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# Aristotle on Intellectual and Character Education

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## Abstract

*The aim of this paper is to explain Aristotle's views on education with specific reference to Intellectual and Character education. Aristotle asserts that the theory and practice of education in general must undoubtedly be build upon a solid foundation of a philosophy of life especially in the fields of ethics and politics. His original works of Nicomachean Ethics, Politics and Metaphysics were also consulted in this regard. The educational implications of his teachings on actuality, potentiality, causality and character formation are also discussed. Though Aristotle had the background of Athenian education in mind, yet his philosophical thoughts is of universal significance and are not restricted to any time or place.*

## Introduction

Aristotle's typical approach to a problem is to adopt a different starting point on different occasions and often to try a number of different starting points one after another in a single discussion. It is something of a historical curiosity that one particular classification of the branches of human knowledge namely the division into theoretical, practical and productive sciences, has come to be known as the Aristotelian classification and has thus had a profound influence on the subsequent history of thought, including our own thinking at the present day. If we wish to recover a correct historical view of the Stagirite philosopher regarding education we will need to free ourselves to a large extent from the perspective imposed by the later history of science and philosophy and to regard him as he must have seen himself, as searching for the truth against the background of the work of his predecessors. While it will be beneficial to see him always as a seeker after systematic knowledge, it will be the stages of his search which will interest us as much as his final position. Recent studies of Aristotle would suggest that if any such overall picture of Aristotle's development is in fact to emerge it is likely to be much more complex than any of the accounts that have so far been put forward.

At least part of the explanation of this situation lies in the relative incompleteness of Aristotle's available writings about education. According to

Burnet (1968), almost all that Aristotle intended to say about physical education and approximately half of what he intended to say about character education are to be found in "Politics" while virtually none of what he presumably intended to say about intellectual education is available there. Despite the importance of physical and character education to Aristotle, even a casual observer of his philosophy would be led to judge that the cultivation of the mind would have been among his major concerns in education. Some evidence for this assertion, together with a consideration of the means of intellectual cultivation in a formal educational setting which would conform to selected philosophical principles of Aristotle, will be addressed in this paper prior to analysing some of his views on character education.

His principles analysed in the *Metaphysics* concerning actuality and potentiality, causality, and knowledge will be summarized briefly and used as a basis for analyzing certain features of the educational process devoted to the formation of the intellect. Furthermore, Aristotle himself offers a comment on the role of the educator in the *Metaphysics*, which suggests a foundation for current philosophical educational connections which will be addressed in this paper.

## II

I will thus commence by attempting to elucidate Aristotle's approach to the group of concepts such as potentiality (δύναμις), actuality (ενέργεια, εντέλεχεια) and substance (ουσία) discussed in the *Metaphysics* and follow it up with his view of knowledge in the same work which forms the framework for a consideration of aspects of an Aristotelian theory of intellectual education. In the *Metaphysics* Aristotle's position on the Platonic doctrine of the forms is clear. Though the form, as formal cause, plays a fundamental part in all of Aristotle's thinking, it is not separable and does not exist separately. For Aristotle it is only in concrete individual objects that a form can have real existence. Concrete individual objects combine matter and form, and form cannot really exist apart from matter, nor it is possible to have matter fully removed from form. The doctrines of matter, form, and privation were basic to Aristotle's physical thinking. In the *Metaphysics* we find associated with the analysis a further explanation in terms of the distinction between the potential and the actual. For Aristotle potentiality is the power of passing from one state to another. Form without matter exists potentially but not actually, and matter without form namely prime matter would also exist only potentially, being that which had the power to become a particular thing by receiving an appropriate form. This same conclusion is reached by Aristotle along a different path in the seventh book of *Metaphysics*, where he examines the nature of substance (ουσία). In his view substance has two characteristics: firstly it is that which

persists through superficial change; and secondly it is that which is qualified by predicates. One mark of the substance is that it can exist alone, while what is signified by the other categories cannot. At this stage only confusion would result from attempting to alter the traditional technical terms with which Aristotle's doctrines have been discussed down the centuries. But the Greek word *ousia* (ουσία) means "being", and what Aristotle is trying to find is true being or that which truly is. Aristotle's discussion of substance is subtle and prolonged and for brevity's sake it can be summarized as follows: We cannot say that matter as the substrate or enduring support of phenomena is substance, since it lacks both the separability and the "thisness" which are needed for real existence. Nor can any universal or species term be the name for a substance in the primary sense of that term. In this respect Aristotle has a considerable number of reasons to cite but at the same time he is in a difficulty in that for scientific as distinct from empirical knowledge, the subjects for which properties are demonstrated are species and not singular things. For example in order to bring the objects of mathematics which are nonsingular under the same umbrella as other substances he developed a doctrine of intelligible matter to be a recipient of mathematical forms. The final conclusion is that it is essence which should be identified with substance. Essence is the conventional technical expression for a curious phrase in Aristotle's Greek (To ti en einai) which he treated as a noun, though its origin is not quite clear. The literal rendering of this phrase should probably be "the what it was to be (something)", and the essence of a thing is for Aristotle what that thing is by its very nature. So the essence of a thing is the thing itself in its truest sense. But we may still ask, in what does a thing's true being consist? Aristotle's answer is that it is the form that is the fundamental being of a thing and is the cause of its being what it is. This is because it is only when a thing has realized its proper form that it has become what it really is. It follows that within the doctrine of the four causes, essence is both formal and final cause. This might lead us to suppose that the essence of a thing is not what it is but what it might become, and in a sense this is true for growing or developing things. Nonetheless Aristotle is anxious to reject this way of reasoning. He would prefer to say that essence is the actual form of a thing and not some form which it might come to have but does not yet possess.

Aristotle's doctrine of actuality is discussed in book IX of the *Metaphysics*. Proceeding from the distinction between potentiality (δύναμις) and actuality, he distinguishes two modes of the latter: *Energeia* (ενέργεια), which is strictly always a process and might often be understood as "activity", though "actuality" is the traditional rendering; and *entelecheia* (εντελέχεια), which stands at the termination of the process and is the goal when achieved and, before that, the goal to be achieved by the *energeia*.

For Aristotle the actuality is the end to which potentiality points and as such is prior to potentiality. It is prior in logic because without the actuality to which the potentiality points we could not have the potentiality. Moreover Aristotle insists that it is prior even in time namely one actuality always precedes another in time right back to the actuality of the eternal prime mover. This is because the actually existing is always produced from the potentially existing by another actually existing thing, for example a musician by a musician. There is always a first mover and the mover exists actually and thus Aristotle is able to say that substance is essence, and essence is actual form, meaning by this not the form already possessed by any one thing, but the form which is the goal of its development, this form being already found in individual concrete objects even if not yet the object in question. But in another sense it already is *the* form of the object in question and can be thought of as present in its activity since it is the goal of that activity. A substance is an object of everyday experience, combining matter and form – for example, a horse. The substance of a horse is its being a horse here and now, and the properties of the horse are accidents of this substance.

According to Aristotle every work of nature or of art, every living creature, including man, has its own predetermined “end” or purpose to fulfil. The end is present potentially in the beginning, and growth is the progressive realization of potentiality. In the works the purpose or end originates in the mind of man (for example the teacher, the builder, the lawyer), who then proceeds to select and fashion the materials in which his plan will be incorporated. By the skill of the sculptor the unformed clay gradually realizes the “form” of the statue as conceived in the sculptors mind. In the works of nature Aristotle implies that growth is the expression of forms which have originated in the divine mind. Each species of living thing grows towards its own end or completion. The individual organism may fall short of its goal, but cannot grow beyond the predetermined limits of the species. Thus Aristotle’s view is founded on the notion of fixed, unaltered species, an assumption which was not seriously challenged until Charles Darwin. However, within the limits of man’s fixed goal Aristotle emphasizes the crucial importance of the human intelligence in determining whether the good for man will be fully realized or not. *“All man’s well-being depends on two things: one is the right choice of target, of the end to which actions should tend; the other lies in finding the actions that lead to that end”*. *Politics VII, 13*. It is also important to refer here to Aristotle’s four causes of a thing’s existence, namely the four reasons which account for a thing being constituted exactly as it is. To grasp what a thing really is we must understand a) its purpose of function which is the called the *final cause*; b) its form or idea namely the expression of its essential nature which is the formal *cause*; c) the material of which it is made namely the *material cause* and d) the immediate stimulus which triggers off the

developmental process called the *moving cause*. Thus the final cause is the function of support which for example a chair is intended to perform; the formal cause is the idea or plan existing in the mind of the craftsman regarding the making of a chair; the material cause of a chair is the timber used in the construction; the moving cause is the craftsman and his tools. In fact Aristotle tends to equate the final cause with the formal cause. This is because he defines the “form” or “idea” of a thing functionally, namely in terms of its purpose, of what it is designed to do. It is characteristic of his realistic outlook that he should not wish to make a distinction between the form and function of a thing. Indeed the final cause of a thing’s existence, consisting in its predetermined function, is to Aristotle the most significant and compelling reason for its existence. Aristotle concludes his argument by reasoning that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. The essential value of either an inanimate object or a living being (human, animal, plant) is to be determined with reference to the adequacy of its performance in the tasks for which it was designed. Aristotle’s emphasis on goal-seeking as the principal of growth can be applied to learning, which is a movement of the mind stimulated by a clear sense of purpose. In this respect his theory of learning is in harmony with modern realistic educational theories.

In the first book of *Metaphysics* Aristotle starts by referring to knowledge by stating: “*All men by nature desire to know*” (πάντες ἄνθρωποι τοῦ εἰδέναι ὀρέγονται φύσει). This is signified by the pleasure we take in our senses. His analogous use of “to know” comprises six meanings: sensation, memory, experience, art, science, and wisdom. The significance of this syllogism indicates the value which Aristotle ascribes to the senses in the process of knowing. He arrives at the conclusion that most knowledge comes through the senses and in his view it is achieved indirectly rather than directly in some instances. He states: “*Not only with a view to action, but even when no action is contemplated, we prefer sight, generally speaking, to all the other senses. The reason of this is that of all the senses sight best helps us to know things, and reveals many distinctions.*” *Metaphysics* 1 – 980a “οὐ γὰρ μόνον ἵνα πράττωμεν ἀλλὰ καὶ μηθὲν [25] μέλλοντες πράττειν τὸ ὄραν αἰρούμεθα ἀντὶ πάντων ὡς εἰπεῖν τῶν ἄλλων. αἴτιον δ’ ὅτι μάλιστα ποιεῖ γνωρίζειν ἡμᾶς αὕτη τῶν αἰσθήσεων καὶ πολλὰς δηλοῖ διαφορὰς”. Memory (μνήμη) is mentioned in connection with sensation (αἴσθησις) and experience (ἐμπειρία). It involves recalling sense impressions when the specific object of sensation is no longer present. He relates it as follows: “*The human race lives also by art and reasoning. It is from memory that men acquire experience, because the numerous memories of the same thing eventually produce the effect of a single experience*” *Metaphysics* 1 - 980b. Furthermore experience seems very similar to science (ἐπιστήμη) and art (τέχνη) but actually it is through experience that men acquire science and

art. With regard to science Collins (1990: 71) defines and elaborates on Aristotle's views as follows: *Science, therefore, in an Aristotelian sense, is pure knowledge of causes, knowing for the sake of knowing (Ross, 1937). Aristotle makes a somewhat incidental reference to education in this context when he refers in a single sentence to the teaching of science and the learning of an object of science. Science is similar to art in that it is knowledge of the universal, but it differs from art, which is not knowledge for its own sake, but knowledge for the sake of some ulterior practical end, as for example curing a disease. It is similar to wisdom, the last and highest form of knowledge in this hierarchy, in that science is knowledge of an eternal object for the sake of knowledge itself; wisdom, on the other hand, is knowledge of the first causes and highest principles of all things (Aristotle, 1943). Art is knowledge of practical rules founded upon general principles. It would thus seem that for practical purposes experience is in no way inferior to art; indeed we see men of experience succeeding more than those who have theory without experience. The reason of this is that experience is knowledge of particulars, but art of universals; and actions and the effects produced are all concerned with the particular. In Aristotle's conception if a man has theory without experience, and knows the universal, but does not know the particular contained in it, he will often fail in his treatment; for it is the particular that must be treated. Nevertheless he considers that knowledge and proficiency belong to art rather than to experience, and we assume that artists are wiser than men of mere experience (which implies that in all cases wisdom depends rather upon knowledge); and this is because the former know the cause, whereas the latter do not. For the experienced know the fact, but not the reason; but the artists know the reason and the cause. Consequently one may perceive a double conceptual distinction between art and experience. Firstly the latter (art) is awareness of the particular while the former (experience) is awareness of the universal; secondly, whereas the latter is awareness of the fact that something is so, the former is awareness of why it is so. Therefore, *in experience*, one knows only that a particular thing is the way it is while *in art*, one knows why the universal principle is true. It can thus be deduced that the cognitive activity of intellectual education is explicated by Aristotle through the differentiation between experience and art. (Collins 1990: 70).*

At the start of his *Metaphysics* II, Aristotle holds the view that the investigation of the truth is in one way hard, in another way easy and an indication of this is to be found in the fact that no one is able to attain the truth adequately, while on the other hand, no one fails entirely. Then he states that philosophy should be called knowledge of the truth: *Moreover, philosophy is rightly called a knowledge of Truth. The object of theoretic knowledge is truth, while that of practical knowledge is action; for even when they are investigating how a thing is so, practical men study not the eternal principle*

*but the relative and immediate application. But we cannot know the truth apart from the **cause**. Now every thing through which a common quality is communicated to other things is itself of all those things in the highest degree possessed of that quality (e.g. fire is hottest, because it is the cause of heat in everything else);* (Metaphysics 2 - 993b). ὀρθῶς δ' ἔχει καὶ τὸ καλεῖσθαι τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ἐπιστήμην τῆς ἀληθείας. θεωρητικῆς μὲν γὰρ τέλος ἀλήθεια πρακτικῆς δ' ἔργον: καὶ γὰρ ἂν τὸ πῶς ἔχει σκοπῶσιν, οὐ τὸ αἶδιον ἀλλ' ὃ πρὸς τι καὶ νῦν θεωροῦσιν οἱ πρακτικοί. οὐκ ἴσμεν δὲ τὸ ἀληθὲς ἄνευ τῆς **αἰτίας**: ἕκαστον δὲ μάλιστα αὐτὸ τῶν ἄλλων καθ' ὃ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὑπάρχει τὸ συνώνυμον (οἷον τὸ πῦρ θερμότατον: καὶ γὰρ τοῖς ἄλλοις τὸ αἶτιον τοῦτο τῆς θερμότητος).

### III

From the educator's perspective comparative to the Aristotelian principles of actuality and potentiality, the general goal of education may be viewed as an endeavour to aid students develop and fulfil their potential, by focusing appropriate attention to the important attributes of the developing student. The aim should be to become acquainted or conversant with individual students/learners in a manner that will contribute meaningfully to their self-development within the proper context. Collins (1990: 74) is led to the following conclusion: *When pursuing the philosophical principles of actuality and potentiality these goals should indeed be understood, in the context of an awareness of the essential characteristics of a student as well as the accidental differences among students. The essence of a person (according to Aristotle) is the composite of body and soul in which the latter is spiritual and the "higher part."* Therefore, in the process of education, while the aim is the realisation of the student's physical and spiritual being, the former is subordinate to the last mentioned, the body is to be trained for the sake of the soul. Accordingly in Aristotle's view happiness belongs to those who have cultivated their mind and character to the utmost and kept the acquisition of external goods within moderate limits, more than those who have acquired more of these than they can possibly use, and are lacking in the goods of the soul. He maintains that happiness is equal to the amount of man's virtue and his wisdom and elucidates as follows: *Virtue (ἀρετῆς) is of two kinds, intellectual (διανοητικῆς) and moral (ἠθικῆς). Intellectual (διανοητικῆς) virtue is, for the most part, produced and increased by instruction, (διδασκαλίας) and therefore requires experience and time; whereas moral virtue is the product of habit. And therefore it is clear that none of the moral virtues formed is engendered in us by nature.* διπλῆς δὴ τῆς ἀρετῆς οὐσίας, τῆς μὲν διανοητικῆς τῆς δὲ ἠθικῆς, ἡ μὲν διανοητικὴ τὸ πλεῖον ἐκ διδασκαλίας ἔχει καὶ τὴν γένεσιν καὶ τὴν αὔξησιν, διόπερ

ἐμπειρίας δεῖται καὶ χρόνου, ἡ δ' ἠθικὴ ἐξ ἔθους περιγίνεται, ὅθεν καὶ τοῦνομα ἔσχηκε μικρὸν παρεκκλίνον ἀπὸ τοῦ ἔθους. ἐξ οὗ καὶ δῆλον ὅτι οὐδεμία τῶν ἠθικῶν ἀρετῶν φύσει ἡμῖν ἐγγίνεται.

According to Collins (1990: 74-75) the philosophical principles of actuality and potentiality as propounded by Aristotle would also have important consequences upon the curriculum. He states: *“Curriculum” here can be assumed to denote a series of academic disciplines established and organized in light of the nature of truth, the nature of the person (including the capabilities of human awareness and the patterns of human development) and various existential circumstances. The curriculum is an essential means of the actualization of the student's physical and spiritual potentialities.* According to the aims of Aristotelian education courses can be designed to improve physical as well as spiritual development; however, the latter would have a primacy over the former. In interpreting Aristotle's view of intellectual education Collins (1990) refers to courses suggested by Burnet (1968) and include biology, history, physics, theory of the heavens, theology, and First Philosophy. According to Aristotle (1946) these subjects would be preceded in elementary education by reading and writing, drawing, gymnastic which advances the virtue of courage, and music which amuses, relaxes and cultivates the mind. The realm of ethics and its concomitant practical applications, would then assist in training the mind and help produce a steadfast character in learners. This can be greatly enhanced by a competent teacher whose good character can be imparted on the student. By raising Aristotle's distinction between essence and accident, Collins (1990) points out that curriculum courses which are meant to contribute to the development of the student's essential characteristics would be compulsory courses, whereas those courses relevant to the accidental traits of students would be electives. It boils down to students exercising wise choices for optimum development of their individual or in Aristotelian terms accidental potentialities. Likewise the teacher-student relationship, should play a vital role to reach the desired aims as responsible teachers become acquainted with essential and accidental human potentialities, and come to grips with their own students' actualized talents and accidental potentialities particularly with reference to the use of the curriculum.

Pertaining to the educational implications of the causality principle Collins (1990: 76-77) refers to Aristotle's analysis of material, formal, efficient, and final causes by stating that it lies in the notion of teaching as the causation of the student's learning. The *material* cause of the student's learning is the student herself/himself, consisting of body and soul, for he is the central figure of the entire learning process. This material cause of learning is also associated with the learner's potential to learn. The *formal* cause of the student's learning refers to the student who advanced to a relatively learned condition, is the positive result of the educative process and can be identified



with the relative realization or achievement of the student's learning. The *efficient* cause of the student's learning, namely the agent of that process, which produces the result, varies. The student is always the primary efficient cause although the human teacher is sometimes an essential efficient cause of the student's learning. This reason is that no learning can take place or little can be accomplished without the utilization of the student's faculties, whereas the student can learn without the teacher's contribution. This information implies that no person can learn for another person and that the role of the teacher is to help the learner to fulfil his potential. Additional efficient causes of learning include the curriculum and factors such as books, libraries, information technology and persons who can assist in this regard.

The final cause of the student's learning refers to the end of this process can be taken in a relative or an absolute sense. Relative ends of learning are those which also serve as means to other ends while the absolute end is that for which the learning ultimately occurs and is not a means to any other end, but is sought for its own sake alone. A relative final cause of learning for Aristotle would be the ability to read and understand human language and the absolute final cause is contemplation of the highest good. According to Aristotle, this application of causality to education means that without the operation of all four causes in any particular instance, there is no learning. Moreover, this view of causality applied to human learning suggests a particular mode of education, which has special significance for the cultivation of the mind. Referring to the last topic connecting Aristotle's view of causality to a theory of education which is part of his principle that there can be no infinite regression of causes, Collins (1990: 77) clarifies it as follows: *This means that the cause of a student's learning cannot be identified with an infinitely regressing series of causes because then there would be no final cause, which indicates that there would be no learning at all since, not expecting to reach some end, no one would begin to do anything. The elimination of a final cause also signifies that no learning would occur because all intelligence in the universe would be obliterated since intelligence implies purposiveness. In conjunction with this argument against an infinite regression of causes are the notions indicated in the first section of final cause in the internal order of intention which is a movable cause and in the existential or external order which is an immovable final cause. The latter also may be viewed as a First Cause, Ultimate Being, unmovable mover or God (κινούν ακίνητον).* Taking all these arguments into consideration one tends to agree with Collins that the implications for all involved in the educational process are serious and sweeping in the compilation of a curriculum which will have the desired end.

## IV

An Aristotelian education always refers to some society and shall have its ultimate goal the attainment of happiness which according to Aristotle's definition is essentially the realisation and the exercise of virtue. Only in this manner can the institutions of the state be safeguarded and the plurality which is the state be made into a unity and the city (πόλις) which is best governed and provides the greatest opportunity for the attainment of happiness. This virtue (ἀρετή) is not only the virtue of intellect but also the virtue or goodness of character. Intellectual integrity is increased mainly by instruction, whereas virtue of character is produced in humans not by nature, but by habits formed through their relation to a proper environment. Aristotle would protect and ensure that very young children abstain from all appearances of evil, until such a time as their training will have enhance in them powers of discrimination. Thereafter, it is not by suppressing feelings or by removing all opportunities for wrong action that he would make people good, but rather by letting them have the feelings and commit the acts, directing them so that these feelings and actions shall constitute a correctly assessed education. Character training in Aristotle's plan of education takes precedence over other immediate objectives of an educational institution. One can envisage the rigorous nature of the training he recommends as stated in the following part from the *Nicomachean Ethics*:

*Strength (ἰσχύος) is produced by taking a great deal of nourishment and undergoing a great deal of exertion, and it is just the strong man that can do these things best. So it is in the case of goodness (ἀρετῶν). It is by abstaining from pleasures that we become temperate (σώφρονες) and it is when we have become temperate that we are best able to abstain from them. So again with courage (ἀνδρείας); it is by habituating ourselves to despise objects of fear and by facing them that we become courageous, and it is when we have become courageous that we shall best be able to face them.*

*We must take the pleasures and pains -that supervene upon our actions as symptoms of our condition. The man who abstains from bodily pleasures and actually enjoys doing so is temperate, while the man who does so but dislikes it is intemperate. The man who faces danger and enjoys doing so, or at any rate is not pained by it, is brave; but the man who faces it with pain is a coward. For goodness of character (ἠθικὴ ἀρετή) has to do with pleasures and pains. It is pleasure that makes us do what is bad, and pain that makes us abstain from what is right. That is why we require to be*

*trained from our earliest youth, as Plato has it, to feel pleasure and pain at the right things. True education is just that (ἡ γὰρ ὀρθὴ παιδεία αὕτη ἐστίν).* (Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, Book 2, ch. 2, sec. 1104b.)

We might logically expect that such a wise man as Aristotle might have been unmindful of the social forces which shape a growing child and would overemphasize scholarship at the expense of social development. What is known, however, concerning Aristotle's training of Alexander reveals that in Aristotle's school at ancient Mieza, close to the city of Naoussa in Greece, Alexander was evidently not the only learner. In line with the fundamental principles of Aristotle's pedagogical system education and particularly moral education, were largely to be attained through personal associations. Vital traits of a child's personality were to be moulded through the learning experiences of immense social value with other children. It is a relationship difficult to achieve in the grade schools where mental and social differences are greatest, yet it is basic to the successful guidance of a pupil. One becomes mindful to the fact that the "modern" and challenging problem of how school children may be guided to a worthy use of spare time has its ancient counterpart in Aristotle's "gospel of leisure". More than two millenniums ago Aristotle was asserting that the highest education is intended to fit us for the right and noble use of leisure. Through reflection on life and leisure opportunities one can make prudent and wise choices that lead to an ethical life. It is Aristotle's contention that, since we cannot always work, if our education has not prepared us to use our spare time correctly, we are at risk to miss the golden mean. Applied to education this philosophy would provide a flexible school, adaptable to conditions existing under quite different constitutions. It would be a school proceeding sanely toward its objectives, a school where theory is not given precedence over practice, and where no single phase of child development receives emphasis to the detriment of others. Virtue becomes an exercise of such traits as are destroyed by excess or deficiency and preserved by the mean. Since the mean will lie where a prudent man would put it, emphasis is laid upon education, practice, and progress. The underlying thought in his theory of induction is that truth reveals itself subjectively in the historic consciousness of the race and objectively in the facts of nature. Therefore, his method of learning is to seek new light from what is already known and observed, proceeding to the unknown by means of induction and syllogism. Aristotle had a deep concern for the objective present, as evidenced by his great intellectual curiosity, his careful observations, and his classification of accumulated facts. Emphasis was placed upon the concrete embodiment of ideas as against the conceptualism and the universals of Plato. His deepest

argument for public moral education is contained in his contention that man is by nature a political animal. According to Aristotle, man is by nature a political animal (ἄνθρωπος φύσει πολιτικὸν ζῷον) because man is by nature the animal with reason or speech. Whereas other animals have voice and can therefore indicate sensations of pleasure and pain, man alone, Aristotle says, can articulate what is good or bad, just or unjust, and the like, *and it is a community of these things that makes a family and a city* Communication thus, in Aristotle's opinion implies community but he also sounds a few words of warning: *Therefore the impulse to form a partnership of this kind is present in all men by nature; but the man who first united people in such a partnership was the greatest of benefactors. For as man is the best (βέλτιστον) of the animals when perfected, so he is the worst (χείριστον) of all when sundered from law and justice* (Pol. 1253a18). It follows that a political community that is truly a community must have higher concerns than simply protecting the life, liberty, and property of each member. It must care about the good life and therefore must be concerned with the virtue and hence with the moral education of its members. A community, on this view, is more than merely a collection of individuals and above all, it is a shared way of life. But a community's way of life, Aristotle argues, is sustained primarily by the character of its members, and character is mainly formed by education.

Aristotle conceived of life as a process of active development, not simply a condition of being; and in outlining a system of education he followed an order of human development which seemed natural. In the concluding sentence of Politics he sums up his philosophy in these words: "Thus is clear that education should be based upon three principles - the mean (μέσον), the possible (δυνατὸν), the becoming (πρέπον) these three". δῆλον οὖν ὅτι τούτους ὅρους τρεῖς ποιητέον εἰς τὴν παιδείαν, τό τε μέσον καὶ τὸ δυνατὸν καὶ τὸ πρέπον. (*Politics*, VIII, 1342b).

Aristotle himself, the original philosophical theorist of this model of moral education, certainly affirms the crucial roles of both practical wisdom and choice in virtuous action. According to Aristotle, the entire subject of ethics, and the idea of responsibility in particular, presuppose that the agent could have done otherwise, and one of the other conditions of virtuous action is knowing what is chosen:... "*in the case of the virtues an act is not performed justly or with self-control if the act itself is of a certain kind, but only if in addition the agent has certain characteristics as he performs it: first of all, he must know what he is doing; secondly, he must choose to act the way he does, and he must choose it for its own sake; and in the third place, the act must spring from a firm and unchangeable character*" (Aristotle, 1962: 39).

Both the element of choice and the requirement of self-conscious understanding make it difficult to argue that the truly virtuous person has been taught uncritically or indoctrinated. That is, virtuous action takes place when

the person understands why the action is good, and chooses to do it. Indoctrination, on the other hand, presumes that the agent acts involuntarily, without a full understanding of the meaning of the action or without full control over his or her own behaviour.

At the same time, however, it is important to notice how the Aristotelian account of virtue and virtuous action predisposes the agent toward the adoption of a specific conception of the good. On Aristotle's view, a moral virtue is an attitude or disposition toward emotion that is cultivated through training, by doing the right thing. Only by engaging in the appropriate activity for a substantial period of time is the agent able to cultivate the desire for doing right and the faculty of judging what is right. This training typically begins early in childhood and results in a set of relatively fixed desires and attitudes, that is, a firm character. The success of the legislators of the community, according to Aristotle, depends on their decisions regarding the cultivation of the proper character in the citizens. Once formed, that character, be it virtuous or vicious, is extremely difficult to alter. Like throwing a rock, as Aristotle says, we can only control its direction at the outset. This creates a kind of natural trade-off between a liability toward bias and the practical insight which may be necessary to informed judgment or penetrating critique. If Aristotle's view of virtue is correct, the training a person gets will inevitably affect his or her attitude toward the activity in question. But at the same time, that training provides the individual with the understanding of the activity that makes informed justification or a thorough critique of that activity possible. In the same vein Scheffler (1976: 28) confirms: *"The moral point of view is attained, if at all, by acquiring a tradition of practice, embodied in rules and habits of conduct. Without a preliminary immersion in such a tradition, an appreciation of the import of its rules, obligations, rights, and demands, the concept of choice of actions and rules for oneself can hardly be achieved. Yet the prevalent tradition of practice can itself be taught in such a way as to encourage the ultimate attainment of a superordinate and comprehensive moral point of view"*.

Given this picture of human character formation, the charge of indoctrination must be taken seriously. The agent must be committed to a training regimen before the age of rational maturity and without the full appreciation for the goodness of the given activity that comes only with experience. According to Aristotle, legislators, parents, and friends are in some sense responsible for the individual's virtues denoting plural responsibility and can certainly provide a climate in which it is much easier to resist the attraction of false ideals. But even so, on Aristotle's view, this does not absolve the individual from her/his own share of responsibility for the development of his/her own character. If character is indeed transmitted largely through role modelling, and the teachers of today did not have the

benefit of a character education program or simply lack outstanding virtue, then the students of today will lack adequate role models to follow and consequently this will lead to moral disorder.

## V

Thus it is to this age of post-modernity which is mostly distinguished by mediocre planning and limited foresightedness that Aristotle's views on education should prove very interesting and strikingly modern as they introduce many fresh aspects on the subject of education. He asserted that the theory and practice of education must undoubtedly be built upon a solid foundation of a philosophy of life, especially in the fields of ethics and politics. Much of what he writes about education is not especially related to any one time or place for his thought is of universal significance and is of the utmost importance as he retraces us to first principles and throws light to many of today's challenges. In Aristotle we see education stripped of many of the trappings of classrooms, timetables and examinations and reduced to its single purpose as the means of assisting in the formation of persons. In his view education is not something imposed on students from outside by a teacher but rather it is an internal process of personal exploration and self-questioning. It is something which the learner must do for himself and this is the necessary consequence of the doctrine that humans have the responsibility for fashioning their own destiny. It is his belief in the reality of this responsibility that Aristotle declares that we learn by doing and not merely by listening to teachers. No one can be compelled to learn as we can be stimulated to learn for ourselves. Aristotle maintained that the intellectual virtue could be taught while the moral virtues could be attained through habituation. Many do accept his view that teaching is an ethical activity, whose aim is to secure the successful transformation of the young persons into the virtuous persons who will be able to participate with their equals in the governance of the community in which they live.

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