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THE SPACE OF SECURITY AND GOOD LIFE: THE ARISTOTELIAN CITY

In the ancient Greek culture there is a close and unavoidable link between security and the city. An inquiry into it could be helpful in shaping the philosophical foundation of the *capabilities approach*.

In the Greek perspective, “to make someone secure” means to preserve him, to look after him, therefore, to provide him with the tools he needs to lead a good life. In this paper - that can be considered a part of my research on the presence of the Aristotelian heritage in the *capabilities approach* - I will try to explore this Greek issue. By focusing mainly on Aristotle’s work, the notion of security as safety and, then, as the possibility to choose and achieve a flourishing life will be highlighted. Moreover, with respect to Nussbaum’s specific approach and her list of capabilities, I am going to focus, in the light of the Greek value of political space, on the key role of two capabilities – Practical Reason and Affiliation – as well as on a crucial Nussbaum’s insight: the ontological separation among human beings.

I. The Greek city – the *polis* – aims, indeed, at protecting the citizens who live in it – i.e., first of all, at defending them from dangers. In the Greek perspective, as far as I see it, three kinds of danger could put the human life at risk: the ones caused by natural events, the internal conflicts and the attacks of the enemies. So, the notion of security means, first and foremost, protection and safety from these sort of dangers.

In Plato’s *Protagoras* (320 d ff.), the myth of Prometheus shows that different skills – the *technai* given to the human beings by the titanus - make it possible for man to rule nature, but also that such expertises are not sufficient to build and maintain a common life: Zeus’ gift –justice – is essential. Namely, the myth tells about the time when there were only the gods and the mortal beings were going to be created: the gods fashioned them out of earth

and fire and, then, ordered Prometheus and Epimetheus to adequately provide them with specific qualities. Epimetheus gave all properties to the animals and forgot man, who remained unprovided. When Prometheus came to check the distribution, he saw that the other animals were suitably furnished, but man alone was naked and barefoot, and had neither a bed nor arms of defence. Prometheus, wondering how he could save mankind, stole the technical knowledge of Hephaestus and Athene. Thus man got the necessary knowledge to supporting life, but not the political wisdom which was, indeed, Zeus' exclusive property. The consequences of this were soon disclosed: human beings, by using the technical skills, invented names and speech, built houses, made beds, clothes, shoes, and so on; but they scattered around and there were no cities. Hence their life was repeatedly put at risk by the attacks of the wild beasts, that they were much weaker than.

According to Plato, at this stage, men are not able to fight together against the animals; namely, the technical skills are sufficient to provide them with the means for supporting their life, but do not enable them to carry out any strike, because the art of war is part of the political wisdom they now lack.

So, the desire of security gathered them into communities; however, for they still lacked all political ability, when they were gathered together, they insulted and fought against each other, later to scatter around again and undermine their safety. Then Zeus, worried that the entire human race would be destroyed, sent Hermes to them, to bring reverence and justice as the ordering principles of cities and the bonds of *philia* (322c), i.e. of friendship.

To be more accurate, *philia* involves a wider range of meanings than our idea of friendship, insofar as it is referred to all social relationships: wherever people share significant aspects of life, there is *philia* and this sharing establishes the *polis*. I will deal with this idea later, through Aristotle's approach and the crucial role of 'Affiliation' among capabilities listed by Martha Nussbaum. Now, I want only to stress that the desire of security can not be separated from the capability to live together in a real *polis*. Without this – whereby a specific education and training are necessary – human life is always at risk.

Another account on the crucial role, in building the *polis*, played by the need for defence against dangers, is offered by Thucydides. In particular, he focuses on the need for defence against the attacks of enemies; according to him, the political arrangement was envisaged first of all for two reasons, i.e. fear (*deos*) of the enemies and, then, and interest, meant as opportunity (*ophelia*). Living together means being stronger and better able to defend

oneself. Thucydides himself, however, in the famous Pericles' Funeral Speech – gave in order to honour the memory of the victims of the first year of the Peloponnesian War – shows that these are only the basic motives, not the final end and the proper function of a good *polis*. Pericles begins by speaking of the ancestors, who have handed down the land of Athens from generation to generation. He recalls the things done by the ancestors and by his contemporaries in order to endow the city with all the latter ones need to live well, as well as the energy with which they have always repelled their enemies. Then, he praises democracy – a form of government that does not enter into rivalry with other institutions: the Athenians do not imitate their neighbours, but are an example to them. Hence, the famous statement: Athens is the school of Hellas. In such a *polis*, like in the one envisaged in Protagoras' myth, justice and friendship are pivotal values: “we alone – Pericles says - do good to our neighbours not upon a calculation of interest, but in the confidence of freedom and in a frank and fearless spirit”.¹

These words show that, a safe political environment makes it possible for human beings to devote themselves to free, disinterested, and unselfish – so specifically human – relationships; fear and immediate interest, therefore, are not the only and ultimate reasons to stay together.

II. Athens – at least the Athens sketched in Pericles' speech – is the highest actualization of what a *polis* should be: the space of the full achievement of human life. The idea of the *polis* as the space of the achievement of a true humanity can also be seen in Aristotle's works.

The aim of the Aristotelian *polis* is shaped in a particular way. In order to recall it, we can start from his statement that everyone wants *eudaimonia*, that is happiness or – according to an English translation now commonly accepted and widely used in the *capabilities approach* – a *flourishing human life*. It can be meant as the human proper excellence. Aristotle envisages it, by stating beforehand that anything has a function (*ergon*) and that its goodness, i.e. its virtue, consists in accomplishing that particular function well: the eye, whose function is to see, is a good eye insofar as it accomplishes this function well, as well as a statue-maker, whose function is to make statues, is a good one if he makes

¹ Thucydides, *History*, II 35

statues well.² So, in this perspective, Aristotle conceives the ‘good man’ as one who accomplishes as best as possible his own *ergon*: as it is well known, according to the philosopher, the good for a man turns out to be an activity of the soul according to virtue.³ And the flourishing life consists in this activity. We may consider the notion of ‘functioning’, whose role in the *capabilities approach* as a truly relevant criterion to recognize prosperity is well-known, in the light of the Aristotelian ‘*ergon*’. Moreover, in the same light, we can also view the aim of the political community: the task of the Aristotelian lawgiver – as well as of a good government considered from the capability approach perspective - is to make the *eudaimonia* possible.⁴ So - as above mentioned with regard to the theories of Plato and Thucydides - Aristotle views the *polis*, basically, - as protection from several kinds of danger.

The link between these two tasks of the *polis* – basic protection and, hence, full actualization of human nature - can precisely be envisaged in the Greek notion of security. It has, indeed, two aspects: a basic one – a human being is secure when he is safe from both internal and external attacks – and a deeper one – such safe human being can actualize and keep his own nature, i.e. the whole range of his capabilities. So, the *polis* could be considered as the space of security precisely because it is the space where a fully human life is possible.

Aristotle seems to me to be well aware of such complexity. He knows that making security possible means, first of all, protecting from enemies and ruling the common life. At the beginning of *Politics*, the *polis* is presented as the culmination of a pathway which includes family, village, and, indeed, city. All along it, one can see that men gather together in order to remedy one another’s lacks and satisfy one another’s needs. Only in the *polis*, can human beings attain all attainable goods. By looking at these initial pages, we can have an idea of the reason why the human being is “by nature a political animal”. But, again, fear and immediate interest are not the only reasons to live together.

Actually, Aristotle explicitly specifies that men do not gather only to accumulate wealth – for, if this were the case, their share in the state would be proportioned to their property, so the oligarchical doctrine would be the best one, which, however, Aristotle does not agree

² See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1097 b25ff

³ See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098a1ff. and *passim*

⁴ See Aristotle *Politics*, 1103b2-6

upon -. Moreover, the *polis* does not exist merely for the sake of alliances and protections from injustices; nor does it have the sake of exchange and mutual help as its only reason – for, if this were the case, then the Tyrrhenians and the Carthaginians, and all others who have commercial treaties and are formally committed to do no wrong to one another would be the citizens of a single *polis*; instead they have no common judiciaries, nor does one single government see to it that the people, who come under the terms of the treaty, are such as they ought to be, i.e. live virtuously. Rather, virtue must be the care of a genuine *polis*. A true *polis* can therefore be meant the proper space of a good life:

“[A *polis*] exists for the sake of a good life, and not for the sake of life only”.⁵

Moreover, Aristotle pinpoints that, without this end, the political community, would be a mere alliance which differs only in place from alliances between people who live apart. And he says that even if distinct places, such as Corinth and Megara, were brought together so that their walls touched, still they would not be one city. In other words, if there is no city, it will not be because men are far from one another: for, even if such a community were to meet in one place, but each man regarded his own house as a *polis* and mutual help were only seen as a range of non-aggression pacts, it would be not a *polis* – which can not make it possible only refrain from negative behaviours. So, the author can conclude:

“It is clear then that a state is not a mere society, having a common place, established for the prevention of mutual crime and for the sake of exchange. These are conditions without which a state cannot exist; but all of them together do not constitute a state, which is a community of families and aggregations of families in well-being, for the sake of a perfect and self-sufficing life. [...] Our conclusion, then, is that political society exists for the sake of noble actions, and not of mere companionship”.⁶

The requisites of safety are necessary but not sufficient to make a real *polis*: they establish at the most a companionship. They could be regarded as instrumental goods; namely, Aristotle repeatedly says that good life is the realization of what is beautiful, meant in absolute, not conditional, terms; he uses the word 'conditional' (*ex hypoteseos*) to express what is necessary and 'absolute' (*aplos*) to express what is good in itself. The conditional action is only the choice of refraining something or doing a lesser evil; whereas recalling the “absolute beautiful” means recalling the promotion and creation of good.⁷

⁵ Aristotle *Politics*, 1280 a 31-32.

⁶ Aristotle *Politics*, 1280 b 29 – 1281 a 4.

⁷ See Aristotle, *Politics*, VII 13, 1332 a 9 ff.

Of course, I do not want to argue that instrumental goods are not important; but only to focus on the wider perspective in which they should be looked at. A similar awareness could be recognized in the *capabilities approach*, where the stress on the fact that the state does not accomplish its proper task only by withdrawing is crucial. Rather, its task is to enable all citizens to live a fully human life – which means providing them with the material prerequisites of a life with dignity and therefore, with adequate protections from dangers. So, in the *capabilities approach* too, the political space is the proper space for a good life, not only something wrong is avoided and escaped; but, more deeply, because something good can be achieved. We can see it also in the crucial role played by ‘Affiliation’, or, in Aristotelian terms, *philia*.

By ‘Affiliation’, Nussbaum means the capability of living with others, engaging in various forms of social interaction, cultivating and showing concern for other human beings: without these social attitudes no real human life is possible. A similar awareness can be found in Aristotle’s idea of human good, the search of which is always envisaged as a political enterprise: man is considered with his parents, children, wife, friends, and fellowcitizens and not as leading a solitary life. Hence, the fact that man is a “political animal” means that he is able to be himself only within the *polis*.

Nussbaum agrees on this view and stresses that ‘Affiliation’ implies protection against any discrimination on the basis of race, sex, religion, then making various forms of affiliation, free and public speech, and critical debate possible.

Affiliation means, to use Aristotelian terms, to have the capability for both justice and *philia*. As before we have previously said, *philia* has a wider sense than our ‘friendship’, insofar as it includes relationships between parents and child, husband and wife, ruler and ruled, lover and beloved and between comrades.⁸ There is *philia* where people are so linked that their treatment of one another can be assessed by standards of justice and injustice.

In the same pages of *Politics* I have quoted above – where Aristotle explains that *polis* is not a matter of extrinsic union –, he stresses that a *polis* is “created by *philia*, for the will to live together is *philia*”.⁹ Thanks to the *philia* the *polis* is the union of families and villages in a perfect and self-sufficing life.

⁸ See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, X

⁹ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1280 b 38

According to Aristotle, *philia* and justice are concerned with the same objects and in every community they are both present; actually justice increases with the intensity of the *philia*.¹⁰

Another important aspect of Aristotelian *philia* – that I can detect in the *capabilities approach* – is the goodwill: wishing someone’s good for his own sake and not wishing that he *flourishes* to benefit from his good condition.¹¹ In this light we can regard the Aristotle’s notion of a friend as ‘another self’. According to the philosopher, the good man has no need of merely useful friend, just like polis does not exist merely for the sake of utility.

“If life is desirable, and particularly so for good men, because to them existence is good and pleasant for they are pleased at the consciousness of the presence in them of what is in itself good); and if as the virtuous man is to himself, he is to his friend also (for his friend is another self):-if all this be true, as his own being is desirable for each man, so, or almost so, is that of his friend. Now his being was seen to be desirable because he perceived his own goodness, and such perception is pleasant in itself. He needs, therefore, to be conscious of the existence of his friend as well, and this will be realized in their living together and sharing in discussion and thought (*koinonein logon kai dianoia*); for this is what living together would seem to mean in the case of man, and not, as in the case of cattle, feeding in the same place”.¹²

The Aristotelian focus on *philia* shows us that human happiness – if it is really ‘human’ - includes the happiness of the others and the possibility of “sharing in discussion and thought”. Also from this point of view ‘Affiliation’ has a key position: to search for the good for oneself without considering the circumstances and needs of other’s security as well as without engaging in dialogue and sharing is to live in a way not really human.

III. I have argued that, according to the Greek political perspective as well as to the *capabilities approach*, protecting from dangers, both external and internal, i.e. arranging security, is the basic and active task of a good political arrangement. So, a good politician makes the *flourishing human life* possible.

Since, according to Aristotle, *eudaimonia* amounts to the accomplishment of the activity of the soul according to virtue and it is only possible through a choice, that task can be meant as making human choice possible. Wherever freedom of choice is prevented by

¹⁰ See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII 9.

¹¹ See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IX 5.

¹² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1170 b 1-11

violence or ignorance or any other sort of constraint (see *Nicomachean Ethics* Book III), there is no room for a truly human life.

In Aristotle's view, those things which are done by force or ignorance are involuntary; he pinpoints that their moving principle is not in man, but outside him. Instead, those movements and transformations whose principle are in man are voluntary. I want to stress that Aristotelian *dynamis* – in which Sen and Nussbaum recognize an anticipation and an source of their idea of capability – is a origin of movement which is in another thing than the thing moved. Man is *dynatos*, i.e. able to do and to be, when he is “the place” of such origin. Consistently, Aristotle's notion of choice (*proairesis*) is “something voluntary”.¹³

There is a close connection between choice and virtue, therefore between choice and political community. Namely, according to Aristotle, virtue is the “habit, disposed toward action by deliberate choice, being at the mean relative to us”¹⁴ and the *polis* is aimed at enabling citizens, i.e. beings able to choose, to ‘live well’.

We may state that the *ergon* of the Aristotelian *polis* is making people capable to choose, in the different areas – as different are the virtues - of their life. Nussbaum, by shaping the list of capabilities, tries to identify these areas in today's human life.

According to Aristotle, justice is first of all the equal distribution of basic goods – which makes possible the choice and the achievement of the good human life. Security, therefore, can be meant as the possibility to live the most choiceworthy life.¹⁵ According to Sen and Nussbaum too, the political enterprise is to identify a group of human activities, that are central for the flourishing human life, and, then, to make sure that the capacity for all of these is available to all citizens.

Moreover, in both these two approaches the political community is the space of human flourishing, insofar as the man cannot be who really is, unless he is able to share “in discussion and thought”, that is to participate in the public debate.

¹³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1111b 7

¹⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1106b35

¹⁵ Considering the subject matter of the political inquiry, the link between choice and *polis* emerges again. At the beginning of *Politics* Book VII, we, actually, read: “He would duly inquire about the best *politeia* ought first to determine which is most eligible life; while this remains uncertain, the best *politeia* must also be uncertain”.(1323 a 14-17) Aristotle calls upon to shape first a conception of good human functioning – to be meant as the most choiceworthy life - and then to envisage the best political arrangement.

In Aristotelian terms, the human being is by nature a political animal since he has the *logos* – i.e. reason as well ability to speak:

“[*Logos*] is intended to set forth the expedient and inexpedient, and therefore likewise the just and the unjust. And it is a characteristic of man that he alone has any sense of good and evil, of just and unjust, and the like, and the association of living beings who have this sense makes the family and the *polis*.”¹⁶

In Nussbaum’s approach, all human beings are to be allowed to partake in the planning of their own life “asking and answering questions about what is good and how one should live. Moreover they wish to enact thier thought in their lives – to be able to choose and evaluate, and to function accordingly.”¹⁷

Sen and Nussbaum highlight the political participation as a crucial functioning. In particular, Nussbaum includes in her list, providing it with a special importance, ‘Practical Reason’. By it, she means the capability to envisage and develop a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life. This capability seems to me to require, just like the Aristotelian ‘ethical character’, first of all an appropriate education which prevents or at least reduces the deformation of preferences. Nussbaum stresses that it implies the protection of free speech and association, like – as I mentioned before – ‘Affiliation’. And like it, ‘Practical Reason’ suffuses all other capabilities: as searching for the good, neglecting the other human beings – their needs and our need of them – is behaving in no genuine or full human way, so accomplishing the other functionings in a way not oriented by the attitude to think and plan is accomplishing them in no human way.

The way of achieving human capabilities has to be a ‘political’ way, that is a rational and intersubjective way –which, as far as I can see it, can be summed up in the key role played by the ‘public debate’, meant as common search for common flourishing. Public debate is an exercise of pratical reason – the highest one according to Aristotle – and a evidence of the relationship with the other as ‘another self’, i.e. as a real friend.

Nowadays, the public debate is taking a particular shape and role, both precious and dangerous. Namely, we are urged to consider it not only a part of *good life*, which is possible when the basic protections against dangers have already been achieved but, rather,

¹⁶ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253 a 12 ff. See also *Metaphysics* I 1, 980 b 28

¹⁷ M. Nussbaum, *Aristotelian Social Democracy*, in R. B. Douglas, G. Mara, and H. Richardson, *Liberalism and the Good*, New York 1990, p.222.

also as a basic means of our security. In a pluralistic world, the common reasoning seems to be too weak and other instruments are chosen; however they turn out to be new threats leading us to “scatter around” – to use the Platonic myth - and put our life at risk, insofar as they give rise to new conflicts. Beyond the dangers coming from external forces – like nature - the ‘internal’ typically human risks are today really serious.

A renewed engagement in practical wisdom – Zeus’ gift enabling us to live together – is necessary to support our cohabitation and security.

IV. I have said above that, according to Aristotle, the search for the common good is to be considered more important than the search for the one man’s good – which might imply a risk for today’s security.

To be more precise: Aristotle explicitly says that if the end, that is the good, is the same for a single man and for a *polis*, even though it is worthwhile to purpose, attain and preserve the end for one man, it is finer and more godlike to attain it for an entire *polis*, insofar as it is something greater and more complete to purpose, attain and preserve. Surely, it could be difficult for us – men and women living in a pluralistic world concerned with the respect for differences – to envisage together the right of each man and woman to choose and develop his/her own life plan and the efforts towards a common good, meant as something “greater and more complete”. The latter may appear like a threat, insofar as it seems to be able to override each man and woman moral autonomy.

Moreover, in the first pages of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle states that the knowledge of the chief good belongs to the most “architectonic” art, which is politics. By “architectonic”, Aristotle means something that embraces all the other human activities.¹⁸ At the beginning of *Politics*, he gives similar suggestions; namely, he introduces the *polis* by

¹⁸ Similarly, in *Nicomachean Ethics* Book VII, the author says that all forms of community are to be considered as parts of the political community: men always gather together with a view to some particular advantage, and to provide something that they need. And it is for the sake of advantage that the political community too seems both to have come together originally and to endure, for this is what legislators aim at, and they call just what is to the common advantage. The other communities, however, aim at particular and narrow advantages but the political community does not exist for the sake of the present advantage but for the sake of what is advantageous for life as a whole.

stressing that it is a community and, like every other community, exists with a view to an end: its end is the highest end which includes all the other ones.

These statements may sound not only difficult to envisage, but also like something to worry about. Actually, the idea of an ability whose end includes the other ends could easily strike us as a despotic power – which is something not to be neglected especially today when the attempts to envisage universal values come to terms with the theoretical risk of inclusivism, as well as the possibility of override and smashing the other, thus provoking new tensions and forms of violence.

Since the Aristotelian idea of the ‘architectonic knowledge’ could be misleading unless the value of such “including” and “embracing” is better specified, it seems to me to be very relevant to inquire into the sort of unity that Aristotle envisages – which can also help us into the understanding of Nussbaum’s *capabilities approach*. Actually, the latter aims at giving a universal framework, based on an “Aristotelian essentialism”;¹⁹ namely, if the Aristotelian account on *polis* could be successfully challenged by such arguments, Nussbaum’s view would be charged too. I will briefly argue that this is not the case.

Let us, therefore, start from an easy consideration: the political arrangement sets the laws; according to Aristotle, the law is an universal statement, nonetheless he is well-aware that it often requires a correction. Namely, in *Nicomachean Ethics* Book V – the one devoted to justice – we read about the “correction of legal justice”: equity. Now, the law being insufficient owing to its universality, i.e. the absoluteness of its statement – which is necessary anyway -, what is equitable is somehow is better than what is just, meant as legal just.

In Aristotle’s words:

“Law is universal but about some things it is not possible to make a universal statement which shall be correct. In those cases, then, in which it is necessary to speak universally, but not possible to do so correctly, the law takes the usual case, though it is not ignorant of the possibility of error. And it is nonetheless correct; for the error is not in the law nor in the legislator but in the nature of the thing [...]. When the law speaks universally, then, and a case arises on it which is not covered by the universal statement, then it is right, where the legislator fails us and has erred by oversimplicity, to correct the omission-to say what the legislator himself would have said had he been present, and would have put into his law if

¹⁹ See, M.C. Nussbaum, *Human Functioning and Social Justice. In Defense of an Aristotelian Essentialism*, Political Theory, Vol.20,1992, no2; *In Defence of Universal Values*, ch.1 of *Women and Human Development. The Capabilities Approach*, Cambridge University Press 2000

he had known”.²⁰

Then Aristotle gives a significant example of this attitude towards the universal. Namely, he says that when something that is indefinite and changing (in his terms *endechomenon*) must be measured, the rule has to be indefinite too, like the leaden rule used in making the Lesbian moulding: this rule is not rigid, but, rather, adapts itself to the shape of the stone.

The idea of equity and the image of Lesbian leaden rule give us an idea of the fact that the Aristotelian universal is not such as to cover and include the particular differences, and the sort of unity it produces cannot be meant as a tyrannical uniformity. This is disclosed precisely in the task of political inquiry and in the sort of unity that the Aristotelian *polis* involves. Namely, when Aristotle gives the statement that “people seek not the way of their ancestors but the good” - relevant and often quoted in Nussbaum’s account -, he specifies:

“As in other sciences, so in politics, it is impossible that all things should be precisely set down in writing; for enactments must be universal, but actions are concerned with particulars”.²¹

Moreover, few pages earlier, the author develops this issue by looking at the *polis* and stressing that equality cannot imply too a close unity, since its nature is to be a pluralità (1261 a 18).

In order to introduce this idea, Aristotle again focuses on the difference between an alliance based on utility and *polis* – which once more shows the role of the basic protection against dangers:

“A *polis* is not made up only of so many men, but of different kinds of men; for similars do not constitute a *polis*. It is not like a military alliance. The usefulness of the latter depends upon its quantity even where there is no difference in quality (for mutual protection is the end aimed at), just as a greater weight of anything is more useful than a less (in like manner, a state differs from a nation, when the nation has not its population organized in villages, but lives an Arcadian sort of life); but the elements out of which a unity is to be formed differ in kind”²²

The *polis* is a community of free and equal men, who speak and act separately not collectively.²³ The political government is the rule of free and equal citizens over each other by turns.

²⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1137 b 13 - 23

²¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1269 a 9 – 12. See also 1282 b 5 ff.

²² Aristotle, *Politics*, 1261 a 22 - 30

²³ See Aristotle, *Politics*, 1332 a 36 - 37

So, even if a close unity was possible, building it would not be the good of the *polis* but, rather its destruction –and “the good of each is what preserves (*sozei*) it” (1261b9). By *sozei*, we can mean saves it, preserves it, arranges the best condition for its existence.

This account is a specific attack against the Platonic idea of community, that – according to Aristotle – forces the citizens into an unjust unity that does neither preserve their capability to choice nor, then, their *eudaimonia*.

Nussbaum’s approach seems to me to properly inherit this account, therefore developing a notion of universal which is not impositive such that does not jeopardize security, but, rather, make it possible.

By focusing on the differences between Plato’s and Aristotle’s views about the nature of political unity, she stresses that they give raise to “issue of lasting importance for any attempt to describe the relationship between political institutions and the human good”.²⁴ She highlightes these differences on the basis of their accounts on human nature and, then, on human needs; according to her, Aristotle’s view makes room for the diversity in the choice of good.²⁵

Consistently, by shaping the *capabilities approach*, Nussbaum speaks about “separateness”, meant as the ontological separation among citizens engaged in the common search for a good life. Namely, they are viewed first of all as distinct receivers of the distribution of basic goods as material prerequisites of flourishing, then as separate choosers, i.e. individually able to strive towards human excellence. Unlike Utilitarians, who favor maximizing the total or average, she finds in Aristotle's criticisms of Plato the importance of providing the conditions of good life for each ad every person. Nussbaum often says that the task of good political arrangement is the distribution to citizens, taken

²⁴ M.C.Nussbaum, *Shame, Separateness, and Political Unity*, in A.O.Rorty (edited by), *Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics*, University of California Press, p. 396.

²⁵ With regard to this, Nussbaum gives a very interesting suggestion: “Aristotle probably believes, as much as Plato, that the good life is the same for us all – or at least that all rational agents, after sufficient reflection and considertion of alternatives, could agree about the plan of the best life. But he will insist that although the good may be objective – or, as seem more correct intersubjective – the *choice* of good must come from within [...] All reflective men might choose the same good life; but what makes each of them a *good man* is that is the one who chooses it. And what is more, it will not count as a *good life* for him unless it is a life chosen by his own active practical reason: prohairesis enters centrally into the specification of the good life itself”. (M.C.Nussbaum, *Shame, Separateness, and Political Unity*, pp. 422-423).

one by one and not viewed as interchangeable, of the goods and the supports that allow them to choose and achieve a *human flourishing life*.²⁶

In other words, politicians should consider each and every human being – as well as train them to that purpose - as a responsible source of agency. ‘Separateness’ deals with a person’s awareness of his/her own value, his/her own self-esteem, and it implies education at engaging in critical reflection, hence the development of a ‘truly human’ way of living together. It means constant effort of engaging a dialogue with the other “self”, never considered as a tool but always as ends;²⁷ so it amounts to the best instrument to prevent conflicts and preserve security.

²⁶ See, M.C.Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development. The Capabilities Approach*, Cambridge University Press 2000, p. 61 ff.

²⁷ See Aristotle, *Magna Moralia*, 1194 b 6-7

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