Aristotle

Time Line for Aristotle

384 BC Is born in Stagira, Chalcidice, to Nicomachus, the court physician to Amyntas II, king of Macedonia. Is brought up by Proxenus, a guardian, following the death of his father.

367 Enters Plato's Academy.

347 Leaves Academy following Plato's death. Accepts invitation of Hermeias, ruler of Assos (which is near Troy), to join his court.
Studies, writes, and teaches during the time at court.
Marries Hermeias' niece and adopted daughter, Pythias. Fathers a daughter.

345 Moves to Mytilene on the island of Lesbos. During this time, he conducts zoological research.

342-339 Serves as tutor for son of Philip II of Macedon—Alexander the Great—at Pella.

335 Returns to Athens and opens the Lyceum. Shortly after arriving in Athens, his wife dies and he takes a mistress, Herpyllis. The union produces one son, Nicomachus.

323 Is charged with impiety (the death of Alexander the Great gave rise to anti-Macedonian sentiment).
Flees Athens to Chalcis.

322 Dies in Chalcis, Euboea.

Time Line of His Writings

367-347 Reflect empathetic and enthusiastic support of Platonism. Included in this period Are *Eudemus* and *On the Good.*

347-335 Are critical of Platonic thought, in particular, the Theory of the Forms. Included in this period is *On Philosophy.*

335-322 Reject essential features of Platonic thought. His thinking becomes based on empirical science; included in this period are *Metaphysics, Politics,* and *Nicomachean Ethics.*

Introduction

Characterized by Dante as "the master of those who know," for centuries, Aristotle was called "The Philosopher." He is generally recognized as the best-educated individual of his or any time, and his mastery of all the world's knowledge places him on "the shortest of lists of the giants of Western thought." As Renford Bambrough explains:

> All studies in formal logic until very recent times were footnotes to his work. In the study of ethics, politics, and literary criticism he set standards of sanity, urbanity, and penetration by which his successors two thousand years later may still be severely judged. . . . There is no problem in any of the branches of what is still called philosophy—ontology, epistemology, metaphysics, ethics—on which his remarks do not continue to deserve the most careful attention from the modern inquirer.'

Born in the Macedonian town of Stagira in 384 BC, Aristotle acquired his taste for biology and the other sciences from his father, the physician to the court of the Macedonian king. Known, today as the philosophical grandson of Socrates, Aristotle never gained full acceptance

as a true Greek. Though honored and revered by subsequent generations, his contemporaries often referred to him, somewhat pejoratively, as "the son of the physician from Stagira" or as the "Stagirite philosopher."

Despite losing both parents at an early age, Aristotle received an outstanding education. At age 18, his guardian, Proxenus, sent him to Athens to study at Plato's Academy. For 20 years he studied with Plato, who described him as "the mind of the Academy." Upon Plato's death in 347 BC, Aristotle left Athens and spent the next few years traveling in the Aegean Islands. A crucial turning point occurred in 343 BC with his appointment as tutor to Prince Alexander, the heir to the Macedonian throne. Although the relationship between Aristotle and his soon-to-be-famous student was often strained, their association proved mutually beneficial. Alexander, the eventual conqueror of the Hellenic world, shipped back to his former teacher an enormous amount of information from those parts of the world about which the Greeks knew little or nothing. Included in this bounty were constitutions and descriptions of the culture and customs of the people encountered during these exploits. Biological and botanical specimens were also sent back, affording Aristotle and his students the opportunity to systematize and categorize the whole spectrum of human knowledge.

By this time, Aristotle had established in Athens the Lyceum, a school located near a favorite meeting place of Socrates. Here, for more than a decade, Aristotle lectured to students on philosophic and scientific topics in the morning and on more general topics to a more popular audience in the afternoon. A creature of habit, Aristotle often walked while he talked, with his students following close behind. Here, too, Aristotle composed his most significant works, summing up in an encyclopedic fashion the results of a life of all-embracing study and thought.

These very productive years ended all too soon as word reached Athens of Alexander's death. Longing for their cherished freedom, Athenians moved quickly to cast off the yoke of the hated Macedonians. Partly because of his association with the Macedonians, the Athenians charged Aristotle with crimes similar to those brought against Socrates several generations earlier. Refusing, as he put it, to allow the Athenians to sin a second time against philosophy, Aristotle withdrew to the Macedonian community of Chalcis, dying there of natural causes in 322 BC.

The body of data available to him enabled Aristotle to develop a "number of amazingly wide-ranging and precisely argued treatises, which have had an enormous influence upon the Western world." In his early works, Aristotle mimicked the style of his mentor, Plato, but in these later, more mature works, Aristotle refuses to allow the human mind to impose its intuitive patterns on the natural world. For Aristotle, as for Plato, there are absolutes or universals, but the method Aristotle employed to attain those absolutes differs significantly from Plato's. Believing that as much data .as possible should be collected, arid analyzed before drawing a conclusion, Aristotle placed his trust in the careful observation and analysis of nature as our best hope of arriving at the truth.

Spending his mature years observing and analyzing a body of knowledge "never before available to one man," Aristotle concluded that all things possess an essence or nature. Inherent in this essence or nature is the potential to be actualized in accordance with that nature. For example, every acorn has the potential to be actualized as a giant oak tree. Whether and to what extent the potential is actualized depend upon the conditions enhancing or impeding the acorn's natural inclination to become an oak tree.

After a lifetime of study, Aristotle concluded that every substance, whether found in the natural world or created by human agency, is unique in that each is striving toward an *end*

consistent with its nature or essence. To understand any substance, one must understand the end that particular substance seeks. Each substance has certain characteristics or performs certain functions that no other substance has or can perform. For example, just as animals are a special kind of organism because they perform certain functions that plants do not, human beings are unique animals in that they perform certain functions no other animal is capable of the defining characteristic of human beings is their ability to ask general questions and to seek answers to them through observation and analysis. In short, human beings are rational animals, that is, questioning and thinking animals, capable of philosophical thought.

For a variety of reasons, not all acorns fulfill their potential of becoming oak trees, and, obviously, too few humans attain the ideal of becoming rational, contemplative beings. Just as a forester or a farmer, by nurturing the acorn at the right time in the right way, can enhance the acorn's chances of fulfilling its inherent potential, an educator—by appropriately exposing human beings to the great minds struggling with the perennial problems of humankind—can enhance the human being's natural desire to know.

A human being who, through education, has cultivated this natural desire to --know comes as close as it is possible in this world to actualizing the human potential. When engaged in contemplation—not as a means to some other end but as an end in itself—humans become godlike, no longer moving from potentiality toward actuality. While the union of potentiality and actuality is not possible in this world, it remains the ideal or aspiration of humankind to "soar after the wings of God, [our] maker, the cause of all things."

Aristotle implies that human beings, at their most sublime, are the most complex substances known in this world. Given this exalted status, it is appropriate for human beings to seek the highest good. As discussed in the selection from the *Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle suggests that the highest good "is to be found in human happiness." Since human beings are essentially rational creatures, Aristotle argues that they attain true happiness to the extent that they act in accordance with reason. In continuing the largely Greek idea that to know the good is to do the good, Aristotle suggests that, ideally, an educated person unites morality and reason in virtuous action. Although the potential for such virtuous being is present at birth, that potential must be nurtured if it is to be actualized. For human beings to develop as they should demands that they be properly educated. Since, according to Aristotle, human beings achieve moral excellence by performing good acts, the development of good habits is a crucial part of their education. The ultimate goal of education is to assist human beings in developing their unique capacity to contemplate the world and their role in it. In addition to achieving human happiness, such individuals become ideal citizens ready and able to perform their duties as rational members of a community.

From Nicomachean Ethics (330 BC)

Book I

Our discussion will be adequate if it has as much clearness *as* the subject-matter admits of, for precision is not to be sought for alike in all discussions, any more than in all the products of the crafts. Now fine and just actions, which political science investigates, admit of much variety and fluctuation of opinion, so that they may be thought to exist only by convention, and not by nature. And goods also give rise to a similar fluctuation because they bring harm to many people; for before now men have been undone by reason of their wealth, and others by reason of their courage. We must be content, then, in speaking of such subjects and with such premises to indicate the truth roughly and in outline, and in speaking about things which are only for the

most part true and with premises of the same kind to reach conclusions that are no better. In the same spirit, therefore, should each type of statement be *received;* for it is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits; it is evidently equally foolish to accept probable reasoning from a mathematician and to demand from a rhetorician scientific proofs.

Now each man judges well the things he knows, and of these he is a good judge. And so the man who has been educated in a subject is a good judge of that subject, and the man who has received an all-round education is a good judge in general. Hence a young man is not a proper hearer of lectures on political science; for he is inexperienced in the actions that occur in life, but its discussions start from these and are about these; and, further, since he tends to follow his passions, his study will be vain and unprofitable, because the end aimed at is not knowledge but action. And it makes no difference whether he is young in years or youthful in character; the defect does not depend on time, but on his living, and pursuing each successive object, as passion directs. For to such persons, as to the incontinent, knowledge brings no profit; but to those who desire and act in accordance with a rational principle knowledge about such matters will be of great benefit...

Let us again return to the good we are seeking, and ask what it can be. It seems different in different actions and arts; it is different in medicine, in strategy, and in the other arts likewise. What then is the good of each? Surely that for whose sake everything else is done. In medicine this is health, in strategy victory, in architecture a house, in any other sphere something else, and in every action and pursuit the end; for it is for the sake of this that all men do whatever else they do. Therefore, if there is an end for all that we do, this will be the good achievable by action, and if there are more than one, these will be the goods achievable by action.

So the argument has by a different course reached the same point; but we must try to state this even more clearly. Since there are evidently more than one end, and we choose some of these (e.g. wealth, flutes, and in general instruments) for the sake of something else, clearly not all ends are final ends; but the chief good is evidently something final. Therefore, if there is only one final end, this will be what we are seeking, and if there are more than one, the most final of these will be what we are seeking. Now we call that which is in itself worthy of pursuit more final than that which is worthy of pursuit for the sake of something else, and that which is never desirable for the sake of something else more final than the things that are desirable both in themselves and for the sake of that other thing, and therefore we call final without qualification that which is always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else.

Now such a thing happiness, above all else, is held to be; for this we choose always for itself and never for the sake of something else, but honour, pleasure, reason, and every virtue we choose indeed for themselves (for if nothing resulted from them we should still choose each of them), but we choose them also for the sake of happiness, judging that by means of them we shall be happy. Happiness, on the other hand,

From the point of view of self-sufficiency the same result seems to follow; for the final good is thought to be self-sufficient. Now by self-sufficient we do not mean that which is sufficient for a man by himself, for one who lives a solitary life, but also for parents, children, wife, and in general for his friends and fellow citizens, since man is born for citizenship. But some limit must be set to this; for if we extend our requirement to ancestors and descendants and friends' friends, we are in for an infinite series. Let us examine this question, however, on another occasion; the self-sufficient we now define as that which when isolated makes life desirable and lacking in nothing; and such we think happiness to be; and further we think it most desirable of all things,

without being counted as one good thing among others—if it were so counted it would clearly be made more desirable by the addition of even the least of goods; for that which is added becomes an excess of goods, and of goods the greater is always more desirable. Happiness, then, is something final and self-sufficient, and is the end of action.

Presumably, however, to say that happiness is the chief good seems a platitude, and a clearer account of what it is still desired. This might perhaps be given, if we could first ascertain the function of man. For just as for a flute-player, a sculptor, or any artist, and, in general, for all things that have a function or activity, the good and the "well" is thought to reside in the function, so would it seem to be for man, if he has a function. Have the carpenter, then, and the tanner certain functions or activities, and has man none? Is he born without a function? Or as eye, hand, foot, and in general each of the parts evidently has a function, may one lay it down that man similarly has a function apart from all these? What then can this be? Life seems to be common even to plants, but we are seeking what is peculiar to man. Let us exclude, therefore, the life of nutrition and growth. Next there would be a life of perception, but it also seems to be common even to the horse, the ox, and every animal. There remains, then, an active life of the element that has a rational principle; of this, one part has such a principle in the sense of being obedient to one, the other in the sense of possessing one and exercising thought. And, as "life of the rational element" also has two meanings, we must state that life in the sense of activity is what we mean; for this seems to be the more proper sense of the term. Now if the function of man is an activity of soul which follows or implies a rational principle, and if we say "a so-and-so" and "a good so-and-so" have a function which is the same kind, e. g. a lyre-player and a good lyre-player, and so without qualification in all cases, eminence in respect of goodness being added to the name of the function (for the function of a lyre-player is to play the lyre, and that of a good lyre-player is to do so well): if this is the case, [and we state the function of man to be a certain kind of life, and this to be an activity or actions of the soul implying a rational principle, and the function of a good man to be the good and noble performance of these, and if any action is well performed when it is performed in accordance with the appropriate excellence: if this is the case,] human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete. . . .

With those who identify happiness with virtue or someone virtue our account is harmony; for to virtue belongs virtuous activity. But it makes, perhaps, no small difference whether we place the chief good in possession or in use, in state of mind or inactivity. For the state of mind may exist without producing any good result, as in a man who is asleep or in some other way quite inactive, but activity cannot; for one who has the activity will of necessity be acting, and acting well. And as in the Olympic Games it is not the most beautiful and the strongest that are crowned but those who compete (for it is some of these that are victorious), so those who act win, and rightly win, the noble and good things in life....

Book II

Virtue, then being of two kinds, intellectual and moral, intellectual virtue in the main owes both its birth and its growth to teaching (for which reason it requires experience and time), while moral virtue comes about as a result of habit, whence also its name is one that is formed by a slight variation from the word (habit). From this it is also plain that none of the moral virtues arises in us by nature; for nothing that exists by nature can form a habit contrary to its nature. For instance the stone which by nature moves downwards cannot be habituated to move upwards, not

even if one tries to train it by throwing it up ten thousand times; nor can fire be habituated to move downward, nor can anything else that by nature behaves in one way be trained to behave in another. Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit.

Again, of all the things that come to us by nature we first acquire the potentiality and later exhibit the activity (this is plain in the case of the senses; for it was not by often seeing or often hearing that we got these senses, but on the contrary we had them before we used them, and did not come to have them by using them); but the virtues we get by first exercising them, as also happens in the case of the arts as well. For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them, e.g. men become builders by building and lyre-players by playing the lyre; so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts.

This is confirmed by what happens in states: for legislators make the citizens good by forming habits in them, and this is the wish of every legislator, and those who do not effect it miss their mark, and it is in this that a good constitution differs from a bad one

Again, it is from the same causes and by the same means that every virtue is both produced and destroyed, and similarly every art; for it is from playing the lyre that both good and bad lyre-players are produced. And the corresponding statement is true of builders and of all the rest; men will be good or bad builders as a result of building well or badly. For if this were not so, there would have been no need of a teacher, but all men would have been born good or bad at their craft. This, then, is the case with the virtues also; by doing the acts that we do in our transactions with other men we become just or unjust, and by doing the acts that we do in the presence of d anger, and being habituated to feel fear or confidence, we become brave or cowardly. The same is true of appetites and feelings of anger; some men become temperate and good-tempered, others self-indulgent and irascible, by behaving in one way or the other in the appropriate circumstances. Thus, in one word, states of character arise out of like activities. This is why the activities we exhibit must be of a certain kind; it is because the states of character correspond to the differences between these. It makes no small difference, then, whether we form habits of one kind or of another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather *all* the difference. . . .

It is the nature of such things to be destroyed by defect and excess, as we see in the case of strength and of health (for to gain light on things imperceptible we must use the evidence of sensible things); both excessive and defective exercise destroys the strength, and similarly drink or food which is above or below a certain amount destroys the health, while that which is proportionate both produces and increases and preserves it. So too is it, then, in the case of temperance and courage and the other virtues. For the man who flies from and fears everything and does not stand his ground against anything becomes a coward, and the man who fears nothing at all but goes to meet every danger becomes rash; and similarly the man who indulges in every pleasure and abstains from none becomes self-indulgent, while the man who shuns every pleasure, as boors do, becomes in a way insensible; temperance and courage, then, are destroyed by excess and defect, and preserved by the mean.

But not only are the sources and causes of their origination and growth the same as those of their destruction, but also the sphere of their actualization will be the same; for this is also true of the things which are more evident to sense, e.g., of strength; it is produced by taking much food and undergoing much exertion, and it is the strong man that will be most able to do these things. So too is it with the virtues; by abstaining from pleasures we become temperate, and it is when

we have become so that we are most able to abstain from them; and similarly too in the case of courage; for by being habituated to despise things that are terrible and to stand our ground against them we become brave, and it is when we have become so that we shall be most able to stand our ground against them. . . .

Virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i,e. the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it. Now it is a mean between two vices, that which depends on excess and that which depends on defect; and again it is a mean because the vices respectively fall short of or exceed what is right in both passions and actions, while virtue both finds and chooses that which is intermediate. Hence in respect of its substance and the definition which states its essence virtue is a mean, with regard to what is best and right an extreme.

But not every, action nor every passion admits of a mean; for some have names that already imply badness, e.g. spite, shamelessness, envy, and in the case of actions adultery, theft, murder; for all of these and suchlike things imply by their names that they are themselves bad, and not the excesses or deficiencies of them. It is not possible, then, ever to be right with regard to them; one must always be wrong. Nor does good-ness or badness with regard to such things depend on committing adultery with the right woman, at the right time, and in the right way, but simply to do any of them is to go wrong. It would be equally absurd, then, to expect that in unjust, cowardly, and voluptuous action there should be a mean, an excess, and a deficiency; for at that rate there would be a mean of excess and of deficiency, an excess of excess, and a deficiency of deficiency. But as there is no excess and deficiency of temperance and courage because what is intermediate is in a sense an extreme, so too of the actions we have mentioned there is no mean nor any excess and deficiency, but however they *are* done they are wrong; for in general there is neither a mean of excess and deficiency, nor excess and deficiency of a mean...

Book X

If happiness is activity in accordance with virtue, it is reasonable that it should be in accordance with the highest virtue; and this will be that of the best thing in us. Whether it be reason or something else that is this element which is thought to be our natural ruler and guide and to take thought of things noble and divine, whether it be itself also divine or only the most divine element in us, the activity of this in accordance with its proper virtue will be perfect happiness. That this activity is contemplative we have already said.

Now this would seem to be in agreement both with what we said before and with the truth. For, firstly, this activity is the best (since not only is reason the best thing in us, but the objects of reason are the best of knowable objects); and, secondly, it is the most continuous, since we can contemplate truth more continuously than we can *do* anything. And we think happiness has pleasure mingled with it, but the activity of philosophic wisdom is admittedly the pleasantest of virtuous activities; at all events the pursuit of it is thought to offer pleasures marvelous for their purity and their enduringness, and it is to be expected that those who know will pass their time more pleasantly than those who inquire. And the self-sufficiency that is spoken of must belong to the contemplative activity. For while a philosopher, as well as a just man or one possessing any other virtue, needs the necessaries of life, when they are sufficiently equipped with things of that sort the just man needs people towards whom and with whom he shall act justly, and the temperate man, the brave man, and each of the others is in the same case, but the philosopher, even when by himself, can contemplate truth, and the better the wiser he is; he can perhaps do so

better if he has fellow-workers, but still he is the most self-sufficient. And this activity alone would seem to be loved for its own sake; for nothing arises from it apart from the contemplating, while from practical activities we gain more or less apart from the action. And happiness is thought to depend on leisure; for we are busy that we may have leisure, and make war that we may live in peace. Now the activity of the practical virtues is exhibited in political or military affairs, but the actions concerned with these seem to be unleisurely. Warlike actions are completely so (for no one chooses to be at war, or provokes war, for the sake of being at war; any one would seem absolutely murderous if he were to make enemies of his friends in order to bring about battle and slaughter); but the action of the statesman is also unleisurely, and—apart from the political action itself—aims at despotic power and honors, or at all events happiness, for him and his fellow citizens—a happiness different from political action, and evidently sought as being different. So if among virtuous actions political and military actions are distinguished by nobility and greatness, and these are unleisurely and aim at an end and are not desirable for their own sake, but the activity of reason, which is contemplative, seems both to be superior in serious worth and to aim at no end beyond itself, and to have its pleasure proper to itself (and this augments the activity), and the self-sufficiency, leisureliness, unweariedness (so far as this is possible for man), and all the other attributes ascribed to the supremely happy man are evidently those connected with this activity, it follows that this will be the complete happiness of man, if it be allowed a complete term of life (for none of the attributes of happiness is incomplete).

But such a life would be too high for man; for it is not in so far as he is man that he will live so, but in so far as something divine is present in him; and by so much as this is superior to our composite nature is its activity superior to that which is the exercise of the other kind of virtue. If reason is divine, then, in comparison with man, the life according to it is divine in comparison with human life. But we must not follow those who advise us, being men, to think of human things, and, being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us; for even if it be small in bulk, much more does it in power and worth surpass everything. This would seem, too, to be each man himself, since it is the authoritative and better part of him. It would be strange, then, if he were to choose not the life of his self but that of something else. And what we said before will apply now; that which is proper to each thing is by nature best and most pleasant for each thing; for man, therefore, the life according to reason is best and pleasantest, since reason more than anything else is man. This life therefore is also the happiest. . . .

But that perfect happiness is a contemplative activity will appear from the fol-lowing consideration as well. We assume the gods to be above all other beings blessed and happy; but what sort of actions must we assign to them? Acts of justice? Will not the gods seem absurd if they make contracts and return deposits, and so on? Acts of brave man, then, confronting dangers and running risks because it is noble to do so? Or liberal acts? To whom will they give? It will be strange if they are really to have money or anything of the kind. And what would their temperate acts be? Is not such praise tasteless, since they have no bad appetites? If we were to run through them all, the circumstances of action would be found trivial and unworthy of gods. Still, every one supposes that they *live* and therefore that they are active; we cannot suppose them to sleep like Endymion. Now if you take away from a living being action, and still more production, what is left but contemplation? Therefore the activity of God, which surpasses all others in blessedness, must be contemplative; and of human activities, there-fore, that which is most akin to this must be most of the nature of happiness.

This is indicated, too, by the fact that the other animals have no share in happiness, being completely deprived of such activity. For while the whole life of gods is blessed, and that of men too in so far as some likeness of such activity belongs to them, none of the other animals is happy, since they in no way share in contemplation. Happiness extends, then, just so far as contemplation does, and those to whom contemplation more fully belongs are more truly happy, not as a mere concomitant but in virtue of the contemplation; for this is in itself precious. Happiness, therefore, must be some form of contemplation... .

Now he who exercises his reason and cultivates it seems to be both in the best state of mind and most dear to the gods. For if the gods have any care for human affairs, as they are thought to have, it would be reasonable both that they should delight in that which was best and most akin to them (i.e. reason) and that they should reward those who love and honour this most, as caring for the things that are dear to them and acting both rightly and nobly. And that all these attributes belong most of all to the philosopher is manifest. He, therefore, is the dearest to the gods. And he who is that will presumably be also the happiest; so that in this way too the philosopher will more than any other be happy...

Now some think that we are made good by nature, others by habituation, others by teaching Nature's part evidently does not depend on us, but as a result of some divine causes is present in those who are truly fortunate; while argument and teaching, we may suspect, are not powerful with all men, but the soul of the student must first have been cultivated by means of habits for noble joy and noble hatred, like earth which is to nourish the seed. For he who lives as passion directs will not hear argument that dissuades him, nor understand it if he does; and how can we persuade one in such a state to change his ways. And in general passion seems to yield not to argument but to force. The character, then, must somehow be there already with a kinship to virtue, loving what is noble and hating what is base.

But it is difficult to get from youth up a right training for virtue if one has not been brought up under right laws; for to live temperately and hardily is not pleasant to most people, especially when they are young. For this reason their nurture and occupations should be fixed by law; for they will not be painful when they have become customary. But it is surely not enough that when they are young they should get the right nurture and attention; since they must, even when they are grown up, practice and be habituated to them, we shall need laws for this as well, and generally speaking to cover the whole life; for most people obey necessity rather than argument, and punishments rather than the sense of what is noble.

This is why some think that legislators ought to stimulate men to virtue and urge them forward by the motive of the noble, on the assumption that those who have been well advanced by the formation of habits will attend to such influences; and that punishments and penalties should be imposed on those who disobey and are of inferior nature, while the incurably bad should be completely banished...

Now it is best that there should be a public and proper care for such matters; but if they are neglected by the community it would seem right for each man to help his children and friends towards virtue, and that they should have the power, or at least the will, to do this.

It would seem from what has been said that he can do this better if he makes himself capable of legislating. For public control is plainly effected by laws, and good control by good laws; whether written or unwritten would seem to make no difference, nor whether they are providing for the education of individuals or of groups—any more than it does in the case of music or gymnastics and other such pursuits. For as in cities laws and prevailing types of character have force, so in households do the injunctions and the habits of the father, and these have even more

because of the tie of blood and the benefits he confers; for the children start with a natural affection and disposition to obey. Further, private education has an advantage over public, as private medical treatment has; for while in general rest and abstinence from food are good for a man in a fever, for a particular man they may not be; and a boxer presumably does not prescribe the same style of fighting to all his pupils. It would seem, then, that the detail is worked out with more precision if the control is private; for each person is more likely to get what suits his case.

But the details can be best looked after, one by one, by a doctor or gymnastic instructor or anyone else who has the general knowledge of what is good for every one or for people of a certain kind (for the sciences both are said to be, and are, concerned with what is universal); not but what some particular detail may perhaps be well looked after by an unscientific person, if he has studied accurately in the light of experience what happens in each case, just as some people seem to be their own best doctors, though they could give no help to anyone else. None the less, it will perhaps be agreed that if a man does wish to become master of an art or science he must go to the universal, and come to know it as well as possible; for, as we have said, it is with this that the sciences are concerned.

And surely he who wants to make men, whether many or few, better by his care must try to become capable of legislating, if it is through laws that we can become good. For to get any one whatever—anyone who is put before us—into the right condition is not for the first chance comer; if anyone can do it, it is the man who knows, just as in medicine and all other matters which give scope for care and prudence.

Questions

1. What does Aristotle mean by happiness?
2. Is happiness intrinsically or instrumentally valuable? Explain.
3. What is the difference between intellectual and moral virtue?
4. What role, if any, does habit play in developing virtue?
5. What role, if any, does nature play in humankind's development of virtue?
6. Explain why habit plays such a significant role in Aristotle's educational scheme.
7. Why did Aristotle refuse to allow the Athenians to sin a second time against philosophy?
8. What is the relationship between virtue, happiness, and leisure?
9. In what ways is the philosopher like the just human being, the temperate human being, and the brave human being?
10. How does the philosopher differ from those human beings?
11. Do you think Aristotle would be pleased with the way contemporary human beings use their leisure time? Explain.
12. What argument does Aristotle offer in support of the statement that the most blessed and happy activity of the gods is contemplation?
13. According to Aristotle, what is it about human beings that make them unique?
14. How did Aristotle arrive at his beliefs about human nature or essence?
15. In what ways is Aristotle like his mentor, Plato, and in what ways does he differ from Plato?
16. In your own words, describe Aristotle's vision of the ideally educated human being.