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The Ways of Life in Classical Political Philosophy

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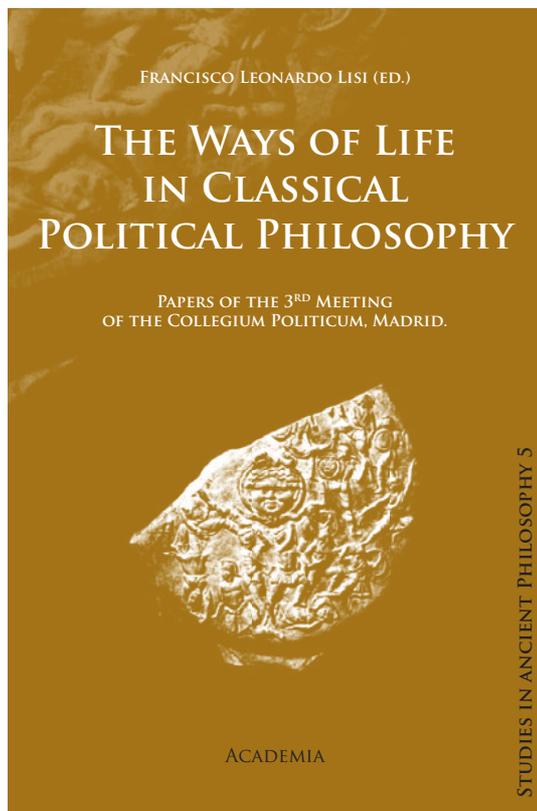
The central issue of classical practical philosophy is, beyond all doubt, the question of eudaimonia and the way in which individual and society can attain it.

From early on, the quest for eudaimonia was related to the problem concerning the appropriate way of life needed to attain it. The present state of our sources does not permit us to establish when the codification of the different kinds of life began, but already Plato clearly distinguishes three kinds of life: the life of pleasure, that of political power and that of wisdom. In spite of the importance of the subject, there is no extensive treatment of its history, since Joly's well-known book almost fifty years ago (1959). Even for Plato and Aristotle there are practically no comprehensive studies about the relationship of the different kinds of life and their function in the political and ethical thought of both thinkers, especially of how they are related to the political dimension of eudaimonia. Plato and, in particular, Aristotle redefined the traditional concept of eudaimonia in a way not always clear to interpreters.

The four initial papers analyze the historical context in which Aristotle's doctrine of the best life arises, mainly Plato and the orators, and give an ample overview in the scholar discussion of the last 50 years. The seven papers, which in the central part are devoted to Aristotle's thought, discuss the main interpretative problems existing in NE, EE and Politics and Aristotle's debt to Plato's theory of contemplation. The volume closes with two papers, which are devoted to the reception of the Aristotelian ideal of the best life in the Italian Renaissance and in contemporary philosophy.

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