



Aristotle, *Politics*
Books 7.13-end & 8

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Healthy Locations

- ◆ Based on Hippocratic ideas:
 - Wind direction determines climate;
 - Clean water is essential; build man-made reservoirs if necessary;
 - “...this latter point is by no means a secondary consideration. For the elements which we use most and oftenest for the support of the body contribute most to health, and among these are water and air” (183).

City topography




- ◆ Acropolis (elevated stronghold, as at Athens) suited to monarchy or oligarchy;
- ◆ Point from which to dominate city;
- ◆ Repulse enemies;
- ◆ Also temple site.



Topography of different regimes

Plain (flat) suited to democracy;

- ◆ All cities need walls for defense—ornamental as well as of most modern construction to resist war machines;
- ◆ Two kinds of arrangements of houses:
 - irregular (like Central)—hard to get in and out, as deterrent to enemies;
 - Regular street plan only in some districts.



Procreation (7.15-16): Preparation of the body

- ◆ “...the care of the body ought to precede that of the soul...for the sake of reason” (190);
- ◆ Marriage = major concern:
 - Parents’ procreative lives should terminate at same time (50 for women; 70 for men);
 - 18 years of age for women; 37 for men;
 - Avoid marriage of very young—leads to intemperance of parents and disrespect of children;
 - Limit procreation to when parents can produce healthy offspring.



Marriage

- ◆ Season and wind direction should be considered (north preferable to south);
- ◆ Athletes make poor progenitors:
 - “The constitution of an athlete is not suited to the life of a citizen, or to health, or to the procreation of children, any more than the ...exhausted constitution, but one which is a mean between them” (191);
 - Man’s constitution should be “inured to labour, but not labour which is excessive or of one sort only [a recommendation for cross-training?].”



Motherhood

- ◆ Condition of mother also crucial
- ◆ She should exercise each day by visiting the temple of deity that protects childbirth and motherhood;
- ◆ Eat nourishing food
- ◆ Keep her mind “quiet, for offspring derive their nature from their mothers as plants do from the earth” (192).



Abortion

- ◆ “...let there be a law that no deformed child shall live”;
- ◆ “But as to an excess in the number of children, if the established customs of the state forbid the exposure of children...and if couples have children in excess, let abortion be procured before sense and life have begun”;
- ◆ “what may or may not be lawfully done in these cases depends on the question of life and sensation” (192).

Implications

- ◆ Open-ended
- ◆ No objection to abortion in principle
- ◆ Timing depends upon a then-unresolved scientific question of when life begins;
 - this still being debated today;
 - Roman Catholic Church regards Aristotle as ‘the philosopher’; opposes abortion.





Child-rearing (7.16)

- ◆ Use animals and military peoples (Celts, Spartans) as examples for feeding young;
- ◆ Much milk, little wine;
- ◆ Exercise and shouting is good for children;
- ◆ Accustom them to cold as do Celts and Spartans;
- ◆ No mental work during period of physical growth.



Censorship (7.17)

- ◆ Aristotle, like Plato, advocates censorship;
- ◆ Plato banishes the poets (e.g. Homer);
- ◆ Censorship: limit access to literature or art for a moral purpose;
- ◆ Today: film ratings, restricted access to “adult” materials;
- ◆ “...we should also banish pictures or speeches from the stage which are indecent”;
- ◆ “Let...there be no image or picture representing unseemly actions, except in the temples” where only “persons of mature age” worship;
- ◆ Keep children away from “all that is bad, and especially...vice or hate:” (194).



Restricted Performances

- ◆ Education the best defense:
- ◆ We like what we experience first;
- ◆ Iambi and comedies only for those who “are of an age to sit at the public tables and to drink strong wine; by that time education will have armed them against the evil influences of such representations”;
- ◆ “The iambic rhythm, as being closest to that of ordinary speech, was employed in Greek and Latin as the common metre of dialogue; its earliest known use is as a vehicle of invective and satire” (*OED*, s.v. “iambus”).



Excellence (7.13)

- ◆ Happiness of city through excellence of *citizens*, not external goods (185);
 - ‘There are three things which make men good and excellent; these are nature, habit, reason’ (185);
- ◆ Which of these can be changed or manipulated?
 - alterable aspects are focus of *public* education (Bk 8).
- ◆ Athenian education was private;
- ◆ Aristotle believes that cultivation of excellence is a collective concern.



Nature of Soul & its ends (7.14)

- ◆ Two parts:
 - Rational (mind)
 - Irrational, appetites (body)
- ◆ Inferior exists for sake of superior: body for mind;
- ◆ Consider the end of soul: excellence
- ◆ Diverse life paths: business, war;
- ◆ Peace, leisure are best, and should be aim of constitution (not war, as in Sparta);



Purposes of war (7.14)

- ◆ War should never be a state's principal aim;
- ◆ Does not lead to happiness;
- ◆ Proof? Spartans have no goal and no satisfaction because they have lost their empire!
- ◆ "...for this the legislator is to blame, he never having taught them how to lead the life of peace (188)."
- ◆ War only to keep state *free*;
- ◆ Should only conquer and enslave those who deserve to be (i.e. natural, not conventional, slavery);
- ◆ Should rule empire in interest of governed;
- ◆ War as a means to peace, not end in itself.



Book 8

Key role of education in the state



Defense of public education (8.1)

- ◆ Education for common end of city;
 - ‘...should be one and the same for all’;
 - ‘...it should be public, and not private—not as at present...the training in things which are of common interest should be the same for all’;
 - ‘...the neglect of education does harm to the constitution’ (195).



Citizen's education is not private

- ◆ Citizenship is a public role
- ◆ Education of citizen should be at public expense for public purposes:
 - “The citizen should be moulded to suit the form of government under which he lives”;
 - All citizens “belong to the state” (195).
- ◆ Citizen's education is *not* his private business, for pleasure or future profit.



What should be taught, and why?

- ◆ Disagreement
- ◆ What should be the subjects?
- ◆ The goals?
 - Moral or intellectual excellence?
 - Usefulness for life?
 - Higher knowledge?

Stages of Education (7.17 & 8.2)

Stage I

- ◆ Seven years to puberty
- ◆ Basic skills: reading, writing, arithmetic
- ◆ not for **utility**;
 - only to cultivate of character “without making mechanics of them” (196);
- ◆ Mechanical arts:
 - deform body, degrade mind;
- ◆ Gymnastic:
 - trains body, teaches courage.


Stage II

- ◆ Puberty to 18
- ◆ Music performance, but only to level of appreciation
- ◆ *Not* expert performance

Stage III

- ◆ Adulthood
- ◆ Lifelong learning





Lifelong learning: Music and the cultivation of character

- ◆ “...our fathers admitted music into education, not on the ground either of its necessity or utility, for it is not necessary, nor indeed useful in the same manner as reading and writing...nor like drawing...nor again like gymnastic. There remains, then, the use of music for intellectual enjoyment in leisure, which is in fact the reason of its introduction [into education], this being one of the ways it is thought that a freeman should pass his leisure” (*Pol.* 1338^a10-20).

Music Education

- ◆ Aristotle posits special human connection to music:
 - ‘...some philosophers say the soul is a harmony’;
 - that ‘it possesses harmony’.
- ◆ Plato considered music important,
 - preferred different *harmoniai* (Phrygian to Aristotle’s Lydian).
- ◆ Shapes moral character of citizens
- ◆ Includes poetry and literature
- ◆ Is a lifelong interest,
- ◆ Not limited to music lessons in childhood or teen years.





Music gladdens the heart

- ◆ ‘...music, whether instrumental or accompanied by the voice, is one of the greatest of pleasures...
- ◆ we may see the reason why people very naturally enlist the aid of music for their social parties and pastimes—
- ◆ it has the power of gladdening their hearts’ (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1339b10).



Reasons to study music

- ◆ “...music should be studied, not for the sake of one, but of many benefits...with a view to education, or purgation [*catharsis*]; music may also serve for intellectual enjoyment, for relaxation and recreation after exertion” (*Pol.* 1341^b35-1342^a5).
- ◆ But most important, music transforms the *soul*:
- ◆ “Rhythm and melody supply imitations of anger and gentleness, and also of courage and temperance, and of all the qualities contrary to these, and of the other qualities of character, which hardly fall short of the actual affections, as we know from our own experience; for in listening to such strains our souls undergo a change” (*Pol.* 1340^a19-24).



Music imitates character

‘...even in mere melodies there is an imitation of character’ (*Pol.* 1340^a38-41).



Imitative power of music

- ◆ “...when men hear imitations, even apart from the rhythms and tunes themselves, their feelings move in sympathy” (*Pol.* 1340^a10-15);
 - ‘feelings such as pity and fear, or again, enthusiasm exist very strongly in some souls, and have more or less influence over all’ (*Pol.* 1342^a5-10.)
- ◆ Which kind of music is best?
 - That which provides imitations of: courage, temperance and justice.
 - Plato and Aristotle agree that the Dorian *harmonia* promotes courage.



Professional musicianship

- ◆ No professional performance by citizens;
 - Only by slaves or metics;
 - B/c professional performer is subordinated to the audience, as a slave is.
- ◆ Plato and Aristotle:
 - the pipes (*auloi*) and harp are too *professional* for guardians or citizens.



Comment

- ◆ The fact that Aristotle opposes the utilization of one's skills (e.g. playing music) to achieve the end of pleasing others shows his elitist attitude towards class differences. It is taken for granted that musicians should be looked down upon because they play for the enjoyment of others.
- ◆ By deeming such musicians a means for citizens to the end of leisure, he downgrades the value of art as a means of self-expression and something to be appreciated on its own, which, when viewed in the modern context, is a degradation of the conception of self, which couldn't be very good for the soul.
- ◆ Nonetheless, the rationale behind Aristotle's views lies in the interests of the city, a whole which functions best when individuals use practical reasoning to serve the city, and speculative reasoning for one's happiness. The order is somewhat confused when in playing music, for instance, an individual practices his skill for another's leisure, thereby ceasing to be an end in himself.



Comment

- ◆ I personally feel that when one spends one's lifetime on music, music acts as a medium in which he sees the value and appreciate life.
- ◆ Just as one practices invention, discovering of medicine, etc., they are also striving to please others. Perhaps it is seemingly striving to please others to amateurs and outsiders whom might not have the exact talent, but to musicians it is a way to find his character and meaning of one's life;
- ◆ therefore I do not see practicing music as any different from practicing any other essential skills.
- ◆ Furthermore, music was very important to the Greeks as they felt that some harmonies were divine. Aristotle himself believes that music can express moral purposes because it can represent states of character just as pictures literally represent the mountains and seas. Therefore by representing a virtuous character, music is able to serve as a very powerful tool for moral instruction.

Auloi [Pipes]



Instruments to avoid

- ◆ “The flute [*auloi*] or any other instrument which requires great skill, as for example the harp, ought not to be admitted into education, but only such [instruments] as will make men intelligent students of music or of the other parts of education.
- ◆ Besides, the flute is not an instrument which is expressive of character; it is too exciting. The proper time for using it is when the performance aims not at instruction, but at the relief of the passions.
- ◆ And there is a further objection; the impediment which the flute presents to the use of the voice detracts from its educational value. The ancients were therefore right in forbidding the flute to youths and freemen...” (*Pol.* 1341^a15-30).





Instruments

- ◆ The pipes deform the face and preclude the use of the *voice*;
 - Speaking/singing = part of *logos*, or reason;
- ◆ Children may learn to play the *kithara* (or cithar);
 - ‘...only until they are able to feel delight in noble melodies and rhythms’ (*Pol.* 1341^a10-16).

Ancient School: *Kithara* [lyre]

