

An Aristotelian perspective on the relationship between aesthetics and law: using the Greek social imaginary in legal education

This research explores how classical Greek philosophy, particularly the ideas of Aristotle, can help reshape modern legal education by incorporating ethical and aesthetic dimensions into the study and practice of law. Over the past few decades, there has been a growing trend to expand legal education beyond the strict confines of technical legal knowledge to include the so-called “human factor”. This shift has led to the development of movements like “Law and Literature” (L&L) and “Law and Humanities” (L&H), both emphasizing the importance of integrating literary and artistic works into the study of law. However, critics argue that these interdisciplinary approaches lack a solid theoretical foundation that would allow them to coexist with traditional legal education. The research presented here aims to address this gap by proposing an Aristotelian framework — particularly his concept of *phronesis* (practical wisdom) — as a way to integrate ethical, political, and aesthetic thinking into legal education in a coherent and meaningful way.

At the core of the research is the idea of Aristotle’s concept of *phronesis*, being the key to understanding how lawyers can be trained to think critically and responsibly about the law. *Phronesis* is not just about following legal rules but it also involves making ethical choices, understanding human relationships, and engaging with the complexities of society. Aristotle’s works, especially the *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Politics*, and *Poetics*, offer a broader view of practical wisdom that includes emotional and imaginative engagement — aspects that are often overlooked in modern legal education, which tends to focus heavily on reason and technical skills. By combining ethics, reasoning, and imagination, *phronesis* offers a more holistic approach to legal practice, one that emphasizes judgment, responsibility, and the ability to understand the deeper human and social dimensions of law.

The research also argues that the ancient Greek understanding of law and justice can provide valuable insights into contemporary political and legal reality of contemporary democratic societies and so it improves the *phronetic* part of legal knowledge. Even though ancient Greece did not have a formalized legal profession like we do today, Greek philosophers and writers deeply engaged with questions about justice (*dike*), political systems (*politeia*), and the role of law in society. This approach aims to revive these ancient insights and demonstrate how they can contribute to a more ethical and human-centered approach to legal education. By looking at Greek myths, tragedies, and other cultural expressions, we can uncover a rich source of lessons about human behavior, social responsibility, and the moral dilemmas that lawyers often face in their practice. This approach, rooted in the Greek “social imaginary” could enrich the way we think about law and legal practice today.

The research is not only theoretical but also practical. It aims to provide a framework for how legal education can be restructured to include competencies necessary to deal with law, such as imagination, ethics, and political thinking. Therefore, besides examining the methodological aspects of integrating *phronesis* into legal science, another part of the projects is related to exploring certain Greek narratives to help lawyers develop better judgment, more ethically informed decision-making, and a deeper understanding of their social responsibilities.

This project seeks to integrate legal science with other disciplines such as humanities and political philosophy. Therefore it stands in line with “Law and Literature” and “Law and Humanities” movements that grow in popularity also in Polish academia.