Aristotle on Citizenship and Civic Education: The Central Role of Political Participation

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Abstract

This chapter examines and summarizes Aristotle's views about citizenship and education. Aristotle defines citizenship functionally, rather than by birth or status, and he understood participation and political authority to be essential to citizenship. Aristotle's definition of citizenship is tied tightly to his theory of the good human life and to his ethics of virtue. A good citizen in the ideal state is identical to the fully ethically virtuous person. For Aristotle, the virtues of living a good human life are the same as those needed to rule and be ruled in turn. Because of the link between ethics and politics of the person, Aristotle's (admittedly

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incomplete) program for civic education is connected to his program for ethical training. This makes the civic educational process intensive and somewhat foreign to modern conceptions of civic preparation. Despite this somewhat foreign idea of education, a number of influential thinkers today have drawn on Aristotelian ideas of citizenship to develop their own theories of governance for modern states today. Social democrats, communitarians, and others looking to revive the link between civic education and participatory communities have all looked explicitly (and sometimes implicitly) to Aristotle for guidance.

Keywords

Aristotle · Virtue · Human nature · Citizenship · Participation · Education

Introduction

Even the most sterilized discussion of Aristotle will undoubtedly be controversial to interested scholars. After upwards of 2000 years of a rich and detailed commentary tradition beginning with the generation directly after Aristotle himself, any and every choice made about philosophical interpretation (including which works to cite) will be open to some measure of reasonable criticism. Given the extent to which Aristotle's writings and thought have drawn different interpretations, readers of this chapter are encouraged to consider additional bibliographical and literature review sources to gain a deeper understanding of the complexity of Aristotle's works as well as of subsequent interpretations. (The most comprehensive for Aristotle's ethical and political works are by Oxford Bibliographies (Lockwood 2013a, b). Excellent starting points for the more casual reader are the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy articles on Aristotle (Shields 2016; Miller 2017; Kraut 2018). For a good introductory overview of the historical context in which Aristotle was living and writing, see Cartledge (2000). For a longer and more comprehensive read, see Hansen (1991). Good and brief introductions to Aristotle's political philosophy can be found in various political companion collections (Taylor 1995; Schofield 2000). Especially excellent overviews of Aristotle's *Politics* are by Reeve and Lord in their respective introductions to each of their translations of the text (Reeve 1998; Lord 2013).) Unfortunately for those seeking to understand his position on citizenship and education, Aristotle himself spends no time (in his surviving works) attempting to give a separate and comprehensive treatment of these topics. To make matters more difficult, what he does say is not, as one might expect given its focus on political constitutions, confined solely to his *Politics*. Instead, to understand Aristotle's views on citizenship and education, it is necessary to draw on discussions sprinkled throughout his works, including *Nicomachean Ethics*, the neglected *Eudemian Ethics*, *Rhetoric*, and *Politics*. As a result, this chapter will be organized thematically rather than textually and will have four main sections: (1) background (2) what a good citizen is like, (3) how to become a good citizen, and (4) contemporary uses of Aristotle on citizenship and education.

Before getting to the main discussion of Aristotle's views on citizenship and education, it is worth sketching in brief some useful background on Aristotle, his philosophical method, and the interlocking concepts that are central to his ethical works and so are essential for understanding his views on education and citizenship.

Background

Life and Method

Aristotle lived most of his life in Athens, but he was born in Stagira and was Macedonian rather than Athenian. When it comes to facts about his life most relevant to citizenship and education, the most interesting was his residency status. Despite being one of the earliest sources to discuss the definition of citizenship, and to organize his theory of governance around the concept, Aristotle himself never really lived the life of a participating citizen. This was true in both the official role and duties of citizens in Athens at the time (he was not allowed to participate in assembly, hold offices, etc.) and with respect to his own philosophical definition of (good) citizenship. Aristotle's own nonparticipation as a citizen is particularly fascinating given his seeming commitment to the idea that participation in politics is a necessary part of the good human life.

The other important thing to note about Aristotle's life was his education. At the age of 17 or 18, Aristotle came to Athens and immediately took up in Plato's school, the Academy. He remained under Plato's tutelage for the next 20 years, until Plato's death in 347 BCE. Acknowledging Aristotle's time spent under Plato's wing is crucial for understanding Aristotle's philosophy. In many ways it is clear that his own thought is a direct (and often critical) response to Plato's thought, as is certainly the case for Aristotle's *Politics* and *Ethics*, which frequently make reference to positions Plato held.

Aristotle is one of the more difficult historical philosophers to read and understand, mainly because he has a precise philosophical method, writes in a clipped style, and rarely explains himself in great detail. For this reason, even a more cursory investigation of Aristotle's philosophical thought such as this chapter requires something to be said about Aristotle's preferred method of investigation. In the first place, and in direct contrast to Plato, Aristotle's ethical and political thinking (as well as much of his other philosophy) is guided by an ironclad commitment to integrating pure theorizing with vigorous empirical study of the world. One of the major and striking contrasts between descriptions of Plato's and Aristotle's ideal states is Aristotle's insistence on building physical and spacial constraints into his ideal. Even more influential for nearly all future political theorizing up to the present day, Aristotle is strongly committed to the thought that politics is informed, guided, and constrained by human nature. Although many later philosophers have disagreed with him about the precise conception of human nature, few have challenged the more general view that political philosophy is dependent on particular views about human beings. Today, this might feel like a trivial point, but it is worth remembering

that it was Aristotle who was one of the first to frame thinking about politics in this way.

Delving a bit deeper into Aristotle's philosophical method, especially with regard to his ethical and political works, it is important to understand that Aristotle usually begins each new topic and subtopic by outlining the views of others, both philosophers and nonphilosophers alike. Without an understanding of Aristotle's method, this procedure can be a bit disorienting and distracting. The main thing to note here is that Aristotle believes that philosophy makes progress by gathering together the reputable beliefs that have already been expressed on a topic. The idea is then to aim for a philosophical position that can stay true to the core components shared by these reputable beliefs. If no reasonable philosophical theory can meet this standard, then the aim is to choose the theory that does the best job accommodating as many of the core components as possible (see *NE* 1145b2-7 and *Topics* 100b21-23, 104a10-11, 104b31-36; see Reeve 1998, pp. xviii–xxv for a good politically oriented discussion of Aristotle's method).

Recognizing Aristotle's method makes it easier to read through the text of both the *Ethics* and *Politics*. *Politics* especially often encourages confusion as Aristotle usually introduces a topic by describing the many different positions other thinkers hold on a subject without offering a clear statement that these positions are not his own. Noticing that Aristotle's method recommends consideration of these theories as part of the process of coming to his own position helps to cut through some of this confusion. Understanding that Aristotle's philosophical method involves examining a range of possible views on the matter at hand also explains why Aristotle often ends up adopting a position that falls somewhere in between the positions of his predecessors on a given topic. In the history of philosophy, this fact has often led thinkers to deride Aristotle as a philosopher of common sense, but this derision is based on a serious misunderstanding of what Aristotle considers good philosophical truth-finding to involve (for more on Aristotle's philosophical method and dialectic in the secondary literature, see the good overview in Bostock 2000).

Major Texts and the Link Between Ethics and Politics

As mentioned above, understanding Aristotle on citizenship and education requires noting that Aristotle gives us no definitive textual treatment of either topic. Instead, his discussion of these topics is scattered throughout his ethical and political works. For this reason, it is unreasonable to view Aristotle's views on citizenship and education as existing separately from his ethical position. In other words, to understand Aristotle's response to the questions "what is a citizen?" and "what makes a good citizen?" we must first know something about his response to the question "what is an ethical life?" The two most studied of Aristotle's texts are his *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*. Of these, *Nicomachean Ethics* is by far and away the more well-traveled by scholars. This focus on *Nicomachean Ethics* is no doubt because *Politics* feels like a more incomplete text, and there are a number of ongoing disputes about whether the text we have was meant to be a complete whole

at all or whether it is actually a composite of separate texts. There is also much debate about which order the books (sections) of *Politics* should go in (for a good survey of these textual issues, see Lord 1981).

For the purposes of thinking about citizenship and education, it is worth keeping in mind that much of what Aristotle says about education is to be found in *Nicomachean Ethics*, despite there being a brief, but sustained discussion at the end of *Politics*. Citizenship as a concept is in the reverse situation. The bulk of Aristotle's discussion appears in *Politics* book 3.1-5, while *Nicomachean Ethics* holds a few, scattered important nuggets about his views on citizenship. That citizenship and education are distributed among both the ethical and political elements of his works is due to Aristotle's conception of ethics and politics as fundamentally connected subjects. Unlike many modern-day thinkers (and laypersons), Aristotle (and the Ancient Greeks generally) did not see the two as distinct from one another. For Aristotle, ethics is the study of how human beings should live, and understood this way, it is not hard to see why he would therefore think that organizing government and the social order would be part and parcel of a complete picture of the good human life. See, for discussion, Adkins (1991).

Essential Concepts for Understanding Aristotle on Citizenship

To flesh out the connection Aristotle sees between ethics and politics a bit more, it is necessary to consider three core concepts in Aristotle's philosophy: Virtue, The Good Life, and Human Nature.

The virtues, for Aristotle, are the central mode by which human beings are conceived of and assessed ethically. In simple terms, the virtues are those states of character that human beings develop and then use to act and live their lives well. For Aristotle, there are a number of distinct virtues, each including its own unique constellation of emotions, kinds of thinking, domains of application, and nuances of behavior (e.g., courage and generosity). To be a good person, in Aristotle's view, one must develop the virtues to the proper extent avoiding an excess or deficiency of the given virtue (his doctrine of the mean). Acting in accordance with the virtues, according to Aristotle, requires extensive training, some of which is controlled by the individual. To be a good person, in Aristotle's view, one must develop and enact the virtues to the right extent (i.e., the mean between excess and deficiency), which will require extensive training, some of which is controlled by the individual and some of which must be initiated at an early age by society and the individual's parents.

More generally, the virtues are those character traits that make a human being an excellent instance of its kind. In this more general sense, we might speak of the distinct virtues of a knife, a car, a hippopotamus, or a person. According to Aristotle's function argument, which appears at the beginning the ethical works (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1.7), the characteristic activity of human beings, and what sets them apart from other creatures, is the ability to use reason.

The completed story is more complex than this, of course, and this becomes clearer when the concept of the good life is examined, including how the good life and virtues are related. For Aristotle, the virtues are not just the generic pieces that make a thing a good example of its kind. After all, we can ask: "a good example of its kind relative to what purpose?" For Aristotle, the virtues are the distinctly human answer to the non-relative purposive question: "What is a good human life?" (Answer: a virtuous life).

On this more specific understanding of the virtues (see Curzer 2012), the virtues are those character traits that uniquely identify human beings as distinct from other types of creatures (the ability to reason) while at the same time serving as the keys which enable a human being to live a good life *as a human being*. In this way, Aristotle's understanding of a good human life is fundamentally ethical. Unlike many modern thinkers, Aristotle would resist the thought that we can carve out a clear distinction between what is good for a person (well-being) and what one should do ethically speaking (morality or ethics). Aristotle does not connect well-being and ethics merely as a motivational connection but as a metaphysical one tied to human nature. The connection is not meant to be an answer to the amoralist's question: "Why be moral?" Instead, the connection between well-being and ethics is a deeper truth about the nature of human beings. For Aristotle then, ethics is inseparable from questions about living a good life.

In much the same way, Aristotle viewed ethics as linked inexorably to politics. For Aristotle, the first thing to think about when we do political philosophy is to think about the purpose of the state. In his view, the aim of the state is to make sure that the people living within it have lives that are good. Aristotle's focus here on the formative role of the state is one of the places where he reacts directly and critically to Plato's view of the state. For Plato, the best government does not aim to make every individual within it happy. Aristotle, by contrast, believes that the entire purpose of having a government is to facilitate the good life for individuals.

Aristotle expresses this view in a couple of key statements: "Every city-state exists by nature" (Politics 1.2 1252b29-30), "anyone who is without a city-state, not by luck but by nature, is either a poor specimen or superhuman" (1.2 1253a4-5), and "a human being is by nature a political animal" (1.2 1253a3-4). There is quite a lot of debate about what these statements mean precisely, but for the purposes of this chapter, the main thing to note is that Aristotle draws a tight link between human nature and the existence of the state. (For further discussion of these three claims linking nature, the city-state, and human aims, see the canonical Keyt (1991). It is worth considering dissenting views such as Chan (1992) and Kraut (2007).) In his view, living in a community of this form is part of the definition of the human species. Human beings as groups and individuals could not reliably satisfy their natural goals without creating the state as part of this process. In other words, Aristotle views the state as a necessary component of a complete (good) human life. (For elaboration on this view, see Cooper (2010). For a more conflict-oriented, and less communal, interpretation of human nature in Aristotle, see Yack (1993)).

In short, Aristotle's vision of ethics and politics is that both are fundamental parts of human life. This intimate connection between ethics and politics sits in fairly stark

contrast to much of modern political thought, in particular social contract theory beginning with Hobbes, which holds that that state is not part of the natural order but is instead an artificial construct that human beings choose to enter into. On the more modern conception, the purpose of the state is not to play its proper part in satisfying the aims of human nature but is instead an agreement between sovereign and separate individuals who choose to create the state to solve a problem of individual safety and security. For Aristotle security and safety, while provided by the state, are not its main reasons for existence.

To get a full understanding of Aristotle on citizenship and education, then, we do not necessarily have to agree with him about virtue, the good life, and the nature of politics, but we must recognize that on his view, citizenship and education play a core role in his theory of human life, since citizens and their character are central to his understanding of politics and the political state. Unlike today, where we can ask seriously whether or not the education of citizens is a central task of a well-functioning political system, for Aristotle, the answer is based on his understanding of the nature of the state and the good human life. We might say that for him, the character of citizens is the central cog in the functioning of the state. Not only that, but education for citizenship is part and parcel of becoming and being a good person.

The Characteristics of Aristotle's Good Citizen

Most of what Aristotle has to say about how to define a good citizen can be found in *Politics* Book 3, Chaps. 1–5. There he provides us with both a general definition of a citizen as well as an account of what citizens are supposed to be like in respect of different political regimes. In the process of outlining these definitions of citizenship, Aristotle also seems to make some broader statements about what an ideally good citizen is like. These three compressed tasks have led commentators to disagree over a number of issues related to what it means to be a (good) citizen (see Johnson (1984), Morrison (1999), and Frede (2005)).

Aristotle's General Definition of Citizenship

For Aristotle, unlike in most governments today, citizenship is defined by political participation and authority, not by one's official status in a city- or nation-state. In contemporary terms, citizenship is usually granted by birth or through a political process of naturalization and imparts on residents a status that allows them to then participate in the political system in ways relevant to that system (this was also the case, for the most part, in Ancient Greece). In Aristotle's view of citizenship, a person might well be a "citizen" in the sense of residency, without thereby being a citizen in its proper sense. For example, on the modern view, a person could be a citizen in a monarchy without also having participation rights and privileges. According to Aristotle's definition of citizen, it is unclear whether a person living

in a monarchy could really properly be called a citizen at all (Morrison 1999; Riesbeck 2016).

Fundamentally, then, for Aristotle, citizenship is primarily defined by political participation. A citizen is defined by what they do (and are meant to do) and the type of political authority they have to participate in governance and in making the laws. Aristotle states his final general definition of citizenship at *Politics* 1275b12-20. Aristotle says: “We can now say that someone who is eligible to participate in deliberative and judicial office is a citizen in the city-state.” (See Johnson (1984) for a good discussion of the complications Aristotle discusses in coming up with a final definition of citizenship. See also Khan (2005) for a good overview of the current state of the literature on Aristotle’s definition of citizenship.)

One way of thinking of this participatory definition of citizenship is directly parallel to how Aristotle comes to the definition of the good human life in his ethical works. In the *Nichomachaen Ethics*, Aristotle ultimately defines the human good life by considering what the function of a human life is. Citizenship is defined in much the same way. What is the function of a citizen? A citizen is someone who participates in governance within the state.

Aristotle expands on this general definition by explicating participation. Citizens can participate in two ways: by participating in ruling and by being ruled. Aristotle then ties these two participatory tasks to a division based on the types of labor involved in each and by the kinds of virtues needed to do each of these labors well. He also establishes a hierarchical order between the two types of participation, where ruling is superior as an activity to being ruled. This mirrors exactly the hierarchy of value he outlines regarding the virtues of the good human life. For Aristotle, the superior virtues are the virtues of the intellect (such as practical wisdom), while the inferior virtues are the virtues of character (such as generosity and courage). According to Aristotle, practical wisdom is the virtue that is needed to rule well, while the virtues of character are necessary for being ruled well. Although both types of participation seem to be part of being a citizen, there is a clear rank order such that ruling is a superior activity and is associated with superior virtues, to being ruled and its associated inferior virtues (see Aristotle’s discussion of better and worse parts of the soul in Politics 7.14 1333a16-30). Although there is dispute about how to understand the relationship between “superior” and “inferior virtues and parts of the soul in Aristotle, there is virtually no dispute that this is how his value hierarchy works at a metaphysical level. For the canonical discussion of the different ways in which a person might relate to this hierarchy of value, especially with regard to the so-called natural goods, see Cooper (1985). It is also helpful to consult the final chapter of the *Eudemian Ethics* 8.3.

What this means is that Aristotle’s definition of citizenship allows for a neat and visible categorization schema for identifying better and worse citizens. True exemplars of citizens are those involved in the process of ruling, while citizens who are only involved in the activity of being ruled are, in some sense, not fully citizens. Or at least, they are not ideal examples of citizens (just as a dull and rusted knife is not a good example of a knife).

Because the types of participation are linked to the virtues and because the virtues are excellent character traits, we can also see that on Aristotle's picture, citizenship is meant to be understood as a success and competence definition. Strictly speaking, according to Aristotle, a citizen is a person who possesses the virtues of ruling and being ruled (or being ruled but not ruling). This means that we can easily identify noncitizens: These are individuals who do not have (or are not capable of having) the virtues (Frede 2005). This brings into focus one of the darker moments of Aristotle's *Politics* (discussed mainly in 1.13). On his view, there are quite a lot of individual persons who are not really capable of being full citizens since they are not really able to develop the virtues. In the first place, natural slaves are persons who by nature cannot really develop the virtues at all except by having traits that approximate virtues in non-slaves. They are therefore excluded from being citizens (Aristotle is convinced that many non-Greek ethnicities and races meet his definition of natural slaves). Likewise, women are only capable of having some part of virtue and so are, on Aristotle's picture, incapable of being citizens in the fullest sense, since they cannot develop the virtues of intellect. Finally, and emphasized most directly in his discussion of citizenship, are manual laborers (*banausoi*) who are incapable of developing the virtues in roughly the same vein as slaves. For this reason, they are also excluded from the citizenry (although this appears to be due to how they spend their time and not so clearly because they are incapable of developing virtue because of their natures. For discussion see Smith (1991), Spelman (1994), Lockwood (2007), and Deslauriers (2009)). It is worth emphasizing that the disparagement of labor by Aristotle does not seem to play an essential role in his theory of value but instead acts as a kind of peripheral vestige of the racist, sexist, and classist views of his time. For this reason, contemporary Aristotelians tend to vehemently reject these sorts of biological, non-egalitarian claims.

With these categories of participation organized in terms of the virtues associated with them, Aristotle brings us quickly to his neat division of different types of political systems. One dimension of this division is in terms of "correct" and "deviant" regimes (while the other is a three-place division based on how many rulers a state has: one, a few, or many). Relying on these distinctions, Aristotle makes it clear that "correct" regimes are those where the citizens have at least some part of virtue. He cites the Spartan system as an example of such a "correct" system, since the Spartans are said to have the virtues of character (the virtues of being ruled), but not full virtue. Part of the rationale for dividing things up this way is that, for Aristotle, "correct" regimes are so because the laws and citizens of those systems aim at the common good of the individuals living within the state, while "deviant" regimes and rulers aim only at their own benefit, often at the expense of other persons living within the regime. This alignment of aiming at the common good and possession of the virtues is not a coincidence. For Aristotle, part of being virtuous is having the right goals, aims, and motives. As a result, individuals who do not aim at the common good are failing to be citizens on the strictest definition (since this shows that they do not really have the virtues). Notice what this means for Aristotle's definition of citizenship. In an important sense, a person cannot really be a citizen

unless they possess the virtues in full. All individuals with imperfect virtue, or no virtue at all, are not, strictly speaking, citizens. In this way, Aristotle seemingly collapses the concepts of "citizen" and "*good* citizen."

Different Political Regimes, Different Types of Citizens

This definition of citizenship, though, is complicated by the fact that Aristotle speaks at length about citizens in "deviant" regimes. He also discusses the idea that the definition of citizenship is relative to the type of political regime the citizen lives in. A good citizen in a democracy is not a good citizen in a monarchy. A good citizen in a "correct" regime is not a good citizen in a "deviant" regime.

This connection between citizenship and regime type leads to some confusion about what Aristotle's definitive understanding of citizenship really is. Scholarly debates are wide-ranging on this issue (see Johnson (1984), Morrison (1999), Khan (2005), and Riesbeck (2016)). On the one hand, it looks like Aristotle is strongly committed to the idea that citizenship, strictly speaking, is a static concept across regime types. On the other hand, he seems to want to leave space for the thought that one might be a citizen even without possessing virtue (or some, but not all of, virtue). For the purposes of this chapter, it is not essential to take a stand on how to solve this tension within Aristotle's discussion of citizenship, since scholars disagree on this issue. Instead, it will be sufficient to lay out a few of the other central puzzles associated with Aristotle's definition of citizenship that are discussed in the literature.

Puzzles About Citizenship

The first puzzle has already been alluded to in the previous section; namely, whether or not Aristotle's definition of citizenship – which is based on political participation and having political authority – will be too narrow for certain types of governments such as monarchies, tyrannies, oligarchies, and aristocracies. In these systems, some residents will not really be political participants, which seem to imply that they will not count as citizens by Aristotle's stricter definition. This fact looks especially problematic in one-ruler systems, since it looks like in such systems Aristotle will have to say that these regimes only have one citizen within them, namely, the monarch. (For a good survey of the literature and a novel solution to the puzzle, see Riesbeck (2016).)

A second puzzle, much less frequently discussed, is the question of fully virtuous individuals living in "deviant" political systems. A number of scholars (Garver 2005; Keyt 2007) have been interested in the question: "Will a fully virtuous person be able to be a good citizen in a bad regime?" The puzzle arises when considering Aristotle's more relativized citizenship definitions, as it seems at least possible, if not plausible, that the behaviors required of citizens in a "deviant" regime will be antithetical to the behaviors required of a good person. If this is so, scholars have

asked, “then how could a virtuous person live under such a system without losing their virtue or becoming a “bad” citizen?”

A third issue, perhaps less of a puzzle and more of a dispute among scholars, is the question of whether the ideally good citizen living in the ideal regime must live the life of a philosopher. Aristotle himself discusses both sides of this issue but remains obscurely aporetic enough to create space for scholarly disagreement on this point. The issue extends to other areas of concern; since if the ideal citizen must be a philosopher, then this will have implications for how we evaluate citizens in less than ideal conditions (they are not really good citizens but only good relative to their imperfect regimes). A philosophical requirement for good citizenship will also draw a tighter evidential link in debates about the role of philosophy in the good ethical life, which is a major dispute among scholars focused on understanding Aristotle’s ethical system separate from politics (c.f. Roochnik 2008; Depew 1991).

Combined with these three major puzzles, disputes about how to define citizenship in Aristotle continue to be fruitful for scholarly investigation. Let us now turn to Aristotle’s views about how to *become* a good citizen.

How to Become a Good Citizen

The first thing to understand about Aristotle on becoming a good citizen is that this is not a separate question from becoming an ethical person. Since individual virtue is so tightly connected to good citizenship, education for one will be education for the other, at least when discussing the ideal definition of citizenship. The second thing to keep in mind is that citizenship education (and so also education for virtue) will be largely a state responsibility (see Curren (2000) and *Politics* 7.1). One of the striking things about Aristotle is that he is an emphatic advocate of universal and egalitarian publicly funded schooling. This commitment to public schooling fits neatly with Aristotle’s conviction that part of becoming virtuous is the training one gets before a person is truly an agent able to make choices for oneself. Both parents and society as a whole have a responsibility to lay the necessary groundwork in the young in order that they might have the opportunity to develop full virtue. Without the proper early training, the window of opportunity will close, and no amount of ethical commitment or effort will be able to lead the ill-educated back to the path to virtue.

Virtue Education

Since citizen education is not separable from ethical (virtue) education, it is worth sketching out Aristotle’s general thoughts on how to develop virtue. Most of the comments Aristotle makes on this subject are strewn about his ethical works and have to be pieced together into a narrative form like the one offered now.

To be virtuous, a person must act well and in character. But in order to hit the right action standard (which is set by the virtues and with reference to the good human life), much more is required. In addition to acting correctly, a person must need to

think about the good life to be virtuous (*Nicomachean Ethics* 6.5 1140a25-8 and 1140b4-6). The ability to reflect about the good life (accurately) is not some capacity we are born with or that some people have and others simply do not. Instead, it is a capacity that needs to be developed (*Politics* 1.13 1260a13). Developing the reflective capacities needed begins with biology (Leunissen 2012; 2013) but continues to develop in better or worse ways depending on our early-stage exposure to people, experiences, and our surroundings (*NE* 10.9 1179b31-5). Because we need the ability to think about the good life, and this is an ability that must be developed from an early age, a person needs help from others to become virtuous. We need guidance so that we can develop habits that will help us follow the correct path (*NE* 1.4 1095b4) until we can develop enough to be responsible for our own ongoing development (*NE* 3.5 1114b22-3). For Aristotle, then, becoming virtuous is a mix of nature, habit, and reason (*Politics* 7.13 1332a39-40). It is worth pausing to note, here, that when Aristotle says "habit," he does not mean the sort of mindless habits we so often develop (intentional or unintentionally). Instead, for him, habit as part of virtue is a cognitively deep state that is framed and held up by reasons for action. Not only that, but habituation for virtue must be connected to the right motivational structures. With respect to civic virtue, habits must be connected causally to the laws of the state, and those laws must be constituted properly (Hitz 2012). In addition to the development of the right habits, virtue requires methodical teaching and discussion if it is to manifest correctly (*NE* 10.9 1179b23), since this is how any character trait is acquired, according to Aristotle (*NE* 2.1 1103a15; see Kraut (2012) for elaboration).

The Specifics of Civic Education

In the final book of *Politics*, Aristotle lays out his rather strict early education program for musical training and its presumed role in citizenship and virtue education. Unfortunately, we do not have a full account of the specifics of Aristotle's citizenship training program, but what we do have suggests that Aristotle had a regimented and demanding program in mind. In addition, this program would have been comprehensive in that it includes many elements that seem potentially tangential to citizenship and ethical training to modern ears. In the discussion we do have, Aristotle focuses on the importance of musical education and physical fitness, both of which he clearly believes are crucial to the proper development of children, not just as people but as virtuous citizens. While this might be surprising from a modern perspective, this fits quite neatly with Aristotle's conviction that virtue is a comprehensive sort of human excellence and not just a domain-specific sort of thing to learn. In this same way, citizenship for Aristotle has to be seen as a concept with broader applicability than in modern states. To be a good citizen for Aristotle is to be a person of sound education not just in depth but also in breadth. Frustratingly, what we do not know about Aristotle on education is perhaps the most tantalizing: we do not have much by way of direct discussion of what is required to become a good person. Instead, we have a partial description of early-stage education components,

and of those, we have discussion of the elements that seem only distantly related to questions about how to develop the virtues. (Scholarship on this issue ranges widely, since most of it must be somewhat speculative. For thoughts about how music relates to virtue training, see Drefcinski (2011). For questions about whether musical education plays a role in developing the intellectual virtues, see Depew (1991) and Koeplin (2009). For a rejection of the idea that musical training is meant to be a step in the development of full philosophical virtue and is instead part of the way in which non-philosophers can partake in a contemplation-like virtue, see Destrée (2013).)

At the very least, it can be agreed that what specifics we do have from Aristotle on citizenship education are on the one hand too general and on the other hand too specific to be of a great deal of help to those seeking concrete guidance in thinking about modern civic education. Lacking specifics, of course, does not preclude developing an Aristotelian view of citizenship and education. That is, in fact, what a number of contemporary scholars try to do.

The Contemporary Uses of Aristotle on Citizenship and Education

There are a number of different ways that contemporary scholars and thinkers use Aristotle's philosophy of virtue, citizenship, and education to help us to think about those issues in our contemporary context. There are those who are neo-Aristotelians, and there are those who are inspired by Aristotle, but are not self-proclaimed Aristotelians. (For some examples of neo-Aristotelian scholars, see Nussbaum (1990), Frank (2005), Collins (2006), many of the essays in Goodman (2012), and Curren (2013). For an example of a scholar influenced by Aristotle, but who is not an Aristotelian, see Sandel (1998).) In both cases, it is important to keep in mind that no scholars argue that we should take Aristotle's theories on any subject and apply them wholesale to contemporary issues we face today. Always, there is some amount of philosophical maneuvering that must take place, where key decisions will be made about which pieces to abandon and which to hold on to. The main difference between different scholars interested in Aristotle's ethical and political project is in how much of his framework they aim to adopt in their own theorizing.

There are two main areas where scholars are most interested in using Aristotle's philosophical ideas to supplement their thinking on contemporary issues: education for citizenship *as virtue education* and theorizing about social democracy using Aristotle's general political framework. Focusing on these two areas illustrates both the enduring interest in Aristotle's ideas and also how they have been updated to account for their expression in the contemporary context.

Citizenship Education as Virtue Education

The most general insight taken from Aristotle when it comes to ethics and politics is the concept of virtue. A number of scholars are inspired by Aristotle to pay more

attention to development of the traits and skills necessary for good citizenship. This is in direct contrast to much modern discussion of citizenship education both by policy-makers and by social scientists, who have tended to focus on imparting political knowledge as the main aim of citizenship education. Aristotelians, by contrast, and as part of their wider focus on character education, have argued that education should include the inculcation of the civic virtues.

Some scholars have focused in on particular Aristotelian virtues, such as practical wisdom (Curren 2013; Kristjánsson 2016), while others have focused on the more general idea that virtue education is the sort of education for citizenship that we need today (Frank 2005; Collins 2006). Discussions of civic virtue are diverse and wide-ranging with little agreement on what the virtues are, how to understand what virtue consists in, and how to train citizens to become virtuous. Different accounts of each borrow different parts of Aristotle's own theory about virtue and education for it.

Aristotle as a Social Democrat

In addition to a renewed contemporary emphasis on virtue, scholars have also drawn from Aristotle a focus on particular elements of social democracy. Some have gone so far as to argue that Aristotle himself endorsed democracy (Frank 2005). For those thinkers aiming to make an argument primarily about how Aristotle's general political framework and thinking can be useful for us today, Martha Nussbaum has perhaps been the greatest champion (Nussbaum 1988, 1990, 1992, 1995, 2000). Across her work, Nussbaum emphasizes the connection between Aristotle's theory of the good human life, good human functioning, and how these ideas ought to influence political institutions. In Nussbaum's view, the state is tasked with creating meaningful opportunities for all citizens to meet their full human capabilities. Achieving this common good requires a state which supplies material and educational goods to all citizens equally. Nussbaum (see also Franks (2005) and Collins (2006)) adds to this insight the further thought that the state will provide these goods to citizens so that citizens will be able to *choose* themselves whether or not to pursue and develop any particular capabilities they have as human beings. In this way, the idea of the common good linked with Aristotle's theory of the human good as human functioning can be developed into a theory of social democracy. (A good recent overview of the scholarly views on Aristotelian ideas and contemporary democracy can be found in Zuckert (2014). A survey of how Aristotle and Aristotelian thought relates to the US Constitution can be found in Biondi (2007).)

In addition to scholarly attempts to connect Aristotle with social democracy, much work has been done in the so-called "communitarian" tradition to bring Aristotle's thoughts on the good life and political community to the attention of contemporary thinkers (MacIntyre 1984; Sandel 1998; Taylor 1985). These thinkers have focused less on social democracy and more on the notion that there are goods intrinsic to the political community that cannot be satisfied on a highly individualized concept of persons. Scholars of this leaning tend to position their theories as opposing forms of liberalism that emphasize separateness of persons and individual

autonomy, two concepts absent from Aristotle's theory of citizenship, education, and politics.

Conclusion

Although Aristotle himself does not give us the easiest primary materials by which to "read-off" his theory of education and citizenship, his deep theory-building in ethics and politics is full of insights and provides a fruitful place to look for inspiration on these issues. At times, his views look quite dated and immoral (slavery, women), and at others, they seem surprisingly useful as a foil against which to compare our own modern thinking. As with most historical texts, the key is to locate those parts of his framework which are essential to the philosophical program and not get overly distracted by the components which are present, but not fundamental. When we do this, Aristotle is a particularly interesting figure when it comes to civic education due to his focus on the development of virtue and the centrality of character traits to his account of the good citizen. He is surprisingly modern in his thinking when it comes to public, equal-access education and his call for the state to focus on improving the lives of its citizens. In addition, like most popular calls in democracy today, Aristotle emphasizes the importance of political participation in a well-functioning state.

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