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An Aristotelian Model of Education

Cecilia Hunt

AN ARISTOTELIAN MODEL OF EDUCATION

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1. Introduction

In this paper I will propose some underlying principles of an Aristotelian approach to education using Thomas Aquinas' thought and some secondary sources to supplement this account of education. This paper is comprised of four sections concerning: discipline, art, practice, and the personal applications of an Aristotelian/Thomistic model of education.[1]

As an important introductory note, the purpose of education for Aristotle (and Aquinas) is human happiness (*eudaimonia*) – the end to which all our actions aim.[2] *Eudaimonia* can be equated with happiness, but a particular kind of happiness that comes about from living a virtuous life and thereby flourishing. [3]

Human happiness is perhaps a broad goal of education compared to other accounts that may aim more specifically at helping students to become good citizens in a society or prepare students for the workplace. Given that Aristotle's account of education is primarily concerned with helping human beings to live a good life and thereby become happy, Aristotle's account of education is mounted on his account of what a human being *is* (namely, a rational and social animal) and what constitutes the flourishing of such.[4]

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[1] An Aristotelian model complements a Catholic view of education. This is especially seen in the way that Aquinas integrates Aristotle's understanding of education in his own work and teaching (Vivian Boland, "St Thomas Aquinas: What Is His Relevance to Catholic Education Today?" *International Studies in Catholic Education* 4, no. 2 (2012): 128).

[2] Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. J. A. K. Thomson (London: Penguin, 2004), 1094a1-27. Note that in Aquinas' view, happiness ultimately consists in the beatific vision (union with God in heaven) (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1911-1925), II.I.2.3). Consequently, a more Thomistic account of education will also emphasise spiritual formation in the learning process. Due to the scope of this paper, I will not discuss Aquinas' thoughts regarding spiritual formation as part of the educative process.

Further, Josef Froula notes that education for Aristotle and Aquinas is somewhat synonymous with philosophy (where philosophy is defined as a general pursuit of truth). This means that whilst neither presents an extensive and systematic assessment of education, their thoughts on philosophy are also their thoughts on education (Josef Charles Froula, "St. Thomas Aquinas on the Nature and Purpose of Education: The Importance of Aristotelian-Thomistic Principles for Educational Leaders," *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses,* 2015).

[3] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1097b20-1098a21.

[4] James Arthur, *The Formation of Character in Education: From Aristotle to the 21st Century* (Milton: Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 174.

What is more, the model of teaching and learning that can be derived from Aristotle's philosophy is grounded in the powers of the rational soul to know the world.[5] In the teacher-student dynamic, the teacher, through their own active power to teach what they themselves have learnt, actualises the passive disposition of the student to learn and to know the world. I will discuss this point in more detail in later sections.

2. Account of *Discipline* in the Model

Discipline in an Aristotelian model of education is aimed at helping students to cultivate virtue.[6] Aristotle's virtue ethics identifies *eudaimonia* as the final and primary goal of human life. Aristotle defines virtue as a thing fulfilling its proper function.[7] So, flourishing for human beings (*eudaimonia*) consists in fulfilling one's potential *qua* human by acquiring both intellectual and moral virtue.[8] The account of discipline in an Aristotelian model of education is derived from this broad framework of human flourishing.

Aristotle distinguishes between *moral* or *character* virtue on the one hand and *intellectual* virtue on the other.[9] Moral virtue refers to the disposition of an individual to act in a certain way (i.e., to act in accord with right reason or otherwise),[10] whilst intellectual virtue refers to five ways that human beings can arrive at truth.[11]

In the philosophy of education, the notion of 'character education' refers to an approach to education that focuses on forming a student's character (i.e., the person as *whole*) rather than focusing on the student acquiring knowledge of a certain subject.[12] Aristotle's view of education includes this notion of 'character education' particularly in the way that, for him, education is

[5] Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 202a.31-36. Also see Angus Brook, "A Philosophical Analysis of Learning: What Can Aristotle's Account of Act and Potency Teach Us?" *The Review of Metaphysics* 75, no. 1 (2021): 7.
[6] Arthur, *The Formation of Character in Education,* 49.
[7] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1097b30-35.
[8] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1102a15-20. For Aquinas, attaining all the virtues also depends on God's assistance (Arthur, *The Formation of Character in Education,* 44).
[9] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1102a15-20.
[10] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1139a21-36.
[11] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1139b 14-20.
[12] Kristján Kristjánsson, *Aristotelian Character Education* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), 4.

meant to form a *virtuous* character in students.[13] The development of *character* through discipline is predominantly concerned with *moral* virtue.[14]

Aristotle observes that moral virtues do not exist in us by nature but need to be trained,[15] though the *capacity* (disposition) for moral virtue exists in human beings by nature.[16] In Aristotle's view, a virtuous character is formed by teaching and discipline (training) of the intellect and the *will,* not merely by a student being *taught* (knowing) what virtue is (as Socrates or Plato would suggest).[17] The student needs to learn the right way to act (through reason, especially by cultivating the intellectual virtue of prudence).[18] Then, there is the additional step of the student *choosing* to act in the appropriate manner (this step concerns the *will*).[19]

Moreover, Aristotle argues that virtue is *intrinsically* and not merely instrumentally valuable;[20] in an Aristotelian approach to education, the increased employability of students or academic advantages are merely by-products (accidental positive effects) of character education.[21] These kinds of benefits are only useful insofar as they serve the broader goal of flourishing (which, for Aristotle, includes living in community and contributing to society).[22] Students should learn that virtue is intrinsically valuable; thus, an appropriate attitude towards a virtuous action is pleasure. This is because acting virtuously is what constitutes living well for Aristotle (which is the aim of education in his view).

In this view, since human beings naturally pursue pleasure and avoid pain, and since individuals can be inclined to excessive or deficient enjoyment of certain pleasures, discipline in education should train students to take pleasure in the right things in the right way (that is, to moderate their desires).[23] Students should be disciplined in such a way that they end up taking delight in being virtuous.

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[13] Kristjánsson suggests that there can be "character education," which does not have virtue as its focus, for example, Kristjánsson contrasts his view of character education with Paul Tough's character education, which is predominantly performance-driven (i.e., based on assessable outcomes), or Millsian utilitarianism. (Kristjánsson, *Aristotelian Character Education,* 4).
[14] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1103a7-10.
[15] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1102a15-20.
[16] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1102a25.
[17] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1143b18-25; and Arthur, *The Formation of Character in Education,* 167.
[18] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1140a25-30.
[19] Arthur, *The Formation of Character in Education,* 49.
[20] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1099a16-22.
[21] Kristjánsson, *Aristotelian Character Education,* 21, 27.
[22] See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1095b15-1096a10. The benefits are also conducive to obtaining finances to get goods which are important for a happy life – e.g., shelter, food and so on.
[23] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1106b20-25. See also Kristjánsson, *Aristotelian Character Education,* 29.

By way of example, a teacher can train a student to take pleasure in the success of other students, charitable acts, for example, and to experience repugnance towards vicious behaviour such as bullying, rudeness and so on. Discipline would not only include punishment and reward for behaviour but also *explanations* as to why certain behaviours are acceptable or unacceptable (at a level appropriate to the student). Such an explanation would include an appeal to what constitutes the good of a human being – that is, moderating behaviours so that one is not subject merely to one's appetites and passions – as well as making explicit the connection between virtue and one's overall happiness. This would ensure that students can acquire the correct attitudes towards behaviours rather than just being taught to act in a certain way against their will (which is a sign of lack of virtue for Aristotle).[24]

Additionally, given that an Aristotelian approach to character education will be grounded in an account of human nature and given that human beings are *social* animals, social training is also required in education.[25] This means students must learn how to form healthy friendships and interact well with others and to take pleasure in doing so.[26]

One potential difficulty with an Aristotelian character education is how to measure the development of a student's character. Given that Aristotle's focus in his virtue ethics is not so much on *doing* good but *being* good and living a good life,[27] the outcomes of an Aristotelian character education are not easily quantifiable.[28]

In regard to intellectual virtue, educational discipline should cultivate good intellectual habits by training students in certain rules of thought like language, grammar, logic and numeracy and intellectual skills like critical thinking.[29] Aristotle distinguishes between

[24] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1152a6-9.
[25] See Brook, "A Philosophical Account of Learning," 17.
[26] Good friendships are necessary for an individual's flourishing, in Aristotle's account – especially 'virtue friendships' where each party encourages the other to grow in virtue. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1155a1-9; and 1156b7-35.

Furthermore, the art of teaching also involves forming a friendship with the student, albeit an *unequal* friendship, meaning that there is an asymmetry of authority (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1158b11-1159a13). This asymmetry of authority arises because of the asymmetry of causal powers at play in the teaching-learning dynamic. Whilst learning takes place in the student, teaching is *prior* to learning in the sense that the active power in the causal relationship belongs to the teacher. Further, the teacher has authority in the classroom only insofar as their students find them trustworthy. If a student does not trust that their teacher has the appropriate knowledge to teach them (in this capacity, they have the *authority* to teach) as well as having their best interest in mind (in this capacity, the teacher is a *friend* of the student), the student will not be able to learn effectively (Brook, "A Philosophical Account of Learning," 18).
[27] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics.* See also Arthur, *The Formation of Character in Education,* 167.
[28] Arthur, *The Formation of Character in Education,* 2. However, Kristjánsson suggests that it *is* possible to measure the development of character (Kristjánsson, *Aristotelian Character Education,* 34).
[29] Brook, "A Philosophical Account of Learning," 17. See also Froula, "The Importance of Aristotelian-Thomistic Principles for Educational Leaders," 43.

intellectual virtues, which have to do with necessary truths (sciences), and contingent things (arts and practical applications).[30] Scientific knowledge can be taught directly by the teacher through inductive and deductive reasoning.[31] On the other hand, training of the intellectual virtues concerned with variable things will include (1) training in a technical skill (art) – for example, training in a skill like woodwork, music or fine art, and (2) training in good decision-making (prudence/practical wisdom) which I have explored in my discussion of moral virtue above.[32]

3. Account of *Art* in the Model

For Aristotle, 'art' (or technical skill), as an intellectual virtue, is the power responsible for production.[33] 'Art' can refer to the process of producing an art form (doing art) as well as the thing which is produced (artefacts/technologies).[34] In this section, I will mainly discuss *teaching* as an art. I will explore the implications of Aristotle's account of causality in his metaphysics to the art of teaching. Then, I will briefly highlight the way in which assessment tasks produced by students, as artworks, are difficult measures of educational 'success.'

Teaching is an art form because it is a technique by which teachers use their own knowledge and skill as means of bringing about the learning of their students.[35] Aristotle's account of causal powers can help us to understand what the excellence of the art of teaching is.[36]

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[30] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1139a5-16.
[31] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1139b25-30. This is perhaps where rote learning (as a kind of training/discipline) would play a role in an Aristotelian model of education. However, the emphasis in this kind of learning would be more on learning the principles underlying facts about the world, rather than merely rote learning facts.
[32] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1140a5-24; and 1140a25-1140b30 (practical wisdom).
[33] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1140a1-24.
[34] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1140a5. Although, Aristotle further distinguishes between *action* in general and the act of *production.*
[35] Aristotle, *Physics,* 202a-202b. Also see Thomas Aquinas, "The Disputed Questions on Truth," in *Collected Works of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Charlottesville, Virginia: InteLex Corporation, 1993), II.11.1; and Collins, "Aristotle and the Philosophy of Intellectual Education," 77. In Aquinas' view, teachers are specifically *God's* instruments for bringing about learning. For Aquinas, God is the cause of everything, but he also makes other things causes – that is, there are secondary causes. So, even if God is the primary 'teacher,' there are secondary causes of learning – viz. human teachers. All this means that human teachers participate in God's role as teacher (Aquinas, "Disputed Questions on the Truth," II.11.1).
[36] Brook, "A Philosophical Account of Learning," 6. Furthermore, Peter Collins provides an interesting reflection on the educational implications of Aristotle's account of the four causes of a substance. The material cause of learning is the student, the formal cause is the "learned student" (the student who has successfully learnt), the efficient cause is the means by which learning comes about (i.e., teaching and/or the instruments used to teach and *primarily* the student through their choice to learn), and the final cause of learning is (1) the learning of a particular lesson (relative final cause), and (2) the integration of what the student has learnt into their life and "contemplation of the highest good (absolute final cause). Instruments of learning would predominantly be the *efficient* cause of

Aristotle posits that causal relationships are based on the relationships between powers that are *actual* (i.e. active potencies)[37] and, in contrast, powers that are *passive* (i.e. passive potencies).[38] In Aristotle's account of teaching and learning, the teacher has an active power (namely, actual knowledge and the ability to teach), which activates a passive potency in the student (namely, their capability for learning/knowing).[39] This means that the student is only going to learn in a way that they are disposed to learn and, consequently, that the effectiveness of teaching relies on how the teacher teaches in a way that is appropriate to the capacities of the student.[40] As learning is grounded in the capacity of the student to receive knowledge, the way a teacher teaches should be flexible to accommodate the varying capacities of their students.[41]

Moreover, for Aristotle, art imitates nature.[42] So, the art of teaching should imitate the way a student would learn about the world through their own experience. The following distinction from Aquinas should make this point clearer. Aquinas outlines two ways that a person can learn:[43]

(1) 'Learning by discovery' – where a person independently learns about the world through their experiences.[44]

(2) 'Learning by instruction' – where knowledge is acquired with the help of someone else. For example, institutional schooling, home-schooling, parents teaching children and so on. 'Learning by instruction' refers to the art of teaching.

education. This includes teachers, books, films, pens, paper, and learning resources (Peter M. Collins, "Aristotle and the Philosophy of Intellectual Education," *The Irish Journal of Education* 24, no. 1 (1990), 76-77). I am assuming here that the reader has some familiarity with Aristotle's account of the four causes.

[37] Aristotle defines an active power as the capacity to produce change in another thing or in itself *qua* other (*Metaphysics,* 1020a1-6).

[38] Aristotle defines a passive disposition[as the potential to be changed by another thing (or by itself *qua* other) or to resist being changed by another thing (or by itself *qua* other). Note that the definitions and discussion of active and passive potencies here are very limited because of the scope of this paper. For further reading, see Brook, "A Philosophical Analysis of Learning," 8-12.

[39] On this, see Anna Marmodoro, *Aristotle on Perceiving Objects* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 45; Aristotle, *Physics,* 202b5-8; and Brook, "A Philosophical Account of Learning," 7.

[40] Aristotle, *Metaphysics,* 1029b3-10; Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae,* I.12.4.

[41] Aristotle, *Metaphysics,* 1029b3-10. Aquinas emphasises that the teacher cannot introduce a concept or subject *wholly* unknown to the student because such a concept would be unintelligible to a student unless it appeals to what they already know about the world. The teacher does bring *new* content to the student, but the teacher's effectiveness in teaching the student is limited by the student's capabilities (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae,* I.117.1.1). See also Brian Davies, "Aquinas on Teaching and Learning." *New Blackfriars* 95, no. 1060 (2014): 636.

[42] Aristotle, *Physics,* 199a18.

[43] Aquinas, "Disputed Questions on the Truth," II.11.1.

[44] For example, this could be learning something about birds simply from bird-watching or learning how to build a computer from pulling apart a computer and looking at the various parts, the way they fit together, and so on.

Aquinas proceeds to state that 'learning by instruction' (teaching) *imitates* learning by discovery.[45] As a result, it seems that the most effective teacher is going to base their teaching on learning by discovery (which is a more perfect way of acquiring knowledge, according to Aquinas).[46] I will here make three points about the way in which teaching should imitate and lend itself to learning by discovery.

Firstly, the teacher can instruct students by *modelling* learning by discovery – that is, by taking the students through the process of learning about phenomena. Peter Collins suggests that in order to help students internalise methods of learning, the teacher has to present their own process of learning and walk the students through such.[47]

Given that all knowledge acquired through learning by discovery begins with our experience of the world through our senses, learning by instruction should also be undertaken in this manner.[48] This implies that to effectively model/imitate learning by discovery, the teacher should use tactile materials where appropriate to make concepts less abstract and thus more accessible to students.[49] Examples of this could be using physical props like maps, figurines, drama props, or facilitating activities like going on field trips. Once a student has relevant sense experiences, then more abstract points of learning can be grasped.[50]

Secondly, the fact that learning by instruction imitates learning by discovery suggests that instructed learning should make the student more capable of learning by discovery – that is, *independent* learning. The student can become more capable of independent learning by internalising practices rather than merely acquiring facts about the world. There is, in this way, a primacy of learning *methods* and *principles* rather than specific subject matter (e.g., rote learning) or conclusions.[51] Authentic teaching is about presenting first principles so that the students can arrive at the conclusion themselves.[52]

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[45] "For the teacher leads the pupil to knowledge of things he does not know in the same way that one directs himself through the process of discovering something he does not know" (Aquinas, "Disputed Questions on the Truth," II.11.1).
[46] Aquinas, "Disputed Questions on the Truth," II.11.2.
[47] By 'method' here, what I mean is a method of learning by discovery, how to learn (Collins, "Aristotle and the Philosophy of Intellectual Education," 82).
[48] Collins, "Aristotle and the Philosophy of Intellectual Education," 79.
[49] Collins, "Aristotle and the Philosophy of Intellectual Education," 80.
[50] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1095b 1-5. See also Collins, "Aristotle and the Philosophy of Intellectual Education," 78.
[51] Collins, "Aristotle and the Philosophy of Intellectual Education," 82.
[52] Collins, "Aristotle and the Philosophy of Intellectual Education," 84.

Thirdly, if teaching imitates learning by discovery, then the technologies that teachers use in the classroom should be deliberately chosen – that is, teachers should try to use technologies that resemble *nature* more closely. Teaching tools may include curriculum, props, whiteboards, markers, paper, visual aids, and digital technologies such as projectors, computers, language and so on.

One example of basing the use of technology on nature in teaching (i.e., learning by discovery) is by basing the curriculum on such. The educational curriculum is itself an instrument of learning. By 'curriculum' is meant the subjects and topics within these subjects that are taught to students. Collins suggests that compulsory courses in education should be those courses that are concerned with actualising *essential* features of human nature.[53] Optional courses, then, would be courses that actualise *accidental* qualities in students. This is one example of how learning by instruction can be structured around nature – by forming the curriculum on an account of human nature (i.e., an account of form/soul, matter/body, essence, accidents, etc.).

In sum, the art of teaching should imitate how a student would learn about the world through their own experience. Not only does this make the lesson being taught more relatable to the student – by appealing to their own engagement with phenomena – but it also develops skills in the student that enable them to undertake their own learning independently of instruction.

Regarding art produced by students during their education, the predominant art forms produced are most likely assessment tasks, that is, those 'artworks' by which the student's development is assessed, for example, exams, essays, presentations, reports, fine artworks and so on. In an Aristotelian model of education, these assessable artworks are somewhat secondary in assessing if a student has achieved educational outcomes. They are ~~somewhat~~ secondary, firstly, because some of the goals of Aristotle's account of education are hard to quantify and assess (for example, the integration of what one has learnt into their life in the sense of 'living well') and secondly, because education is a lifelong process, so many 'outcomes' are not assessable until the end of one's life.[54]

[53] Collins, "Aristotle and the Philosophy of Intellectual Education," 75. One shortcoming of Collins' discussion is that he does not give concrete examples of which subjects would be essential and which would be optional.
[54] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1098a19-21.

4. Account of *Practice* in the Model

Since, for Aristotle, education is meant to help students to live well, education needs to teach students to *internalise* practices so that they can live and think in a particular way (rather than merely rote learning answers to questions or achieving quantifiable outcomes). This means students must learn how to become lifelong learners.[55]

In Aristotle's view, learning is something proper to human nature and is meant to be lifelong. The teacher teaches *exteriorly* and cannot teach *interiorly*.[56] It becomes the student's responsibility to make a *choice* to learn and also to integrate what is learnt into their own lives.[57] So, learning via instruction is meant to help the student to become a lifelong learner, integrating what they have learnt into their own lives by teaching them *how* to learn and to *love* to learn.[58] Teaching practice should be conducive to both of these ends.

Firstly, as I have mentioned, a teacher can teach a student *how* to learn by modelling their own learning process and by prioritising the teaching of *principles* rather than *facts*.[59] If a student understands principles about the world (e.g., metaphysics, methods of deriving conclusions and so on), the student can come to conclusions more readily independently of instruction.

In our process of learning, we have to start from facts (i.e., effects), which we know about the world and then progress to learn the principles that underlie those facts[60] (i.e., causes).[61] So, in good teaching practice, learning needs to progress according to these stages.[62] Aristotle and Aquinas argue that the learning process depends on the student's prior knowledge.[63] This means that the student can only learn new things if they are somehow related to what they already know.[64] Appealing to the student's prior knowledge and experience of the

[55] For Aristotle, education is meant to help us to use our leisure time well – that is, education shows us what to do when we are bored. A good use of leisure time is contemplation about the world because this is proper to us *qua* human beings. This again suggests that learning practices need to become habituated and internalised in and by the student so that when they are no longer undergoing learning by instruction, they can continue to actualise their potential for knowledge through their own discovery and contemplation of the word (Felix C. Robb, "Aristotle and Education," *Peabody Journal of Education* 20, no. 4 (1943): 209).
[56] Aquinas, "Disputed Questions on the Truth," II.11.1.
[57] Brook, "A Philosophical Account of Learning," 19.
[58] See Froula, "The Importance of Aristotelian-Thomistic Principles for Educational Leaders," 61; and Brook, "A Philosophical Account of Learning," 18.
[59] Collins, "Aristotle and the Philosophy of Intellectual Education," 82.
[60] Froula, "The Importance of Aristotelian-Thomistic Principles for Educational Leaders," 109.
[61] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1095b1-10.
[62] Collins, "Aristotle and the Philosophy of Intellectual Education," 78.
[63] Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics,* 71a1-2; Aquinas, "Disputed Questions on the Truth," II.11.1.
[64] Aquinas gives the following example and explanation of this point. He writes, "if we are taught what man is, we must know something about him beforehand, namely, the meaning of animal, or of substance, or at least of being

world helps students relate what is being taught within their own lives, making the process of integrating the lesson within themselves easier. The teacher should appeal to the student's prior experience of the world by engaging with their sensations of the world and their memory. This means the teacher could include storytelling, role-playing, and an emphasis on imaginative thinking.[65]

Additionally, in order to teach in a way conducive to the student's internalisation of practices within themselves, the teacher should account for the differing capabilities of their students (given that a student's ability to learn is grounded in their passive dispositions, as I have already discussed).[66] A good teacher should identify what the students already know or what kinds of topics they are most familiar with and then build upon this prior knowledge.

Secondly, students should learn to *love* learning because:

(1) For Aristotle, learning is proper to us *qua rational* animal.[67] This is because the highest good of a thing is tied to its *highest* power, which for human beings is our ability to reason.[68] This means that teachers should make clear that since knowledge is proper to us as human beings, it has intrinsic and not merely instrumental value. That is to say, what we know does not have to be immediately useful to us.

(2) The student who loves to learn will be more disposed to receive the lesson being taught and more inclined to integrate the lesson into their own life since they are motivated by a *desire* to learn.[69] Practically, to help a student love to learn, the teacher should make lessons relatable to the student, make lessons interesting (by appealing to their student's interests),

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itself … Similarly, if we are taught a certain conclusion, we must know beforehand what the subject and predicate are" (Aquinas, "Disputed Questions on the Truth," II.11.1).

[65] Collins, "Aristotle and the Philosophy of Intellectual Education," 80.

[66] This means each individual student will be more disposed to learn in some ways than others (e.g., by auditory or visual learning or through physical education). See Brook, "A Philosophical Account of Learning," 8, 17.

However, one problem that arises in regard to having a flexible teaching method depending on which students are in a class is that within a class there could be students with very different interests or learning styles. So, there is a tension between educating a *group* of students and educating *individual* students. Perhaps this is where Collins' reflections on the essential and accidental features of teaching and learning can help a teacher to reflect on and identify which elements of their teaching practice are essential and which parts of their practice should be more flexible (meaning those features that are concerned with actualising accidental qualities in students) (Collins, "Aristotle and the Philosophy of Intellectual Education," 75).

It seems to me that if a teacher focuses on teaching a student *how* to learn and think and, in so doing, makes the student more capable of self-learning, then the student will also become more capable of pursuing areas of learning that are more specific to their own interests and abilities/talents.

[67] Aristotle, *The Metaphysics* trans. John H. McMahon (Garden City, NY: Dover Publications, 2018), 980a1.

[68] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1177a10-15. Aristotle provides a detailed discussion about why human happiness ultimately consists in contemplation at 1177a10-1179a35. It is not within the scope of this paper to provide all these reasons here.

[69] See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1172a20-25; and Brook, "A Philosophical Account of Learning," 15.

and aim to cultivate a sense of wonder in their students, as wonder is foundational to learning.[70]

5. How you could apply the model to your own context in order to develop your own adapted approach to education.

In this section, I will highlight some key points that stand out to me from an Aristotelian model of education. Given that I am a student who is not currently training to be a teacher, in this section concerning the implications of Aristotle's model of education, I will first discuss my context as a student and then the implications of this model on any possible future teaching.

i. My context as a student

As discussed, the goal of education in an Aristotelian model is broad – namely, education is meant to help one to live well. This means that, for myself as a student, measures of success are also broad. The question 'am I a successful student?' when answered from an Aristotelian perspective, would include information not only to do with reaching academic outcomes (e.g., grades) but also concerning how my learning has changed me as a person (e.g., taught me methods of thought, to take pleasure in virtuous action etc.), whether I am able to teach what is learnt (since Aristotle thinks this is a mark of true learning), and so on.[71] One practical implication of this is that I should be more reflective on the way my learning has shaped the way I live rather than being driven by academic results.

ii. Implications for Possible Future Teaching

As I have mentioned in this paper, since teaching is primarily about actualising what is potential in the student, a teacher's method of teaching should be flexible depending on the students they are teaching. This is because the teacher's role is to actualise a passive disposition in the student. The teacher can only do this if what they are teaching corresponds with this passive disposition.

I imagine it would be tempting as a teacher to stick dogmatically to a lesson plan, even in the midst of an inattentive or rowdy class. Firstly, because by getting through a lesson plan, the lesson may be deemed 'successful,' and secondly, because by completing a lesson as

[70] See Aristotle, *Metaphysics,* 1.2.
[71] Aristotle, *Metaphysics,* 981b11.

planned, the teacher would have a greater sense of control over what is going on in the classroom. However, in the model of education I have discussed, teaching should be flexible and concerned with the best way for the student to learn, even if this means altering a lesson plan in such a way that certain quantifiable outcomes are not met or what may seem like 'central' teaching material is not covered. This is to say that a good teacher needs to appeal to the desires and interests of the students in order to teach effectively since the desire to learn is what will make learning possible.[72] The engagement of students in the lesson takes priority over the student's ability to memorise content from the lesson.

Also, as I have suggested in this paper, if the art of teaching imitates learning by discovery, then effective teaching will mimic learning by discovery more closely. Consequently, if one is to be a good teacher, then they need to reflect deeply on nature, including the natural passive dispositions of their students, the nature of reality, what constitutes virtue, the function of a human being and so on – that is, a teacher needs to be highly reflective (in Aristotle's terminology, 'contemplative').

Lastly, if teachers are to teach by modelling their own process of learning, this implies (1) that in order to teach virtue, teachers themselves have to be virtuous and (2) that in order to cultivate wonder and a desire to learn in students, teachers have to love learning themselves. Only a teacher who is passionate about what they teach is going to inspire a similar passion for learning in their students.

In sum, it seems to me that in an Aristotelian model of education, there are higher expectations for the character of teachers to be virtuous and deeply engaged in what they are teaching. If a teacher is merely regurgitating facts about the world, they are not inspiring students to become lifelong learners and, as a result, not helping their students to flourish as human beings (which, in Aristotle's view, is the purpose of education).

One practical implication of the above discussion is that within an Australian context, the study of philosophy should be introduced into Australian school curricula, perhaps in primary, secondary, *and* tertiary education. This is because philosophy, generally defined as the study of reality, can provide an overarching insight into the way reality ties various disciplines together, for example, the way that mathematics relates to reality as an abstract language and how this relates to human thought and language in general, or how art and science can be related to living

[72] See Aristotle, *De anima,* 433a.

a good life and so on.[73] Also, the study of philosophy, particularly the philosophy of thinkers like Aristotle and Aquinas, can make clear why learning is valuable for its own sake, that is, because learning is proper to us as human beings capable of rational thought. Introducing philosophy would then mean that students understand the purpose of their education and hopefully grow in their desire to learn.

Moreover, part of introducing philosophy to the curriculum would include training teachers in philosophy (particularly the philosophy of education) to ensure that teachers have the ability to be reflective and virtuous individuals so as to cultivate the same capacity in their pupils.

[73] Aristotle communicates this in the way that he expresses that metaphysics and the study of first principles tie together other arts and sciences (*Metaphysics,* 981a-981b).

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