum, London-New York 2009; E. GARVER, *Aristotle's Politics. Living Well and Living Together*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago-London 2011; Th. A. PANGLE, *Aristotle's Teaching in the Politics*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago-London 2013; M. DESLAURIERS, P. DESTRIÉE (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Politics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2013; M. H. HANSEN, *Reflections on Aristotle's Politics*, Museum Tusulanum Press - University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen 2013; Th. LOCKWOOD, Th. SAMARAS (eds.), *Aristotle's Politics. A Critical Guide*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2015.

estudios como un síntoma de la crisis de los modelos políticos que caracteriza la segunda mitad del siglo XX en el mundo occidental, y que en los albores del siglo XXI se siente más agudamente. Un hecho, sin embargo, parece aceptable y deseable: «L'approccio al pensiero di Aristotele esige da sempre una raffinata preparazione: non solo per accedere alla multiforme complessità del suo pensiero, ma anche - e forse soprattutto - perché l'uso specialistico del linguaggio che connota la ricerca dello Stagirita possa essere di vantaggio e non di ostacolo alla comprensione»<sup>6</sup>. En el caso de la *Política*, en particular, sólo la preparación en varios frentes, la pluralidad de conocimientos, y por lo tanto la «collaborazione interdisciplinare»<sup>7</sup> entre investigadores de diferentes orígenes, pueden permitir entender con la percepción correcta y adecuada aquel «uso specialistico del linguaggio» que caracteriza las τέχναι aristotélicas. Es indicativo de la urgencia de perspectivas exegéticas confiables que la estructura aristotélica del mejor sistema de gobierno (πολιτεία) sigue siendo una fuente de controversia; como enseñan distintamente los ensayos de «Pegé», incluso hoy en día están abiertas más perspectivas de investigación sobre el modelo político que Aristóteles indica como forma mejor y más propicia para la armonía de los ciudadanos. La urgente necesidad de entender estas perspectivas se

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<sup>6</sup> E. CATTANEI, F. FRONTEROTTA, S. MASO, *Introduzione*, en: E. CATTANEI, F. FRONTEROTTA, S. MASO (eds.), *Studi su Aristotele e l'Aristotelismo* (“Studi di Storia della Filosofia Antica” 1), Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Roma 2015, VIII.

<sup>7</sup> L. BERTELLI, M. MOGGI, *Presentazione dell'opera*, en: Aristotele. *La Política*, Direzione di L. B. e M. M., I, Istituto Italiano per la Storia Antica - «L'Erma» di Bretschneider, Roma 2011, VI (de esta nueva edición crítica de la *Política*, con texto griego y aparatos, traducción y comentario en italiano, han parecido los volúmenes I [libro I], II [libro II, Roma 2012], III [libro III, Roma 2013], IV [libro IV, Roma 2014], V [libros V-VI, Roma 2015]).

identifica con una necesidad parecida de aplicarlas, incluso en tipos de sociedad tan diversas como las contemporáneas<sup>8</sup>.

La percepción correcta del mensaje político de Aristóteles, sin embargo, empieza con la recepción crítica de la obra, es decir, con la presentación filológica del texto: sin una edición de referencia, respetuosa de la tradición manuscrita y los muchos problemas que vienen con ella, no se puede lograr resultados exegéticos plenamente compartibles. El texto griego establecido por David Ross (1957) puede considerarse, de hecho, como bastante anticuado (1957), equipado con un aparato de información ínfimo comparado con la complejidad de la situación manuscrita y además es un texto que incorpora muchas conjeturas demasiado simplistas. Sin embargo, es también el más utilizado por los traductores, comentaristas y exégetas; ni la edición crítica de Alois Dreizehnter (1970) ni la de Jean Aubonnet (1960-1989), las dos mucho más ricas en referencias documentales, han logrado establecerse a nivel internacional como textos de referencia.

Con respecto a la relación que une la *Política* con los tratados éticos, el lector juzgará consistente que el fascículo de Pegé se abra con un ensayo de Veronika Konrádová centrado en el último libro de la *Ética a Nicómaco*

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<sup>8</sup> En los últimos años se encuentran cada vez menos estudios acerca de la tradición textual griega o latina de la *Política*: véanse sin embargo R. LAMBERTINI, *Lo studio e la ricezione della Politica tra XIII e XIV secolo*, en: C. DOLCINI (ed.), *Il pensiero politico dell'età antica e medioevale. Dalla polis alla formazione degli Stati europei*, Utet, Torino 2000, 145-173; M. CURNIS, *Le parole per il potere: Strozzi, Bruni, Filelfo e la Politica di Aristotele*, en: E. BONA, M. CURNIS (eds.), *Linguaggi del potere, poteri del linguaggio - Langages du pouvoir, pouvoirs du langage*. Atti del convegno PARSA, Torino 6-8 novembre 2008, Edizioni dell'Orso, Alessandria 2010, 417-437; IDEM, *Il codice Marc. lat. 2527, Muretus e la Politica di Aristotele*, en: A. BALBO, F. BESSONE, E. MALASPINA (eds.), *Tanti affetti in tal momento? Studi in onore di Giovanna Garbarino*, Edizioni dell'Orso, Alessandria 2011, 297-304; E. SCHÜTRUMPF, *The earliest translations of Aristotle's Politics and the creation of political terminology*, Fink, Paderborn 2014; L. LANZA, *“Ei autem qui de politia considerat”. Aristotele nel pensiero politico medievale*, Brepols, Turnhout 2015.

y el análisis de la vida humana y divina. La investigadora observa que el libro trata la distinción entre la vida política y la vida filosófica, pero no como dos modelos diferentes entre los que el hombre tiene que elegir, porque se excluyen entre sí, sino como perspectivas que se comunican. La vida política que enfrenta el final de la *Ética*, por el contrario, ya permite el logro de la contemplación filosófica, y sería un motivo adicional para mantener la coherencia entre los dos tratados. Con esta perspectiva, el artículo de Konrádová, a pesar de estar dedicado sustancialmente a la *Ética Nicomaquea*, aparece como la más adecuada introducción a la discusión sobre la *Política*.

Se ocupa de prácticas específicas de la vida social también el ensayo de Arianna Fermani, dedicado a un tema principal del primer libro de la *Política* como la crematística (especialmente con respecto a los capítulos 8-11). La percepción correcta de esta práctica depende de una definición dual disponible en las páginas de Aristóteles: en una primera forma, la crematística puede explicarse como un deseo canalizado, gestionado y organizado por la sabiduría, en vista de un fin ulterior, pero cuando el deseo de riqueza se pone como fin en sí mismo, insaciable, ilimitado, que ya no responde a los mandamientos de la sabiduría, se trata de una crematística equivocada, y hay que rechazarla. La búsqueda de la riqueza no es una mala acción, siempre y cuando esté adecuadamente enmarcada y orientada a un fin superior. Curiosamente, el *τέλος* se impone desde el primer libro de la *Política* como un horizonte indispensable de toda la acción social y por eso el lector tiene que conectarlo (por ejemplo, a través de la crematística) al tema del “vivir bien”, que Aristóteles presenta como fin de la vida social misma.

También el articulado ensayo de Manuel Knoll procesa los indicios de otro de los temas específicos dentro de la *Política* (justicia distributiva, en los libros IV-VI) para estudiar una cuestión mucho más amplia, como las diferentes formas de constitución; la variedad de regímenes políticos, según Knoll, sería de hecho el resultado de las diferentes concepciones de

la justicia distributiva. Dado que la forma preferida por Aristóteles de justicia distributiva es la aristocrática, Knoll sostiene que, en última instancia, la mejor forma de ciudad-estado en los libros VI-VIII debería ser la gobernada por una constitución aristocrática, y no por la *πολιτεία*, como generalmente se afirma. Al mismo argumento se conecta el estudio de Elena Irrera, que tiene como objetivo analizar las consideraciones aristotélicas de los regímenes aristocráticos basándose en cuatro grandes ejes temáticos: tipo perfecto de constitución, tipo realizado a partir de una mezcla estudiada de las clases sociales, tipo de *πολιτεία* que tiende a la oligarquía y para finalizar tipo que tiende a la aristocracia. Esta última es aquella en la que la investigadora más se centra, para presentar una hipótesis en algunos aspectos parecida a la de Knoll, es decir que en condiciones políticas menos que ideales Aristóteles cree que la mejor forma de constitución sería precisamente la “*πολιτεία* aristocrática”: ella sí, mejor que los otros modelos, cumple con los requisitos de estabilidad, *concordia*, armonía entre gobernantes y gobernados.

Jakub Jinek elabora su estudio a partir de un convencimiento aristotélico que une la ciudad con su constitución: si el objetivo de una ciudad, que se caracteriza por la multiplicidad de formas y existencias, es el “vivir bien” en sociedad, la mejor constitución para esta ciudad depende precisamente de las diferentes formas de vida, y en particular de la distinción entre las virtudes de un buen hombre y las del buen ciudadano. La diferencia cualitativa entre estas virtudes también se puede encontrar en la comparación de las distintas constituciones políticas.

La coherencia global del pensamiento aristotélico y, por lo tanto, el problema de la unidad de la *Política* desde una perspectiva histórica y textual también pueden ser investigados a la luz de una evolución orgánica («organische Entwicklung») de las ideas del filósofo dentro de las diversas obras, de acuerdo con la famosa teoría de Werner Jaeger que data de 1923. El ensayo de Lucio Bertelli está precisamente dedicado a la reconstrucción de las reacciones a la publicación de esta teoría, sus

antecedentes y su reflejo en las debilidades que ella implica, incluso en el análisis contemporáneo.

El recién desaparecido Aleš Havlíček, a quien Jakub Jinek dedica una nota *in memoriam* a final del fascículo, traza la herencia de unas investigaciones aristotélicas de la *Política* en el *Leviatán* de Thomas Hobbes. El estudioso advierte que la definición del hombre como animal “social” va a desarrollarse en Hobbes con la caracterización de los opuestos extremos, o sea del hombre “natural” y del hombre “artefacto”, los dos utilizados en lugar del adjetivo “político”. Gracias al estudio de Havlíček el primer número de «Pegé» se cierra con una perspectiva diacrónica, presentando una vez más la herencia del pensamiento político antiguo en los tiempos modernos en clave no tanto de “supervivencia”, sino de fructífera y estimulante “vitalidad”.

# Human and Divine Lives in Book X of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*

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## *Abstract*

The paper analyses the dual form of striving for a good life underlying Aristotle's distinction between "human" and "divine" lives. The paper explores this theme with regard to the close connection between ethics and politics inherent in Aristotle's analyses, focusing primarily on the specific relationship between politics and philosophy outlined in this connection in Book X of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. The distinction between political and philosophical life is interpreted not as a definition of two different life contents we are to choose from, but as a definition of two attitudes or perspectives our lives can be approached from – either from the perspective of a variety of different types of actions performed in the social space, or with regard to the unifying element binding our life together reflexively in a coherent whole. Taking into account the relevant principles of Aristotelian anthropology, the paper demonstrates that philosophical contemplation thus conceived is already grounded in political life and it does not stand against it as an option of some "other" life released from socio-political ties. The proposed interpretation makes it possible to alleviate the tension in Aristotle's concept of political and philosophical life and thereby support a more coherent reading of the conclusion of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

## *Key Words*

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotelian Anthropology,  
Political Life, Philosophical Life, Good Life

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Aristotle's reflexion on the dual form of striving for a good life and his distinction between "human" and "divine" lives was one of his important

contributions to ethical discussion taking place in ancient Greece. In my paper I am going to deal with this subject with regard to the close connection between ethics and politics, focusing primarily on the specific relationship between politics and philosophy outlined in Book X of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

### 1. *The Two Best Lives*

Aristotle's distinction between "human" and "divine" lives in the last book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* appears in the context of the search for human happiness, i.e. a successful or happy life (*eudaimonia*), which frames the ethical exploration in this treatise<sup>1</sup>. The initial definition of happiness as "activity of soul exhibiting virtue" (*NE* 1098a 17) is also evoked in the concluding passages of Book X which are going to be the immediate subject of our exploration:

If happiness is activity in accordance with virtue (*energeia kat' aretên*), it is reasonable that it should be in accordance with the highest virtue; and this will be that of the best thing in us. Whether it be reason or something else that is this element which is thought to be our natural ruler and guide and to take thought of things noble and divine, whether it be itself also divine or only the most divine element in us, the activity of this in accordance with its proper virtue will be perfect happiness (*NE* 1177a 11-18)<sup>2</sup>.

Drawing on this definition, Aristotle goes on to present a more precise distinction between the relevant activities, distinguishing between the two kinds of life these activities represent: on the one hand there is "life according to reason" (*kata ton nûn bios*), hereafter called divine life, on the other hand there is "life according to the other virtues" (*kata tên allên*

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<sup>1</sup> For the conception of *eudaimonia*, see e.g. LEAR 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Quotations from the *Nicomachean Ethics* are taken from the translation by D. Ross (ARISTOTLE 2009). Quotations from the *Politics* are taken from the translation by H. Rackham (ARISTOTLE 1959).



*aretên*), hereafter called human life. The distinction between the two lives also implies a corresponding value hierarchy:

...that which is proper to each thing is by nature best and most pleasant for each thing; for man, therefore, the life according to reason is best and pleasantest, since reason more than anything else is man. This life therefore is also the happiest. But in a secondary degree the life in accordance with the other kind of virtue is happy (*NE* 1178a 6-10).

This distinction is further supported by a reference to the composite character of human nature, containing an emotional component as well as a rational one (*NE* 1178a 19-23). Therefore, the two types of life represent two types of happiness, and, in a way that is at first sight unexpected, they dualise Aristotle's answer to the question of a good life that the whole treatise revolves around.

Aristotle is intentionally brief in distinguishing the two kinds of happiness, and hence the closing passages of the *Nicomachean Ethics* understandably attract the attention of interpreters, especially for the following reasons: the whole *Nicomachean Ethics* is placed in the political context and it deals with issues of action within human community, i.e. within the *polis*. The opening passages explicitly emphasize the political grounding of ethics (*NE* I 2) and the political interest in ethical education (*NE* I 9; I 13). Similarly, its ending also supports this connection, referring in its last chapter to the legislative framework of ethical education (*NE* X 9), thereby creating a natural transition to a treatise on political matters, i.e. the *Politics*. Therefore, Aristotle's interest seems to be directed primarily towards the political sphere. His exploration is explicitly focused on the realm of *praxis*, i.e. it does not strive for a mere theoretical handling of a problem, but maps the space for action and turns to those who act in that space, actively entering political affairs (*NE*

1095a)<sup>3</sup>. This is the sphere in which Aristotle's addressees are to attest their qualities.

Taking into account that Aristotle's ethics is so obviously evolving on the platform of the *polis*, the ethical virtues Aristotle is dealing with can at the same time be called political virtues, and "life according to the other virtues" can be paraphrased as political life: "the activity of the practical virtues is exhibited in political or military affairs" (*NE* 1177b 6-7). On the other hand, "life according to reason" can be paraphrased as theoretical or contemplative life, i. e. philosophical life<sup>4</sup>.

The accentuation of theoretical life coming in Chapters 7 and 8 of Book X, where it is explicitly accredited supremacy over political life, may, however, seem surprising, disturbing or downright paradoxical within the whole of Aristotle's proceedings. Accordingly, interpreters are not unanimous on the reading of Book X, disagreeing on the issue of the mutual relationship between the two types of the "best lives" as well as the overall consistency of Aristotle's treatment of these motives. A number of authors emphasize the tensions within Aristotle's conception<sup>5</sup>, suggesting a whole range of interpretations to cope with these tensions<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> This orientation of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is emphasized e.g. by O'CONNOR 1999, 109: «Aristotle's primary addressee is a man driven by ambition, an ambition that manifests itself fundamentally if not ultimately in politics. Aristotle issues an invitation to virtue that is aimed specifically at such ambitious men».

<sup>4</sup> However, I do not think we can understand this term as *vita contemplativa*, either in the sense of the medieval concept of *contemplatio* or in the sense of the modern distinction *vita contemplativa* / *vita activa*.

<sup>5</sup> See for example URMSON 1995, NUSSBAUM 2001.

<sup>6</sup> A review of research on this issue is presented by GOTLIEB 2009. As far as Czech research is concerned, a recent study written by Stanislav Synek retains a certain tension in the relationship between the two lives: «it is not clear whether man is more an individual being whose highest and most meaningful realisation rests in self-sufficient contemplation (*theôria*) with minimal dependence on the life of the community, or whether man is more a "naturally" social being whose happiness depends on the

In my paper I am going to try and moderate the paradoxical impression of the concluding passages of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and to show that politics and contemplation in Aristotle's concept do not stand next to one another as two disparate activities but, on the contrary, are connected by a very specific relationship.

## 2. *The Choice of a Life?*

First of all, let us take a look at whether Aristotle's distinction between "life according to reason" (*kata ton nûn bios*) and "life according to the other virtues" (*kata tèn allên aretên*) should be understood as a distinction between two life alternatives inviting us to choose one of two ways of life, on the one hand offering a life devoted to activity within the *polis* exercising a wide range of ethical virtues, and on the other hand a life devoted to contemplation, remote from political affairs. These two "lives" are presented in Aristotle's work as serious candidates for a good life. Strictly speaking, there is one more candidate, i.e. the life dedicated to pleasure; that is, however, degraded in Aristotle's treatise to a position of a less-than-human life, "the life of cattle"<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, although Aristotle proceeds from the trichotomy of life alternatives commonly accepted in public opinion and including the life of pleasure, the political life and the

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happiness of others and therefore cannot be achieved without a "good" or "happy" company of other people. This indicates the limitations of the whole of Aristotle's concept: the impossibility of uniting human and divine perspectives, and hence the impossibility of satisfactorily answering the initial question what *practicable human happiness* really is» (SYNEK 2011, 239, translation is mine). Nevertheless, Synek immediately acknowledges certain dynamics this tension brings to Aristotle's concept of the realisation of human nature.

<sup>7</sup> As far as the value of pleasure in human life is concerned, let us refer to a more sophisticated analysis in Book VII and X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which shows that pleasure is not to be completely dismissed from human life and examines its appropriate role more comprehensively.

philosophical life (*NE* 1095b 15-19)<sup>8</sup>, in fact he works with the dichotomy of political and philosophical lives. Do the two members of this dichotomy, however, stand before us as objects of a life choice? Is it possible to choose one before the other?

On this matter let us first mention that the motif of the choice of a way of life is well known in classical tradition and it has been the subject of a number of literary treatments. One of the examples is Prodicus's allegory *Hercules at the Crossroads*, where the proposed alternatives one of which Hercules is to choose at the threshold of his adulthood are a comfortable life of pleasure and a life based on virtue, accompanied, however, by pain and striving (*Xenophon, Mem.* II 1, 21-34)<sup>9</sup>. The motif is also presented by Plato, who deals with the question of the choice of life in his dialogues *Gorgias*, *Apology of Socrates* or *Republic*. In the *Apology* he presents a distinction between two kinds of life aspiration: one of them is aimed at money, reputation and honour, and the other one is aimed at reason, truth and the cultivation of the soul (*Apol.* 29d-30b). In *Gorgias* the question in what way one should live is asked explicitly, and two life possibilities are suggested the requirements of which we have to consider with all due responsibility: on the one hand a life devoted to active involvement in political sphere, where actions are accompanied by honour and credit, on the other hand a life devoted to philosophy (*Gorg.* 500b-d). With peculiar gravity the motif of the life choice is incorporated in the concluding passage in Book X of the *Republic*. Here we encounter the soul of man on the threshold of a new birth facing the necessity of choosing not one of two alternatives, but one of a whole range of possible lives. This choice is irreversible and with all gravity it makes man once and for all responsible for who he is. (*Resp.* 617d-621b).

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<sup>8</sup> The idea of three ways of life corresponding to the threefold structure of the soul is also elaborated by Plato (*Resp.* 436a-441c, cf. *Resp.* 586a-e).

<sup>9</sup> The allegory was modelled on a passage from the *Works and Days* by Hesiod (Hesiod, *Op.* 287-292).

For further elaboration of our subject matter it should be noted in this place that Plato at the same time indicates the serious pitfalls of the precarious situation of the soul. The choice of a destiny may be carried out blindly and impetuously, which is characteristically demonstrated already in the case of the first chooser, who inconsiderately reaches for the life of a tyrant, not realising in time the horrible deeds accompanying that kind of life. It is very telling that the unfortunate choice is performed by the soul of a man who had lived his previous life decently, but – and this is crucial – it was a decency based only on habit, not on philosophical understanding (*aneu filosofias, Resp.* 619d 1)<sup>10</sup>.

Coming back to Aristotle, we may ask the question whether also Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics* should be read in the light of the indicated text tradition. Are the two lives – political and philosophical – alternatives for the choice of the way of life? I think such a reading would be inaccurate, especially considering Aristotle's understanding of choice. Aristotle deals with the issue of choice (*prohairesis*) extensively in his ethical theory, but instead of the idea of absolute choice determining the whole of our existence he employs the idea of relative choice, i.e. preferential choice presupposing selection and preceding deliberation<sup>11</sup>. That is why in Book III of the *Nicomachean Ethics* he repeatedly emphasises that choice concerns the means, not the ends. Therefore, we choose the means or ways of certain actions, but not the end itself that we act for. However, the choice of a life would be a choice of an end. Unlike the Platonic vision saying that “the choice of a different life inevitably determined a different character” (*Resp.* 618b), Aristotle

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<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that under closer examination the position of Plato reveals a number of parallels and a deeper congruence with Aristotle. When Plato distinguishes sharply between different „lives“ in various passages of his dialogues, he prepares a ground for a deeper examination of the relationship between politics and philosophy, which prove to coincide in the person of a philosopher considered as a true politician. In this context see especially *Gorgias* 484c-521d, *Theaitetus* 173c-176b and *Republic* VI-VII.

<sup>11</sup> See NUSSBAUM 2001, 307 and nn.

assumes that it is particular ways of acting that are the objects of choice, and they are constitutive of human character (*NE* 1114a 9). That corresponds to his understanding of responsibility for the way of life we lead. In the Aristotelian perspective we are not “what we choose to be once and for all, but what we choose *to do* at each moment”<sup>12</sup>.

### 3. *Distinguishing Life Perspectives*

Having clarified this, we can proceed to considering the value of the two ways of life and asking about the criteria we use when distinguishing between them. Let us begin with Aristotle’s question (*NE* 1178a 34-35) whether intention, or, more precisely, deliberate choice (*prohairesis*), is more important for virtue than actions (*praxeis*). Aristotle himself answers this question by a repeated reference to the idea that what determines the nature of ethical conduct is, above all, deliberate choice: “it is thought to be most closely bound up with virtue, and to discriminate characters better than actions do” (*NE* 1111b 5; cf. 1112 a2-3). This conviction corresponds to the distinction between the external and internal character of action, and Aristotle demonstrates it in several places, e.g. by his reminder that it is not enough to perform just *actions*, but it is necessary to perform these actions *as a just man*, i. e. as one who decides and acts with regard to the principles of ethical conduct (*NE* 1105a 30-1105b 9; cf. *NE* 1144a 13-21). Conditions of ethically valuable action are specified in the following way:

...if the acts that are in accordance with the virtues have themselves a certain character it does not follow that they are done justly or temperately. The agent also must be in a certain condition when he does them; in the first place he must have knowledge, secondly he must choose the acts, and choose them for their own sakes, and thirdly his action must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character (*NE* 1105a 28-34).

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<sup>12</sup> AUBENQUE 1963, 152.

At the same time, the nature of ethical conduct is based on practical wisdom, *phronêsis*, i.e. the ability to discover in the changeable constellations of our lives the optimal way of responding to the challenges of the situations we find ourselves in. The structure of conduct then involves a cooperation of the ability to find appropriate ways of behaviour with the ability to orientate these ways towards the overall course of our life: virtue is responsible for aiming at the correct goal, and practical wisdom then in the light of this goal chooses the correct means leading to it (*NE* 1144a 8-9)<sup>13</sup>. It should be noted that what we mean by “means” here are particular ways of acting which in particular situations in specific ways fulfil our idea of how we should act to make our life successful.

The distinction between a deliberate choice and an act enables Aristotle to outline the nature of ethical conduct more sharply and contrast it with activities having the character of *technê* rather than *praxis*. While the result of *technê* is assessed on the basis of a certain task having been performed, ethical conduct is assessed not only according to the external appearance of the act in question, but mainly according to what inner disposition is enacted in the actual choices of the agent.

As Aristotle comes back to these constituents of virtue in Book X, asking once again what the role of deliberate choice is and what that of the action itself, the question posed in this way can be an important clue for grasping the relationship between philosophical and political lives, because different answers to it open up different perspectives regarding this relationship. From the perspective of actions political and philosophical lives are different in their contents, are different in the nature of the activities performed. The difference between the two ways of life would, from this perspective, lie in the difference between their actual contents.

However, the external appearance of an action, as we have seen, is not the only criterion. Activities can be evaluated not only in terms of *what*

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<sup>13</sup> On this issue, cf. MOSS 2011.

we do, but also in terms of what principles we are following while performing them, i.e. *what* we act *for*. Introducing the perspective of purposes and aims then also makes it possible to form a different structure of the relationship between political and philosophical lives. The difference will not consist in the different contents but in the overall orientation of life.

Political life could be characterized as life aimed at a wide range of particular ethical virtues set in the framework of social coexistence. Philosophical life, i.e. life lived from the position of *theôria*, would, in contrast, offer a higher measure of integration of individual activities in the whole of life, relating these activities to the unity of a single happy life<sup>14</sup>.

I think this distinction may help us achieve a less tense interpretation of Aristotle's understanding of the relationship between political and philosophical lives, offering the conception of politics and philosophy as two attitudes or perspectives our lives can be approached from – once from the perspective of a multitude of various types of action performed in the social space, once with regard to the unifying element binding our life together reflexively in a coherent whole.

What appears on the outside as the same life can therefore be lived either philosophically or politically, depending on the understanding of the agent. The difference between political and philosophical life would then be based not on different contents of the lives in question but on different perspectives from which a person views his or her actions. Therefore, it is not a distinction between two different types of life, but rather a distinction

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<sup>14</sup> «In the political life, the dominant attention and value remains with the individual virtuous actions. The contemplative life places attention and value on the single happy life made up of these parts. When many good actions are fully integrated into one happy life, then one is living theoretically...» (GARVER 2006, 196).



between two ways of approaching one's life coexisting in a particular life of an individual<sup>15</sup>.

Distinguishing the two elements coexisting in one life<sup>16</sup> well corresponds to Aristotle's reflections on a happy life, i.e. *eudaimonia*. Formal characteristics of *eudaimonia* include "perfection" and "self-sufficiency": "Happiness, then, is something final and self-sufficient, and is the end of action" (*NE* 1097b 20-21). That suggests the question: in what sense can our life be as perfect and complete as to manifest the quality of *eudaimonia*? This perfection or completeness can be understood in terms of time, which is a possibility that Aristotle explores in the first book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where he, however, at the same time highlights the obvious paradoxes the time perspective necessarily results in: we could not call anyone a happy man until his death, when he finally escapes any possible twists of fate; nevertheless, even after his death he can be troubled by unfortunate events befalling his offspring, etc. Therefore, it is more appropriate to relate *eudaimonia* to a different type of holistic understanding of life.

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<sup>15</sup> «Note that on the interpretation of 10.6-8 as giving an outline of happiness, we do not take the phrases 'a life lived according to the mind' (or philosophical wisdom) (1177b30) or 'a life lived according to the other virtues' (1177a21) to mean separate ways of life, or possible bibliographies, but rather ways of carrying on with life, which coexist in the life of one individual» (PAKALUK 2005, 327). Pakaluk immediately goes on to explain how he imagines this coexistence: «Aristotle when lecturing in philosophy is living 'life according to the mind', and when he is writing his will, and exercising administrative virtue and justice, he is living 'life according to the other virtues'. Those phrases should be taken to indicate types of activity» (PAKALUK 2005, 327). For an opposite view arguing that «the theoretical life and the 'life in accordance with the other virtue' (1178a 6-9) are competing alternatives, and not two aspects of the same life», see LEAR 2004, 177 and nn.

<sup>16</sup> In this sense, a man applying ethical virtue and a man devoting himself to contemplation «are not two different persons; rather, it is one and the same person on different levels of excellence» (AUBENQUE 2003, 98).

Again, we can begin with the distinction between *techné* as instrumental activity aiming to an external result, and *praxis* as activity performed with a consciousness of the purpose and a full awareness of the activity itself, with the purpose being not the external “product” but the activity itself.

We realise that our life is never fully completed in the form of a perfect actualisation lying in front of us as a completed “product”. We are on the way to this actualisation and in this sense our life is more an aiming, not a fulfilment. In spite of that, we may be able to view our life as a whole. This complete view can be best achieved in certain self-reflexive acts allowing us a sort of an intellectual insight in what we are doing<sup>17</sup>. It is this self-reflection accompanied by self-awareness that brings the necessary stability and unity to our life:

The attribute in question [i.e. permanence], then, will belong to the happy man, and he will be happy throughout his life; for always, or by preference to everything else, he will do and contemplate what is excellent (*praxeî kai theôrêsei ta kat'aretên*)... (NE 1100b 18-20)<sup>18</sup>.

The quoted formulation explicitly underlines the connection between *praxis* and *theôria*, and Aristotle further elaborates this connection in

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<sup>17</sup> «...if he who sees perceives that he sees, and he who hears, that he hears, and he who walks, that he walks, and in the case of all other activities similarly there is something which perceives that we are active, so that if we perceive, we perceive that we perceive, and if we think, that we think; and if to perceive that we perceive or think is to perceive that we exist (for existence was defined as perceiving or thinking)...)» (NE 1170a 29-b 1).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. NE 1152a 15-17. Referring to the nature of ethical virtues, M. Pakaluk says: «their being goals somehow involves our being able to reflect upon or *see* them with reasonable satisfaction; this is not philosophical contemplation strictly, but some kind of intellectual perception, presumably of the *kalon*, namely what is admirable and attractive in action. It must be Aristotle's view ultimately that to carry out a fitting action is somehow to *see* that it is fitting, and that our seeing that it is so is the best part of the action, and that there is no point to life beyond *seeing* in this way» (PAKALUK 2005, 328). Cf. RORTY 1978, 346.

Book IX, determining as appropriate objects of *theôria* not only our own actions, but even more so the actions of our friends in whom we see ourselves, so to speak<sup>19</sup>:

If happiness lies in living and being active, and the good man's activity is virtuous and pleasant in itself, as we have said at the outset, and a thing's being one's own is one of the attributes that make it pleasant, and we can contemplate our neighbours better than ourselves and their actions better than our own, and if the actions of virtuous men who are their friends are pleasant to good men (since these have both the attributes that are naturally pleasant) — if this be so, the supremely happy man will need friends of this sort, since his purpose is to contemplate worthy actions and actions that are his own, and the actions of a good man who is his friend have both these qualities (*NE* 1169b 30-1170a 4)<sup>20</sup>.

If the range of objects of contemplation is conceived in this way, it may also suggest a clue for a better understanding of the meaning of *theôria*, described in Book X as the highest and most divine activity.

We know that divine life consists in contemplating oneself. Which human activity would then be the most divine? It might be the contemplation of the divine, meaning we would try as much as we could to contemplate the same that god is contemplating. This concept of

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<sup>19</sup> For a broader context, see *NE* 1169b 14-1170a 5. On the political character of friendship, cf. GARVER 2006, 141.

<sup>20</sup> The role of friendship in connection with the awareness of oneself is further elaborated in the passage following the extract quoted in Note 17: «...if perceiving that one lives is in itself one of the things that are pleasant (for life is by nature good, and to perceive what is good present in oneself is pleasant); and if life is desirable, and particularly so for good men, because to them existence is good and pleasant (for they are pleased at the consciousness of the presence in them of what is in itself good); and if as the virtuous man is to himself, he is to his friend also (for his friend is another self) — if all this be true, as his own being is desirable for each man, so, or almost so, is that of his friend. Now his being was seen to be desirable because he perceived his own goodness, and such perception is pleasant in itself. He must, therefore, perceive the existence of his friend together with his own, and this will be realized in their living together and sharing in discussion and thought...» (*NE* 1170b 1-12).

*theôria* would best correspond to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, and the value of theoretical activity would in this case be derived from the value of its object<sup>21</sup>. However, if we place the emphasis on the reflexive aspect of *theôria* that we register in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, contemplating our own activities may be seen as the most divine activity approximating what god is doing: like god viewing himself, we would be viewing our own activity. Only in this sense what is divine could at the same time be what is most proper to us.

Therefore, I think a plausible interpretation should connect both of the two steps mentioned before: broaden the field of contemplation to include a wider range of possible objects<sup>22</sup>, and at the same time revise the understanding of Aristotle's concept of *homoïôsis theôi*, i. e. the concept of the imitation of the divine which is an important fundament of Aristotle's ethical thinking. The perspective of the *Nicomachean Ethics* shows that this imitation does not have to be a strict imitation of divine activity in a purely intelligible sphere in which god as pure reason relates to the most valuable objects of thinking, but it can be an imitation of the very reflexivity *theôria* is connected to in the context of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

#### 4. Phronêsis and Theôria

Contemplation conceived in this way, then, does not need to be put against political life as some "other", apolitical life. This is also intimated by Aristotle's polemics with the opinion that philosophy means retreating

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<sup>21</sup> *Theôria*, in the broadest sense of "seeing" or "viewing", denotes perfect knowledge related to necessary and unchangeable objects.

<sup>22</sup> A certain flexibility is suggested by Aristotle himself in the closing passage of Chapter 8 in Book X, where he says that "happiness is some form of contemplation" (*theôria tis*). Hence it seems he does not mean the strictly conceived *theôria* of the *Metaphysics*.

from active life to seclusion and inactivity, implied in Book VII of the *Politics*<sup>23</sup>. Here is what Aristotle is saying on this:

But the active life is not necessarily active in relation to other men, as some people think, nor are only those processes of thought active that are pursued for the sake of the objects that result from action, but far more those speculations and thoughts that have their end in themselves and are pursued for their own sake (*Pol.* 1325b 18-22).

What is crucial here is the emphasis on activity, which can be internal as well as external in character. Taking into account this statement, we can go on to define more precisely the relationship between theoretical and political activity. Instead of making a sharp distinction between contemplative and political life we can say that contemplation completes political life and it is itself already grounded in political life: the political nature of man expressed by the term *zôon politikon* is grounded in the ability of speech and thinking, represented in the formula *zôon logon echon* (*Pol.* 1253a 10-18). Both of these terms underline the political character of friendship which makes our self-reflection and realising our own goodness possible through the reflection of the actions of another person, “another self” with whom we are “living together and sharing in discussion and thought” (*NE* 1170b 11-12). Both of these terms together demonstrate to what extent human rationality is connected to the political nature of man. Also, it is the space of the *polis* where this rationality is primarily manifested. A wide range of human activities require *phronêsis* which is necessary to a good life because it constitutes the rational structure of ethical virtue (*NE* 1178a 10-19).

As the ability to relate to both the general and the particular enabling us to find particular ways of applying ethical virtue in the light of general

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<sup>23</sup> A typical exponent of the conviction about the antagonism of politics and philosophy and a proponent of the thesis about the inactive, and in that sense “unmanly”, nature of philosophy is Callicles from Plato’s dialogue *Gorgias* (*Gorg.* 485c-486d).

principles, *phronêsis* is an important bridge between practical and theoretical reason. In this sense, it also prepares the ground for the development of *theôria*:

[Practical wisdom] is not supreme over philosophic wisdom, i.e. over the superior part of us, any more than the art of medicine is over health; for it does not use it but provides for its coming into being; it issues orders, then, for its sake, but not to it (*NE* 1145a 6-9).

In what sense, then, is *theôria* dependent on the ability of ethical action within the *polis*? Only those endowed with *phronêsis* can judge the relative value of human activities, but above all they understand the activities performed for their own sake; therefore, they can see the difference between activities having the character of *energeia* and activities having the character of *kinêsis*<sup>24</sup>, and from this perspective they also view ethical action. Activity construed on the model of *kinêsis* has the nature of instrumental activity and its goal lies outside the activity itself<sup>25</sup>. By contrast, activity construed on the model of *energeia* is itself its own goal, and it is exactly this kind of activity that ethical action is, at least in its pure form.

Here we can distinguish between simple virtue, which is necessary to a good life and is accompanied by desirable elements such as honour, power or social status, and nobility, which values virtue for its own sake, i.e. for its intrinsic value<sup>26</sup>. This is the course of the subtle analyses of the nature of virtue in which Aristotle distinguishes more finely between ethically and politically motivated virtue; an example of this is his analysis of courage in Book III of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where he says that political courage of a citizen-soldier is most like courage, but it is not pure courage, inasmuch as it is motivated by secondary principles in the form

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<sup>24</sup> This distinction is suggested in the *Metaphysics* (*Met.* 1048b).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. the distinction between virtue and cleverness (*deinotês*) in *NE* 1144a.

<sup>26</sup> See BROADIE 2005, 98. Cf. *Eth. Eud.* 1248b-1249b.

of public appreciation or mere obedience of the law<sup>27</sup>. The principal expression of this point is the note that virtue is not only *kata ton orthon logon*, but *meta tû orthû logû*: “it is not merely the state in accordance with correct reason, but the state that implies the presence of correct reason, that is virtue“ (*NE* 1144b 24-26).

The shift between the two positions, between politically and ethically motivated virtues, is the result of ethical development. In the course of this development a range of particular actions filling the political space can be perceived not as a simple sum of activities constituting a good life, but it can be elevated to viewing the intrinsic value of virtue and related to the unifying perspective of a happy life as a whole, conceived also in the sense of *energeia*. A man endowed with *phronêsis* already has all the prerequisites for that.

Further, it follows from the nature of the human being that a higher measure of unity is given by a higher measure of integration of diverse components<sup>28</sup>. Therefore, the unity of human life does not rest in performing the same activity all the time: “...if the nature of anything were simple, the same action would always be most pleasant to it.” (*NE* 1154b 25-26). But that is not the case with human beings. The composite human nature finds its unity in a higher measure of integration connecting diverse activities<sup>29</sup>. The same point that is applied on the level of political life can thus be transferred to the level of individual life: there, too, unity is conceived as integration of plurality and diversity.

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<sup>27</sup> Here we can also follow up with a reference to the distinction between habitual and reflected virtue which is a part of the Socratic-Platonic heritage and was suggested above by the reference to the eschatological myth in Book X of the *Republic*.

<sup>28</sup> Let us remember Aristotle's analyses of unity in the *Metaphysics*, where the unity of a heap is confronted with a higher unity of an integrated whole (*Met.* 1052a).

<sup>29</sup> This should also be the disposition of the *phronimos*: he is the one who knows that isolated actions without coherence and continuity do not establish a good life (see *NE* 1105a 30-34).

Hence, it is necessary to add one more note to the above mentioned principles of Aristotelian anthropology: “man is not the best thing in the world” (*NE* 1141a 21-23). His human, social activities, although they achieve their own perfection, still, as to their value, come second<sup>30</sup>. However, they form the necessary condition for the integrating theoretical insight into these activities. The contemplative life, therefore, does not release itself from social ties, as Aristotle explicitly emphasises by repeated references to social life being necessary to happiness (*NE* 1169b 14-1170a 5; cf. 1157b 20-22; 1099b 4). Hence, the self-sufficiency of a happy life is not supposed to mean a solitary life:

...by self-sufficient we do not mean that which is sufficient for a man by himself, for one who lives a solitary life, but also for parents, children, wife, and in general for his friends and fellow citizens, since man is born for citizenship (*NE* 1097b 8-12).

Therefore, I think that on the basis of the proposed evidence it is possible to alleviate the tension in Aristotle's concept of political and philosophical life, thus supporting a more coherent reading of the conclusion of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. It turns out that both of the two ways of life, or, rather, both of the two life perspectives, do not stand next to one another as objects of alternative choice, but they are connected by a more fundamental relationship. The unifying element of Aristotle's conception is the element of activity, the actively lived life. The conception of life as *energeia* is suggested by the argumentation as early as in Chapter 7 of Book I, where Aristotle is looking for the *ergon* of man,

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<sup>30</sup> Why living a life based on *phronêsis* is not enough? Here is what A. Rorty has to say on the subject: «Theoria can complete and perfect the practical life, making it not only self-justified but self-contained because its grounds are contained within it» (RORTY 1978, 350).



i. e. a specific activity appropriate to man as man<sup>31</sup>. Aristotle at the same time demonstrates that this active, en-ergetic charge is present not only in political involvement, but also, in an even greater measure, in theoretical activity.

The proposed analysis is also in harmony with the Aristotelian conception of ethical improvement, i. e. the conception of education on the principle of gradual progress. The space for education is, first and foremost, the *polis*. Again, let us point out that ethical virtues are above all political virtues, because self-rule, i. e. the state of man understanding oneself as an agent and choosing acts for their own sake, develops through submission to political rule<sup>32</sup>. In relation to reason it means that a man learns to obey his own reason by first listening to and obeying someone else's reason – as a child the reason of the adults, as an adult most of all the reason of the law<sup>33</sup>. What is at first merely potentially reasonable conduct may thus through habituation and subsequent reflection become fully reasonable conduct which the agent understands as good and beautiful.

Habituation is an important stage of ethical development; however, it is not its final stage<sup>34</sup>. Aristotle's analyses allow for gradual improvement with a better understanding of ethical motivation playing the key role, and this understanding comes from rational reflection. It is this understanding that opens the path to the above explored realisation of one's own life as *energeia*. Therefore, the essential grounding of *theôria* in the space of political life which the proposed interpretation tried to follow valorises

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<sup>31</sup> The counterpart to the active conduct of life is inactivity comparable to the passivity of a sleeping person, which is an image Aristotle uses repeatedly to underline his distinction (*NE* 1095b 32-1096a 2; 1098b 32-1099a 6; 1178b 19-20).

<sup>32</sup> GARVER 2006, 130. Conversely, individual vices make political participation impossible because through them people become too slave-like or too despotic, and hence they cannot take part in the political alternation of ruling and being ruled.

<sup>33</sup> The law is "wisdom without desire", as Aristotle puts it in the *Politics* (*Pol.* 1287a 33).

<sup>34</sup> Cf. NUSSBAUM 2001, 285-287.

Aristotle's central thesis of the political embedding of human life, as well as his thesis of the existence of the *polis* "for the good life" (*Pol.* 1252b 30).

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*Politica*: questioni di composizione.  
È ancora praticabile il metodo di Jaeger?

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*Riassunto*

Werner Jaeger rivendicò a se stesso la scoperta di un’“evoluzione organica” all’interno delle opere di Aristotele, pubblicando i risultati delle sue ricerche in una celebre monografia del 1923. Il confronto tra le recensioni e gli studi che seguirono su questo libro epocale dimostra la non totale originalità delle posizioni di Jaeger e soprattutto la discutibilità di alcuni dei suoi principi di base.

*Parole chiave*

Aristotele, *Politica*, Werner Jaeger, “evoluzione organica”, metodo

*Title*

*Politics*: Composition Issues. It’s still Workable the “Jaeger Method”?

*Abstract*

Werner Jaeger claims to himself the discovery of an “organic evolution” within the works of Aristotle, publishing the results of his research in a famous monograph dated 1923. The comparison of the reviews and studies that followed on this epochal book shows not complete originality of Jaeger positions and, more important, how problematic result some of its basic principles.

*Key Words*

Aristotle's *Politics*, Werner Jaeger, "Organic Evolution", Method

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Quando fu pubblicato nel 1923 l'*Aristoteles* di Jaeger<sup>1</sup> fu salutato quasi come una rivoluzione copernicana nella rappresentazione della sua filosofia, un libro *epoch-making* che allontanava definitivamente Aristotele dalla sua immagine scolastica di filosofo sistematico, ma nello stesso tempo diviso tra idealismo platonico ed empirismo, insomma tra l'Aristotele platonico e l'Asclepiade di Theodor Gomperz. Era soprattutto la novità del metodo a essere sottolineata: il fatto cioè che anche nel caso di Aristotele, come in quello di Platone, si poteva ricostruire una "evoluzione organica" (*organische Entwicklung*) che al posto di considerare le due anime di Aristotele - quella platonico-idealista e quella empirica - come un'antitesi costante del suo pensiero, le collocava come le posizioni estreme di una evoluzione che, attraverso varie fasi di allontanamento dal platonismo iniziale, conduce Aristotele al compimento ultimo di una visione del reale empirica e nello stesso tempo razionale.

La sensazione di una svolta definitiva si può leggere nell'elogio, più che recensione, fatto da Taylor all'opera di Jaeger su «Mind» nel 1924: «If any of us henceforth ventures to make assertions about Aristotle without having taken Mr. Jaeger's fascinating work into account, he will at least be speaking very terribly at his own peril»<sup>2</sup>.

L'unica riserva avanzata da Taylor è sul giudizio di Jaeger a proposito dell'evoluzione finale di Aristotele verso l'empirismo: quello che Jaeger presentava come un progresso o il compimento del *telos* della filosofia ari-

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<sup>1</sup> W. JAEGER, *Aristoteles. Grundlegung einer Geschichte seiner Entwicklung*, Berlin 1923.

<sup>2</sup> A. E. TAYLOR, «Mind» 33, 1924, 193.

stotelica, per Taylor era invece la storia tragica di un pensiero che perdeva la propria anima, quella platonico-idealista.

Non che mancassero voci di dissenso o di rettifica alla ricostruzione di Jaeger: per limitarci alla *Politica*, che è l'oggetto principale del nostro discorso, con un intervallo di pochi mesi dalla pubblicazione dell'*Aristoteles* usciva negli «Atti dell'Accademia delle Scienze di Vienna» (presentato nell'ottobre 1923, pubblicato nel 1924, ma anticipato nel gennaio 1922, quindi prima della pubblicazione dell'*Aristoteles*, da una comunicazione sullo stesso argomento nella «Società Scientifica di Utrecht») un ampio contributo di Hans von Arnim<sup>3</sup> - ben 127 pagine rispetto alle 36 dedicate alla *Politica* nell'*Aristoteles* - che rovesciava letteralmente l'ordine compositivo dei libri della *Politica* proposto da Jaeger: dissenziente sull'ordine dei libri, von Arnim era tuttavia perfettamente consenziente con il metodo jaegeriano della *genetische Entwicklung*. Lo stesso discorso si può fare per gli altri tre contributi che seguirono tra il 1923 e il 1934, di Stocks (1927)<sup>4</sup>, Barker (1931)<sup>5</sup>, Siegfried (1933)<sup>6</sup>: trattarli sommariamente, come pedissequae applicazioni del metodo di Jaeger, sarebbe ingiusto. Stocks proponeva non solo un ordine diverso di composizione dei libri della *Politica*, ma anche interessanti osservazioni sulla natura delle successive stesure delle varie *methodoi* o *logoi* che costituivano gli elementi del trattato nella sua forma definitiva, e soprattutto criticava, fornendo soluzioni alternative, uno degli argomenti principali della cronologia jaegeriana, quello dei rinvii interni ai vari libri presenti nella *Politica*. Barker, se non conte-

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<sup>3</sup> H. v. ARNIM, *Zur Entstehungsgeschichte der aristotelischen Politik*, «Ak. d. Wiss. In Wien» 200, 1924, 3-130.

<sup>4</sup> J. L. STOCKS, *The Composition of Aristotle's Politics*, «C1Q» 21, 1927, 177-187.

<sup>5</sup> E. BARKER, *The Life of Aristotle and the Composition of the Politics*, «CIR» 45, 1931, 162-172.

<sup>6</sup> W. SIEGFRIED, *Zur Entstehungsgeschichte von Aristoteles' Politik*, «Philologus» 42, 1933, 362-391.

stava il metodo genetico, distribuiva tuttavia su tre periodi, e non su due come proposto da Jaeger, la composizione dell'opera.

In questo quadro, critico sugli aspetti particolari dell'evoluzione di Aristotele, ma coerente nel metodo genetico-evolutivo, spicca la lunga recensione all'*Aristoteles* di Augustin Mansion del 1927<sup>7</sup>, il quale se concede che Jaeger ha ragione nel rifiutare «l'idea di un Aristotele, spirito freddo e critico, senza illusioni e quasi senza storia, le cui convinzioni, una volta formate, non sono quasi cambiate nel corso della sua lunga carriera» (p. 317), precisa tuttavia che «il trionfo che Jaeger si attribuisce è un po' troppo disinvolto» (*ibidem*). In effetti nell'introduzione all'*Aristoteles* Jaeger si attribuiva in modo molto marcato la scoperta del “principio dello sviluppo organico” nella filosofia di Aristotele e della rappresentazione storica del filosofo: «Es gehört zu den fast unbegreiflichen Paradoxien, an denen die Geschichte der menschlichen Erkenntnis reich ist, daß man das Prinzip der organischen Entwicklung bis heute nicht auf seinen Urheber angewandt hat, wenn man von einzelnen verdienstlichen, aber ganz partiellen und daher unwirksam gebliebenen Äußerungen absieht. Man darf ohne Übertreibung sagen, daß in einer Zeit, wo über Platons Werdegang eine ganze Literatur zusammen geschrieben ist von der Entwicklung des Aristoteles kaum jemand redet und jedenfalls fast niemand etwas weiß» (*Aristoteles*, p. 2).

Mansion innanzi tutto contestava a Jaeger il merito di essere stato l'“inventore” del metodo genetico-evolutivo, in quanto esso aveva precedenti non solo in Bernays, ma anche e soprattutto in Zeller, che metteva bene in evidenza i primordi platonici di Aristotele testimoniati dai *Dialoghi*, e il teologo belga era anche il primo a ricordare, seppure in una nota<sup>8</sup>, che una presentazione evolutiva del sistema aristotelico era già stata pro-

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<sup>7</sup> A. MANSION, *La genèse de l'oeuvre d'Aristote d'après les travaux récents*, «Rev. neoscolastique de philos.» 29, 1927, 307-341, 423-466.

<sup>8</sup> Ivi, 318 n. 1.

posta da Thomas Case in un articolo dell'«Enciclopedia Britannica» (1911, XI s.v. *Aristotle*) e ribadita con un certo risentimento in «Mind» del 1925 da parte dello stesso Case, soprattutto nei riguardi del recensore inglese dell'*Aristoteles*, A. E. Taylor, che l'aveva del tutto trascurata<sup>9</sup>. Per Mansion il merito che si poteva riconoscere a Jaeger non consisteva nella scoperta dell'evoluzione di Aristotele, ma nella determinazione più precisa delle sue tappe. Ma anche nel merito dei due termini estremi del percorso evolutivo di Aristotele Mansion non era soddisfatto della contrapposizione jaegeriana tra un Aristotele tutto idealismo platonico degli inizi e un Aristotele totalmente devoto alla ricerca empirica del particolare della fine carriera, e considerava l'opposizione troppo accentuata, troppo aprioristica e fondata su un pregiudizio di ordine psicologico (l'inconciliabilità delle due tendenze nello stesso individuo), che non teneva conto della compresenza delle due tendenze in molti periodi dell'attività di Aristotele. Secondo Mansion Jaeger aveva sostituito il conflitto tra Aristotele platonico e Aristotele asclepiadeo dell'Ottocento con la successione cronologica delle due caratteristiche. Alla *Politica* - probabilmente perché non rientrava nei suoi campi di indagine abituale - Mansion dedica uno spazio inferiore a quello riservato alla critica delle ipotesi jaegeriane sulla *Metafisica* e sugli scritti di fisica, tuttavia anche da queste poche pagine risultano evidenti quelli che sono a suo dire i limiti e l'aleatorietà del metodo genetico. La strategia di lettura di Mansion è piuttosto scaltra in quanto, dopo aver messo da parte in poche parole l'eterna questione dell'ordine dei libri, prende le mosse da un breve riassunto delle tesi di Ross<sup>10</sup>, valutando positivamente la sua proposta di mantenere l'ordine tradizionale dei libri, anche se riconosce che nella breve trattazione di Ross manca qualsiasi tentativo di affrontare il “problema storico della formazione del trattato”; se-

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<sup>9</sup> T. CASE, *The Development of Aristotle*, «Mind» 34, 1925, 80-86; il riferimento a Taylor si trova a p. 80.

<sup>10</sup> W. D. ROSS, *Aristotle*, London 1923; Ross aveva notizia del libro di Jaeger, ma non aveva potuto usarlo per il suo.

condo Ross<sup>11</sup> era infatti un errore «to suppose that there is an original or proper order of the books of Politics». Il riferimento è ovviamente alla ricostruzione di Jaeger. L'esame della questione della composizione del trattato è costruito in forma di dittico nel quale alle opinioni di Jaeger - rispetto alle quali Mansion mette in evidenza l'incertezza dei confronti tra *Politica* e *Protreptico* - vengono contrapposte le teorie di von Arnim, confronto dal quale si deduce in tutta evidenza che lo stesso metodo porta a conclusioni non solo diverse, ma opposte. Per Mansion questo non significa che il metodo "genetico" sia infondato, ma che la sua applicazione è estremamente delicata, mentre sia Jaeger sia von Arnim si sono affidati ad indizi "molto tenui", e soprattutto controvertibili, assunti al contrario come certi e assoluti. Il difetto di entrambi è quello «di aver accentuato troppo il senso di certi indizi» (p. 461) e soprattutto di aver considerato le differenze di dottrina e di metodo nelle diverse parti della *Politica* come esclusive tra di loro, mentre potrebbero essere semplicemente complementari o comunque derivare da una differenza di punti di vista. In definitiva, se il metodo "genetico" nell'analisi delle singole opere era l'unico che permetteva di dare ragione delle molte contraddizioni e varianti senza ricorrere alle facili - ma di solito infondate - soluzioni estrinseche dell'interpolatore o della glossa penetrata nel testo, tuttavia sia i termini dell'evoluzione aristotelica come erano posti da Jaeger, sia la cronologia delle singole parti dei trattati e in molti casi dei trattati stessi (si veda il caso della *Historia Animalium* o della *Fisica*) per Mansion erano tutt'altro che acquisizioni definitive, e l'opera di Jaeger era "in gran parte da rifare" (p. 464); la pretesa "rivoluzione" nella conoscenza della filosofia di Aristotele in realtà non si era realizzata perché, pur ammettendo che indubbiamente vi è stata una evoluzione nel suo pensiero e che questa evoluzione si riflette sulle parti che formano gli attuali trattati, tuttavia il fatto che esse si ritrovino nei trattati allo stato attuale significa che Aristotele con-

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<sup>11</sup> *Aristotle*, ed. cit., 248.



siderava questi la forma definitiva del suo pensiero; il fine della ricerca secondo il metodo “genetico” doveva consistere nel rendersi conto nella misura del possibile perché e quando Aristotele aveva proceduto a questi innesti. Le linee generali e la tendenza di questa evoluzione dovevano essere il risultato a posteriori di queste indagini particolari, non il presupposto sul quale veniva costruita la cronologia dei singoli trattati o delle loro parti.

Nell’ampia disamina di Mansion tuttavia non era dato molto rilievo al tema della relazione Platone-Aristotele posta da Jaeger come evoluzione graduale, da un Aristotele entusiasta accolto delle teorie platoniche (soprattutto dell’ultimo Platone) all’Aristotele empirista che abbandona definitivamente il retroterra platonico. Ma all’incirca nello stesso periodo della recensione di Mansion questo cardine della ricostruzione jaegeriana veniva messo in discussione e confutato indipendentemente anche da Hans G. Gadamer e da P. Shorey. In un suo celebre articolo su «Hermes» del 1928<sup>12</sup> Gadamer infirmava la validità di uno degli argomenti fondamentali del disegno jaegeriano, cioè il *Protreptico* come prova dell’adesione incondizionata di Aristotele alle idee di Platone e come termine di paragone per stabilire il grado di platonismo dei trattati aristotelici; Shorey, già nel 1924<sup>13</sup> e poi ancora nel 1927<sup>14</sup>, ribadiva che l’intera costruzione di Jaeger, per quanto potesse apparire stimolante e suggestiva al lettore, conteneva «much demonstrably false reasoning and misinterpretation of the text»<sup>15</sup>, soprattutto sull’argomento «evoluzione di Aristotele da platonico a positivista di stretta osservanza».

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<sup>12</sup> H. G. GADAMER, *Der aristotelische Protreptikos und die entwicklungsgeschichtliche Betrachtung der aristotelischen Ethik*, «Hermes» 63, 1928, 138-164.

<sup>13</sup> In una serie di seminari tenuti in Belgio: vd. notizia in P. SHOREY, *Note on the “Evolution of Aristotle” and Calogero’s “I Fondamenti della Logica Aristotelica”*, «CIP» 22, 1927, 422.

<sup>14</sup> Ivi.

<sup>15</sup> Ivi, 421.

La traduzione inglese dell'opera di Jaeger, a cura di Richard Robinson e pubblicata nel 1934<sup>16</sup>, e quella italiana, quasi contemporanea, a cura di G. Calogero (1935)<sup>17</sup>, non solo erano il segno che essa aveva raggiunto "lo stato di un classico", ma che c'era il rischio che il suo contenuto si trasformasse in "ortodossia", come avvertiva in tono piuttosto preoccupato Harold Cherniss nella sua lunga recensione alla traduzione di Robinson<sup>18</sup>; e per evitare questo rischio, a cui non avevano posto rimedio le «superficial and vaguely eulogistic» presentazioni dell'opera al suo apparire (ma ancora nel '35 quelle di Einarson e di Allan<sup>19</sup>, anche se con qualche riserva), Cherniss si applicava a una lunga confutazione dell'analisi di Jaeger utilizzando le critiche di Shorey, Gadamer, von Arnim, Gohlke, e arrivava a conclusioni non molto diverse da quelle di Mansion sulla composizione delle opere di Aristotele: anche concedendo che egli avesse incorporato nei suoi trattati riflessioni e discussioni risalenti ad epoca precedente, «we are bound - concludeva Cherniss - to consider that at the end the technical writings he (Aristotle) left were to his own mind a unified system» (p. 270). Come esempio Cherniss citava quello della *Politica*, dove secondo Jaeger nello strato più antico costituito dai libri II-III-VII-VIII Aristotele stesso avrebbe inserito più tardi il blocco dei libri IV-VI e premesso come introduzione il libro I: per Cherniss questo poteva significare soltanto che Aristotele considerava gli otto libri della *Politica* «a unified theory of politics» e che le contraddizioni che i critici moderni vi trovano, forse non apparivano tali ad Aristotele, mentre potevano essere soltanto oscillazioni o diversi punti di vista sullo stesso problema, che non ci ob-

<sup>16</sup> *Aristotle. Fundamentals of the history of his development*, transl. by R. ROBINSON, Oxford 1934.

<sup>17</sup> *Aristotele. Prime linee di una storia della sua evoluzione spirituale*, trad. di G. CALOGERO, Firenze 1935.

<sup>18</sup> A. CHERNISS, «AJP» 56, 1935, 261-271.

<sup>19</sup> B. EINARSON, «CIP» 30, 1935, 363-365; D. J. ALLAN, «Philosophy» 10, 1935, 96-98; si aggiunge al coro anche W. K. C. GUTHRIE, «JThS» 36, 1935, 87-89.

bligano a ritenerle indici di “differenti strati cronologici” dell’opera. La teoria dello “sviluppo organico” di Jaeger veniva liquidata da Cherniss con la sentenza che «philosophy, even in a single mind, does not follow the course of geological forces» (p. 271).

In una molto ponderata *mise à point* del significato dell’*Aristoteles* di Jaeger nella cultura filosofica del Novecento Mario Vegetti<sup>20</sup> riassume in questi termini i problemi non risolti della ricostruzione jaegeriana:

1) il “Platonismo”. L’immagine che Jaeger costruisce del “platonismo” da cui Aristotele dipenderebbe è troppo compatta e univoca (qualcuno si è spinto oltre e l’ha definita una “caricatura” del pensiero platonico)<sup>21</sup>. Aristotele non ha cominciato a costruire una sua autonoma filosofia solo dopo la morte di Platone, ma fin dall’inizio, «pur restando all’interno dell’orizzonte teorico del platonismo», egli si presenta piuttosto come “interlocutore” che come «passivo propagandista» delle dottrine del maestro (p. 44). E questa posizione, in sostanza già anticipata nelle critiche di Shorey degli anni Venti, è stata fortemente rimarcata dagli anni Cinquanta in poi dalle ricerche di I. Düring, fautore dell’«unità e della coesione della filosofia aristotelica»<sup>22</sup>, nella quale certe strutture di pensiero platoniche erano una costante.

2) I *Dialoghi*. La possibilità di usare questi scritti frammentari come criteri di datazione dei trattati si scontra con le difficoltà sollevate da Cherniss, Gigon e altri, e soprattutto da Düring, sulla loro effettiva adesione alle teorie platoniche.

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<sup>20</sup> M. VEGETTI, *L’Aristotele redento di Werner Jaeger*, «Il Pensiero» 17, 1972, 7-50.

<sup>21</sup> C. LORD, *The Character and Composition of Aristotle’s Politics*, «Political Theory» 9, 1981, 469; con riferimento in particolare alle teorie politiche di Platone; sulla rappresentazione jaegeriana di Platone vd. anche Ch. H. KAHN, *Werner Jaeger’s Portrayal of Plato*, in: W. M. CALDER III (ed.), *Werner Jaeger Reconsidered*, Atlanta (Georgia) 1992, 69-81.

<sup>22</sup> I. DÜRING, *Aristotele*, tr. it. a cura di P. DONINI, Milano 1976, 39.

3) L'empirismo. È questa la componente riconosciuta da tutti come la più debole della ricostruzione jaegeriana: a parte il fatto che le ricerche nell'ambito zoologico ormai non siano più ritenute le più recenti nell'attività di Aristotele, il ricorso ai *phainomena* e alle *doxai* è un dato costitutivo del metodo scientifico aristotelico a partire dai trattati di dialettica composti nell'epoca dell'Accademia; in questo senso Aristotele è stato sempre empirista. Al posto quindi di un'immagine dell'evoluzione di Aristotele costruita «come una serie di superamenti ottenuti grazie a scatti di ordine più o meno psicologico», bisognerà sostituire l'idea di «un faticoso itinerario diaporetico» (p. 49) che non tende a un sistema chiuso, ma ad una continua problematizzazione delle tematiche filosofiche, più interessato a «strutturare problemi che a dare risposte»<sup>23</sup>.

Eppure, nonostante le molte critiche all'analisi delle singole opere e all'impostazione dello schema evolutivo aristotelico, ancora in recenti riconsiderazioni dell'*Aristoteles* si coglie un esplicito riconoscimento della insostituibilità del *Gesamtbild* costruito da Jaeger, o per lo meno si ammette che nessuno l'abbia finora sostituito con un quadro d'insieme altrettanto complessivo: così pensavano Schütrumpf nel 1992<sup>24</sup> e, in modo ancora più marcato, Chroust nel suo contributo *The First Thirty Years of Modern Aristotelian Scholarship (1912-1942)*<sup>25</sup>, che concludeva la sua rassegna sulla recezione delle teorie di Jaeger fino al 1942 con un aperto attestato della loro validità: «except in some detail, by 1942 Jaeger's main theses or hypotheses had proven their essential soundness as well as their indispensable value. Despite occasional and isolated opposition, they had come to be the fundamental guide of all sound Aristotelian research and

<sup>23</sup> I. DÜRING, *Aristotle and the heritage from Plato*, «Eranos» 62, 1964, 97.

<sup>24</sup> E. SCHÜTRUMPF, *Einige wissenschaftliche Voraussetzungen von W. Jaegers Aristotelesdeutung*, in: A. M. CALDER III (ed.), op. cit., 221.

<sup>25</sup> In W. WIANS (ed.), *Aristotle's philosophical development: problems and prospects*, Lanham 1996, 41-65.

scholarship. No opposing theory of even remotely equal importance or persuasiveness could so far be pitted against them» (p. 65). Parole eccessivamente entusiastiche sul valore dell'opera di Jaeger che, pur essendo state scritte nel 1973<sup>26</sup>, non tenevano conto della radicale revisione delle teorie jaegeriane contenuta nell'*Aristoteles* di I. Düring del 1966, il quale, se accettava l'idea di una evoluzione del pensiero di Aristotele - cosa del resto ovvia per qualsiasi filosofo -, modificava radicalmente la valutazione delle singole opere del *corpus* sia rispetto al rapporto Platone-Aristotele sia rispetto alla cronologia di composizione.

Eppure anche l'eterodosso - ovviamente rispetto a Jaeger - Düring subisce in certa misura il fascino, o se vogliamo la vischiosità, delle teorie jaegeriane. Nella trattazione della *Politica* infatti egli accetta senza rilevanti variazioni la cronologia compositiva delle parti del trattato, anche se ammette che la "cronologia relativa" delle "opere monografiche" che la compongono - vale a dire quelle comunemente chiamate parti o sezioni della *Politica* - non ha grande importanza per la comprensione della filosofia politica di Aristotele, che "rimane sostanzialmente invariata" e unitaria; quindi è meglio mettere in archivio l'idea di una *Urpolitik*. Per quanto riguarda la sezione sullo "stato ideale" (VII-VIII) Düring concorda con Jaeger che Aristotele lavora con un "materiale concettuale che in blocco è di origine platonica" e accetta gli "stretti rapporti" tra *Pol.* VII-VIII, *Protreptico* ed *Etica Eudemia*: da ciò deriva la sua possibile cronologia al periodo dell'Accademia. Come si vede, sono le tesi di Jaeger con qualche variante. Anche Schütrumpf, nel suo commento ai libri VII-VIII della *Politica*<sup>27</sup>, dà come *zweifellos* i rapporti tra *Pol.* VII 1 e *Protreptico*, anche se in *Pol.* VII si prescinde dalla scelta della vita teoretica. Come *experimentum crucis* vorrei sottoporre a prova soltanto l'argomento che Jaeger considera fondamentale per stabilire che l'introduzione del libro VII "si basa

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<sup>26</sup> Il saggio era già stato pubblicato in «Classica et Mediaevalia» 24, 1973, 27-57.

<sup>27</sup> E. SCHÜTRUMPF, *Aristoteles. Politik Buch VII/VIII*, Berlin 2005, 194.

su un modello essoterico”, cioè sul *Protreptico*, e che pertanto l’abbozzo di stato ideale si possa collocare in un periodo tra il 350 e il 340, anche per i suoi stretti rapporti con l’*Etica Eudemia*.

Nell’affrontare il tema della costituzione nello stato migliore Aristotele parte dalla premessa sul genere di vita preferibile in assoluto, se sia lo stesso per la collettività e per l’individuo (*Pol.* VII 1, 1323a 14-21) e dichiara di utilizzare quanto ha già detto “nei *logoi exoterikoi* intorno alla vita migliore”. Jaeger identifica questo come un riferimento al *Protreptico*. Il primo argomento introdotto da Aristotele è quello della tripartizione dei beni (*trion ouson meridon*), quelli esterni (*ta ekta*), quelli fisici (*ta en toî somati*), e quelli psichici (*ta en te psychéi*): Jaeger commenta<sup>28</sup> che «dal *Protreptico* egli (Aristotele) desume anzitutto, come all’inizio del secondo libro dell’*Eudemia*, la partizione dei beni in esterni, corporei e psichici”.

Qui cominciano i guai: infatti la questione della ripartizione dei beni era già stata discussa da Jaeger a proposito della “Prima Etica” – cioè dell’*Etica Eudemia*, quando si metteva a confronto *Protrept.* B 21 D. con *EE* II 1, 1218b 32, il cui testo era integrato da Jaeger in modo illegittimo e superfluo con <*en somati e en*> per renderlo coerente con *ENA* 8, 1098b 12 (dove effettivamente c’è la tripartizione) e con il passo in questione della *Politica*. Dai testi come sono tramandati senza correzioni (indebite) risulterebbe che sia in *Protreptico* sia in *EE* si trova una bipartizione dei beni (fisici/psichici o esterni e psichici) mentre la tripartizione di trova in *EN* e *Politica* (in realtà si tratta di una *doxa* ben consolidata, già platonica). Tra i “related texts” di *Protr.* B 93 Düring<sup>29</sup> citava il nostro testo della *Politica* e nel commento (pp. 254-256) indicava i punti di contatto degli argomenti di VII 1 col *Protreptico*, ma anche le assenze, concludendo che

<sup>28</sup> *Aristoteles*, ed. cit., 291 (trad. it., 373).

<sup>29</sup> I. DÜRING, *Aristotle’s Protrepticus. An Attempt at Reconstruction*, Göteborg 1961, 139 s.

il passo in questione era una specie di sommario di argomenti esposti in questo dialogo con alcune aggiunte. E tra queste aggiunte segnalava la questione della quantità dei beni necessari all'*eudaimonia*, discussa in VI 1, ma assente dal *Protreptico*, dove infatti la questione è sulla qualità e la gerarchia dei beni necessari alla vita migliore, non alla loro proporzione.

Il meno che si possa dire è che Jaeger offre una visione molto sommaria - e almeno in un particolare errata - della relazione tra *Pol.* VII 1 e *Protreptico*. Ma il peggio sta nella conclusione: è noto che alla fine del proemio di *Pol.* VII Aristotele propone come *bios hairetotatos* un *bios praktikos* con forte contenuto noetico: questa conclusione è incompatibile con l'esaltazione del *bios theoretikos* del *Protreptico* e con l'ideale platonico del re filosofo a cui il dialogo si ispirava (secondo Jaeger); qui il tentativo di conciliare l'ideale giovanile della filosofia come "suprema norma politica, legislatrice dello stato" con questa diversa prospettiva che privilegia la vita pratica assume toni di chiara matrice hegeliana nel conflitto tra "Io filosofico" e Stato, e trasforma il *theorein* filosofico in una forma di agire "creativo" a vantaggio dell'umanità e della comunità, sotto le spoglie di "architetto del pensiero" («Baumeister der Gedanken»: *hoi dianoiais architectones*: anche la traduzione è sbagliata) che edifica il suo stato a vantaggio di tutti. E in questo modo Aristotele rimarrebbe fedele al suo ideale giovanile.

La fumosità retorica dell'argomentazione nasconde evidentemente la difficoltà di rendere coerenti posizioni tra loro inconciliabili.

Mi fermo qui anche se ci sarebbero molti altri punti delle cosiddette prove di Jaeger che non sopportano una verifica approfondita. A mio giudizio, se dovessi suggerire a uno studente di cominciare dal libro di Jaeger per conoscere la filosofia di Aristotele, e in particolare le sue teorie politiche, gli darei il consiglio in perfetto spirito aristotelico: la verità si può conoscere anche dalla confutazione degli errori.

# La χρηματιστική nella *Politica* di Aristotele: articolarioni concettuali e ricadute etico-antropologiche

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## *Riassunto*

Questo contributo ha l'obiettivo di studiare le due fondamentali concezioni della nozione, complessa ed estremamente ampia, di *chrematistiké* (crematistica) nella *Politica* di Aristotele, esaminata nei suoi nessi con la nozione di *oikonomia*, focalizzando particolarmente l'attenzione sui capitoli 8-11 del I libro della *Politica*. Le due diverse forme di crematistica sono basate su due atteggiamenti psicologici molto diversi: 1) in un primo caso c'è un desiderio canalizzato, gestito e organizzato dalla saggezza in vista di un fine ulteriore; 2) nel secondo caso il desiderio è fine a se stesso, insaziabile, senza limiti e refrattario ai comandi della saggezza. La conclusione è che, secondo lo Stagirita, la ricchezza non è un male, e non lo è neanche, in quanto tale, la ricerca della ricchezza, cioè appunto la crematistica che, se correttamente inquadrata e orientata in funzione del fine, costituisce la *conditio sine qua non* della vita buona, ordinata e felice a livello individuale e politico.

## *Parole chiave*

crematistica, ricchezza, saggezza, vita buona

## *Title*

Money-making in Aristotelian *Politics*:  
Conceptual Articulations and Ethical and Anthropological Implications

## *Abstract*

This paper aims to examine the two fundamental treatments of the complex and very broad notion of *chrematistiké* (money-making) in Aristotle's *Politics*, in its links with the notion of *oikonomia*, focussing, particularly, on *Politics* I, 8-11. The two different arts of money-making are based on two very different psycho-



logical attitudes: 1) in a first case, a desire is channeled, managed and organized by practical wisdom with a view to a further end; 2) in the second case, a desire is an end unto itself, insatiable, boundless and contrary to the commands of practical wisdom. The conclusion is that, for the Stagirite, wealth is not an evil, nor, in itself, is an evil the pursuit of wealth, that is, the art of money-making, because if it is rightly organized and oriented in function of the end, it constitutes the *conditio sine qua non* of a life that is good, ordered and happy for the individual and for the city.

*Key Words*

Money-making, Wealth, Practical Wisdom, Good Life

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1. *Riflessioni introduttive*

Con questo *paper*<sup>1</sup> vorrei cercare, innanzitutto, di ricostruire schematicamente le articolazioni che la nozione di χρηματιστική - nozione complessa<sup>2</sup>, ricorrente 39 volte all'interno del *corpus*<sup>3</sup> e di difficile traduzione<sup>4</sup>

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- <sup>1</sup> Si tratta della relazione, con alcune piccole integrazioni, tenuta al XII<sup>th</sup> *Meeting of the Collegium Politicum, Aristotle's Politics*, Universidad Carlos III Madrid (25-26 maggio 2012). Ringrazio i Proff. Lucio Bertelli, Alberto Maffi, Christoph Horn e la Prof.ssa Elena Irrera per essere intervenuti al dibattito e per avermi fornito importanti indicazioni e spunti di riflessione.
- <sup>2</sup> Anche perché si va a sommare a un terreno già di per sé impervio, sia per la serie di legami "scivolosi" che la teoria dello Stagirita instaura con la dibattuta nozione di "crematistica" in Platone, sia a causa della «mancanza di una teoria economica preesistente all'opera aristotelica» (VENTURI FERRIOLO 1983, 5).
- <sup>3</sup> Il lemma χρηματιστικός compare 39 volte all'interno dell'intero *corpus aristotelicum*. Di queste 39 occorrenze, ben 28 sono nella *Politica*, come è possibile vedere dalla tabella sottostante, tratta da RADICE-BOMBACIGNO 2005:

| <i>Opera</i>            | <i>Fraasi</i> | <i>%</i> |
|-------------------------|---------------|----------|
| De sophisticis elenchis | 1             | 0,16     |
| Ethica Nicomachea       | 1             | 0,05     |
| Magna moralia           | 1             | 0,09     |

- riceve all'interno della *Politica* di Aristotele, per poi tentare di soffermarmi più attentamente sui suoi fondamenti antropologico-psicologici e sulle sue ricadute etico-politiche.

L'esame specifico della questione della *χρηματιστική*, che io mi limiterei in questa sede a traslitterare con il termine "crematistica", si trova nei capitoli 8-11 del primo libro della *Politica*, anche se la questione viene anticipata già in I, 3. Qui si precisa che per studiare la città, la quale è composta di famiglie, è necessario misurarsi con la nozione di *οικονομία*, termine anch'esso di difficile traduzione e che potremmo rendere con "amministrazione della famiglia" o con "amministrazione domestica"<sup>5</sup>. Nel terzo capitolo del primo libro dell'opera si dice che, dal momento che ogni oggetto va studiato nelle sue parti, si devono esaminare le parti della famiglia, ovvero: 1) il rapporto che lega padrone e schiavo (rapporto di padronanza), 2) quello tra marito e moglie (rapporto di coniugalità), e il 3) rapporto tra padre e figli (paternità).

Inoltre si aggiunge che c'è anche una quarta parte, che è appunto la *χρηματιστική*, il cui esame specifico viene affrontato, come si ricordava, nei capitoli 8-11.

## 2. *Esame dei rapporti tra chrematistike e oikonomia*

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|                |    |      |
|----------------|----|------|
| Ethica Eudemea | 1  | 0.35 |
| Politica       | 28 | 1,43 |

<sup>4</sup> Tali difficoltà investono i tentativi di restituire il termine *χρηματιστική* nelle traduzioni moderne (da *Chrematistic* a *Money-making* in inglese, da *industrie* a *chrématistique* in francese; da *crematistica* a *arte pecuniaria* o *arte finanziaria* in italiano, da *crematística* a *arte de adquirir* in spagnolo, da *Chrematistik* a *Gelderwerbs* in tedesco, latino *pecuniativa*).

<sup>5</sup> CUBEDDU 2006, 5, ricorda come il termine greco *οικονομία*, da cui "economia", «ha preso il nome dalla *casa* (*οἶκος*) abitata dalla famiglia, dal primo tipo di aggregazione... che si moltiplica nei villaggi e che nella città acquista l'ultima forma, quella di una comunità perfetta».

All'inizio del cap. 8 Aristotele si chiede in che rapporto la *chrematistiké* stia con l'*oikonomia*. Riassume bene la questione Cubeddu<sup>6</sup>: «che cosa si identifichi o sia parte di che cosa, se l'economia si identifichi con l'acquisto di beni (con la crematistica; *χρηματιστική*, da *χρῆμα*, ciò di cui si ha bisogno, che viene usato; al plurale: gli averi, le ricchezze) oppure se questa sia una parte della prima o costituisca una specie a sé, per es. se abbia una propria natura diversa da quella dell'amministrazione domestica, e se della crematistica, che si occupa della proprietà e dell'acquisto di beni, sia parte l'agricoltura, sono queste le domande che Aristotele si pone all'inizio dell'ottavo capitolo del primo libro della *Politica*».

In un primo momento la possibilità che *chrematistiké* e *oikonomia* siano identiche viene esclusa perché, mentre la crematistica serve a procurare i beni e le risorse, l'amministrazione della famiglia ha il compito di usarle e di amministrarle:

È dunque chiaro che l'amministrazione domestica non è identica alla crematistica -alla seconda infatti compete procurarsi (*πορίσασθαι*) i beni, alla prima usarli (*χρήσασθαι*)<sup>7</sup>.

Una distinzione, quella tra l'arte che utilizza i beni da quella che li procura, che, commenta S. Tommaso, vale anche per le altre arti: «del resto, anche negli altri settori è assodato che l'arte utilizzatrice si differenzia da quella produttrice o acquisitiva: p. es. l'arte di governare una nave è diversa da quella armatoriale che la costruisce. Dunque l'economia si differenzia dalla finanziaria»<sup>8</sup>.

Gioca qui un binomio molto importante, che risulta essere centrale anche su altri terreni. Si tratta, cioè, della coppia acquisto/possesso e uso:

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<sup>6</sup> CUBEDDU 2006, 4.

<sup>7</sup> *Politica* I, 8, 1256 a 10-12. La traduzione di riferimento del primo libro della *Politica* è di G. Besso, in ARISTOTELE, *Politica. Libro I*, 2011; la traduzione degli altri libri è (seppur con alcune modifiche) di Viano, in ARISTOTELE, *Politica*, 2002.

<sup>8</sup> TOMMASO D'AQUINO 1996, 119.

*ktesis*<sup>9</sup> e *chresis*. Le ricchezze, infatti, possono essere usate oppure acquisite, come viene ricordato anche in *Etica Nicomachea* IV, 1, 1120 a 8-9:

per le ricchezze, poi, l'uso (*χρησῖς*) consiste nel fatto di spendere e di donare; al contrario l'acquisizione e la conservazione sono piuttosto forme di acquisto (*κτησῖς*)<sup>10</sup>.

La crematistica si configura, pertanto, come la capacità di acquisire le ricchezze, e tale importante capacità, che distingue la crematistica dall'amministrazione domestica, ha anche una ricaduta sul piano "affettivo", come si legge *en passant* in *Etica Nicomachea* IX, 7, 1168 a 21-23:

tutti amano le cose che si sono guadagnati con fatica, come per esempio coloro che hanno conquistato la ricchezza (*οἱ κτησάμενοι*) la amano di più di coloro che la hanno ereditata.

Per indagare sul nesso fra crematistica e *oikonomia*, inoltre, Aristotele applica, come ha già fatto precedentemente a proposito della città e della casa, il metodo della divisione dell'intero in parti, esaminando singolarmente queste ultime. In questo modo si giunge ad una divisione di fondamentale importanza all'interno del discorso sulla crematistica, che è possibile schematizzare nel modo che segue:

1. Innanzitutto c'è una specie di *acquisto naturale*, che rappresenta una parte naturale dell'amministrazione domestica, e che serve a raccogliere mezzi necessari utili alla *polis* e alla famiglia<sup>11</sup>:

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<sup>9</sup> «Pur nell'ambito di procedimenti diairetici che mirano a scopi diversi (in Platone a classificare le tecniche, in Aristotele le forme di acquisizione) in entrambi gli autori riscontriamo uno stretto collegamento fra *κτητική* e *χρηματιστική*» (MAFFI 1979, 166).

<sup>10</sup> La traduzione di questa e delle altre *Etiche* aristoteliche è di chi scrive, in ARISTOTELE 2008.

<sup>11</sup> A questo proposito va notato come questo tipo di acquisto non è chiamato da Aristotele *chrematistike*, ma semplicemente *ktetike*.

una sola specie (εἶδος) di arte acquisitiva è per natura parte dell'amministrazione domestica, quella che deve esserci o che deve provvedere affinché disponga di quei mezzi attraverso i quali sia possibile l'accumulo dei beni necessari alla vita e utili alla comunità cittadina o familiare. E pare che la *vera ricchezza* (ἀληθινός πλοῦτος) consti di questi beni. E infatti la quantità di una tale proprietà sufficiente *alla vita buona* (πρὸς ἀγαθὴν ζωὴν) non è *illimitata* (οὐκ ἄπειρός ἐστιν)<sup>12</sup>;

2. Ma c'è anche un altro genere di arte acquisitiva, che per lo più (μάλιστα)<sup>13</sup> è stato chiamato crematistica, per cui, invece, non c'è un limite nell'acquisto dei beni. Questa seconda forma di crematistica, rispetto al modo naturale di acquisire i beni, richiede esperienza e tecnica:

Esiste un altro tipo di arte acquisitiva (γένος ἄλλο κτητικῆς), che per lo più chiamano (μάλιστα καλοῦσι), e che anzi è giusto chiamare (δίκαιον αὐτὸ καλεῖν) crematistica, in virtù della quale sembra che non esista *alcun limite* (οὐδὲν... πέρασ) a ricchezza e proprietà; molti credono che essa sia una sola e identica a quella di cui si è parlato in virtù dell'affinità; invece non è identica a quella citata né è lontana da essa. Di queste l'una è per natura, l'altra non è per natura ma deriva piuttosto da una forma di esperienza e di tecnica<sup>14</sup>.

Sulla scorta del testo aristotelico, pertanto, si deve dire che *una parte della crematistica* fa parte dell'amministrazione domestica<sup>15</sup>, e che essa si articola a sua volta in una serie di sottoparti che in questa sede non è possibile approfondire<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> *Politica* I, 8, 1256 b 26-32.

<sup>13</sup> «Nel senso pregnante del termine», traduce Viano (ARISTOTELE, *Politica*, 2002), mentre la Besso rende (a mio avviso più giustamente) il *malista* con «per lo più». In ogni caso si tratta di qualcosa che, come si precisa subito dopo, «è giusto chiamare in questo modo».

<sup>14</sup> *Politica* I, 9, 1256 b 40-1257 a 5.

<sup>15</sup> Questo aspetto è ovviamente riconducibile anche a quanto si legge all'inizio del capitolo ottavo. Se consideriamo crematistica e arte acquisitiva come sovrapponibili, come Aristotele ha detto all'inizio del capitolo, una parte della crematistica è parte dell'*oikonomia*.

<sup>16</sup> Si rimanda, tra gli altri, al ricco studio di VENTURI FERRIOLO 1983, che delinea in modo ampio le coordinate per orientarsi nella questione, mostrando molto bene il rapporto tra la

### 3. *Crematistica naturale e crematistica innaturale*

La differenza fondamentale, su cui vorrei puntare particolarmente l'attenzione provando a sondarne le radici psicologiche ed antropologiche, nonché le fondamentali ricadute etiche, è la cesura tra la crematistica naturale e crematistica innaturale, la prima delle quali

- a) rientra nell'amministrazione domestica;
- b) è atta a produrre la vera ricchezza<sup>17</sup>;
- b) ha un limite (πέρας)<sup>18</sup>.

Questo primo tipo di crematistica, inoltre, che, come si è visto, si ha quando l'uomo si procura ciò che la natura ha prodotto per lui, è quella in grado di fornire una quantità finita di mezzi sufficiente per una vita buona (πρὸς ἀγαθὴν ζῶην). Questo riferimento alla vita buona, ovvero - questione su cui tornerò - ad un fine esterno rispetto all'acquisizione del denaro, risulta di capitale importanza, visto che, come si ricorda, tra l'altro, in *Politica* III, 9, 1280 b 39-1281 a 2:

il vivere bene è il fine della città, comunità di genti e villaggi che conducono una vita perfetta e autosufficiente, cioè, come diciamo, una vita bella e felice.

Su versante opposto si colloca la crematistica innaturale, che procura ricchezze tramite il denaro, che si configura come un'acquisizione non naturale e illimitata, e che non fa parte dell'amministrazione domestica: «da una forma di crematistica che rientra nei giusti termini, atta al completa-

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concezione aristotelica della crematistica e l'apporto fondamentale del retroterra platonico.

<sup>17</sup> Su tale questione, che qui non approfondisco, ritornerò nel cap. IV. *Ricchezza e virtù*.

<sup>18</sup> «Della crematistica che rientra nell'amministrazione domestica esiste un limite (πέρας), poiché questo tipo di ricchezza (quella senza limiti), non è compito dell'amministrazione domestica» (*Politica* I, 9, 1257 b 30-31).

mento, al *limite* dettato dall'autarchia, che ha il suo τέλος nel vivere bene, si scivola verso una forma [di crematistica]... giustamente biasimata (1258 b 1), non più praticata in funzione della comunità, bensì uno scambio ἀπ' ἀλλήλων: la crematistica commerciale»<sup>19</sup>. Per Aristotele, pertanto, la crematistica diventa innaturale quando perde il suo carattere acquisitivo, cioè non serve più a procurarsi i beni utili alla vita buona, che è la sua funzione nell'*oikonomia*, ma punta solo all'accumulo di denaro. Per questo la vita perde il proprio carattere di vita "buona": il denaro non fa la felicità, che è il fine dell'uomo che vive in comunità<sup>20</sup>. L'elemento che risulta essere fondamentale in questa distinzione è quello del limite, cioè dal *peras*, nozione che è strettamente connessa a quella di fine (*telos*). Una conferma dell'indissolubile intreccio tra queste due nozioni ci viene offerta da *Politica* I, 9, 1257 b 28:

«il fine è per tutte le cose il limite (πέρας γὰρ τὸ τέλος πάσαις)».

Ma oltre ad intrecciarsi fortemente al *peras*, il *telos* è chiamato a declinarsi secondo una duplice movenza teorica: esso, infatti, da un lato si configura come un *terminus ad quem*, cioè come scopo ultimo, come ciò a cui tutto tende, come obiettivo finale; ma dall'altro esso costituisce anche un *terminus a quo*, cioè un punto di partenza, ciò a partire da cui ogni altro bene, ogni altro elemento, viene collocato, posizionato, come ciò *verso cui* ogni cosa si orienta e come ciò *da cui* ogni cosa riceve un posto, un limite, un *peras*, appunto<sup>21</sup>. In *Etica Nicomachea* III, 10, 1115 b 22 si legge, infatti, che:

<sup>19</sup> VENTURI FERRIOLO 1983, 58.

<sup>20</sup> A tale fondamentale senso di appartenenza alla comunità e di tendenza naturale alla socialità si contrappone, come si mostrerà nelle pagine finali del contributo, la spinta egoistica che caratterizza la figura del *philautos* (considerato nella sua accezione deteriore).

<sup>21</sup> Per un approfondimento della questione mi permetto di rimandare al mio saggio *Vita felice umana*, 198 ss.

Ogni cosa si definisce in riferimento al fine (*ὀρίζεται γὰρ ἕκαστον τῷ τέλει*).

Compare qui, non a caso, il verbo *ὀρίζω*, che significa, appunto, “attribuire un orizzonte” (*ὀρίζων*), “determinare” e, con ciò, “assegnare un posto” a tutto il resto. Ora però, per tornare alla nostra questione specifica, se il fine (*telos*) dell’accumulo del denaro è dato esclusivamente dal denaro e non da un elemento esterno, come la vita buona, come capita nel primo tipo di crematistica, è evidente che dell’accumulo del denaro non può esserci un limite, un *peras*, e che quindi esso è destinato a rivelarsi come costitutivamente *apeiron*. Infatti, in questo caso, come si legge in *Politica* I, 9, 1257 b 22-23:

il denaro è principio (*στοιχείου*) e fine (*πέρας*) dello scambio.

Se, cioè, il fine del denaro è il denaro stesso, è evidente che in questo spingersi verso il denaro non può esserci un *peras*. La differenza del fine che ci si propone, quindi, determina un fondamentale spostamento dall’ambito del “vivere” a quello del “vivere bene”:

causa di questo modo di essere è il darsi da fare per vivere (*περὶ τὸ ζῆν*), *ma non per vivere bene* (*ἀλλὰ μὴ τὸ εὖ ζῆν*); dunque, poiché quel desiderio (*τῆς ἐπιθυμίας*) è illimitato (*ἄπειρον*), desiderano anche mezzi produttivi illimitati (*Politica* I, 9, 1257 b 41-1258 a 2).

Si assiste, pertanto, a una fondamentale distinzione fra vivere (*zen*) e viver bene (*eu zen*), e alla collocazione della crematistica naturale in questo secondo ambito: chi pratica la crematistica innaturale, infatti, non si pone la domanda su “come si deve vivere”, ma si limita ad assecondare un desiderio *ἄπειρον*, una «concupiscenza illimitata» per dirla con San Tommaso<sup>22</sup>, il cui fine è solo ed esclusivamente il suo accrescimento (*ἡ αὐξήσις*).

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<sup>22</sup> TOMMASO D’AQUINO 1996, 143.



L'arte di acquisire ricchezze, pertanto, come tutte le arti, si protende verso il suo fine e tale tensione desiderativa, *in quanto tale*, cioè svincolata da ogni criterio, è infinita, illimitata. Ogni arte e ogni tecnica, infatti, così come ogni altra disciplina, tendono infinitamente verso il proprio *telos*. Ma all'interno di una vita che, per essere buona, deve tenere insieme le sue parti in modo armonico, dando origine a quella *symphonia*<sup>23</sup> che costituisce la cifra di ogni intero ordinato fatto di parti ordinate, l'aspirazione infinita e unilaterale verso quel determinato fine comporterebbe la rovina della vita stessa, e l'impossibilità di qualificarsi complessivamente come un *eu zen*. In questo senso è possibile che la ricchezza, lungi dal rendere buona e felice la vita, la mandi in rovina, come Aristotele ricorda in *Etica Nicomachea* I, 3, 1094 b 18-19:

infatti è già capitato che alcuni siano andati in rovina a causa della ricchezza.

Ancora più chiaro, in questo senso, quanto si legge in *Politica* VII, 1, 1323 b 7-10:

i beni esterni... hanno un limite (*πέρας*) e tutto ciò che è utile lo è per qualcosa; l'eccesso (*ὑπερβολή*) di quei beni necessariamente è dannoso o inutile per chi li possiede.

Ma ci si può porre la domanda sul viver bene, sul posto che la ricchezza e, più nello specifico, la crematistica devono occupare all'interno di una vita buona, solo se si posseggono determinati requisiti. Senza questi ultimi, infatti, la stessa ricchezza, che in quanto tale è un bene, diventa un male; senza certe caratteristiche, o per dirla con Aristotele, senza certe *hexeis* (stati abituali) o, più nello specifico, senza certe virtù, la ricchezza,

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<sup>23</sup> «Può darsi che, procedendo verso l'unità, una città perisca o può darsi che sopravviva, ma allora, diventando una ben cattiva città, finirà con l'annullarsi come città, come si annulla la sinfonia (*συμφωνία*) ridotta all'omofonia o il ritmo ridotto a una sola misura» (*Politica* II, 5, 1263 b 33-35).

che in sé è certamente qualcosa di utile (come si legge ad esempio in *Etica Nicomachea* IV, 1, 1120 a 5, in cui si ricorda che «la ricchezza è fra le cose utili»), diventa dannosa. In *Etica Eudemia* VIII, 3, 1248 b 27-30, infatti, si legge che,

i beni su cui si discute maggiormente... come onore, ricchezza, virtù del corpo... da un lato sono beni per natura, ma dall'altro è possibile che, per alcuni, risultino dannosi (βλαβερά) a causa dei propri stati abituali (διὰ τὰς ἑξεις).

Senza virtù, insomma, la vita non regge, lo *skopos*<sup>24</sup> vero e il bersaglio finale della vita non viene raggiunto, perché ad esso, come capita nel caso della crematistica innaturale, neanche si mira, e il perseguimento unilaterale di fini parziali (come, appunto, la ricchezza), e di quelle che dovrebbero essere le parti dell'intero, finiscono per distruggere o per rendere impossibile l'edificazione dell'intero stesso.

Al contrario una vita buona, che funziona, è una vita in cui si tiene costantemente d'occhio il fine ultimo, cioè il *telos* che, come si è visto, è anche il criterio, l'*horos*<sup>25</sup>, termine che significa “limite”, “confine”, ma, appunto, anche “criterio” in base a cui commisurare tutto il resto. E questo *horos* non è altro che l'*eu zen*, ovvero l'orizzonte di una vita buona che, dunque, si può realizzare solo commisurando in questo modo i mezzi, i fini intermedi e il fine ultimo.

A comprendere ancora meglio questa fondamentale questione e, più nello specifico, il rapporto tra fini e mezzi, può aiutarci il commento<sup>26</sup> di Tommaso d'Aquino: «in ogni arte il desiderio del fine non ha limiti; invece i mezzi per raggiungere il fine non sono oggetto di un desiderio infinito,

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<sup>24</sup> «In tutti gli stati abituali di cui abbiamo parlato, come anche negli altri, vi è una specie di bersaglio (σκοπός) mirando al quale l'individuo razionale tende e allenta la corda del proprio arco» (Aristotele, *Etica Nicomachea* VI, 1, 1138 b 20-22).

<sup>25</sup> In *Politica* I, 8, 1258 a 18, a proposito della crematistica necessaria, infatti, Aristotele afferma che essa ha «un confine (ὄρον) ben stabilito».

<sup>26</sup> Riferito al passo della *Politica* ricordato nella n. 18.

ma limitati dalla norma e dalla commisurazione del fine stesso: p.es., l'arte della medicina si prefigge la guarigione indefinitamente, nel senso che combatte senza sosta per far riacquistare la salute; con ciò tuttavia, la medicina non somministra tutti i farmaci di cui dispone, ma nella misura in cui sono utili per far guarire. Lo stesso vale per tutte le arti. Il fondamento di ciò sta nel principio che il fine è in se stesso oggetto di desiderio»<sup>27</sup>.

La ricchezza dotata di limite, quindi, è sì oggetto di desiderio, è sì ciò che viene voluto (perché il fine viene voluto, ricorda Aristotele, mentre i mezzi sono valutati e scelti<sup>28</sup>), e costituisce sì il fine, ma non il fine ultimo. In questo senso la ricchezza, come si legge anche in *Etica Nicomachea* I, 1, 1094 a 8-9<sup>29</sup>, può essere sì il fine dell'*oikonomikè*, ma non della vita della sua totalità, se questa è una vita buona. Questo implica che quel medesimo fine, che *in sé* viene voluto, e viene voluto senza limiti, da un altro punto di vista, cioè spostandosi al livello dell'intero, dell'*eu zen*, debba essere "misurato", ovvero sottoposto ad un saggio calcolo rispetto al fine ultimo della vita buona. In questo senso, dove questo calcolo (*logismos*), ci sia e funzioni correttamente, il fine della ricchezza diventa un fine parziale, cioè un mezzo in vista di altro, o una parte dell'intero. Nell'altro caso, invece, cioè in quello della crematistica innaturale, questo fine è fine a se stesso, ed è all'origine di un desiderio infinito, di quella insaziabilità (*ἀπληστία*) che caratterizza il re Mida (ricordato in *Politica* I, 8, 1257 b 16), ovvero di quella «umana concupiscenza che è proiettata sull'infinito»<sup>30</sup>. C'è quindi una profonda e radicale differenza tra le due forme di crematistica, che determinano delle differenze altrettanto radicali

<sup>27</sup> TOMMASO D'AQUINO 1996, 141.

<sup>28</sup> Cfr. *Etica Eudemia* II, 10, *passim*; *Etica Nicomachea* III, 2, 1111 b 26-27; *Etica Nicomachea* III, 5, 1113 b 3-5; *Grande Etica* I, 17, 1189 a 7 ss.

<sup>29</sup> «Mentre la medicina ha per fine la salute, l'arte di costruire le navi ha per fine il navigare, quella militare la vittoria, *l'economia la ricchezza*».

<sup>30</sup> TOMMASO D'AQUINO 1996, 143.

rispetto al peso e al ruolo che la ricchezza è chiamata a giocare all'interno della vita umana. Si tratta di una questione che Aristotele mette perfettamente a fuoco quando afferma che, da un lato

appare necessario *un limite per ogni ricchezza* (παντὸς πλοῦτου πέρας),

ma che, dall'altro,

nella realtà accade il contrario: infatti tutti coloro che si dedicano ad accumulare ricchezze accrescono il denaro all'infinito (εἰς ἄπειρον)<sup>31</sup>.

Tra chi assegna correttamente un posto alla ricchezza allo scopo di vivere bene e chi, invece, asseconda semplicemente il desiderio di ricchezza, appiattendolo la propria vita sul denaro e trasformandosi in φιλάργυρος<sup>32</sup> (ovvero in quell'individuo avido di ricchezze ricordato in *Etica Eudemia* III, 5, 1232 a 4, che «si dedica completamente al denaro»), c'è una differenza enorme. Tra questi individui o, più in generale, tra queste due forme di vita, c'è un divario radicale nell'ottica aristotelica, uno iato che si gioca sul piano etico-antropologico e psicologico del soggetto agente e che ha delle ricadute enormi a livello individuale e sociale.

Alcuni elementi sono stati già messi in campo dallo Stagirita nei testi della *Politica* già ricordati, ma per capire meglio e da altri punti di vista la questione, si tratta di osservarla da ulteriori prospettive, come lo stesso Aristotele ci invita spesso a fare, ricordandoci che l'essere è e si dice in molti modi, *pollachos legetai*<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> *Politica* I, 9, 1257 b 32-34.

<sup>32</sup> Questo termine, all'interno del *corpus aristotelicum*, costituisce un *hapax*, mentre invece ricorre due volte in Platone, e, più precisamente, in *Gorgia* 515 E 6 e in *Repubblica* 347 B 2.

<sup>33</sup> Per un approfondimento di tale questione mi permetto di rimandare FERNANI 2012, 7 ss.

#### 4. *Ricchezza e virtù*

Aristotele sottolinea più volte come quella con cui la crematistica naturale è chiamata a misurarsi è una “ricchezza vera” (*ἀληθινὸς πλοῦτος*)<sup>34</sup>, o una “ricchezza secondo natura” (*ὁ πλοῦτος ὁ κατὰ φύσιν*)<sup>35</sup> concetto, quello della ricchezza vera, che costituisce, come ha giustamente sottolineato Giuliana Besso, il punto nodale della riflessione su questo tema<sup>36</sup>. La ricchezza vera costituisce, pertanto, non una ricchezza fine a se stessa, ma una ricchezza finalizzata al viver bene. Ma, ancora una volta, a fare la differenza, anche su questo terreno, è il soggetto morale, il soggetto agente, che è chiamato ad amministrare e a gestire questa ricchezza. In effetti, a livello etico-politico, la ricchezza, definita come «tutto ciò il cui valore si misura in denaro» (*Etica Nicomachea* IV, 1, 1119 b 26-27), svolge un ruolo fondamentale. Ad esempio per la stessa possibilità dell’insorgere di fondamentali virtù come la generosità (*eleutheriotes* che, diversamente dai due vizi opposti della dissipazione e dell’avarizia, consiste nel rapportarsi adeguatamente alla ricchezza<sup>37</sup>), o la magnificenza (*megaloprepeia*), che rappresenta il giusto mezzo tra prodigalità e meschinità<sup>38</sup>, e che rappresenta una sorta di grandezza nella generosità (cfr. *Etica Nicomachea* IV, 2, 1122 b 12-13), o per l’insorgenza di un’altra virtù dalle molte facce come la fierezza (*megalopsychia*), dato che l’individuo fiero «avrà anche un atteggiamento misurato (*μετρίως ἔξει*) riguardo alla ricchezza (*περὶ πλοῦτον*)» (*Etica Nicomachea* IV, 3, 1124 a 13-15).

Ci troviamo insomma di fronte a una ricchezza che, in ambito etico-politico, si rivela non solo accettabile, non solo utile, ma anche di capitale

<sup>34</sup> *Politica* I, 8, 1256 b 30-31.

<sup>35</sup> *Politica* I, 9, 1257 b 19-20.

<sup>36</sup> G. Besso, in ARISTOTELE, *Politica*, 2012.

<sup>37</sup> Cfr. *Etica Eudemia* II, 3, 1221 a 5; *Etica Eudemia* III, 4, 1231 b 37-38; *Etica Nicomachea* II, 7, 1107 b 10; *Grande Etica* I, 23 *passim*.

<sup>38</sup> Cfr. *Etica Eudemia* II, 3, 1221 a 12; *Etica Nicomachea* II, 7, 1107 b 17; *Grande Etica* I, 26, 1192 a 37-38.

importanza all'interno della vita del singolo e della comunità, dato che nel passaggio dal sostentamento alla ricchezza risiede «l'emergere della dimensione economica propria del cittadino, il soggetto politico ed etico. Egli può raggiungere la vita buona solo attraverso la tranquillità economica che gli consente di ottenere quel tempo libero (*scholē*) che è il presupposto per la vita politica»<sup>39</sup>.

La ricchezza, dunque, svolge un ruolo importantissimo, visto che, come ha giustamente ricordato Elena Irrera: «Aristotele rivendica il ruolo cruciale delle ricchezze, sia nella sopravvivenza, sia nella conduzione di una vita bella»<sup>40</sup>. Inoltre la ricchezza costituisce il fondamento anche della *philia*<sup>41</sup>, di quell'amicizia che «tiene unite le città» (*Etica Nicomachea* VIII, 1, 1155 a 22-23). Come si ricorda in *Etica Nicomachea* VIII, 1, 1155 a 7-10, infatti:

a che cosa servirebbe una tale ricchezza se le si togliesse la possibilità di fare del bene agli altri, bene che si compie soprattutto, e in modo sommamente lodevole, verso gli amici?

Ma perché la ricchezza si configuri come una ricchezza “vera”, e dunque, di nuovo, come una ricchezza “correttamente gestita”, adeguatamente “posizionata” all'interno della vita buona, è necessario che l'essere umano che si trova a gestirla sia detentore, da un lato, a) di specifici stati abituali (come la generosità, la magnificenza o la fierezza appena ricordati), dall'altro, più in generale, b) di una competenza architettonica, in grado di realizzare quell'intero bello e ordinato che è la vita buona, in cui ogni parte, e quindi anche la ricchezza, riceva una sua giusta collocazione, un posto, e quindi un limite. E se questo limite c'è, è appunto perché c'è un fine che orienta e che funge da criterio per tutto il resto.

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<sup>39</sup> CAMPESE 2005, 10.

<sup>40</sup> IRRERA 2011, 30.

<sup>41</sup> Sul legame tra denaro e *philia* nell'orizzonte platonico e aristotelico, con il fondamentale allargamento del discorso al tema del dono, cfr. MAFFI 1979, 179 ss.

Questa capacità architettonica di organizzare la vita buona, di edificare un *holon* ordinato fatto di parti ordinate, come sappiamo dalle Etiche, risiede nella saggezza, in quella *phronesis* che è in grado di ordinare le varie parti di cui la vita si compone, e di fare valutazioni, ricorda Aristotele in *Etica Nicomachea* VII, 5 1140 a 25-28, rispetto alla «vita buona in generale» (*to eu zen holos*).

In realtà noi sappiamo anche, perché il Filosofo lo dice chiaramente in *Etica Nicomachea* VI, 8, 1141 b 31-32, che, oltre alla saggezza politica e alla saggezza riguardante l'individuo, c'è una saggezza che riguarda la famiglia, che è appunto l'*oikonomia*, l'amministrazione domestica, che quindi è anch'essa una capacità valutare orientandosi direttamente al fine<sup>42</sup>. Quindi, ancora una volta, anche a partire da questo ulteriore punto di vista, l'amministrazione domestica risulta costitutivamente orientata verso l'*eu zen*, intrinsecamente finalizzata alla vita buona e alla felicità.

In questo senso si deve dire che c'è a) una crematistica che è parte dell'economia intesa, appunto, come capacità di stabilire un limite alla ricchezza in vista del *telos* della vita buona, e quindi di farne un mezzo in vista di un fine ulteriore, e che b) c'è un accumulare ricchezze che non è strumentale rispetto ad un fine ulteriore, ma che diventa il fine stesso; e mentre la prima è una parte dell'"arte del viver bene", la seconda si configura semplicemente come un'"arte del far soldi". Si tratta di forme di acquisizione radicalmente diverse, che però hanno, come ricorda più volte Aristotele, un elemento di unità e di vicinanza<sup>43</sup>. Ci troviamo, insomma, di fronte a più forme di crematistica:

- 1) la cui differenza è radicale, sia per le conseguenze che esse determinano sul piano etico-politico, sia per il loro fondamento psicologico-antropologico,

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<sup>42</sup> Cfr. FERMANI 2012, 267 ss.

<sup>43</sup> Tali forme, infatti, sono affini, al punto che alcuni, erroneamente, ritengono che si tratti di un'unica forma di crematistica (cfr. *Politica* I, 8, 1257 a 1-3). Al contrario, si legge in *Politica* I, 8, 1257 a 3, «non è identica a quella citata né è lontana da essa».

2) che però sono unificate da un elemento comune, da un *pros hen* che ne impedisce l'equivocità e la dispersione, e che consiste nel fatto che in entrambi i casi si assiste ad un accumulo e a un'acquisizione di ricchezze.

Le due differenti crematistiche, pertanto, si fondano su due atteggiamenti psicologici radicalmente diversi: a) nel caso della prima forma di crematistica ci troviamo di fronte a un desiderio che viene incanalato, gestito, organizzato dalla saggezza in vista di un fine ulteriore; b) nel secondo caso ci troviamo di fronte a un desiderio fine a se stesso, insaziabile, smisurato, proprio in quanto refrattario ai comandi della saggezza. Questa brama insaziabile di avere di più, Aristotele, come già Platone prima di lui, la chiama *pleonexia*. Un concetto, quello della *pleonexia* che, come ha mostrato Mario Vegetti, costituisce un concetto decisivo «tanto per l'etica, quanto per la politica, la psicologia e l'antropologia»<sup>44</sup>, che si applica a vari terreni e che può essere definito come una «spinta incoercibile ad “avere di più”-in termini di potere, gloria, ricchezza, dunque di signoria-rispetto ad una ripartizione equilibrata e paritaria di questi beni»<sup>45</sup>.

In ogni caso, pertanto, si assiste ad un fuoriuscire dall'alveo delimitato dalla misura e quindi, nell'ottica aristotelica, dal perimetro tracciato dalla saggezza. È la saggezza, infatti, ciò che permette di individuare la misura a più livelli:

1) in un primo senso perché, come è noto, stabilisce quel medio rispetto a noi, quella misura tra eccesso e difetto, in cui consistono le virtù morali<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> VEGETTI 2008, 337.

<sup>45</sup> VEGETTI 2008, 338-339.

<sup>46</sup> La virtù morale, infatti, consistente in una medietà per il fatto che tende al giusto mezzo nelle passioni e nelle azioni (cfr. ad esempio, *Etica Nicomachea* II, 8, 1109 a 20 ss.), o come la disposizione morale a scegliere il giusto mezzo in rapporto a noi, nelle cose piacevoli e in quelle dolorose (cfr. *Etica Eudemia* II, 10, 1227 b 8-9), viene appunto definita come «uno stato abituale che orienta la scelta, consistente in una medietà rispetto a noi, determinato razionalmente e come verrebbe a determinarlo l'individuo saggio (*Etica Nicomachea* II, 6, 1106 b 36-1107 a 2).



E tra le virtù morali c'è la giustizia, che non a caso rappresenta un giusto mezzo rispetto al prendere di meno di quello che spetta e il prendere di più. Cioè rispetto alla *pleonexia*, ovvero rispetto a quello sporgersi al di fuori dei confini della misura. In questo senso la *pleonexia* è un vizio, e chi è caratterizzato da *pleonexia* sul piano etico è un vizioso (*Etica Nicomachea* IX, 6, 1167 b 9-10).

2) In un secondo senso la saggezza è ciò che stabilisce una misura in virtù della sua capacità architettonica, cioè per la sua capacità di costruire l'intero, ovvero quella vita buona e felice nella sua complessità, le cui parti sono ordinate in vista della realizzazione del fine ultimo. Ed è la misura ad impedire l'ipertrofia di una delle parti e ad evitare che, come invece capita nel caso della crematistica innaturale, una *parte* prenda il posto dell'*intero* e quindi finisca per distruggerlo. Ci troviamo insomma di fronte ad un conflitto "pleonectico" che anche in Aristotele, come accade in Platone, sebbene non debba essere soppresso, in alcuni casi non riesce neanche ad essere governato, determinando l'infelicità e l'impossibilità dell'*eu zen*, sia sul piano personale, sia su quello sociale. Chi è caratterizzato da *pleonexia*, infatti, fa del male a se stesso e agli altri, come si legge in *Etica Nicomachea* IX, 6, 1167 b 9-10: «i viziosi non riescono a essere d'accordo con se stessi se non per un breve tempo, come pure non riescono ad essere amici, dato che cercano di prevaricare (*πλεονεξίας*) nel procurarsi il proprio utile (*ἐν τοῖς ὠφελίμοις*)». Questo concetto di *pleonexia*, però, che costituisce il fondamento di distruzione e delle parti e dell'intero, va a sua volta agganciato ad un atteggiamento che, *in sé*, non è per nulla negativo, ma che anzi costituisce un desiderio originario e naturale. Si tratta di quell'atteggiamento che Aristotele nella *Politica*, come pure nelle *Etiche*, chiama *philautia*, e che può essere tradotto con "amore di sé" o "amor proprio", e in cui è stato tra l'altro intravisto l'antecedente della *oikeiosis* stoica.

Un nesso, quello tra il piacere del possesso e l'amore di sé che viene chiaramente istituito in *Politica* II, 5, 1263 a 40-1263 b 1:

«è indicibile il piacere che dà il considerare qualcosa come nostra proprietà, poiché non è cosa vana ma naturale (*φυσικόν*) l'amore che ciascuno porta a se stesso (*τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸν αὐτὸς ἔχει φιλίαν ἕκαστος*).

Questo “volersi bene”, questo amor proprio, infatti, è un sentimento naturale, dice Aristotele.

Giustamente si rimprovera l'egoismo... come fa l'avaro nei confronti delle ricchezze, mentre *tutti amano se stessi e le ricchezze*,

si legge in *Politica* II, 5, 1263 b 2-5. Ma la *philautia*, che è un sentimento in sé buono e positivo<sup>47</sup>, si trasforma in egoismo (ed è così che, a mio avviso, il termine va tradotto nella sua accezione negativa) quando, ricorda Aristotele in *Politica* II, 5, 1263 b 3, si ama se stessi «più del dovuto (*τὸ μᾶλλον ἢ δεῖ φιλεῖν*)». Allora non è la *philautia* in quanto tale a costituire la radice della *pleonexia*, ma quella *philautia* esercitata al di fuori dalla norma del “come si deve”, fuori da quella misura individuata volta per volta dalla saggezza, solo in quel volersi bene che si trasforma in egoismo e in sopraffazione.

### 5. *Riflessioni conclusive*

Cercando di raccogliere le fila di questo rapido e, necessariamente, incompleto percorso lungo le articolazioni e i crocevia della nozione di ricchezza e di crematistica<sup>48</sup>, si potrebbero ricordare le parole con cui lo stesso Aristotele conclude la trattazione:

Si è dunque detto, della crematistica non necessaria, quale sia e per quale motivo ce ne serviamo, e di quella necessaria che, diversa dall'altra, è parte

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<sup>47</sup> Per un approfondimento di tale nozione mi permetto di rinviare a FERMANI 2012, capitolo *La philautia: tra “egoismo” e amor proprio*, 127-134.

<sup>48</sup> Per un approfondimento delle quali, mi permetto di rimandare a FERMANI 2012a e a GIOVANOLA-FERMANI 2012.

dell'amministrazione domestica per natura, ha a che fare con i mezzi di vita, e non è, come l'altra, illimitata, ma dotata di un limite preciso (*ὄρον*)<sup>49</sup>.

C'è dunque una crematistica che si configura naturalmente e "saggiamente" come parte dell'intero *oikonomia*, e che ha per fine il viver bene; e c'è una crematistica fine a se stessa, «come se questo fosse il fine, e a questo fine tutto dovesse tendere» (*Politica* I, 9, 1258 a 12-14), che sostituisce il denaro al vero fine, e quindi una crematistica illimitata e innaturale, fondata esclusivamente sul desiderio insaziabile di ricchezza. E, dice addirittura Aristotele con un passaggio di estremo realismo, se individui con queste caratteristiche non riescono ad appagare il loro desiderio insaziabile di procurarsi ricchezze, ricorrono ad altri strumenti:

ogni loro occupazione è tesa al procurarsi ricchezze, e per questo è sorta l'altra specie di crematistica. Poiché infatti il piacere risiede in un eccesso, ricercano il mezzo per ottenere l'eccesso di piacere; e se non riescono a procurarselo attraverso la crematistica, ci provano con un altro espediente, servendosi di ciascuna della competenze non in maniera naturale<sup>50</sup>.

D'altro canto si è visto come la ricchezza, che in quanto tale è un bene e un elemento insottraibile dall'umana esistenza, per certi versi costituisce il fine, mentre per altri un mezzo in vista del fine. Questo significa che, per alcuni versi, la ricchezza viene voluta, così come viene voluto ogni fine, mentre, per altri, essa viene scelta, così come viene valutato e scelto ogni mezzo in vista del fine, soprattutto quando si tratta di quel fine ultimo che è la felicità. Ricorda infatti Aristotele in *Etica Eudemia* II, 10, 1226 a 8-11 che

nessuno sceglie di essere felice, ma di acquisire ricchezze o di correre rischi allo scopo di essere felice.

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<sup>49</sup> *Politica* I, 9, 1258 a 14-18.

<sup>50</sup> *Politica* I, 9, 1258 a 5-10.

Ci troviamo insomma di fronte ad una crematistica che si fonda su quel desiderio primario e “ineliminabile” (nel duplice senso che esso *non può* e *non deve* essere eliminato) che è la *philautia*, verso quel naturale amarsi ed amare le ricchezze che però, se abbandonato a se stesso, se non arginato, si trasforma in *pleonexia*, cioè in quel «desiderio di avere più della propria parte, e pertanto di prevaricare sugli altri» che, in quanto tale, costituisce «l'opposto della norma della giustizia»<sup>51</sup>.

Tale forma di *pleonexia*, dunque, si esplica, sul piano etico, nell'ingiustizia, cioè nell'incapacità di rapportarsi correttamente agli altri, attribuendo a se stesso più del dovuto<sup>52</sup>, e sul piano economico assume le vesti di quella crematistica “innaturale”, in grado di rendere infelice il singolo e di distruggere la città annullandone la *symphonia*, cioè impedendo che essa si costituisca come intero ordinato fatto di parti ordinate e saggiamente disposte. Perché se è vero che, come ricorda Aristotele in *Etica Nicomachea* I, 5, 1096 a 6-7:

la ricchezza non costituisce il bene che cerchiamo; infatti è utile ed è in funzione di qualcos'altro,

è anche vero che la vita felice è, *per molti versi*, una vita “ricca”. La ricchezza non è un male, e non lo è neanche, *in quanto tale*, la ricerca della ricchezza, cioè appunto l'arte di guadagnare, arte che, se correttamente inquadrata e orientata in funzione del *telos*, costituisce la *conditio sine qua non* della vita buona, ordinata e felice a livello comunitario e politico. Perché non bisogna dimenticare che l'essere umano, oltre ad essere, secondo la celeberrima definizione, un “animale politico”, uno ζῷον πολιτικόν, è anche (καί), un “animale domestico” (ζῷον οἰκονομικόν) (*Etica Eudemia* VII, 10, 1242 a 23), visto che, come si legge in *Etica Nicomachea* VI, 8, 1142 a 9-10:

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<sup>51</sup> CAMPESE 2004, 164.

<sup>52</sup> Per una visualizzazione delle articolazioni fondamentali della nozione di “ingiustizia” si rimanda all' *Indice ragionato dei concetti*, in Aristotele 2008, 1283-1284.

non si può conseguire il proprio bene senza appartenere a una famiglia e a una comunità politica (*ἄνευ οἰκονομίας οὐδ' ἄνευ πολιτείας*).

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# The Meaning of Distributive Justice for Aristotle's Theory of Constitutions \*

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## *Abstract*

This paper examines Aristotle's theory of distributive justice and its meaning for his theory of constitutions. First, it shows that his account of constitutions in Books IV–VI of the *Politics* is an extension and refinement of his scheme of six constitutions in Book III. Second, it argues for the thesis that the account of justice (τὸ δίκαιον) in distribution of political offices that Aristotle gives in Book III of the *Politics* links up with and extends the doctrine of justice (δικαιοσύνη) that he develops in Book V of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Third, it substantiates the thesis that Aristotle understands the different forms of constitution as embodiments of different conceptions of distributive justice, and argues for the thesis that Aristotle has a clear preference for the aristocratic conception and, as a consequence, for aristocracy. Finally, it supports the thesis that the constitution of the best polis, which Aristotle outlines in Books VII and VIII of the *Politics*, has to be understood as a true aristocracy and not as a polity (πολιτεία).

## *Key Words*

Aristotle's *Politics*, Theory of Justice, Distributive Justice, Constitutions

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The twentieth century has witnessed an impressive renaissance of Aristotle's practical philosophy. This is not only true for his virtue ethics but for his political philosophy, which is mainly a theory of constitutions<sup>1</sup>.

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The ethical virtue that is most important for Aristotle's political philosophy is justice. In his theory of justice, he distinguishes different forms of justice, which should be applied in different spheres of the city (*πόλις*)<sup>2</sup>. In the tradition of Aristotle, today we associate justice with the laws of a political community, with a fair exchange of private goods, with lawful punishment or a just distribution of public goods. Most significant for Aristotle's political philosophy are his conceptions of universal justice, which requires citizens to abide by the laws of the polis, and distributive justice, a part of particular justice. Though not usually recognized in the literature, distributive justice already plays a central role in the political philosophy which Plato develops in the *Politeia* and the *Nomoi* (cf. Knoll 2010). In contemporary political philosophy, distributive justice is still a much-debated concept: not only John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*, but the theory that Michael Walzer develops in *Spheres of Justice*, revolve around the question of a just distribution of social goods (Rawls 1971, Walzer 1983).

This paper examines Aristotle's theory of distributive justice and its meaning for his theory of constitutions<sup>3</sup>. Such an investigation has to face some well-known philological problems and questions: does Aristotle have a coherent theory of constitutions or did his teaching develop over his lifetime, as Werner Jaeger suggested in his renowned book first published

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and Stephen Snyder. And finally, thanks to David Butorac for checking my translations from Greek into English.

- <sup>1</sup> For a detailed account of this renaissance and especially of the renaissance of Aristotle's political philosophy see the voluminous dissertation GUTSCHKER 2002.
- <sup>2</sup> Aristotle develops his theory of justice in Book V of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which contains the identical text as Book IV of the *Eudemian Ethics*, and in his *Politics* (especially in Book III).
- <sup>3</sup> For a fundamental critique of the legitimacy to use the term "distributive justice" for Aristotle's account of the distribution of political power see SCHÜTRUMPF 2017. For my arguments against this critique see KNOLL 2011b.



in 1923 (Jaeger 1955)?<sup>4</sup> Is Aristotle's account of constitutions in Books IV–VI of the *Politics* an extension and refinement of his well-known scheme of six constitutions in Book III or does it represent a new theoretical approach?<sup>5</sup> And on the most general level: Should we regard Aristotle's *Politics* as a unified work with a coherent theory or do we have to understand it as a composition of an earlier and a later treatise or as a collection of political essays that were written in different periods of his life?<sup>6</sup>

This paper is not only based on but defends the weak Unitarian thesis, according to which the eight books of the *Politics* develop a coherent and unified theory of constitutions<sup>7</sup>. The first section gives a brief introduction to Aristotle's theory of constitutions and shows that his account of constitutions in Books IV–VI of the *Politics* is an extension and refinement of his scheme of six constitutions in Book III. Section two elucidates Aristotle's theory of distributive justice and the political dispute about how to fill its two formal principles with content and make them concrete. It shows that for the political culture of his time Aristotle distinguishes between four different conceptions of distributive justice.

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<sup>4</sup> For a contemporary assessment of Jaeger's hypothesis and an informative account of the history of its perception see BERTELLI 2016.

<sup>5</sup> This is one of the central issues of my disagreement with Eckart Schütrumpf. According to Schütrumpf's genetic view, in Books IV–VI Aristotle takes a new theoretical approach in his constitutional theory. Against this view I argue that Aristotle's account of constitutions in Books IV–VI of the *Politics* is an expansion and refinement of his scheme of six constitutions (KNOLL 2011 b, 417–421; cf. fn. 12).

<sup>6</sup> For an overview of the controversy between a genetic-analytic and a Unitarian view of the *Politics* see SCHÜTRUMPF 1980, 287–326, ROWE 1991, and BERTELLI 2016.

<sup>7</sup> According to the strong Unitarian thesis, the eight books of the *Politics* should be viewed as a coherent and unified work. Though many reasons and arguments for a strong Unitarian thesis can be given, our sources do not allow us to provide final and incontestable evidence for it. For my arguments for both versions of the Unitarian thesis see KNOLL 2009, 2011a, 2011b.

The section argues for the thesis that the account of justice (τὸ δίκαιον) in distribution of political offices which Aristotle gives in Book III of the *Politics* links up with and extends the doctrine of justice (δικαιοσύνη) that he develops in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The third section substantiates the thesis that Aristotle understands the different forms of constitution as embodiments of different conceptions of distributive justice. Furthermore, it argues for the thesis that Aristotle has a clear preference for the aristocratic conception and, as a consequence, for aristocracy. The section devotes special attention to Aristotle's argumentation for the aristocratic conception of distributive justice. The final section, which is presented as a conclusion, supports the thesis that the constitution of the best polis, which Aristotle outlines in Books VII and VIII of the *Politics*, has to be understood as a true aristocracy and not as a polity (πολιτεία).

In the literature, the question of Aristotle's political preferences is a controversial issue. His well-known scheme of six constitutions provides no criterion to solve the problem of which of the three correct constitutions Aristotle prefers. In kingship, aristocracy and polity alike, the rulers govern for the common good (τὸ κοινῇ συμφέρον) and not for their personal advantage. In his outline of the constitution of the best polis in Books VII and VIII, Aristotle doesn't give this constitution a name. These are two important reasons why, to this day, there is a controversy regarding Aristotle's fundamental political convictions. The first line of interpretation, which prevails in the English speaking world, claims that the constitution of the best polis is an aristocracy of the best men (Barker 1959, 353; Keyt 1991; Mulgan 1991, 318; Depew 1991, 346, 362; Chuska 2000; Bates 2003, 97). The second line, which is still dominant among German scholars, understands Aristotle's "ideal constitution" as a mixed government, which he calls polity (πολιτεία) (Bien 1980, 315ff.; Ottmann 2001, 210; Sternberger 1984, 119, 127, 156). As a defender of "Aristotelian Social Democracy", Martha Nussbaum belongs in this line as well (1990; 2000, 109; 2001, 147).

### 1. Aristotle's theory of constitutions

Aristotle lays out his theory of constitutions, the central subject of the *Politics*, in Books II through VII. Of course, for a political thinker rooted in the ancient world of the polis the term “constitution” (πολιτεία) has a different meaning than for us today. In Book III Aristotle presents his well-known scheme of six constitutions and gives a first version of his definition of a constitution:

A constitution is the order of a polis in respect to its various offices, and especially in respect to that office which is supreme in all issues. The supreme office is everywhere the government of the polis, in fact the government is the constitution itself (ἔστι δὲ πολιτεία πόλεως τάξις τῶν τε ἄλλων ἀρχῶν καὶ μάλιστα τῆς κυρίας πάντων. κύριον μὲν γὰρ πανταχοῦ τὸ πολίτευμα τῆς πόλεως, πολίτευμα δ' ἐστὶν ἡ πολιτεία, *Pol.* III 6, 1278b 8-11)<sup>8</sup>.

Aristotle understands a constitution as the order (τάξις) which determines who rules in the political community. He even identifies the constitution with the group of the ruling citizens. According to the literal meanings of the names of the constitutions, Aristotle defines a democracy as the rule of the people (δημος), and an oligarchy as the rule of the few (ὀλίγοι) (*Pol.* III 6, 1278 b 11–13). In the following paragraphs, Aristotle differentiates also the other forms of constitution according to the criterion of who rules in the polis. In doing so, he introduces his scheme of six constitutions, which separates the three good constitutions kingship, aristocracy, and polity (πολιτεία), from their perversions, tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy.

Essentially, Aristotle's constitutional scheme goes back to Plato, who develops it in the *Politikos*. In this dialogue, Plato's protagonist, a

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<sup>8</sup> All Greek quotes of the *Politics* are taken from the edition of W. D. Ross (ARISTOTELIS, 1957).

stranger from Elea, already divides constitutions into three right and three wrong ones. The basis of both divisions is the quantitative distinction of whether one, a few, or the many rule. Like Aristotle, Plato comprehends kingship as the good government of one ruler and tyranny as the bad. Similar to his student, Plato understands aristocracy as the good government of a few rulers and oligarchy as the bad. While Aristotle calls the legitimate rule of the many “polity” (*πολιτεία*), and the illegitimate one “democracy”, Plato uses the term “democracy” for both (*Pol.* III 7, 1279 a 32–1279 b 10; *Politikos*, 302 c/d). There are two further differences between the two constitutional schemes. First, contrary to Aristotle, Plato assumes a paradigmatic seventh constitution, in which the one or the few who have knowledge rule intelligently<sup>9</sup>. Second, Plato distinguishes the three right constitutions from the three wrong ones by means of the criterion of whether the rulers govern according to the law or against the law (*Politikos*, 302 d/e). On the contrary, Aristotle groups the six forms of constitutions according to the criterion of whether the rulers govern for the common good (*τὸ κοινῇ συμφέρον*) or merely for their particular or personal advantage (*Pol.* III 7, 1279 a 17–1279 b 10).

Aristotle distinguishes constitutions not only by means of the quantitative criterion of whether one, a few, or the many rule, and the normative-teleological criterion of whether the rulers aim at the common good or not. He differentiates constitutions also according to the specific quality of the ruler or the ruling group. Thus, Aristotle defines democracy

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<sup>9</sup> In the *Politeia*, Plato designates the best constitution, depending on whether one or more virtuous and knowledgeable persons rule, either as kingship or as aristocracy (*Rep.* IV, 445 d). On the contrary, in the *Politikos*, he understands the correct constitution, in which one or more knowledgeable people rule intelligently, as a separate seventh constitution. Plato emphasizes that the correct constitution has to be dissociated from the other constitutions as far as a God from men (297 b/c, 302 c–303 b). He conceives of the other six constitutions merely as imitations of the correct constitution, the three good ones as imitations for the better, the three bad ones as imitations for the worse (293 e, 297 c).

as the government of the poor, oligarchy as the rule of the rich, and aristocracy as the government of the most virtuous<sup>10</sup>. Combining all three aspects of his constitutional scheme, democracy can be defined as the rule of the many poor for their own advantage, oligarchy as the rule of the few rich for their benefit, and aristocracy as the government of the few virtuous for the common good (*Pol.* III 7/8, 1279 a 32–1279 b 19).

Aristotle is aware that a classification which distinguishes constitutions according to both the quantity and the quality of the rulers could lead to taxonomy problems. This would be the case if a poor minority or a rich majority ruled. For him, in political reality such cases do not happen. While in every polis there are only a few rich or virtuous citizens, the people (*δημος*) or the majority consists always of the poor. In political reality, the quantitative and the qualitative criterion coincide (*Pol.* III 8, 1279 b 20–1280 a 6; for Aristotle's account of the exception Colophon see *Pol.* IV 4, 1290 b 14–17).

In Books III–VI of the *Politics*, Aristotle extends and refines his scheme of six constitutions. He needs to do this, because the three criteria he initially offers for distinguishing constitutions are not precise enough. First, the normative-teleological criterion and its opposition between a government for the common good or for the personal advantage of the rulers is too simple. This plain opposition raises the question of how to define the common good and the advantage of the rulers, which amounts to the question about the goal or the end (*τέλος*) of a constitution. Concerning the three wrong constitutions, Aristotle mentions the safeguarding and increase of wealth (*πλοῦτος*) as the dominant aim of

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<sup>10</sup> Already Plato distinguishes constitutions according to a qualitative criterion. He comprehends aristocracy and oligarchy as the rule of the rich and democracy as the rule of the poor. For him, the difference between kingship and tyranny is that the first rule is based on voluntariness and the second one on violence (*Politikos*, 291 e–292 a; cf. 276 d/e, 293 a). In the *Politeia*, Plato regards virtue (*ἀρετή*) as the central quality for aristocracy and kingship (*Rep.* IV, 445 d).

oligarchy and tyranny, and freedom (ἐλευθερία) as the highest goal of democracy (*Pol.* III 9, 1280 a 25–31; *Pol.* V 10, 1311 a 9–10; *Pol.* VI 2, 1317 a 40–b 17; cf. *EN* VIII 12, 1160 b 12–15). How Aristotle understands the common good is disputed in the literature. Fred D. Miller, who discusses the different positions, distinguishes between individualistic and holistic interpretations of the common good, which both allow for an extreme and a moderate form<sup>11</sup>. In any case, in accordance with his ethical writings Aristotle equates the common good primarily with a good life (εὖ ζῆν) or with happiness (εὐδαιμονία), the natural end of the polis.

Like the normative-teleological criterion, the quantitative and qualitative criteria are not precise enough and need to be supplemented. As a consequence, Aristotle introduces subspecies of the different constitutions. Already in Book III he presents five forms (γέννη, εἶδη) of kingship<sup>12</sup>. From a conceptual and logical perspective this distinction is

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<sup>11</sup> Miller points out: “One line of interpretation is *individualistic*: to promote the common advantage *is* to promote the ends of its individual members. The polis is happy or flourishing provided that its individual citizens are happy. [...]. Another line of interpretation is *holistic*: the polis resembles an organism in that it has an end which is distinct from, and superior to, the ends of its individual members” (MILLER 1995, 194; italics by Miller). Miller maintains “that the preponderance of evidence in the *Politics* indicates that Aristotle has a moderate-individualist position” (*ibidem*, 204).

<sup>12</sup> According to his genetic approach, Eckart Schütrumpf maintains that in Book IV Aristotle rejects the scheme of six basic constitutions, which he presented in Book III, and displays a changed and progressed view on constitutions. For Schütrumpf, in Books IV–VI Aristotle takes a new theoretical approach. As a main reason for this interpretation Schütrumpf mentions that in these books Aristotle divides his six basic constitutions in subspecies (1980, 320–23, cf. 273; 1991, 46; 2001, 122–23). A central argument against this interpretation and in favor of the thesis that the *Politics* should be seen as a coherent unity is the fact that already in Book III Aristotle divides one constitution, kingship, into five subspecies. However, Schütrumpf tries to show that this division is not equivalent to Aristotle’s later divisions of democracy and oligarchy in subspecies (SCHÜTRUMPF 2011, 250–257). For my arguments that Aristotle’s

necessary, because the definition of a kingship as the government of one virtuous ruler for the common advantage lacks precision. It lacks precision because it does not indicate how much political power or competences a king has. Aristotle's distinction of five kinds of kingship allows him to specify this for each form. The extremes are absolute kingship (*παμβασιλεία*), in which one man rules over everything, and the Spartan type of kingship, which is primarily a hereditary generalship. The remaining three forms are intermediates between these extreme forms, because in these constitutions the kings have less power and competences than in absolute kingship, but more than in Spartan kingship (*Pol.* III 14/15, 1284 b 35–1286 a 2).

Like the general definition of kingship, the common definitions of democracy and oligarchy as the rule of the many poor or the few rich for their own advantage have to be supplemented. Contrary to kingship, Aristotle distinguishes democracy and oligarchy not according to how much power one man has, but according to how many and which kinds of citizens participate in political power. In the first form of democracy all male citizens participate equally in government, in the second form only those who have some property and pay taxes, and in the third one only those with incontestable decent (*Pol.* IV 4, 1291 b 30–1292 a 7). Analogously, in the first form of oligarchy a greater number of citizens with a moderate amount of property participate in government, in the second one a lesser number with a greater amount of property, and in the third one an even lesser number with still greater property. In the fourth form of oligarchy only the very few citizens govern, who exceed everyone else by wealth and influence (*Pol.* IV 6, 1293 a 12–34). According to the logic of Aristotle's distinction of constitutions, a fifth form of oligarchy would pass into a form of monarchy. This shows that Aristotle's

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subdivisions are essentially all equivalent extensions and refinements of his scheme of the six constitutions see KNOLL 2011 b, 417–421; cf. fn. 5.

subdivisions correspond to each other. That Aristotle's subdivisions are equivalent can also be seen by the fact that the second form of democracy is close to the first form of oligarchy.

## 2. Aristotle's theory of distributive justice

In Book V of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which contains the identical text as Book IV of the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle develops his comprehensive theory of justice (*δικαιοσύνη*)<sup>13</sup>. Justice is likewise a central topic of the *Politics*. This is especially true for distributive justice, which Aristotle starts discussing in Book III as justice (*τὸ δίκαιον*) in the distribution of political offices (*ἀρχάς*). This section substantiates the thesis that Aristotle's account of distributive justice in the *Politics* is an extension and refinement of the doctrine of justice (*δικαιοσύνη*) in his ethical writings.<sup>14</sup> However, the central thoughts of Aristotle's theory of distributive justice are already found in Plato's *Laws*<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Almost all scholars acknowledge that the *Nicomachean Ethics* (*NE*) was written by Aristotle. Concerning the *Eudemian Ethics* (*EE*), some classicists like Hellmut Flashar still doubt that Aristotle is the author (1985, 76, 78). Most scholars today believe that the three common Books, *NE* V–VII and *EE* IV–VI, belong to the *NE* (BUDDENSIEK 2012, 56 (fn. 1)). These are the reasons why this paper mainly refers to the *NE*.

<sup>14</sup> An opposite thesis has been recently defended by Eckart Schütrumpf. For him it is not appropriate to talk about “justice” or “distributive justice” in the *Politics*. Schütrumpf tries to substantiate this thesis with the fact that in Book III of the *Politics* Aristotle uses the term “τὸ δίκαιον”, which he translates with “Recht” (“right”), and not the term “δικαιοσύνη”. According to Schütrumpf, justice (*δικαιοσύνη*) only refers to the ethical problem of developing the character toward virtue (*ἀρετή*) (Schütrumpf 2011, 257–263; cf. my arguments against Schütrumpf's thesis (KNOLL 2011b, 414–417), cf. fn. 17. For an instructive account of the role of justice in the *Politics* and of Aristotle's distinction between objective and subjective justice see LISI 2017. In his paper Lisi criticizes rightfully that modern interpreters do not pay enough attention to Aristotle's important distinction between justice as an objective norm and justice as a subjective state or disposition.

<sup>15</sup> For the reasons that substantiate this thesis see fn. 19, fn. 21, fn. 26, fn. 44, and KNOLL 2010.



In Book V of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle distinguishes justice (*δικαιοσύνη*) as the whole virtue or universal justice, which requires abiding by the laws of the polis, from justice as a part of virtue or particular justice. He divides particular justice (*κατὰ μέρος δικαιοσύνης*) into distributive justice and rectifying justice:

One form of particular justice, and of that which is just in the corresponding sense, concerns the distribution of honour or money or other things that are divisible among those who have a share in the constitution (for in these cases it is possible for one man to have a share either equal or unequal to that of another); the other form rectifies the conditions of a transaction (*τῆς δὲ κατὰ μέρος δικαιοσύνης καὶ τοῦ κατ' αὐτὴν δίκαιου ἐν μὲν ἐστὶν εἶδος τὸ ἐν ταῖς διανομαῖς τιμῆς ἢ χρημάτων ἢ τῶν ἄλλων ὅσα μεριστὰ τοῖς κοινωνοῦσι τῆς πολιτείας (ἐν τούτοις γὰρ ἐστὶ καὶ ἄνισον ἔχειν καὶ ἴσον ἕτερον ἑτέρου), ἐν δὲ τὸ ἐν τοῖς συναλλάγμασι διορθωτικόν, ENV 5, 1130b 30-34)*<sup>16</sup>.

Although Aristotle mentions money and “other things” as the subject of distributive justice, this form of justice primarily concerns the just distribution of political offices (*ἀρχάς*) and the honor (*τιμῆ*) that the citizens can achieve by exercising them. In the *Politics*, Aristotle even declares that “we speak of offices as honors” (*Pol.* III 10, 1281 a 31). That for Aristotle distributive justice relates primarily to the distribution of political power is already apparent in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Shortly after his division of particular justice into distributive justice and rectifying justice, Aristotle outlines the two formal principles of distributive justice and refers to the political dispute concerning how to fill these principles with content and make them concrete:

So the just necessarily involves at least four terms: two persons for whom it is in fact just, and two things in which it is manifested. And there is the same

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<sup>16</sup> All Greek quotes of the *Nicomachean Ethics* are taken from the edition of I. Bywater (ARISTOTELIS 1954).

equality between the things as between the persons, for the things are in the same ratio to one another as the persons: if the persons are not equal, they will not get equal things. And from there quarrels and complaints originate: when either equals have and are assigned unequal shares, or unequals equal shares. This is also clear from the fact that assignments should be according to worth. For everyone agrees that what is just in distribution must be according to worth in some sense. But they do not all mean the same sort of worth: for democrats it is freedom, for supporters of oligarchy it is wealth, for others it is noble birth, and for aristocrats it is virtue. So justice is a sort of proportion (*ἀνάγκη ἄρα τὸ δίκαιον ἐν ἐλαχίστοις εἶναι τέτταρσιν: οἷς τε γὰρ δίκαιον τυγχάνει ὄν, δύο ἐστί, καὶ ἐν οἷς, τὰ πράγματα, δύο. καὶ ἡ αὐτὴ ἔσται ἰσότης, οἷς καὶ ἐν οἷς: ὡς γὰρ ἐκεῖνα ἔχει, τὰ ἐν οἷς, οὕτω κακείνα ἔχει: εἰ γὰρ μὴ ἴσοι, οὐκ ἴσα ἔξουσιν, ἀλλ' ἐντεῦθεν αἰ μάχαι καὶ τὰ ἐγκλήματα, ὅταν ἢ μὴ ἴσα ἴσοι ἢ μὴ ἴσοι ἴσα ἔχωσι καὶ νέμονται. ἔτι ἐκ τοῦ κατ' ἀξίαν τοῦτο δῆλον: τὸ γὰρ δίκαιον ἐν ταῖς νομαῖς ὁμολογοῦσι πάντες κατ' ἀξίαν τινὰ δεῖν εἶναι, τὴν μέντοι ἀξίαν οὐ τὴν αὐτὴν λέγουσι πάντες ὑπάρχειν, ἀλλ' οἱ μὲν δημοκρατικοὶ ἐλευθερίαν, οἱ δ' ὀλιγαρχικοὶ πλοῦτον, οἱ δ' εὐγένειαν, οἱ δ' ἀριστοκρατικοὶ ἀρετὴν. ἔστιν ἄρα τὸ δίκαιον ἀνάλογόν τι, EN V 6, 1131a 18-29)<sup>17</sup>.*

Distributive justice is a form of justice that is not blindfolded; it allots the goods of the polis with distinction of the persons and in view of their qualities. As different persons generally have different qualities, they usually get allotted unequal shares. In a just distribution, these shares should be bestowed on the persons in proportion to their different qualities, or as Aristotle puts it, in proportion to their unequal worth or merit (*ἀξία*)<sup>18</sup>. In a just distribution everyone gets allotted equal shares in proportion to his unequal worth or merit. Like Plato, Aristotle calls this

<sup>17</sup> In this paragraph, in which Aristotle explains particular justice (*κατὰ μέρος δικαιοσύνης*), he uses several times the terms “τὸ δίκαιον” and “δίκαιον”. The term “δίκαιον ἐν ταῖς νομαῖς” can be translated as “just in distribution” and as well as “justice in distribution”. This shows that Aristotle uses the terms “τὸ δίκαιον” and “δικαιοσύνης” as synonyms. In accordance with this, the term “τὸ δίκαιον” can be translated with “justice” and with “right” or “Recht” (cf. fn. 14).

<sup>18</sup> Only in a few English editions of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics* the term “ἀξία” is translated with “worth”. Usually it is rendered with “merit”.

form of equality, which he opposes to “numeric” or “arithmetic” equality, “proportional” or “geometrical” equality (*EN* V 6, 1131 a 29 ff.)<sup>19</sup>. For Aristotle, a distribution to citizens is just if the public goods are allotted according to proportional or geometrical equality.

The above quoted paragraph from the *Nicomachean Ethics* contains two formal principles of distributive justice. The first principle establishes that a just distribution is one according to worth (*κατ' ἀξίαν*). The second principle, which also refers to the relation between the persons who have claims, determines that only equals should get equal shares, while unequals should be allotted unequal shares. The first principle can be phrased “To everyone in proportion to his worth or rank”, the second one “Equal shares to equals, unequal shares to unequals”<sup>20</sup>.

Aristotle observes that there is a consensus among citizens that justice in distribution “must be according to worth in some sense”<sup>21</sup>. But at the same time he reports a substantial disagreement about the criterion or standard, which is appropriate in order to measure worth (*ἀξία*). This disagreement exists among citizens in so far as they have different political

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<sup>19</sup> In the *Laws*, in which he already develops the main elements of Aristotle's theory of distributive justice, Plato distinguishes between two concepts of equality. One kind of equality he calls “equality according to measure, weight and number”, and the other one the “most genuine” and “best” equality. This sort of equality, which for him is inextricably linked to political and distributive justice, allots more to the greater – more virtuous and educated – person, and less to the inferior one (VI, 757 a–e). In the *Gorgias* Plato calls this form of equality “geometrical equality” (508 a, cf. 490 b–e). Cf. fn. 26 and fn. 44.

<sup>20</sup> The principle “To everyone in proportion to his worth or rank” is more appropriate for Aristotle's political thought than the principle “To each his own”, which in German literature on Aristotle is usually regarded as the formula for distributive justice (ENGISCH 1971, 159; HAACKE 1994, 28; SALOMON 1937, 26; TRUDE 1955, 108). The principles “To everyone in proportion to his worth” and “To everyone in proportion to his rank” are equivalent (cf. HAACKE 1994, 28; RICKERT 1997, 27).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Pol.* V I, 1301 b 35–36. In the *Laws*, Plato already declares that candidates for political offices should be elected or rejected “according to their worth” (VI, 751 d).

convictions. Aristotle mentions four groups with fundamentally different political convictions, which go along with four different standards of worth. The democrats favor “freedom (ἐλευθερία)” as the criterion of worth, the supporters of oligarchy “wealth (πλοῦτος)”, the aristocrats “virtue (ἀρετή)”, and an unnamed fourth group “noble birth (εὐγένεια)”. It is important to notice that for Aristotle the true aristocrats (ἀριστοκρατικοί) are those who hold “virtue” to be the appropriate standard of worth and not those who favor “noble birth”. While the criteria “wealth”, “virtue”, and “noble birth” allow a gradation of “more” and “less”, people are either free as citizens or - Aristotle’s contrast to freedom - they are slaves, foreigners or resident aliens<sup>22</sup>.

For the political culture of his time Aristotle distinguishes between four different ways to fill the two formal principles of distributive justice with content and make them concrete. In accordance with this he discriminates four different conceptions of distributive justice: the democratic, the oligarchic and the aristocratic conception, and an undesignated fourth conception<sup>23</sup>. Each of the two principles thus can be phrased in four different ways: “To everyone in proportion to his wealth, freedom, virtue or noble birth”, and: “Equal shares only to persons equally wealthy, free, virtuous, or with equally good ancestors”.

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. KEYT 1991, 243–44. Keyt doesn’t explicitly mention resident aliens.

<sup>23</sup> Applying a distinction which John Rawls introduces in *A Theory of Justice*, David Keyt explains that “we can distinguish the *concept* of distributive justice from the various *conceptions* of it”. Keyt understands the different conceptions as interpretations of the one principle of distributive justice (KEYT 1991, 242–43, italics by D.K., cf. RAWLS 1971, 5–6, and Keyt’s fn. 16 to the ultimately Aristotelian roots of Rawls’s distinction). Less appropriate, Fred D. Miller talks about a “dispute among different *theories* of justice: oligarchic justice, democratic justice, and aristocratic justice. At issue are rights within the political community” (MILLER 1995, 124; italics by M.K.). Miller’s expression “different *theories* of justice” is problematic, because it suggests that the different conceptions of distributive justice have little or nothing in common, which is not the case.

In the *Politics*, Aristotle refers two times to the short account of distributive justice that he gave in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (*Pol.* III 9, 1280 a 16–25; *Pol.* III 12, 1282 b 18–23)<sup>24</sup>. Both references are located in Book III, which many scholars identify for good reasons as the centre of the whole *Politics*<sup>25</sup>. In Book III, Aristotle takes up the issue of the political dispute about the appropriate standard of worth and gives reasons for his own position. He concedes that in the political quarrel over how political offices should be distributed, freedom, wealth, noble birth, and virtue can be regarded with some right and for some reasons as justified claims. But none of the claims of the four political convictions in question are “absolutely justified” (*Pol.* III 13, 1283 a 29–31). Aristotle is not the first thinker who distinguishes and analyses competing reasons that support claims to political power. In the *Laws*, Plato already distinguishes seven, or rather eight, contradictory and competing claims (*ἀξιώματα*) used to justify ruling political communities and families<sup>26</sup>.

In the political dispute about the just distribution of offices and the appropriate standard of worth all four political groups or parties can put forward some arguments. The supporters of an oligarchic conception of distributive justice, which Aristotle equates with the rich, argue that they pay more taxes, that they are “usually more reliable in matters of

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<sup>24</sup> These two references are usually, as Olof Gigon and Franz Susemihl state in their commentaries on the *Politics*, related to Book V 6 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (ARISTOTELES 1965, 289; ARISTOTELES 1973, 306, 311).

<sup>25</sup> David Keyt calls Book III “the philosophical core of the entire treatise” (KEYT 1991, 247). William L. Newman understands Book III as „the centre round which the whole treatise is grouped“ (NEWMAN 1887-1902, II, XXXI). The interpretation that Book III is the centre of the whole *Politics* can be substantiated as well by the cross-references (cf. KEYT/MILLER 1991, 4).

<sup>26</sup> For Plato's distinction and list of seven reasons for claims see *Laws* III, 689 a–690 d. Though the claim of the rich citizens to share in the offices and honors in proportion to their wealth is not part of Plato's list, he mentions it in Book V as an eighth claim (*Laws* V, 744 b–c).

contract” and that they “have a larger share of the land”, which is “to the benefit of the public” (*Pol.* III 9, 1280 a 25–31; *Pol.* III 13, 1283 a 31–33). Because of these merits they hold an unequal share in political power to be just, and claim that an oligarchy, in which the offices are distributed in proportion to wealth, is the appropriate constitution. Aristotle criticizes this position, stating that one cannot derive conclusively from the single particular inequality of wealth a general inequality that could justify an oligarchic constitution. The argument of the supporters of oligarchy would be convincing if the end of the polis were wealth. But for Aristotle this is not the true goal of a political community (*Pol.* III 9, 1280 a 22–31; *Pol.* V 1, 1301 a 31–36).

The adherents of a democratic conception of distributive justice argue that all male citizens are equal, because they are all born as free men. Because of that they hold it to be just if both the poor and the rich get an equal share in political power, and claim that a democracy is the appropriate constitution. Aristotle criticizes this position, stating that one cannot derive conclusively from the single particular equality of freedom a general equality that could justify a democratic constitution (*Pol.* III 9, 1280 a 22–31; *Pol.* V 1, 1301 a 28–36). The argument of the democrats would be convincing if the true goal of the polis were freedom, but this an idea which Aristotle rejects.

In the democracies of Aristotle’s time not only slaves and foreigners, but women and young men were excluded from political participation. The democratic method of distributing the majority of offices was a distribution for a short period by lot. The consequence was an equal chance for all male citizens to participate in political power, which led to a system “of all ruling over each, and of each over all in turn” (*Pol.* VI 2, 1317 b 18–20). It is worth noticing that the account of the democratic conception of distributive justice, which Aristotle gives in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, differs in an important aspect from the one he gives in the *Politics*. In the *Ethics* he equates democratic justice with a

distribution according to worth (κατ' ἀξίαν), which the democrats measure with the standard "freedom". In the *Politics* he identifies democratic justice with equality according to number, which he opposes to equality according to worth (κατὰ ἀριθμὸν ἀλλὰ μὴ κατ' ἀξίαν) (*Pol.* VI 2, 1317 b 4, cf. 1318 a 3–10). While in the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle seems to use "worth (ἀξία)" as a generic term or an open concept which can assume different meanings, in the *Politics* he uses it in a non-egalitarian sense pointing to the idea of an unequal rank, merit or desert of citizens.

Contrary to supporters of both democratic and oligarchic conceptions of distributive justice, the members of the good families refer to their noble birth (εὐγένεια). They argue that they are citizens to a greater degree than those of low birth, that good birth is honored in every community, and that descendants of good parents are likely to be better than children of the low-born, because noble birth is the virtue of the family. With these arguments the better-born claim that it is justified that they get a bigger share in political power than the low-born (*Pol.* III 13, 1283 a 33–37).

### *3. Distributive justice and constitutions: Aristotle's arguments for the aristocratic conception of distributive justice and for aristocracy*

In a first step, this section substantiates the thesis that Aristotle understands the different forms of constitution, with the exception of tyranny, as embodiments of different conceptions of distributive justice. In a second step, the section argues for the thesis that in the political dispute among the supporters of four conceptions of distributive justice Aristotle has a clear preference for the aristocratic conception<sup>27</sup>. Taken together,

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<sup>27</sup> An opposite thesis is central for Dolf Sternberger's interpretation of Aristotle's fundamental political convictions. Sternberger claims that Aristotle differs "considerably" from Plato, because Aristotle values democratic equality and justice "equally" as oligarchic and aristocratic equality and justice (STERNBERGER 1984, 130–31, 139, 154; cf. fn. 19 and fn. 44).

these two theses yield a third one: Because Aristotle has a preference for the aristocratic conception, he must likewise have a preference for aristocracy.

The above given reconstruction of the arguments of the well-born, the democrats, and the supporters of oligarchy shows that each conception of distributive justice is linked with its corresponding constitution. To advocate the distribution of political offices in proportion to wealth is the same as to support oligarchy. To claim that every free-born male citizen should get an equal share in political power is identical with the endorsement of democracy. And likewise, “the distribution of honors according to virtue (*κατ’ ἀρετήν*) seems to be the most characteristic trait of aristocracy; for virtue is the defining criterion of aristocracy, as wealth is the criterion for oligarchy, and free birth of democracy” (*Pol.* IV 8, 1294 a 9–11). The political dispute over the just distribution of the offices and the appropriate standard of worth amounts to a quarrel over the appropriate constitution of the polis.

In Athens, the dispute of political parties over the right constitution of the polis broke out long before Aristotle’s birth<sup>28</sup>. This dispute turned into a violent fight during the Peloponnesian War, which was led from 431 until 404 BC between Athens and Sparta and their respective allies. During this horrific war, civil wars broke out in several cities, in which Athens endorsed the democratic and Sparta the anti-democratic forces. Like the defection of one polis from their ally, a civil war often led to a change in constitution. While Athens introduced democracy, Sparta

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<sup>28</sup> In *The Constitution of Athens*, Aristotle (or some other author) reports about Athens in the early 6<sup>th</sup> century BC: “The parties at this time were three in number. First there was the party of the Shore, led by Megacles the son of Alcmeon, which was considered to aim at a moderate form of government; then there were the men of the Plain, who desired an oligarchy and were led by Lycurgus; and thirdly there were the men of the Highlands, at the head of whom was Pisistratus, who was looked on as an extreme democrat” (ARISTOTLE, 1991, § 13, 11–12).



substituted democracy with a constitution that they called an “oligarchy”, in which only a part of the people held political power<sup>29</sup>.

In Book V of the *Politics*, Aristotle examines the change (*μεταβολή*) of constitutions and in particular why they decay and how they can be preserved. In the important first chapter he declares that democracy and oligarchy are the prevailing constitutions of his time. In view of these two constitutions he explains the general causes and motives for sedition and revolution (*στάσις*). His account is based on his theory of distributive justice. He even holds that democracy and oligarchy originate from the opposing conceptions of distributive justice of their supporters (*Pol. V I, 1301 a 25–32*). From these opposing conceptions the citizens of competing political parties also derive their irreconcilable judgments of whether an equal or unequal distribution of political power is just or unjust. Therefore, the opposing conceptions are, in the end, the reason why democracies and oligarchies are often not stable and cannot be preserved. The rich citizens strive to overthrow democracies, because they hold an equal distribution of political power to be unjust. Sedition in oligarchies originates because the poor citizens think their exclusion from political life is unjust and because they demand an equal participation in government (*Pol. V I, 1301 a 32–1302 a 13*)<sup>30</sup>. For Aristotle, the general cause or motive for sedition and revolution is that citizens are outraged and get angry when they perceive power relations to be unjust, and therefore want to change them<sup>31</sup>. This cause or motive concerns the inner

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<sup>29</sup> THUKYDIDES 2002, III, 82, 206; BLEICKEN 1994, 58–59; cf. GEHRKE 1985, 356, and BLEICKEN 1994, 59). After the Peloponnesian War, some more bloody overthrows happened in Greece, for example in Thebes and in Thessalia (GEHRKE 1985, 352).

<sup>30</sup> In Book V, Aristotle declares several times that the cause for political overthrow in democracies and oligarchies is that the people or the rich think that the distribution of political rights is unjust (1302 a 22–32, 1303 b 3–7, 1316 a 39–1316 b 3).

<sup>31</sup> Ronald Polansky points out: “Since the disposition fostering change or sedition is ultimately the sense of injustice in distribution in the community, this must be the most general of all the causes operative in change” (Polansky 1991, 335). In line with

state of the revolutionaries that is brought into being by their sense of justice. In the end, the human sense of justice which enables man to have perceptions of good and bad, of just and unjust, is the “anthropological” basis of all different conceptions of distributive justice<sup>32</sup>.

As several scholars have pointed out, Aristotle understands the different forms of constitution, except tyranny, as embodiments of different conceptions of distributive justice<sup>33</sup>. In the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle declares that “all constitutions are a particular form of justice; for they are communities, and every community is held together by justice (αἱ δὲ πολιτεῖαι πᾶσαι δικαίου τι εἶδος: κοινωνία γάρ, τὸ δὲ κοινὸν πᾶν διὰ τοῦ δικαίου συνέστηκεν)” (EE VII 9, 1241 b 13–15). In the *Politics*, he explains an important aspect of how justice holds the political community together. A constitution is not only the order which determines to whom

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Polansky, Hans-Joachim Gehrke pronounces: “In der Tat ist der entscheidende Gesichtspunkt das Empfinden der ungerechten Behandlung durch das Vorherrschen differenter Gleichheitsvorstellungen. Man fühlt sich zurückgesetzt und benachteiligt, in seinem Recht und Anspruch verletzt. Es unterliegt keinem Zweifel, daß Aristoteles hier ein ganz wesentliches Movens der ‘Aufsässigkeit’ erarbeitet hat” (GEHRKE 2001, 143).

<sup>32</sup> In a famous paragraph Aristotle explains: “Contrary to the other living beings, it is peculiar to man that he alone has perception (αἴσθησις ἔχειν) of the good and bad, of the just and unjust, and of other similar qualities. Community in these things makes a household and a polis” (*Pol.* I 2, 1253 a 15–18). In view of this paragraph, John Rawls states: “Aristotle remarks that it is a peculiarity of men that they possess a sense of the just and the unjust and that their sharing a common understanding of justice makes a polis” (RAWLS 1971, § 39, 234). For Rawls, together with the human capability of having a conception of one’s good, the capability for a sense of justice is the “basis of equality” of “human beings as moral persons” (*ibidem*, § 4, 19; cf. § 77, 505).

<sup>33</sup> Richard Mulgan explains: “Different constitutions embody different conceptions of justice with differing criteria of how honours and other public goods should be distributed” (MULGAN 1991, 310). In line with this Fred D. Miller pronounces “that the constitution is in some manner identical with justice (in the sense of being the embodiment of justice)” (MILLER 1991, 299, cf. MILLER 1995, 79). Analogously, David Keyt points out that “a constitution is primarily a kind of distributive justice” (KEYT 1991, 238).

the political power is allotted in the polis, but ethically justifies this distribution through a conception of distributive justice inextricably linked to it. Furthermore, a constitution establishes what the final or dominant goal of the political community is. The question of the goal of the polis is an ethical question, because it mainly revolves around the decision of what a political community and its rulers hold to be a good life and what values it holds to be important. In Book IV of the *Politics*, Aristotle gives a second and extended version of his definition of a constitution which includes these two ethical aspects:

A constitution is the order of a polis in respect to its various offices and the questions of how they are distributed, what the supreme power of the polis is, and what the end of every community is (πολιτεία μὲν γάρ ἐστι τάξις ταῖς πόλεσιν ἢ περὶ τὰς ἀρχάς, τίνα τρόπον νευέμηνται, καὶ τί τὸ κύριον τῆς πολιτείας καὶ τί τὸ τέλος ἐκάστης τῆς κοινωνίας ἐστίν, *Pol. IV* 1, 1289a 15-18).

Aristotle discusses both the ethical questions of the just distribution of the political offices and of the goal of the polis in the chapters in Book III, which follow his first definition of a constitution. This strongly suggests the interpretation that he phrases a second definition in order to include the results he gained in Book III. This is an argument for the unity of the *Politics*. First, it shows that there is no rupture between Books III and IV, as the supporters of the genetic-analytic interpretation of the *Politics* suggest<sup>34</sup>. Second, it indicates that the subjects and arguments of the *Politics* are not only coherent and consistent, but build on each other in such a way that later parts implicitly or explicitly refer back to earlier

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<sup>34</sup> For Werner Jaeger, the *Politics* is divided in an early “Urpolitik” (Books II, III, VII, and VIII), which contains Aristotle’s “speculative outline”, and the “empirical books” IV–VI, that were supposedly written later (JAEGER 1955, 275–282). According to Eckart Schütrumpf, Book III is an early precursor to the discussions in Book IV, and a treatise that has not been completely preserved or that has never been finished (SCHÜTRUMPF 1980, 273).

parts, which they presuppose, continue, distinguish, or supplement<sup>35</sup>. Both points can be further substantiated by section one of this paper, which demonstrated that Aristotle's account of constitutions in Books IV–VI is essentially an extension and refinement of his scheme of six constitutions in Book III. The introduction of subspecies of the different constitutions already begins in Book III, which distinguishes five forms of kingship<sup>36</sup>.

A constitution establishes what the goal or end of a political community is. As has already been pointed out, in Book III Aristotle assesses three constitutions as wrong because they are forms of government structured for the advantage of the rulers and not for the common good. In oligarchy and tyranny, the end of the rulers and thus the polis is to safeguard and increase wealth, in democracy the highest goal is the realization of freedom. According to Aristotle, democratic freedom means that everyone can live how he wants. Aristotle makes clear that neither freedom nor wealth can be regarded as the true ends of a polis (*Pol.* III 9, 1280 a 22–31; *Pol.* V 9, 1310 a 28–36, cf. *Pol.* VI 2, 1317 b 10–13).

After he rejected freedom and wealth as candidates for the true goal of the polis, Aristotle mentions several ends and shows that these cannot be regarded as the specific or highest goals of the political community. He brings up bare life or survival, mutual defense against injury, trade and mutual intercourse or advantage, and mutual protection against injustice and damages as possible ends of a polis (*Pol.* III 9, 1280 a 31–1280 b 5). Against such conceptions of the goal of the political community Aristotle argues that trade agreements, treaties for mutual defense, and other forms of alliance also exist between peoples and thus cannot be regarded as the characteristic or specific end of a polis. The goals to mutually protect each other, to not harm each other, or to do trade are only

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<sup>35</sup> For a compilation of examples of how the subjects and arguments of the *Politics* build on each other see KNOLL 2011 b, 413–14; cf. fn. 47.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. fn. 12.

pre-conditions that must be present before a polis can exist; but the presence of all these conditions is not enough to make a polis. What constitutes a polis is an association of households and clans in the good life (εὖ ζῆν), in order to achieve a perfect and self-sufficient existence. [...] The goal (τέλος) of the polis is the good life, and these things are means to that end. And a polis is an association of clans and villages in a perfect and self-sufficient existence, which in our view constitutes a happy and noble life (τὸ ζῆν εὐδαιμόνως καὶ καλῶς). Therefore, the political communities must be considered to exist for the sake of good actions (πράξεων), and not for the sake of bare social life. Hence, those who contribute most to such an association have a greater share in the polis than those who are their equals or superiors in freedom or decent but not their equals in political virtue (πολιτικὴν ἀρετῆν), or than those who surpass them in wealth but are surpassed by them in virtue (*Pol.* III 9, 1280b 31-35; 1280b 39-1281 a 8).

The supreme goal of the polis is the good and happy life. Aristotle states this conviction in the first paragraphs of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, in which he points out that happiness (εὐδαιμονία) is the highest end and supreme good which man can achieve through his actions<sup>37</sup>. Aristotle's definition of the supreme goal of the polis is a premise of the argument that he gives in order to substantiate his own preference in the political dispute about how political offices and honors should be distributed<sup>38</sup>. The paragraph cited above gives a short version of this argument and mentions once more the four competing reasons for political claims that were common in the political culture of Aristotle's time: freedom, wealth, noble birth and virtue.

Aristotle's argument for his political preference is part of his general theory of what constitutes a just distribution. Usually in a distribution of goods there are different people who have claims and who advance

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<sup>37</sup> In the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle states that happiness (εὐδαιμονία) as the supreme of all practical goods is related to political science (*EN* I 2, 1094 b 7–10).

<sup>38</sup> For an interpretation of Aristotle's argument that is partly different and partly similar than the one given above see KEYT 1991, 250–259.

different and competing reasons in order to justify their claims. According to Aristotle's theory, the disputed question of which reason for political claims is most justified in a distribution can be decided in regard to the goal of this distribution. A reason for a justified claim must not only have a factual connection to the goal of the distribution but must also contribute substantially to reaching it.

A first illustration of this general theory can be seen in Aristotle's critique of the oligarchic and the democratic conceptions of distributive justice (*Pol.* III 9, 1280 a 22–31). The supporters of oligarchy claim a greater share in the polis, in offices and honor, in proportion to their greater wealth, which is their claim's justification. If the goal of the polis were property or wealth, the supporters of oligarchy would have a strong argument. As an instructive analogy to the polis and the competing claims of the rich and the poor Aristotle brings up an imaginary financial partnership of two men with a capital of 100 talents in which one man contributed only one talent and the other one 99 talents. It is obvious that in such a partnership the man who only put in one talent would only have a share in the whole capital and in the interest it generates in proportion to his contribution and thus a much smaller share than the man who put in 99 talents. As the only goal of a financial partnership is an increase in wealth, such extremely unequal shares are justified. But for Aristotle, the polis is neither a financial partnership nor is its goal an increase in wealth or property.

This paragraph of the *Politics* is not well-elaborated, but it suggests that Aristotle has a similar critique of the democratic conception of distributive justice in mind, whose supporters he criticizes alike for not being able to see that the justified claims they can make are very limited. If the goal of the polis were the realization of freedom, all free men, the rich and the poor alike, could make an equal contribution to reach this goal and thus have an equal share in the political community. But the polis is not a

partnership for the goal to realize ones freedom (*Pol.* III 9, 1280 a 25–31).

A second illustration of Aristotle's general theory is his example of a just distribution of flutes<sup>39</sup>. If flutes are distributed in a just way, the person who is distinguished through the capability of outstanding flute-paying should get the best flute<sup>40</sup>. To be sure, alternative reasons for claims like noble birth, beauty, or wealth have a higher rank in the general order of goods than the capability of flute-paying. But they have no factual connection to the goal of good flute-paying and they do not contribute anything to reach it. This is why they are arbitrary and irrelevant standards in a just distribution of flutes. With his example of a just distribution of flutes Aristotle makes clear that offices and honors should not be allotted according to superiority in any good whatsoever. There are goods like height or the ability to run fast which are irrelevant in a just distribution of offices and honors, because they have no factual connection to the goal of the polis and do not contribute anything to the attainment of it. Furthermore, a distribution according to superiority in any good whatsoever would presuppose that every good is comparable with any other, which is impossible in regard to the heterogeneity and incommensurability of the mentioned goods (*Pol.* III 12, 1282 b 23–1283 a 11).

Aristotle concedes that the standards of freedom and wealth have some claim in the political distribution of offices and honors. A polis that

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<sup>39</sup> Some chapters before Aristotle introduces his example of the distribution of flutes, he declares that “the ruled correspond to the flute-maker, the ruler to the flute-player who uses the instrument” (*Pol.* III 4, 1277 b 29–30). Like flute-makers allot flutes to flute-players, the ruled distribute political power to the rulers.

<sup>40</sup> For Martha Nussbaum's interpretation of Aristotle's example of a just distribution of flutes see NUSSBAUM 1990, 171. According to Nussbaum's interpretation of his theory of distributive justice, Aristotle holds a capability for a certain function to be the “morally relevant criterion” for the distribution of “the necessary material conditions” to perform this function (*ibidem*).

consisted only of slaves would not be able to exist. The same is true for a polis made up of only poor people. Such a polis would have no income in taxes and, as such, no financial means for public affairs. This demonstrates that both the poor and the rich citizens together with their qualities make an indispensable contribution to the existence of the polis. Therefore, they can claim some share in political participation. However, in a just distribution of offices and honors, Aristotle holds political virtue to be the standard of worth that is most justified<sup>41</sup>.

The first step of Aristotle's argumentation for the aristocratic conception of distributive justice is to substantiate the thesis that the specific goal of the polis is the good and happy life, as opposed to survival, wealth, freedom, or something else. While people agree that flutes should be distributed for the end of good flute playing, there is no consensus among them about the true end of the polis. As a second step he establishes his general theory of distributive justice, according to which a justified claim in a distribution must not only have a factual connection to the goal of this distribution but must also contribute substantially to reaching it. The third and final step is to show that political virtue contributes much more to a good and happy life than do freedom, wealth, or noble birth. The conclusion of these steps is that the aristocratic conception of distributive justice can claim by far better reasons than the other three conceptions, which shows that Aristotle has a clear preference for it.

Considering the competing standards noble birth, freedom, wealth, justice (*δικαιοσύνη*) and political virtue (*πολιτικὴ ἀρετή*)<sup>42</sup>, Aristotle phrases this conclusion as follows:

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<sup>41</sup> The paragraph above shows that Ada Neschke-Hentschke's interpretation that "only" political virtue can advance a claim for rule is too exclusive and too rigid (NESCHKE-HENTSCHE 2012, 115).

<sup>42</sup> For the problem whether Aristotle wrote in 1283 a 20 in fact "*πολιτικῆς ἀρετῆς*", which is most likely, or "*πολεμικῆς ἀρετῆς*", see KNOLL 2009, fn. 266. In Aristotle's list of



In view of the existence of the polis, it would seem that all, or at least some, of these controversial claims are justified; but in regard to the good life education and virtue would have a more justified claim, as we have already said<sup>43</sup> (πρὸς μὲν οὖν τὸ πόλιν εἶναι δόξειεν ἂν ἢ πάντα ἢ ἐνιά γε τούτων ὀρθῶς ἀμφισβητεῖν, πρὸς μέντοι ζῶν ἀγαθὴν ἢ παιδεία καὶ ἡ ἀρετὴ μάλιστα δικαίως ἂν ἀμφισβητοῖσσαν, καθάπερ εἴρηται καὶ πρότερον, *Pol.* III 13, 1283a 23-26).

Like Plato, Aristotle holds “education (παιδεία)” and “virtue (ἀρετή)” to be the appropriate standard of worth in a just distribution of offices and honors<sup>44</sup>. In his statement, “education” and “virtue” should not be apprehended as rivaling claims. Rather, education should be understood as the formation of the soul (ψυχῆ) that leads to the ethical virtues, the virtues of the character<sup>45</sup>. The most important ethical virtue is justice as a trait of character or disposition (ἕξις). Starting at an early age, education has to form the activities and thereby the habits in order to produce a virtuous character. For Aristotle, education should not only focus on subjective justice but also on other ethical virtues like courage (ἀνδρεία) and temperance (σωφροσύνη) (*EN* II 1, 1103 a 31–1103 b 25). Together with the intellectual virtue named prudence (φρόνησις), these ethical virtues constitute what Aristotle calls political virtue (πολιτικὴ ἀρετή). Already in Chapter 4 of Book III he mentions prudence (φρόνησις) as the virtue peculiar to a good ruler (*Pol.* III 4, 1277 a 14–15; cf. Elm 1996).

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claims “justice (δικαιοσύνη)” and “political virtue (πολιτικὴ ἀρετή)” should not be understood as rivaling claims, as for Aristotle justice is a part of political virtue. Cf. *Pol.* III 9, 1281 a 7–8.

<sup>43</sup> This statement refers back to the short version of Aristotle’s argument in *Pol.* III 9, 1280 b 39–1281 a 8.

<sup>44</sup> In the *Laws*, Plato mentions explicitly both “education (παιδεία)” and “virtue (ἀρετή)” as the relevant standard for the “most genuine” and “best” form of political justice and equality (VI, 757 c); cf. KNOLL 2010, and fn. 19.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. PATT 2002, 78.

For Aristotle, political virtue is the most justified reason for claims in a distribution of offices and honors<sup>46</sup>.

For Aristotle, political virtue contributes substantially to reaching the goal of the polis, the good and happy life. In order to answer the question of how Aristotle conceives of this contribution, it is necessary to ask how he conceives of a good and happy life. According to the central definition of Aristotle's theory, happiness (*εὐδαιμονία*), "is an activity of the soul according to virtue (*κατ' ἀρετήν*)" (*EN I 6*, 1098 a 16–17). Human beings can live a good and happy life if they develop and practice their ethical and intellectual virtues in two forms of life. As citizens, they can practice the combination of prudence (*φρόνησις*) and ethical virtues in a political life. As scientists or philosophers, they can practice their intellectual virtues – wisdom (*σοφία*) as a combination of science (*ἐπιστήμη*) and intuition (*νοῦς*) – in a life of contemplation (*EN I 3*, 1095 b 14–1096 a 5; *EN I 13*, 1103 a 1–7; *EN VI 3*, 1139 b 16–17; *EN VI 7*, 1141 a 19).

It is not difficult to see how political virtue contributes substantially to reaching the good life, the goal of the polis. To practice political virtue as a citizen is identical with good actions and a political life. In an active political life a citizen carries out virtuous actions for his polis in the assembly, the council, the law-courts, or in war. For Aristotle, an active political life, in which citizens deliberate, govern, and shape the polis, counts as a good and happy life. Such a life aims at honor, and, as an even higher end, at virtue (*EN I 3*, 1095 b 22–31). Furthermore, it depends on the political virtue of the citizens whether a polis flourishes or perishes, whether it can keep its self-sufficient existence or not, and whether its constitution remains stable or faces civil war and sedition. If politically virtuous citizens maintain the stability of the political order and ensure that

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<sup>46</sup> See for a similar interpretation of Aristotle's evaluation of the role of political virtue GORDON 2007, 145, 154, and SCHÜTRUMPF 1980, 146. According to Ada Neschke-Hentschke, for Aristotle political virtue is composed out of prudence ("der praktischen Klugheit") and just ethos ("dem gerechten Ethos") (NESCHKE-HENTSCHE 2012, 115).

the polis is self-sufficient and flourishing, they safeguard the freedom and wealth of all citizens, and thus, some important means for a good and happy life. Like peace and leisure, stability and prosperity are the best conditions for a fruitful life of contemplation, the good life of the scientist or philosopher. If a virtuous political life is able to reach these aims it contributes substantially to realizing this form of life, which, according to Aristotle's arguments in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, is even happier than the political life (*EN* X 7–9, 1177 a 12–1179 a 32).

According to Aristotle's classification of the political convictions of his time, for democrats worth (*ἀξία*) "is freedom, for supporters of oligarchy it is wealth, for others it is noble birth, and for aristocrats it is virtue" (*EN* V 6, 1131 a 27–29). This section has demonstrated that for Aristotle the appropriate standard of worth and the most justified reason for claims in the distribution of political offices and honors is political virtue. Therefore, according to his classification he has to be categorized as a supporter of the aristocratic conception of distributive justice<sup>47</sup>. Furthermore, this section

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<sup>47</sup> Also Fred D. Miller comes to the conclusion that "Aristotle makes clear the superiority of the aristocratic theory": "In so far as the citizens are free, well-born, or wealthy, they can help to keep the polis in existence; but only in so far as they possess virtue can they directly contribute to its natural end. Therefore, the aristocratic theory is correct, and the virtuous have a just claim to political authority which is superior to that of other members of the polis. Furthermore, the aristocratic constitution is best [...] Thus the aristocratic theory of political rights is the authoritative theory of rights" (MILLER 1995, 127; cf. fn. 23). David Keyt distinguishes between an aristocratic and an Aristotelian conception of distributive justice. The latter has a standard of worth that includes not only virtue but wealth and freedom (KEYT 1991, 247, 259). To be sure, the Aristotelian standard of worth embraces wealth and freedom. But this is true for the aristocratic standard as well. As a consequence, there is no need to introduce an additional Aristotelian standard or conception of distributive justice. Keyt's interpretation leads to an inconsistency within the analysis of his paper. Keyt claims correctly that Aristotle's best polis is a "true aristocracy", which "embodies the Aristotelian conception of distributive justice" (*ibidem*, 260). As each constitution embodies its corresponding conception, it is only

has made evident that for Aristotle every constitution contains or embodies a corresponding conception of distributive justice. As a consequence, Aristotle has to be classified in regard to his political convictions as a supporter of aristocracy.

Like for Plato, for Aristotle aristocracy is a constitution closely connected with kingship (*Pol.* V 10, 1310 b 2–3, b 31–32; *Rep.* IV, 445 d). The fundamental principle of both constitutions is the virtue of the rulers. In both constitutions political power is distributed in proportion to virtue, which serves as both the aristocratic and the monarchic standard of worth. Apparently, both constitutions embody the same conception of distributive justice. But as kingship means an extremely unequal share in political power, it is only justified if the king distinguishes himself through outstanding virtue. For Aristotle, such extraordinary individuals cannot be found in contemporary Greece (*Pol.* VII 14, 1332 b 16–27).

In Chapter 13 of Book III, Aristotle emphasizes that in the distribution of political power education and virtue are the most justified reasons for the political claim. As a consequence, in Chapters 14 through 17 he discusses mainly kingship and aristocracy and ponders which of these constitutions is best. After advancing some arguments in favor of aristocracy, Aristotle concludes that aristocracy is generally more desirable for the political communities than kingship (*Pol.* III 15, 1286 b 3–7). In the second chapter of Book IV, Aristotle refers back to these reflections: “Aristocracy and kingship have already been discussed (to consider the best constitution (*ἀρίστης πολιτείας*) is the same thing as to consider the two constitutions so named; since both are based on virtue provided with the necessary external means)” (*Pol.* IV 2, 1289 a 30–33). In this reference Aristotle understands both aristocracy and kingship as subspecies of the best constitution, which elucidates the close connection between these two constitutions.

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sound to understand the conception contained in aristocracy as an aristocratic conception of distributive justice.

#### 4. *Aristocracy as the constitution of the best polis*

The arguments of this paper show that Aristotle supports both an aristocratic conception of distributive justice and aristocracy. This final section substantiates the thesis that the constitution of the best polis, which Aristotle outlines in Books VII and VIII, must be understood as a “true aristocracy”, which embodies an aristocratic conception of distributive justice. Furthermore, the section gives arguments against interpretations that claim that Aristotle’s “ideal constitution” is a mixed government, which he calls polity (*πολιτεία*). The conclusion of this section and the whole paper is that Aristotle has to be understood as an aristocratic political thinker.

Aristotle approaches the question of the constitution of the best polis by first answering the question of the most desirable life. The specific characteristic of the best city, the polis according to our wishes (*κατ' εὐχὴν*), is that the citizens can lead the best and happiest life in it (Pol. VII 4, 1325 b 36). In order to achieve this goal, the citizens have to develop the specifically human virtues and become perfectly good and virtuous, which requires excellent natural dispositions, a first-rate education, and social conditions like wealth, leisure, and exemption from having to work. Apparently, the demands for being a member of the citizens of the best polis are very exacting. As a consequence, the best polis does not have many citizens.

The social structure of Aristotle’s best polis has the shape of a pyramid. The top of the pyramid is constituted by a small leisure class of the good and virtuous citizens. The lower parts are composed of the vast majority of people who live in the polis as non-citizens. These people will be foreigners, resident aliens, and, as much as possible, slaves and barbarians. The non-citizens constitute the laboring class, which Aristotle divides into day-laborers, seamen, farmers, traders, and craftsmen. For Aristotle, the members of the laboring class are not parts of the polis, they

are only indispensable conditions and means for the polis (*Pol.* VII 9, 1329 a 34–39).

Aristotle justifies the exclusion of the laboring class in view of the end of the polis. In order to live a good and happy life, one needs virtue. But the laboring class lacks the natural dispositions, education, or social conditions required to develop their virtues (*Pol.* VII 9, 1329 a 21–24). The laboring class has to serve the leisure class as a means for their good and happy life. Aristotle justifies this with the theory of natural slavery, which he develops in Book I<sup>48</sup>. He also argues that the members of the working class have a lower worth and are by nature designed for the function (ἔργον) and end (τέλος) to serve as means for the human beings that have a higher rank in the natural order (cf. Knoll 2009, 200–01).

According to Aristotle's second definition, "A constitution is the order of a polis in respect to its various offices and the questions of how they are distributed, what the supreme power of the polis is, and what the end of every community is" (*Pol.* IV 1, 1289 a 15–18). The end of the best polis is undoubtedly the good and happy life, which requires that the citizens develop and practice their ethical and intellectual virtues in a political or theoretical life. This is an important reason why the constitution of the best polis cannot be understood as a polity. Aristotle declares more than once that the citizens of the polity, average Greek men, are far from being fully virtuous (*Pol.* III 7, 1279 a 39–1279 b 4; *Pol.* IV 11, 1295 a 25–31). As a consequence, they do not possess the qualities which are required for citizenship in the best polis (cf. Schütrumpf 1980, 159). The best polis aims at a good and happy life and thus virtue. The best means to

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<sup>48</sup> In Book VII Aristotle refers several times directly or indirectly to his theory of natural slavery in Book I (*Pol.* VII 2, 1324 b 36–41; *Pol.* VII 2, 1325 a 28–31; *Pol.* VII 14, 1333 a 3–11; *Pol.* VII 14, 1334 a 2; for a view of the barbarians that is more refined than the one exposed in Book I see *Pol.* VII 7). These references are an argument for the unity of the *Politics*. For a substantiation of the thesis that Aristotle justifies the rule of free citizens over natural slaves with his theory of distributive justice see KNOLL 2009, 149–156.

reach these goals is education. This explains why in his account of the best polis in Books VII and VIII Aristotle devotes a great deal of attention to education.

Aristotle does not say much about the concrete political institutions of the best polis. In order to determine its form of constitution, it is necessary to analyze his thoughts on how the political offices and the political power should be distributed. The citizens of the best polis are all supposed to be good, virtuous, and just. They are all equal and of the same kind. This is why they must all have the right to participate in the government of the polis. Aristotle points out that “for many reasons it is necessary for all to share in ruling and being ruled in turn. For equality means the same treatment of same persons, and a constitution that is not based on justice can hardly survive” (*Pol.* VII 14, 1332 b 25–29). According to the conception of distributive justice that is embodied in the constitution of the best city, all citizens have to participate in the government because they are all equally good and virtuous. Equal participation is not only required for reasons of justice but for reasons concerning the preservation of the polis. Linking up with his analysis of the change of constitutions in Book V, Aristotle argues that an unjust constitution is often an instable one because it leads to sedition.

Aristotle's statement that “it is necessary for all to share in ruling and being ruled in turn” could be misunderstood as suggesting that the best constitution is a polity or a democracy<sup>49</sup>. But an analysis of how Aristotle understands equal participation rules out this interpretation. Shortly after this statement, he explains that it cannot be disputed that the rulers have to

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<sup>49</sup> This is a central misunderstanding of Nussbaum's interpretation of Aristotle's account of political participation. Nussbaum claims that Aristotle's “ideal city is a politeia” (2001, 147), and that he understands participation as a democratic form of participation (NUSSBAUM 1990; cf. 2000, 109). Mistakenly, she tries to support this thesis with Aristotle's statement quoted above (*Pol.* VII 14, 1332 b 25–27; cf. Knoll 2009, 260–63).

be better than their subjects. Referring back to what he had said some paragraphs before, Aristotle explains that nature made a distinction within the persons of the same kind by making some younger and some older. For the younger citizens it is appropriate to be governed, for the older ones to govern. This shouldn't offend the younger citizens as their turn to rule will come with the years (*Pol.* VII 14, 1332 b 35–42).

Aristotle correlates the two age-groups with two different qualities and two different political tasks. The first political task is to deliberate, to judge in law-courts, and to govern the polis. The second one is to protect the government against those who do not want to obey, and to defend the polis against attackers from outside. About the qualities of the two age-groups Aristotle declares that by nature the younger citizens have strength or vigor (*δύναμις*), and the older ones prudence (*φρόνησις*). For Aristotle, the second political task is appropriate for the younger citizens, and the first one for the older ones. The constitution of the best polis entrusts both tasks to the same persons, however, not at the same stage of their life. Nevertheless, by allotting both tasks to every citizen it ensures an equal participation in the political life of the city. Aristotle justifies this distribution of political tasks with the aristocratic conception of justice:

But as by nature strength is found in the younger men and prudence in the older, such a distribution seems expedient and just; this mode of division also possesses conformity with worth (*ἀλλ' ὡςπερ πέφυκεν ἡ μὲν δύναμις ἐν νεωτέροις, ἡ δὲ φρόνησις ἐν πρεσβυτέροις εἶναι, ἔοικεν οὕτως ἀμφοῖν νενεμησθαι συμφέρειν καὶ δίκαιόν ἐστιν. ἔχει γὰρ αὕτη ἡ διαίρεσις τὸ κατ' ἀξίαν*, *Pol.* VII 9, 1329a 14-17).

In the best polis, the political offices and the supreme power are distributed according to worth. In its constitution, the appropriate standard of worth is primarily prudence (*φρόνησις*), which is the intellectual virtue



that, combined with ethical virtues, constitutes political virtue<sup>50</sup>. This demonstrates that the constitution of the best polis embodies an aristocratic conception of distributive justice (cf. Keyt 1991, 260). Because, for Aristotle, each constitution embodies its corresponding conception of distributive justice, the constitution of the best polis has to be understood as an aristocracy. The quote above shows that the constitution of the best polis cannot be conceived of as a polity. Aristotle defines the polity as a mixture of democracy and oligarchy (*Pol.* IV 8/9, 1294 a 15–b 17). Analogously, the conception of distributive justice of the polity is a mixture of the standards of freedom and worth. The quote above demonstrates that these standards have little relevance in a just distribution of political offices.

Aristotle outlines the constitution of the best polis as an aristocracy. However, he considers the case that one citizen is distinguished through such extraordinary virtue that he surpasses all the others by far (*Pol.* VII 14, 1332 b 16–27). According to Aristotle's theory of justice, such an outstanding man would deserve to be allotted the supreme power and to be king. But as such men rarely exist, Aristotle's consideration is rather hypothetical than practical. However, as virtue is both the aristocratic and the monarchic standard of worth, and as aristocracy and kingship are closely connected constitutions, Aristotle holds them to be subspecies of the best constitution (*Pol.* IV 2, 1289 a 30–33).

The argument that the constitution of the best polis embodies an aristocratic conception of distributive justice is not the only reason that supports the thesis that it must be understood as an aristocracy. The constitution of the best polis also corresponds exactly to the features which Aristotle mentions in order to characterize a "true aristocracy". In Book IV Aristotle refers back to his account of aristocracy in Book III and talks

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<sup>50</sup> The citizens of the best polis do have the ethical virtues as well. For Aristotle, they are "absolutely just" (*Pol.* VII 9, 1328 b 38).

about “true aristocracy” as the “first and best constitution” (*Pol.* IV 7, 1293 b 1–3, 19; cf. *Pol.* IV 2, 1289 a 30–33). He defines “true aristocracy” as a “constitution which is based on men that are absolutely the best according to their virtue, and not on good men only in relation to some other standard” (*Pol.* IV 7, 1293 b 3–5). Only in a “true aristocracy” the “good man is absolutely the same as the good citizen; in all other constitutions the good citizen is only good relatively to his own form of constitution” (*Pol.* IV 7, 1293 b 5–7). In all other constitutions apart from “true aristocracy” the citizens are not distinguished through perfect virtue or the virtue of the perfect man. The virtue of a citizen has to be oriented towards his particular constitution. As there are many forms of constitutions, “it is evident that there is not one single virtue which is perfect virtue. But when we speak of a good man we mean that he possesses one single virtue which is perfect virtue” (*Pol.* III 4, 1276 b 31–34). The citizens of the best polis are all perfectly good and virtuous, and the constitution is based on these men. As soon as the citizens come of such an age that they may achieve prudence (*φρόνησις*), “the virtue of the citizen and ruler is the same as that of the best man”. Aristotle points out that “the virtue of the good man and that of the good citizen is the same in the best polis”. As the constitution of the best polis is based on the best and most virtuous men it corresponds exactly to the features which characterize a “true aristocracy” (*Pol.* VII 14, 1333 a 11–12; *Pol.* III 18, 1288 a 38–39; *Pol.* VII 9, 1328 b 38–39).

The thesis that the constitution of the best polis is a “true aristocracy” can be supported as well by a third argument which is connected to the second. The goal or end of the constitution of the best polis is a good and happy life. This presupposes a focus on education in order to develop the virtues which are necessary for a good and happy life. A “true aristocracy” has exactly the same goal and the same requirement to develop virtue. In the context of his distinction of *three kinds of*

*aristocracy*<sup>51</sup> in Book IV, Aristotle makes clear that aristocracies care about virtue and pay public attention to its generation (Pol. IV 7, 1293 b 12–13; cf. Pol. IV 2, 1289 a 30–33). The constitution of the best polis is a “true aristocracy” which embodies an aristocratic conception of distributive justice and which is based on the best men, whose outstanding virtues allow them to live a good and happy life.

As has been mentioned before, there are two opposing lines of interpretation of Aristotle's fundamental political convictions. An analysis of the mistaken interpretations, which hold Aristotle's “ideal city” to be a polity, shows that their representatives neglect Aristotle's distinction of four different tasks of constitutional theory, which he articulates at the beginning of Book IV of the *Politics*. The most important of these distinctions is the one between the task “to study which is the best constitution”, and the task to “ascertain the form of constitution most suited to all cities” (Pol. IV 1, 1288 b 21–24, 33–35; cf. Knoll 2012, 133–135). While Aristotle executes the study of the best constitution in Books VII and VIII, he examines the polity mainly in Books IV–VI. The polity is most suited to all states because most cities at Aristotle's time were either democracies or oligarchies, and the polity is a stable mix of elements of these two unstable constitutions (Pol. IV 8/9, 1294 a 15–b 17)<sup>52</sup>. The neglect of Aristotle's distinction of these two tasks is already one cause for Werner Jaeger's division between an early “Urpolitik” (Books II, III, VII, and VIII), which contains Aristotle's “speculative outline”, and the “empirical books” IV–VI, that were supposedly written later (Jaeger 1955, 275–282). If one takes seriously Aristotle's declaration that the same science has four different tasks, many

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<sup>51</sup> For Aristotle's distinction of three kinds of aristocracy and for the problem whether there are not, in fact, four kinds see IRRERA 2016.

<sup>52</sup> Democracy and oligarchy are the main topic of Book VI. A large part of Book V is devoted to the analysis of the reasons why constitutions and especially why democracies and oligarchies change through seditions and revolutions.

misunderstandings and supposed contradictions of the *Politics* disappear together with the need to postulate different strata of their origin. The same conclusion can be drawn from this analysis of the role of Aristotle's theory of distributive justice for his theory of constitutions. Distributive justice is a central topic of the *Politics* which is equally relevant for different books and for different aspects of Aristotle's theory of constitutions, and which must be regarded as one of the main factors that demonstrate the unity of the *Politics*.

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# The Normative Significance of Aristocratic Constitutions in Aristotle's *Politics* \*

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## *Abstract*

This paper contends that, despite evidences, Aristotle's view of aristocratic constitutions displays a heavily marked normative content. I argue that his understanding of aristocracy may be separated into four main strands: (i) an ideal type, based on the rotation of power of virtuous people over equally virtuous citizens (as evinced from a joint reading of Books III and IV); (ii) a type grounded on a fine blending of social classes, as emerging from a reading of *Pol.* IV, 7.1293b7-18 in the light of *Politics* IV, 3.1290a24-29; (iii) a polity inclining toward oligarchy, which seems to lack any normative worth; (iv) an 'aristocratic polity', grounded on the political role of the middle class (Book IV.11). I shall propose that, in non-ideal conditions, type (iv) is the constitution which best accommodates (a) the need for stability and concord, (b) the search for an ideal of structural harmony and proportion among rulers and citizens.

## *Key Words*

Aristotle, Aristocracy, Normative, Polity, Fine Blend

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## 1. *Introduction*

Aristotle's treatment of aristocracy stands out in the taxonomy of constitutions outlined in the *Politics* as remarkably more elusive than his discussion of other forms of government. While in books III-VI the philosopher spends considerable time and effort in presenting a systematic account of different kinds of monarchy, oligarchy and democracy, he does not seem offer an equally wide-ranging picture of the rule by the excellent.



Also, his references to aristocracy appear scattered throughout the text and do not seem to point to an exclusive qualifying criterion shared by any kind of aristocracy. For instance, he occasionally speaks of some forms of aristocracy whose core value is public concern for ethical excellence<sup>1</sup>, whereas, on other occasions, he mentions forms of government which, although generally labeled as “aristocratic”, show a well-articulated plurality of values, including wealth, good birth (εὐγένεια), education (παιδεία)<sup>2</sup> and sometimes even specific modalities of popular participation<sup>3</sup>. Such constitutions will vary from each other depending on the chosen combination of eligibility criteria and on the priorities accorded to each. Within such forms of government, then, ethical excellence appears simply as *one*, and not as *the only* distinctive feature of aristocracy.

This paper contends that Aristotle’s concern is addressed to the normative – rather than to the merely descriptive and taxonomic – aspect of the aristocratic form of government, and proposes that different levels of normativity are at work in Aristotle’s treatment of aristocracy. I begin by examining *Politics* IV, 7, where three different kinds of constitutional forms are sketched out and presented as *properly* aristocratic: (i) a regime made up of those who are best simply on the basis of virtue (*Pol.* IV,

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<sup>1</sup> See *Pol.* III, 7.1279a35-37; 13.1283b20-21; 15.1286b3-5; IV, 7.1293b1-5; 8.1293b40.

<sup>2</sup> See *Pol.* III, 12.1283a9-22; IV, 3.1289b40-1290a2; 8.1293b35-38; 8.1294a19-25. See also IV, 4.1291b27-30, where Aristotle mentions the notables (οἱ γνῶριμοί), who generally hold the highest offices in aristocracies, by pointing out that there are kinds distinguished by wealth, good birth, virtue, and education. On the plurality of requisites see WHIBLEY 1968, 111-112; cf. ARNHEIM 1977.

<sup>3</sup> See for instance Aristotle’s treatment of Sparta, Crete and Carthage in Book II of the *Politics* (sections 9-12). Cf. *Pol.* IV, 7.1293b7-18.

7.1293b1-7); (ii) regimes differing from both oligarchy and polity, which Aristotle exemplifies by mentioning Sparta and Carthage (*Pol.* IV, 7.1293b7-18), and (iii) those forms of so-called polity which incline more toward oligarchy (*Pol.* IV, 7.1293b18-21). I propose that only two among the three constitutional types outlined at *Politics* IV.7 possess a normative side: the first one, which conveys the idea of a perfect virtue-based aristocracy, and the second one, where such an excellence coexists with and informs other criteria for political power.

In the second part of this paper I note that a crucial form of government of aristocratic flavour appears to be left out of the picture: a polity which does not incline either toward oligarchy or toward democracy, but is rather grounded in the presence and stabilizing role of the middle-class. This kind of polity, which Aristotle invites the reader to identify as *a sort of* aristocracy, is introduced at *Politics* IV.11 and presented as the best regime for most cities, championing a way of life that does not fall outside the intellectual and ethical range of most citizens and that, just for this reason, makes it possible for them to participate in the running of the *polis*. I argue that this is a fourth kind of aristocracy, which is not included in *Politics* IV.7 and discloses a normative factor different from those exhibited by the forms of aristocracy outlined in the above mentioned section. What approximates it to the level of a well-blended aristocracy is the degree of beauty employed in the blending of its political components.

I shall tease out the various normative aspects of aristocracy through two methodological patterns of political analysis that Aristotle himself makes available to the reader. The first paradigm, traceable at *Politics* IV.1, lays down the main tasks of political science and prescribes to study (i) the ideal constitution; (ii) which regime is fitting for which cities; (iii) the regime based on a presupposition; (iv) the regime which is most fitting for all cities. The second, which we find enucleated in a short passage of *Politics* IV.3 (1290a24-29), proposes a classification of constitutions based on the distinction between one or two regimes that are beautifully

constituted and their deviations, which are described as “deviations from the well-blended harmony as well as from the best regime”. I suggest that the “polity of aristocratic flavour” introduced at *Politics* IV.11 can be better understood in its nature and goals in the light of the first pattern of analysis, whereas the aristocracies exemplified by Sparta and Carthage at *Politics* IV.7 find conceptual support in the second paradigm.

## 2. *The First Kind of Aristocracy as the Best Constitution in Absolute*

In section 7 of Book IV of the *Politics* Aristotle lists three kinds and, on the whole, four different examples of aristocratic government. As for the first one, by referring to unspecified arguments which have already been laid out in the text, he speaks of a constitution made up by those who are ἀριστοι in virtue conceived in absolute terms:

Now it is right to call aristocracy [the regime] we treated in our first discourses. Only the regime that is made up of those who are best in absolute<sup>4</sup> on the basis of virtue, and not of men who are good in relation to some presupposition, is justly referred to as an aristocracy; for only here is it simply the case that the same person is a good man and a good citizen, while those who are good in others are so in relation to their regime (*Pol.* IV, 7.1293b1-7).

The above mentioned passage presents some interpretive problems. In the first place, although the qualifying trait of this first type of aristocracy is undoubtedly pure virtue, it is not entirely clear whether such a constitutional pattern is traceable in existing historical cities or it rather indicates the ideal constitution. Secondly, in case the aristocracy at issue

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<sup>4</sup> The English translation of the *Politics* I adopt in this paper is LORD 1984. Here, however, I have modified Lord’s translation of the Greek ἀπλῶς as “simply”, given that in the following lines he opposes those who possess virtue ἀπλῶς to those who possess it relatively to some presupposition. The adverb “simply” would rather emphasize the distinction between the first kind of aristocracy, which is the one grounded on pure virtue, and the remaining two kinds, which include other criteria of political power.

were the ideal one, it might be wondered whether absolute excellence in such a regime is an exclusive prerogative of rulers.

Aristotle speaks of the first kind of aristocracy in very generic terms, which makes it hard to find an uncontroversial solution to the above mentioned interpretive issues. His appeal to what he calls “the first discourses” might represent the key to our understanding of this first kind of aristocracy. Some scholars maintain that, by invoking the “first discourses”, Aristotle is referring the reader to Books VII-VIII, where he spends a great deal of effort to lay the grounds for the best possible constitution. Their view implies that the original position of these books in the text was antecedent to book IV<sup>5</sup>. An alternative possibility is stressed by Barker, who claims that the philosopher expressly addresses some remarks contained in Book III, particularly those concerning his well-known distinction between the good man and the good citizen and the subsequent identification of the virtue of the good man as the one possessed by the good ruler in absolute<sup>6</sup>.

On my view, it is primarily to Book III that Aristotle is referring in his account of the best form of aristocracy outlined in Book IV. Remarkably enough, in the last section of Book III (*Pol.* III, 18.1288a37-39), he makes use of the same expression, i. e. “the first discourses”, by pointing out not only that the main object of concern is the relationship between the virtue of the good man and that of the good citizen in the best city, but also and especially that the two virtues are one and the same, just as it is reported in *Pol.* IV, 7. 1293b3-5 with respect to the first kind of aristocracy. Nor is it a case that, in Book III, the picture of the ideal constitution makes a significant appearance as the framework of discussion

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<sup>5</sup> See for instance NEWMAN 1887-1902; SUSEMIHL-HICKS 1894; WELLDON 1883. See also SIMPSON 1998, xvi-xvii. The same view is held by Lord, although his edition of the *Politics* retains the “traditional” order (see in particular 257, footnote 29).

<sup>6</sup> See BARKER 1946, 186-187. For a better understanding of his stance see III, 4, particularly 1277a14-16 and 1277b25-30.

chosen by Aristotle do set up the identity between the authentically virtuous man and the good ruler in absolute<sup>7</sup>. Assuming that it is primarily Book III that Aristotle has in mind while outlining the first kind of aristocracy in book IV, how can it help us to understand its nature and the implications of the identity between the good man and the good citizen established at VI.7? A plausible answer can be found in the emphasis accorded in Book III on the relationship between the distinctive virtue of the *good citizen* and that of the *good ruler*. The core of their distinction lies in the idea that, unlike the good citizen, whose distinctive virtue and political commitment simply presupposes an unquestioning abidance by the constitutional principles in force in his community, the good ruler is fully equipped with wisdom and a deliberative capacity informed by ethical excellence<sup>8</sup>. On the other hand, in the ideal city, which Aristotle selects as a suitable frame for his discussion<sup>9</sup>, the two virtues can be conceptually distinct without this preventing an individual from possessing both<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> See *Pol.* III, 4. 1276b35-37: «By raising questions in a different manner, the same argument [i. e. the issue of the virtue of the good citizen and its relation to that of the good man] can be made concerning the best regime».

<sup>8</sup> See *Pol.* III, 4. 1276b28- 1277a20. Among those who emphasise a structural difference between the two virtues we find Develin (1973), who argues that the excellence of the ruler and the excellence of the ruled cannot coincide, not even within the framework of the ideal *polis*, whose well-being mainly depends on a well balanced diversification of functions. A similar view with regard to Book III is held by KRAUT 2002, 364-368), although he maintains that in Books VII-VIII the ideal city is described as one in which all citizens possess a correct understanding of well-being and have the equipment needed to live an ethically virtuous life (186, 359-360).

<sup>9</sup> See footnote 7 above.

<sup>10</sup> I refer the reader to IRRERA 2012, where the “coexistence thesis” is expounded, that is, the view that the virtue of the good citizen in the ideal city is perfectly compatible with a simultaneous possession of ethical and intellectual excellence. In other words, each and every citizen of the ideal city would be a potentially good ruler.

As he stresses at *Pol.* III, 4.1277b11-13, learning how to become a good citizen is an indispensable step towards becoming a good ruler, just as it happens in the military sphere, where one learns to be a commander of cavalry by serving under other commanders<sup>11</sup>. Even more forcefully, at *Pol.* III, 13.1283b42-1284 a2 he claims that citizens should also be able to rule:

A citizen in the common sense is one who shares in ruling and being ruled; but he differs in accordance with each regime. In the case of the best regime, he is one *who is capable of and intentionally chooses being ruled and ruling*<sup>12</sup> with a view to the life in accordance with virtue<sup>13</sup>.

Although no political community – not even the ideal one – can allow a simultaneous exercise of political power on its members' part, there seems to be a possible way of guaranteeing political participation to all: government in relays (*ἐν μέρει*). As Aristotle makes it clear in the context of an investigation of the ideal constitution, such a political device is needed among persons who are free and equal in nature, for all cannot rule at the same time but each rules for a given period of time, so that, as a result, all have a share in ruling activity (*Pol.* II, 2.1261a31-b9)<sup>14</sup>. In fact, such a method of allocation of political honours and duties is an appropriate normative response to the following principle: equal men should have what is fine (*καλόν*) and just (*δίκαιον*) in relays, and to assign things unequal to similar individuals is contrary to nature, not to consider that nothing contrary to nature is fine (*Pol.* VII, 3.1325b7-10).

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<sup>11</sup> «But there is also a sort of rule in accordance with which one rules those who are similar in stock and free. For this is what we speak of as political rule, and the ruler learns it by being ruled – just as the cavalry commander learns by being commanded, the general by being led, and [similarly in the case of] the leader of a regiment or a company».

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Plato, *Laws* I, 643e.

<sup>13</sup> A similar position is held at *Pol.* III, 4.1277a25-27.

<sup>14</sup> On the issue of government in relays see CAMBIANO 2000. Cf. IRRERA 2012, 145-146.

The view that the good citizen of an ideal polis can also be a good ruler is theoretically sustained by the identity established by Aristotle between the virtue of the good citizen and that of the *good man* in the ideal community. Such a view, vaguely foreshadowed at *Pol.* III, 4<sup>15</sup>, finds its full expression at *Pol.* III, 18.1288a36-39. Provided that *φρόνησις* is the distinctive excellence of the good man<sup>16</sup>, the virtue of the good citizen, being the same as that of the good man, will not consist in mere conformity to the constitution in force, but will display itself in an exercise of autonomous deliberative excellence. It is just the latter excellence which entitles a good citizen to hold the highest political offices.

If equality is the underlying ratio of any form of government in relays, in the ideal constitution it will then take the form of equality based on virtue, provided that, in accordance with the leading principles of the best regime, each and every individual committed to ruling activity is expected to possess and display authentic *φρόνησις*<sup>17</sup>. On my view, this explains Aristotle's thought that, although the virtue of the good citizen is not the same as the virtue of the good ruler, the virtue of a citizen of reputation is held to be the capacity to rule and be ruled finely (*δύνασθαι καὶ ἄρχειν καὶ ἄρχεσθαι καλῶς*) (*Pol.* III, 4. 1277a25-27). Full excellence and deliberative capacity will be required in the ideal community even of those who, at a given time, play the role of "simple" citizens<sup>18</sup>; for there will come a time for them to have a share in the highest offices.

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<sup>15</sup> At *Pol.* III, 4.1277a14-16 Aristotle asserts that *φρόνησις* is the distinctive excellence of the good ruler, not of the good citizen. At *Pol.* III, 4.1277a20-21, however, he identifies the virtue of the good citizen with that of the good man by presenting it as a hypothesis. If we accept its validity, *φρόνησις* will be possessed by the good citizen as well.

<sup>16</sup> See *Pol.* III, 4.1277a14-16, mentioned above.

<sup>17</sup> See *Pol.* III, 4.1277a14-16, 1277b25-26.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. SIMPSON 1998, 191, 316.

We might now wonder in what respects reference to the “first discourses” contributes to clarifying the nature of the “aristocracy of the best people”. This kind of aristocracy, which he presents in terms of “the best regime” (τὴν ἀρίστην πολιτείαν, *Pol.* IV, 7.1293b18-19), is not simply “the best aristocracy” among the three listed at *Pol.* IV, 7, but the best constitution in absolute. It is just this sort of constitution that acts as supreme regulative ideal for politicians and political scientists. In this respect, it seems to be endowed with a high normative worth, which explicates itself in the capacity to show what each and every virtuous citizen should be: a potentially good ruler. This suggests that aristocracy, being by definition government of the ἄριστοι directed to the promotion of the common interest<sup>19</sup>, is not necessarily modeled on the pattern of an asymmetrical relation in terms of virtue between rulers and ruled, as it might otherwise happen in particular cases of historical constitutions<sup>20</sup>.

As Aristotle says at *Pol.* IV, 2.1289a31-32, to speak of the ideal *polis* is tantamount to speaking of aristocracy (plausibly the first aristocratic kind outlined in *Pol.* IV, 7). By relating the best constitution in absolute to a specific form of government, aristocracy, he gives a well-defined content to a purely abstract political category. What emerges from his reference to the “first speeches” in *Pol.* IV, 7 is not the willingness to detach the first aristocracy from the historically existing ones, but to specify and give substance to an abstract ideal, one which would otherwise risk to be the object of a sterile, utopian speculation.

### 3. *Aristocracy as a Well-tempered Constitution*

If reference to the “first discourses” made in *Pol.* IV, 7 has helped us to understand how the first aristocracy is to be conceived, it nevertheless does not explain the relationship subsisting between this first kind of

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<sup>19</sup> See *Pol.* III, 7. 1279a35-37.

<sup>20</sup> On the Aristocracy based on the superiority of rulers see for instance *Pol.* III, 4 1288a9-15 and *Pol.* III, 18. 1288a32-39.



aristocracy and the following two. Unlike the former, presented as a constitution based on possession and exercise of pure virtue, the latter kinds seem to involve a combination of qualities and selection criteria needed to perform a leading role in politics. We might wonder, then, whether such constitutions relate to the best one, and in what respects they depart from it. I propose that a suitable theoretical backup for the task is supplied by Aristotle in *Pol.* IV, 3. Here, by analysing some possible reasons for the existence of a plurality of constitutions, he explains that the constitution is an arrangement of offices (*ἡ τῶν ἀρχῶν τάξις*) whose distribution takes place with respect to the political weight (*δύναμις*) of those sharing in the constitution; constitutions are therefore as many as the ways of arranging magistracies in relation to the preeminence and the difference of the parts (*Pol.* IV, 3.1290a7-13). At any rate, as Aristotle is keen on emphasizing, it seems that the variety of constitutions can be reduced in the last analysis to two distinct kinds: democracy and oligarchy<sup>21</sup>. By appealing to what seems to be a commonsensical view, aristocracy might be envisaged as a peculiar form of oligarchy, whereas the polity as a form of democracy. In the attempt to exemplify this concept by way of images understandable by anyone, he proposes not only the case of various winds that can be substantially reduced to two kinds, i. e. the northern and the southern, but also the case of different musical modes, which can be reciprocally combined in various ways. Emphasis on combination helps the readers' understanding of a different way of thinking of constitutions. In fact, Aristotle explains that, although his contemporaries are generally accustomed to conceive of constitutions in this way,

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<sup>21</sup> On the polarity between oligarchy and democracy in Aristotle's times see MULGAN 1991, particularly 311.

[...] it is truer (*ἀληθέστερον*) and better (*βέλτιον*) to distinguish as we have, and say that one or two are finely constituted (*τῆς καλῶς συνεστηκυίας*) and the others deviations (*παρεκβάσεις*) from them – deviations from the well-blended harmony (*τῆς εὖ κεκραμένης ἁρμονίας*) as well as from the best regime, the more taut [of the harmonies] being oligarchic and more like rule of a master, the relaxed and soft being popular (*Pol. IV, 3.1290a24-29*).

His taxonomy is an alternative more theoretically sustainable and practically efficacious than the commonsensical paradigm. By initially exhibiting a substantial degree of uncertainty, Aristotle proposes “one or two” constitutions in the light of which the others seem to derive their nature as “deviations”. The marking trait of the first two is a construction effected “in a beautiful way”. In the case of the ideal constitution, the “good construction” stems from the adoption of virtue as the qualifying criterion for the exercise of political power alongside devices such as the already mentioned government in relays; as we have seen in the already mentioned *Pol. VII, 3.1325b7-10*, the latter is presented as “beautiful” and “consistent with nature”.

Remarkably enough, however, Aristotle invites the reader to look at those constitutions which can be regarded as “beautifully structured” even when these are not grounded on the promotion of pure virtue. The beauty of the regime’s inherent structure, in this second case, seems to come to the surface as the outcome and the visible manifestation of a good blending. This implies the existence of different qualifying criteria and social groups that do not necessarily share by their own nature a prominent concern for the valorization of virtue in political life; nevertheless, they result liable to be combined with the featuring qualities of different regimes thanks to the intervention of a wise lawgiver. In that case, the characteristic beauty of this second kind of constitution would not lie in any of its constitutive components, but rather in the blending itself. In the light of this taxonomic framework, oligarchies will no longer appear as suitable normative paradigms after which aristocracies are

modeled. *Vice versa*, aristocratic forms of government and, in particular, the best one, are presented as a suitable cornerstone in the light of which oligarchies appear pure deviations. In a similar fashion, democracies are just deviations from the well-blended community, which at *Pol. IV*, 3.1290a18 is named “polity” (*πολιτεία*)<sup>22</sup>.

As far as the polity is concerned, Aristotle has not yet provided a systematic treatment of such a constitutional form, nor has he mentioned the wide variety of forms this can take on. In the third book of the *Politics*, for instance, he simply includes it within the group of the right constitutions, that is, those regimes which aim at the common interest<sup>23</sup>, and confines himself to presenting it as the rule by a multitude (*πλῆθος*) of people who do not possess virtue as a whole, but just some part of it, like the military class, whose distinctive virtue is simply of military kind<sup>24</sup>. Elsewhere, it is presented as a mixture of two constitutions, namely oligarchy and democracy (8.1293b33-34: *μίξις ὀλιγαρχίας καὶ δημοκρατίας*) or, better said, a mixture of the well off and the poor (*μίξις τῶν εὐπόρων καὶ τῶν ἀπόρων*; 9.1294a16-17)<sup>25</sup>. The aspect of polity which strengthens the rationale of Aristotle’s argument in *Pol. IV*, 3 (and makes it different from an unspecified “mixture” of various constitutions) is the presence of a “virtuous arrangement” of offices and groups. This is suggested by the idea that the blending is made “beautifully”, that is, according to some kind of proportionality which ensures not only the inherent harmony of the polity, but also its stability. This, in turn,

<sup>22</sup> On the identification of the well-blended constitution with a form of polity, see Simpson’s comment on the passage.

<sup>23</sup> See *Pol. III*, 7.1279a37-1279b5.

<sup>24</sup> On the involvement of the military class in the administration of the polity I refer the reader to IRRERA 2010, section V.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Pol. IV*, 8.1294a23-24, where Aristotle draws a stark distinction between polity and aristocracy by specifying that only aristocracy mixes virtue to wealth and freedom, whereas polity is rooted exclusively on the mixture of the two latter properties.

presupposes the presence of a wise project, that is, one which involves a “phronetic” attitude and possession of the typical deliberative capacity of wise lawgivers. What Aristotle mentions as a “polity”, then, is a constitution approaching the nature of an aristocracy.

If the first kind of constitution enucleated in *Pol. IV, 7* corresponds to the ideal constitution, the second one seems to incarnate just the kind of well-tempered constitution described in *Pol. IV, 3*. Let us then read the passage at *Pol. IV, 7.1293b7-18*:

Nevertheless, there are certain regimes which differ both from those that are oligarchically run and from so-called polity, and are called aristocracies. For wherever they elect to offices not only on the basis of wealth but also on the basis of desert, the regime itself is different from both of these and is called aristocratic. For indeed, in [cities] that do not make virtue a common concern there are still certain persons who are of good reputations and held to be respectable. Wherever, therefore, the regime looks both to wealth and to virtue as well as the people, as in Carthage, it is aristocratic; and so also those which, like the Lacedaemonian regime, look to two alone, virtue and the people and where there is a mixture of these two things, democracy and virtue.

It is worth noting that, in this second typology of constitution, virtue can be employed in the government of a city without being considered as the one and only requirement for accessing the highest offices; nor does virtue need to be publicly fostered among citizens as a value to cultivate and spread. A similar thought seems to reinforce the hypothesis that a polity can include respectable and virtuous people in ruling power, even though virtue is not regarded by lawgivers a “structural ingredient” of the mixture. The relevant examples put forward by Aristotle on this occasion are Sparta and Carthage. Within the present framework of discussion, he introduces them as cities which exhibit some concern for virtue in ruling power. Sparta, for instance, is described as a community whose constitutional nature involves a mixture of virtue and popular participation, whereas Carthage as one grounded on a mixture of the latter

criteria to wealth. Such constitutions, being rooted on a multiplicity of presuppositions and qualifying criteria, cannot obviously be regarded as forms of a pure aristocracy; nor can they be identified as cases of oligarchy, for what oligarchic constitutions make open display of is exclusively wealth<sup>26</sup>, which is championed by those who abide by its principles both as a constituent of their personal view of happiness<sup>27</sup> and as criterion for the selection of people to public offices. Within oligarchic forms of government, values like education, nobility of birth and deliberative virtue are not attached a prominent role, and they can emerge in and affect political life only in a contingent manner, that is, without enjoying public recognition. Sparta and Carthage seem rather closer to a blended constitution involving virtue. As far as Carthage is concerned, this seems to match the constitutional pattern of aristocracy outlined at *Pol.* IV, 8. 1294a23-25, that is, the one of a well-blended compound of wealth, popular participation and virtue. Wealth is instead omitted in the case of Sparta, which is described as rooted in a mixture of virtue and popular participation. Assuming the reliability of Aristotle's account of the Spartan constitution, such an omission might be explained by a supposed willingness of lawgivers to place higher emphasis on values which might prove factors of stability in a well-blended mixture. Desire for wealth, by contrast, might engender tendencies and attitudes opposed to virtuous practice, and it might also be a cause of internal conflict among the citizens.

In this respect, Sparta and Carthage can be identified as normative paradigms of a well-tempered constitution. Carthage, in particular, might be conceived of as a better aristocratic model than the one exemplified by

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<sup>26</sup> On the various kinds of oligarchy as regimes based on wealth see *Pol.* IV, 6. 1293a12-34. See WHIBLEY 1968.

<sup>27</sup> See Book VII, 2. 1324a8-10: «Those who ascribe living well to wealth in the case of a single person also call the city as a whole blessed if it is wealthy».

Sparta, given that, on Aristotle's account, it adopts virtue as suitable criterion of selection not only of the highest offices, but also of lower ones, i.e. the which involve a widespread popular participation<sup>28</sup>. Also, by keeping the involvement of the many in political deliberations in high esteem, Carthage appears a solid, well organized constitution (*συντεταγμένης*), where people acquiesce in the arrangement of its principles and no factional conflict arises between different social groups (*Pol.* II, 11. 1272b29-33).

In the light of the normative model proposed in *Pol.* IV, 7, the second kind of aristocracy, i.e. the one consisting in well-tempered models, is certainly less desirable than a perfect aristocracy purely founded on absolute virtue, but this is not a good reason to dismiss the second kind as a possible guiding pattern for less perfect constitutions, especially for those who are far away from the ideal regime. An example of the latter kind of constitution might be represented by the third kind of aristocracy mentioned in *Pol.* IV, 7: a polity inclined towards oligarchy (*Pol.* IV, 7.1293b18-21). It is not clear whether virtue is presupposed within the structure of the third aristocracy, as Aristotle rounds off the issue very quickly. Considering that in *Pol.* IV, 3 he has spoken of the generic tendency to mistake aristocracy for oligarchy, we might hypothesize that the latter kind of aristocracy be intended in the way in it is seen by common people<sup>29</sup>. In that case, it would not involve virtue and it might be regarded as diverging not only from the ideal aristocracy, but also and especially from the aristocracy based on a fine blend of qualities. Conceived as a deviation from the second kind of aristocracy outlined in *Pol.* IV, 7, oligarchy might be very close – or even identical with - a polity which resorts to expedients designed to reduce the multitude's political

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<sup>28</sup> See *Pol.* II, 11.1272b35-37.

<sup>29</sup> See SIMPSON 1998, 316-317. Cf. MULGAN 1977, 70. For a different view see Newman (1887-1902, 195-96), who conceives of this third kind of aristocracy as a true one for Aristotle.

weight<sup>30</sup>. Although this does not exclude the presence of virtuous people in the highest offices, considering that some respectable people descend by noble and rich families, virtue would not be publicly exhibited as a value of the constitution.

Notably enough, Aristotle does not offer here historical examples to elucidate the third kind of aristocracy. This might be due to the fact that he has no interest in presenting it as a model to follow. If such a kind of aristocracy is a real deviation, it cannot be taken on as a valid, inspirational model of aristocratic constitution. Still, the former kinds of aristocracy will offer it some clues on how to modify its underpinnings in the direction of a virtuous blend of factors.

#### 4. *A Fourth Kind of Aristocracy*

Having established some possible theoretical connections between sections 3 and 7 of *Pol. IV*, it is now time to answer our original question: do the three kinds of aristocracy discussed so far exhaust the whole issue about aristocracy? I suggest that a plausible answer can be given after consideration of Book IV, 11. Here, as I believe, Aristotle offers an outline of a form of aristocracy which does not match any of the typologies of constitution outlined so far: one fully identifiable with a polity primarily grounded on the power of the middle class. Another question then arises: if the constitution at stake is a true form of aristocracy, why should Aristotle accord it a separate treatment with respect to the others?

In the first place, it should be noted that Aristotle's discussion of a polity based on the rule of the middle class is introduced by Aristotle within a search on the kinds of constitution that meet specific requirements, namely those of political science. We have already seen how perfect aristocracy turns out to coincide with the ideal constitution in

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<sup>30</sup> On the expedients worked out against popular participation in some polities see *Pol. IV*, 13.1297a15-35.

absolute. Among other things, this is precisely the first kind of constitution that a lawgiver endowed with political science should get to know, as we learn from *Pol. IV*, 1. As we have already seen, a lawgiver or politician endowed with political *ἐπιστήμη* will also know what constitution fits different kinds of city, that is, what is the best one in given conditions, but also the best under a given presupposition. At this stage of our discussion, however, I shall put these three requisites aside and concentrate on the fourth and last one: knowledge of the constitution which fits most states in general (*Pol. IV*, 1.1288b33-35). This is an activity of a substantial practical import, for such a knowledge should be possessed by the virtuous lawgiver committed to an extremely difficult task: that of amending and ameliorating the constitution in which he finds himself operating. The wise lawgiver ought to introduce an arrangement of such a sort that the ruled could easily accept it (*Pol. IV*, 1.1289a1-3). The prescriptive aspect of such a research stands out forcefully in its prominence.

Only in the following section of the *Politics* we learn that the kind of constitution which Aristotle has in mind is one of aristocratic nature, that is, one in which the criterion of desirability is connected to the possibility of being applied to the majority of cities:

We must distinguish, first, the number of varieties of regimes, if indeed there are several kinds both of democracy and of oligarchy; next, which is the most attainable and which the most choiceworthy after the best regime, and if there is some other that is aristocratic (*εἴ τις ἄλλη τετύχηκεν ἀριστοκρατικῇ*) and finely constituted (*συνεστῶσα καλῶς*) but fitting for most cities, which it is (*Pol. IV*, 1.1289b11-17).

The adjective *συνεστῶσα* is generally applied to indicate poetical compositions made by parts<sup>31</sup>; in association with the adverb *καλῶς*, it indicates a fine arrangement of elements, and conveys the idea of a

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<sup>31</sup> See the verb *sunistanai* at *Poetics*, 17.1455a22, 8.1451a29.



successful blending similar to the one emerging from the two patterns of well-temperate constitutions spelled out respectively in *Pol.* IV, 3 and 7.

When the blended constitution is a non-aristocratic polity, that is, one grounded in a simple balance between the rich and the poor, a way to attain its distinctive balance is to impart order in such a way that the part of the city that wants that constitution is superior to the part that refuses it (*Pol.* IV, 12.1296b15-16) or, even better, in such a way that each social class is inclined to endorse the preservation of the constitution. A similar case occurs when one thinks that the constitution champions the same values by which one abides, i.e. those he identifies happiness with. In a well-organized polity each member believes to be well-represented, without seriously considering the possibility that people belonging to different social classes might fully accept the same constitution and perceive an equal sense of satisfaction<sup>32</sup>.

Such a balance, though, proves extremely fragile and precarious, and just a few imperceptible moves would be sufficient to allow one part to acquire a position of political prominence. Not only in ill-balanced polities, but even in aristocratic constitutions do we find that revolutions do burst out because just a few people take part in political honours. As Aristotle explains, the starting point of a polity's decline is the lack of a fine blending between democracy and oligarchy, whereas that of an aristocracy's change for the worse is the lack of an appropriate mixture between the two above-mentioned elements and virtue (*Pol.* V, 7.1307a5-11). Historically relevant examples of cases like this are Thurii and Locris, in which rebellions were undertaken by the *δημος*, as political offices and wealth were in the hands of just a few notables. Such things,

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<sup>32</sup> A clear example of a well-tempered constitution accepted by anyone is the one in which the polity which results from the mixture can be spoken of as either a democracy or an oligarchy (*Pol.* IV, 9.1294b14-17). Cf. IRRERA 2010, section III; WHIBLEY, 1968, 16-17.

as Aristotle points out, would never have happened in a democracy and not even in a well-tempered aristocracy (*ἐν ἀριστοκρατίᾳ ἐὺ μεμειγμένῃ*) (*Pol.* V, 7.1307a27-40).

What is then the connective element between rich and poor that has the power to guarantee a stable, and not simply temporary, fine blending? Aristotle proposes that it is the political role of the middle class. Such a constitution is the best not in absolute terms, but only in relation to a way of life which is possible for most to participate in. It is also meaningful that, in such a context of discussion, Aristotle introduces aristocracy as a benchmark for the understanding of the constitutional form under examination. Here, we read that there are various kinds of aristocracy, some of which fall outside the range of most cities, whereas others approach that form of government named “polity” (*Pol.* IV, 11.1295a31-33). What is most relevant for our purposes is the remark at *Pol.* IV, 11.1295a33-34: “*hence we may speak of both as one*”. Although far from the perfect city, there is still a sense in which the polity Aristotle is going to introduce can approximate the level of an imperfect aristocracy.

In the impossibility to promote a form of government which endorses possession and exercise of perfect virtue for each and every citizen, it is still legitimate to maximize what constitutes the general character of ethical virtue, that is, its being an intermediacy between excess and deficiency. Such an intermediacy is not a political solution externally imposed to the city by lawgivers, namely the one consisting in the attempt to lead opposed classes to a mediation point, but it is one which must be interiorized by individuals, at least by those entrusted with political offices of high responsibility. A similar constitution is highly unlikely to be entirely formed by moderate citizens, even more so because, as Aristotle himself explains, there are three different classes of citizens: the extremely rich, the extremely poor and those who stand in-between them (*Pol.* IV, 11.1295b1-3). The well-off and the poor will develop habits far from a healthy intermediacy just respectively in virtue of their excessive possess

or lack of material resources. As Aristotle however explains, since what is moderate is by general agreement the best, it is evident that even in the case of the goods of fortune a moderate possession will be the best, given that what is moderate is more well-inclined to obey reason, while for one who is exceedingly handsome, strong, well born or wealthy, or the reverse of these things, it is difficult to abide by the prescriptions issued by reason (*Pol.* IV, 11.1295b3-9). Despite its contingent character, an excessive or defective possession of goods, then, either material like wealth or immaterial like beauty, strength and nobility, exerts a profound and decisive influence on the shaping and the reinforcement of non-virtuous ethical inclinations. More specifically, those in possession of an exceeding quantity of goods not only are not well-inclined to be subjected to the ruled, but are themselves unable to exert ruling power in the appropriate way. Those who live in conditions of extreme poverty, on the other hand, need the resources, strength and self-confidence required to engage in political deliberative process, which is why they appear more well-inclined to be ruled rather than to rule. Unlike the extremely rich and the extremely poor, whoever possesses a moderate quantity of resources is highly likely to obey and to exert reason more easily and appropriately (*Pol.* IV, 11.1295b9-1296a18).

It is reasonable to suppose that, rather than presenting the picture of a state entirely constituted of citizens belonging to the middle-class, Aristotle is staging a normative model which makes use of the middle-class as its pivotal underpinning. The political role of the middle class turns out to constitute a balancing power between opposite forces<sup>33</sup>, that

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<sup>33</sup> As the pivotal underpinning of a well-conducted political community, the middle class cannot emerge from a simple combination of the rich and the poor. See for instance FRANK 2005, 5, who explains that it rather emerges «when, on the basis of their self-interests, the few and the many cooperate to their mutual advantage to produce a common good that is something more than a aggregation of their discrete self-interests».

is, as the ideal center of a symmetry which, without its presence, would degenerate and slide into political disorder and injustice. As Aristotle concludes,

It is clear, therefore, that the political partnership that depends on the middling sort is best as well, and that those cities are capable of being well governed in which the middling element is numerous – most particularly if it is superior to both [of the other] parts, but if not, superior to either of them; for when added to one it will tip the scale and prevent the opposing excesses from arising (*Pol. IV*, 11.1295b34-39).

As a consequence, it is a truly good fortune for those who are engaged in politics to own a middling property, because where some possess too many things and others nothing, either an extreme democracy or an unmixed oligarchy are doomed to come into being. In the light of such possible outcomes, the middling sort of constitution will certainly appear the best, because it alone is without factional conflict. In fact, where the middling element is numerous, factional conflicts are less likely to occur (*Pol. IV*, 11.125b34-1296a2).

A second aspect which positively affects the outcomes of political activity bears on the education endured by wise lawgivers. For it is generally to the middle class that belong lawgivers like Solon and Licurgus (*Pol. IV*, 11.1296a18-21). The lawgiver coming from the middle class must be aware of the stabilizing power of the intermediacy paradigmatically exemplified by his original social class, and must convert intermediacy itself into a source of virtuous political activity. This is why, as Aristotle points out at *Pol. IV*, 12.1296b34-38,

The legislator should always add those of the middling sort [to the dominant class] in the regime. If he enacts oligarchic laws, he ought to aim at the middling sort; if democratic ones, he ought to attach these to them.

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Cf. 163-178, where she contends that a middle class can emerge on through an already existing friendship within the polity.

His activity is the one proper to an arbitrator (*ὁ δαιτητής*) (*Pol.* IV, 11.1297a5), that is, as the author of the fine blending which shapes such a constitution. His wise intervention, being firmly grounded in moderate attitudes, proves that the fine mixture is not a purely apparent harmony, but a stable, structural property of well governed cities, capable of sorting out beneficial effects both on political life itself and on the members of the community. The better the mixture in the polity, Aristotle says, the more lasting it will be. It is also indicative that

Many of those who want to set up aristocratic regimes as well [as polities] thoroughly err not only by the fact that they distribute more to the well off, but also by deceiving the people. For in time from things falsely good there must result a true evil, and the aggrandizements of the wealthy are more ruinous to the polity than those of the people (*Pol.* IV, 13.1297a7-13).

A good blending relying on the middle class might certainly be effected by some members of the middle class, but a simple good propensity to moderation is not sufficient. For, as Aristotle has already stressed in Book III, the good ruler should be equipped with *φρόνησις*. Such a virtue, being accompanied by the rest of ethical virtues<sup>34</sup>, will secure the right step in deliberative processes at the political level. It is just this virtue, presupposing a correct reason (*ὀρθὸς λόγος*), which causes lawgivers to think of the middle class as a potential counterbalancing power in the polity. Placing moderate individuals in strategic political offices will prove a successful strategy for both a good blending and its stability<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> On the connection between *φρόνησις* and the rest of ethical excellences see *NE* VI, 13.1145a6-7.

<sup>35</sup> As Aristotle explains at *Pol.* V, 1.1302a13-15: «Moreover, the regime made up of the middling elements is closer to the [rule of] the people than to [rule of] the few, and this is the most stable of regimes of this sort».

Besides stressing an expedient aspect of the search for a good order and stability in the city, Aristotle's argument on the well-ordered city invites us to believe that there is also an "aesthetical" reason in support of a fine blending of political components. As we have seen with respect to *Pol. IV*, 3, the mixture of parts in a well-tempered constitution is realized "in a beautiful way" (*καλῶς*), and so is a polity so well-organised that it can be called both a democracy and an oligarchy (*Pol. IV*, 9.1294b13-17). This may allow us to view a hypothetically perfect polity, that is, one that can be regarded as a kind of aristocracy, in terms of a regulative ideal<sup>36</sup> capable of inspiring virtuous lawgivers and politicians committed to political activity in deviant constitutions, especially when the well-articulated blend on which it is based involves a substantial participation of people belonging to the middle class.

This is why a polity which manages to satisfy both the need of beauty and that of stability can be identified as an aristocracy proper<sup>37</sup>. We can therefore speak of a fourth kind of aristocracy, that is, one which Aristotle is keen on keeping separate from the others in virtue of its peculiarly paradigmatic nature. As a constitution approachable by most communities, such a kind of aristocracy possesses a higher practical relevance than the ideal constitution itself, representing a pattern to be emulated by wise lawgivers.

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<sup>36</sup> This point is well emphasised by ROWE 2000, 367-368. With reference to *Pol. IV*, 1 Rowe explains that Aristotle himself clearly says that «writing about the 'best absolutely' and saying what is 'of practical use' are not only compatible, but are actually both to be properly regarded as parts of the business of political philosophy'» (367).

<sup>37</sup> On the proximity of the polity to aristocracy see ROWE 2000, 380, 384. Cf. BLUHM 1962. However, as Bluhm points out at 749, though the life of the polity is similar to that of the ideal state, Aristotle says that the polity falls short of the ideal (*Pol. IV*, 11.1295a25-40). There are in fact some inequalities which are absent in the ideal state, such as the existence of wealthy and impoverished minorities. On this point see also JOHNSON 1988, 191.

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# Zum Problem der Bürgerbestimmung in der aristotelischen *Politik*

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## *Zusammenfassung*

Der Artikel wendet sich gegen die übliche Deutung der These von Aristoteles, der Bürgerbegriff richtet sich immer nach der Polis-Verfassung. Aristoteles proklamiert mit dieser Äußerung keinen bloß deskriptiven Gesetzpositivismus oder Verfassungsrelativismus. Er möchte damit eher seine Vorstellung des guten Polis-Lebens in den Vordergrund rücken, das aus einer Varietät der Lebensorientierungen besteht und das – insofern es allgemein wünschenswert ist – für *alle* Poleis normativ ist. Nur unter solchen Umständen kann die Verfassung als „das *Eidos* der Polis“ bezeichnet werden, an dem sich der Polites-Begriff orientieren soll. Der Bürger wird dadurch relativ breit aufgefasst und die gesamte Argumentation gleicht somit einem Plädoyer für die Volksverfassung (*Politeia*). Auf der anderen Seite stellt die Bürger-Definition eine wahrhaft aristotelische begriffliche Einschränkung, die ermöglicht, die Tugend des guten Mannes gegenüber der gemäßigten Normativität der bürgerlichen Tugend abzustufen und dadurch die guten Verfassungen auch gegeneinander zu differenzieren.

## *Schlüsselwörter*

Aristoteles *Politik*, Bürgerbestimmung, Politische Verfassung, Staatsbürgerschaft

## *Title*

On the Problem of Determining Citizens in Aristotelian *Politics*

## *Abstract*

The paper disproves the widely held interpretation of Aristotle's statement that the concept of the citizen varies with the constitution. I claim that it gives no evidence for any positivism or constitutional relativism. What Aristotle truly intends here is to put emphasis on his idea of the good life in a city that consists of a variety of

forms and ways. This variety is generally desirable and thus prescriptive. It is only under these conditions that the constitution is „the *Form* of the city“ which determines the citizenship. The concept of the citizen is thus conceived as rather broad and the argument reveals to be a plea for the rule of majority (polity). But on the other hand, the definition of citizen enables to distinguish the virtue of the good man from that of the good citizen and thus to differentiate among the good constitutions.

*Key Words*

Citizenship, Constitution, Polity, Aristotelian *Politics*

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1. *Einleitung*

Was ist an der Aristotelischen *Politik* das wesentlich Neue? Worin besteht ihr systematischer Ertrag gegenüber der politischen Philosophie Platons? Diese Fragen führen uns gemeinhin zu Aristoteles' Kritik des platonischen Projekts der besten Verfassung im II. Buch seiner *Politik* zu. Die Konzentrierung am II. Buch ist in dem Sinne berechtigt, dass Aristoteles hier diejenigen Entwürfe Platons aufs Korn nimmt, die einerseits dem damaligen Publikum als die wesentlichsten und zugleich provokativsten vorkommen müssten, nämlich die Abschaffung des Privatbesitzes, der Familie und die Anforderung an die möglichst große Einheit der Gemeinschaft<sup>1</sup>, und auf die andererseits auch Platon besonders ankam (wie es deren zusammenfassende Wiederholung im *Timaios* bestätigt)<sup>2</sup>. Dennoch ermöglicht die Knappheit der hauptsächlich doxographischen Abhandlung des II. Buches nicht, die Kritik breiter anzulegen, und es bleibt oft bei der bloßen Behauptung der alternativen

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<sup>1</sup> Die für die *Politeia* zentrale Anforderung an die Philosophenherrschaft erwähnt Aristoteles dagegen nicht.

<sup>2</sup> Platon, *Tim.* 17c–19a; *Leg.* V, 739a–e.

Grundansichten<sup>3</sup>. Dieser Umstand macht die Kritik im II. Buch relativ wenig aufschlussreich für die Erkenntnis der eigentlichen Intention der *Politik* – natürlich wenn wir uns nicht damit zufrieden geben möchten, dass wir im II. Buch eine Kritik des totalitären Denkens sehen, um nur eines der verbreiteten Klischees zu nennen.

Viel wirksamer und im Bezug auf eine eigene Politikauffassung viel konstruktiver wird jedoch Platon dort angegriffen, wo Aristoteles im bewussten Opposition zu seinem Lehrer eine zwar begrifflich von ihm abhängige, inhaltlich aber wesentlich abweichende Konzeption formuliert: im I. Buch legt er ein alternatives Herrschafts- und Politikkonzept vor, in den Büchern IV. – VI. eine alternative Auffassung der wissenschaftlichen Gesetzgebung, in VII. – VIII. ein alternatives Model des besten Staates und Erziehungsprogramms. Eine besondere Stellung gebührt dennoch dem III. Buch der *Politik*. Dortige Abhandlung stellt eine direkte – obwohl unausgesprochene – Auseinandersetzung mit dem methodologischen und systematischen Zentralpunkt der politischen Philosophie Platons dar, nämlich mit der Analogie von Polis und Seele. Der Angriff entfaltet sich zunächst unauffällig, um auf desto destruktivere Konsequenzen hinauszulaufen. Denn hier verwirklicht Aristoteles das, was er an der klassischen Stelle der *Nikomachischen Ethik* nur programmatisch behauptet, nämlich die methodische Absonderung der Politik von der Ethik<sup>4</sup>. Im vorliegenden Aufsatz möchte ich aufzeigen, wie Aristoteles im III. Buch der *Politik* diese Absonderung durchführt,

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<sup>3</sup> Wie auch immer diese Grundansichten in der Metaphysik beider Philosophen verankert sind (wie es z. B. MRAZ 1998; oder ZEHNPFENNIG 2012 schildern). Vgl. KRAUT 2011, 52: „it is difficult to view these remarks as an effective rebuttal of Plato’s proposal“. Erst die „soziologische“ These, die die Bedeutung der kleineren Gemeinschaften für die Existenz der Polis betont, die aber erst im 9. Kapitel des III. Buches formuliert wird, bietet – so Kraut (54–55) – eine effektive Widerlegung des platonischen Einheitsgedanken an. Vgl. auch KRAUT 2002, 306–307.

<sup>4</sup> Aristoteles, *Eth. Nic.* X, 10, 1179b1 ff. und 1181b14 ff.; vgl. 1177b26 ff.

indem er einen *a-moralischen*, wohl aber *sittlichen* Begriff der Bürgerschaft entwickelt.

## 2. *Verschiedene Bürgerdefinitionen*

Dass Aristoteles im III. Buch seine eigene und ursprüngliche philosophische Agenda verfolgt, ist darin ersichtlich, wie schnell er die am Anfang der Erörterung angekündigte, in der zeitgenössischen Diskussion kanonische<sup>5</sup> Frage nach dem Wesen und Qualität der Verfassung verlässt. Er macht somit klar, dass die Stadtverfassung keine allerwichtigste und selbständige Stellung in der politischen Theorie hat – wie es bei Platon der Fall war –, sondern gänzlich von der Polis und deren Teilen – den Bürgern – abhängt<sup>6</sup>.

Und es ist gerade die enge Beziehung zwischen der Polis und dem Polisbürger, die die ganze folgende Untersuchung bestimmt, und die platonische Analogie von Polis und Seele ersetzt. Uns interessiert besonders die Eigentümlichkeit dieser Beziehung, die weder biologisch-genetisch wie im *Pol.* I,2, noch technisch-ökonomisch wie in den *Pol.* I,4–7, aber auch nicht verfassungsrechtlich aufgefasst wird<sup>7</sup>. Besonders die letzterwähnte Konnotation scheint zwar für Aristoteles im III. Buch angesichts der hier untersuchten Themen (Verfassung, politische Ämter, Bürgerschaftsstatus) gewichtig zu sein, aber auch die Verfassungsproblematik ist schließlich – wie wir noch sehen werden – durch die aristotelische Abkehr vom Verfassungsrechtlichen<sup>8</sup> zum spezifisch Politischen betroffen. Obwohl Aristoteles im Fortgang seiner Abhandlung verschiedene Polis-Ämter und Institutionen auch

<sup>5</sup> τῷ περὶ πολιτείας ἐπισκοποῦντι, 1274b32–33; vgl. Platon, *Gorg.* 448e6, 463c3; *Men.* 71b4, 86e, 87b3; vgl. *Leg.* VI,767c1; Aristoteles, *Rhet.* I,2,1356a23, 6,1362b5; *Eth. Nic.* I,7,1098a31. Zur ἐπισκοπέω s. *Pol.* 1276b16; Platon, *Leg.* 924d; Xenophon, *Mem.* IV,2,24.

<sup>6</sup> Vgl. SCHÜTRUMPF 1991, 382.

<sup>7</sup> So MULGAN 1977, 66; und KEYT 1995, 130–132.

<sup>8</sup> Vgl. οὐδ' οἱ τῶν δικαίων μετέχοντες, 1275a8–9.

verfassungsrechtlich untersuchen muss, entwickelt er schließlich eine *institutions-* und *verfassungsneutrale* Konzeption der Bürgerschaft.

In den ersteren Kapiteln des III. Buches wird eine Reihe von Versuchsbestimmungen vorgelegt, die auf Definition des Bürgers schlechthin (*ἀπλῶς*) zielen, d. h. auf eine solche, die keine zusätzliche Verbesserung brauchen würde<sup>9</sup>. Die *erste* Definition, die den Bürger durch Teilnahme am Gericht und Amt bestimmt<sup>10</sup>, zeigt sich als zu vag; die dadurch eingeschlossenen Richter (*δικασταί*) und Mitglieder der Volksversammlung (*ἐκκλησιασταί*) üben einerseits zwar Herrschaft (*ἀρχή*) aus, wobei sie sogar als die wichtigsten (*κυριωτάτοι*, 1275a28) betrachtet werden müssen<sup>11</sup>, sie können aber andererseits zu den Herrschern (*ἄρχοντες*) nicht gezählt werden, insofern ihre *ἀρχή* unbegrenzt ist<sup>12</sup>. Das Problematische an der ersten Definition liegt also darin, dass sie schließlich keine wirkliche Bestimmung darstellt: Letztendlich kann man einem so los erfassten Bürger eine Regierungsrolle weder bedingungslos (s. *ἀπλῶς*) zusprechen noch aberkennen.

Wenn man aber dieser Unbestimmtheit dadurch zu entgehen möchte, dass man – nun schon im Rahmen der *zweiten* Definition des Bürgers – die *δικασταί* und die *ἐκκλησιασταί* mit einem gemeinsamen Namen „das unbestimmte Amt“ (*ἀόριστος ἀρχή*) betitelt und dadurch abzusondern und

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<sup>9</sup> ζητοῦμεν γὰρ τὸν ἀπλῶς πολίτην καὶ μηδὲν ἔχοντα τοιοῦτον ἔγκλημα διορθώσεως δέομενον, 1275a19–20; vgl. a16, 22. Von dieser Bemerkung aus lässt sich die etwas schwer nachvollziehbare Methode und die sich daraus ergebende Vielheit der Bürger-Definitionen zu verstehen.

<sup>10</sup> μετέχειν κρίσεως καὶ ἀρχῆς, 1275a23.

<sup>11</sup> Dasselbe Wort stand am Anfang von *Pol.* I, 1 als Bezeichnung der Polis, die sich dadurch von anderen *κοινωνίαι* unterscheidet. Damit ist nicht ihre Macht gemeint (vgl. 1276a12–13), sondern eher ihre Würde, die darin besteht, dass die Polis die anderen Gemeinschaften in sich einschließt – *κυριωτάτη* heißt schließlich „die umfangsreichste“.

<sup>12</sup> Aristoteles, *Pol.* 1275a27–29.

zu begrenzen versucht<sup>13</sup>, taucht ein gleichsam umgekehrtes Problem auf. Eine solche Definition wäre zu eng und lediglich für demokratische Polisverfassungen passend<sup>14</sup>. Doch verbirgt diese zweite Definition eine Möglichkeit für Korrektion in sich<sup>15</sup>, was verhilft, die *dritte* Bestimmung zu formulieren. Der Polisbürger wird als derjenige ergriffen, *wem die Erlaubnis oder Freiheit gegeben ist, an einem beratenden oder einem rechtsprechenden Amt teilzunehmen*<sup>16</sup>. Diese Definition kann als endgültig gelten<sup>17</sup>, weil sie im Verlauf der weiteren Diskussion nie in Frage gestellt wird und weil sie zugleich – wie noch gezeigt werden soll – Aristoteles’ Zwecken sehr gut dient.

Der Unterschied zwischen dieser verbindlichen und beider vorangehenden unvollständigen Definitionen lässt sich mit dem Blick auf die Realität der athenischen Institutionen und Ämter beleuchten<sup>18</sup>. Das entscheidende Gedankenmanöver ist die Ersetzung der Angehörigkeit zur *ἐκκλησία* oder zum *δικαστήριον* bei der zweiten Definition durch *ἀρχή βουλευτική*, bzw. *ἀρχή κριτική* bei der dritten. Wir dürfen darin eine doppelte Absicht vermuten: a) Da der demokratische Rat (*βουλή*) ein organisatorisches und exekutives Instrument der *ἐκκλησία* war, wobei seine Mitgliedschaft restriktiv festgelegt wurde, kann auch dem Mitglied der *ἀρχή βουλευτική* im Vergleich mit dem bloßen *ἐκκλησιαστής* ein

<sup>13</sup> ἔστω δὴ διορισμοῦ χάριν ἀόριστος ἀρχή. τίθεμεν δὴ πολίτας τοὺς οὕτω μετέχοντας, 1275a31–33.

<sup>14</sup> Aristoteles, *Pol.* 1275a5.

<sup>15</sup> ἀλλ’ ἔχει διόρθωσιν ὁ τοῦ πολίτου διορισμός, 1275b13.

<sup>16</sup> ᾧ γὰρ ἐξουσία κοινωνεῖν ἀρχῆς βουλευτικῆς ἢ κριτικῆς, 1275b18–19.

<sup>17</sup> So auch BRAUN 1965, 21. Die weiteren drei Bestimmungsversuche (im 4., 5. und 13. Kapitel) können dann nur als Erweiterungen dieser dritten angesehen werden.

<sup>18</sup> Dass hier Aristoteles eine demokratische Verfassungspraxis im Sinne hat, wird von seiner selbstkritischen Bemerkung erkennbar (1275b5). Diese reflexive Besinnung gibt uns aber andererseits zu verstehen, dass Aristoteles’ Definition auf keine konkrete verfassungsrechtliche Ordnung zielt, sondern eher im Gegenteil die Ausschaltung der Probleme im Auge hat, die mit den empirischen Institutionsformen verbunden sind. Vgl. FREDE 2001, 77.

engerer, und somit klar begrenzter Begriff der Bürgerschaft zugeschrieben werden. Auch die neuere Bestimmung des Bürgers durch die *ἀρχή κριτική* beabsichtigt gegenüber dem bloßen *δικαστής* eine Begrenzung; denn während zum Geschworenen eigentlich jeder Bürger gewählt werden konnte<sup>19</sup>, deutet die neuere Formulierung eher auf eine Befugnis, die den verschiedenen, mit bestimmter Agenda und Mitgliedschaft verbundenen Ämtern zukommt<sup>20</sup>.

b) Auf der anderen Seite möchte Aristoteles die diskutierten Befugnisse und Funktionen nicht einem konkreten, im institutionellen Rahmen der Demokratie oder Oligarchie verankerten Amt (etwa *δικαστήριον* oder *ἐκκλησία*)<sup>21</sup>, zuteilen und spricht lieber generell über Ämtertypen, die er durch Verwendung eines Adjektivs abzugrenzen sucht (*κριτική, βουλευτική*).

Das in der dritten Definition benutzte Wort *ἐξουσία* (Befugnis, Freiheit, Möglichkeit) hat im politischen Kontext zwei spezielle Bedeutungen, die wir im oben angeführten Zitat durch zwei Ausdrücken übersetzt haben (*Erlaubnis oder Freiheit*). Einerseits drückt *ἐξουσία* eine Befugnis oder Erlaubnis aus, die einer Person von außen, durch Gesetz oder von Menschen, gebilligt wird<sup>22</sup>. Andererseits steht es für innere Möglichkeit, etwas zu tun, oder für Freiheit, sich beliebig, bloß aufgrund der eigenen inneren Entscheidung zu verhalten. In den meisten Übersetzungen wird das Wort *ἐξουσία* an dieser Stelle als Befugnis

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<sup>19</sup> Vgl. FRITZ-KAPP 1977, 132.

<sup>20</sup> Aristoteles macht dies an anderen Verfassungen anschaulich (*ἐν ταῖς ἄλλαις πολιτείαις*), wo *ἐκκλησιαστής* und *δικαστής* nicht unbestimmt ist, sondern immer aufgrund eines bestimmten Amtes begrenzt wird: *ὁ κατὰ τὴν ἀρχὴν ὠρισμένος* (1275b13–15).

<sup>21</sup> Wie es gerade an der in der vorangehenden Fußnote zitierten Stelle der Fall war.

<sup>22</sup> Wie etwa in 1275a25: *ἕξεστω ἄρχειν*.

gedeutet<sup>23</sup>. Ein Blick auf weiteres Vorkommen dieses Wortes in der *Politik* lässt uns dennoch nachdenklich werden. Wenn wir diejenigen Stellen beiseite lassen, die das gleiche Problem wie die jetzige Passage behandeln (1255b35, 1291b41, 1315a14), und somit dem selben Deutungs-Dilemma ausgesetzt sind, ermöglichen die üblichen Stellen teils beide Auslegungen, wobei es aber immer um die Beziehung gerade zwischen dem menschlichen *Willkür* und dem Gesetz handelt (1270a21, 1286a13, 1302b9), und teils überwiegt eindeutig die spätere Möglichkeit, d.h. *ἐξουσία* als Freiheit oder Willkür (1266b7, 1272b4, 1315a23, 1318b39). Das altgriechische Politikverständnis hat offensichtlich besseren Sinn für die freie Spontaneität<sup>24</sup> als die moderne, moralisierende Politik, die dazu neigt, Erlaubnis immer negativ auf dem Hintergrund eines Gebots zu verstehen: Erlaubt ist gerade das, was nicht verboten ist. Wenn wir an dieser Stelle die Übersetzung „Befugnis“ begünstigen, entkommt uns die eigentliche Absicht von Aristoteles und auch gewisse Kühnheit, mit der er diesen demokratischen Ausdruck in seine Konzeption einschließt<sup>25</sup>.

Das Wort *ἐξουσία* schließt jedoch auch eine Begrenzung in sich ein, obschon eine viel subtilere ist als diejenige, die durch konkrete Gesetze und Normen erzwungen werden kann. Diese Begrenzung lässt sich

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<sup>23</sup> RACKHAM 1944: „who has the right“; ROLFES 1958: „wem es zusteht“; SCHWARZ 1989: „wem die Erlaubnis gegeben ist“; SCHÜTRUMPF 1991: „wem das Recht eingeräumt ist“.

<sup>24</sup> Vgl. Platon, *Symp.* 182e; *Gorg.* 461e, 526a; Aristoteles, *Eth. Nic.* 1114a16, 1163b19, 1161a9, 1163a13, 1178a33. *ἐξουσία* bezeichnet in der *Ethik* sehr oft die Position eines Herrschers: 1095b21, 1158a28, 1159a19. Die Bedeutung des Wortes ist also durchaus positiv, und entzieht sich der Negativität der modernen Vorstellung einer Befugnis.

<sup>25</sup> Dadurch entsteht aber erst auch die moralische Tragweite dieser Freiheits-Vorstellung. Es macht die Stelle 1286a13 ersichtlich, in der beides, *Nomos* als Befugnis und *ἐξουσία* als Willkür nebeneinander gestellt werden. Man steht vor der Wahl: entweder kann man sich aufs Gesetz verlassen, und ausschließlich gesetzmäßig handeln, was ihm die Sicherheit bringt, nicht angeklagt zu werden, oder man wagt gesetzwidrig zu handeln, dann natürlich aber nur auf eigene Verantwortung.



erblicken, wenn wir die Frage stellen, was es eigentlich heißen soll, dass jemand „Freiheit“ hat, ein Amt zu bekleiden. Dies muss einerseits bedeuten, wenn wir die gerade besprochene Bedeutung der ἐξουσία als Spontaneität ernst nehmen sollen, dass die bürgerliche Freiheit auch einräumt, ein Amt *nicht* zu bekleiden. In anderen Worten, es liegt nur auf dem Bürger, ob er in den Rat kommt und seine Kontrollfunktion ausübt. Andererseits kann es doch – falls die dritte Definition der Bürgerschaft der Vagheit der ersten Versuchsbestimmung ausweichen soll – nicht nur Willkür und Beliebigkeit sein, die von der politischen (Nicht-)Beteiligung entscheidet. Im 5. Kapitel begegnen wir einen Kandidaten für eine subtile Begrenzung der ἐξουσία des Bürgers, ein Amt innezuhaben. Die politische Teilnahme kann durch die Mangel an Zeit verhindert werden<sup>26</sup>. Der Bürger kann sich an den Ämtern beteiligen, wenn es *ihm seinerseits möglich ist*. Wer für Politik keine Muße hat, wird sich einfach nicht beteiligen, obwohl seine Freiheit dazu formal immer besteht. Kein Gesetz verbietet ihm die politische Beteiligung, seine ἐξουσία führt ihn jedoch dazu, dass er selber erwägen muss, ob es ihm seine Lage erlaubt. Wenn Aristoteles sagt, eine gute Polis wird Arbeiter nicht zum Bürger machen (1278a8), muss er dabei nicht notwendig eine gesetzliche Restriktion im Sinne haben, sondern vielleicht eher die Beendigung der problematischen Auszahlung des Lohns für die armen Mitglieder des Rats, die im 4. Jahrhundert notwendig wurde, um die demokratische Verfassung überhaupt zu erhalten (IV, 6, 1293a5)<sup>27</sup>. Das Problem der Besetzung der Ämter war aber – genauso wie heute – höchst delikats: einerseits war es notwendig, den Druck der verschiedenen parteiisch-ökonomischen Ansprüche standzuhalten, andererseits war aber immer schwieriger, die

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<sup>26</sup> Aristoteles, *Pol.* 1278a10–11. Vgl. VII, 14, 1333a16 ff.; STOCKS 1936, 177–187.

<sup>27</sup> Vgl. BLEICKEN 1986, 235.

tatsächliche Teilnahme der Bürger zu bewahren<sup>28</sup>. Der Begriff *ἐξουσία* ermöglicht Aristoteles, diese Spannung in seiner Konzeption zu berücksichtigen, ohne dabei eine oder andere Verfassungsordnung zu bevorzugen. Diese Lösung entspricht darüber hinaus völlig Aristoteles' Überzeugung von der zentralen Bedeutung der Muße für die erhabensten Tätigkeiten<sup>29</sup>.

Im Ganzen beobachten wir also in Aristoteles' Bürgerauffassung zwei einander entgegengesetzten Intentionen. Einerseits geht es ihm um die Bestimmung – *ὄρισμος* –, die gegen demokratische – und in der athenischen Alltagspolitik wohl stark präsent – Unbegrenztheit und institutionelle Vagheit gestellt werden kann. Andererseits liegt ihm daran, die Bürgerbestimmung nicht auf konkrete bürgerlich restriktive Verfassung, besonders auf Oligarchie, oder aber auch auf Aristokratie, hinauslaufen zu lassen. Aristoteles möchte den Bürger *ἀπλῶς*, d. h. verfassungsrechtlich neutral erfassen.

Um diese spannungsvolle Bestimmung des Bürgers richtig zu verstehen, soll man nun zwei Fragen stellen: 1) Ist sie tatsächlich verfassungsneutral, auch wenn Aristoteles wiederholt auf die Verfassungsproblematik hinweist? 2) Was ergibt sich aus dieser Bestimmung für die Polis, d.h. schließlich für das ganze politische Projekt?

### 3. *Der Bürger und die Polisverfassung*

Die Verfassungsproblematik wird in die Diskussion im 2. Kapitel im Hinblick auf zeitgemäße politische Praxis einbezogen<sup>30</sup>. Aristoteles hat zwei Situationen im Sinne, einerseits die Zuteilung der Bürgerrechte

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<sup>28</sup> Zu bemerken ist, dass gerade dies der Aspekt des *ἐξουσία*-Begriffes darstellt, der an der wichtigen Stelle Platonischer *Nomoi* im Zusammenhang des damals aktuellen Problems der Besetzung der Ämter besprochen wird (VI, 768b2).

<sup>29</sup> Aristoteles, *Met.* I, 1, 981b13–25, I, 2, 982b20–24.

<sup>30</sup> Vgl. *πρὸς τὴν χρῆσιν*, 1275b22.

durch die Herkunft, andererseits die konfliktvolle Lage bei der Abänderung der Polisverfassung. Im ersten Fall erwähnt er die „politische und schnelle“ (πολιτικῶς καὶ ταχέως, 1275b25) Bestimmung des Polisbürgers aufgrund der Herkunft seiner Eltern (wie sie etwa in athenischer Praxis der Überprüfung, δοκιμασία, gängig war). Sie stellt zwar eine Form der legalen Restriktion des Bürgerbegriffes dar, eine solche jedoch, die wohl nicht für die wissenschaftlichen Zwecke nutzbar sein kann, weil sie zum infiniten Regress in Form des „dritten Menschen“ führt: Die allerersten Bürger-Eltern wären gar nicht zu bestimmen (1275b32–34). Im zweiten Fall versucht Aristoteles das Dilemma, das aufgrund der unrechtmäßigen Verbreitung der Bürgerrechte in Folge der Verfassungsänderung entstand, durch die Unterscheidung zwischen dem Bürger, wie er tatsächlich ist, und dem Bürger zu Recht, zu lösen. Er lehnt dabei eine strikt normative Gleichsetzung beider Bürgerbegriffe ab, nach der nur der zu Recht gewordene Bürger als Bürger bezeichnet werden kann<sup>31</sup>. Diejenigen, die durch eine verfassungsrechtliche Abänderung zu den Bürgern gemacht wurden, haben diesen Status zwar nicht zu Recht, trotzdem aber – insofern sie an einem Amt Anteil haben – Bürger genannt werden müssen<sup>32</sup>.

Dieses Resultat muss nun bekräftigt werden mit dem Hinblick auf die Identität der Polis<sup>33</sup>. Bei den Verfassungen, die das gemeinsame Nutzen (κοινῆ συμφέρον) nicht berücksichtigen, sondern nur wegen der Macht (κρατεῖν) da sind, fällt Verfassung und Polis auseinander<sup>34</sup>. Zu diesen

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<sup>31</sup> Vgl. negativ: ἀδίκου καὶ τοῦ ψευδοῦς, 1276a2

<sup>32</sup> ὁ δὲ πολίτης ἀρχῆ τι καὶ διωρισμένος ἐστίν, ὁ γὰρ κοινωνῶν τῆς τοιαύτης ἀρχῆς πολίτης ἐστίν ... δῆλον ὅτι πολίτας μὲν εἶναι φατέον καὶ τούτους, 1276a3–6. τὴν ἀρχήν weist wahrscheinlich auf die vage zweite Bestimmung vom 1. Kapitel hin (vgl. ὡς ἔφαμεν, a5). Vgl. auch ἀναγκαῖον, 1278a16.

<sup>33</sup> Dies war die Anfangsfrage der ganzen Untersuchung, auf die nun Aristoteles' Worte πρότερον ἀμφισβήτησιν (1276a7–8) zurückweisen.

<sup>34</sup> Ich bevorzuge hier die von Susemihl vorgeschlagene Lesung der Stelle 1276a14–16 (SUSEMIHL 1871, 11): ὁμοίως οὐ τῆς πόλεως φατέον εἶναι τὰς τῆς πολιτείας ταύτης

„Verfassungen ohne Polis“<sup>35</sup> gehört nicht nur Oligarchie und Tyrannis, sondern auch Demokratie, insofern sie Gemeinwohl ignoriert. Der Zusammenhang der Identitätsfrage und der Frage nach dem berechtigten Bürgerstatus<sup>36</sup> ermöglicht nun folgende Deutung: diejenigen, die nur aufgrund von konstitutionellen Veränderungen als Bürger bezeichnet werden (müssen), sind eigentlich keine Polis-Bürger, sondern nur Verfassungs-Bürger<sup>37</sup>.

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*πράξεις, καὶ τὰς ἐκ τῆς ὀλιγαρχίας καὶ τῆς τυραννίδος*, und zwar aus den inhaltlich-systematischen Gründen. Die entgegengesetzte Deutung (s. etwa NEWMAN 1902, 148), nach der die Taten der Polis und der beliebigen Verfassung zusammenfallen sollten, ist wenig sinnvoll: 1) Sie hätte die Frage nach der Identität der Polis vorzeitig entschieden. Wenn Aristoteles wirklich glaubte, Verfassung sei mit der Polis identisch, dann wäre es nicht nur eine gefährliche Annäherung an Platon gerade in dem Punkt, den Aristoteles in seiner Untersuchung in der *Politik* III zu umformulieren versucht, sondern es machte auch die ganze Untersuchung gar überflüssig. 2) Es stünde im direkten Widerspruch mit der evidenten Intention des Abschnittes, das gemeinsame Nutzen (*τὸ κοινῆ συμφέρον*) von der bloßen Macht (*τὸ κρατεῖν*) zu unterscheiden (1276a12–13). 3) Es stünde im Widerspruch auch mit der gängigen Auffassung, auf der das Argument beruht, nämlich dass Tyrann sich von der Polis trennt, was einige zur Ablehnung der Verpflichtungen veranlasst. Wahrscheinlich wurde die Modifikation des Textes, die in den modernen Übersetzungen übernommen wurde, durch die Annahme verursacht, dass unsere Stelle die Behauptung am Ende des Kapitels antizipiert, nach der sich die Identität der Polis nach der Verfassung richte (1276b10–11). Diese Annahme beruht jedoch, wie noch gezeigt werden soll, auf einer unrichtigen Auslegung der letztgenannten Stelle.

<sup>35</sup> Vgl. SCHÜTRUMPF 1991, 403.

<sup>36</sup> Vgl. *περὶ δὲ τοῦ δικαίως ἢ μὴ δικαίως συνάπτει πρὸς τὴν εἰρημένην πρότερον ἀμφισβήτησιν. ἀποροῦσι γάρ τινες πόθ' ἢ πόλις ἔπραξε καὶ πότε οὐχ ἢ πόλις*, 1276a6–9. Das Bindewort *γάρ*, das die Frage nach der Identität der Polis anführt, bezieht sich auf *πρὸς τὴν εἰρημένην πρότερον ἀμφισβήτησιν*, das einerseits auf die anfängliche Frage von 1274b34–36 und andererseits auf den unmittelbaren Kontext der Frage nach dem berechtigten Bürgerstatus hinweist.

<sup>37</sup> Dieses Ergebnis steht im Einklang mit der wichtigen Stelle III,7,1279a31–32, der zufolge die Teilnehmer an der Polis entweder Anteil am gemeinsamen Nutzen haben müssen, oder dürfen sie nicht als Polisbürger genannt werden.

Der Konzept der Bürgerschaft schlechthin (*ἀπλῶς*) oder zu Recht (*δικαίως*) beruht also auf der Vorstellung des gemeinsamen Nutzens, die im III,6 als Unterscheidungskriterium zwischen den richtigen, bzw. schlechthin gerechten (*ἀπλῶς δίκαιον*), und fehlerhaften Verfassungen verwendet wird (1279a17–20). Das 6. Kapitel geht in diesem Punkt auf das I. Buch der *Politik* zurück mit dortiger Entgegensetzung der Sklavenherrschaft und der Freienherrschaft über Frau und Kinder (1255b18). Der Bürgerbegriff des III. Buches wird daher von der normativen Distinktionen im Haushalt, dem Bestandteil der Polis, wesentlich geprägt. Die für ihn relevante Spaltung ist folglich die zwischen dem gemeinsamen und eigenen Nutzen, d. h. zwischen der guten und schlechten Regierung.

Wenn Aristoteles am Ende des 3. Kapitels zum Ergebnis gelangt ist, man müsse bei der Identität der Polis die Verfassung berücksichtigen<sup>38</sup>, sollen wir es nicht als eine Feststellung über Abhängigkeit der Polis von der jeweiligen Verfassungsordnung verstehen, sondern eben als normative Bindung der Polis auf das Gemeinwohl, das in der Polisverfassung seinen besten Ausdruck findet. Dasselbe gilt folglich auch für die Identität des Bürgers zu Recht (bzw. schlechthin) und des Bürgers in der Tat – auch sie kommt nur in den Verfassungen zur Geltung, die schlechthin gerecht sind, d. h. deren Herrscher das Gemeinwohl verfolgen. Wenn kurz davor die Verfassung als *εἶδος* der Polis erfasst wurde<sup>39</sup>, und zwar im Zusammenhang, in dem die Polis als „Gemeinschaft von Bürgern der Staatsverfassung“ definiert wurde<sup>40</sup>, ist dabei stark die Bindung der Verfassung auf *κοινωνεῖν*, eine kooperative Lebensweise, und somit auch die normative Perspektive der bipolaren Gliederung auf gute und schlechte Regierungsformen, klar ersichtlich.

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<sup>38</sup> *μάλιστα λεκτέον τὴν αὐτὴν πόλιν εἰς τὴν πολιτείαν βλέποντας*, 1276b10–11.

<sup>39</sup> Aristoteles, *Pol.* 1276b2, 7.

<sup>40</sup> *κοινωνία πολιτῶν πολιτείας*, 1276b2.

Die andere Behauptung von Aristoteles, nämlich dass es aufgrund von Vielheit von Verfassungen auch eine Vielheit von Bürgerarten gibt<sup>41</sup>, muss mit dieser Deutung gar nicht in Konflikt geraten. Sie erklingt nämlich im Zusammenhang der Kritik der Demokratie, der schlechten Verfassung also, die das Bürgerrecht zu Unrecht auf viele verbreitet, so dass diese nur der Notwendigkeit halber als Bürger bezeichnet werden *müssen*. Aristoteles möchte in dieser Aussage über die Abhängigkeit des Bürgerstatus von der Regierungsform keinen positivistischen Verfassungsrelativismus billigen, von dem er von Anfang an als von einer fremden Ansicht berichtet (1275a2–5)<sup>42</sup>. Er möchte ihn eher philosophisch überwinden, und zwar aufgrund der Vorstellung von einer richtigen und unrichtigen Herrschaft.

Wir haben mit Aristoteles' Versuch zu tun, wissenschaftlich den Sachverhalt zu begreifen, dass einerseits ein normativer Begriff der Bürgerschaft besteht (*δικαίως, ἀπλῶς*), dem andererseits nicht alle empirischen Erscheinungen entsprechen, die sich in das politische Leben aufdrängen (vgl. *ἀναγκαῖον*). Es ergibt sich ein Doppelmodell: primär ist die Differenzierung der Verfassungen nach der Spaltungslinie gut und schlecht, die auf breiteren Kontext der *Politik* hinweist, wo dieses bipolare Modell ihr Ursprung hat. Hier ist die Perspektive des Guten leitend, in deren Rahmen die Verfassung als *εἶδος* mit der Polis als einer gut organisierten und kooperierten Gemeinschaft wahrhaft zusammenfällt. In der empirischen Perspektive, wo die schlechten Verfassungen in

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<sup>41</sup> *πλείους εἰσὶν αἱ πολιτεῖαι, καὶ εἶδη πολίτου ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι πλείω*, 1278a15–16.

<sup>42</sup> Aristoteles geht es also *nicht* um eine *allgemeine* Bürger-Definition, die überall angewendet werden kann, wie es Kahlenberg 1973, 105–106, deutet. Eine solche könnte dem Positivismus gar nicht widerstehen. Aristoteles geht es primär um die Definition des Bürgers, insofern er diesen Status zu Recht hat, und erst sekundär um die zahlreichen abweichenden Formen (1275b2–3). Im Zusammenhang mit der gerade zitierten Stelle ist es zu erwähnen, dass die Vielheit der Polisverfassungen für Aristoteles im III. Buch keinen bloß festgestellten Sachverhalt darstellt, sondern immer normativ als etwas Verhängnisvolles bewertet wird.

näheren Betracht kommen, muss dann noch eine weitere Unterteilung auf εἶδη erfolgen. Im ersteren Fall geht um die Gleichsetzung: πόλις-εἶδος-πολιτεία, im späteren um die Unterscheidung vieler εἶδη der verschiedenen πολιτεία<sup>43</sup>.

Dieses Doppelmodell darf sich dabei auf Aristoteles' *Metaphysik* stützen. Denn dort finden wir auch zwei auf ersten Blick schwer auszusöhnende Auffassungen von εἶδος. Einerseits ist es die Lehre von der *Metaphysik Z*, wo εἶδος und τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι nicht als Attribute oder Prädikate einer jeglichen Sache dienen, sondern ausschließlich eigentliche Seins-Objekte, οὐσίαι im primären Sinne sind, andererseits wird jedoch εἶδος in der *Kategorienschrift* als die zweite οὐσία erfasst, die das am wenigsten allgemeine, mehreren Subjekten zukommende Prädikat darstellt<sup>44</sup>.

#### 4. Bürgerliche Tugend

Eine weitere Stelle, an der von der Abhängigkeit der Bürgerschaft von der Verfassung die Rede ist, ist im 4. Kapitel zu finden, wo Aristoteles zwischen der speziellen Tugend des Einzelnen und der gemeinsamen Tugend der Bürger unterscheidet. Die bürgerliche Tugend trägt dem Ziel des Ganzen zu, das in der Errettung der Gemeinschaft (σωτηρία) besteht, womit Aristoteles überraschend nicht die Rettung der Polis, sondern der

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<sup>43</sup> Wenn wir eine gute Polis beobachten, dann sehen wir eigentlich keine verfassungsrechtliche Pluralität, sondern schließlich nur ein εἶδος, das die gute Polis wesentlich charakterisiert. Die dritte kanonische Bürgerdefinition bleibt somit ungetastet: der Bürger ist derjenige, dem es seinerseits möglich ist, an der Ausübung der amtlichen Funktionen mitzuwirken. Das gebührende Wort hier ist κοινωνεῖν, nicht μετέχειν wie in beiden ersteren Definitionen – es geht um das Gemeinsame, was nur durch Kooperation erzielt werden kann. Die Bürgerdefinition beruht nicht auf einem verfassungsrechtlichen Umstand, sondern auf einer fundamentalen Vorstellung der Polis als einer guten, kooperierenden Gemeinschaft.

<sup>44</sup> *Cat.* 2a11–17; *Met. Z*, 4, 1029b13–14, 19–22, 1030a11–17. Vgl. SCHMITZ 1985, 57–74.

Polisverfassung meint. Da es eine Vielheit von Verfassungen gibt und da die Tugend der Bürger auf die *Politeia* hinblicken soll<sup>45</sup>, muss ein Unterschied zwischen der bürgerlichen Tugend und der Tugend des guten Mannes, die vollkommen und daher nur eine einzige ist, bestehen. Dem Argument liegt also der Gedanke der Abhängigkeit der Bürgerschaft von einer Vielheit der Verfassungen zugrunde. Es ist aber wichtig auf seinen Kontext aufzupassen. Die Rede ist nämlich von der *besten* Polis und der *besten* Verfassung (1277a77; 1276b37), und somit werden hier lediglich die *richtigen* Verfassungen differenziert. Diese Differenzierung erfolgt aufgrund des Unterschieds zwischen dem *guten* Bürger und dem *guten* Menschen.

Aristoteles möchte durch diese Unterscheidung einen selbständigen Begriff der bürgerlichen Tugend aufsuchen, ohne dabei aus der Polis eine Tugendgemeinschaft zu machen, so wie sie etwa in platonischer *Politeia* dargestellt wurde<sup>46</sup>. Sobald die gute Polis ohne den guten Menschen als der Gegenstand der Politikwissenschaft etabliert ist, wird die platonische Analogie von Polis und Seele schlussendlich aufgelöst.

Aus dem Unterschied zwischen dem guten Mann und dem guten Bürger ergibt sich, *dass es möglich ist, ein rechtschaffener Bürger zu sein ohne den Besitz der Tugend, nach der ein rechtschaffener Mann bestimmt ist*<sup>47</sup>. Es besteht nach Aristoteles keine Notwendigkeit, vom guten Bürger auch innere ethische Beschaffenheit zu verlangen. Der gute Bürger ist von der moralischen Belastung, die auf ihn Platons *Politeia* aufgelegt hat, befreit. Das Wort für Konzession, *ἐνδέχεται*, gehört zum denselben Gedankenfeld wie *ἐξουσία*; sie konstituieren gemeinsam die Vorstellung der politischen Freiheit, die die ganze Sphäre von Politik gezeichnet und bestimmt. Das Politische wird nun eindeutig zum Nicht-Ethischen, mit

<sup>45</sup> διὸ τὴν ἀρετὴν ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι τοῦ πολίτου πρὸς τὴν πολιτείαν, 1276b30–31.

<sup>46</sup> Oder so wie sie nach Aristoteles im Haushalt besteht (*Pol.* I, 13).

<sup>47</sup> ὅτι μὲν οὖν ἐνδέχεται πολίτην ὄντα σπουδαίου μὴ κεκτῆσθαι τὴν ἀρετὴν καθ' ἣν σπουδαῖος ἀνὴρ, 1276b34–35.



einer Entschiedenheit, die am Ende der *Nikomachischen Ethik* noch kaum zu ahnen war. Um aber nicht relativistisch zu argumentieren, muss zugleich eine eigens politische Normativität erarbeitet werden, eine Sittlichkeit, die in der Tugend des guten Bürger besteht.

Diese Tugend bringt den guten Bürger in die Lage, sowohl zu herrschen als auch beherrscht zu werden<sup>48</sup>. Bei dieser Bestimmung, die als *vierte*, (im Bezug auf die dritte) zusätzliche Definition des Bürgers angesehen werden kann, verlässt sich Aristoteles auf die Richtigkeit der allgemeinen Empfindungen<sup>49</sup>, die allerdings seiner Konzeption sehr günstig entgegen gehen, indem sie die in der dritten, verbindlichen Bürgerdefinition präsenannte innere Spannung zwischen Freiheit und Begrenzung erklären: Die Beschränkung der Teilnahme an der Regierung wird jetzt als *Abwechslung* gefasst. Diese Abwechslung kann als Gerechtigkeitsanforderung verstanden werden, weil sie die Belastung, die die Regierenden als Dienst zugunsten der anderen an sich nehmen, auf verschiedene Personen abwechselnd verteilt. Von der verkehrten Perspektive aus gesehen kann die Abwechslung vielen, die als Individuen keine Muße haben, die für die Politik förderliche Freizeit gewährleisten. Die Freiheit (*ἐξουσία*) von der dritten Definition wird durch die Vorstellung der beiderseitigen Hilfe bereichert.

Der Gedanke der bürgerlichen Tugend lässt allerdings eine wichtige Ausnahme zu. Diese betrifft die Person des guten Mannes<sup>50</sup>, bei dem die bürgerliche und menschliche Tugend schlechthin einen einzigen innerlichen Zustand darstellt<sup>51</sup>. Seine einmalige und herrschende Tugend

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<sup>48</sup> δεῖ δὲ τὸν πολίτην τὸν ἀγαθὸν ἐπίστασθαι καὶ δύνασθαι καὶ ἄρχεσθαι καὶ ἄρχειν, καὶ αὐτῇ ἀρετῇ πολίτου, 1277b13-15.

<sup>49</sup> ἐπαινεῖται τὸ δύνασθαι ἄρχειν καὶ ἄρχεσθαι, 1277a25-26.

<sup>50</sup> Vgl. *τινός*, 1277a13; *τινός πολίτου* in a23. Dieser stellt eine systematische Ausnahme dar: ἀπλῶς – τις: ἀπλῶς οὐχ ἡ αὐτὴ ... ἀλλ' ἄρα ἔσται τινός ἡ αὐτὴ ἀρετὴ πολίτου τε σπουδαίου καὶ ἀνδρὸς σπουδαίου (1277a12-14).

<sup>51</sup> Man darf hier sogar von einer Version der sokratischen Einheit der Tugend bei Aristoteles sprechen.

der Vernunft (*φρόνησις*) hebt die Dialektik der Bürgerschaft (regieren und regiert werden) auf, indem sie beides auf eins bringt<sup>52</sup>. Der gute Mann – *φρόνιμος* – ist in einer paradoxen Lage: inwiefern er vernünftig ist, soll er bei der Herrschaft nie abgewechselt werden; trotzdem aber gehört beides – d. h. regieren und regiert werden – auch zu ihm (1277b16–17). Aristoteles schildert das Verhältnis seiner Tugend zu üblichen bürgerlichen Tugenden in der Weise, die teils an die Beziehung zwischen dem Haushaltsherrn und seinen Untertanen (Sklave, Frau, Kind) im *Pol.* I, 13 (1277b21–25), teils sogar auf die Beziehung zwischen den Polisschichten in Platons *Politeia*, erinnert<sup>53</sup>.

Es scheint also, dass Aristoteles diese Figur für die potentielle Differenzierung der guten Regierungsformen benutzt, ohne dabei die dritte und vierte verbindliche Definition des Bürgers verlassen zu müssen. Denn der gute Mann versteht innerlich, durch seine *φρόνησις*, beide Seiten des Regierungsprozesses: Wenn in der guten Polis eine ausreichende Zahl der Bürger vorkommt, die der dritten Definition entsprechen, teilt er gerne seine Herrschaftsrolle mit ihnen. Er ist bereit, sich der Mehrheitsüberlegenheit zu unterwerfen, obwohl diese Willigkeit bei ihm nicht aus der äußeren Notwendigkeit<sup>54</sup>, sondern immer aus seiner inneren Freiheit und Einsicht hervorgeht. Wenn es aber den anderen Einwohnern nicht möglich ist, die amtlichen Aufgaben zu erfüllen, dann muss die Regierungsdialektik, die in der Bürgertugend erhalten ist, enger

<sup>52</sup> Verschiedene Bürgertugenden haben dagegen eine unterschiedliche Beziehung zur Einheit: sie sind harmonisierend miteinander, und zwar im Bezug auf das Ziel, die Rettung der Verfassung, des Gemeinsamen. *κοινός τις ἐφαρμόσει πᾶσι = σωτηρία τῆς ναυτιλίας ἔργον ἐστὶν αὐτῶν πάντων*, 1276a25–27.

<sup>53</sup> ἕτερον εἶδος σωφροσύνης καὶ δικαιοσύνης ἀρχικῆς, 1277b17–18; vgl. *σωφροσύνης τε καὶ δικαιοσύνης καὶ συμπάσης τῆς δημοτικῆς ἀρετῆς*, *Resp.* VI, 500d7–8; *ἀνδρεία πολιτικὴ* entgegengesetzt zu *κάλλιον*, *Resp.* IV, 430c2–3.

<sup>54</sup> Oder aus seiner Angewohnheit, so wie bei den anderen, die die Herrschaftsrolle als beherrschten erlernen müssen; 1277b10.

ausgelegt werden, so dass sich eine teilnehmerisch restriktivere Verfassung daraus ergibt<sup>55</sup>.

Wenn wir nun zu jener Aussage von Aristoteles zurückkehren, der zufolge die bürgerliche Tugend *πρὸς τὴν πολιτείαν* sein soll, müssen wir sie in einer Doppelperspektive des Zieles der besten Polis und der in ihr *bestehenden* sittlichen Kondition verstehen. Das Ziel ist das Gemeinsame, d. h. die gute Stadtverfassung, das gute *πόλις-εἶδος* als Ausdruck des besonderen guten Lebensstil, das durch rechtmäßige Abwechselung der Regierungsrollen zustande kommt und erhalten wird<sup>56</sup>. Die konkrete Art und Weise, wie dies erzielt werden kann, unterscheidet sich jedoch je nach der tatsächlichen Personal-Lage in der Polis. Beides, das Ziel und die Kondition, steht in keinem Widerspruch zueinander und es wird in dieselbe verbindliche verfassungsneutrale Definition der Bürgerschaft einbezogen.

### 5. *Schluss*

Das politische Denken von den Griechen wurde spätestens seit Herodotos durch die Intuition geprägt, der zufolge das politische Leben sich am treffendsten in der Frage der Verfassungsform widerspiegelt. Platon hat diese Intuition vertieft und mit der Seeleproblematik

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<sup>55</sup> Diese Möglichkeit scheint jedoch in der politischen Praxis nicht sehr wahrscheinlich zu sein und Aristoteles führt es wohl eher als eine hypothetische Möglichkeit vor (vgl. III, 13, 1284a10). Der Zusammenfassung im 13. Kapitel zufolge gehört auch die Aristokratie zu den reinen Verfassungstypen, bei denen je nur eine Polisschicht und ihr Legitimationskriterium dominant ist. In einer tatsächlichen, geschichtlichen Polis, wo alle Gruppen und alle Kriterien zugleich da sind, dürfen sie sich diese nicht gegenseitig ausschließen und zum Nachteil der anderen überwiegen.

<sup>56</sup> In diesem Sinne sagt Aristoteles im IV. Buch, die Verfassung sei „das Leben der Polis“. *ἡ γὰρ πολιτεία βίος τίς ἐστι πόλεως*, IV, 11, 1295a40–41. Das letzte Ziel der Polis kann man nach III, 9 folgend verstehen: als die *Gemeinschaft des guten Lebens sowohl für die Häuser und für die Geschlechter um eines vollendeten und selbstgenügsamen Lebens willen*. 1280b32 ff.

verbunden. Aristoteles wendet sich gegen diese traditionelle Agenda der politischen Wissenschaft und relativiert – wenn nicht λόγῳ, dann aber sicher ἔργῳ – die Frage der Verfassung als die für die Politik leitende. Er betont dagegen die Rolle der freien Bürgerschaft und des genuin politischen Zieles, das im guten Leben im Rahmen der *Polis* liegt.

Das sich daraus ergebende Auseinanderfallen der Analogie von Polis und Seele, Absonderung der Ethik von der Politik bedeutet allerdings keine Verlassung des normativen Anspruchs für die Politik. Der gute Bürger braucht zwar nicht mehr gute Seele zu haben, er muss aber die ihm gebührende Rolle vollfüllen, denn es geht immer um die beste Polis<sup>57</sup>. Es ist gerade diese Perspektive, die – aufgrund der reflektierten methodischen Wechsel – in den neuen Bürgerschaftsbegriff auch die empirischen Nebenformen einzuschließen weiß.

Es ergibt sich ein Bürgerbegriff, der – in metaphysischen Termini ausgedrückt – systematisch mehrdeutig ist (*πολλαχῶς λέγεται*), so dass bei ihm eine Struktur des begrifflichen Kerns einerseits (*πολίτης ἀπλῶς*, bzw. *δικαίως*) und dessen Umfeld andererseits (*εἶδη πλείω πολίτου*) vorkommt. Das Umfeld, das aus verschiedenen *εἶδη* besteht, bezieht sich zum Kern, der dem einzigen *εἶδος*, *analogisch*. Die Beziehung zwischen dem bürgerlich und menschlich guten (oder schlechthin guten) Mann lässt sich metaphysisch als *πρὸς ἔν*-Verhältnis auszudrücken<sup>58</sup>. Durch *πρὸς ἔν* kommt die typisch aristotelische Normativität zur Geltung, die nicht dem

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<sup>57</sup> Sie ist im doppelten Kontext die beste: a) sie ist vollkommen durch ihre innere Spannung zwischen der Begrenzung und Freiheit, Teilnahme und Entlassung (weswegen sie auch einen rechtlich neutralen Bürgerstatus verlangt), denn nur eine solche ermöglicht das potenzielle Engagement des besten Mannes, der nie zum Tyrann werden darf; b) sie schaut auf ihr einheitliches Ziel, das im guten gemeinsamen Leben besteht und zu dem auch verschiedene Personen unterschiedlich beitragen.

<sup>58</sup> Die Bestimmung der bürgerlichen Tugend *πρὸς τὴν πολιτείαν* bekommt dadurch eine überraschende Pointe.

Gedanken der hierarchischen Ordnung entspringt, sondern teleologisch bei der Phänomenologie des politischen Lebens ansetzt<sup>59</sup>.

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# Der Mensch als natürliches und künstliches Wesen

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## *Title*

The Human Being as Natural and Artificial

## *Abstract*

This article traces the heritage of the Aristotelian political investigations in Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*. It can be very important to note that the definition of man as a "social" animal will develop in Hobbes's characterization by the opposite terms, the "natural" man and man "artifact"; two adjectives that Hobbes uses instead of "political", the very Aristotelian adjective.

## *Key Words*

Aristotels's *Politics*, Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*, "Social/Political" Animal

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Aristoteles schreibt als einer der ersten Denker über die natürliche Bestimmung des Menschen, in einer Gemeinde zu leben, also über ζῷον πολιτικόν. Dabei geht er davon aus, dass die Gemeinde zu den natürlich gegebenen Seienden gehört (*tôn physei hê polis*, 1253a 2). An diesen Gedanken knüpft in der Zeit der Aufklärung auch Thomas Hobbes an, wenn er vom Staat als einem „künstlichen Menschen“ („artificiall man“, Einleitung) spricht. Beide Denker setzen dabei einen natürlichen Zustand voraus, der für Aristoteles der Zustand des Vermögens oder der wesentlichen Möglichkeit (*dynamis*) ist, für Hobbes hingegen der Kriegszustand, dem man sich durch Vertragsabschluss entziehen muss. Für Aristoteles wird diese Natürlichkeit als Vermögen mittels der Kunst (*technê*) erfüllt und verwirklicht, mit der jedes Individuum je nach seinem

Geschick und seiner Befähigung unterschiedliche Stufen der Erfüllung erreicht. Dem gegenüber bewertet Hobbes diesen natürlichen Zustand als andauernden Krieg von Allen gegen Alle negativ und ersetzt ihn durch einen neuen, künstlichen Vertragszustand. Diese unterschiedlichen Auffassungen von Natürlichkeit, die nicht nur die Natürlichkeit des Menschen betreffen, sind der Ausgangspunkt unserer Überlegungen über den Menschen als „politisches Wesen“, wobei wir uns vor allem auf den oft betonten Unterschied zwischen den Staatsauffassungen von Aristoteles und Hobbes konzentrieren, das heisst auf die verbindenden und trennenden Wesenszüge der Entstehung und Konzeption des Staates.

Aristoteles schrieb über die ursprüngliche Philosophie, über Politik, Ethik, Logik, Natur, Meteorologie, Rhetorik oder Poetik, aber in keinem seiner Texte befasst er sich ausführlich mit dem Menschen. In seiner *Nikomachischen Ethik* erscheint zwar einmal das Wort *anthrôpologos*, aber nur in der Bedeutung eines Menschen, der andere Menschen verleumdet<sup>1</sup>. Andererseits, finden wir aber an vielen Stellen seiner Texte unterschiedliche verstreute Äußerungen über den Menschen, wie zum Beispiel in der oben erwähnten Auslegung aus der *Politik*, dass er *physei politikon zôon*, d.h. durch seine Natürlichkeit zum Leben in der Gemeinde bestimmt sei<sup>2</sup>, oder auch die Behauptung, dass der Mensch *logon echei*, dass er also Sprache besitzt, die ihm wesentlich zugehört<sup>3</sup>.

Im Fall der ersten Äußerung sind die Interpreten über die Frage uneins, ob wir den Ausdruck *politikon zôon* in einem weiteren oder engeren Sinn zu verstehen haben. Die enger gefasste Variante besagt, dass nur der Mensch die Fähigkeit besitzt, in der Gemeinde zu leben, so dass nur er ein politisches Lebewesen ist und ein Gemeinbewohner werden kann.

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<sup>1</sup> Vgl. Aristoteles, *Ethica Nicomachea (Eth. Nic.)*, IV 3,1125a 5. Vgl. O. HÖFFE, *Grundaussagen über den Menschen bei Aristoteles*, «Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung» 30 (1976), S. 227 nn.

<sup>2</sup> Aristoteles, *Politica (Pol.)*, I 1253a 3, III1278b 20, *Eth. Nic.* I 7, 1097b 12.

<sup>3</sup> Aristoteles, *Pol.* I 1253a 9-10; VII1332b 5-6.



Die weiter gefasste Interpretation begreift hingegen den Ausdruck *politikon zōon* nicht nur als Charakterisierung des Menschen, sondern auch einiger Herdentiere, wie zum Beispiel der Bienen, Wespen, Ameisen oder Kraniche<sup>4</sup>. Die Verfechter der erweiterten Variante, Autoren wie Wolfgang Kullmann oder John M. Cooper<sup>5</sup>, berufen sich nicht nur auf die Passage 1253a 8-9 in der *Politik*, wo es heißt, der Mensch sei *politikon zōon* in einem größeren Maß oder auf einer höheren Stufe<sup>6</sup> als Herdentiere oder Bienen, sondern auch auf eine Stelle in der *Historia animalium*<sup>7</sup>, aufgrund derer sie *zōon politikon* als biologische, und nicht als politische Beschreibung verstehen.

Auf die Passage 1253a 6 in Aristoteles' *Politik* beruft sich auch Hobbes in seinem Werk *Leviathan*, wenn er sich im XVII. Kapitel die Frage stellt, warum bestimmte, „sociably“ lebende Lebewesen wie zum Beispiel Bienen und Ameisen, die weder über Verstand noch Sprache verfügen, ohne Nötigung in Gesellschaft leben. Bevor er auf diese Frage

<sup>4</sup> Aristoteles, *Pol.* I 1253a 7-9; *Metaphysica* (*Met.*), VII 1029a 29.

<sup>5</sup> Vgl. W. KULLMANN, *Der Mensch als politisches Lebewesen*, «Hermes» 108 (1980), S. 419-443; J. M. COPPER, *Political Animals and Civic Friendship*, in: G. PATZIG (ed.), *Aristoteles' „Politik“*, Göttingen 1990, S. 221-242. J. M. COOPER, *Political Community and the Highest Good*, 2009 (Sonderdruck).

<sup>6</sup> Aristoteles, *Pol.* I 1253a 7-8: *politikon ho anthrōpos zōon pasēs ... zōū mallon* (engl.: „a greater measure“, dtsch.: „in weit höherem Masse“).

<sup>7</sup> Aristoteles, *Historia animalium* (*Hist. animal.*) I 487b 32-488a 12: „Ein Teil der Tiere lebt gesellschaftlich, andere vereinzelt..“ Τὰ μὲν γὰρ αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἀγελαία τὰ δὲ μοναδικά, καὶ πεζῶ καὶ πτηνὰ καὶ πλωτά, τὰ δ' ἐπαμφοτερίζει. Καὶ τῶν ἀγελαίων καὶ τῶν μοναδικῶν τὰ μὲν πολιτικά τὰ δὲ σποραδικά ἐστὶν. Ἀγελαία μὲν οὖν οἷον ἐν τοῖς πτηνοῖς τὸ τῶν περιστερῶν γένος καὶ γέρας καὶ κύκνος (γαμψώνυχου δ' οὐδὲν ἀγελαίου), καὶ τῶν πλωτῶν πολλὰ γένη τῶν ἰχθύων, οἷον οὓς καλοῦσι δρομάδας, θύννοι, πηλαμύδες, ἀμαίαι· ὁ δ' ἄνθρωπος ἐπαμφοτερίζει. Πολιτικά δ' ἐστὶν ὧν ἐν τι καὶ κοινὸν γίνεται πάντων τὸ ἔργον ὅπερ οὐ πάντα ποιεῖ τὰ ἀγελαία. Ἔστι δὲ τοιοῦτον ἄνθρωπος, μέλιττα, σφῆξ, μύρμηξ, γέρας. Καὶ τούτων τὰ μὲν ὑφ' ἡγεμόνα ἐστὶ τὰ δ' ἄναρχα, οἷον γέρας μὲν καὶ τὸ τῶν μελιττῶν γένος ὑφ' ἡγεμόνα, μύρμηκες δὲ καὶ μυρία ἄλλα ἄναρχα.

in der Form von sechs Vergleichen zwischen Menschen im Besonderen und Lebewesen im Allgemeinen Antwort gibt, bezeichnet er diese Lebewesen als „political creatures“, die im Unterschied zu den Menschen nicht in der Lage seien zu sagen, was sie als „common benefit“ erachten.

Wenn wir nun auf die oben angeführten Interpreten Kullmann und Cooper zurückkommen, so vermuten wir im Unterschied zu ihnen, dass es sich in der *Politik* oder in der *Historia animalium* nicht um eine biologische, sondern um eine dezidiert politische Beschreibung handelt. Denn unter der Voraussetzung, dass der Mensch *physei politikon zôon* also ein Lebewesen ist, dass durch seine Natürlichkeit dazu bestimmt ist, in der Polis zu leben, bezieht sich Aristoteles sowohl auf dessen Existenz als auch auf sein Verhalten (*politikon* ist ein Adjektiv, das den Bezug zur *polis*, zur Gemeinde ausdrückt). In seinem Sinne können wir sagen, dass die Gemeinde zwar *wegen des Lebens* und zu seiner Erhaltung entsteht, dass sie aber *für ein gutes Leben* weiter besteht<sup>8</sup>. Auf der Grundlage der Analogie zwischen der Eudaimonie der *Polis* und des Individuums<sup>9</sup> kann auch über den Menschen ausgesagt werden, dass er zunächst bestrebt ist, sein Leben zu erhalten, um dann aber ein gutes Leben zu führen. Und gerade ein gutes Leben ist das Ziel und der Sinn jedes einzelnen menschlichen Lebens und auch der Gemeinde. Einen ähnlichen Gedanken finden wir auch in der *Historia animalium*, wo *zôon politikon* als ein Lebewesen charakterisiert wird, dem es um eine „gemeinsame Aufgabe“ (*koinon ergon*)<sup>10</sup> geht, was bedeutet, dass ihm das Allgemeinwohl am Herzen liegt. Diese Schlussfolgerung bezüglich des Allgemeinwohls stützen wir auf eine die Klassifizierung der einzelnen Verfassungen betreffende Passage im Buch III. der *Politik*, in dem vom Königtum, der Aristokratie und der *politeia* die Rede ist. Aristoteles führt

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<sup>8</sup> Aristoteles, *Pol.* I 1252b 30.

<sup>9</sup> Vgl. P. WEBER-SCHÄFER, *Einführung in die antike politische Theorie*, II, Darmstadt 1967, S. 37 nn.

<sup>10</sup> Aristoteles, *Hist. animal.* I 488a 7.

hier aus, dass der Unterschied zwischen der Tyrannis, der Oligarchie und der Demokratie ihr Zweck *koinon symferon* d.h. das ist, was jeweils als gemeinsamer Vorteil oder als Allgemeinwohl angesehen wird<sup>11</sup>. Das führt uns zu dem Schluss, dass in beiden Fällen, in der *Politik* und in der *Historia animalium*, der Ausdruck *zôon politikon* auf das Wohl der Gemeinschaft oder der Gemeinde bezogen, also nicht biologisch, sondern politisch verstanden wird.

Wäre das grundlegende Charakteristikum der Gemeinde nichts anderes als ein gemeinsames Leben in der Gemeinschaft, dann wären auch andere Lebewesen *zôon politikon*. Aber die Gemeinde ist, über eine bloß natürliche Gemeinschaft hinaus, eine Gemeinschaft von zusammen lebenden Lebewesen, die alle anderen Gemeinschaften in sich vereinigt (*pasa periechûsa tas allas*)<sup>12</sup>. Dass die Gemeinde alle anderen Gemeinschaften aufnimmt oder in sich vereinigt bedeutet, dass sie sich von ihnen wesentlich unterscheidet. Dieser Unterschied besteht darin, dass die Gemeinde unter allen Gemeinschaften *am meisten* (*malista*) nach dem gemeinsamen Wohl strebt<sup>13</sup>. In ähnlicher Weise kann man auch vom Menschen sagen, dass er im Unterschied zu den anderen Lebewesen *mallon*, d.h. mehr oder in höherem Maß *politikon zôon* ist als andere Lebewesen, da er den *logos*, Sprache besitzt. Und gerade der *logos* ist es, der dem Menschen die Möglichkeit gibt, ein gutes Leben zu führen. Den anderen Lebewesen ist dies nicht möglich, da sich ihr Leben nur auf der Ebene der Selbsterhaltung und des Überlebens abspielt. Darin beruht der grundlegende Unterschied zwischen ihnen und dem Menschen.

Das zweite grundlegende Charakteristikum des Menschen, dass er *logon echei* sei, begründet einen wesentlichen Unterschied zwischen dem

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<sup>11</sup> Aristoteles, *Pol.* III 1279a 34.

<sup>12</sup> Aristoteles, *Pol.* I 1252a 5-6.

<sup>13</sup> In der *Politeia* heißt es wörtlich, dass die Gemeinde „am meisten und zu den bedeutendsten von allen Gütern“ strebt (*malista de kai tû kyriôtatû pantôn*) (Aristoteles, *Pol.* I 1252a 4-5).

Menschen und den Herdentieren, die ähnlich wie er fähig sind, in der Gemeinschaft zu leben. Im Unterschied zu den Tieren, die nur Geräusche als Ausdruck des Schmerzes oder der Freude von sich geben können, ist es dem Menschen möglich, mittels des *Logos* oder der Sprache zu diskutieren und zu erläutern, was gut und böse, gerecht und ungerecht, schön oder hässlich ist. Dieses Vermögen (*dynamis*), das die übrigen Lebewesen nicht besitzen, begibt den Menschen mit einem Sinn für das Gute und Böse, Gerechte und Ungerechte.

Aristoteles' Charakterisierung des Menschen als politisches Wesen umfasst zwei wichtige Momente: Einerseits ist der Mensch durch seine Natürlichkeit dazu bestimmt, in der Gemeinschaft zu leben, und andererseits geht es ihm um eine bestimmte Qualität des Gemeinschaftslebens. Die Gemeinschaft ist zwar eine Gewähr für das Überleben oder den Lebenserhalt, sie ist aber für den Menschen auch die Grundlage für sein Streben nach einem guten Leben. Dass der Mensch dazu getrieben ist (*hormê* besitzt), in einer solchen Gemeinschaft (*polis*) zu leben, bedeutet jedoch noch keineswegs, dass er wirklich darin leben wird. Er könnte durchaus auch völlig isoliert von den Anderen, oder auf dem Land leben, wenn die Gemeinschaft noch nicht die Stufe der *polis* erreicht hat.<sup>14</sup> Insofern hat Aristoteles mit dem Begriff *physei politikon zôon* jene grundlegende menschliche Fähigkeit (*dynamis*) im Sinn, die uns, die wir nicht naturgemäß zu Bewohnern der *polis* werden, unter dem Gesichtspunkt des Vermögens betrachtet, uns dazu zu machen. Dieser Befund trifft auch für seine Behauptung zu, dass der Mensch *zôon logon echon* ist, d. h. dass ihm die Sprache unveräußerlich zugehört. Und auch das bedeutet keinesfalls, dass der Mensch sofort und auf natürliche Weise befähigt ist zu sprechen, sondern dass er ein Vermögen verkörpert, das sich entwickeln muss und durch Erziehung und Selbstbildung aktualisiert

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<sup>14</sup> Dasselbe gilt auch im Fall des Wohls und der Gerechtigkeit. Der Mensch besitzt nämlich die Fähigkeit (*dynamis*), besser gesagt er stellt die Fähigkeit dar, gut und gerecht zu sein, was nicht notwendigerweise bedeutet, dass er immer gerecht handelt oder gerecht ist.

werden kann. In beiden Fällen handelt es sich um *dynamis*, also um eine Möglichkeit, durch die wir bestehen, die wir aber keineswegs besitzen.

Wir können nun zusammenfassend konstatieren, dass die Gemeinde auf der Grundlage der Natürlichkeit des Menschen besteht, dass aber ihre Gestalt und ihre Verfassung (*politeia*) das Ergebnis einer zwischenmenschlichen Übereinkunft ist. Es handelt sich hierbei um zwei unterschiedliche, aber eng miteinander verknüpfte Momente. Das erste betrifft die Natürlichkeit (auf natürliche Weise werden wir vom Leben in Gemeinschaft angezogen) und das zweite berührt die menschlichen Fähigkeiten oder die Kunst (durch die Kunst entfalten wir die menschliche Natürlichkeit). Dieses zweite Moment, das die menschliche Kunstfertigkeit (*technê*) betrifft, ist „künstlich“ und weist in gewisser Hinsicht gemeinsame Charakterzüge mit dem Gemeinschaftsvertrag auf, von dem es sich jedoch durch seine Beziehung zur Natur unterscheidet.

In der Antike sind es die Sophisten, die als erste über den Ursprung und die Entstehung der Gesellschaft debattieren und dabei von einer Antinomie zwischen *physis* und *nomos* ausgehen. Als eine der Möglichkeiten dieser Entstehung betrachten auch sie den „Gesellschaftsvertrag“. Auf diese Bedeutung der Sophisten als der antiken Vorläufer der Theorie des Gesellschaftsvertrages hat Charles Kahn in seiner bekannten Studie *The Origins of Social Contract Theory* aus dem Jahr 1981 aufmerksam gemacht.<sup>15</sup> Für uns folgt daraus, dass uns das erneute Interesse am Gesellschaftsvertrag, das seit der Veröffentlichung von Rawls *Theorie der Gerechtigkeit* (1972) zu beobachten ist, nicht nur zu einer Rückkehr zu Denkern wie Hobbes, Locke oder Rousseau führen sollte, sondern bis zu den sophistischen Denkern und von hier aus weiter zu Demokrit, Epikur und Lukrez. Die Konzeptionen des 17.–18. Jahrhunderts und die des 5.–4. Jahrhunderts vor Christus haben vor allem die Voraussetzung der menschlichen Autonomie, sowie die Vorstellung eines ursprünglichen

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<sup>15</sup> C. H. KAHN, *The Origins of Social Contract Theory*, in: G. B. KERFERD (ed.), *The Sophists and their Legacy*, Wiesbaden 1981, S. 92-108.

Naturzustandes gemeinsam, der noch keine politisch organisierte Gemeinschaft darstellt.<sup>16</sup> Individuen sind demnach im natürlichen Zustand Unsicherheit und Bedrohungen ausgesetzt, gegen die sie sich durch die Konstitution von Recht und Gesetz oder durch den Abschluss des Gesellschaftsvertrages, d. h. durch ein Leben in Gemeinschaft zur Wehr setzen.

Aus dem 5.–4. Jahrhundert sind einige Textfragmente überliefert, in denen die Autoren die Rechtskonstitution, die Annahme von Gesetzen und auch die Gesellschaftsverträge beschreiben<sup>17</sup>. Eines der ersten Fragmente, das den natürlichen Zustand und die darauf folgende Rechtskonstitution behandelt und gewöhnlich den Titel *Sisyphos* trägt<sup>18</sup>, wurde früher Kritias, heute Euripides zugeschrieben<sup>19</sup>. Darin entledigt sich der Mensch der Fesseln der Natur (*physis*) durch die Erfindung des Gesetzes (*nomos*) und des Rechts (*dikē*). Einen ähnlichen Gedanken finden wir in einem bei Iamblichos überlieferten, anonymen Text, der wohl aus dem Jahr 430 v. Chr. stammt<sup>20</sup>. Der Naturzustand wird darin als Zustand beschrieben, in

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<sup>16</sup> Im Naturzustand gibt es weder Recht, noch Gerechtigkeit, oder Werte. Von ihnen können wir erst mit der Entstehung der Gesellschaft sprechen, wenn die Menschen zusammenarbeiten, Verhaltensrichtlinien formulieren und bedingt Werte definieren.

<sup>17</sup> Siehe z. B. den Vertrag als Gesetzesgrundlage bei Antiphon (*DK B 44a*). Das Wort Vertrag (*synthêkê*) erscheint aber zum ersten Mal in Platons Dialog *Kriton* (52c), wo das Gesetz Sokrates auffordert, sich dazu zu äußern, ob er es vernichten möchte, wenn er vor Vereinbarungen und Verträgen flüchtet, die es mit ihm abgeschlossen hat. In diesem Dialog taucht auch der Ausdruck *homologia* oder *homologeîn* auf, der Vertrag oder Vereinbarung bedeutet. Das Vorkommen des Infinitivs *synthesthai* ist z. B. in Platons *Politeia* belegt (359a 1–b 3).

<sup>18</sup> *DK 88 B 25*. Das Fragment ist Bestandteil des Satyrspiels *Sisyphos* und wird von der Hauptfigur Sisyphos vorgetragen, daher trägt dieser Teil den angeführten Titel.

<sup>19</sup> A. DIHLE hat das Fragment als erster Euripides zugeschrieben (*Das Satyrspiel „Sisyphos“*, «Hermes» 105 [1977], S. 28–42). Zur Geschichte der Autorenschaft des Fragments vgl. C. H. KAHN, *The Origins of Social Contract Theory*, S. 97.

<sup>20</sup> *DK 98 (89 A 1–7)*. Der Text hat wurde in Iamblichos Werk *Protreptikos* überliefert (Kap. 20).

dem die Menschen nicht in der Lage sind, eigenständig zu leben. Die Notwendigkeit (*anagkē*) führt sie also zu einem gemeinschaftlichen Leben, das sie mit Hilfe des Gesetzes (*nomos*) und des Rechts (*to dikaion*) gestalten (DK 89 A 6, 1).

Nicht nur die sophistischen Texte, sondern auch die Texte Demokrits und Epikurs<sup>21</sup> verbindet der Gedanke der menschlichen Unselbstständigkeit, die verschiedene Formen hat, die von der Schwäche und Unfähigkeit des Menschen sich im Naturzustand vor Raubtieren oder vor anderen Menschen zu schützen, bis zur fehlenden Eigenständigkeit bei der Nahrungsbeschaffung reichen. Sie wird durch das Austreten aus dem ursprünglichen Naturzustand und die Gründung einer Gemeinschaft überwunden. In den meisten Fragmenten begründet der Mensch eine Gemeinschaft durch Vertragsabschluss und die Annahme von Gesetzen<sup>22</sup>.

Denselben Gedanken finden wir auch beim führenden Vertreter der Theorie des Gesellschaftsvertrages im 17. Jahrhundert, bei Thomas Hobbes. Während seines französischen „Exils“ lernt er durch die Vermittlung Gassendis den Atomismus Epikurs und auch seinen Gedanken des Gesellschaftsvertrages kennen. Durch diesen hellenistischen Denker inspiriert, entwickelt er die Konzeption des Staates als Kunstprodukt. Der Staat ist also für Hobbes – im Unterschied von Aristoteles, in der menschlichen Natürlichkeit (*physis*) begründeten Auffassung und ähnlich wie bei den Sophisten - durch eine Vereinbarung oder einen Vertrag verfasst (*nomos*). David Keyt nimmt in diesem Zusammenhang an, dass Aristoteles Hobbes darin zustimmen könne, dass die politische Gemeinschaft ein Kunstprodukt sei, da dies sich auch aus den Prinzipien des Aristoteles ergebe. Er stützt sich mit dieser Auffassung

<sup>21</sup> Vgl. A. HAVLÍČEK, *Péče o duši u Démokrita*, «Reflexe» 23 (2002), S. 5–22.

<sup>22</sup> In diesen verschiedenartigen Texten finden wir auch viele gemeinsame Ausdrücke oder bildliche Äußerungen, wie zum Beispiel den Ausdruck *sporadên*, also dass die Menschen verstreut lebten, oder das Bildnis des Naturzustandes, als die Menschen den Tieren ähnlich waren und zwischen ihnen Kampf herrschte, usw.

auf Passagen in der *Politik*, wo der Gesetzgeber als Handwerker der Gesetze und Einrichtungen, oder der Verfassungen ausgelegt wird<sup>23</sup>. Durch seine politische Kunst verleiht er der Gemeinde die Form, d. h. die Einrichtung oder Verfassung<sup>24</sup>, und daher ist die Gemeinde hinsichtlich ihrer Form ein künstliches Werk. Aristoteles behauptet aber zugleich auch, dass die Gemeinde *physei* existiert, d. h. auf einer natürlichen Grundlage. Besteht hier ein Widerspruch, wie Keyt behauptet, oder unterliegt er selbst einem Missverständnis über die Auffassung des Aristoteles? Und kann man die Staatskonzeption von Aristoteles und Hobbes als gegensätzlich erachten?

Beginnen wir zunächst mit der bekannten Äußerung von Hobbes in der Einleitung zum *Leviathan*:

Denn durch Kunst wird jener grosse Leviathan geschaffen, genannt Gemeinwesen (*commonwealth*) oder Staat (*state*), auf lateinisch *civitas*, der nichts anderes ist als ein künstlicher Mensch, wenn auch von größerer Gestalt und Stärke als der natürliche, zu dessen Schutz und Verteidigung er erdacht wurde. For by Art is created that great LEVIATHAN called a COMMON-WEALTH, or STATE (in latine CIVITAS) which is but an Artificiall Man ; though of greater stature and strength than the Naturall, for whose protection and defence it was intended...<sup>25</sup>

In Hobbes' Schrift *De cive* (Über den Bürger), die in Paris im Jahre 1642 (die englische Version stammt aus dem J. 1651), also noch vor dem *Leviathan* (engl. 1651) verfasst wurde, kann man im ersten, „Freiheit“ genannten Teil lesen, dass die Mehrzahl Jener, die über die Gesellschaft oder den Staat (*commonwealth*) geschrieben haben, voraussetzten, dass der Mensch von Geburt an ein zum Leben in der Gemeinschaft geeignetes

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<sup>23</sup> Aristoteles, *Pol.* VII 1325b 40-1326a 5; II 1273b 32-1274b 18.

<sup>24</sup> Aristoteles, *Pol.* III 1276b 1-11.

<sup>25</sup> T. Hobbes, *Leviathan (Lev.)*, Einführung (Übersetzung I. FETSCHER, in: T. HOBBS, *Leviathan*, Frankfurt a. M. 1996); vgl. auch *Lev.* XVII, 13.



Lebewesen ist (*That Man is a Creature born fit for Society*)<sup>26</sup>. In der Anmerkung zum Wort „geeignet“ (*fit*) gesteht Hobbes ein, dass die Menschen unter dem Einfluss der Natürlichkeit den Kontakt untereinander suchen oder zusammenkommen (als Beispiel führt er Kinder und Nichtwissende an, die Hilfe von Anderen benötigen). Er ist jedoch davon überzeugt, dass die bürgerliche Gesellschaft (*civill society*) nicht bloß im *Kontakt* (*meeting*) zwischen den Menschen besteht, sondern dass sie auch einen *Bund* (*bond*) darstellt, zu dessen Einrichtung Bürgschaften und Verträge notwendig sind<sup>27</sup>.

Hobbes unterscheidet also strikt zwischen einem vorvertraglichen und dem auf einem Vertrag begründeten Zustand. Bloß ein abgeschlossener Vertrag macht aus den Menschen politische Wesen:

Ist dies geschehen, so nennt man diese zu einer Person vereinte Menge *Staat*, auf lateinisch *civitas*. (Right to him, and Authorise all his Actions in like manner. This done, the Multitude so united in one Person, is called a COMMON-WEALTH, in latine CIVITAS)<sup>28</sup> (*Lev. XVII 13*)

Ähnlich heißt es in *De cive*:

Der Mensch wird nicht von Natur, sondern durch Zucht zur Gesellschaft geeignet. Ja selbst wenn der Mensch von Natur nach der Gesellschaft verlangte, so folgte doch nicht, daß er von Natur zur Eingehung der Gesellschaft auch geeignet sei; denn das Verlangen und die Fähigkeit sind verschiedene Dinge. (*De cive*, I 2, Anm. 1)

Man is made fit for Society not *by Nature*, but by *Education*: furthermore, although Man were born in such a condition as to desire it, it followes not, that he

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<sup>26</sup> T. Hobbes, *De cive*, I 2.

<sup>27</sup> Vgl. T. Hobbes, *De cive*, I 2, pozn. 1: „... wherefore I deny not that men (even nature compelling) desire to come together. But civill Societies are not meer *Meetings*, but *Bonds*, to the making whereof, Faith and Compacts are necessary: The Vertue whereof to Children, and Fooles, and the profit whereof to those who have not yet tasted the miseries which accompany its defects, is altogether unknown“.

<sup>28</sup> T. Hobbes, *Lev. XVII 13*.

therefore were Born fit to enter into it; for it is one thing to desire, another to be in capacity fit for what we desire. (Kursiv. A. H.) (*De cive*, I 2, pozn.)<sup>29</sup>

Durch Vertragsabschluss eines Jeden mit Jedem und durch die Übergabe von Vollmachten an eine einzige Person (Souverän), die Jeden zum Autor seiner Taten erklärt, entsteht ein politischer Staat (*political commonwealth*)<sup>30</sup> und wird der Mensch zu einem politischen Lebewesen<sup>31</sup>. Den Grund dafür, dass wir diesen Vertrag abschließen, sieht er in der Erhaltung des Lebens und der Sicherung eines zufriedeneren Lebens<sup>32</sup>.

Darin besteht für Hobbes das hauptsächliche Lebensziel des Menschen, das aus seiner Natürlichkeit, d.h. dem Streben des Individuums nach Erfolg und in der Konsequenz nach Erhaltung des eigenen Lebens resultiert. Dass Hobbes dabei auch die Beziehungen zu den anderen Menschen erwähnt, wie zum Beispiel die Hilfe für Kinder und Blinde, hängt entschieden nicht mit den altruistischen Tendenzen in seiner Konzeption zusammen, sondern im Gegenteil mit dem Egoismus des Menschen. Denn nur zur Erreichung des eigenen Ziels, d.h. zum Zweck der Selbsterhaltung und eines zufriedeneren Lebens ist es für ihn notwendig, den Kontakt zu den übrigen Menschen aufrecht zu halten. Im Kapitel XIII. des *Leviathan* über die menschliche Natürlichkeit lesen wir von dieser Beziehung zu den anderen Menschen:

Und wenn daher zwei Menschen nach demselben Gegenstand streben, den sie jedoch nicht zusammen genießen können, so werden sie Feinde und sind in Verfolgung ihrer Absicht, die grundsätzlich Selbsterhaltung und bisweilen nur Genuss ist, bestrebt, sich gegenseitig zu vernichten oder zu unterwerfen. (*Lev.* XIII, 3)

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<sup>29</sup> T. Hobbes, *De cive*, I 2, pozn. 1.

<sup>30</sup> T. Hobbes, *Lev.* XVII 13-15.

<sup>31</sup> T. Hobbes, *Lev.* XVII 13.

<sup>32</sup> T. Hobbes, *Lev.* XVII 1.

Hobbes interessiert sich also im Grunde nicht für die Qualität der entstandenen Gesellschaftsordnung, denn seine Hauptforderung ist die Erhaltung des Lebens, die durch den Vertragsabschluss und die Regierung des Souveräns erreicht werden soll. Dieser hält die Macht zum Schutz der Menschenleben ganz in seiner Hand<sup>33</sup>. Für den Fall, dass es zu keinem Vertragsabschluss kommen sollte, wäre ein Krieg Aller gegen Alle unvermeidlich. Der grundlegende Schritt, der den Dauerzustand dieses Krieges beendet<sup>34</sup>, ist die freiwillige Unterwerfung der Menschen unter einen von ihnen (oder unter die Volksversammlung), der die Aufgabe hat, sie vor den anderen Menschen zu beschützen<sup>35</sup>.

### *Zusammenfassung*

Die Staatskonzeption beider Autoren beeinflusst in wesentlicher Weise ihre Anthropologie und konkret ihre Antwort auf die Frage nach dem Ziel und dem Sinn des menschlichen Lebens. Wie wir schon früher angeführt hatten, zählt nach Aristoteles zum Wesen des Menschen nicht nur, dass er *physei zôon politikon* ist, sondern auch, dass er *logos*, Sprache besitzt. Ohne die Welt der Sprache könnte der Mensch nicht gut oder schlecht, gerecht oder ungerecht handeln. Die Sprache ist eine notwendige Bedingung dafür, dass der Mensch zu einem politischen Wesen wird<sup>36</sup>. Nur in der Welt der Sprache können wir ein gutes oder ein schlechtes Leben führen. Nach Höffe sollten wir jedoch bei der Auslegung von Aristoteles nicht nur eine der Standardformeln durchsetzen, denen zufolge der Mensch ein vernünftiges oder ein politisches Wesen ist, sondern zwischen ihnen eine bestimmte Art einer dialektischen Beziehung

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<sup>33</sup> T. Hobbes, *Lev.* XVIII 13.

<sup>34</sup> T. Hobbes, *Lev.* XIII 8.

<sup>35</sup> T. Hobbes, *Lev.* XVII 13.

<sup>36</sup> Vgl. B. YACK, *Problems of a Political Animal*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1993, S. 70 nn.

sehen<sup>37</sup>. Anders wäre dem, wenn der Mensch Gott wäre, denn dann würde seine höchste Glückseligkeit in einer kontemplativen Tätigkeit bestehen. Da aber der Mensch durch sein Wesen dazu bestimmt ist, mit den Anderen zusammen zu leben, ist seine Glückseligkeit als Mensch an die Gemeinde geknüpft und beruht insofern auf moralischen Tugenden<sup>38</sup>. Da aber das bloße Wissen um die Tugenden zur Glückseligkeit nicht ausreicht, müssen wir gut handeln, Gutes tun und gut werden<sup>39</sup>. In diesem Sinn gibt Aristoteles weder in seiner *Nikomachischen Ethik* (X. Buch), noch in der *Politik*<sup>40</sup> einseitig nur dem theoretischen oder dem praktischen Leben den Vorrang, sondern er hält beide in einer dialektischen Spannung.

Bei Hobbes ist – wie wir gezeigt haben – die Situation ganz anders, da für ihn das Wesen und Ziel des Menschenlebens darin besteht, sich „der Gefahr der Zerstörung zu widersetzen“<sup>41</sup> und d.h., das eigene Leben zu erhalten. Das ist zwar auch der grundlegende und charakteristische Wesenszug, der für Aristoteles die Gemeinde entstehen lässt, aber ihr Fortdauern beruht bei ihm auf ganz anderen Gründen als für Hobbes, da sie aus seiner Sicht wegen des guten Lebens überdauert. In der Darlegung von Hobbes muss dem gegenüber der Staat den Frieden sicherstellen, einheitlich bleiben und alle Bürger sind der Meinung des Souveräns verpflichtet<sup>42</sup>.

Es ist nötig, den Unterschied zwischen Aristoteles und Hobbes darin zu suchen, dass beide Denker eine andere Ansicht der Grundlage hatten,

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<sup>37</sup> O. HÖFFE, *Grundaussagen über den Menschen bei Aristoteles*, S. 244.

<sup>38</sup> Vgl. Aristoteles, *Eth. Nic.* X 1178b 10.

<sup>39</sup> Aristoteles, *Eth. Nic.* X 1179b 5.

<sup>40</sup> Aristoteles, *Pol.* VII 1325a 20.

<sup>41</sup> D. HENRICH, *Die Grundstruktur der modernen Philosophie* (1969), in: *Selbstverhältnisse*, Frankfurt a. M. 1982, S. 84.

<sup>42</sup> T. Hobbes, *Lev.* XVII 15; *De cive*, V 6-10. Vgl. damit Platons *Republic*, konkret das Buch V., wo die beste Gemeinde einem Menschen zugeordnet wird, über den Alle einstimmig sagen: „das ist meines, das ist nicht meines“ (462c).

aus dem die Gemeinschaft entspringt und sich bildet. Für Aristoteles ist ähnlich wie für Platon die Grundlage der Mensch, der durch seine Natürlichkeit nach dem eigenen Lebenserhalt strebt. Aristoteles und Hobbes, setzen in gewissem Sinn einen Naturzustand voraus, der für den Einen der Zustand des Vermögens (*dynameis*), für den Anderen der Kriegszustand ist, aus dem er durch Vertragsabschluss entkommt. Durch Aristoteles wird die Natürlichkeit wie auch das Vermögen durch Kunst (*technê*) erfüllt und verwirklicht, wenn jedes Individuum je nach seiner Geschicklichkeit und Fähigkeit unterschiedliche Stufen der Erfüllung erreicht. Man kann insofern sagen, dass erst die Kunst der Natürlichkeit Gestalt verleiht. Im Gegensatz dazu bewertet Hobbes den Naturzustand des dauerhaften Krieges Aller gegen Alle negativ und ersetzt ihn daher durch einen neuen, und zwar friedlichen oder vertraglichen Zustand. In diesem Fall handelt es sich nicht darum, die Natürlichkeit zu vollenden oder umzugestalten, sondern den natürlichen Zustand durch einen künstlichen zu ersetzen. Ein weiterer Unterschied zwischen beiden Denkern besteht darin, dass es Hobbes um die Entstehung des Staates und folglich um seine Einheit geht, die durch die Zustimmung Aller erreicht wird, wobei die Meinung eines Jeden mit der Meinung des Souveräns übereinstimmen muss. Demgegenüber interessiert Aristoteles der Sinn oder das Ziel der Gemeinde, das ihr nicht vorgegeben ist, sondern Gegenstand ihrer internen Diskussion ist. Steht schließlich bei beiden Denkern die Entstehung der Gemeinde im Dienst des Lebens, so ist der Zweck ihres Bestehens für Hobbes dessen Erhaltung, für Aristoteles hingegen ein gutes Leben.

GIAN FRANCO GIANOTTI, *La cena di Trimalchione. Dal Satyricon di Petronio* («*Multa paucis*» 14), Bonanno Editore, Acireale-Roma 2013, pp. 478, ISBN 978-88-7796-861-6.

Secondo la bibliografia che egli stesso fornisce, Gian Franco Gianotti (= GFG) avrebbe pubblicato il suo primo contributo su Petronio abbastanza recentemente, nel volume collettivo *La commedia latina: modelli, forme, ideologia, fortuna* (a c. di M. Blancato e G. Nuzzo, Siracusa 2009), con un saggio dedicato a *Spettacoli comici, attori e spettatori in Petronio* (pp. 77-127). Si tratta certamente di un testo ampio, ricco di indagini e ancor più di frutti e riflessioni non circostanziati a quell'occasione, bensì esito di una lunghissima frequentazione con il testo del *Satyricon*. Chi conosce lo studioso sa infatti che sin dalla seconda metà degli anni Novanta GFG ha dedicato parte della sua attenzione di filologo classico e di lettore del mondo antico a quel caleidoscopico, caotico e indefinibile universo linguistico-letterario che è il *Satyricon*; per esempio con corsi monografici presso l'Università degli Studi di Torino, dove ricopriva la cattedra di Filologia classica, con seminari e conferenze in tutta Italia. Era dunque naturale, o per lo meno prevedibile, che un'attenzione così duratura si traducesse in opera organica e autonoma in forma di libro dedicato a Petronio. GFG non ha voluto pubblicare una nuova edizione dell'opera intera, ma ha preferito optare per un segmento di essa, quello certamente più suggestivo e celebre, la *Cena Trimalchionis* (Petr. 26, 7-78), e procedere all'edizione critica del testo latino, accompagnata da nuova traduzione italiana e da commento analitico. Il volume è dunque strutturato in maniera molto lineare: dopo una breve *Premessa* (datata Torino, 3 settembre 2012, momento in cui il libro è stato licenziato, pp. 9 s.) si susseguono un' *Introduzione* (pp. 11-39), la rassegna di edizioni, traduzioni, commenti, bibliografia e *sigla* (pp. 41-115), il testo vero e proprio con traduzione a fronte (117-241), e per ultimo il commento (243-478).

Come ci si può accorgere dalla semplice indicazione delle pagine delle varie sezioni, il lavoro di GFG si basa su di una produzione specialistica che ha pochi confronti nell'ambito della letteratura latina: l'elenco della bibliografia critica si estende per sessanta pagine complete, suddivisa in repertori, saggi e studi pubblicati dai primi decenni dell'Ottocento fino a oggi (pp. 53-112). E a questo proposito sarà opportuno rendere omaggio alla dirittura scientifica di GFG, il quale non ha voluto ristampare tutti i suoi precedenti studi petroniani (a p. 76 ne sono annoverati quattro), né diffondersi in una discussione della principale bibliografia, ma ha scelto di stabilire con precisione e sobrietà l'esito degli studi (suoi e altrui) nelle pagine di commento; e si sa bene quanto problematico risulti il *Satyricon*, sotto ogni aspetto della lettura.

Presentare criticamente una parte di opera letteraria al di fuori del suo contesto complessivo potrebbe apparire rischioso e limitativo (tanto più perché il *Satyricon* stesso è un insieme frammentario, mutilo del principio e della conclusione); ma GFG ha riflettuto non soltanto sulla relativa indipendenza della tradizione della *Cena* rispetto al resto, o alla sua isolabilità in quanto episodio conchiuso e celebrato da una ricca tradizione di studi; l'autore, infatti, chiarisce come sul piano strutturale la *Cena* costituisca un episodio unico tra tutti quelli superstiti: «Il grande intermezzo [...] interrompe la narrazione di viaggi e schermaglie omoerotiche, interrompe cioè la mobilità nello spazio e nei rapporti personali, per ospitare chiari esempi di mobilità sociale (aspetto ben presente nella storia della prima età imperiale): si presenta infatti come tappa consacrata alle avventure dello sguardo e della parola, come vivace spaccato d'una società dinamica in cui si intrecciano ascese personali e comportamenti di classe, conflitti culturali e antagonismi linguistici, il tutto nella cornice spettacolare di fastose esibizioni di ricchezza e di misere manifestazioni morali» (p. 16).

Per quanto concerne la classificazione dell'opera GFG non accantona la questione del genere letterario cui il *Satyricon* potrebbe appartenere, ma la contestualizza, in particolare con l'accostamento a un altro suo titolo prediletto della letteratura latina: «Si può pertanto ribadire che il *Satyricon* superstite, non diversamente dalle *Metamorfosi* apuleiane, finisca per dimostrare come la letteratura di intrattenimento non rappresenti tanto un genere autonomo e succedaneo di generi specifici, quanto si definisca come licenza di incursione - parodica o seria - entro i confini di tutti i generi, da cui può trascinare in piena libertà ogni tipo di dettaglio che, riciclato dallo *humour* dell'autore, può felicemente convivere in nuovi scenari di sapido impianto» (p. 22).

Il testo latino è distribuito in modo che a ogni pagina corrisponda quasi sempre un solo paragrafo della *Cena* con il relativo apparato critico; a fronte è la sola traduzione italiana, perché ogni altra nota di carattere esplicativo, storico-linguistico, letterario, fa parte del commentario finale. L'apparato critico allestito da GFG rende conto delle varianti della tradizione manoscritta e ovviamente delle numerosissime proposte correttive e congetturali che gli editori hanno accumulato sul testo nel corso di una tradizione plurisecolare. Il primo pregio di tale apparato - che è formato da un unico blocco per ogni pagina, poiché anche fonti, citazioni, allusioni e *loci similes* sono documentati nelle note di commento - è la perfetta leggibilità: con poche annotazioni l'autore permette sempre di identificare la natura della stringa testuale e il giudizio qualitativo accordatole dagli editori. Il secondo pregio è quello che rende l'apparato realmente "critico": GFG rinuncia a elencare tutte le proposte correttive al testo della *Cena*, ma si arresta a quelle più significative, secondo un giudizio di affidabilità e di giustificabilità. La *constitutio textus* obbedisce quindi a uno dei criteri cardine del magistero filologico dello studioso: quando i testimoni manoscritti offrono un senso soddisfacente, anche se diverso da quello che il let-

tore soggettivamente si attende, perché mai si dovrebbe modificare il testo trádito? Con tale assunto di base l'editore ricostruisce un testo petroniano che per lo più rispetta il dettato dei manoscritti, senza scelte automatiche o pregiudizi sui testimoni. Il ricorso alle correzioni altrui è comunque frequente, poiché molto spesso la *paradosis* è del tutto insoddisfacente o insufficiente alla comprensione.

GFG è filologo scaltrito: potrebbe permettersi frequenti interventi personali sul testo che così a lungo ha studiato e vagliato; e invece preferisce limitare fortemente il suo ruolo di editore, per ricorrere ai suggerimenti altrui, valorizzare la tradizione e ascoltare la voce dei filologi del passato o del presente. Come se avesse pudore di aggiungere a tante voci illustri anche la propria, argomenta le sue scelte nelle minuziose note di commento anziché imporle direttamente nel testo latino. E siccome sono pochissime le pagine in cui si manifesta la sua personale *ars edendi*, è opportuno renderne conto nel dettaglio. In 46, 5 Echione racconta con entusiasmo ad Agamennone i progressi scolastici del figlioletto Primigenio, ma si lagna dei due insegnanti che lo seguono; si tratta di un passaggio molto famoso, perché del primo *magister (sibi placens)* è detto che *Nec uno loco consistit sed venit dem litteras sed non vult laborare*, come si legge nel codice Par. Lat. 7989, H (il secondo *magister*, tanto per completare la citazione, è colui che invece *plus docet quam scit*). Numerosissimi sono i filologi che hanno tentato di sanare il primo testo (sin da Peter Burman, che nel 1743 proponeva *sed novit quidem litteras sed*), ma in apparato GFG riporta soltanto l'intervento di Paul Thomas (1921): *sed venit <raro: scit qui>dem litteras sed*. A testo, però, c'è la sua proposta (pubblicata per la prima volta in *I due maestri di Primigenio. Petronio 46*, «Serclus» 1, 2011, pp. 23-34): *sed venit <tan>dem, litteras <scit> sed non vult laborare*, con la traduzione «ma viene alla buon'ora; conosce, sì, la letteratura, ma non ha voglia di far fatica» (pp. 162 s.). La proposta si concentra sul completamento dell'azione di movimento indicata dai precedenti verbi contrapposti *consistit ... venit*; a questo proposito GFG ha seguito un filone di correzioni dedicate alla nervosa instabilità del *magister*, come quelle di Wehle (1861: *sed venit abit, scit quidem litteras*) e di Jacobs e Blümner (1920: *sed it et redit; scit quidem litteras*), ma la sua ha l'inconfondibile pregio dell'economicità e della funzionalità congiunte. È rimarchevole che il problematico *dem* della tradizione possa essere letto quale corruzione di *tandem*, avverbio di tempo, e non di *quidem*, più banale concessione, come risulta dalla correzione di Blümner, adottata poi nel corso di tutto il XX secolo fino alle recenti edizioni teubneriane di Konrad Müller.

Del tutto nuova è invece la proposta per l'apertura del cap. 53: l'imbarazzante esibizione di Trimalchione come danzatore che imita il pantomimo Siro si situa alla fine del cap. 52, ed è bruscamente seguita dalla lettura del rendiconto da parte di un *actuarius* del podere di Cuma; il nesso che collega i due capp. secondo il codice H è il più tipico dei coordinanti (*Et plane interpellavit saltationis libidinem actuarius, qui tamquam Urbis acta*



Michele Curnis

*recitavit*). Bücheler propose di espungere *et*, Jacobs di correggerlo in *sed*; GFG, molto più semplicemente e con un intervento minimo sul testo trådito, lo muta in *at* («Ma a interrompere del tutto la fregola di ballare ecco un contabile che recitò ad alta voce, come se si trattasse della Gazzetta Ufficiale di Roma», pp. 176 s.).

MICHELE CURNIS

Aristotele, *Retorica*. Introduzione, traduzione e commento di SILVIA GASTALDI («Classici» 36), Carocci Editore, Roma 2014, pp. 637, ISBN 978-88-430-7419-8.

La *Retorica* aristotelica curata da Silvia Gastaldi (=SG) non è, evidentemente, soltanto l'esito di un lavoro pluriennale mirato a tradurre e commentare tutto il testo del trattato, ma anche un bilancio di studi e di indagini che risalgono a ormai molti anni fa (almeno al 1981, quando la studiosa pubblicò per La Nuova Italia di Firenze *Discorso della città e discorso della scuola. Ricerche sulla Retorica di Aristotele*). Il volume attuale si presenta infatti come uno studio compiutissimo e organico, molto aperto alla dimensione problematica tanto delle singole questioni quanto del senso complessivo dell'opera. Per rispondere a tutto questo il lavoro è articolato nelle tre sezioni fondamentali di presentazione del testo aristotelico: un'introduzione molto mirata sin dalla scelta del titolo (*Una teoria del discorso tra dimostrazione e persuasione*, pp. 9-37), il testo greco con la traduzione italiana dei tre libri (pp. 42-349), il sistematico commento (pp. 351-627).

La struttura del volume è dunque molto tradizionale, e questo giova alla comprensione di uno dei testi classici a fondamento del pensiero occidentale, non soltanto per quanto riguarda analisi e razionalizzazione dei mezzi retorici. Un dato "quantitativo" è subito evidente dalla ponderosa mole del libro: l'ampiezza del commento equivale quasi al doppio dell'estensione del testo originale, ma è del tutto giustificata sia dall'esistenza dei problemi da risolvere e dalla necessità di continue esplicazioni sia dall'impianto molto scorrevole con cui SG lo ha concepito e redatto. Il commento si può anzi leggere come saggio autonomo e continuo, perché non risulta dalla sola giustapposizione di schede e di appunti, di rimandi cifrati e di elenchi bibliografici; al contrario, SG ha voluto costruire un grande testo parallelo a quello originale, in cui la pagina del filosofo è al tempo stesso riassunta e analizzata, con uno stile di invidiabile chiarezza e di perfetta linearità. Il commento non ha note a piè di pagina, perché i frequenti rimandi alla letteratura critica aristotelica sono inseriti direttamente nel corpo delle argomentazioni, di cui non interrompono affatto la compattezza. Tanto per fornire un esempio iniziale (prima riga del trattato), il problema della traduzione dell'aggettivo *ἀντίστροφος*, detto della retorica in relazione alla dialettica, è armonicamente collegato all'individuazione di una *methodos* che comprenda la stessa retorica (pp. 351-353). In tal modo il commento, pur componendosi inevitabilmente di segmenti indipendenti dal testo, assume una continuità e una coerenza complessiva che vanno ben oltre quelle di un insieme di note esplicative, o peggio di singole schede di lettura.

Il problema della resa di termini ed espressioni aristotelici anima una costante relazione tra traduzione e commento: l'esplicazione etimologica e lo studio del

significato, ribadito anche a distanza all'interno del commentario, serve a SG a evitare il rischio della sola *parafasi* o della semplice *descrizione* dei contenuti della *Retorica*; in parallelo, l'insistenza sulle parole-segnaletta e sulle loro differenti accezioni a seconda della pagina, del libro o dell'opera del *corpus aristotelicum* fa sì che il commento assuma autonomia e coerenza sempre più stringenti. Il lettore apprende, tra l'altro, che *πίστις* significa 'persuasione vera o apparente', che *δημεγορία* connota la prima condizione del cittadino della *πόλις* greca, che *πολιτεία* non va per lo più inteso come 'costituzione' (e che non è un termine importante soltanto nella *Politica*), che il significato di *φιλία* per l'uomo greco è totalmente differente rispetto al concetto di amicizia che vige nel mondo moderno e contemporaneo, che in tutto Aristotele non esiste una definizione univoca di *πάθος*, sebbene ai diversi tipi di coinvolgimento emotivo (dell'uditorio, evidentemente) sia dedicata un'approfondita disamina all'inizio del II libro, che *εἰκός*, a partire da I 2, deve essere inteso soprattutto nell'accezione di 'probabile' più che di 'verisimile', che l'attributo *φρόνιμος* in Aristotele è quasi sempre sinonimo di *σπουδαῖος*, e così via. In altre parole, il lessico tecnico della *Retorica* è presentato non per definizioni secche e apodittiche, ma sempre in chiave problematica, nel quadro storico del suo utilizzo e nella pluralità dei significati coinvolti. Soprattutto SG si preoccupa di trascorrere dal valore letterale a quello traslato e corrente delle numerose metafore che Aristotele utilizza.

Uno degli scopi della studiosa è di non fare apparire la *Retorica* come un trattato filosofico frutto di speculazione esclusivamente teorica; in essa, al contrario, «sono evidenti la ripresa e la rielaborazione delle acquisizioni che, sul terreno della pratica dei discorsi, sono state prodotte dai tecnografi e dagli oratori: la quasi totalità dei materiali utilizzati proviene dalla tradizione professionale della retorica, che tuttavia acquista un nuovo senso alla luce dell'infrastruttura teorica propriamente aristotelica» (p. 14). D'altra parte il commento ritorna spesso sull'impossibilità di ridurre la *Retorica* a semplice manuale di mozione degli affetti; per questo motivo SG si diffonde sulla precisa caratterizzazione del termine basilico *ἐνθύμιος*, e quindi dell'entimema come elemento costituente il senso stesso dell'insegnamento e della tecnica della parola. Grazie alle ricorrenti etimologie e all'analisi linguistica dei termini-chiave, tutto il commento è sorretto da argomentazioni filologiche, storico-letterarie, a volte anche critico-testuali, in cui i primi due libri dell'opera sono sempre posti in dialogo tra loro.

SG presenta in modo molto convincente la *Retorica* come specchio delle esigenze politico-comunicative di un'età di crisi, ossia di un periodo che soffre di tutte le conseguenze della guerra del Peloponneso, della fine dell'esperienza democratica e, non da ultimo, dell'ingerenza macedone. Tutto questo riporta evidentemente alle specificità storico-politiche di Atene, più che del mondo greco in generale. Soprattutto nel commento alla seconda parte del I libro (ossia ai §§ 7-13) SG dimostra una marcata attenzione nei confronti della concezione aristotelica della giustizia, quale capacità di

distinzione tra azioni giuste o ingiuste compiute dai cittadini, che poi finiscono al centro di una contesa giudiziaria. Ma al di là dell'ambito tribunale - prevedibile scenario di pratica della *τέχνη ῥητορική* - SG relaziona sempre le osservazioni di Aristotele al complesso contesto della *πόλις* e dei rapporti propriamente "politici" (che sono poi quelli interpersonali di ogni livello) tra i cittadini. La *Retorica* è dunque un trattato che nasce in primo luogo dalla disamina delle relazioni sociali tra gli Ateniesi; di questo si deve sempre tenere conto, perché «vi è un nesso stringente tra le passioni e l'ambiente in cui emergono, così come esiste una scala di priorità, e pertanto di rilevanza, tra le reazioni emotive, dovuta alle condizioni culturali e sociali» (p. 452). L'importante avvertenza - collocata immediatamente innanzi alla rassegna delle passioni del cittadino - sembra da porre in stretta relazione con una notazione che segue, ossia che «dal vasto repertorio passionale greco, Aristotele seleziona un numero tutto sommato ridotto di passioni: tutte appaiono connesse ai meccanismi dell'interazione sociale, e cioè ai rapporti tra i cittadini, con l'esclusione, pertanto, delle passioni provate da un singolo soggetto, come l'*epithymia*» (*ibidem*). SG non lo afferma esplicitamente, ma la congiunzione dei due passaggi suggerisce certamente al lettore che la selezione e lo studio dei *πάθη* nel II libro della *Retorica* non abbia un valore assoluto, bensì commisurato all'esperienza aristotelica della realtà ateniese (lo dimostra, per esempio, la serie di episodi citati per argomentare la dinamica di 'ira' e di 'calma' in II 3, 1380b 2-30; *cf.* pp. 459 s.). Tra i *πάθη* Aristotele colloca anche la *χάρις* (cui è dedicato l'intero cap. II 7), con un'inclusione che si allontana dal senso comune di intendere il termine; per questo SG interviene a spiegare come l'autore «voglia attribuire a questo termine il senso di "benevolenza", che si manifesta nell'erogazione di un beneficio a tutto vantaggio di chi lo riceve. In questo senso, si tratta di un *pathos* collaborativo, una sorta di eccezione nel panorama passionale greco, costantemente contrassegnato da dinamiche conflittuali» (p. 473).

Altra sottolineatura marcata nel commento di SG è che la *Retorica* sia un trattato profondamente diverso da un manuale come quelli che la tradizione greco-romana avrebbe consegnato in seguito, paragonabile piuttosto ad altre *τέχναι* aristoteliche: come la *Politica*, essa costituirebbe un'esortazione alla salvaguardia delle strutture esistenti e delle loro funzioni all'interno della città; non una serie di precetti finalizzata alla formazione del perfetto oratore, ma una disamina razionale delle potenzialità della parola in ogni uomo libero: «questo superamento della dimensione puramente personale attesta come il soggetto - il cittadino - sia sempre inserito in un sistema di relazioni, familiari o di amicizia, che è chiamato a salvaguardare» (p. 453). Anche la qualità delle affezioni personali, nel filtro aristotelico, è riconducibile alla dimensione politico-sociale della città; persino *φιλέιν* è «un verbo, pertanto, funzionale a porre l'accento sull'adozione di un atteggiamento collaborativo, che si manifesta nell'erogazione di beni e di servizi. Essa

presuppone la comunanza di interessi, la condivisione dei successi e degli insuccessi della vita di relazione in cui il cittadino è inserito» (p. 461).

Nel commento dell'attacco del III libro (pp. 542-547) SG si premura di indicare l'evidente differenza rispetto ai due precedenti, come fattore di autonomia: più che la continuazione della *τέχνη ῥητορική* l'ultimo libro parrebbe un *Περὶ λέξεως* a sé stante. Non a caso, i rimandi, i parallelismi strutturali e contenutistici si spostano tutti dall'interno della *Retorica* (ossia dai primi due libri) alla *Poetica* e alla considerazione del discorso retorico come imitazione (al pari di quello poetico). Contemporaneamente, però, SG rimarca ogni punto in cui Aristotele metta in guardia il retore dall'imitare (nel senso di comportarsi come) il poeta, in base al fatto - tutt'altro che ovvio - che prosa e poesia ricorrono a linguaggi profondamente differenti. «Aristotele, per meglio definire il linguaggio adeguato al discorso in prosa, richiama la tipologia dei nomi e dei verbi che ha già esposto nella *Poetica*» (p. 547). E d'altro canto, l'imposizione di una parola estranea, ma per qualche ragione analoga, ossia il ricorso alla metafora, è comune a poesia e prosa.

Al di là dell'esplicazione circostanziata al relativo passo, il commento è attraversato da importanti complementi, a beneficio di qualsivoglia lettore, dallo studente che per la prima volta si confronta con la *Retorica* allo studioso di Aristotele: a proposito dell'introduzione dell'entimema, per esempio, SG si premura di riportare la definizione completa di sillogismo (tratta da *Top.* I 1, 100a 25; *cf.* p. 363); la ricorrenza degli ἔνδοξα cui il parlante deve attenersi è di volta in volta spiegata come ricorso a «opinioni codificate» (p. 510) oppure tipologia di «opinione autorevole» (pp. 513, 521, con rimando a *Top.* I 1, 100b 21 ss.). I commenti di riferimento cui più spesso SG rimanda sono quelli di E. M. Cope (1877), J. H. Freese (1926), M. Dufour (1931-1938: si tratta dei primi due libri della *Retorica* nella "CUF", Belles Lettres), W. M. A. Grimaldi (1980-1988), Ch. Rapp (2002) e P. Chiron (2007, la più recente edizione francese, edita da Flammarion).

Poiché la qualità della traduzione dipende anche dal rapporto che si instaura tra colui che traduce e il testo critico adottato, va osservato con soddisfazione come SG non abbia voluto riprodurre a ogni costo nella resa italiana il sistema diacritico dell'edizione di W. David Ross (Oxford Classical Texts, Oxford 1959), su cui pure il lavoro si basa: sarà sufficiente notare che non tutte le innumerevoli parentesi tonde inserite nel testo greco per distinguere il livello delle argomentazioni aristoteliche diventano altrettante parentesi nel periodo italiano. Altra edizione critica di riferimento è quella di Rudolf Kassel (De Gruyter, Berlin 1976), alle cui scelte SG solitamente si allinea quando si discosta da Ross; ma in linea di massima la studiosa opta per la conservazione del testo tràdito, contro le congetture che tentano di appianare le difficoltà esegetiche o contro interventi semplificatori (come le espunzioni di una porzione testuale ritenuta incongruente o le supposizioni di lacuna). Nella fattispecie di alcuni *loci conclamati* della tradizione della

*Retorica*, SG accetta il testo di Ross in 1354a 12 s. (coincidente con la lezione dei manoscritti) e 1363a 11 (dove respinge l'espunzione di φαῦλοι proposta da Kassel); respinge, sulla scorta di Kassel, l'espunzione di φαινομενῆς proposta da Jebb e Ross a 1378a 31; respinge, contro Dufour e Kassel, le espunzioni delle rr. 1380b 16 s.; ripristina a 1387a 14 s. e 1398a 28 s. il testo tràdito (quello del manoscritto più autorevole della *Retorica*, il Par. gr. 1741, **A**, dei secc. X-XI), contro le proposte congetturali seguite per lo più dagli editori moderni; non accetta l'integrazione di una congiunzione coordinante a 1398a 4 (come invece fa Kassel, tra altri editori moderni); non accetta l'espunzione proposta da Kassel e seguita da Rapp del «riferimento a Pitagora onorato dagli Italioti» di 1398b 15, perché «il termine *Italiotai* indica i coloni greci stabilitisi in Italia meridionale, e si differenzia da *Italoí*, Italici, con il quale si designano i nativi» (p. 520); non accetta, sulla base del seguito della frase, l'espunzione di δι' ἐπαγωγῆς operata da Kassel a 1402b 16; accetta la correzione di Ross (non già «lezione», come è detto a p. 568) a 1408b 32 s., dove Aristotele definisce l'esametro in funzione del discorso parlato σεμνῆς ἀλλ' οὐ λεκτικῆς ἀρμονίας δεόμενος (contro il testo dei manoscritti σεμνὸς καὶ λεκτικὸς καὶ ἀρμονίας δεόμενος, che in effetti richiede una qualche correzione, in funzione della coerenza dell'intero periodo); accetta e traduce il testo di Ross a 1412a 35-b 1, ma nel commento propende per la *distinctio* alternativa di Dufour-Wartelle sul gioco di parole delle donne di Tracia (cf. pp. 588 s.); non accetta l'espunzione di Kassel a 1413b 1 s. del riferimento agli oratori attici che utilizzano molto l'iperbole (cf. p. 593).

Ancor più curato dell'aspetto critico-testuale è, ovviamente, quello relativo alla traduzione; non solo nella resa effettiva, che il lettore ritrova a fianco del testo greco, ma anche nell'interazione con il commento, sede della giustificazione e spiegazione della traduzione stessa, oltre che di traduzioni alternative, inevitabili nei passaggi di difficile interpretazione (come accade a proposito di 1383b 27-30, tradotto alle pp. 181-183 e discusso a p. 469). Esempio eloquente di tale attenzione è il caso di *πραότης*, relativa a 1380a 6-9: «La traduzione di “calma” è stata preferita a quella di “mitezza” adottata da molti traduttori, tra cui il Plebe (*ad loc.*), Dorati (*ad loc.*), Zanatta (*ad loc.*), per rendere meglio il contrasto tra *praotes* e *orge* e soprattutto per distinguere la *praotes* come *pathos* dalla *praotes* come virtù. Nell'*Etica Nicomachea* IV, 5, infatti, Aristotele colloca la *praotes* tra le virtù etiche, definendola quale medietà (*mesotes*) riguardo all'ira (1125b26)» (p. 458).

La bibliografia conclusiva è utilmente suddivisa in settori di pertinenza e di interesse, e documenta un'informazione molto ampia e precisa della letteratura critica sulla *Retorica*; tra le edizioni vere e proprie si potrebbe aggiungere quella di Antonio Tovar (Centro de Estudios Constitucionales, Madrid 1953<sup>1</sup>, 2003<sup>6</sup>), caratterizzata da un apparato critico molto sobrio, ma apprezzabile per l'equilibrio delle scelte e per la

traduzione spagnola a fronte). Alla ricca «Bibliografia critica» si potrebbe aggiungere qualche titolo recente, di ambito manualistico oppure no, ma comunque dovuto a studiosi che proseguono da tempo ricerche aristoteliche o retoriche; per esempio: G. A. Kennedy (di cui SG utilizza due saggi), *A New History of Classical Rhetoric*, PUP, Princeton 1994; F. Woerther, *L'èthos aristotélicien. Genèse d'une notion rhétorique*, Vrin, Paris 2007; W. W. Fortenbaugh (di cui SG menziona altri studi aristotelici risalenti agli anni Settanta), *Aristotle's Art of Rhetoric*, in: I. Worthington (ed.), *A Companion to Greek Rhetoric*, Blackwell, Malden-Oxford-Victoria 2007, pp. 107-123; M. Heath, *Codifications of Rhetoric*, in: E. Gunderson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rhetoric*, CUP, Cambridge 2009, pp. 59-73.

Sul piano editoriale il volume è molto curato - come in genere avviene nelle collane della casa editrice Carocci - nella qualità della carta, nell'apprezzabile ariosità della pagina e della dislocazione del testo a stampa; molto utile che, sia nel greco sia nella traduzione sia nel commento, il testo sia sempre separato nei paragrafi in cui i tre libri si articolano. Peccato che il testo greco non sia giustificato nel margine destro, ma disegni una linea continuamente frastagliata, che contrasta con la precisione grafica di tutto il resto; dal momento che l'editore ha riprodotto l'edizione oxoniense di Ross, ma con un suo proprio carattere greco, sarebbe costato poco allineare a destra le righe secondo la numerazione di Bekker in modo più ordinato, anche a costo di spaziature forzate e di inevitabili piccoli disequilibri nella distribuzione delle lettere.

MICHELE CURNIS

Siriano, *Discorsi di guerra*. Testo, traduzione e commento di IMMACOLATA ERAMO, con una nota di LUCIANO CANFORA (“Paradosis” 17), Edizioni Dedalo, Bari 2010, pp. 245, ISBN 978-88-220-5817-1.

Nel II libro del *De oratore* Cicerone lamentava una sorta di lacuna nella tradizione retorica antica per numerosi generi (*in eodem silentio multa alia oratorum officia iacuerunt*, II 15, 64); al primo posto dell’elenco erano le *cohortationes*, ossia gli incitamenti alla guerra che il generale-oratore aveva l’obbligo di porgere prima dell’inizio della battaglia. Mancava insomma, a detta di Cicerone, una *rhetorica militaris*, una τέχνη (*more aristotelico, ça va sans dire*) tutta declinata nell’ambito della tattica e della strategia di guerra. Il vuoto fu colmato in età bizantina dall’autore di un compendio piuttosto vasto, che collegava sostanzialmente tre trattati: una *Rhetorica militaris*, appunto, un *De re strategica* e uno scritto di tattica navale (testo che sopravvive acefalo, edito da Konrad Müller nel 1882 e poi più volte ripreso con il titolo di *Ναυμαχία*). L’*editio princeps* del primo dei tre (intitolato *Δημηγορίαί προτρεπτικαί*) si deve a Hermann Köchly (1855-1856), che però non lo attribuisce ad alcuno scrittore, poiché la non estesa tradizione manoscritta è anonima. Una corposa serie di studi che attraversa la seconda metà dell’Ottocento - ed è poi ripresa anche nel XX secolo, fino all’attuale edizione a cura di Immacolata Eramo (=IE) - è quasi unanime nell’attribuire la redazione del compendio a Siriano, «un μάγιστρος τῶν ὀφφικίων, il più alto funzionario dell’apparato amministrativo bizantino, quasi certamente lo stesso Siriano la cui opera era consigliata da Costantino VII al figlio Romano quale utile viatico per le compagne militari (*βιβλία ιστορικὰ, ἐξαιρέτως δὲ τὸν Πολύαινον καὶ τὸν Συριανόν*) e il cui nome compare tra le fonti dei *Tactica* di Niceforo Urano [...] e nella glossa a margine dei codici della *recensio Laurentiana* dei *Tactica* di Leone VI» (p. 15). La fonte manoscritta più importante dell’opera è infatti il Laurentianus LV.4 (L), codice membranaceo del X secolo che presenta una «raccolta degli scritti polemologici della Biblioteca imperiale di Costantinopoli, frutto di un’iniziativa ufficiale patrocinata da Costantino VII» (p. 24).

IE provvede a una nuova collazione dei testimoni, all’indagine dei loro rapporti interni, e quindi a nuova, equilibrata e documentata *constitutio textus*; in più fornisce la prima e unica traduzione italiana del manuale, con un commentario analitico ricchissimo di osservazioni e di collegamenti tra i *Discorsi di guerra* e tutta la letteratura retorica (e non soltanto) del mondo antico e bizantino. Il libro, insomma, è un’autentica edizione critica e al tempo stesso un aggiornato saggio di scienza retorica e polemologica. Sebbene non si conosca nulla della biografia dell’autore, il genere letterario - specifico e al tempo stesso sfaccettato - cui egli si dedica ha suscitato notevole interesse a partire dalla metà del XIX secolo. Come scrive la studiosa, «Maggiore fortuna ha sortito l’indagine sui



caratteri letterari del compendio, in particolare i suoi rapporti con il genere polemografico, per la sezione di tattica e poliorcetica, ma anche retorico, storico, stratagematico e biblico. Il risultato è un ricco repertorio di fonti, non sempre chiaramente esplicitate e identificabili, che abbraccia l'*Iliade* e il quarto libro dei Maccabei, e comprende anche Enea Tattico, Eliano, Filone di Bisanzio e Apollodoro di Damasco per l'ambito tattico e poliorcetico, Erodoto, Ctesia, Arriano e Polieno per aneddoti e riferimenti a episodi celebri del passato, il Vangelo di Giovanni e la pseudoepigrafa epistola paolina agli Ebrei per la professione di fede cristiana più volte manifestata nella *Rhetorica militaris*» (p. 15).

Dopo la *Nota* di Luciano Canfora (pp. 7-9) si dipana l'*Introduzione* (pp. 11-34), a sua volta articolata in due sezioni: nella prima IE traccia una sintetica storia del genere polemografico, giungendo fino a Siriano e alla sua epoca («pressappoco la dinastia dei Macedoni», p. 15); nella seconda dà conto dei testimoni manoscritti e dei loro rapporti, fino a ricostruire lo *stemma codicum* che li include tutti e che presuppone un archetipo. Direttamente da quest'ultimo derivano i due codici principali (e più antichi): il già citato Laurentianus (L) e l'Ambrosianus B 119 sup. (139) (A), anch'esso membranaceo del X secolo: il secondo «È l'unico manoscritto che riporta, benché notevolmente decurtate, tutte le sezioni del compendio di Siriano» (p. 28). Appoggiandosi soprattutto agli studi di Alphonse Dain, IE conclude che «L ed A provengano, indipendentemente l'uno dall'altro, da un comune antenato» (p. 29); gli altri testimoni sono apografi di questi due: copie, o copie di copie.

La sezione centrale del libro è occupata dal testo greco, con apparato critico di varianti e interventi correttivi, e dalla traduzione italiana (pp. 35-113). Il lettore, del resto, è già bene avvertito sui contenuti che si appresta a conoscere: «È una strategia che privilegia artificio, indugio, lentezza, dissimulazione, corruzione, in definitiva un approccio indiretto al conflitto, tale da ridurre al minimo tutti i rischi connessi. Più che lo scontro in armi, condotto in ossequio a norme predeterminate e a codici condivisi, sono importanti, anzi, determinanti, la valutazione delle forze, proprie e dell'avversario, le istanze motivazionali delle truppe, gli espedienti di natura psicologica, i rapporti tra belligeranti ed alleati, il principio del *divide et impera*, le trattative volte a scongiurare la battaglia, la razionalizzazione delle risorse umane e finanziarie» (p. 19). Nel porgere l'originale greco e le questioni relative alla tradizione manoscritta, IE interviene molto raramente con correzioni personali, preferendo stabilire la versione critica sulla base della tradizione e tutt'al più accettando alcuni dei numerosi aggiustamenti proposti da Köchly. Dal momento che le *Δημηγορίαι* di Siriano sono state oggetto di poca attenzione critico-testuale (nell'apparato l'unico nome di editore che compare è appunto quello di Köchly), ogni intervento di IE si rivela prezioso per la storia della ricezione, e merita di essere riportato nel dettaglio: in 7, 2 l'editrice propone un'espunzione nella frase *οἶον*

Ἀριστείδης καὶ εἴ τις ἄλλος [τῶν] ἐπὶ δικαιοσύνη παρ' Ἑλλησι θαυμαζόμενος (all'interno del periodo: «Perciò anche molti per la loro giustizia sono beatificati ed onorati pure dopo la morte, come Aristide e quanti altri siano stati per la giustizia oggetto di ammirazione da parte dei Greci», pp. 44 s.), anche se in apparato utilizza una formula di cautela («τῶν fort. secludendum»). In 22, 3 stampa ἰδοὺ καιρὸς ἀγώνων all'interno del periodo che così traduce: «Se dunque le parole del generale sono vere, quanto cioè egli sosteneva a vostro vanto, ecco il momento della prova: ricordatevi dell'affetto che vi ho riservato» (pp. 62 s.); la relativa informazione d'apparato è «καιρὸς ἀγώνων proposui : καιρὸς ἀγώνων καιρὸς ἀληθείας codd. : καιρὸς ἀληθείας Köchly», ma IE si premura di argomentare più diffusamente la propria scelta anche in nota: «Il testo dei manoscritti pare tradire un'origine glossematica; le due espressioni, καιρὸς ἀγώνων da una parte e καιρὸς ἀληθείας dall'altra, sembrano essere alternative, o meglio l'una esplicativa dell'altra. In altre occasioni - vd. 20.5 καιρὸς τῶν ἀγώνων; 27.1 καιρὸς πρὸς τὸν παρόντα ἀγῶνα; *De re strat.* 15 ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τοῦ ἀγῶνος - il καιρός è normalmente associato alla prova delle armi piuttosto che al 'momento della verità', pertanto sembrerebbe più fondato il sospetto che sia stata originariamente una glossa, entrata poi nel testo proprio alla luce della suggestione creata dalla veridicità o dalla verosimiglianza delle parole del generale citate poco prima» (p. 143). L'esempio dimostra come una correzione apparentemente non necessaria possa invece rivelarsi plausibile con la scorta di argomentazioni convincenti e con l'indicazione dell'*usus scribendi* dell'autore. Ancora più persuasiva la correzione di 37, 7 (6), che ha anche il pregio dell'economicità: IE stampa οἶδαμεν γὰρ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων κατορθωμάτων ἕκαστον τὸν βίον εὐεργετεῖν, κτλ. (e traduce: «Sappiamo, infatti, che anche ciascuno degli altri valori reca benefici alla vita, niente è tuttavia come la giustizia», pp. 82 s.); in apparato si legge: «οἶδαμεν supposui : οἶδεν μὲν LQBW : οἶδε μὲν C Köchly»; ma la supposizione si può dire certa, perché in questo passaggio il pensiero dell'autore deve essere coniugato alla prima persona. L'ultimo intervento di IE sul testo di Siriano riguarda l'*inscriptio* del capitolo finale, insolitamente estesa e forse anche trasposta rispetto alla collocazione più adeguata: Παράδειγμα τοῦ παραμυθητικοῦ κατ' ἔλλειψιν τῆς μεταθέσεως τῆς αἰτίας [ἔνθα γὰρ ὀνειδισμὸς χώραν ἔχει, ἐκλείπει ἢ τῆς αἰτίας μετάθεσις] («Esempio di consolatorio in mancanza di spostamento della causa [quando infatti ha luogo un rimprovero manca lo spostamento della causa]», pp. 112 s.). La studiosa ipotizza che «il cap. 58 sia fuori posto (la sua più degna e naturale collocazione sarebbe all'interno o immediatamente dopo il cap. 56) e che il riferimento al rimprovero presente nella *inscriptio* tradisca un'origine glossematica: nato per superare l'*impasse* della ripresa a distanza causata dall'inidonea collocazione e per fornire un richiamo in sintesi e un collegamento anche con l'argomento subito precedente» (p. 194, che è l'ultima delle note).

L'editrice ha denominato *Note* la sezione successiva, costituita appunto di 161 annotazioni esplicative numerate progressivamente (i numeri che vi rimandano sono dislocati nelle righe della traduzione italiana); è una scelta di grande umiltà, perché l'estensione complessiva (pp. 115-194, per di più in corpo minore) e l'accuratezza delle schede assurgono a esemplare commento di tutto il testo. Ed è un vero piacere, oltre che molto istruttivo, seguire di nota in nota IE nella perlustrazione del lessico tecnico della polemografia antica e dei suoi rapporti con gli autori di riferimento (da Tucidide ad Aristotele, da Demostene a Ermogene); attenendosi infatti all'ordine con cui sezioni e contenuti del discorso protrettico si presentano nel testo, IE ha modo di fornire la definizione e l'esemplificazione di argomenti generali e predisposizioni alla trattazione (come *πρόβλημα*, *προοίμιον*, *προδιήγησις*, *προκατασκευή*, *προβολή*, quest'ultima intesa come *intentio criminis* di un'azione giudiziaria), dello *status quaestionis* da cui si diparte il dibattito (*στάσις*, o *πραγματική στάσις*), del ragionamento deduttivo (*Ἐνθύμημα* di aristotelica memoria) e della sua conclusione (*ἐπιχείρημα*), dello sviluppo degli argomenti (*ἐργασία*), e così via.

Costituisce davvero un *unicum* il compendio di Siriano, anche per la frequente congiunzione dell'esortazione guerresca con le leggi di vita prescritte dalla Bibbia e dalla cultura cristiana. Per questo motivo chi commenta il testo ha l'onere di spiegare i numerosissimi *exempla* storici e letterari, che dai poemi omerici e dalla storia greca antica giungono fino alla storia romana. IE si disimpegna benissimo in questo compito, peraltro senza limitarsi alla nota puntuale e analitica; al contrario, il commento abbonda di chiarificazioni sintetiche, come quella inerente ai confini del genere praticato da Siriano: «La tattica si configura come una scienza a carattere eminentemente pratico, da sviluppare dopo aver bene appreso la capacità di maneggiare le armi (Pl. *La*. 182b), per questo non può che costituire solo una delle parti di cui si sostanzia l'arte del comando ed essere solo una porzione della *στρατηγία*» (p. 169). La ricchezza di terminologia tecnica è uno dei dati più interessanti del trattato; in effetti, gran parte degli accenni al lessico protrettico (tattico e strategico) sparsi nella letteratura retorica di più ampio raggio, in Siriano è spiegata dettagliatamente, soprattutto grazie ai numerosi esempi "da manuale" che l'autore ha raccolto. La guerra è dunque la realtà di fondo che motiva l'elaborazione retorica del buon generale al pari di tutti gli stratagemmi pratici che egli deve mettere in pratica sul campo di battaglia; ma è indispensabile quanto IE ricorda in proposito: «La civiltà bizantina, benché erede di una diuturna tradizione di guerre sul campo [...], ed essa stessa impegnata in uno stato di belligeranza con i confinanti pressoché ininterrotto, non giunse mai ad elaborare una giustificazione positiva della guerra (determinando in questo un solco ideologico rispetto all'Occidente, dove anche i teologi cristiani finirono per avallare la necessità di una guerra 'giusta' [...]), ma ricorse al tranquillizzante

principio, già consacrato dalla tradizione [...], della guerra ‘necessaria’ in quanto difensiva» (p. 168).

Il volume si conclude con un *Bibliografia* (pp. 197-220) distinta in *Edizioni e traduzioni del compendio di Siriano*, *Studi sul compendio di Siriano*, *Ulteriore bibliografia*; seguono accuratissimi *Indici* (pp. 221-245), degli autori antichi, dei luoghi citati, dei nomi antichi, che includono anche tutti i riferimenti presenti nell'introduzione e nelle note della curatrice.

Un elogio finale deve essere dedicato anche all'eleganza editoriale del volume: in semplice broccata con sovraccoperta, ma realizzato con carta Lux cream 1, 8, gr. 70, con caratteri perfettamente leggibili e lineari sia nell'italiano sia nel greco, esso conferma l'impegno di rigore e di cura artigianale delle Edizioni Dedalo; con la sua tiratura limitata a 650 copie numerate a mano, anche questo è un libro di pregio del catalogo barese, oltre che un saggio di prima qualità storico-culturale e intellettuale. L'esemplare recensito è il n. 109 della produzione totale.

MICHELE CURNIS

**Aleš Havlíček**  
**(1956-2015)**  
*in memoriam*

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JAKUB JINEK

At the end of last May, Francisco Lisi told me that Hans Krämer, the distinguished Platonic scholar and the founding figure of the Tübingen School of Platonic scholarship, had passed away a month ago, and added: “This is a black year for all Platonists”. Lisi thus referred to the fact that Giovanni Reale, Krämer’s fellow-worker in the field of Platonic hermeneutics and the founder of the Milan school of Platonic scholarship, had also died only some six months before that. At the time, nobody could suspect that the black year was to culminate in less than two month’s time, on 22th July 2015, when, suddenly and quickly, our colleague and close friend Aleš Havlíček also died.

Like Krämer and Reale, Aleš also founded a school which has won academic acclaim. A fitting name for it, I suggest, would be the Prague Neoclassical School of Political Thought. It has drawn substantively on the work of the founders of the German-American neoclassical school, L. Strauss and H. Arendt, and it agreed with their main thesis that the disaster of the Nazi and Communist totalitarian regimes (Aleš had very direct personal experience with the latter one, as the Communists dismissed him from the university and made him to work as a mechanic for almost a decade) are rooted in the crisis of modern European rationality, so that in order to tackle this crisis, Europe should concentrate on its pre-modern period and seek inspiration in the classical works of ancient and medieval philosophical tradition. Aleš enriched this intuition by two important innovations. First, in accord with Czech authors such as

Emanuel Rádl, Jan Patočka and Ladislav Hejdránek, he systematically insisted that many of the practical philosophical problems which we face today present an important spiritual aspect which should - in a somewhat “biblical” manner - orient us to the future. Secondly, with a more historical accent, Aleš recognized that a true revival of the classical tradition necessitates a close and rigorous study of its authors and works. This was the reason why he dedicated much of his academic effort to research on Plato - and he achieved here a level of expertise that the founders of the neoclassical school hardly ever had.

In Platonic hermeneutics, Aleš was influenced by what we can call the anti-dogmatic strand of interpretation of Platonic philosophy, represented by Leo Strauss on one hand and Theodor Ebert on the other. At the same time, however, he fully respected the one approach which is usually taken to be the most dogmatic one - that of Tübingen and Milan. In this open-mindedness, which was characteristic for him, Aleš could remind us of Jan Patočka, who similarly oscillated between the systematical inclination to an existential, rather non-dogmatic interpretation of Platonism, and his historical-philological expertise which made him, one he familiarized himself with the works of Gaiser and Krämer, to entirely adopt their hermeneutical view.

Aleš’s philosophical interest in Plato concentrated on the Good. The Good was for him non-objective, surpassing any positive conceptualization, being - in a rather Kantian way - something regulative and merely guiding our practice in the plurality of its empirical conditions. The Good can be grasped, not by any positive science, but only by dialectics as an activity of the rational soul, inspired by the virtue of *phronesis*. Dialectics finds its expression in dialogue that helps to articulate and differentiate correct and incorrect views. Dialectics always comprises conflicting views; negativity belongs essentially to thought itself. However, there is a positive way out of this essential conflict of opinions, one which is not based merely on arguments but rather on a

decision. Following Weischedel, Aleš often spoke about *the basic decision*, by which the individual person relates to the Divine or - using a Platonic metaphor - by which she is forced towards the Good. For Aleš, the crucial point was that this basic decision has a practical character and intention. On his rather radical reading of Plato's myth of the cave, theoretical philosophy in sense of ascending towards the Good is but a presupposition for the descent inside the cave, i.e. politics which comprises all efforts of theory and is consequently superior to it.

But let me get back from the ideas to the personal memories. The conversation with F. Lisi I mentioned at the outset occurred in Ústí nad Labem at a conference of the Collegium Politicum, organized by Aleš as the Dean of the Faculty of Arts. It was a very stimulating meeting intellectually, and furthermore, Aleš imprinted it with his optimism, generosity, and friendship, putting into practice the title of the conference: *koina ta ton philon* - "for friends, all is shared". As an organizer of numerous conferences and meetings (prominently including the international Plato's symposia, held biannually in Prague), Aleš always insisted that it is not enough to simply let scholars read their papers; he wanted each conference to be also a social event which can strengthen the sense of community and the bonds of personal friendship among the participants.

Aleš had a tremendous talent to connect people across fields, professions, languages and differences of age. The force of his personal field brought together established academics and service staff, business people and members of the Prague cultural underground, professors and undergraduates; with all of them he talked in the same tone, without any trace of haughtiness. That was the reason why he was so popular among students, and some of them loved to make long trips with him for the notorious "road seminars", often with lack of material comfort but always with the immense reward provided by reading Empedocles in Akragas, Machiavelli in Florence and Heidegger in Todtnauberg.

Free of all arrogance, he was always prepared to help by giving advice or providing some service to others - generations of students and colleagues profited from his tireless willingness to read, edit and correct their texts. Aleš run the most important Czech editing house for philosophy; this was a vocation which he inherited from the Samizdat-era and which required him to a fair extent to sacrifice his own work. He did it with ease, professing that it felt natural; quoting Aristotle, he claimed that the whole is more fundamental than its parts.

In many respects, Aleš was a magnanimous man in the Aristotelian sense. The loss of such a *μεγαλοψύχος* is indeed irreparable for both Czech and international academic community. Yet for him personally, from his Platonic and Christian perspective, his death is not the end but rather the fulfillment of a life which has always been lived with respect to “that which is coming from the future”.