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NOURISHING BODY AND SOUL.
ALBERT THE GREAT ON ARISTOTLE'S *POLITICS* (BOOKS VII-VIII)¹

Andrea COLLI (Bologna)

1. Introduction

In his paper *Considerations presque philosophiques sur les commentaires de la Politique d'Albert le Grand et de Thomas d'Aquin*, Francis Cheneval notes that «l'intérêt de l'historiographie contemporaine pour la Politique d'Albert a été jusqu'à présent très modéré. Tout ce qui a été écrit sur cette oeuvre peut être lu en une seule journée»². After twenty years, the *status quaestionis* has not changed significantly: Albert the Great's commentary on Aristotle's *Politics* is presumably one of Albert's most neglected works. Of course, this does not mean that there are no recent studies on this text³, but it is a fact that a systematic analysis of the work with an accurate examination of the sources has not yet been carried out. Certainly, this is primarily due to the absence of a modern critical edition of the text. Borgnet's edition presents certain errors and does not provide a reconstruction of the sources⁴. Then, there are at least two other reasons that make the analysis of this commentary particularly problematic. Firstly. As appropriately emphasized by Gianfranco Fioravanti in his well-known article *Politia Orientalium et Aegyptiorum. Alberto Magno e la Politica aristotelica*, several historical episodes mentioned by Aristotle in his treatise are not easy to comment on for a medieval theologian⁵. Therefore, they are frequently misinterpreted by Albert the Great. Secondly, in a number of passages, it is very difficult to distinguish Albert's opinion from Aristotle's position. This is certainly a problem, which affects the study of all Albert's commentaries on the Peripatetic treatises, but emerges clearly here. In other terms, the Dominican master seems to simply repeat or, at best, paraphrase the Aristotelian doctrines.

However, despite all this, Albert's commentary on the *Politics* is a very interesting case study, and not only for exploring the assimilation of fundamental concepts of Aristotle's political vocabulary, such as “citizenship”, *bonum commune* or “wealth-getting art”, in 13th-century thought⁶, but also for considering the reworking of the significant number of practical suggestions and teachings characterizing large parts of this Aristotelian text.

¹ A first version of this paper («Is there an Albertinian Theory of Education? Albert the Great on Aristotle's Politics (VII-VIII)») was presented at the Albertus Magnus Institute's workshop «Politik und Ethik bei Albertus Magnus und im mittelalterlichen Diskurs» (Bonn, October 11, 2019). I am very grateful to Henryk Anzulewicz, Pavel Blazek, Susanna Bullido del Barrio, Maria Lucrezia Leone, Sven Lichtmann, Evelina Miteva, Hannes Möhle, and Stefano Perfetti for their precious comments.

² CHENEVAL 1998, p. 57.

³ BERTELLONI 2000; LAMBERTINI 2000; LANZA 2010, pp. 50-52; COLLI 2015; PIERPAULI 2018, pp. 71-92; ID. 2019, pp. 83-104; COLLI 2019.

⁴ ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Politica*, ed. BORGNET. In the present paper I quote Albert's text from Borgnet's edition (= Albertus Magnus, *Politica*), that was conducted on the basis of manuscripts preserved in the Italian libraries. However, in order to present a more reliable text, transcriptions from the Berlin manuscript witness (Berlin, SBPK, Lat. fol. 879) will be added in the footnotes. The spelling of the texts transcribed by Berlin manuscript has been classicized: 'u' and 'v' have been distinguished and 'j' is not used; the Latin classical diphthongs have been used; punctuation and capitalization have been modernized and abbreviations spelled out. English translation in the main text is mine.

⁵ FIORAVANTI 1979.

⁶ Cf. COLLI 2022.

The present study concerns this second important aspect. In particular, it aims to focus on Albert's analysis of the accurate description of children's education provided by Aristotle in the 7th and 8th books of his *Politics*. This constitutes a privileged point of view from which Albert's idea of soul-body relationship may be taken into account. How does Albert the Great interpret the numerous Aristotelian pedagogical suggestions contained in this part of the text? Is it possible to identify a sort of Albert's theory of education? Are there points of contact between the "educational activity" described by Albert in his commentary on the *Politics* and his comprehensive view of soul-body relationship?

The discussion of some examples from two central aspects of the Aristotelian pedagogy, namely (1) child nourishment and (2) musical education, suggests some ideas to answer these questions and gives the opportunity – in the concluding remarks – to make some general considerations on Albert the Great's working strategy on this point.

2. The health benefits of milk: Galen and the Frisians

Aristotle poses the problem of child nutrition at the end of the 7th book, after the long digression about conception and pregnancy⁷. Albert the Great starts from the Aristotelian consideration that "after the children have been born, the manner of rearing them may be supposed to have a great effect on their bodily strength"⁸ (*natis autem pueris, magnam putari esse differentiam ad corporum potentiam*)⁹. Then, he engages in a long reflection – which deserves to be fully quoted – to determine which foods are essential to strengthen the child's body:

"[Aristotle] determines which foods are essential [to strengthen the child's body] by using the term *alite*, deriving from the verb *alitur*, which signifies "one who is nourished". Among the various foods which can support the growth, this food [essential to strengthen the child's body] should be the best. For this reason, Aristotle refers to the name *alites* to define "the better fed children", as well as the grammarians confirm, when they use expressions such as *altilia* or *alitilia*, which stand for "people who eat well". Avicenna on his part suggests that the healthiest children can be called *istimbrae*, as *istimbra* is the natural warmth that stimulates the appetite and helps digestion. What is the most nourishing food is stated in the following lines, where Aristotle takes into account "the example of animals". As they feed the young with milk, we can consider it as the most nourishing food. Milk has three properties: watery part, that is whey; solid part, that is cheese; fat part, that is cream. The watery (or liquid) part easily flows in the members of the body, the solid part (cheese) strengthens and invigorates the members, and the fat part (cream) fortifies the spirit. All three nutritional properties constitute a spiritual resource and a support for the body, as Costa Ben Luca states in his book *De differentia spiritus et animae*: "indeed, spirit is the vehicle of virtue". Then, Aristotle corroborates his argument, by saying "it would appear from the example of those nations who desire to create the military habit". That milk is the essential food to strengthen the child's body is further confirmed by the sentence: "the food which has most milk in it is the best". Aristotle explains it by adding that "milk is the best food suited to human body". This argument is also defended by Avicenna: milk is generated in the mother's breast from her menstrual blood, as mother's milk is really a whitened form of menstrual blood. Therefore, child's body is generated from the same matter of the mother's body. For this reason,

⁷ ARIST., *Politica*, VII, 16, 1334b29-1336a3.

⁸ ARIST., *Politica*, VII, 17, 1336a4-9; eng. trans., *Politics*, ed. BARNES, p. 2119.

⁹ ARIST., *Politica*, VII, 17, in ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Politica*, VII, 15, ed. BORGNET, p. 741a.

Aristotle writes: “suited” and “body”, as breast milk is constituted by the same matter of human body”¹⁰.

The first point of Albert’s analysis revolves around the explanation of the sentence *Quale quoddam utique sit, apparet alite*, which actually cannot be found, in this particular formulation, in the two Latin translations of Aristotle’s *Politics*. In the *antiqua translatio*, attached by Borgnet to his printed edition of Albert’s commentary, we can only find the sentence *quale quoddam utique sit*¹¹. By contrast, the verb *apparet* introduces the subsequent proposition: *apparet et per alia animalia considerantibus [...]*¹². Moerbeke’s version, which is dated around 1280, and was thus written after Albert’s commentary, is almost identical¹³.

The only difference from the ancient translation consists in the presence of the conjunction *autem* after the verb *appareo*, and this is presumably the term transcribed as *alite* in the Latin version used by Albert. In any case, the Dominican theologian conducts a careful examination on the etymology of *alite*, albeit this expression is *de facto* inexistent not only in the Aristotelian Latin tradition, but – according to a broad overview of various lexica and databases – also in medieval literature in general. As interpreted by Albert, the term is to connect to the verb *alo* or, more precisely, to the name *altilia* or *alitia*, which stands for “people who eat well” (*bene aluntur*) and, in this particular context, should mean “the better-fed children”.

In fact, the Dominican theologian does not seem to undertake this etymological reconstruction from nothing: he provides a general reference to the grammarians (*sicut in grammaticis*), but a very similar explanation of the significance of *altilia* and *alitia* can be found in Gregory the Great’s *Homiliae in evangelia*: «altilia enim saginata dicimus; ab eo enim quod est alere, altilia quasi alitia vocamus»¹⁴. Although this may be a mere coincidence, this study will reveal a constant reuse of previous biblical exegesis in Albert’s commentary on Aristotle’s *Politics*. Lastly, this “creative” etymological reconstruction of *alite* is further clarified through the parallelism with another enigmatic term, namely *istimbrae*, that Albert takes from Avicenna’s *Liber Canonis* with the purpose of defining the “healthiest children”¹⁵.

¹⁰ ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Politica* VII, 15, ed. BORGNET, pp. 745b-746a (Berlin SBPK, Lat. fol. 879, f. 90vb): «Et determinat quale sit illud, (ibi] om.), Quale quoddam utique sit, apparet alite, id est, eo quod alitur: a quocumque enim alimento accipit incrementum, illud melius est. Et vocat pueros tales, alites, quia bene aluntur, sicut et in grammaticis dicuntur altilia, quasi alitia: quia bene aluntur. Et rationem dicit Avicenna, dicens quod pueri meliores sunt istimbrae: istimbra enim est calor naturalis bonum faciens appetitum et bonam digestionem. Quale autem sit illud alimentum, determinat subdens, (ibi] om.), Et alia animalia considerantibus, id est, si quis consideret alia animalia foetus suos nutrire lacte. Et ratio est, quia lac tres in se habet substantias, scilicet aquosam quae serum est, terrestrem quae caseus est, pinguedinem sive aeream quae butyrum est: et ex aquosa (habet] est) quod facile influit membra, et ex (casea] caseata) sive terrestri habet quod membra dura et fortia facit, ex (unctuosa] butirosa) habet quod multorum est spirituum, et spiritus confortat, qui sunt instrumenta virtutum et vehicula per corpus. «Est enim spiritus vehiculum virtutis», ut dicit Costabenluce in libro de Differentia spiritus et animae. Hoc etiam probat subdens, (ibi] om.), Et pergentes quibus cura est inducere in pueris (suis] add. scilicet) bellicum habitum. Quod sit autem alimentum, subdit, ibi, Lactis abundans alimentum. Et ponit rationem, (ibi] om.), (Est] om.) maxime familiare corporibus, supple, lactis alimentum. (Rationem] add. huius] ponit Avicenna: quia scilicet lac generatur ex sanguine (menstruo] menstruoso] dealbato in mamillis, ex quo etiam generatur corpus pueri in matrice matris: et ideo familiare dicitur corpori, quia ex eadem materia est utrumque».

¹¹ ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Politica*, VII, 15, ed. BORGNET, p. 741a.

¹² ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Politica*, VII, 15, ed. BORGNET, p. 741a.

¹³ ARISTOTELES LATINUS, *Politica. Translatio Guillelmi de Moerbeka* VII, 17, 1336a3-5, ed. SUSEMIHL, p. 324, ll. 9-11: «Natis autem pueris magnam putare esse differentiam ad corporum potentiam alimentum, quale quoddam utique sit. Apparet autem et per alia animalia considerantibus [...]

¹⁴ Cf. GREGORIUS MAGNUS, *Homiliae in evangelia* XXXVIII, 4, ed. ÉTAIX, p. 362, ll. 64-65: «Altilia enim saginata dicimus; ab eo enim quod est alere, altilia quasi alitia vocamus».

¹⁵ Cf. AVICENNA, *Liber canonis*, I, tr. 1, doct. 4, 5, ed. Lugduni 1522, f. 6ra and f. 17ra.

After these introductory explanations of the text, basically aimed at clarifying the Aristotelian words, Albert presents a series of detailed considerations on the nutritional value of milk, which seem to be an expression of his own opinion. After all, the Greek philosopher merely observes that “the food which has most milk in it is best suited to human body”¹⁶. However, for his part, the Dominican friar engages in a very careful description of the nutritive properties of milk: it “has three properties: watery part, that is whey; solid part, that is cheese; fat part, that is cream”. All these elements, *serum* (the watery part of milk), *caseus* (cheese), and *butyrum* (cream), contribute to the growth and the development of the child’s body. In particular, as “the watery (or liquid) part easily flows in the members of the body, the solid part (cheese) strengthens and invigorates the members, and the fat part (cream) fortifies the spirit”.

In fact, this description is entirely based on the in-depth analysis of the properties of milk carried out by Galen in his *De alimentorum facultatibus*¹⁷. However, the impression is that Albert does not simply look for a *concordantia auctoritatum*, but rather alludes to the Galenic alimentary theories for supporting the Aristotelian position, as he is really convinced of its validity. This hypothesis is confirmed by a very curious fact: analogous considerations on the nutritional value of milk and its properties also occur in Albert the Great’s *Enarrationes in Evangelium Lucae*, that is, in a kind of text completely different from a philosophical commentary, as is the *Commentarii in octo libros politicorum Aristotelis*. In these annotations on the Gospel of Luke, Albert’s principal concern is certainly not to repeat Aristotelian or Galenic nutritional theories, but rather to present an exegetical analysis of the text. Nevertheless, he uses Galen’s language in defining cream as the fat part of milk, in order to explain an Old Testament prophecy about Jesus’ lactation:

“Cream is served in a magnificent bowl [Jdg 5:25]. Indeed, such bowl is the Virgin’s breast, which administered the fat part of milk, that is cream, to nourish Jesus”¹⁸.

Moreover, a few lines later, there is a passage of the exegesis of Luke’s Gospel that really sounds like an implicit quotation from the 7th book of Aristotle’s *Politics*. By explaining an invocation addressed to Jesus, “Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you”¹⁹, Albert comments:

“According to Aristotle, milk is the only food sufficiently provided by nature”²⁰.

Both the explicit reference to Aristotle’s *Politics* (*sicut dicit Philosophus*) and the similarities with Galen’s description of the nutritional properties of milk, adopted by Albert for commenting on it, provide at least three suggestions concerning Albert’s working strategy.

Firstly, the *Commentarii in octo libros politicorum Aristotelis* was likely composed before or in the same years as the *Enarrationes* on the Gospel of Luke. Secondly, the fact that in an exegetical work, Albert the Great alludes to the specialist description of milk and its nutritional values, more largely presented in his commentary on the *Politics*, indicates – I presume – that

¹⁶ ARIST., *Politica*, VII, 17, 1336a6-7.

¹⁷ CLAUDIUS GALENUS, *De alimentorum facultatibus* III, 14, ed. Venetiis 1490; eng. transl., *On the Properties of Foodstuffs* (*De alimentorum facultatibus*), ed. POWELL, pp. 123-131.

¹⁸ ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Enarrationes in Evangelium Lucae*, 11, v. 27, ed. BORGNET, p. 172a: «In phiala principum obtulit butyrum. Phiala enim ista uber Virginis est: quod propinavit pinguedinem lactis, quae est butyrum, in Christi nutrimentum».

¹⁹ *Lc.* 11, 27.

²⁰ ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Enarrationes in Evangelium Lucae*, 11, v. 27, ed. BORGNET, 172b: «Lac autem, sicut dicit Philosophus, solum est quod sufficienter naturam praeeparat ad nutrimentum».

he embraces these alimentary theories. Otherwise, his working strategy would appear unintelligible: for what reason would the Dominican theologian refer to a series of Aristotelian (and Galenic) considerations on the nutritional properties of milk and cream in his exegetical writings, if he did not share them? Thirdly – and this is a significant aspect for our purpose – these nutritional suggestions are perfectly coherent with Albert’s view of the close relationship between soul and body. In fact, an adequate nourishment of body since birth directly benefits the soul, namely the non-corporeal part of humans. This conviction even gets to affect Albert’s interpretation of the prophecy about Jesus’ lactation: the Dominican theologian seems to be relating the divine nature of Jesus also with the adequate constitution of his body.

By continuing our punctual analysis of Albert’s interpretation of child nourishment, we can stress other two elements that support the hypothesis that in his commentary on the *Politics* the Dominican theologian does not simply intend to blindly repeat the Aristotelian arguments, but presents his own opinion here.

Firstly, Albert decides to justify Galen’s definition of cream as the fat part that restores the spirit, by recurring to an adage from Costa Ben Luca’s *De differentia spiritus et animae*: “indeed, spirit is the vehicle of virtue” (*est enim spiritus vehiculum virtutis*)²¹. Secondly, he *en passant* makes a remark on the origin of breast milk, through a reference to the description of the passage from the menstrual blood to the breast-milk contained in Avicenna’s *Liber Canonis*:

“[...] milk is generated in the mother’s breast from her whitened menstrual blood. Therefore, child’s body is generated from the same matter of the mother’s body”²².

Albert’s analysis thus combines different sources: the starting point is the Aristotelian text, which is explicated by Galen’s alimentary theories, which, in turn, are ultimately clarified through a quotation from *De differentia spiritus et animae* and a general reference to Avicenna’s *Liber Canonis*. The impression is that Albert shares both Costa Ben Luca’s and Avicenna’s opinion, as is demonstrated by the use of similar remarks also in some of his other writings. Otherwise, this non-required digression concerning this particular passage of the commentary on the *Politics* could not be explained.

On the other hand, as well-know, Albert’s working strategy frequently entails the collection of different quotations, but this does not always mean that he aims to support their content. In this case, it must be said that Costa Ben Luca’s adage *spiritus vehiculum virtutis* is very frequently quoted by Albert, not only in the philosophical commentaries, but also – as in the previous example – in his exegetical works. For instance, in the *Enarrationes in Evangelium Lucae*, the idea that spirit is the “vehicle of virtue” is always cited both to define the function of the Holy Spirit and to describe a physiological dynamism, in a way very similar to that of the commentary on the *Politics*:

“It is not wrong to claim that a tunic protects us from something coming from the outside. However, it must also be said that [a tunic] protects something staying inside, i.e., the spirit, as vehicle of virtue”²³.

²¹ Cf. COSTA BEN LUCA, *De differentia spiritus et animae*, 2, ed. BARACH, p. 125. The English translation is mine.

²² ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Politica*, VII, 15, p. 746a (Berlin SBPK, Lat. fol. 879, f. 90vb). See AVICENNA, *Liber canonis*, I, tr. 1, doct. 5, ed. Lugduni 1522, f. 9rb.

²³ ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Enarrationes in Evangelium Lucae*, 9, v. 3-5, ed. BORGNET, p. 608b: «Si autem dicatur, quod tunica est contra defendens ab extrinseco, non est contradicendum: sed tamen etiam hoc est verum, quod continet digerens intrinsecum, et continet spiritum qui est vehiculum virtutum».

The “spirit” is thus considered as a sort of “life-force” that completely affects humans, starting from their physiological aspects, e.g. the nourishment, to their “spiritual awareness”. Then, this use of Costa Ben Luca’s principle is evidently in line with the arguments concerning the reciprocal relationship between body and soul advanced by Albert in his numerous writings devoted to the origin and the nature of the soul²⁴.

There is ultimately another very intriguing aspect of Albert’s reworking of Aristotle’s theory of child nourishment that needs to be examined. Albert also wants to provide a historical example that substantiates what he is claiming to the 13th-century reader. In this regard he proposes the following reference to the Frisians:

“This is evident among some people, in particular, among the Frisians. Because of their diet rich in milk, they are high, strong, and suited to the war”²⁵.

In fact, in the same years in which the commentary on Aristotle’s *Politics* was composed, the people of Frisians were involved in a bloody war against the counts of Holland²⁶. Presumably, their highness (*proceritas*) and strength (*fortitudo*) are so well known to his contemporaries that the Dominican master considered it inevitable to refer to them as the most illustrative example of the benefits of a diet based on milk in childhood.

This historical reference, combined with the previous reconstruction of the sources, seems to remove any doubt: albeit on the basis of the Aristotelian convictions and significantly influenced by a number of other philosophical and scientific traditions, in commenting on the end of the seventh book of Aristotle’s *Politics*, Albert proposes his own alimentary observations. Moreover, this topic could be considered as a fascinating point of view for observing Albert’s comprehensive view of the soul-body problem.

3. Musical education: Pythagoras’ De tripudio and the problem of the sound of the flute

A second angle from which the impact of Aristotelian pedagogy on Albert the Great’s psychology could be examined is musical education. Unlike the case of child nourishment, this aspect is not too easy to explore, as Aristotle himself recurrently has some hesitations concerning the role played by music in the context of children’s and youth’s educational activities²⁷. Accordingly, Albert is very cautious in approaching this topic. For instance, when the Greek philosopher observes that playing and listening to music is comparable to the experience of dreaming or inebriation²⁸, the Dominican theologian promptly confirms this with a long quotation on the inebriating power of wine taken from *The Book of Proverbs*:

²⁴ See, among the others, ANZULEWICZ 2006, pp. 9-34; RUNGGLADIER 2010; HELLMEIER 2011, pp. 45-288.

²⁵ ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Politica*, VII, 15, ed. BORGNET, p. 746a (Berlin SBPK, Lat. fol. 879, f. 90vb): «Gentes autem in quibus maxime probatur, Frisones sunt, qui propter multum alimentum lactis, et proceri et fortes sunt et directe procedentes, in corpore bellicum habitum gestantes».

²⁶ See VRIES 2001, pp. 538-549.

²⁷ See, among the others, SÖRBOM 1994, pp. 37-46; WOERTHER 2008; DESTREE 2013, pp. 316-320.

²⁸ ARIST., *Politica*, VIII, 5, 1339a13-20, p. 2124: “Concerning music there are some questions which we have already raised; these we may now resume and carry further; and our remarks will serve as a prelude to this or any other discussion of the subject. It is not easy to determine the nature of music, or why anyone should have a knowledge of it. Shall we say, for the sake of amusement and relaxation, like sleep or drinking, which are not good in themselves, but are pleasant, and at the same time ‘make care to cease’, as Euripides says?”

“Give inebriant drink to anyone who is perishing, and wine to the embittered: when they drink, they will forget their misery, and think no more of their troubles”. Here inebriation means a quantity not exceeding a bottle of wine, which represents a unit of measure. This condition obscures the mind and produces insanity”²⁹.

Then, when Aristotle observes that listening to music is frequently accompanied by dance (*saltatio*)³⁰, Albert the Great proves to be quite an “expert” in the field:

“When Aristotle talks about “dance”, he means “choral dance”, as well as in the *De Tripudio* Pythagoras describes “dance” as bodily movements expressing musical rhythms”³¹.

As frequently happens, when one attempts to identify the sources behind Albert’s conjectures, the authorship of certain quotations is really difficult to discern. This is the case regarding the explicit reference to the Pseudo-Pythagorean treatise *De tripudio*. In fact, this text is never mentioned in *Aristoteles Latinus* and does not even appear in the sources that usually influence Albert’s arguments. Moreover, this is not the only reference to this text in Albert’s writings: in the *Enarrationes in Evangelium Lucae*, the Dominican theologian effectively provides the same definition of *saltatio*:

“‘Dance’ is to be intended as ‘choral dance’. According to Pythagoras choral dance is a sort of game where musical rhythms are represented by bodily movements”³².

In fact, the combination of music, the inebriating power of wine, and the description of dance as the bodily expression of rhythm do not seem to reflect Albert’s condemnation of musical education, but rather to be the recognition of the great potentialities of this particular liberal art: listening and playing music is such a deep experience that it appears to be an “irrational rapture”, and through dance it involves the whole person, i.e. the unity of soul and body. After all – as we have already stressed – this key concept of Albert’s anthropology seems to underpin his interpretation of Aristotle’s pedagogy.

In any case, the abovementioned reference to the Pythagorean idea of *tripudium* contained in the *Enarrationes in Evangelium Lucae* is not aimed at criticizing dance, but, on the contrary, to comment on the Pharisees’ reluctant attitude: “We have piped unto you, and yet have not danced”³³. To stay with biblical metaphors, it can be said that the unforgivable sin of the Pharisees lies in not having danced.

Albert’s subsequent remarks effectively move in the same direction. Aristotle once again emphasizes the corporeal and spiritual power of the music: “music conduces to excellence, on the ground that it can form our mind and habituate us to true pleasure as our bodies are made

²⁹ ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Politica*, VIII, 3, ed. BORNET, p. 773b-774a (Berlin SBPK, Lat. fol. 879, f. 94vb): «Date siceram moerentibus, et vinum his qui amaro sunt animo: bibant, et obliviscantur egestatis suae, et doloris sui non recordentur amplius. Ebrietas autem vocatur hic, non quae excedit brian, id est, mensuram, quia oppilat et opprimit et inducit insaniam». Cf. *Prov.*, 31, 6-7.

³⁰ ARIST., *Politica*, VIII, 5, 1339a20-22, p. 2124 (with modifications): “And for this end humans also appoint music, and make use of all three alike – sleep, drinking, music – to which some add dancing”.

³¹ ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Politica*, VIII, 3, ed. BORNET, p. 774a (Berlin SBPK, Lat. fol. 879, f. 94vb): «Saltationem vocat tripudium in choreis et (saltibus] saltis), quando, sicut dicit Pythagoras in libro de Tripudio, gesticulatione corporis exprimuntur modulationes musicae».

³² ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Enarrationes in Evangelium Lucae*, 7, 32, ed. BORNET, p. 494a: «Saltus enim hic vocatur tripudium. Tripudium autem secundum Pythagoram vocatur ludus, quo artificialiter decenti motu corporis et membrorum, modulatio musicorum repraesentatur».

³³ *Mt.*, 11, 17.

by gymnastic to be of a certain character”³⁴. And the Dominican friar introduces an interesting analogy between the role played by gymnastics in strengthening the body and the music as spiritual exercise:

“Physical training improves quality of life, as physical movement frees the body of tension, stress, and laziness. In the same way, listening to or playing music conduces to a virtuous life and to the joy of a good conscience”³⁵.

Albert justifies these considerations by mentioning Augustine’s *De musica*³⁶ and the ancient Stoic and Epicurean doctrines on the harmony of natural music. As in the case of the child nourishment, this mosaic of sources and quotations denotes the accurate work of the Dominican theologian, who does not simply intend to follow the Aristotelian reasoning in general, but rather to explore it in all its details, as stated programmatically in the prologue to *Physics*.

The in-depth analysis of the different musical instruments (*quibus instrumentis sit utendum*)³⁷ is very representative in this sense. As is well known, Aristotle particularly criticizes the use of the flute, as this was generally played in the Bacchic rites³⁸. Albert seems to share this view, because – as he notes – this is a practice also in his day (*consuetudo quae usque hodie perseverat*)³⁹. This is an interesting historical detail: probably Albert does not refer to real pagan rites, but rather to the troubadour tradition. Then, by quoting a passage from Augustine’s *De civitate Dei*, the Dominican theologian seems to relate instrumental music in general to the libido and to the dance of prostitutes⁴⁰. Moreover, Albert the Great expresses the same conviction also in some passages of his commentaries on the Holy Scripture, in which the sound of the flute is related to concupiscence or even to adultery. For example, in the treatise *Super prophetas minores*, he notes: “The sound of the flute relates a song with worldly concupiscence” (*pro fistula cantus inordinatus mundanae concupiscentiae*)⁴¹; or, in the commentary on *Job*, he says: “they are enthralled by the sound of the flute, and therefore the adultery is committed: the power of sensuality affects mind, pleasure prevails” (*sibilo fistularum clausi sunt et adulterium perpetratum est, et sic vires delectationis carnalis enervant vim mentis, et vincit delectatio*)⁴².

On the other hand, in a very specific way (Aristotle does not cover this aspect), the Dominican theologian focuses on a particular musical instrument, that seems to be the only instrument taken into account in his view of musical education: the “choir” (*chorus*). This is a

³⁴ ARIST., *Politica* VIII, 5, 1339a23-25, p. 2124. Cf. ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Politica*, VIII, 3, ed. BORNET, p. 774a: «Tamquam potentem, sicut exsecutiva quale aliquod corpus efficere, et musicam morem qualem quemdam facere».

³⁵ ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Politica*, VIII, 3, ed. BORNET, p. 774a (Berlin SBPK, Lat. fol. 879, f. 94vb): «[...] (id] hoc) est, sicut exercitativa ad bonam qualitatem convertit corpus, eo quod per motum eventat ipsum a superfluis fumis et humoribus et pigrizia: ita musica convertit ad bonum morem assuescentem, in musicis scilicet, gaudere recte».

³⁶ ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Politica*, VIII, 3, ed. BORNET, p. 774a (Berlin SBPK, Lat. fol. 879, f. 94vb): «Et ideo Augustinus in libro de Musica»; Cf. AUGUSTINUS, *De musica*, VI, 14, n. 44-45, ed. JACOBSSON, pp. 224-225.

³⁷ Cf. ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Politica*, VIII, 5, ed. BORNET, pp. 791a-794b (Berlin SBPK, Lat. fol. 879, f. 97rb).

³⁸ Cf. ARIST., *Politica*, VIII, 6, 1341a20-24, p. 2124: “[...] 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”.

³⁹ ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Politica*, VIII, 5, ed. BORNET, p. 792b (Berlin SBPK, Lat. fol. 879, f. 97va)

⁴⁰ Cf. ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Politica*, VIII, 5, ed. BORNET, p. 792a (Berlin SBPK, Lat. fol. 879, 97va). Augustine condemns *meretriculae scenicae* in several passages of his works. However, I have not been able to find an exact quotation in the 10th book of *De civitate Dei*.

⁴¹ Cf. ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Super prophetas minores. Zacharias*, 11, 16, ed. BORNET, p. 590b.

⁴² Cf. ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Super Iob*, 40, 13, ed. WEIS, pp. 478-479.

sort of ancient version of organ constituted by a series of tubes (*fistula*)⁴³. An even more detailed description of this particularly harmonious instrument recurs also in Albert's commentary on the Gospel of Luke:

“Choir is a musical instrument, similar to the trumpet. It is composed by many pipes for producing different tones, which are harmonized in one symphony with balanced treble and bass”⁴⁴.

As in the case of child nourishment, there are a number of elements suggesting that Albert aims to present his own opinion about the music here as well: the explanation of the Aristotelian sentences through other sources (for example, Augustine's *De musica*), the concordance with passages from his commentaries on the Holy Scripture, and the reference to current events, (for example, the consideration on the use of the flute in the troubadour tradition or the accurate description of the choir). Moreover, by commenting on the role played by the music in the children and youth education, the Dominican theologian, once again, works within his general view of soul-body relationship. The comparison between gymnastic and musical education is representative in this regard.

4. For concluding

The analysis of two examples, i.e., child nourishment and musical education, is obviously not sufficient to shape exact contours of Albert's “pedagogy”, as numerous other aspects of the education of children and the youth should be taken into account as well. However, these examples allow us to give an answer to the two questions posed in the introduction of my study, and then to make some remarks on Albert the Great's working strategy.

Firstly, we asked ourselves in which way Albert the Great interprets Aristotle's pedagogical suggestions. Albert's first concern certainly is to clarify Aristotle's text by explaining the meaning of terms or sentences. After all, his principle “to make Aristotle intelligible to the Latins”⁴⁵ applies to both the Aristotelian physical writings and the *Politics*⁴⁶. On the other hand, the Dominican theologian uses some Aristotelian sentences to present his own convictions on child education. To this end, he combines different philosophical and theological sources, which, moreover, he mentions also in his exegetical works.

Accordingly, we can ask ourselves whether it is correct to speak of Albert the Great's “theory of education”. Indeed, expressions such as “theory of education” or “pedagogy” are very

⁴³ ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Politica*, VIII, 4, ed. BORGNET, p. 786a (Berlin SBPK, Lat. fol. 879, 96va): «Chorus est instrumentum, in quo multae fistulae in unum concentum et concordiam modulantur». On the *chorus* as musical instrument see, among the others, DALLA LIBERA 1956; BARBIERI 2013, pp. 1-28. I am very grateful to the music critic, Enrico Parola (*Corriere della Sera*), for these bibliographical suggestions.

⁴⁴ ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Enarrationes in Evangelium Lucae*, 15, 25-27, ed. BORGNET, p. 409a: «Chorus autem est instrumentum factum sicut cornu, in quo multae sunt fistulae diversis sonis in unam symphoniam modulatae, et gravibus et acutis sonis conjunctas».

⁴⁵ ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Physica*, I, 1, 1, ed. HOSSFELD, p. 1, ll. 43-54: «Cum autem tres sint partes essentielles philosophiae realis, quae, inquam, philosophia non causatur in nobis ab opere nostro, sicut causatur scientia moralis, sed potius ipsa causatur ab opere naturae in nobis, quae partes sunt naturalis sive physica et metaphysica et mathematica, nostra intentio est omnes dictas partes facere Latinis intelligibiles. Inter partes vero illas prima quidem secundum ordinem rei est, quae est universalis de ente secundum quod ens, quod non concipitur cum motu et materia sensibili secundum se et secundum sua principia nec secundum esse nec secundum rationem».

⁴⁶ ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Politica*, VIII, 6, ed. BORGNET, p. 803b (SBPK, Lat. fol. 879, f. 99va): «Ecce hunc librum cum aliis philosophicis et moralibus exposui ad utilitatem studentium».

difficult to apply to 13th-century philosophical and theological milieu⁴⁷. Albert the Great, as Dominican friar and bishop, presumably does not take a “pedagogy” or “theory of education” different from that taught in the Holy Scriptures and in the Patristic tradition into account. On the other hand, the profound analogies between certain passages of the commentary on the *Politics* and sentences from Albert’s biblical commentaries, approximately composed in the same years, demonstrates that the Dominican theologian not only intends to present his own convictions on educational activity, but also to place these suggestions in a broad and more comprehensive view of the human nature and, more precisely, of the soul-body relationship. As we have emphasized, Albert’s considerations related to the nutritional properties of the milk, the role played by dance in the musical education, or even the consequence of the use of the flute, seem to be aimed at reinforcing his opinion about the close interrelation between soul and body: an accurate education of the body, also in its more material aspects, may be intended as a concrete support in forming human soul. After all, according to the Dominican theologian, the nerves and the flesh that constitute the human body are not to be intended as similar to those characterizing animal bodies, as they are profoundly molded by the spiritual part (rational soul)⁴⁸.

Taking account of these conclusions, Albert’s commentary on the *Politics* ceases to appear a less stimulating text constituted by a series of misinterpretations. On the contrary, the text becomes a wealth of information on Albert’s view of society and a fascinating point of view for reading one of the crucial problems of his philosophical reflection.

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⁴⁷ For a recent and comprehensive overview on the philosophy of education in the Middle Ages, see GARY 2021.

⁴⁸ ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *De natura et origine animae*, I, 6, ed. GEYER, p. 15, ll. 16-27: «Et ideo sicut vegetabilis in plantis imprimit in naturam et ideo natura in vegetabilis agit ad formam vegetabilis sibi impressam, et sicut sensibilis in animalibus imprimit in vegetabilem in naturam ut agat ad formam sensibilis, ita in homine rationalis natura imprimit in sensibilem et per sensibilem imprimit in vegetabilem et per hanc imprimit in naturam, ut omnis actio corporis ad formam rationabilis perficiatur. Propter quod carnes hominis et ossa et huiusmodi non conveniunt in forma et specie et ratione carnibus et nervis animalium».

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