

Was Aristotle indifferent to sport? Analysis of *The Nicomachean Ethics*, *Rhetoric*, *Politics*, *Metaphysics* and *On the Soul*

¿Era Aristóteles indiferente al deporte? Análisis de *Ética a Nicómaco*, *Retórica*, *Política*, *Metafísica* y *Acerca del alma*

JUAN RODRÍGUEZ LÓPEZ

Facultad de Ciencias del Deporte. Universidad de Granada. España.

Carretera de Alfacar, S/N. 18071 Granada

juanrl@ugr.es

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4985-2314>

Recibido: 24-06-2020. Aceptado: 17-12-2020.

Cómo citar / Citation: Rodríguez, J. (2020). Was Aristotle indifferent to sport? Analysis of *The Nicomachean Ethics*, *Rhetoric*, *Politics*, *Metaphysics* and *On the Soul*, 22, 167-186.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24197/aefd.0.2020.167-186>

Abstract: After the systematic analysis of five main works by Aristotle –*The Nicomachean Ethics*, *Rhetoric*, *Politics*, *Metaphysics* and *On the Soul*–, I observe a very considerable intellectual appreciation of Aristotle for the sport activity, which is manifested in a) an abundant number of references in *Rhetoric*, *Politics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, b) the inclusion of the sporting and competitive qualities in the lists of goods that are suitable for man, in *Rhetoric*, c) the educational and social importance that Aristotle gives to sporting activity, in *Politics* and d) the creation of a rich epistemology on the science of physical exercise and sport, in *The Nicomachean Ethics*, *Rhetoric*, *Politics* and *Metaphysics*.

Keywords: Aristotle; Plato; sport philosophy; sport history; Greek physical education.

Resumen. Después del análisis sistemático de cinco obras principales de Aristóteles –*Ética a Nicómaco*, *Retórica*, *Política*, *Metafísica* y *Acerca del alma*–, se puede advertir un muy considerable aprecio intelectual de Aristóteles por la actividad deportiva, que se manifiesta en: a) un número abundante de referencias en *Retórica*, *Política* y *Ética de Nicómaco*, b) la inclusión de las cualidades deportivas y competitivas en las listas de bienes que convienen al hombre, en *Retórica*, c) la importancia educativa y social que Aristóteles da a la actividad deportiva, en *Política* y d) la creación de una rica epistemología sobre la ciencia del ejercicio físico y el deporte, en *Ética a Nicómaco*, *Retórica*, *Política* y *Metafísica*.

Palabras clave. Aristóteles; Platón; filosofía del deporte; historia del deporte; educación física en Grecia.

INTRODUCTION

In connection with Aristotle's thinking on exercise and sport, Young (2005) has stated that "Aristotle, Plato's most illustrious student, soon took a major step towards an eventual rejection of bodily excellence among the ancients. (...) Aristotle was the first of a great many to view physical and intellectual training as enemies in constant confrontation" (p. 30).

It has also been said, in a prominent study on Aristotle by Heather Reid (2010a) that he was little interested in sport and that, as a result, there are few references to sports in his books: "It seems unlikely Aristotle would be observing athletic events in the first place. Unlike his teacher Plato, who, as we have seen, was immersed in the athletic milieu, Aristotle rarely mentions the games" (p. 183).

This supposed Aristotle's indifference or negative influence on the sports afterwards, contrasts with the considerable number of current publications that attempt to apply Aristotle's theories to the fields of sports education and sports ethics (Austin, 2013; Oskvig (2103), Hochstetler & Hopsicker (2016), Hochstetler (2006), Hyland (2015), Hwang & Kretchmar (2010).

Thus, according to Oskvig (2013, p. 20) Aristotle emphasizes the role of the human body in ethical life, including in his category of ethical goods bodily capacities such as strength and speed. In Aristotle's "ethics of virtue", intellectual life, says Oskvig, is only an important part of life, since Aristotelian ethics also includes family, friends, physical condition, property and other material goods. If one accepts this inclusive vision of "eudaimonia" (happy active life, which Aristotle identifies with virtue and therefore with ethics), one must admit that for the Stagirit the exercise of physical strength is imbued with moral excellence.

Therefore, this idea of Oskvig supposes an extraordinary evaluation of the potential of Aristotle's theory for the body and sport, which would imply the recognition of the morality of physical exercise in itself and not only as a means of health or self-esteem or to prolong life.

This contrast, together with our previous impression of Aristotle's appreciation for the sport, due to his abundant comments on the physical

qualities of athletes and the sporting references in *Nicomachean Ethics*, has awakened our personal interest in carrying out a systematic analysis of the importance of exercise and sport in Aristotle's work based on sporting references from a large part of his bibliographical production. Specifically, we will carry out an analysis of *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Rhetoric*, *Politics*, *Metaphysics* and *On the Soul*. In this way I try to contribute to clarify the meaning of sport in the Aristotelian books and to prove Aristotle's interest in sport.

Before continuing with the analysis, I must make some previous observations. The term "gymnastics" (γυμναστική) is used by Aristotle to designate physical exercise and training in the disciplines of Greek athletics and sports fighting or, also, to designate the science that deals with it. Therefore, I think it is appropriate to translate the term "gymnastics" to the terms "exercise" and "sport" (understood in a broad sense), since the current expression "Greek sport" is accepted both in academic and popular language. But I will avoid always translating it literally as "gymnastics" since the meaning of "gymnastics" has changed in today's languages with respect to its meaning in Greece.

Of course, what interests me most is not Aristotle's appreciation or disdain for sport on an emotional level, which is of very secondary interest, but rather to analyze on a rational level his qualification of sport as important or not important for man and society.

Finally, the fact that Miller (2004) in his renowned book *Arete: Greek sports from ancient sources*, gathers only 6 references to sport in Aristotle's books, also indicates that the analysis of Aristotle's sports references deserves this new study.

1. ANALYSIS OF SPORTS REFERENCES IN *THE NICOMACHEAN ETHICS* (EXTRAORDINARY EPISTEMOLOGY)

We will classify the references to sport in *The Nicomachean Ethics* in two types: first, references to the science of physical exercise and sport (gymnastics, γυμναστική) of which we find a total of 8, and, second, references to exercise and sport as an example to clarify his philosophy, of which we find a total of 15.

As for those references devoted to the science of sport, we observe that Aristotle understands gymnastics as a biological science of physical exercise that seeks health and sports performance. These are statements and arguments of an epistemological and biological nature.

Here is the epistemology-biology of *Nicomachean Ethics*: The science of sport (gymnastics) is defined as the science of just measure in effort (1096b), which tries to avoid excess and lack of exercise (1124b), which seeks the intermediate, which is the ‘good form’ in gymnastics (1138b). We look for what produces and is favorable to the firmness of the flesh, since good physical condition is the firmness of the flesh and the vicious condition is the laxity of the flesh (1129a). He warns that his knowledge is not necessary for all, for we can obey him who possesses this science, and that we do not practice it only by possessing this scientific knowledge (1144a). He also warns of the need for good laws in the city that educate in gymnastics (1180b). Aristotle distinguishes between general knowledge which would be proper to science, and his particular application, which has greater difficulty (1106b). It is a science encompassed in those of human action (within his classification of science in sciences of nature, action and production), which are characterized by being knowledge about what we deliberate and can be otherwise (1112b). (In *Magna Moralia* 1187b, Aristotle argues that there is a varied, individual state of health and beauty for each body whose cultivation and preservation determines the choice of the type of gymnastic exercises to be chosen).

I am surprised by Aristotle's observations on the theory of sports science because they are so numerous and clearly mark the nature and objectives of this epistemology. It is perhaps the most important part of Aristotle's sporting thought in *The Nicomachean Ethics*. We will also see in *Rhetoric*, when talking about the sporting qualities of boys, an extraordinary theoretical development on the athletic abilities according to the different sports specialties.

Let's see below the list of sport examples he goes to in order to clarify his philosophical theories, which often offer an interesting informative content about Greek sport: The list of sports examples is as follows:

1. The first sports example is found in the reflection on the research methodology. Aristotle asks whether we should proceed from the beginning to the end, like the runners in the stadium: from where those who preside over the competitions are located to the finish line, or vice versa (1095b).

2. In the second, he tries to illustrate the difference between habit and activity, and the insufficiency of habit to achieve the end: in the

Games it is not those who have the best body or the strongest (habit) who reach the crown, but those who compete (activity) (1099a).

3. In order to explain that excess and defect destroy perfection and that it is convenient to seek the middle ground for each individual, Aristotle takes the example of athletes, runners and wrestlers, who were subjected to a diet according to their weight, according to their sport and depending on whether they were beginners or veterans (1106b).

4. The usual full-time training of those who prepare for competitions is used by Aristotle to compare with the great effort required for the exercise of virtues (1114a).

5. Aristotle observes that not only the vices of the soul are socially criticized and censored, but also those of the body when they are voluntary and caused by lack of exercise (1114b).

6. After dealing with virtues in general, he goes on to dealing with them one by one, beginning with courage; with regard to this virtue he will say that there are behaviors that seem to be motivated by courage but are not really so. To explain this, he uses the example of the fighters who achieve victory not by being braver but by having more vigorous bodies and more experience (1117a).

7. In this virtue of courage, bearing painful things has more merit than turning away from pleasant things, so pugilists and pankratiasts are good examples of courage (1117b).

8. After courage, the second virtue that Aristotle deals with is temperance, which would have as its object the pleasures of the body, not of the soul, and Aristotle defends the dignity of gymnasium massages, because they are not licentious pleasures, since the touch that affects licentious people is not of the whole body but of certain parts (1118b).

9. Thirdly, he deals with the virtue of generosity and says that expenses must be adapted to the situation, since he who sins out of excess and is vulgar spends more than is due; thus, a beautiful ball or “ariballus” can be considered an excellent gift for a child (1123a).

10. When discussing incontinence, he argues that the desire for victory (such as the desire for other good or ‘intermediate’ things, such as honour, children, and wealth) is not censured for being experienced, but for being more concerned than it should be. He goes on to say that this can only be called incontinence in a relative sense -for incontinence affects bodily pleasures- just as the Olympic victor of 456 B.C. was called ‘Anthropos’ (1148a).

11. Explaining the difference between simple benevolence towards someone and friendship, he stated that benevolence can arise suddenly, as it happens to spectators with respect to those who compete in gymnastic contests. But this benevolence is not true friendship, for although they are very attracted to those who compete, they would not join them for any enterprise (1167a).

12. In treating friendship he exposes that for friends the proper thing is the common life. Therefore, some drink together, others play together, others devote themselves together to gymnastic exercises, hunting or philosophy (1172a).

13. When referring to pleasure he says that it is of whole and complete things. He contrasts it with the movement of translation in the stadium, which is different if it is a matter of running the whole stadium or only part of it, or crossing this line or the other (1174b).

14. In distinguishing happiness -which is an activity sought for itself and not to achieve anything else- from play and bodily pleasures, both of which are also sought for themselves, he alludes to the reprehensible customs of the tyrants, who gave themselves to the pleasures of the body and in whose courts those who had the ability to perform bodily games were greatly appreciated (1176b).

15. Education must specify what is appropriate for each individual. Thus we see that boxing masters train their boxers differently according to their individual characteristics (1180b).

We see that the number of sporting references in *Nicomachean Ethics* is considerable. Adding the sports examples and the considerations about science, we obtain 23.

2. ANALYSIS OF SPORTS REFERENCES IN *RHETORIC* (EXTRAORDINARY EVALUATION OF THE ATHLETIC-COMPETITIVE CONDITION)

In *Rhetoric* we find again wonderful epistemological arguments, in addition to those already seen in *The Nicomachean Ethics*.

If in other books Aristotle refers to the philosophical principles of the science of sport, here in *Rhetoric* he descends to contents of a technical nature that bring us closer to the theory of sports training, explaining what the excellence of the body consists of for sports competitions.

In 1361b he declares that the excellence of human bearing consists in excelling in height, volume and width over others, but to such an extent

that the movements are not made heavy because of some excess. (Also in *Nicomachean Ethics* he manifested his preference for large bodies by affirming that only large bodies can be said to be beautiful, not small ones: 'magnanimity implies greatness, just as beauty is given in a large body; small ones will be exquisite and well proportioned, but beautiful will not' (1123b)). The excellence of the body for competition would be a product of bearing, strength and speed (since he who is fast is also strong). For he who has the ability to propel the legs in a certain way and to move them quickly and with great strides, is a good runner, he who is able to oppress and hold, he is a good wrestler, and he who is able to push with blows, is a good boxer; he who has these two qualities serves as a *pankratiast*, and he who has them all as a pentathlete.

As we can see, these are only sporting considerations applied to runners, to the various specialties of wrestlers and pentathletes. Similarly, Aristotle's explanation in *On the Progression of Animals* (705a), that pentathletes jump more with dumbbells than without them, and that the swinging of the runners' arms helps them run faster, is a purely sporting explanation (technique, biomechanics), not ethical.

In this book of *Rhetoric*, Aristotle explains what force is: force is the capacity to move another body or weight as one wishes, which necessarily has to be dragging it or pushing it or lifting it, or squeezing and oppressing it. So, the one who is strong is strong because he is capable of doing all these things or some of them (1361b 3-34).

Reid (2010a) points out that Aristotle would not be in the front row as a spectator of sports competitions (p.183), but the truth is that many of Aristotle's comments seem to be typical of a sports coach. Aristotle's sports commentaries, as we see, occupy a wide epistemological range, from the philosophical to the scientific and technical.

We can see in *Rhetoric* two references to the science of exercise, as examples to clarify his philosophy: The causes and consequences can be simultaneous or posterior to the first; thus, doing gymnastics, in most cases, produces health (1362a). On the other hand, what constitutes an end is greater than what is not, since this is preferred for another reason, for example, gymnastics is done to have a well-disposed body (1364a 3-5).

More important and surprising in *Rhetoric* are the lists of main goods for man -typical in this book- in which athletic and competitive qualities stand out, and therefore these lists manifest the indisputable esteem that Aristotle has for the body and sport, especially considering that Aristotle

conceives Rhetoric as the art of persuading what is good and dissuading what is not, being thus strongly connected with his ethics (1362a15-20).

Therefore, we see that the dissonance between Aristotle's alleged disinterest in sport and the strong applicability of his ethical theory to sport seems to be fading, since both things are evident in Aristotle's books and theory: the interest in sport (as we see in *Rhetoric*) and the applicability of his ethics to sport (an ethics of harmonious effort and repetition).

In the *Rhetoric* lists of goods, sport appears with notoriety:

Now, if this is happiness, then it must be agreed that its parts are nobility, the many and faithful friends, wealth, goodness and abundance of children and good agedness; furthermore, the excellences proper to the body (such as health, beauty, bearing and capacity for competition); and also fame, honor, good luck and virtue (or also its parts: wisdom, courage, justice and moderation). Because of course it would be superlatively independent who possesses the goods that are in oneself and those that come from outside, since others are not out of these. Goods that are in oneself are those that refer to the soul and body, and those that come from outside, nobility, friends, money and honor; but also we think that, in order to reach these goods, it is proper to have power and luck, because in this way life becomes safer. Let us now make some considerations about these goods and about what each one of them is (...) The goodness and abundance of children is not a subject that offers doubts. A community has good offspring if it has numerous and good youth, good in terms of the excellences of the body, such as bearing, beauty, strength, and capacity for competition. As for the soul, the virtues of the young man are moderation and courage. On the other hand, for an individual, the goodness and abundance of children consists in having many children of one's own and of the indicated qualities, both female and male. The virtue of women resides, as to the body, in beauty and bearing, and as to the soul, in moderation and in being industrious without meanness (...). (1360b20-1361a10).

These are Aristotle's explicit praise of the purely physical and sporting qualities of individuals. It follows that Aristotle's praise of pentathletes as the most perfect of all athletes also refers to their physical and competitive qualities, not their ethical qualities as suggested by Reid (2010a, 183-184).

These are phrases and praises from Aristotle to the beauty of the pentathletes' athletic body and to their strength and speed:

As for beauty, it is different in each of the ages. The beauty of the young person consists of having a body that is useful for the tiring exercises, as well as those of race as those of strength, and that in addition is pleasant to see for enjoyment (of the spectators). For this reason, the most beautiful young people are those who perform in the pentathlon, since by nature they are equally gifted for strength and speed exercises. On the other hand, the beauty of the mature man lies in his aptitude for the works of war, as well as in the fact that he seems to be both pleasant and fearsome. Finally, the beauty of the old man lies in his aptitude to resist necessary fatigues and in being free of pains because he does not suffer from any inconvenience of old age. (1361b).

3. ANALYSIS OF SPORTS REFERENCES IN *POLITICS* (CONTINUITY WITH PLATO)

In this book, Aristotle, who certainly does not deceive with the title of this book, deals systematically and realistically with everything related to the Politics of the city, of the state: the types of individuals and collectives in the city -families and communities-, the relations between them and the different political regimes.

And in it, the author also exposes -systematically, as it cannot be otherwise in the case of Aristotle- everything that refers to gymnastics (exercise, competitions) in the city and in the education of the citizen. Again we find excellent epistemological considerations on the objectives of gymnastics as a science. These epistemological considerations are appropriate to the political and educational subject and different from the epistemological considerations that appear in *Nicomachean Ethics*, in *Rhetoric* and in *Metaphysics*. The epistemological considerations in each of these books are specific to the subject matter of each book and not a mere repetition in the different books.

For Plato in *Republic* (ca.390-385 BC /1986, 402d), the most beautiful spectacle would be a man in whom the beautiful qualities of soul and body coincide. We have just seen in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* a similar expression, also of an aesthetic and emotional nature: pentathletes are the most perfect of athletes because nature has endowed them with strength and speed and enjoy watching them for pleasure. Thus, even on an aesthetic and emotional level, we can find in the philosopher Aristotle an express declaration of appreciation for sport. Aristotle also deals with the *Constitution of the Athenians* (ca.330-322 B.C./1995), says

something about the organization and the prizes of the gymnastic and equestrian competitions of the Panathenaic Games. Unlike the musical competitions, these competitions would be awarded with olive oil (60.3).

Noteworthy is the explicit importance that Aristotle gives to sport in *Politics* (as in *Rhetoric*). As we will see, Aristotle considers that gymnastics, like Plato, is indispensable in education because those qualities cannot be given by music (1337b, 1338a). Like Plato, he rejects the unilateral excess of many athletes (1335b). Also, like Plato, he believes in the supposed incompatibility of the exercise of the mind with that of the body performed at the same time (1339a).

The continuity of Aristotle's thought (in *Politics*) with that of Plato (in *Republic*), therefore, is appreciable as far as sport in education is concerned. The difference is that Aristotle, being a realistic philosopher, does not insist as much as Plato on the planning of gymnastic education, because Aristotle does not believe in that utopian plan of education of the guardian-philosophers.

We will see in the following paragraphs how, with a realistic concern, Aristotle explains that gymnastics must be well organized in education and in the community, for the achievement of the best city and the best citizen (the "free man", by the way, the only citizen who deserves such a name for Aristotle). Gymnastics must be well organized also outside the educational sphere, with gymnasiums and gymnastic contests, also for women (although Aristotle considered them different, inferior and subordinate to men by nature). Aristotle collected some data on the organization of gymnastics in some cities.

Gymnastic exercises appear as important social identifiers of men belonging to the most distinguished classes in Greek cities, the "citizen", the "free men" (1264a). Besides, physical exercise is especially identified with the rich and with the oligarchies (governments of the rich); oligarchies that, by the way, prefer that only the rich do physical exercise (1279a).

According to Aristotle, the most prosperous cities and those most concerned with good order had Magistrates for the direction of gymnastic exercises and for the celebration of gymnastic contests (1322b) and, in the square of the free men (the privileged ones) - one of the most distinguished places in the city, to which artisans or peasants do not have access, unless they are called - Aristotle advises that there should be a gymnasium, in which some Magistrates should devote themselves to

gymnastics along with free men, managing to impose their modesty and virtue on all the others (1331a).

The legislator must ensure that the bodies of the citizens in his charge are at their best (1334b).

Aristotle is not in favor of the physical constitution of athletes, because it is not favorable to the welfare of the citizen, nor to their health. Instead, Aristotle demands that the citizens should have a constitution accustomed to exercise, avoiding violent exercise, and avoiding specialization which are defects of athletes (1335b).

For Aristotle, sport contributes and must contribute to the excellence of man - who, for him, is necessarily a citizen - and anything that he believes can harm such excellence is rejected.

This explains his criticism of the athletes of his time. It is necessary to take into account that the Greeks' sport was very limited in terms of the number of sports specialties, incomparably smaller than the sport of our time, and that a huge percentage of those athletes were engaged in violent combat sports.

Specifically, the pankratiasts and the pugilists fought by striking without protection on their faces, without taking breaks between rounds, without having any time limits or separation by weight categories (which favored the overweight of the fighters).

It is likely that these unhealthy sports habits are the reason for Aristotle's criticism of the athletes of his time, of certain athletes, not all of them because he clearly praises the pentathletes.

Aristotle goes on in *Politics* explaining the reason for the inclusion of gymnastics in the disciplines of education. Gymnastics develops manhood and is beneficial for health and strength, and none of these effects could come from music (1337b, 1338a). A child's body must be educated before his mind and earlier through habits than through reason (1338b). Aristotle complains that, in fact, children are educated in physical exercise in a harmful way, often favoring an athletic disposition similar to that of adults, being brutalized, making them useful only for a function in life, and leaving them uneducated in what is necessary (1338b).

Until adolescence, only mild exercise should be done, avoiding violent exercise that damages body shape and growth (1338b). This seems to be demonstrated by the case of the Lacedemonians, since only two or three Olympic champions won as children and then as adults (1339a). It would be more appropriate that from puberty onwards, boys

devote themselves to other disciplines for three years, and later on it would be the time to devote themselves to strenuous exercises, without at the same time engaging in exercise of the mind and body (1339a). Many times Aristotle makes purely biological observations about exercise; Plato in *Republic* generally limits himself to philosophical considerations.

As for philosophical considerations, I do not perceive a break between Plato (*Republic*) and Aristotle (*Politics*) but continuity, as concisely suggested by Kretchmar, Dyresson, Llewellyn, and Gleaves (2018, 87).

Concerning epistemological considerations, in *Politics* Aristotle also includes an impressive and extraordinary enumeration of the purposes of gymnastics as a science:

The proper thing of the science or art of gymnastics is to study: a) What kind of exercise is suitable and for what kind of body; b) What is the best type of exercise that corresponds to the most perfect body and best endowed by nature; c) What kind of exercise, in the opinion of the majority, is suitable for all or for the majority; d) How to awaken interest and obtain the proper complexion and knowledge for sports competition and wrestling, in someone who is unconcerned about it, since this would also be an important task for the gymnastics teacher and trainer (1288b).

If we count the total of sport references in *Politics*, we find 18 (ten of them concentrated in the final chapters of the book dedicated to education, -chapter 17 of Book 7 and all the chapters of Book 8).

4. ANALYSIS OF SPORTS REFERENCES IN METAPHYSICS

In *Metaphysics* there are five references to sport. Three of them are sports examples to clarify the metaphysical theory. The most interesting one is that which compares the pre-Socratic, Pythagorean and Socratic philosophers -that is, the whole Greek philosophy before Aristotle- with the untrained pugilists, those without a coach, who only by chance strike a good blow, in the same way those philosophers only succeed in metaphysical questions (about being and the causes of being) very rarely and only by chance (985a).

Two other references allude to the order of the Pan-Hellenic Games: The Isthmian Games are immediately prior to the Olympic Games (994a) and those of Nemea are immediately preceding those of Delphi (1018b).

Of the two remaining references, one alludes to the sports stadium as the usual measure of large and imprecise length (1053a). The last reference is of epistemological nature, since it is an outline of his theory of science -and, therefore, very appropriate for this book on *Metaphysics*.

In this scheme of theory of science, Aristotle classifies the sciences into practical, productive and natural sciences. The natural sciences are neither practical nor productive, but theoretical, and some capture what it is through sensation, others through hypothesis. All science must fall into one of these three genres, and the science of gymnastics, like medicine, is explicitly classified by Aristotle as a practical science. Aristotle contends that every science investigates certain principles and causes concerning the things for which they are responsible, and in every practical science their "movement" (their knowledge) does not take place in what has to be done, but in the agents (1064a).

Thus, every science seeks principles and causes, laws and generalizations that, in the case of gymnastics being a practical science, refers mainly to actions to be performed by those who know it.

5. ANALYSIS OF SPORTS REFERENCES IN *ON THE SOUL*

Reid (2007) claims that the mind-body dichotomy - just like the study-sport and individual-community dichotomies - characteristic of our time, is not exactly a dichotomy in Plato, since between them there is no confrontation but rather complementarity and unity (p.160). The same can be said for Aristotle, since the soul-body confrontation of our time, as well as the identification of sport as something exclusively of the body, is not Aristotelian.

In the book *On the Soul*, Aristotle deals with both the body and the soul, since he extends his treatment to each of the senses and sensations, to such an extent that the book could be divided into two main parts: the study of sensations and the study of operations of the intellect (concepts, judgements, reasoning).

This great extension in the treatment of senses in the book *On the Soul*, is explained because, for Aristotle, the irrational soul cannot be separated from the body, like the form of matter (412b15; 413a5). Certainly, the rational soul can be detached from the body -Aristotle says the sensory faculty is not given without the body, while the intellect is separable- (429b5), but in spite of this separability, the intellect intervenes and has an important part in the bodily activity. According to

Aristotle, the intellect is capable of thinking and doing; there is an intellect capable of becoming all things and another capable of doing all things (429a15). Finally, Aristotle defends that the separability of the intellect will allow that, once separated, it will be immortal and eternal (429a25).

Affirmations like the previous ones about the separability of the intellectual soul from the body -and other similar statements that he makes in *Nicomachean Ethics*, among which I would emphasize the categorical affirmation that "man is his mind" (1169a)-, have fed among some authors the so-called "non-inclusive" interpretation of Aristotle. It is a spiritualistic interpretation of Aristotle's philosophy that would entail Aristotle's contempt for the body.

This spiritualistic interpretation does not seem justified, taking into account Aristotle's work as a whole (we have already seen, for example, his high explicit consideration of the corporal goods in *Rhetoric*).

For Aristotle, sport would be a type of body movement -local or translational movement- determined by desire and intellect. So involved is movement in the soul that it enters into the Aristotelian definition of the soul: 'It is usual to define the soul primarily through two differential notes - local movement and the activity of intellection and thinking' (427a15-20). The implication of the intellect in movement would be evident because 'desire is not sufficient to explain such movement: proof of this is that those who have control of themselves do not carry out those behaviors that they wish and desire, but let themselves be guided by the intellect' (433a5).

In *On the soul* there is no reference to sport, unlike what happens in *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Politics*, *Rhetoric*, and even in *Metaphysics*, but Aristotle's explanations in this book allow us to understand that for him, sport is the activity of the body and the intellect.

6. CONTINUITY AND OVERCOMING OF PLATO BY ARISTOTLE

Young (2005) makes an excellent study, covering a wide historical spectrum, from antiquity to the present time, on the sentence "mens sana in corpore sano", on the possibility of the existence of the learned and erudite athlete. In this study, the main Greek character he focuses on is Plato, carrying out a detailed study of the sources. However, he affirms about Aristotle that took the first step in the rejection of the body and athletics in antiquity (p. 30), and I don't see any reason for it.

We can see that Plato had already said the same thing before in the book *Republic* (see Jowett, B. Trans. 2016) in similar words:

At the age when the necessary gymnastics are over: the period whether of two or three years which passes in this sort of training is useless for any other purpose; for sleep and exercise are unpropitious to learning; and the trial of who is first in gymnastic exercises is one of the most important tests to which our youth are subjected. (537b).

Obviously, in these statements there is no rejection of sport by Plato, just as there was no rejection of sport by Aristotle, but simply a way of organizing the educational program.

In many subjects other than sports, Aristotle (in *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*), follows the theories of Plato's *Republic*. Thus, for example, in the importance of habits in education (*Rep.* 444d,e; *Pol.* 1338b), the relationship between happiness and virtue (*Rep.* 576c, 578b; *Pol.* 1325a), the contempt of democracy (*Rep.* 555b; *Pol.* 1296b), the eugenic mentality (*Rep.* 461a; *Pol.* 1335a), the way of explaining tyranny and the character of tyrants (*Rep.* 573a-577e; *Pol.* 1310b), the contempt of the lower classes (*Rep.* 466b, *Pol.* 1278a-468a), even a certain disregard for women (*Rep.* 469d; *Pol.* 1277b). In the same way Aristotle (in *Politics*) follows the theories of Plato's *Republic* on sport, such as a) the importance and necessity of gymnastics in education, b) the criticism of the excesses of gymnastics by athletes and c) the non-convenience of the simultaneity of gymnastics and study in the education of young people.

This is the sporting heritage that Aristotle receives from Plato and there is, therefore, continuity between Aristotle and Plato in sporting thought.

Apart from this continuity, I think that Aristotle surpasses Plato's sports heritage by explicitly declaring, in *Rhetoric*, the excellence of physical qualities for young people and, above all, by adding an interesting epistemology of sports science and biological principles of sports training, which we have referred to in detail in the analysis of the books.

Reid (2010b) notes in "The Epicurean Spectator" that there was a severe shift in philosophical thought between Greece and Rome - the Greeks were interested in theoretical philosophy; the Romans became interested in practical philosophy (p.195).

It was, in Greece, a moment of historical splendor for the theory of science. At that time, the theory of the science of physical exercise appeared and developed quite systematically. It could not have appeared already in Rome, because the Romans were not too attracted to epistemology or athletics.

So, the love of the Greeks for theoretical philosophy (metaphysics and epistemology) also had this modest but interesting consequence: the development of exercise epistemology by Aristotle.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The considerable number of references to sport (in *The Nicomachean Ethics, Rhetoric, Politics, Metaphysics*), to the science of exercise (in *The Nicomachean Ethics, Rhetoric, Politics, Metaphysics*) and the praise of competition and competitive qualities (in *Rhetoric*), indicate Aristotle's great appreciation of sport.

In bringing together his reflections on sport, we can find an abundance of considerations of a philosophical nature: epistemological, anthropological, educational and political.

Anthropological considerations in which the inclusion of the competitive qualities of young people in the list of man's main assets (1360b-1361a) stands out. Educational reflections, such as that the body must be educated through sport before educating thought, and that habits must be educated through sport before educating thought (1338b). Political considerations, such as that the political authorities must organize sports competitions in the city (1322b) and must be concerned with ensuring that citizens have the best possible body (1334b).

Very remarkable and little known is his extraordinary epistemology:

For Aristotle, the science of physical exercise is the science of the right medium in effort (1069b) that tries to avoid the excess of exercise and the lack of exercise (1124b), looking for the middle state, which is the good form in gymnastics (1138b), that seeks and produces the firmness of the flesh, avoiding the vicious condition that is the laxity of the flesh (1129a).

Aristotle lists the proper purposes for the science of physical exercise: a) to study what kind of exercise and physical training is suitable and for what kind of body, b) what is the best kind of physical training for the best and most gifted body, c) what kind of exercise and training is the most suitable for all or most, d) how to awaken interest in

sports competition and to get the right complexion, in someone who does not want it (1288b).

Aristotle explicitly classifies the science of physical exercise within the category of action sciences (not natural or productive sciences) and within practical sciences (not theoretical). Being a science of action, it is characterized by being a knowledge about which we deliberate and which can be otherwise (1112b). Its knowledge is not centered on what should be produced, but on the agents (1064a) (unlike the productive sciences). The science of physical exercise, therefore, seeks principles and causes about what should be done by those who know this science (teachers and trainers). This is because it is a knowledge that is not necessary for everyone, since we do not practice fitness simply because we possess the science of exercise (1144a). What is necessary is that there are good laws in the city that educate in physical exercise and sports training (1180b).

Aristotle reflects on the physical qualities necessary for competitions: Strength consists in moving another body as we wish: dragging, pushing, lifting, squeezing and oppressing. He who is strong is strong because he is capable of doing some or all of these things (1361b3-34).

The excellence of the body consists of excelling in weight, height and amplitude, without the movements being weighed down by excess, and the excellence of the body for competition would be the product of bearing, strength and speed (taking into account that he who is fast is also strong). Thus, he who is capable of pushing his legs and moving them quickly and with great strides is a good runner; he who is capable of pressing and holding, a good wrestler; he who is capable of pushing with blows is a good pugilist; he who possesses the qualities of the two previous ones is a good pankratiast; and he who possesses all the previous ones is a good pentathlete (1361b).

REFERENCES

Aristotle. *Constitution of Athens*. (Kenyon, F.G. Trans.). Princeton University Press. In: Barnes, J. Ed., Kenyon, F. G., Trans. (1995). *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation*. Princeton University Press.

- Aristotle. *Magna Moralia*. (Stock, St. G. Trans.). In: Barnes, J. Ed., Kenyon, F. G., Trans. (1995). *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation*. Princeton University Press.
- Aristotle. *Metaphysics*. (W. D. Ross, Trans.). In: Barnes, J. Ed., Kenyon, F. G., Trans. (1995). *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation*. Princeton University Press.
- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. (W. D. Ross revised by J. O. Urmson, Trans.). In: Barnes, J. Ed., Kenyon, F. G., Trans. (1995). In: *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation*. Princeton University Press.
- Aristotle. *On the Progression of Animals*. (A.S. L. Farquharson, Trans.). In: Barnes, J. Ed., Kenyon, F. G., Trans. (1995). *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation*. Princeton University Press.
- Aristotle. *On the Soul*. (J.A. Smith. Trans.) Barnes, J. Ed., Kenyon, F. G., Trans. (1995). *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation*. Princeton University Press.
- Aristotle. *Politics*. (B. Jowett, Trans.) Barnes, J. Ed., Kenyon, F. G., Trans. (1995). *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation*. Princeton University Press.
- Aristotle. *Rhetoric*. (W. Rhys Roberts, Trans.) Barnes, J. Ed., Kenyon, F. G., Trans. (1995). *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation*. Princeton University Press.
- Austin, Michael (2013). Sport as a Moral Practice: An Aristotelian Approach. *Royal Institute of Philosophy*, 73(1): 29-43.
- Hochstetler, Douglas (2006). Using Narratives to Enhance Moral Education in Sport. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 77(4): 37-44. DOI: [10.1080/07303084.2006.10597862](https://doi.org/10.1080/07303084.2006.10597862)
- Hochstetler, Douglas, & Hopsicker, P. Matthew (2016). Normative concerns for endurance athletes. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 43(3): 335-349. DOI: [10.1080/00948705.2016.1163226](https://doi.org/10.1080/00948705.2016.1163226)
- Hwang, Jung Hyun, & Kretchmar, R. Scott (2010). Aristotle's Golden Mean: Its Implications for the Doping Debate. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 37(1): 102-121. DOI: [10.1080/00948705.2010.9714769](https://doi.org/10.1080/00948705.2010.9714769)

- Hyland, Drew A. (2015). Athletes Play to play. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 42(1): 29-33. DOI: [10.1080/00948705.2014.961159](https://doi.org/10.1080/00948705.2014.961159)
- Kretchmar, R. S., Dyresson, M., Llewellyn, M. P., & Gleaves, J. J. (2018). *History and Philosophy of Sport and Physical Activity*. Champaign IL: Human Kinetics.
- Miller, S. G. (2004). *Arete: Greek sports from ancient sources (Third ed.)*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Oskvig, K. (2013). Harder, Faster, Stronger, Better. Aristotle's Ethics and Physical Human Enhancement. *Journal of Evolution and Technology*, 23(1): 19-30.
- Plato. *Republic*. Brandon (Ed). Jowett, B. (Trans.) (2016). *The Project Gutenberg EBook of The Republic, by Plato*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Reid, Heather L. (2007). Sport and Moral Education in Plato's Republic. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 34(2): 160-175. DOI: [10.1080/00948705.2007.9714719](https://doi.org/10.1080/00948705.2007.9714719)
- Reid, Heather L. (2010a). Aristotle's Pentathlete. *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, 4(2): 183-94. DOI: [10.1080/17511321.2010.486598](https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2010.486598)
- Reid, Heather L. (2010b). The Epicurean Spectator. *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, 4(2): 195-203. DOI: [10.1080/17511321.2010.486601](https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2010.486601).
- Young, David C. (2005) 'Mens Sana in Corpore Sano? Body and Mind in Ancient Greece.' *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 22(1), 22-41. DOI: [10.1080/0952336052000314638](https://doi.org/10.1080/0952336052000314638)