

## FLOURISHING VS. MARKET: TOWARDS THE ARISTOTELIAN CONCEPT OF EDUCATION

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MACHURA, P.: Flourishing vs. Market: Towards the Aristotelian Concept of Education  
FILOZOFIA 73, 2018, No. 2, pp. 145-157

In this paper I shall investigate the nature of education as seen from the neo-Aristotelian perspective. My thesis is that education should be seen as a part of political activity in the source sense of the term, that is, as an element of human development rooted in the idea of the good, which makes this concept at odds with the modern concepts of politics and education.

I start with a brief discussion of the classical concept of politics with special attention being paid to the relation between ethics, education and politics. I then address the changes in the philosophical background of this concept of politics introduced in early modernity, in order to indicate the consequences of this process for education as subordinated to an economy-influenced politics. Following is the discussion of some aspects of contemporary Aristotelianism. I argue for the thesis that education is the basic form of policy understood along Aristotelian lines.

**Keywords:** Education – Politics – Economics – Ethics – Aristotelianism – Virtue

In this paper I shall investigate the nature of education as seen from the neo-Aristotelian perspective and its link with political activity. My general thesis is that education should be seen as part of political activity in the source sense of the term, that is, as an element and in fact the key element, of human development rooted in the idea of the good, which makes this concept of education and politics at odds with the modern concepts of what politics is and what role education plays in the life of an agent. This incompatibility is rooted in the cultural and philosophical changes that were introduced in early modernity, which led to the broad acceptance of a narrowed concept of man as an individual autonomous and rational *per se* and the society as form of a system best described by the rules of a market economy. This was followed by the progressive spread of economic forms of thinking as the basic form of rationality, independent from the ties of morality.

I will start with a brief discussion of classical (basically the Aristotelian) concept of politics with special attention being paid to the relation between ethics, education and politics as providing individuals with the tools of the search for their good and the duties of the state. I will then address the changes in the philosophical background of the concept of politics introduced in early modernity, to sketch the consequences of this process for both the general idea and practice of (moral) education as subordinated to economy-influenced politics. I will follow this with a discussion of some aspects of contemporary

Aristotelianism as a normative practical theory and hence I shall argue for the thesis of education being the basic form of policy understood along Aristotelian lines.

**1. Politics, education and the good.** Politics, according to Aristotle, is a science which looks for the highest good for a human being (*Nic. Et.*, I 2). What is important here is that Aristotle, who calls politics “the master craft” (1094a28), sees its task in ordaining “which of the sciences should be studied in a state and which each class of citizens should learn and up to what point they should learn them” (1094a29-1094b3). Hence, there are three elements linked in this concept: power, education and happiness.

If the realm of politics is the natural space of man’s search for a good life, then what follows is that both government and education are to help them in this search (see *Politics*, III 4 1278b16-30). What is striking here is that Aristotle, when discussing different kinds of government, stresses that all true forms of government are devoted to the “the common interest” (*Polit.*, III 7 1279a30-31).<sup>1</sup> What follows from this is moral upbringing seen as the central duty of the state, for, as Aristotle claims:

excellence must be the care of a state which is truly so called and not merely enjoys the name: for without this end the community becomes a mere alliance which differs only in place from alliances of which the members live apart; and law is only a convention, ‘a surety to one another of justice’, as the sophist Lycophron says and has no power to make citizens good and just (*Polit.*, III 5 1280b7-12).

What sets the area of the common interest here is the idea of human good, *entelecheia* of man taken as a certain kind of being (see Haldane 2009, 322). It brings the idea of every living being as described in relation to its two states: the thing as it is now and the thing as it would be if it would realise its *telos* (see MacIntyre 1984/1981, 53). To obtain the *telos* of a particular form of being is to act according to what makes it fulfil its species essence. Hence, the good man is a rational man, a man that has fulfilled their distinctive potentialities through engagement in organising their *Lebenswelt*, that is, through the deliberation and practical search for the best life possible for him or her and – at least in some cases – through being involved in theoretical contemplation.

What is crucial to notice here is that this form of the depiction of human beings presupposes some holistic concept of metaphysics. In other words, human beings might be seen along such lines if they are taken as a part of nature, as an animal of a complex nature.

As man is a social animal, human activity which, according to Aristotle, always aims at some good, is mediated by the communities one inhabits. As the conditions of obtaining the good are set up, at least partially, by others, it is crucial for one’s possibilities of getting *eudaimonia* to develop a practical conduct, a kind of practical knowledge and behavioural habit that can enable him or her to act according to their good. This has at

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<sup>1</sup> “(...) but the governments which rule with a view to the private interest, whether of the one, or of the few, or of the many, are perversions. For the members of a state, if they are truly citizens, ought to participate in its advantages” (*Polit.*, III 7 1279a31-33).

least two consequences. Firstly, a political system provides a kind of institutional framework in which human activity may be organised in a certain way. Any attempt to obtain the good outside society needs to fail. Hence, political activity is a part of everyday activity and a political system is a form of environment in which humans may flourish. For this reason education should be provided to citizens in order to make them able to make use of the system, to cooperate in obtaining common good. This refers as well to those political systems which do not presuppose the broad participation of citizens in power.

Secondly, education seen along such lines is a form of political activity. That is to say, it is political in the source sense of the term – it is strictly connected with the life of the *polis*. For it is the educational system that makes people not only citizens of particular state, but more fundamentally, it makes them *people* by furnishing them with the tools of understanding both themselves and the nature of the environment they inhabit as well as the forms of imaginaries of what they might become, both as individuals and as a society. Hence, any possible analysis and critique of any way of (social) life needs to include both political (in terms of the constitutional order and government) and moral aspect of the life of a certain community, that is the way in which it brings up their children and what *kind of people* it makes them. This way of moral and political critique may be witnessed in Aristotle's comments on Spartan education in Book VII of *Politics* (1334b).

Hence, politics should be understood here as interlinked with and in fact as based in the tasks of ethics, which is the way in which human beings look for their happiness and that the duty of the government is to act in a way that enables all of the citizens to flourish. Accordingly, education is part of both politics and ethics. For it is education that makes youngsters active agents who can act virtuously and as such, they can be involved in the public sphere as conscious political agents.

**2. The turn of modernity.** However, since the turn of modernity, the problems of education have not been taken as part of political thinking any longer. Although both Plato and Aristotle devoted important parts of their political works to the upbringing of citizens (which included not only their military training or introduction to law, but also music and literature, which were supposed to make them a certain kind of *people*), modern political thinkers do not pay much attention to this matter.

Two important features seem to play important roles in this change. Firstly, and more fundamentally, the concept of the human being has changed with the modern concept of the mind. For even if both ancient and modern philosophers call man a “rational animal”, the content of this term is significantly different. For when ancient philosophers call human beings *zoon logikon*, they point out, normatively, their natural potentiality. That is to say, humans seen along such lines are not rational in and of themselves, but they *might* become rational through education and exercise. Hence, if the citizens of the state are to become subjects of political life, they need to be educated so that they are able to make just and reasonable decisions. Plato radicalises this idea by saying that only philosophers, those who possess knowledge and wisdom, may be good rulers and Aristotle claims that the difference between the virtue of citizens and the virtue of the ruler is that a virtuous

ruler should be “a good and wise man” (*Polit.*, III 4 1277a15) and that citizens do not necessarily need to be wise. This is what makes classical thinkers suspicious of democracy. For they do not think everybody can obtain such a level of rationality that would make them able to act as a subject, as one of the rulers, of the state.

Yet, Descartes introduces the concept of a human mind as independent from the general nature of the world. This can be witnessed in his *Discourse on the Method*, where he says, in the very first sentence of the book, that:

Good sense is, of all things among men, the most equally distributed; for everyone thinks himself so abundantly provided with it, that those even who are the most difficult to satisfy in everything else, do not usually desire a larger measure of this quality than they already possess (Descartes 2008/1637, 11).

This heralded an important, far-reaching change in the self-understanding of man and as a consequence, modern philosophers find it useful to depict human acting as rooted in the narrow concept of human beings as rational *per se*, with no special links with other beings and directed by passions and interests (on this and especially on Locke’s concept of the “punctual self” see Taylor 1989, 143-176). This change also had important social and political consequences. For on the one hand, it introduces a basic sense of equality among men which is the *sine qua non* of modern democracy. In fact, it might be argued that this very notion of equality accompanied by the diminishing of the power of the Catholic Church set the basic conditions for the social and political changes that Europe faced in the following centuries. On the other hand, it is rooted in the significant modification of the dominant philosophical language. For what marks the difference between those two concepts is the disappearance of the fundamental concept of the good. As a result, the link between the idea of man, ethics, politics and education was broken.

First of all, what we mean by ‘politics’ has changed. For the modern term has little in common with the Aristotelian concept as it is not connected with individual life and the good of polis and its citizens, but rather with the rules of governance. Yet, the question arises as to what the standards of good governance are. This new concept of politics, as expressed in works by Niccolò Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes, focuses on the sole role of the suzerainty, and William Petty was the first to draw the conclusion from this that it changed and defined the aims of policy in terms of effectiveness – effectiveness in strengthening the state and making it more profitable, which in fact does not need to include broad participation of citizens (Brewer 2003, 83-85). Hence, the tasks of politics began to be seen as part of the discourse of power and economy and not as connected with the fulfilment of human nature.

It is important to remember, however, that the thinkers of early modernity, e.g. Bernard Mandeville, faced rapid changes in social dynamics. Modern economics and large-scale synergic societies were something very different from the Greek *poleis*. The division of labour and the growing complexity of social relations released agents from the ties of their natural (primal, rural) communities and their morality. New ways of life and new standards of excellence were introduced to follow the growing mobility and the pursuit of well-being. Therefore, the thinkers of modernity started to look for the source of norma-

tive political notions in those forms of the depiction of society which were adequate for such complex objects. They found it in the language provided by modern economics (see Dumont 1977, especially part I).

Yet, society seen from this perspective looks very different from the picture given by classical forms of thinking. The society appears as a market, which is ruled by the rules of economic game. What is crucial here is the mechanism of the game in which an individual's virtues and good are not as important as his or her correspondence with the dominant trends in the social market, which is limited by the boundary conditions set by the government. Notice, that because of this, Aristotle's idea of prohibiting what extends the limits of law needs to be exchanged with the modern concept of prohibiting only those kinds of actions which are strictly identified by the law. Hence, ethics, which so far focused mostly on the traits of character and motivation of the agent, becomes interested in the rules and norms of successful action. This was best expressed in Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism.

Notice, that Bentham presupposes that the "radical frame of mind", its initial condition, differs among people (Bentham 1823, 94-95) and hence, what constitutes the human capability of acting is a coincidence of a group of factors. What thus makes people's deeds comparable is pleasure taken as the general aim of every action and it is the only dimension which is broadly recognised. This makes the desires and acts of different people comparable, thus providing the common ground for negotiating the important problems of the public sphere. What is more, it is also the core of human relation to others (see *ibid.*, 90-92), as it is a founding factor of relations that are based on both sympathy and money.

Consider, however, the situation of those whose interests happen to be outside the bounds of the "Extend" category, that is the situation of any minority. In the light of Bentham's social nominalism, the only way of negotiating the "common good" ("common interest") is to summarise the interests of the greatest number of people. Or, to express it in contemporary terms – to recognise the dominant trend in the market. Yet, without any concept of human dignity (as introduced by Mill), that is, without any recognition of the basic moral element shared by all humans, Bentham's utilitarianism remains open to the possibility of becoming a justification for an exclusivist social order. For any government that would look to fulfil the interests of the majority may do this without recognition of the aims and good of the minority.

Hence, the utilitarian framework may, on the one hand, be welcomed as a form of a depiction of the moral situation of modern man which is most suitable to the new social and economic order; on the other, it might be argued that this one-sided focus on the economic dimension of human life, which is rooted in an acceptance of psychological hedonism, may corrupt social life to a significant degree. For it cannot be devoted to human good taken in classical terms any longer, as there are no tools for setting up any coherent concept of such a good. Hence, economics and politics join their forces in introducing what is supposed to be the "natural law" (as Francois Quesnay argued) of social life. And there are at least two important features that should be noted here.

Firstly, the emancipatory character of a free market as both an economic theory and a social movement was rooted in the search for the kind of legal and institutional boundary conditions that were supposed to trigger people's activity independently from their religious, feudal and social ties. In this respect, equal opportunities and the freedom of the bargaining process were taken as the *sine qua non* of prospective cost-efficiency, productivity and well-being. Yet, with the course of the history, it became clear that, however efficient the new economic imaginary was for some, most of the people do not have equal opportunities in the bargaining process, neither as individuals nor as members of their societies; and the language of dominant economic discourse covers this fact. As a result, most people are not social agents, but they are subjected to the rules of games set up and controlled by someone else, and in fact, they are not able to control their lives in key aspects.

Secondly, both the language of economics and practice of contemporary economy to a certain degree deprive people of at least some possibilities of living good human lives. As Michael Walzer famously diagnosed (see Walzer 1990), it is the practice of the liberal economy and the form of the depiction of social reality focused on a game of individual passions and interests that alienates people from each other, from their environment and their values, so that they cannot find any ground on which it is possible to settle any coherent narrative of themselves, any sound identity. Here the "natural law" of economics stands in opposition to the natural character of human way of life.

Hence, the education of agents who recognise themselves as players in such a game is devoted to introducing students to rules and institutions rather than to developing their understanding of human good. With the dominant cultural positions of both economics as social imaginary and of economy as basic human practice, education is progressively reorganised as a tool to educate elements of the economic machine, who are driven by the desire of individual economic success and not human beings. Thus, students are supposed to be skilled, rather than well-informed and project-oriented, rather than wise.

**3. Education as political activity.** The remarks above make it possible to give answers to the questions raised at the beginning of the paper. There are, I assume, two arguments for establishing a link between democracy and education. Firstly, most of the developed countries in the world are democracies. However varied the forms of democracies these are, democratic education shows up as a universal issue of the education theory. For, as the educational system is devoted in one of its key aspects to furnishing students with those traits of character and pieces of information that will make them able to live a prolific life within the bounds posed by the political system, the development of the proper, democratic kind of personal conduct is a prerequisite of both *personal* success and *social* sustainability that emerge from interpersonal relations. That is to say, the aim of education is not only to adapt students to a certain form of social and political order, but also to make them able to inhabit it as agents.

Secondly, and more importantly, as democracy is the kind of political system which enables the broadest participation in power, it also holds all citizens responsible for the

lives of all of the others. That is to say, the character of democratic citizenship not only allows everyone to benefit from the broadest opportunities of political agency, but it also imposes certain duties on them. It is crucial to note that these duties are of a moral rather than political nature. That is to say, they emerge from the interpersonal relations and basic facts of communalism and not from one's ties with the legal system. This makes the ability to understand another person a basic prerequisite of any democratic attitude. For, as Martha Nussbaum claims:

When people think that political debate is something like an athletic contest, where the aim is to score points for their side, they are likely to see the "other side" as the enemy and to wish its defeat, or even humiliation (Nussbaum 2010, 51).

And hence, it also makes education a central issue in a democracy. For the democratic attitude, the attitude of treating others as political and social agents and fellow human beings, is an aim rather than a given factor, a starting point of political activity.

Hence, to reclaim the kind of education which can answer the needs of democratic citizenship, a return to the philosophical language rooted in the concept of the good (and flourishing) is needed. For it is thanks to the possibilities offered by this concept that the crucial aspects of human life, such as the teleological structure of acting, the need for identity and the role played by significant others as well as the sense of flourishing, can be grasped (see e.g. MacIntyre 1999, 108-109). And what follows is that it is also thanks to the intellectual framework provided by this very notion that the need for the cultivation of human abilities to treat others as ends and not only as media, to negotiate the order of the *Lebenswelt* and to limit one's own immediate emotions and frustrations might be addressed as a part of natural human heritage, even though it is a potentiality that needs to be developed. This has consequences for both politics and education.

The concepts of the good and flourishing (*eudaimonia*), used as key concepts, organise the whole practical thinking in a certain way. That is, they are always the good and flourishing of certain human beings. That is, in building any moral or political theories on them, it is necessary to start from needs and potentialities of particular people. From this point of view neither in economics nor in politics can it be justified to set a rule or decision as emerging from impersonal, objective 'laws' (on distinction between ethics-related and the engineering form of economic thinking see Sen 2004/1987, 2-10). Quite the opposite, it should be justified by showing the ways in which a certain form of market or institution may help these people to improve their lives. Hence, democracy should not be defined as the best possible relation between order and individual freedom (that is as a form of Pareto optimal) but rather as the form of governance which enables every citizen to take part in power (which defines a citizen according to Aristotle, see *Polit.*, III 1 1275 20-22).

Notice, that this kind of (participatory) democracy involves education as its key element. This kind of democratic upbringing should be focused on three aspects of citizens' development: (1) providing them with information and developing (2) virtues and (3) forms of imagination.

1. Nowadays educational systems are primarily devoted to furnishing students with practical knowledge in order to make them fit into the bounds of the economy. Yet, this one-sided orientation overlooks the general, social aspect of education and if citizens of a democratic state are to make reasonable decisions, they need to have some broad worldview and what is more – they should be able to question any broadly shared views and ways of life, so that they can reflect on their problem in an open-minded, flexible way. Hence, for instance, they should be provided not only with some substantial knowledge in economics, but also introduced into debates on economic development, market periodicity and the ways in which economic life is described. Similarly, as Nussbaum argues, it is important for democratic citizens to get at least some basic knowledge of the history and the nature of basic social institutions, such as family and gender-based inequalities (see Nussbaum 1997). For without this knowledge, she claims, they will find themselves closed in clichés and deprived of the sense of possible change.

On the other hand, if they are to participate in decision-making related to the aims of their state, they should be conscious participants of its tradition. For, as Alasdair MacIntyre stresses, without a recognition of the role played by the intellectual framework provided by tradition, they cannot become conscious agents (MacIntyre 1988, 372-383; MacIntyre 1990, 196-200). That is to say, it is crucial to acknowledge the sources of the current configuration of the tradition's components (which may be described as social and cultural 'Markov chains') to develop it in a way that, on the one hand, sustains the unity of the core of the framework and on the other hand, enables its compatibility with the world around. This links the general aspect of a moral and social common ground shared by inhabitants of a certain community with the individual-one. For, as an individual person is a social construct, the language and intellectual tradition of one's community are key factors that enable them to recognise their good. For just as it is impossible to live a good life outside a certain community, it is also impossible to recognise what the good life is and what the good itself is outside a certain cultural context. Hence, it is also crucial for partisans of the cosmopolitan concept of moral allegiance to recognise the fundamental character of socialisation and primal education within particular, even contingent, traditions.

2. There are two kinds of virtues that should be mentioned here. Firstly, the virtue of justice is a central trait of democratic conduct, as it allows one to make just judgements and act according to them. For it is the ability of judging and acting *kata ton orthon logon* (see *Nic. Eth.*, II 2 1103b31-32) that makes one reflect about the equal agency of fellow citizens and the *common* good. In fact, it might be argued that it is this virtue that enables the usage of the notion of good, since as a limitation of the will to get as much as possible, it is a prerequisite of the recognition of what is to be obtained in a group acting for a shared good and also what is at stake in limiting one's own will (*Ibid.*, V 1 1129b30-1130a1). Hence, justice needs to be accompanied by *philia*, most commonly translated as friendship, both in a broad sense as in the first chapter of Book VIII of *Nicomachean Ethics*, as a kind of general attitude towards fellow citizens and in the sense of what Aristotle calls the best kind of friendship – the one that has a friend's *good* as its aim (*Ibid.*,

VIII 3 1166b7-23). What the aim is in acting according to this virtue, that is to say, is to help other people in their flourishing. Secondly, what follows from this is the central role played by both the virtues of acknowledged dependence (in the sense of MacIntyre 1999) and the virtues of cooperation which establish “networks of giving and receiving” (MacIntyre 1999, 122) which is the space for practicing justice and *philia*.

Yet, what is more fundamental here is the process of learning virtues. It is obvious that one can learn how to act virtuously by practice only, that is, through developing the habit of proper acting. And, as Aristotle claims in the opening chapters of *Nicomachean Ethics*, youngsters are not good students of politics as they lack temper and experience. Hence, what follows is that it is the school (if not the family) which is the institution that should aim at building proper conduct in students. Therefore, they should be given practical tasks which would make them cooperate with each other, should be encouraged to self-governance and in making (rightful) judgements concerning both themselves and other students.

3. Yet, if students are to become independent agents, they need not only the proper information and moral conduct, but also the intellectual skills of understanding others and reasoning justly. Thus, as Nussbaum points out (see Nussbaum 1994), it is necessary for democratic agents to become independent reasoners, exceeding in their thoughts and deeds the bounds of their natural communities and taking the cosmopolitan, universal moral community into account and giving it priority allegiance. Hence, at the very heart of our (just) decision-making, she stresses, our best guide is the philosophically-trained, critical reason which Socrates and Diogenes are masters of.

But what is even more fundamental is that democratic citizens need to be able to understand others' points of view, others' ways of life, passions and desires. For this reason, it is crucial for students to take courses in arts and humanities with special attention being given to literature. For it is literature, Nussbaum claims, and especially modern novels, that offer an entrance into someone else's mind; that is, they provide the possibility of seeing the world from another's perspective and within his or her intellectual framework. Hence, according to her, reading is an essential social practice as it develops the forms of imagination and sensitivity which are the prerequisites of tolerance, friendship and cooperation.

Notice, that education seen along such lines aims at building the kind of conduct in students which enables them to recognise the good rather than the interest of others. Based in the idea brought by the notion of *philia*, it will make students recognise the needs of others as seen both from the others' and a general point of view. For it is thanks to the possibility of looking from someone else's point of view, gained in the course of developing imagination and sensibility, that makes one able to see humans as not only equally capable of agency, but also as sharing the same basic nature. And this will lead to exceeding the ties of local allegiances and culture. That is to say, education seen along such lines ought to help students to form a social imaginary (see Taylor 2004, 23). The kind of social imaginary, however, that would overcome the contingency of the “Markov chains” of a certain community's culture and social order and that is aimed at rooting in it

a deepened view on human nature and its *entelecheia*. For moral and social consciousness rooted in the concept of the good will be expressed in the forms very different from the game of desire-oriented selves.

Hence, the question of to what extent the concept of education outlined above might be called an Aristotelian one remains open. Two factors seem to be crucial here – the primacy of the notion of the good and the social (public) aim of education.

There are, it seems, two ways of defending the importance of the social character of education. The first, which can be seen in Martha Nussbaum (e.g. Nussbaum 1997, Nussbaum 2010), aims at pinpointing those elements of the humanities which strengthen students' abilities to succeed in business (see e.g. Nussbaum 2010, 52-53) on the one hand, and its importance and usefulness in shaping what Nussbaum takes to be the proper attitude towards the problems one faces in a multi-cultural, globalised and democratic social environment. The latter seems to invite quite a tricky argument, however, as it addresses certain moral, political and economic demands without rooting them in a sound concept of a human being. That is to say, in the light of Nussbaum's "thick and vague conception of the good", it would be difficult to diagnose some form of culture of a certain community as impeding human flourishing if it would be broadly accepted (as might be the case with e.g. some labour market regulations). For deriving her concept of capabilities from the idea of individual freedom (see Nussbaum 2011, 18-28), she focuses on an individualistic concept of agent and makes its internal sense of satisfaction the only mark of a good life and social order, which is at odds with the Aristotelian concept of how the ability of human agency is developed.

Nevertheless, Nussbaum is right in pointing out the dangers of a one-sided, narrowly economy-oriented education. For it is not only that it prevents students from the possibility of developing their non-commercial skills and interests, but also, to a certain degree, limits their possibilities of engaging in a political activity which would be critical to the political and economic status quo. For just as the economy today requires skilled participants, building a decent social and cultural environment needs a sophisticated recognition of both the internal and external conditions which shape the social, political, economic and cultural background, as well as personal attitudes of creating and sustaining the kind of interpersonal relations which make universal flourishing possible.

Hence, to strengthen Nussbaum's reasoning, it might be fruitful to address the tasks of higher education. There are two possible strategies here. The first is that education is to serve private purposes. Whether it is economic success or the goals of life taken more generally (that is, as a flourishing life, *eudaimonia*) is of a lesser importance, as what is at stake is the *individual* developing what they find important in *their* life. Seen along such lines, higher education provides one with the tools with which to gain a certain position within the economic system and in this respect is just a form of professional training. Therefore, it does not have any immediate social duties.

Secondly, in contrast to this, higher education might be seen as an outcome of the division of labour which is taken not only as a matter of gaining the best economic position possible (which seems to have become the dominant form of understanding the role

of academic, and not only academic, teaching nowadays), but which is derived from the way of organising the practical sphere by a certain community. That is, just as societies emerge from a lack of self-sufficiency and human vulnerability (*Polit.*, I 1252a-1252b), the division of labour and level of education reflect both differences in intellectual capabilities and the division of labour itself. Teachers, doctors, scientists, journalists, etc. are key figures in every human community and the way in which they gain their knowledge, as well as its content, is of a crucial social importance. This is not to say that such social roles are to be subjected to social benefit (as was the case in Soviet Block), but the recognition of the over-individual, social and cultural significance of these roles is indispensable. Thus, one of the key aims of higher education is to form a generally educated public (see MacIntyre 1987), a group of legislators and interpreters to use the title of Zygmunt Bauman's book (Bauman 1987), whose role is to interpret the complexity of the world to their less educated fellow-citizens and to provide them with the most sophisticated services and knowledge necessary to sustain democratic agency.

Similarly, an educated agent is one who not only possesses some technical knowledge, but also has broadened his mind. That is to say, even in the narrow concept of education as aiming primarily at practical tasks, obtaining the knowledge needed in technical work is accompanied by the development of more the general skills of logical thinking, problem-solving and advanced analysis. And this in fact is something that Aristotle refers to in *Nicomachean Ethics* book II (1103a32-1103b2) where he says that there is a parallelism of the way in which we acquire both virtues and the skills in *technai* through practice. That is, teaching, in fact, involves two ways of developing skills and knowledge, as some part of it is learned directly and some appears as the general trait of mind and character, a general attitude and mode of problem-solving which derives from what one has learned. Consider, for instance, the case of teaching logic and arts, which are not aimed at developing the ability to solve a certain group of formal problems in students or making them able to analyse this or that piece of art, but rather to make them able to organise their entire mode of thinking in certain way. Hence, similarly, it is not that a technical, pro-growth education leaves students just as they are – private in their world-view – but it develops, or at least influences the development of, a kind of attitude which is interests-rooted and organises the *Lebenswelt* of the students in an economic way, that is, in terms of cost-efficiency and personal profit. Thus, there is no “value-free” education, one that separates the technical and social aspects of education and any responsible educational system needs to recognise this. For “education is part of general movement towards the full actualisation of the subject’s nature” (Haldane 2007, 322) and the Aristotelian perspective provides helpful tools with which to root education dealing with a vast diversity of human ways of life within a sound concept of human nature.

Note that this Aristotelian understanding of education and social roles cannot be based on individual interest (however beneficial, in terms of money, fame and prestige, it might be). For just as the doctor takes responsibility for the patient’s well-being and his or her judgements concerning it because of the knowledge that gives him an advantage over the patient, the advantage of educated people over the rest of their community holds them

responsible for the judgements and decisions they make. Yet, this does not need to lead into Plato-ish social model. For the good of human beings as seen in Aristotelianism does not define the outcome of flourishing, but rather it shapes the general framework of flourishing by recognising its initial conditions and most important general goals. For, however socially and culturally contingent are the forms of human being, they are always (or in fact almost always) aware of those elements of the human condition which emerge from its animal heritage, its social way of life and cultural and rational abilities (see MacIntyre 1999, 48-61). That is, looking at the practice of intellectual capability in accordance with virtue (see *Nic. Eth.* I 7, 1098a) is not to determine the form of such a practice *a priori*. Contrary to this, part of the subsidiary role of an educated public in the community members' search for *their* good is the critical examination and evaluation of the search's current state, its communal and cultural resources and dominant forms of life.

Therefore, the good and social significance of education is of two kinds. Firstly, it enables moral upbringing in the sense of developing the kind of attitude that fits in with the shared social (including political and economic) order in agents and furnishes them with what they need to engage in just reasoning concerning the common good as it might be conceived within the intellectual framework of their community. In fact, much of the attempt being made in humanities to deepen the understanding of art and literature (as well history, philosophy and, in a way, theology) may find its sense only as part of a community's move towards a better self-understanding. For apart from this it may be either valued as part of personal, private erudition, or it may not be valued at all. Thus, it is a prerequisite of any recognition of human good as the good of a complex, historically-organised, social being.

**4. Conclusion.** Education seen along such lines is at odds with its most dominant, market-oriented contemporary form. In fact, education thus understood should be to protect students from overwhelming logic of the market as one of its most urgent tasks. Allowing education to strictly follow market trends is to let students become alienated from each other before they start living on their own. And alienated citizens are unlikely to form a well-rounded, self-governed state.

Hence, education is a key political activity in both the classical and modern senses. It is a crucial factor in organising a political community as well as in preparing people to participate in power. And the Aristotelian perspective seems to be especially suitable here, as it offers a holistic perspective on man as an independent rational agent, who sees morals and politics as complementary realms of human activity. Thus, on the ground offered by the general Aristotelian framework, it is possible to sustain a theory of action which avoids the primal alienation of the most important aspects of human agency. Therefore, Aristotelian "virtue ethics" needs to be accompanied by political education seen along such lines.

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