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CONTEMPLATION AND CIVIC HAPPINESS IN PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

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Contemplation and Civic Happiness in Plato and Aristotle

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Abstract: This study concerns the civic value of contemplation in Plato and Aristotle: how does intellectual contemplation contribute to the happiness of the ideal state? The texts discussed include the *Republic*, the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics*, works in which contemplation is viewed from a political angle. The Element concludes that in the *Republic* contemplation has purely instrumental value, whereas in the *Politics* and *Nicomachean Ethics* it has purely intrinsic value. To do justice to the complexity of the issues involved, the author addresses a broader question about the nature of civic happiness: whether it is merely the aggregate of individual happiness or an organic quality that arises from the structure of the state. Answering this question has implications for how contemplation contributes to civic happiness. The study also discusses how many citizens Plato and Aristotle expected to be engaged in contemplation in the ideal state.

Keywords: Plato, Aristotle, Contemplation, Happiness, Politics

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