MONOGRÁFICO I

POLITEIA *IN ARISTOTLE'S POLITICAL THEORY AND HISTORICAL RESEARCH*

Coordinado por

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Introduction

The multi-faceted notion of *politeia* as a lens on Aristotle's ideas about politics and history is the organizing focus of this monograph in *Araucaria* which unites essays by philosophers, historians and political theorists. What issues are focused on? The historical qualities of the research on the *politeiai* in relation to the Aristotelian judgement on history (Mara, Poddighe); the use of the *politeiai* as *paradeigmata* for the correction of the existing regimes and for the creation of new ones by lawgivers and politicians, be they real models (Pezzoli, Zizza) or theoretical elaborations (Sancho Rocher); Aristotle's ethical reflection on the principles that give unity and stability to the *politeia*, in particular the democratic ones (Irrera) and Aristotle's analysis on a pragmatic way to settle the problem of *stasis* with political means (Knoll); and, finally, the method of Aristotelian research on the *politeiai* (Polito).

The same issues are often approached from different perspectives. This is the case of the historical qualities of research on the *politeiai* in relation to Aristotelian judgements on history. Gerald Mara revisits the problem relying principally on an intertextual reading of the *Athēnaiōn Politeia* and Book 5 of the *Politics*. Both texts direct the reader's attention to history, though in dramatically different ways. Read in a dialogic spirit, these texts underscore the possibilities and hazards of civic agency and preserve the importance of history for Aristotle's political theory. Mara's perspective challenges the scholarly view that Aristotle's political theory is only tangentially concerned with history; a view reinforced by Aristotle's statements in the *Poetics* that diminish history and historians in favour of poetry and the poets. According to Mara, we should reconsider Aristotle's understanding of history and poetry differently, seeing both as essential resources for his political theory. To be practiced well, political theory requires the virtues of both the finest poetry which is open to possibility, and the finest history which is respectful of truth. Within this reading, political theory relies on both poetry and history, each adjusted according to the needs of the *historia*. Aristotle's judgement on history in comparison with poetry is also discussed in Elisabetta Poddighe's contribution, at the end of a more general discussion of *politeia* as an ideal interpretive and narratological frame for the *polis*' history. At the core of her analysis is the 'unifying quality' of the *politeia*, which provides the history of a *polis* with a thematic unity similar to that found in poetry and superior to chronological unity. Aristotle identified the

politeia as the most suitable category for a historical account of the *polis*: an account which, through the narration of actions converging towards a chosen end, places the description of the events within a synoptic vision that helps to unmask historical causation and the universals.

With regard to the function of the *politeia* in Aristotelian historical research, Cesare Zizza's contribution considers the value of the political regime of the Aphytaians as a historical example and paradigm of a particular type of democratic *politeia*. The reference to the *nomos* of the Aphytaians appears in the section of *Politics* Book 6 dedicated to the so-called agricultural democracy. The value of this historical example is pointed out by Aristotle not as an ideal model but as a real reference for politicians and lawgivers engaged in the correction of existing models of *politeiai* in order to give stability to the *poleis*, tempering the economic disparity between rich and poor through the provision of a plot of land for all citizens. The issue of the combining of extremes under the sign of the 'middling' class (also with reference to land ownership) is at the centre of Laura Sancho Rocher's analysis of the *mese politeia*. In Aristotle's *Politics* Book 6, the reader finds a form of correct constitution (*he mese politeia*) that occurs when the citizens with moderate resources, the 'middling' class or *mesoi*, are not only numerous, but the majority. According to Aristotle, this class guarantees the rule of law and reason, lays the foundation of friendship between citizens, and thus, ensures the regime's stability. In Sancho Rocher's essay this constitution is compared first and foremost with the theoretical model of *politeia* based on the virtue of citizens, i.e. that regime of perfectly virtuous men which therefore has a somewhat mildly aristocratic character. A second and decisive comparison is that with the historical model of the *politeia* devised in Athens under the leadership of Theramenes, namely the constitution of the Five Thousand. In neither case do we find a model of a *mese politeia*. In neither case is it a question of increasing the number of *mesoi* citizens in order to give stability to the political regime. The Aristotelian *mese politeia* instead identifies that ideal model of *politeia* which achieves the goal of citizen's happiness through reforms that increase the number of *mesoi* and ensure a fair distribution of property among citizens.

Marina Polito's essay addresses the method followed in the composition of the 'other' *politeiai* and the comparison with the *Athēnaiōn Politeia* model. According to this scholar, it is possible that Aristotle's school had a 'broad' model as a reference point for the *politeia* of a political community. The differences in character or structure between the *politeiai* were determined by the characteristics of the specific political community and the documentation the school had about it. Although there was undoubtedly a tendency towards a certain form of structure, the organization of a *politeia* into fixed parts, as a set content, is not attested by the sources. A definition of the *Athēnaiōn Politeia* as

atypical must therefore be avoided since, in their variety, the ancient sources and the Heraclidean extracts show that such a fixed model does not exist.

Federica Pezzoli's contribution focuses on the political-institutional aspects of Aristotle's analysis of a real political regime, namely the Carthaginian one, which was probably not included in the collection of Aristotelian *politeiai* since it belonged to a non-Greek city. According to the author, the criteria of the broader definition of *politeia* found in *Politics* Book 4 allowed Aristotle to assemble the available documentation for this community and include non-Greek material in the treatment of historical *politeiai* which had an excellent reputation and could represent a model for the elaboration of an *ariste politeia* project. The same analysis of the merits and demerits of the mixed regime of the North African city is carried out mainly on the basis of the criteria in the 'empirical books' (4-6) of the *Politics* regarding the classification of the different *politeiai*, their internal organization and their preservation.

The focus on real politics and one of its fundamental problems, namely the demise and stability of 'political systems' (*politeiai*), discussed by Aristotle in *Politics* Book 5, is at the core of Manuel Knoll's contribution. After describing the most significant features of Aristotle's theory of 'sedition', the author shows how it is mainly directed against the a-historical account of constitutional change Plato presents in Books 8 and 9 of the *Republic*. In fact, this account reduces the complexity of the empirical political world. Moreover, Knoll argues that in the philosopher's investigation of the causes of *stasis* of the political regimes, the constitution that Aristotle calls 'polity' (*politeia*) represents his solution to the challenge of stabilizing democracies and oligarchies, which are the prevailing political systems of the fourth century BCE. The polity is not his 'ideal' political order, but it is "the political system most suited to all cities" of his time. This is why Aristotle is a political realist and the founder of empirical political science.

The concern for the *ēthos* of citizens in the establishment and preservation of regimes by virtuous legislative activity represents the core of Elena Irrera's paper. In her contribution the author analyses political friendship in Aristotle's ethical works, stressing its importance for holding cities together and its strong role in democratic forms governments, discussed especially in *Politics* Books 4-6. This is by no means a defence of deviant regimes but develops the idea that democratic tools might be introduced in non-democratic regimes as devices designed to promote a more efficient functioning of institutions and greater stability of the whole political community.

Federica Pezzoli, Elisabetta Poddighe

Politeia in Aristotle's political theory and historical research (eds. F. Pezzoli, E. Poddighe)

Federica Pezzoli, Elisabetta Poddighe, *Introduction*

Gerald Mara, *Historical Representations in Aristotle's Political Theory*

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2. Practicing practical philosophy
3. Reconsidering *Poetics*' 'history'
4. History's particulars and universals
5. Dialogues of history, poetry and theory in the *AP* and *Pol.* 5
6. Alternative histories

Elisabetta Poddighe, *Politeia and the historical account of the polis in Aristotle*

1. The first establishment of a *politeia*
2. The *politeia*'s intelligibility in the polis as a "community of interpretation"
3. *Politeia* and the unity of the polis

Federica Pezzoli, *Aristotle's Politeia of the Carthaginians*

1. The *politeia* as a conceptual criterion used to interpret the Carthaginian regime
2. Mixed aristocracy or oligarchy? Strengths and weaknesses of the Carthaginian regime
3. Aristotle's testimony of Carthage

Cesare Zizza, *Aristotle, the Agricultural Democracy, and the Aphytaians (Pol. 6, 1319a 14-19)*1.

1. The *poleis* and the *ethne* mentioned as *exempla historica* in the *Politics* of Aristotle
2. Historical notations in books 5 and 6 of the *Politics*: a quick overview
3. Agricultural democracy: the oldest and best *demokratia*
4. The Aphytaians in the *Politics* (part I)
5. Aphitys and the Aphytaians: for a brief history of a Chalkidic *polis*
6. Aphytis: a *polis* also known to Aristotle's disciples
7. The Aphytaians in the *Politics* (part II)
8. Aristotle, the agricultural democracy, and the Aphytaians (πάντες γεωργοῦσιν): some concluding remarks

Laura Sancho Rocher, *Aristóteles y la posibilidad de una mése politeía*

1. La *mése politeía* y los *mésoi*
2. Politia y *mése politeía*
3. "No ha existido nunca o pocas veces…" (*Pol.* 4.11, 1296a 37)
4. Conclusión

Elena Irrera, *Friendship, Ēthos and Equality in Aristotle's Treatment of Democratic Politeiai*

1. Introduction
2. A Democratic Education?
3. *Philia* and Types of Democracy

Manuel Knoll, *Aristotle on the Demise and Stability of Political Systems*

1. Aristotle and political realism
2. Aristotle's conception of a 'political system' (*politeia*) and political justice
3. Political injustice as general cause of factional conflict
4. The general and particular causes of factional conflict and Aristotle's empirical, inductive, and comparative method
5. Plato's a-historical account of constitutional change as Aristotle's main target
6. The 'polity' (*politeia*) as the most stable political system
7. Conclusion

Marina Polito, *Aristotle's "other Politeiai"*

1. The "other *Politeiai*"
2. The approaches of the research
3. Conclusions: from the examination of the texts