
Security and Happiness in Aristotle's Polis

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the telos of Aristotle's polis and on the laws' effectiveness in achieving this end. The polis aims to make citizens happy. However, I argue that due to the means the polis possesses, it can only provide security through an imitation of virtue.

Aristotle wants citizens to find happiness in a polis, but emphasizes the good of the polis over the happiness of individual citizens. I show Aristotle does not oppose the individual and the common good since the latter is composed of individual goods. Yet at the same time, Aristotle's analysis of the acquisition of aretè in the Nicomachean Ethics reveals the laws' inability to make citizens happy. As guidelines for action and instruments for correcting deviant behaviour, laws provide means by which citizens habituate themselves to virtuous actions. However, there is a difference between virtuous actions and true virtuous character. Good laws aim to make citizens virtuous, thus happy, yet may only succeed in ensuring virtuous action. In reality, a law-abiding citizen more closely resembles a continent agent than a virtuous one. Therefore, Aristotle's polis may not necessarily make citizens truly virtuous and, therefore, not necessarily happy.

The πόλις "comes to be for life (τοῦ ζῆν ἕνεκεν), but it exists for the good life (τοῦ εὖ ζῆν)" (*Pol.*, I, 1252 b 29-30). According to Aristotle, while the πόλις can provide the conditions for survival and security in a communal life, it possesses a higher τέλος: the happiness of its members.

Through an analysis of Aristotle's arguments, I propose to examine whether the πόλις can provide the means to the good life. To this aim, I must first determine if the common good is opposed to the individual good, that is, if the legal framework forces citizens to forego their individual happiness. Second, I evaluate the legal system's ability to make citizens happy by instilling virtue. Third, I approach the question from another angle, considering whether a law-abiding citizen is a truly virtuous agent.

In a well-known passage of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle claims: "For if the good of the individual and of the πόλις are the same, the good of the πόλις seems precisely greater and more perfect to grasp and conserve; it is good when it is cherished by one, but nobler and more divine when cherished by the people and the πόλις (I, 1094 b 7-11). On the one hand, insofar as the individual good and the common good both aim for the supreme human good (*Eth. Nic.*, I, 1094 b 7), they are the same. In other words, all human beings, both as individuals and members of a πόλις, aim for this supreme good, both individually and as members of a πόλις. However, the good of the πόλις (the common good) is greater, more complete, nobler and more divine because it is shared by many. Presumably, this text and others, claiming for example that a citizen belongs to the πόλις and not to herself (*cf. Pol.*, VIII, 1337 a 27-30), justify a call on all citizens to lay aside individual ethical ends for political ones, i.e. for the greater good of the community. Furthermore, citizens are often coerced by the legal system to sacrifice their happiness for the sake of the common good. It may be true that working towards this common good is advantageous to each citizen insofar as they can live out their lives in a safe environment (*cf. Pol.*, III, 1279 b 27-31; 1282 b 17), however, this seems inconsistent with the opening pages of the *Politics*, where it is plainly stated that the τέλος of the πόλις is the good life (εὖ ζῆν) rather than survival (ζῆν: *cf. Pol.*, I, 1252 b 29-30).

It is possible to eliminate this apparent inconsistency by analysing the nature of the common good. Pierre Aubenque for example suggests a different interpretation of the relationship between ethics and politics in Aristotle, given that "the good of the πόλις is reduced (*se ramène à*) to the good of the individuals that compose it."¹ It would thus be possible that Aristotle, in claiming the good of the πόλις is greater than the good of the individual, does not imply the necessity to sacrifice the good of individuals to a greater common good, but rather, it would be nobler to attain the good of many citizens.² This interpretation is consistent with textual evidence, where Aristotle states that the very concept of "common good" is inconceivable without the happiness of each citizen.³

If, for Aristotle, "it is apparent that the best constitution is that arrangement where anyone could undertake the best actions and live in felicity" (ζῶν μακαρίως: *Pol.*, VII, 1324 a 23-25), the πόλις achieves its goal or attains its good if *all* citizens are happy. In other words, insofar as the common good is the good of *all* the individuals, there seems to be a certain *reversal* (*renversement*) in comparison to Aristotle's position in the first book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Rather than being opposed, the common good includes the goods of the citizens⁴.

According to Aristotle,

It is impossible for the whole to be happy, unless all, or most, or some have acquired happiness. For happiness is not of the things like evenness: it is possible on the one hand to predicate the latter of the whole and on the other hand not of either of its parts, but this is impossible in the case of happiness (*Pol.*, II, 1264 b 17-22).

Aristotle identifies two distinct types of collective concepts. On the one hand, if we take an even number (*W*) made up of two parts (*P1* and *P2*): it is possible for *W* to be even independently of the evenness or oddness of its parts (*P1* and *P2*). On the other hand, Aristotle refers to the good of the πόλις. If the parts of this kind of whole (in this case, the citizens) are not happy, it is impossible to declare that the πόλις itself is happy. This distributive conception of the common good is apparent in Aristotle's criticism of the platonic πόλις.

Aristotle's principal point of contention with Plato rests on the latter's claim: that which is best for the πόλις according to Plato (as Aristotle interprets it) is to be an absolute unity (*Pol.*, II, 1261 a 15-16). However, from an Aristotelian perspective, this τέλος is in no way desirable for the πόλις because it will inevitably prove to be the source of its downfall (1261 b 8-10; cf. 1263 b 31-35). The reason is, according to Aristotle, that Plato does not adequately understand the nature of a πόλις: "certainly it is apparent that making and transforming a community into more of a unit will make it so that it is no longer a πόλις; for the πόλις is by nature a kind of multiplicity" (*Pol.*, II, 1261 a 16-18). By nature, the πόλις is not uniform; at least not in the way Plato conceives it. To ensure its self-sufficiency, such a community must necessarily be made up of many different parts (cf. *Pol.*, II, 1261 b 10-15; III, 1275 b 20-21).⁵ To desire absolute unity for the πόλις is to wish for it to be something it is not, in the same way that one would wish to transform "a harmony into a monotone or a rhythm into a unified beat" (*Pol.*, II, 1263 b 34-35).

If Plato's πόλις (as Aristotle interprets it) aims at reaching an absolute unity, then the good of the citizens need to be subordinated to this higher good.⁶ Now if Aristotle recognizes that the πόλις is not a unity, but a community composed of many differing types of citizens, presumably he would not subordinate the good of individual citizens to the good of the whole.⁷ Or if he does, it would not be for the same reasons nor in the same way as Plato. For Aristotle, in the case of the community, the whole is not a concept different from the sum of its parts.⁸ It therefore seems Aristotle is aiming at a common good that is no different than the sum of individual goods. The τέλος of the πόλις is then no different than the happiness of each part of the political community (*Pol.*, III, 1278 b 20-24).⁹ This claim is related to the purpose of what Aristotle calls the right constitution.

One of the elements differentiating the right constitution from a corrupt constitution is the interest at which it aims: "when one, or few, or many govern for the sake of the common interest, those constitutions are necessarily right, but those governing for the sake of individual interest, either of one, of a few, or of the multitude are corrupt" (*Pol.*, III, 1279 a 28-31). A constitution is right if and only if it aims for the interest of the whole community. But insofar as the community is a sum of parts, and due to the way it must "distribute" happiness among its members, the common interest is neither some abstract notion of general interest¹⁰ nor mere survival or security of the community. This implies that the happiness Aristotle intends to offer citizens is not the happiness of some abstract entity called the "πόλις." Rather, this happiness cannot *exist* unless the citizens themselves are happy.¹¹ Insofar as the common good is the good of all (individually), it would seem most profitable for everyone to work towards it.

This type of demonstration, however is not entirely convincing, and it is difficult to imagine Aristotle presenting these arguments to convince citizens to act for the sake of the common good. Aristotle himself recognizes this insofar as he differentiates two means of attaining virtue: teaching and habituation (*cf. Eth. Nic.*, II, 1103 a 14-19). Teaching is a method of transmitting virtue using arguments and demonstrations. But since most people are not convinced by arguments alone, teaching can only be a second step, once a citizen is habituated to ethical virtue (*cf. Pol.*, VIII, 1334 b 6-28; *Eth. Nic.*, X, 1179 b 23-28).¹² This leads us to my second point: I will now examine the relationship between happiness and virtue, which will allow me to evaluate the means possessed by the πόλις to make its citizens happy.

II

Εὐδαιμονία is "an activity of the soul (ψυχῆς ἐνέργεια) in agreement with virtue (κατ' ἀρετήν)" (*Eth. Nic.*, I, 1098 a 16-18). In other words, the happy individual will possess virtue and act accordingly. If the πόλις is to achieve its end, it must possess the means to transform its citizens from non-virtuous to virtuous agents.¹³ This is, according to Aristotle, the task of legislators: "For, by habituating (ἐθίζοντες) them, the legislators make the citizens good, and this is the intent of all legislators" (*Eth. Nic.*, II, 1103 b 3-5; *cf. Pol.*, V, 1310 a 12-19). It is the legislators, Aristotle suggests, by means of laws, who habituate the citizens and make them virtuous. Before developing this idea further, I will say a few words on the Aristotelian conception of ethical virtue.

In general terms, ethical virtue is "a disposition of deliberated choice (ἔξις προαιρετική)," an inclination to choose to act appropriately (*Eth. Nic.*, II,

1106 b 36). In other words, an agent is virtuous in that she possesses a specific character (ἦθος) that determines the way she acts. Ethical virtues are in no way innate (cf. *Eth. Nic.*, II, 1103 a 14-b 1). Rather, they are acquired by means of habituation (cf. *Eth. Nic.*, II, 1103 a 17; I, 1095 b 4-b 6, 1098 b 6). Aristotle argues for the connection between habituation (ἔθος) and character (ἦθος) by drawing an analogy between virtue and art (τέχνη):

We acquire the virtues by first accomplishing actions in the same manner as with the arts. For those things requiring learning to do, we must do to learn. For example we become builders by building and harpists by playing the harp. In precisely a similar way, we become just through just actions, temperate through temperate actions, and courageous through courageous actions (*Eth. Nic.*, II, 1103 a 31-b 2).

Virtues resemble the arts insofar as one learns them through repetition: it is impossible to acquire either of them through teaching alone. It is as ludicrous to claim that someone can become courageous without behaving courageously, as to claim that someone can become a builder without building.¹⁴ Therefore, the repetition of a given type of action is a necessary condition to acquiring the corresponding disposition. Presumably then, to instil virtue, the πόλις must encourage its citizens to act as virtuous agents.

When a citizen becomes an adult, the legal system is intended to habituate her to act in a certain way:

The law commands (προσάττει) to accomplish the actions of the courageous (τὰ τοῦ ἀνδρείου ἔργα ποιεῖν), for example, not to abandon one's post, nor to flee, nor to throw down one's weapons, and the actions of the temperate, for example not to commit adultery, nor excess, and the actions of the mild, for example not to be violent, nor to revile another, and in the same manner for the other virtues or negative dispositions, urging toward some and forbidding others, in a correct manner if the law was correctly established, and incorrectly if it was improvised (*Eth. Nic.*, V, 1129 b 14-26).

Through a system of rewards and punishment, the laws encourage virtuous actions and punish reprehensible ones.¹⁵ For Aristotle, this is presumably sufficient for the development of ethical virtue. The relationship he establishes between character and habit is such that if one were to perform certain virtuous actions over a long period of time, one will become virtuous. It may very well be necessary to repeat an action for it to become second nature, but Aristotle does not indicate *how* the law could be sufficient to acquire ethical virtue. Forcing citizens to act in a certain way may not affect their character *in the desired way*.¹⁶ The nature of Aristotelian virtue makes it difficult to understand how early childhood moral education or the legal system could be sufficient means of ethical habituation.

In Aristotelian philosophy, there is a difference between an action and its principle. A fine action, i.e. one prescribed by good laws, may be caused by something other than virtue. In contrast, the virtuous agent possesses a certain disposition; her actions are shaped by a certain character (ἦθος).

We can understand the relationship between an action and its possible causes by looking closely at an example from Aristotle's text, in which he analyzes the causes of improper actions. Let us say, for instance, that an agent is virtuous, but at some point commits an action contrary to her virtue: a courageous citizen flees the battle scene, or a just citizen commits adultery. Aristotle is not saying that these citizens are, respectively, cowards or unjust, but that these actions may have been cowardly or unjust *by accident* (κατὰ συμβεβηκός: *Eth. Nic.*, V, 1137 a 23). To be a coward or unjust is not to act in a certain way "just as to treat and to cure is not a matter of cutting or not cutting, nor of treating with drugs or not treating with drugs, *but doing it in a certain way*" (*Eth. Nic.*, V, 1137 a 23-26; my emphasis). Someone could successfully go through the motions of cutting or administering drugs, but unless she possesses the art of medicine, she is not a doctor. Similarly, someone could act either virtuously or un-virtuously, but that does not mean she possesses the corresponding disposition: she may be only "going through the motions." Aristotle is aware of this problem. This is apparent in a further example:

But someone may be puzzled if in any way we say it is necessary to do just actions to become just and to do temperate actions to become temperate. And if people do just actions and temperate actions, they are automatically just and temperate, similarly if they do grammar or play music, that they are automatically grammarians and musicians. But it may not be so in the case of the arts. For it is possible to do grammar and that it be the result of luck or of directions. To be a grammarian, then, is to do grammar and to do it in a grammatical way, that is, to do it according to the art of grammar in us (κατὰ τὴν ἐν αὐτῷ γραμματικὴν: *Eth. Nic.*, II, 1105 a 17-26).

In this text, Aristotle anticipates an objection: he acknowledges it would be absurd to claim that as soon as someone engages in just or temperate actions, she automatically and therefore necessarily becomes just or temperate. This is as unfounded as the claim that someone will be a grammarian or a musician as soon as she performs the actions corresponding to these arts. There are three possible causes or principles that could make someone able to do grammar: luck, following directions, or the true possession of the art of grammar. Possession of the art of grammar is different from the two other possible causes in that it is *internal* to the agent. In this third case, the agent does grammar "in a grammatical way."¹⁷ Just as there are certain conditions to be met to correctly state that an object is crafted by art, there are also certain necessary conditions to be met to

claim that virtue is the principle of an action. In the case of the virtues, an action must be accomplished (a) with an understanding of the reason for acting in a certain way, (b) as a result of a deliberated choice (*προαίρεσις*) and chosen for its own sake, and finally, (c) it must be done in a firm and unwavering state (*Eth. Nic.*, II, 1105 a 31-34; III, 1119 b 15-16). In other words, she must act knowingly, freely and her actions must correspond to her character. With this understanding of virtue, let us return to the case of a law-abiding citizen.

Insofar as laws are well constructed, they will lead to virtuous action on the part of a law-abiding citizen (*cf. Eth. Nic.*, V, 1129 b 14-26). However, it may not seem correct to claim that such an action is necessarily caused by virtue. A possible explanation might be that such an action is involuntary (*ἀκουσία*) and therefore not the result of a deliberated choice, for the law *coerces*, *forces* a citizen to act in a certain way under the threat of punishment (*Eth. Nic.*, X, 1180 a 8-9). In general terms, an involuntary (*ἀκουσία*) action is an action with an external principle. For example, if “the wind or those who control someone carry her somewhere” (*Eth. Nic.*, III, 1110 a 3-4), it cannot be said of such a person that she acted voluntarily. It seems that an action undertaken because it is prescribed by law may correspond to such a case.

However, an action undertaken under the threat of punishment is purely forced. Aristotle gives the following example: what if a tyrant has captured someone’s family and under the threat of executing her family, forces that person to do something she would never do otherwise (in Aristotle’s terms, she would not do it *ἀπλῶς*)? Is that particular action voluntary or involuntary? This otherwise undesirable action possesses elements of voluntary and involuntary actions; it is a mixed action, but more closely connected to voluntary action in that it is chosen in *that* particular circumstance (*Eth. Nic.*, III, 1110 a 4-26). Its motive is the “fear of a greater evil” (*φόβον μειζόνων κακῶν: Eth. Nic.*, III, 1110 a 4). If punishment is the means by which law is *imposed* on citizens, it is presumably the fear of punishment that will “force” the citizen to act according to law. An action that she would not have chosen otherwise (she would not have chosen *ἀπλῶς*), is nevertheless *chosen* for fear of a greater evil, i.e. punishment. Therefore, we can assume that lawful actions are the result of a deliberated choice. Nevertheless, the reason why lawful action does not necessarily lead to a virtuous character is *related to* the laws’ necessity to contain a coercive element. The coercive nature of the law is a direct result of the moral psychology of a law-abiding citizen. This idea can be explained further in my third and final part, by comparing processes of practical reasoning that may result in virtuous action.

III

Without a coercive element, laws would be ineffective because citizens would not act appropriately of themselves. In fact, citizens' motivations are often contrary to what the legislators have identified as the good of the community. In terms of the conditions of virtue identified by Aristotle, whereas the virtuous agent chooses virtue for its own sake (προαιρούμενος δι' αὐτὰ: *Eth. Nic.*, II, 1105 a 32), a good citizen may act merely for the sake of avoiding punishment.

We say that some who undertake just actions are not yet just, for example those who do what is deemed appropriate by the law, either unwillingly, in some ignorance or for the sake of some other reason and not for its own sake (yet they do what they must and as much as the good agent (τὸν σπουδαῖον) ought to) (*Eth. Nic.*, VI, 1144 a 13-17).

In this case justice (as a virtue) is not necessarily the cause of just action. If the agent conducts herself in agreement with the legal prescriptions, it may be for reasons other than justice: under constraint, in ignorance, or for *any* reason other than for the sake of the just action itself. A few lines above the text just cited, Aristotle claims that "on the one hand, ethical virtue makes the target correct, and on the other hand, practical wisdom chooses the means to it" (*Eth. Nic.*, VI, 1144 a 7-9). If the agent is virtuous, ethical virtue is the motivation for, or the final cause of the action. In such a case, there is no need of external motivation.

In contrast, praise or avoidance of punishment are rewards for lawful action. The legal system provides a *necessary* reward (μισθός: cf. *Eth. Nic.*, V, 1134 b 6) for those who do not act for the sake of virtue but for some other reason.¹⁸ Therefore, if a citizen refrains from acting in a certain way out of a fear of punishment or for the sake of an honour, she is not virtuous in the Aristotelian sense, since she does not desire the proper thing. The final cause of her actions is reward or avoidance of punishment rather than virtue itself. However while the law-abiding citizen is not virtuous, it would be just as wrong to claim that she is immoral.

In Aristotelian ethics, there are multiple intermediary degrees between virtue and vice. For example, regarding bodily pleasures, the different human levels are the following: intemperance (ἀκολασία: cf. *Eth. Nic.*, VII, 1147 b 28; 1148 b 12), incontinence (ἀκρασία: *Eth. Nic.*, VII, 1145 a 16-17), continence (ἐγκράτεια: *Eth. Nic.*, VII, 1145 a 18), and temperance (σωφροσύνη: *Eth. Nic.*, VII, 1147 b 28).¹⁹ The positive human dispositions in relation to pleasure are temperance and continence. While they are related, they are not the same (*Eth. Nic.*, VII, 1146 a 10-11; 1148 a 14) insofar as the latter is not a virtue (*Eth. Nic.*, IV, 1128 b 34). They are different in that the continent "chooses but without desiring" (*Eth. Nic.*, III, 1111 b 14-15).

While the continent *chooses* the correct action – it is a deliberated choice (προαίρεσις) guided by reason and the knowledge of the appropriate action – it is in conflict with the desires (cf. *Eth. Nic.*, I, 1102 b 14; I, 1102 b 27, *Eth. Eud.*, II, 1224 b 27). In other words, the continent agent knows *how* she ought to act, but does not desire to act in that way, yet at the same time, she nonetheless forces herself to act appropriately, according to what her reason dictates (*Eth. Nic.*, VII, 1145 b 10; IX, 1168 b 34).

Outwardly the continent and the virtuous agent seem to be the same (cf. *Eth. Nic.*, VII, 1145 b 8), but the decisive difference is the way each *feels* with regards to virtuous action: the virtuous agent derives pleasure from the actions themselves (*Eth. Nic.*, II, 1104 b 3-1105 a 14) since she possesses a certain character that determines the way in which she acts and feels towards virtuous actions. Ethical virtue makes people *want* to act virtuously.²⁰ However, the continent must force herself to undertake fine actions. She is able to resist desires (βίαιον ἢ κάθεξις: *Eth. Eud.*, II, 1123 b 18; cf. II, 1224 a 32-34) and act in imitation of the virtuous agent, according to what her reason dictates (*Eth. Nic.*, VII, 1145 b 10; IX, 1168 b 34).²¹ The continent acts against her desire, but for the sake of possible future advantages (*Eth. Eud.*, II, 1224 b 16-19). This is how the law-abiding citizen is driven to virtuous action. She acts according to the dictates of law for the sake of rewards (or avoidance of punishment), not for the sake of the actions themselves (*Eth. Nic.*, V, 1134 b 6).

Her misguided wish (βουλήσις: *Eth. Nic.*, III, 1111 b 26-29; 1113 a 15-b 2) does not regard just action as a good in itself, rather, it interprets it as being good for *others*, and in many cases a source of harm to herself.²² Of course, as I have shown in my first section, the common good is not superior to the individual good, but insofar as the law-abiding citizen is not virtuous, she cannot understand this. This explains why an external reward is necessary. Of course, it *is* necessary for the πόλις to enforce its laws through a system of rewards and punishment since most people will only respond to fear of punishment (*Eth. Nic.*, X, 1179 b 11-13). As most members of the political community are not virtuous, their improper wishes and desires must be kept in check for all to be able to coexist within a community.

To conclude, it seems on the one hand that the πόλις aims at a common good that is inseparable from the good of each citizen. In this sense, the happiness sought by the πόλις cannot be interpreted as the happiness of a totality to which the good of individual citizens is sacrificed. Instead, Aristotle's political project is to make citizenship necessary and sufficient for the happiness of *each* member of the πόλις. On the other hand, while the laws may *aim* to make citizens love the fine and despise the bad (cf. *Eth. Nic.*, X, 1179 b 30-31), laws can only ensure an intermediate state

more akin to continence than to virtue: laws habituate the citizens to rewards and punishment, not to desire virtue in itself. Therefore, the legal system cannot make a citizen virtuous, no more than it can make her happy.²³ The πόλις can be, *at best*, an (or *the*) environment where citizens *may* become virtuous. The πόλις thus provides a safe environment where those few and rare citizens capable of crossing the threshold from imitation of virtuous action to virtue itself can do so without the fear of becoming victims of injustice.²⁴

Said differently, there seems to be a tension between the τέλος of the πόλις and its ability to fulfill that τέλος, that is, its limited capability to make its citizens happy. This tension represents a tragic consequence: the πόλις gives itself a nearly impossible task due to the nature of virtue, for virtue is not only the result of actions for the sake of external motivations, but more importantly, it is founded on the internal disposition of each citizen.

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Endnotes

1. P. Aubenque. 1980. "Politique et éthique chez Aristote." *Ktèma* 5: 216. Cf. E. Lévy. 1980. "Cité et citoyen dans la *Politique* d'Aristote." *Ktèma* 5: 231.
2. Cf. R. Bodéus. 1996. *Aristote, la justice et la cité*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. 13, 114. Cf. E. Lévy. "Cité et citoyen." 231.
3. R. Bodéus. *Aristote, la justice et la cité*. 108.
4. R.-A. Gauthier and J.-Y. Jolif. 1970. *L'Éthique à Nicomaque*. Traduction et commentaire. Louvain: Publications Universitaires. Vol. II.1. 11-12.
5. *Pol.*, III, 1274 b 38-40, tells us a πόλις is made up of many parts (ἐκ πολλῶν μορίων) and *Pol.*, II, 1261 a 24, that it is not a group of ὁμοίοι, of resembling parts. In the Aristotelian vocabulary, a "multiplicity" is the opposite of a "unity" (*Metaph.*, Γ, 1004 a 10; I, 1054 a 20-22). Cf. R. Mayhew 1997. "Part and Whole in Aristotle's Political Philosophy." *Journal of Ethics* 1: 331.
6. I will not examine eventual limits of Aristotle's criticism of Plato's πόλις. The very fact that Aristotle condemns Plato's doctrine shows that for the former, the πόλις cannot be an absolutely unified whole. On this question, see M. Canto-Sperber. 1993. "L'unité de l'État et les conditions du bonheur public (Platon, *République*, V ; Aristote, *Politique*, II)." *Aristote Politique: Études sur la Politique d'Aristote*. (Eds, P. Aubenque and A. Tordesillas) Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. 49-71.
7. R. Mayhew. "Part and Whole." 333.
8. Cf. M. Canto-Sperber. "L'unité de l'État."
9. E. Lévy. "Cité et citoyen." 230, n. 291.
10. Cf. P. Rodrigo 1987. "D'une excellente constitution. Notes sur *Politeia* chez Aristote." *Revue de philosophie ancienne* 5(1): 79-80.
11. E. Lévy. "Cité et citoyen." 230, n. 291; F. Wolff. 1991. *Aristote et la politique*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. 66-67.
12. M. Burnyeat. 1980. "Aristotle on Learning to be good." *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*. (Ed, A. O. Rorty) Berkeley: University of California Press. 69-92; J. Lombard. 1994. *Aristote: politique et éducation*. Paris: L'Harmattan. 86.
13. J. Lombard. *Aristote: politique et éducation*. 54.
14. Aristotle uses the examples of building and seeing when he explains the way in which logically, activity (ἐνέργεια) precedes potentiality (δυνατόν: *Metaph.*, Θ, 1094 b 12-17).
15. Cf. Ph. Betbeder: "Le facteur déterminant réside dans le rôle de la loi : seule, celle-ci a le pouvoir coercitif suffisant pour plier les enfants et les hommes sous le joug de la contrainte formatrice." P. Betbeder. 1970. "Éthique et politique selon Aristote." *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 54: 478.
16. According to some commentators, this is somehow due to some inappropriate or "improvised" laws. In other words, in an ideal πόλις, laws would be sufficient to instil

ethical virtue. See S. Vergnières. 1995. *Éthique et Politique chez Aristote: phusis, êthos, nomos*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. 188; R. Bodéus. 1982. *Le philosophe et la cité. Recherches sur les rapports entre morale et politique dans la pensée d'Aristote*. Paris: Belles Lettres. 18; and, to a certain extent E. Lévy. "Cité et citoyen." 247-248. However, on this point, I follow J. Barnes' interpretation, for whom this aspect of Aristotle's political theory is fundamentally flawed for "you may, as the proverb has it, lead a horse to water; but if you do, it won't drink," J. Barnes. 1987. "Aristotle and Political Liberty." *Aristoteles' "Politik"*. (Ed, G. Patzig) Göttingen: Vandehoeck & Ruprecht. 247-263.

17. Notice the use of the expression *κατὰ τὴν ἐν αὐτῷ γραμματικῆν*, opposed to one of the passages I evoked earlier, where an action possessed a quality *by accident* (*κατὰ συμβεβηκός*: *Eth. Nic.*, V, 1137 a 23).

18. Compare this with *Pl., Resp.*, II, 358 a 4-6; *cf.* 357 c 5-10; 358 a 4-6.

19. The two extreme dispositions, bestiality (*θηριότης*: *Eth. Nic.*, VII, 1145 a 17) and a "heroic and god-like" temperance (*ἡρωικὴ τιμὰ καὶ θεϊάν*: *Eth. Nic.*, VII, 1145 a 20), are not human and therefore very rare (*Eth. Nic.*, VII, 1145 a 22-35).

20. *Cf.* L. Kosman: "The moral virtues are states of character that enable a person to exhibit *the right kinds of emotions* as well as the right kinds of actions," L. Kosman. 1980. "Being Properly Affected: Virtues and Feelings in Aristotle's Ethics." *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*. (Ed, A. O. Rorty) Berkeley: University of California Press. 103-116.

21. This continent agent possesses incorrect desires but "knowing her desires are bad, does not obey them because of her reason (*οὐκ ἀκολουθεῖ διὰ τὸν λόγον*)" (*Eth. Nic.*, VII, 1145 b 13-14; *cf. Eth. Eud.*, II, 1223 b 11-12; *De An.*, III, 433 a 7).

22. *Cf.* P. Betbeder. "Éthique et politique selon Aristote." 458.

23. *Cf.* "Politics aim to ensure the reign of virtue, but this end remains exterior to the quality of the means put in motion (*cette fin reste étrangère à la qualité des moyens mis en œuvre*): the moral end of politics being only an extrinsic end, in no way implies the political capacity," P. Aubenque. "Politique et éthique chez Aristote." 220. *Cf.* D. J. Allen. 1964. "Individual and State in the *Ethics* and *Politics*." *Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique: La "Politique" d'Aristote*. Vandoeuvres et Genève: Fondation Hardt. 55-95.

24. On this point, see P. Betbeder. "Éthique et politique selon Aristote." 466.