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CONSIDERATIONS CONCERNING COMMUNITY IN PLATO'S REPUBLIC AND ARISTOTLE'S POLITICS

CONSIDERAÇÕES A RESPEITO DA COMUNIDADE NA REPÚBLICA DE PLATÃO E NA POLÍTICA DE ARISTÓTELES

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ABSTRACT:

The article comparatively analyzes the political thought presented in Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Politics* regarding the notions of community, property, justice, and government. The constitution of the city in *Politics* diverges from the communitarian idea in the *Republic*, where families and property are supposed to be communal. The conceptions of justice and property also differ: although both consider justice essential in the constitution of the community and government, Aristotle criticizes Plato's analogy between parts of the soul and parts of the city. Regarding government, Aristotle appears indebted to Plato's conception but differs in believing that a majority of virtuous individuals decides better than a single, even excellent, individual.

KEYWORDS:

Plato, Aristotle, Politics, Justice, Community.

RESUMO:

O artigo analisa comparativamente o pensamento político exposto na *República* de Platão e na *Política* de Aristóteles no que tange às noções de comunidade, propriedade, justiça e governo. A constituição da cidade, na *Política*, dissona da ideia de comunitarismo da *República* em que famílias e bens devem ser comuns. As concepções de justiça e de propriedade também diferem: ainda que para ambos a justiça seja imprescindível na constituição da comunidade e do governo, a analogia platônica entre partes da alma e partes da cidade é criticada por Aristóteles. Sobre o governo, Aristóteles parece devedor da concepção

platônica, mas difere por pensar que uma maioria de homens bons decide melhor que um só homem, ainda que excelente.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE:

Platão, Aristóteles, Política, Justiça, Comunidade.

1 Introduction

It is a fact that the entire political concept encompasses that which is in some way shared by people. Thus, politics is an art of the communal. Things that are common to various individuals form a larger whole, and these interconnected individuals constitute a community. Politics can address matters concerning the community. For the purposes of defining this work, the community is the collective of individuals forming an organism, a mass.

The objective of this work is to produce a comparative analysis of how each of the two major seminal authors of Ancient Greece approaches and characterizes the community of people in their main works related to politics. We will begin by analyzing the way in which Plato succinctly addresses the community in the *Republic*. To address the community in the *Republic*, it is necessary to explore the formation, virtue (in its various forms: wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice), the form of government, and the education of the perfect city, along with the relationship of these characteristics to the narrower scope of the individual as Plato conceived it. The approach will always be guided by the central notion of justice (*dikaiosunê*), a key theme in the *Republic*.

Following that, we will proceed with a brief analysis of how Aristotle investigates the concept of community in *Politics*. To do so, it is necessary to explore the concept of justice, Aristotle's critique of Platonic thought regarding the structural similarity between the soul and the city, the communal aspects of children and women, goods and properties, and, above all, the forms of government.

2 Plato's View on Community

To understand the concept of community in the *Republic*, it is necessary to consider: i) the reflection undertaken by Plato between, on one hand, the harmony sought between the parts of an

individual's soul, and on the other hand, the desired harmony among the elements that make up a city; ii) the notion of justice as virtue; iii) the issue of private property; iv) the conception of education and the types of soul; and iv) the analysis of forms of government. This is what we will present in this chapter.

2.1 The Individual and Communal Just

The central question posed by Plato in the *Republic* concerns the investigation into the definition of justice (*dikaiosunê*). Throughout Book I, various attempts to define justice are made by Socratic interlocutors, such as "returning what one has received" (*Rep*., 331d) or "the advantage of the stronger" (*Rep*. 339a), and to all of them, Socrates will present refutations through cases recognized as just but that do not align with the proposed definitions.

In the quest to define what is just and unjust in the realm of the individual, it is necessary to investigate in what sense, on a larger scale, namely that of the city, justice and injustice are spoken of. In larger things, it seems easier to identify their elements. Moreover, Plato understands that there would be an analogy between the soul of the individual and the city, as if the latter were an expanded version of the former (Pradeau, 1997). Similarly, having found what is sought in the larger scope of the city, the smaller scope of the individual will be found by analogy (*Rep*. 369a):

> The just order and the well-being of the state depend on individual just order. The emphasis Plato places on education indicates that individual virtue presupposes good legislation. When the virtue of the individual disintegrates, it takes the order of the state with it. The well-being of the individual and the progress of the state are interdependent. (Ricken, 2008, p. 87).

Thus, as explained by Bolzani Filho (2006, p. XXVI) in the introduction to the *Republic*: "the transition from the investigation of justice in the individual to the investigation of justice in the city establishes an indissoluble link between individual conduct and action in the city, between politics and ethics." In initiating the investigation of justice in the city, Plato, through the words of Socrates, asserts that the reason for the existence of cities is the necessity individuals have because they are not self-sufficient (*Rep*. 369b). Individuals need food, housing, clothing, etc. To achieve this, farmers, shoemakers, weavers, etc. must come together and exchange the products of their labor, as one person cannot excel at such diverse tasks.

Moreover, the thesis regarding the unity of each individual's function as a requirement for their excellent performance will be crucial to the definition of justice, as we will see later: "each citizen must be directed to the work for which he has a natural inclination, so that, applying himself to his own unique work, each becomes one and not many" (*Rep.* 423d). For now, it is enough to establish that each professional should dedicate themselves only to one function and not interfere in the functions of others.

2.2 The Just as Virtue

The conclusion of Book I presented by Socrates already provides relevant clues in shaping the definition of justice as a virtue of the soul (*Rep.* 352-353). However, the definition of justice will only be found in Book IV. There, Socrates begins by affirming that the goal to be pursued was a city where everyone would be happy (*Rep.* 420b) and that, for this, the city should possess four virtues: courage, temperance, wisdom, and justice. If wisdom is presented as a certain type of judiciousness in decisions concerning the city as a whole, a virtue primarily required in the ruling class, courage, on the other hand, is the predominant virtue in the guardian class, defined as preserving the correct opinion about things that pose a danger.

On the other hand, temperance, which, being the control of certain pleasures, makes the individual who possesses it master of oneself, is presented as a kind of harmony that, on an individual level, must occur within the human soul between the best part, reason (*logos*), and the inferior parts, the desires of appetite (*epithumía*) and spirit (*thumos*). In the context of the city, such harmony must occur between the ruling class, the guardian class, and the artisan class. For there to be harmony, just as rulers must direct and advise the other classes, reason must direct and advise desires.

Unlike courage, temperance, and wisdom, justice does not receive a new characterization; instead, it is said that it had been discussed from the beginning of the work without knowing specifically that it was the subject: "Plato, in Socrates' voice, sets his undertaking in motion, describing in detail the good city and separating which part of it is the description of wisdom, courage, and temperance. Having done this, it will be possible to recognize that the remaining part is justice" (Silva, 2019, p. 111). Thus, the initial question about each person performing only one function in the city, according to their condition and nature, and not meddling in the functions of others, is revisited (*Rep.* 433b2). In a good city, "each one, child and woman or slave, free man and artisan, or ruler and ruled, since they are one, should perform

the task that is theirs and not meddle in the tasks of others" (*Rep.* 433d). Ultimately, justice is defined as "each one possessing what is his own and doing what is assigned to him" (*Rep.* 434a).

2.3 Private Property

The notion of "possessing what is one's own," however, requires an important observation: there seem to be few things that would actually be someone's private property. In the more radical ideas of communitarianism, as seen in the *Republic*, private property is practically nonexistent. The justification for this is clear and reasonable: "if they were to acquire their own land, dwelling, and money, they would become householders [...] and would become hostile owners instead of allies of the other citizens" (*Rep.* 417a3). In the *Republic*'s conception, both wealth and poverty hinder virtue: wealth makes citizens idle and negligent (*Rep.* 421d), and poverty results in products derived from their work being inferior due to a lack of suitable materials and tools (*Rep.* 421e).

Men, women, and children are also considered "communal." In fact, quite differently from his contemporaries and predecessors, Plato, through Socrates, will assert that women, concerning the tasks they must perform in the city, will not differ at all from men: just as there are women who by nature are suited for the highest offices, there are others who by nature are not, exactly as it happens among men. The difference, therefore, lies not in gender but in the souls of each, regardless of whether they are men or women (*Rep.* 454e - 457b).

Well, not everything is rosy. In 459d, the reader, who is our contemporary, will certainly be shocked by the idea of discrimination and eugenics:

> It is necessary that [...] the best have relations with the best as often as possible, and conversely, the more mediocre with the more mediocre; and that the children of the former be raised, but not those of the latter, if the flock is to be as excellent as possible. The realization of all this should only be known to the rulers themselves, if they want the guardians as a whole to remain without rebellion.

Those who are born with any "defect" (*Rep.* 460c 2) or are "less endowed" should be kept away from common society and hidden in a "secret and unknown place" (*Rep.* 460c 3). Furthermore, all children would be raised by the community, and thus, everyone would be the child of everyone, and there

would be no genetic distinctions in preferences and affections. People belong to the community above all and for everything.

2.4 Citizen Formation

Citizens would undergo an educational process starting in early childhood, a process that aims to educate both the body and the mind. Regarding education, each citizen would be instructed to perform in the best possible way an activity, namely, the activity for which they were naturally better endowed, which is fully in line with the definition of justice seen above. During the formative process, based on the signs detected in the citizen's soul, they would be classified and directed towards a specific field of public life: "it is the moment of the emergence of perhaps the most important notion in the dialogue, as it is the key to making the city viable: education. The unified and harmonious city depends on the proper education that artisans, guardians, and philosophers will receive" (Bolzani Filho, 2006, p. XXIX).

Artisans would constitute that class of people whose souls are predominantly appetitive (*epithumía*), and for whom the pleasures of taste and touch are always sought. Guardians, in whom the soul is predominantly spirited (*thumos*) and, therefore, most suited for the virtue of courage, would be provided with physical education for the full development of the body, as well as music for the development of the soul (*Rep.* 376e). For this class, honor is always pursued, and the object of greatest aversion is everything involving humiliation and contempt: "keen in their perception, quick in the pursuit of those whose presence they have perceived, and strong, if they have to engage in a fight against him after seizing him" (*Rep.* 375a): these are the main characteristics of the guardians that must be developed through education. Additionally, they must be impetuous with others and gentle with their own. Interestingly, the teaching of music serves for the proper development of gentleness (*Rep.* 401d).

However, if their soul is of the rational type, it will culminate, at the age of fifty, in a phase where the citizen is ready for a supreme sacrifice: giving up oneself to offer the gifts of their wisdom for the realization of the collective ideal. For this class, whose souls are predominantly guided by reason (*logos*) and are therefore more suited for the governance of the city, after fifty years of learning, it is time to give back and ensure the perpetuity of a system based on the will to achieve a higher ethical ideal provided by wisdom:

> The task that falls to us, as founders, is to compel the best natures to reach the learning that, in what we were talking about a little while ago, we said was the best of all, that is, to see the good and make that journey upwards, and after they have made it and have sufficiently contemplated the good, we must not allow them what we allow today [...]. Let them stay there, I said, and not wish to come down again (*Rep.* 519c).

This distinction between the best natures and the different types of soul is presented based on the myth that, at the moment of soul generation, the god "mixed gold in all those who were capable of ruling, and so they are valuable, and silver in all those who were the auxiliaries of those rulers, but iron and bronze in farmers and other artisans" (*Rep.* 415a).

2.5 Types of Government

Plato, through the words of Socrates, questions whether following the rulers is always a just act even if the laws are unjust and only benefit the rulers themselves (Botelho, 2021). Until reaching the tyrant and tyranny, governments will undergo degenerations. Reinforcing his viewpoint, Socrates adds to his argument:

> So, Thrasymachus, I said, no one else in any position of command, as far as he is a ruler, has in view and imposes what is advantageous for himself, but what is advantageous for the governed and for whom he provides service. Turning his gaze to this and to what is advantageous and suitable for that person, he says and does everything he says and does (*Rep.* 342e).

According to Annas (*apud* Botelho, 2021, p. 36), what is just must always be analyzed within the moral realm of the political community, with injustice being "the violation of people's rights or the breaking of laws already recognized by the political body. [...] This reform requires correcting past mistakes: distribution of wealth, honors, and goods made according to fundamental moral requirements."

In the final lines of Chapter IV, Plato names the type of government that has been outlined so far as either a monarchy, if there is only one ruler, or an aristocracy if there are many rulers. He asserts that "if this form [of government] is good and right, the others are bad and flawed in relation to the administration of cities and the formation of the souls of individuals, with four kinds of vices affecting them" (*Rep.* 449a).

Regarding the established forms of government, the degeneration that originates from the enrichment and strengthening of the less educated or virtuous (*Rep.* 564), who will become oligarchs and,

through a succession of corruptions, progress towards tyranny, begins as democrats. The liberality and excesses of democracy are the breeding ground for tyranny (*Rep.* 562c). The discourse formally takes on the narrative of decay, of a progressive degradation, starting with a just and perfect city and gradually deteriorating into "timocracy, oligarchy, and democracy, until it reaches the extreme perversion, the maximum deterioration, represented by tyranny, the nadir of political life" (Oliveira, 2014, p. 40).

Here, we enter a dangerous territory for current democratic ideas, as Plato's discourse clearly portrays it as a form of government decay. However, it seems important to analyze the critique presented in the *Republic* so that, as Oliveira (2014, p. 29) states: "we reach a more mature and philosophically less naive understanding of the democratic phenomenon, beyond the merely apologetic and laudatory considerations that usually dominate conventional discourses on the subject."

Plato's argument, whose conclusion asserts that democracy is a corrupted form of government, has as one of its premises that, to be just, one must know what justice is. To discover what it is, we need those whose souls are nourished by gold, the wise, to constitute "a rigorously educated intellectual elite at the forefront of public affairs, which [...] will have knowledge of the true moral order that should guide the functioning of political life [...] leading to the necessary proposition of sophocracy as the only legitimate regime" (Oliveira, 2014, p. 33). Therefore, it would not be beneficial for the city if the majority of people whose souls are predominantly appetitive and, at best, impetuous, dominate and manage the city, as they are not competent for it. If they were to do so, Plato envisions a democratic regime that is nothing more than an ungoverned ship (*Rep.* 488a).

At that historical moment, democracy was associated with poverty, murder, and exile. Consequently, the distribution of offices was done blindly, without merit. The criticism continues, and beyond the theatricality of the formation of democratic constitutions, there are also deeper critiques of the freedoms and liberality that shape them. In this view of democracy, permissiveness, with its libertarian nuances and shades, allows each individual to freely choose what pleases them the most but generates tragic consequences for the community to the extent that its citizens no longer respect any source of authority. Moreover, tyranny stems from democracy, and "from the most extreme freedom arises the greatest and most severe slavery" (*Rep.* 564a).

This quarrel about democracy is well-known and traditional, and its rationale is based on a notion that generates much more controversy than it should, as it is precisely the misuse of the interpretation of the rule of the virtuous (aristocrats), and also its exclusionary nature, that led to the preference for representative majority governments.

Thus, the just city is a moral fabric that requires an ethical constitution of its community, a correct and well-distributed constitution of the virtues of courage, temperance, justice, and wisdom, which aims neither at enrichment for its own sake nor at frivolities. For this, the institution of a group of lovers of wisdom is necessary, burdened with leading public affairs and guiding political life toward the attainment of the aforementioned virtues:

> Their rejection of democracy stems from the fact that the majority is not always in a position to decide, as Socrates argues that if a decision of great importance is placed under the deliberation of a majority of ignorant individuals, they will certainly decide erroneously, as such a decision would not be in line with a guiding principle and a rational order, as would be done, for example, by the philosopher-king (Silva, 2020, p. 46).

It is fair to say that, in the way societies are constituted according to Plato, the community is formed by a group of individuals who do not seem to have the conditions to achieve their ideals unless it is worked on and guided. The view of the community seems undeniably pessimistic about the possibilities of autonomy. This collectivity is fragile, constantly needing protection from falling into the clutches of some degenerate who has emerged from within. It is through the teaching of virtue, the propagation of goodness, that the zenith of human possibility is reached.

3 Aristotle's View on Community

Aristotle's project regarding practical philosophy is clearly outlined and presented in the *Nicomachean Ethics*: one part of practical philosophy concerns the knowledge that enables us to produce things excellently; another part pertains to practical wisdom, which is a true and reasoned ability to deliberate well concerning human goods (*NE* 1140a-1140b). Furthermore, there are things we desire for their own sake and things we desire for the sake of other things. Those we desire for their own sake are better and higher. There is no doubt that the end all desire is a good, and that this good is happiness, which is sought for its own sake and not for the sake of anything else. Now, the happiness of the State is a greater and more complete good than the happiness of an individual. The best way of life in pursuit of individual happiness is the subject of ethics; the best type of government in pursuit of the happiness of the city is the subject of *Politics* (*NE* 1094a 1-1095a 20).

3.1 Critique of Plato's Analogy between Individual and Communal Justice

Aristotle approaches his work analytically and immediately clarifies the understanding of the purpose of politics at the beginning of his discourse:

> We see that every city is a kind of community, and every community is formed with a view to some good, for everyone does everything for the sake of what seems to him a good; if all communities aim at some good, the state or political community, which is the highest of all, and which embraces all the rest, aims at the highest good. (*Pol.* 1252a 1-7)

Thus, Aristotle establishes an objective, a purpose, a hierarchy in his own way. A city is a set that contains other formed sets, all with the intention of initially meeting daily needs (from which the family arises, formed by the union between man and woman, master and slave) and later, associations that promote a better quality of life beyond basic daily needs (several families form a village; several villages form a city). The primacy lies with the larger set, the city, as it is self-sufficient and, therefore, superior and primary. The association forming this set consists of all the aspirations within it. It is natural for humans to associate, as well as engage in power and hierarchical relationships: "These considerations make it clear that the city is a natural creation, and that man is by nature a social animal" (*Pol.* 1253a 3).

However, there is a fundamental difference between Plato's and Aristotle's notions of community: while in Plato there is a relationship of structural similarity between the individual's soul and the city, for Aristotle, such an analogy is a fundamental mistake, as stated in the opening lines of *Politics*:

> Those who think that the qualities of a king, a property owner, and the head of a family are the same do not express themselves well; they believe that the difference between these various forms of authority [...] consists only in the greater or lesser number of people subject to it [...] as if there were no difference between a large property and even a small city. (*Pol.* 1252a 8-13).

As Vergnières aptly points out (2003, p. 301), Aristotle rejects the conception that a city functions like an individual, as envisioned by Plato: "The polis is not an individual; it is a community. The difference is clear: a living individual is a composite whose parts remain in potentiality, a community is a plurality whose parts or elements are in actuality."

3.2 The Just as a Virtue, but not in the Platonic Sense

Aristotle's development of the notion of justice, which was a central concern in Plato's *Republic*, finds its Aristotelian counterpart not specifically in the *Politics*, although it is fundamental to it, but rather in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where it is presented throughout Book V. Unlike other moral virtues, whose exposition begins in Book III with an investigation into courage and ends in Book IV with an analysis of modesty, justice receives particular attention, spanning over about one book. This emphasis on the treatment of justice in the *Nicomachean Ethics* could be justified by its explicit relevance to relations with others, unlike other particular virtues, which seem directed towards an agent's actions in their pursuit of excellence in building their own character. Another reason for the privileged treatment of justice may lie in its role as the link between ethics and politics.

The relationship between ethics and politics in Aristotle seems to find theoretical junction precisely in the concept of justice. Perhaps for this reason, as Zingano (2017) points out, the Treatise on justice in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is the most cited book in Aristotle's *Politics*. To seek the most excellent form of government, the objective of Politics, it is necessary to seek the most just form of government: one that produces the common good and equality, centered on merit. "In all sciences and arts, the end is a good, and the highest good in the highest degree is found chiefly in the all-powerful science; this science is politics, and the good in politics is justice, or rather, the common interest." (*Pol.* 1282b 11). In this sense, politics is dependent on ethics, as it is in ethics that Aristotle presents the concept of justice that will underpin the analysis of the selection of the best types of government.

Aristotle's conception of justice is not grounded in the terms of the Platonic view where each individual must perform a single function well. In the first chapter of Book V, Aristotle states that people understand justice as a disposition of character that makes individuals inclined to desire and do what is just (*NE* 1129a 7). He then introduces the famous distinction between justice as a particular virtue and justice in the broad or general sense, considered as the entire virtue. Justice in the strict sense means honesty and is more of a moral or character virtue, like temperance and courage. Justice in the strict sense participates in the name and nature of justice in the broad sense because the definition falls under the same category (*NE* 1130b 1); both justices concern relations with others, but particular justice relates to honor and money, while general justice concerns all objects related to the good person. In Book III, Aristotle states that general justice is the entire virtue and not a part of it (*NE* 1130a 9).

In 1134b (*NE*), there is a distinction between natural and legal justice as parts of political justice. Aristotle begins his exposition by stating that natural justice is the same everywhere in the world, while legal justice consists of what, once established, applies to all citizens of a particular place for a certain period. It is certainly a justice by convention, by human decision, so it is not equal everywhere. However,

beyond legal justice, "there is a justice by nature, though it is all changeable" (*NE* 1134b 29). It seems that both justices are changeable (can be otherwise), but one is by nature, the other by convention.

It is not our goal here to answer the Aristotelian problem of natural justice. However, it seems reasonable to assume that aiming for the common good is what is taken as natural justice within political justice. Thus, natural justice has the best as its end (Amorim, 2011). However, what is just by nature has a certain mutability, as Zingano (2017, p. 242) states: "[...] for it diffracts into three constitutional structures that promote the common good: monarchy, aristocracy, and the constitutional regime [...]", which means that natural justice, to some extent, is mutable, not certainly in what constitutes it as just, but in the application, as it depends on the type of government in question.

> [...] there is not a single correct constitution, but three, and here lies the variability of natural justice: each one corresponds to a type of citizen, and in each one, a body of legislation and law is constructed, through which justice is imposed among all equals and is reflected, in the form of a relationship of similarity, in the unequal spheres that belong to the city (that is, in economic justice according to its three types) (Zingano, 2017, p. 244).

This natural justice, therefore, forms the basis for the constitution of a just city, differing considerably from legal justice.

3.3 The right to private property

In Book II of *Politics*, Aristotle questions the system of communal property proposed in Plato's *Republic*, where children, women, and properties in general are meant to be shared by all. He presents a variety of arguments to counter aspects of what he perceives as the result of Plato's defense of his city model. Regarding communal ownership or the sharing of women, he employs the logic of distinguishing between community, family, and citizen to argue that Plato's ideal city would lead to the destruction of the city because it aimed to erase all differences among its constituents through a rigid ordering of freedom.

For Aristotle, true unity must be composed of elements that differ in kind, and a city full of equals is not a city but rather a military alliance, he asserts. Such a group does not represent genuine urbanity. The social composition of the community should reflect its needs and demands because the small slice of society that leads a good life in the Aristotelian sense must be catered to by another slice. From

something as simple as a pair of sandals to an amphora of olive oil, there is no chance for this upper class to engage in these sub-intellectual activities if they are to achieve the goals that Aristotle establishes. Thus, in part, Plato's *Republic* disagrees with Aristotle's ideal city in *Politics*. The idealization seems to forget, to some extent, the actual functioning of the classes, the heavy and unpleasant services that, ultimately, someone has to perform.

Furthermore, Aristotle raises a fundamental question when the city owns everything, and there is a distinct lack of private property.

> Communal ownership, therefore, brings with it these and other difficulties of the same kind [...] goods must be held in common in a certain sense and private in a general sense. The administration of goods, divided among the respective possessors, will not cause mutual complaints, and they will grow because each person will attend to them as if they were his own personal and exclusive business. (*Pol.* 1263a 20-30).

According to Aristotle, it is natural for humans to procrastinate and transfer responsibility to the next person in charge. Consequently, if the group of such individuals is large enough, no one will take responsibility for the maintenance and care of what is held in common, and they will only contribute to what interests them.

This issue of communalism would lay the groundwork for the demolition of the city itself. The foundation of the city, for Aristotle, is the community formed by families. Having a community of people in the same place who exchange goods with each other is a necessary condition for the existence of a city, but not sufficient. What constitutes a city is the union of families striving for a better life and friendship, which is the reason for living together. However, the *Republic* advocates the sharing of women and children, and thus, families could not exist. Without families, there can be no city.

About the condition of women, however, Aristotelian thought falls short in many respects.[1] The analysis begins at 1260a questioning whether men and women have the same nobility of character and goes on to highlight the difficulties of the theme. Considering that one should command and the other be commanded, conceiving that men and women possess virtues in equal measure seems misguided; it would also be incorrect to conceive a quantitative difference, as if men possessed nobility of character in

[1]There is an important article on the woman in Aristotelian philosophy written by Maria da Graça Schalcher titled "Considerations on the theme of woman in Aristotle's thought," from 1998. Here, Schalcher states that even though man and woman are free, they are not equal for Aristotle, "leading to a lack of reciprocity in power that, within the family, does not alternate" and that "such superiority [of man] calls into question the weakness of woman, not only in the physiological dimension but invested with an ethical-metaphysical connotation, through the analogy with the relations between soul and body and the parts of the soul, one endowed with reason and the other devoid of reason" (1998, p. 337).

greater quantity than women. Both conceptions would be mistaken because the difference between commanding and being commanded is not quantitative but qualitative. On the other hand, if only those who command possessed nobility of character, justice, temperance, and courage, then the commanded would never fulfill their role well. The provisional conclusion is that both those who command and those who are commanded have moral qualities, but these qualities differ in each. To explain his conclusion, Aristotle will bring up the argument of the division between the irrational and rational within the soul. Just as, by nature, the rational part must command the irrational part for the agent to be virtuous, man must command woman, the free man must command the slave, and the adult must command the child. Thus, "all possess the various parts of the soul, but possess them differently, for the slave does not possess the capacity to deliberate at all, while the woman possesses it but without full authority" (*Pol.* 1260a 10). At least at this point, Plato's superiority is clearly seen, as he believed that humans did not exhibit different capabilities based on their gender. Competence and incompetence, as well as virtue and vice, could be found in both men and women equally.

3.4 Types of Government

The constitution of sets, as discussed earlier in the *Politics*, forming a community of nuclei, deviates from the basic idea of communitarianism in the *Republic*. Aristotle begins the inquiry by questioning the role of the citizen and asserts that, although each citizen has a distinct function in society, the concern of all is the security of the community. Apart from more technical issues related to the definition of a citizen, the term that fundamentally matters in Aristotle's definition is that one can be a good citizen while not being a good man at the same time: everything depends on the prevailing form of government. Thus, in some cases, a good citizen and a good man coincide, in others, they do not. The civic virtue does not necessarily overlap with moral virtue, and therefore, an individual is required to exemplarily fulfill the constitutional principles of their community, even if they are an immoral person, to be a good citizen: "everyone must possess the goodness of a good citizen (this is the indispensable condition for a city to be the best possible), but it is impossible for everyone to possess the goodness of a good man" (*Pol.* 1277a 1).

In the choice of the regime to be adopted in a particular community, there is something that applies to all: "Constitutions whose aim is the common good are correctly structured in accordance with essential principles of justice, while those that aim only at the good of the rulers themselves are all

defective and constitute deviations from correct constitutions" (*Pol.* 1279a 16). Thus, politics seems to be dependent on ethics, as the best government is the most just and the one that promotes equality. However, equality is said in many ways, depending on the type of government. Roughly speaking, in monarchy, it is only one person who rules, and equality is wealth or noble birth; in aristocracy, a few people rule, and equality is virtue; in constitutional government, the majority rules, and equality is freedom. The deviations follow, respectively, as tyranny (if monarchical government is despotic), oligarchy (if aristocracy is defined by wealth), and democracy (if constitutional government is exercised by the poorer and more numerous). Of the degenerate forms, the worst is tyranny, then oligarchy, and lastly democracy, which is the lesser evil among the three.

Regardless of the type of government, Aristotle seems to assert that it is best to follow the laws than the judgment of a ruler. The reason for this is that laws are free from emotions and desires and lack personal interests. However, for all cases where the law, being general, does not perfectly fit the particular case, Aristotle seems to argue that judgment will be fairer if made by several people rather than just one, as it is easy for one or a few individuals to become corrupt, but difficult for this to happen in a large number, making it more likely that all people involved will collectively err.

It is in 1281b-1282b that we see Aristotle's interesting argument that a large number of people, even if individually unfit to govern and deliberate well, judges as well or even better than a small group, even of experts and wise individuals: "It is indeed possible that members of the majority, though individually good men, may be better when assembled, not individually, but collectively, than the few who are individually good" and that "where there are many men, each has a share of goodness and prudence, and when they come together [...] they can assume a single personality in terms of moral and intellectual faculties" (*Pol.* 1281b 1-5). Thus, if the majority consists of good men, it will be better for the majority to govern than a single man, even an excellent one. Aristotle will call the former case a kind of aristocracy, and the latter, monarchy.

Aristotle concludes that determining the best form of government is not simple, as it depends on the characteristics of the city, but in general, there are three valid forms: monarchy, aristocracy, and constitutional government.

> of these, the one exercised by the best men must necessarily be the best, and this is the one in which some man, or an entire family, or a group of men, can show themselves superior in qualities to all the other citizens together, and in which the citizens want to be governed, and that man, or the entire family, or the group of men, wants to govern with the aim of giving everyone the most desirable life (*Pol.* 1288a 35).

As a rule, in cities, the parts with higher population density (*Pol.* 1296b 20) were the parts with more poor people, but this alone could not determine the strength of that representation. The community that Aristotle studies and interprets is proud, capable of taking care of itself and able to defend itself. Vulnerable, yes, to external forces, but fully capable of organization.

4 Comparing the Views

The objective of this work was to analyze how the two main political works of the Hellenic golden age looked at communities as collectives, examining their perspectives on government, justice, private property, and formation, with the aim of understanding the relationship between ethics and politics and the concept of community.

The proposals of the two works have an opposite format, in style and intention. The *Republic* is a dialogue, considerably longer, with poetic nuances, interspersed with myths crucial to the formation of Western culture. It has a propositional character, suggesting what an ideal society could be. *Politics*, on the other hand, has an analytical character, in the form of a treatise, dissecting the operational modes of existing administrative forms and seeking to classify and qualify political agents and pieces of public life and their valuation.

There is a fundamental concern pointed out at the beginning of the *Republic* with the definition of justice and, subsequently, a fundamental concern with the idea of education. Thus, it was necessary to analyze these concepts to better understand the notion of community. Although for both philosophers justice is essential for thinking about the community and forms of government, the analogy proposed by Plato between the parts of the soul and the parts of the city, as if the latter were identical to the former on an enlarged scale, is strongly criticized by Aristotle. City and individual differ structurally. Furthermore, the definition of justice differs in the two approaches. With Plato, we see justice in terms of harmony where each part must perform its single function well. Aristotle, on the other hand, will present a much more complex and rich conception of justice for various reasons, including the distinction between particular and general justice, distributive and corrective justice, natural and legal justice, etc.

About private property, in the ideal of the *Republic*, families and goods should be held in common. The fact is that, for thinkers or analysts of the city, the cell matters more for its value to the organ or the body than for itself. The common entity takes precedence over the individual because there is an

understanding that the greater value lies in the common good, and collectivity is greater than individuality. Shepherds take good care of cattle, but we know well for what purpose (*Rep.* 343c). It is a subversive project, in an exegesis of the term, as it creates a new form of human existence by replacing the most basic form of social unity, which is the family. The foundation of the city, for Aristotle, is the community formed by families. However, the *Republic* recommends the communion of women and children, and thus, there could be no families. Well, without families, there can be no city. Aristotle, in turn, advocates for the continuity of the family and individual responsibilities that property entails.

Regarding the recommendation of the best type of government, although Aristotle is indebted to the Platonic conception not only concerning justice, which must prevail over individual interests and be at the foundation of any type of government, but also in a certain sense, to the governments considered the best (monarchy, aristocracy, and constitutional regime) and their respective degenerations (tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy), which should be avoided, the Stagirite is faultless in asserting that if the majority is composed of good men, then it is better for the majority to govern than a single man, even an excellent one. This is because in the decision made collectively, each with their share of prudence, there seems to be a higher likelihood of success in matters concerning the common good than in decisions made individually.

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