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Aristotle's Political Science and the Training in Pleasures and Pains

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This paper concerns the political and pedagogic significance of pleasure and pain in Aristotle's philosophy concerning an education to virtue. Turning to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, I examine the classical view that moral education falls properly under the purview of the political community and that it consists at a most basic level in a habituation or "training" in pleasures and pains. Whereas modern liberal political thought hopes for politics to leave individuals free to choose and shape their own life paths without interference from the state or other individuals, Aristotle understands that citizens must be trained to find pleasure in the activities that foster virtue and to be pained by their opposites. Aristotle thus exhorts legislators and citizens to go beyond their own subjective pleasures to live in accordance with a virtuous life.

The task of the teacher is to use the citizens' inborn attraction to pleasure and their repulsion to pain to "steer" them toward the activities that foster virtue and away from those that foster vice. Aristotle's account of education is commonsensical on the face of it, especially when we consider the education of children. But investigating the precise role that Aristotle assigns to pleasures and pains in both education and politics presents an opportunity to study the intricate and complementary roles of *nomos* and *phusis* in the formation of the political community, as well as the status of the virtues recommended by Aristotle. Are the moral virtues understood to be a piece of our human completion and hence natural, or are they rather the result of mere convention or law? The final section concerns the divergence between the ancient and modern liberal

democratic worldview concerning the place of pleasure and pain in our education and political life.

Education and Political Life

Whereas liberal political thought places moral education under the auspices of the private sphere, the ancients understood moral education to fall under the purview of the law and the political community. This is clear from Book II of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, when Aristotle says that the wish of every lawgiver is to habituate citizens and thereby make them good (2.1.1103b3–5).[1] He recognizes that the family is an important locus of rearing and education, but he also understands that the character of the family is shaped by the political community to which it belongs.[2] At the center of the classical conception of political science is thus the "formation" of citizens in accord with the comprehensive framework of laws, traditions, and customs, as well as daily practices and habits, that bind a people together and give shape to a distinctive and common way of life. In the best case, the legislator brings the human good or human virtue into being through the education or formation of citizens.[3]

Aristotle contends that the legislator, in striving to inculcate the moral virtues, will seek to secure both the happiness of the city as a whole and the good of each of its members (consider 5.1.1130a13–27).[4] On one hand, the moral virtues support the good of the political community, what Aristotle calls a "nobler and more divine" end than the good of any single individual (1.2.1094b9–10). Courage in times of battle and moderation or law-abidingness in times of peace support the continued existence of the city. And yet, on the other hand, the moral virtues are not simply reducible to the political good. They are understood by the legislator, the political community, and the person who possesses them to be intrinsically good and a reflection of noble and good character. Hence, the regimen of education established by the legislator aims to secure two ends: the happiness of the city as a whole and the virtue of each of its members (2.1.1103b2–6).[5]

Given the place of moral education in the classical understanding of *politikē* and the role of pleasure and pain in the habituation

to virtue at its core, it is a surprise that contemporary students of political theory have not paid greater attention to Aristotle's treatment of pleasure and pain in moral education. Scholars in philosophy departments have given greater attention to the matter. Since the influential 1980 essay of Myles Burnyeat, "Aristotle on Learning to Be Good," an entire strain of moral philosophy has been dedicated to determining the precise pedagogic role that Aristotle assigns to pleasure and pain in the moral education of the young.[6] Marta Jimenez characterizes the "dominant view" in that literature as the view introduced by Burnyeat and carried on by his followers, which explains moral development by "appealing to the mechanisms of pleasure and pain." According to this view, moral education is primarily about "becoming able through practice to enjoy the pleasures characteristic of virtuous activities." Moreover, it is by coming to experience those activities *as pleasurable* that the student becomes able to grasp what is choiceworthy about those activities.[7] In other words, Burnyeat and his followers maintain that moral habituation is about becoming able to enjoy the exercise of the moral virtues and, likewise, acquiring a "taste" for them.[8] As Burnyeat says, "[T]o understand and appreciate the value that makes [virtuous actions] enjoyable in themselves, I must learn for myself to enjoy them, and that does take time and practice—in short, habituation."[9]

Sarah Broadie and other critics of the Burnyeat thesis object to it on the grounds that it inverses the proper relation between the good and the pleasant in the virtuous person's priorities and motivations. According to Jimenez, the Burnyeat thesis "reverses the relation between taking pleasure in virtuous activities and grasping and valuing their goodness."[10] Furthermore, since the pleasures associated with the moral virtues are "only available to those who have become familiar with that activity and have learned to love it (typically through habit)," it follows that "the proper pleasure that learners take in virtuous activities cannot be the basis through which learners grasp and pursue at first the goodness of those activities."[11] In other words, the pleasures of virtue are available only *after* one has had some experience in the actions and activities

of virtue and, therefore, cannot be used to entice those who have no experience or awareness of such pleasures. However, it would be contrary to human experience to say that *no* pleasures and pains have a role in the education of children. So, their role needs further specification.

Since the publication of Burnyeat's essay, many scholars have agreed on the pedagogic significance of pleasure and pain as a fact of moral education. Yet, within that scholarship there is little agreement about the contribution of pleasures and pains to that education. Do pleasures and pains have a chief role in guiding children to enjoy and to esteem virtuous actions and activities, as Burnyeat suggests? Or do pleasures and pains serve a more limited role—for example, by reinforcing good behavior and by correcting or punishing bad behavior? The subsequent sections aim to clarify the nature of moral habituation and especially the role of pleasures and pains in that education.

Pleasure and Pain in Aristotle's Conception of Education as Habituation

Aristotle begins his discussion of education in the *Ethics* with a picture of human beings as complex creatures innately attracted to some things and repelled by others but also open to education and capable of change and development, including with regard to what gives us pleasure and what gives us pain.[12] In his "rough sketch" of the human soul, Aristotle asks us to imagine that the human soul comprises two parts: one possessing reason (*to logon echon*) and the other being nonrational (*to alogon*). According to the argument, the rational part of the soul possesses reason (*logos*) "in the authoritative sense" (1.13.1103a1), whereas the nonrational part of the soul is itself divided into parts, one nutritive (*to phutikon*) and the other characterized by desire (*to orektikon*) and appetite (*to epithumētikon*) (1.13.1102b31). The nutritive part of the soul is common to all life and responsible for nutrition and growth and does not "admit of being otherwise." In other words, the nutritive part of the soul is governed by the natural processes of the human body, which are not an object of habituation. The other part of the

nonrational part of the soul—the part characterized by appetite (*to epithumētikon*) and desire (*to orektikon*) in general (1.13.1102b31)—is receptive to habituation and improvement. Moral education involves the habituation of the desires and appetites in the nonrational part of the soul. It is noteworthy that Aristotle uses these terms in a precise sense: appetite *(epithumia)* signifies a desire for pleasure; desire (*orexis)* signifies a longing for a higher array of ends, including the noble (*to kalon*), the good (*t'agathon*), and the pleasant (*to hedu*; consider 2.3.1104b29–1105a1).[13] Since pleasure and pain are a natural part of the fabric of human motivation and accompany all desires and appetites, moral education involves training in pleasures and pains.[14]

Aristotle compares the appetite to a child who can either strain against or obey the commands of his father (1.13.1102a32–1103a10). The analogy of the appetite to a child is illuminating: because the sensations of pleasure and pain are a child's primary source of motivation, a parent ought to use the natural desire for pleasure and aversion to pain to direct the child, through rewards and punishments, toward the activities that foster virtue and prevent vice. It is important that children not only practice virtue and develop stable characteristics but also that they learn to prefer pleasures stemming from those activities becoming of adults. For example, a child may be originally attracted by the pleasures of candies and suckers, but he can and must be trained to go beyond these in the course of his development. If properly educated, children will come to live by a definition and a hierarchy of pleasures that the poorly educated will not even perceive *as* pleasures. They will have what Aristotle considers "nobility of character."

This said, the use of pleasure and pain in the moral life is complicated because, as Aristotle tells us, pleasure and pain are hardly ever discrete—virtuous actions often entail pain. For example, in 2.3 of the *Ethics*, Aristotle argues that the moderate person will delight in acting moderately or in abstaining from indulging in excessive bodily pleasures, but he also suggests that moderation may involve "endurance" or control over the appetite and, hence, also some pain or discomfort. The admixture of pleasure and pain

is also clear in the case of courage: the courageous person is said to delight in, or not to be overly pained by, standing his ground in battle, but his action also involves the physical pains of battle and the psychological pain of the prospect of his own death. Thus, pleasure and pain are not simply in opposition to each other in Aristotle's account of the life of noble action. As a result of the complex interaction of pleasure and pain, the training needed involves a toughening of the soul with respect to both sensations.

What is needed, according to Aristotle's account, is a training that consists of repetition and action that fosters a stable ordering of the desires and appetites. A stable order of the desires and appetites is what Aristotle calls our *hexeis*, or characteristics and habits. This is the basis of Aristotle's pedagogic principle that we become good by repeatedly doing noble and just deeds (2.1.1103a14–b26; 2.2.1103b30–32; 2.4.1105a18). Only repeated actions shape the disposition of our desires and appetites. Aristotle even supplies an etymological argument in support of the point: the word for "character" (*ēthos*) is formed by a lengthening of the first vowel in the word for "habit" (*ethos*) (2.1.1103a16–18). The characteristics are not in us by any natural endowment but come to be through habit. As Aristotle says,

> Neither by nature, therefore, nor contrary to nature are the virtues present; they are instead present in us who are of such a nature as to receive them, and who are completed through habit (dia tou ethous). (2.1.1103a23–26)

Whereas we possess the natural capacities—sight, hearing, and so forth—first and exercise them later, habits of virtue are acquired by performing virtuous actions first. Each of the particular dispositions arises out of the performance of the like activity (2.1.1103a26–b22). Thus, "we must make our activities be of a certain quality, for the characteristics correspond to the differences among the activities" (2.1.1103b23–24). In brief, our actions have the power to shape our desires and appetites into stable and reliable orderings or dispositions.

While the habituation that Aristotle urges certainly involves shaping the desires and appetites through repetition, this education also entails a cognitive component.[15] In other words, Aristotle is suggesting not that we become automatons but that by performing virtuous deeds, we will come to *understand* that those deeds are choiceworthy in and of themselves. As Aristotle puts it, "[T]he virtues we come to have by engaging in the activities first . . . as regards those things we must learn how to do, we learn by doing them" (2.1.1103a31–35). In other words, Aristotle is not suggesting a purely "mechanical theory" of habituation, to use Alexander Grant's phrase.[16] To explain this, Aristotle compares education to house-building, a skill also learned through practice. By practicing the art of house-building, the house-builder comes to understand what constitutes a good house. Similarly, Aristotle also offers the example of cithara-playing, where one learns how to play a musical instrument through the practice of melodies and harmonies. In so practicing, the citharist will come to distinguish good music from bad. Virtue is thus akin to house-building and cithara-playing in that "knowledge" concerning the activity itself is begotten through the practice of the activity. It is by performing noble and just actions that we habituate nobility of character, and at the same time we acquire an understanding of what it means to be noble and just.

Finally, it is worth noting that Aristotle's argument in the first five books of the *Ethics* reflects the sort of education that he is encouraging. Since moral virtue—the correct ordering of the appetites and desires—is not attained merely by way of being in possession of a set of logical propositions but requires training, Aristotle encourages his students to undertake the necessary actions that will shape the nonrational part of the soul. Accordingly, he emphasizes that the purpose of the inquiry is practical: "We are conducting an examination, not so that we may know what virtue is, but so that we may become good" (2.2.1103b26–30). By underscoring the need to undertake the necessary practices, Aristotle's argument accords with how the moral virtues are actually acquired—not by study but by a training of the desires and appetites. He also censures the way of the many (in contrast to the few) who "take refuge in arguments"

and confuse what they are doing with "philosophizing." As he notes, such people participate in arguments about virtue and suppose that in this way they will be serious or excellent (*spoudaios*), but they fail to undertake actions that will produce virtue. In this regard, they are more like the sick who "listen attentively to their physicians but do nothing prescribed." By failing to do anything, such people will not come to possess a well-ordered soul (2.4.1105b10–19). Again, Aristotle is here concerned to show that virtue is not something we attain merely through theoretical instruction. It is possible, after all, to have a correct opinion about what moderation or justice or virtue in general demands and still act poorly on account of base desires.

Moral Virtue's Relation to Pleasures and Pains

In the passages that proceed, Aristotle famously describes moral virtue as a disposition that resides in a "mean" between two extremes. The discussion of the mean illuminates the question of pleasure and pain because the account suggests that the correct disposition toward pleasures and pains is essential for the coming-to-be, preservation, and growth of the virtues. The moral virtues, Aristotle explains, are certain stable orderings of the desires and appetites that are "naturally destroyed through deficiency and excess" and preserved by a "mean" (*hē mēsotes*) (2.2.1104a11–13).[17] He compares the moral virtues with the "manifest" cases of strength and health. In both cases, excess and deficiency—either too much or too little exercise or too much or too little food—destroy the good condition, but the proportionate amounts (*ta summetera*) create, increase, and preserve it. Similarly, in the virtues, the excesses and deficiencies destroy moderation and courage while the mean preserves them. Courage is destroyed by an excess or deficiency of fear and confidence: he who "fears all things and endures nothing becomes a coward, and he who generally fears nothing but advances toward all things becomes reckless" (2.2.1104a20–22). Moderation is destroyed by an excess and deficiency of bodily pleasure: "he who enjoys every pleasure and abstains from none becomes licentious; but he who avoids every

pleasure, as the boorish do, is a sort of 'insensible' person" (2.2.1104a22–26).[18]

Not only are the virtues acquired, increased, and destroyed "as a result of the same things and through the same things," but the activities (*energeiai*) of the virtues "will be found in the same things" that are responsible for their coming-into-being and growth (2.2.1104a26–30). Each fully formed virtue is especially able (*malista dunametha*) to perform the actions that accord with that virtue. The moderate man is especially able to abstain from bodily pleasures, and the courageous man is especially able to endure frightening things. Aristotle compares the virtues of courage and moderation with strength again: just as the strong man is especially able to endure exercise and to take much nourishment, so are the morally virtuous especially able to perform actions that accord with the virtues. The account highlights the similarity between the moral virtues and the virtues of the body; courage and moderation apply to the bodily appetites and passions, and so, in a certain respect, they may also be said to be virtues of the body.

Each fully formed virtue, in contrast to its coming-to-be, is distinguished not only by a capacity (*dunamis*) to perform the actions that accord with that virtue but also by a distinctive pleasure that accompanies its activity or exercise. In Book II, chapter 3, of the *Ethics*, Aristotle proceeds through six arguments (each of which is marked by the word "further") that bear on this crucial relationship of moral virtue with pleasure and pain.

The first argument is that moral virtue is "concerned with pleasures and pains," meaning that it is concerned with resisting the allure of certain pleasures and not capitulating to pains, in such a manner that one also derives pleasure from the activity or exercise of the virtues (2.3.1104b5–12). The emphasis is not on resisting or enduring pleasures and pains for becoming virtuous but on the pleasure that the virtuous will derive from the actions of virtue. As he argues, the pleasure or the pain that accompanies one's actions can and ought to be taken as a "sign" of one's character, of whether one truly possesses the virtue in question (2.3.1104b5–8). For example, the moderate man will delight (*chairōn*) in abstaining

from bodily pleasures and the courageous man will delight in, "or at any rate, is not pained by," enduring terrifying things (2.3.1104b5–8). Someone who performs external actions that accord with what the moderate or courageous man would do, but is pained or takes no delight in performing those actions, cannot be said to be fully moderate or courageous.[19]

It is a subtle but important point that the pleasure accompanying the exercise of the virtues does not derive from *resisting* the contrary pleasures—that is, from self-mastery or self-overcoming. The very fact of resistance within oneself suggests that one possesses a form of self-restraint and hence that one still does not yet fully possess the virtue. If someone is vexed by abstaining from bodily pleasures but is pleased to have overcome himself, he has not fully realized the virtue. Of course, becoming virtuous means resisting certain pleasures and not capitulating to pains, but the pleasure of self-overcoming or merely resisting temptation is not a realization of the virtue. While pleasure is not the final goal of moral education, the pleasure one takes in one's actions serves as a "sign" of one's character (2.3.1104b4).

This distinction raises an important question: Does habituation make the habits of virtue so pleasurable that the pain involved in virtuous actions can be ignored when an individual acts as the result of habit? For example, does the courageous person love virtue so much and derive so much pleasure from the exercise of his virtue that the pains involved in enduring the prospect of death can simply be ignored? The presence of pain in courageous action poses a problem for the argument that the actions of virtue will be pleasant to the virtuous person. Is it not absurd to say a courageous and noble death in battle will be pleasant? On this point, Aristotle says the following: "Hence courage is in fact a painful thing and is justly praised. . . . Nevertheless, the end that pertains to courage would seem to be pleasant but to be obscured by the circumstances that surround it" (3.9.1117b1–2). In other words, the end of courage—"the noble"—is intrinsically desirable and pleasant, but as a result of the pain and death suffered in battle, its pleasurable character is "obscured." Aristotle compares the actions of courage to

boxing: "To boxers, the end—victory—is pleasant, but being struck is grievous, and given that they are made of flesh and blood, painful—as is all the exertion involved" (3.9.1117b2–6). The pleasure of victory in boxing matches disappears under the physical pain of fighting and suffering blows to the body. Aristotle says that something similar occurs in the case of courage. He then concludes, contrary to his general principle, that "the activity (*to energein*) is not pleasant in the case of *all* the virtues, except insofar as the virtue attains its end" (3.9.1117b17). And yet, Aristotle does not conclude from this that courage is not truly a virtue. The presence of pain and death, while problematic for the virtue of courage, points to the other virtues and their domains of action as better and superior.

The second argument regarding moral virtue's relation to pleasures and pains is that virtue concerns pleasures and pains because it concerns actions (*praxeis*), and passions (*pathē*), and pleasure and pain accompany every passion and every action (2.3.1104b14–16). Politics and the entire realm of human action are "knit together with the passions" and what is composite in human beings (10.8.19–23). We see this reflected in the political community's allocation of honor and praise, as well as in its use of punishment, or the application of pain, as a sort of "curative treatment" for bad behavior (2.3.1104b14–18). Lawgivers make use of punishment for education and remediation, not just for deterrence or retribution.

The third argument is that moral virtue is constituted, not by complete freedom from the desires and appetites, but by freedom from the passions in the right circumstances. Aristotle notes that "some people" wish to define virtue as a disposition entirely free from passion since it is "through pleasures and pains that people become base, by pursuing and avoiding these." Some, he says, "define the virtues as certain dispassionate (*apatheias*) and calm (*ēremias*) states," but "such a definition is not good" (2.3.1104b24–29). Virtue is not freedom from the affections; rather, it consists in relating to them as one ought and when one ought (2.3.1104b24–29). This argument underscores the centrality of the desires and appetites, and hence pleasures and pains, to all human action.

The next argument (1104b29–1105a1) is that all objects of choice fall into one of three categories: the noble, the advantageous, and the pleasant. Similarly, all objects of human avoidance fall into three opposing categories: the shameful, the harmful, and the painful. This classification is important because it is said to encompass all possible objects of human choice. Pierre Manent develops the importance of these "three sources of motivation for practical reason" in *Natural Law and Human Rights*. He writes,

> The active presence in us of these three great motives is not "up to us," even though the strength of each, their relative weight, and the way in which they affect our actions vary according to our nature, our education, and, precisely, the way we are in the habit of acting.[20]

The task of the moral agent, Manent argues, is to produce in any particular circumstance whatever action "imparts what is due to the pleasant, the useful, and the honest [the noble]" and "surely nothing could be more honorable than to have discerned and produced the just proportion."[21] The most important part of Aristotle's analysis of the three objects of choice, for our purpose, is how he suggests they are made available to human beings. Aristotle argues that the objects of choice appear both good *and* pleasant to human beings (2.3.1105a1). Objects that appear noble and good to us, in so far as they are objects of our desire, also appear pleasant. For pleasure accompanies the satisfaction of our desire. This means that if a person is apt to be correct in his choice of noble and good ends, he must be properly disposed toward pleasure lest he be deceived by it in the moment of action.

Aristotle's fifth argument is that pleasure "has been a part of the upbringing of us all from infancy" and therefore that "it is difficult to remove this experience since our life has been so ingrained with it" (2.3.1105a1–8). Now, as already stated, the sensations of pleasure and pain occur in the soul from one's earliest childhood, even before one's grasp of the noble or the good. Children who have benefited from a good upbringing will find pleasure in doing what is noble and

good. And those who have benefited from a good upbringing, as well as those who have not, "take pleasure and pain [in some form or another] as the rule of our actions" (2.3.1105a4). Since pleasure and pain exert a certain compulsion on human beings throughout life, "one's entire concern necessarily pertains to pleasure and pain," and "taking delight and feeling pain make no small contribution to our actions being well or badly done" (2.2.1105a6).

Aristotle's final argument stresses the difficulty of mastering our desire for pleasure. Whereas Heraclitus claimed that it is difficult to battle against spiritedness (*thumos*), Aristotle responds that it is more difficult to master pleasure (2.3.1105a8–13). Because virtue arises especially in challenging situations ("the doing of something well is better when it is more difficult"), virtue will also be distinguished by its having mastered pleasure (2.3.1105a8–13). Consequently, "the whole matter of concern in both virtue and the political art is bound up with pleasures and pains. For he who deals with these well will be good, but he who does so badly will be bad" (2.3.1105a8–13).

Aristotle concludes the chapter on pleasure and virtue by summarizing his argument beginning in the previous chapter:

> Let it be said, then, that virtue concerns pleasures and pains; that it both increases as a result of those actions from which it comes into being and is destroyed when these are performed in a different manner; and that it becomes active in just those activities as a result of which it also came into being. (2.3.1105a12–17)

For Aristotle, we develop the virtues by resisting the allure of certain pleasures and by not capitulating to pains, and this is to be done in such a way that we ultimately derive pleasure from that activity. Pleasure, though not the goal of moral education, is a "sign" of one's characteristics and so of one's moral progression (2.3.1104b4). Given the weight and interwoven character of pleasure and pain in human life, Aristotle concludes that "he who deals with these [pleasures and pains] well will be good, but he who does so badly will be bad" (2.2.1105a13).

By placing this extended discussion of pleasure and pain in the center of his discussion of habituation and moral virtue, Aristotle draws attention to the centrality of pleasure and pain for his conceptions of education and moral virtue. A fuller and more robust appreciation of the matter would require an analysis of how each particular moral virtue, from courage to justice, relates to specific pleasures and pains that are encountered. Nevertheless, this preliminary analysis of how moral virtue in general relates to pleasures and pains serves to illuminate a rather underappreciated aspect of Aristotle's discussion of moral virtue: while Aristotle ultimately subordinates moral virtue to intellectual virtue, his treatment of the moral virtues as the set of characteristics that dispose us correctly toward pleasures and pains deepens our appreciation of the status of the moral virtues as genuine forms of human excellence. By perfecting our relations to pleasures and pains, the moral virtues prove to be in accord with our human perfection and hence more natural than the appetite's attractions and repulsions.

Conclusion

Reading Aristotle today presents an opportunity to reflect on some of the deeper issues that mark the divergence between the modern liberal worldview and the contributions that Aristotle, with his complex view of human nature and education, can offer. Aristotle may be seen as a political philosopher who points to the emptiness and simplicity of certain aspects of the conceptual framework that defines our modern politics. He understands, as many contemporary students do not, that human beings are creatures who are born attracted to certain things and repelled by others, but who are also capable of development and growth, including with regard to what gives us pleasure and pain. Human nature needs the support of an early formation and hence good parents, educators, and laws to bring us to our fullest potential. The hope of the modern liberal worldview is for politics to leave men free to choose and shape their own course of life. But Aristotle's account of education, understood as a training in pleasures and pains, helps us to understand how the dispositions toward pleasure that one adopts and

encourages in the education of children may make all the difference in the character of the political community and the way of life of its citizens: a regime dedicated to the freedom of the individual, on the one hand, or a regime dedicated to fostering human virtue, on the other.

Notes

1. Translations of the *Nicomachean Ethics* are either my own or adopted from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Robert Bartlett and Susan Collins (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012). Hereafter, references to the *Nicomachean Ethics* will use the Bekker numbering system. Each citation refers to the book, chapter, and Bekker line number.
2. Catherine Zuckert summarizes Aristotle's view of the regime's effect on the character of the family in the following manner: "Although it is true that the *Politics* begins by showing that the polis does not emerge until or unless the necessities of life are provided by the *oikos*, it is not true, as Arendt claims, that the polis is characterized by a sharp distinction between public and private. On the contrary, Aristotle shows that the regime shapes and so infuses all aspects of private life, especially the family, not through totalitarian controls, of course, but rather by praise and blame expressed either in legislation or mere opinion." Catherine Zuckert, "Aristotle on the Limits and Satisfactions of Political Life," *Interpretation* 11, no. 2 (1983): 185–206.
3. In the final chapter of the *Ethics* (10.9. 1180a26–b14), Aristotle acknowledges that most political communities "utterly neglect" the education and upbringing of citizens. In such regimes, matters of education fall to the family to handle, but moral education cannot simply be a private affair. Education always bears on matters of the common concern, including decisions about justice and our relations with other human beings. Susan Collins, *Aristotle and the Rediscovery of Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 99–100.
4. Regarding the complexity of the end at which the law aims, see Susan Collins, "Moral Virtue and the Limits of the Political Community in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*," *American Journal of Political Science* 48, no. 1 (2004): 47–61.
5. In Book X Aristotle expresses admiration for skilled legislators when he criticizes the sophists for reducing politics to rhetoric and for supposing incorrectly that good legislation consists in nothing but collecting laws that are well regarded by the community. They do not see that selecting

the best laws involves "comprehension" and a "correct judgment . . . the greatest thing," which entails "contemplating and judging what is noble and what sorts of things accord with which circumstances" (10.9.1181a12–18).

6. See Myles F. Burnyeat, "Aristotle on Learning to Be Good," in *Essays on Aristotle's "Ethics,"* ed. Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, 69–92 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press), 138. I am indebted to Marta Jimenez for her outline of the terms of the debate and the central issues at stake in the moral philosophy literature. See Marta Jimenez, "Aristotle on 'Steering the Young by Pleasure and Pain,'" *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 29, no. 2 (2015): 137–64. As Jimenez notes, the scholars in the discipline who follow in Burnyeat's footsteps and emphasize a "leading" role for pleasure and pain in moral education and human motivation include Julia Annas, "Aristotle on Pleasure and Goodness" in Ethics with Aristotle, ed. Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkley: University of California Press, 1980), 285–299; Nancy Sherman, *The Fabric of Character* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1989); C. C. W. Taylor, trans., *Aristotle: "Nicomachean Ethics," Books II–IV* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Michael Weinman, *Pleasure in Aristotle's "Ethics"* (London: Continuum, 2007); Thomas Tuozzo, "Conceptualized and Unconceptualized Desire in Aristotle," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 32, no. 4 (1994): 525–49; and Troels Engberg-Pederson, *Aristotle's Theory of Moral Insight* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983). Critics of Burnyeat's thesis who recognize a more limited role for pleasure and pain in moral education include Sarah Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); John Cooper, *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986); Howard Curzer, "Aristotle's Painful Path to Virtue," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 40 (2002): 141–62; and Jimenez, "Aristotle on 'Steering the Young.'" In my view, the critics are right to underscore the priority of the noble and the good to the pleasant in the virtuous person's set of priorities, but they go too far in dismissing the sheer fact that pleasure and pain play a determinative role in the actions and education of children. Children are guided first by their attractions and repulsions or pleasures and pains and only later develop a conception of the noble or the good that may become a standard for their actions. The critics of the "dominant view" also fail to appreciate how Aristotle's argument in the first five books of the *Ethics* mimics the sort of education that he is encouraging.
7. Jimenez, "Aristotle on 'Steering the Young,'" 138.

8. Burnyeat, "Aristotle on Learning to Be Good," 76.
9. Burnyeat, "Aristotle on Learning to Be Good," 78.
10. Jimenez, "Aristotle on 'Steering the Young,'" 138. See also footnote 6 for a list of the criticis and proponents of the Burnyeat thesis.
11. Jimenez, "Aristotle on 'Steering the Young,'" 138.
12. See Alexander Grant, *The Ethics of Aristotle*, vol. 2 (London: 1885), 480. Regarding Aristotle's understanding of man's changeability with respect to what gives him pleasure, see *Rhetoric* 1.11.1369b33–1372a4; and Robert Bartlett, "Interpretive Essay," in *Aristotle's Art of Rhetoric* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 246–47.
13. To capture the precision with which Aristotle uses these terms, I translate "*to epithumētikon*" and "*epithumia*" as appetite and "*to orketon*" and "*orexis*" as desire.
14. Aristotle's term for desire derives from the verb "*oreg*ō," meaning to stretch out for or to reach for something. When he speaks of *to orketon* he suggests that there is a separate part of the soul that is the locus of all forms of desire. Martha Nussbaum, in her discussion of the origin and meaning of the concept, notes that before Aristotle there is only one occurrence of this abstract noun in Greek, an occurrence that is found in the ethical fragments of Democritus. Nussbaum argues that the term implies (1) a focused directedness toward a clearly defined object and not a vague state of yearning and (2) activity rather than passivity or a state of being affected. Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 311.
15. Marta Jimenez characterizes two general views about habituation: "the brute conditioning view," according to which habituation is understood to be a conditioning process of attaching pleasure and pain to the correct kinds of objects, and "the refined pleasure-based view," according to which habituation primarily entails learning to enjoy properly a new sort of pleasure that arises from noble actions and objects. See Marta Jimenez, "Aristotle on Becoming Virtuous by Doing Virtuous Actions," *Phronesis* 61 (2016): 11. Her thesis, following Sarah Broadie's criticism of Myles Burnyeat's argument, is that both views of habituation fail: the pleasures of the virtuous cannot be a motivating role in moral habituation or the process of becoming virtuous since they are experienced only after someone possesses the virtuous characteristics. Consider Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*; also Burnyeat, "Aristotle on Learning to Be Good."
16. Marta Jimenez captures this in her statement that "[h]abituation is responsible for bringing the learners to a good affective condition, properly orienting them to aim towards noble actions and emotions,

and getting them to grasp crucial aspects of the noble and the good that allow them to see what is choiceworthy about virtuous actions—that is, their nobility." Marta Jimenez, "*Empeiria* and Good Habits in Aristotle's Ethics," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 57, no. 3 (2019): 365.

17. Like Bartlett and Collins, I translate *to meson* as "the middle term" and *hē mesotēs* as "the mean." The mean is the characteristic or disposition that "preserves" the middle term, a precise middle point in matters of action and passion. See Robert Bartlett and Susan Collins, "Interpretive Essay," in *Aristotle's "Nicomachean Ethics"* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).
18. In a relevant passage of the *Eudemian Ethics* (1222a6–17), Aristotle notably defines "the mean" as a mean in pleasures and pains: "Virtue has been taken to be the state which makes people doers of what is best and through which men are best disposed in regard to what is best, and the best is that which is in accord with the right principle, this being the mean between excess and deficiency relative to us. So it would follow that virtue of character is essentially a mean state in each case, and concerns certain means in pleasures and pains, and things pleasant and unpleasant. The mean state will sometimes be a mean state in the matter of pleasures, as will the excess or deficiency also, sometimes in pains, and sometimes in both. For the man who goes to excess in enjoyment, goes to excess in the pleasant, the man who goes to excess in suffering pain does so in the opposite—and that either without qualification or relative to some limit, as when they do so not as most people do; but the good man does so as he should."
19. There is scholarly disagreement as to whether the actions of virtue can be pleasant to someone who is in the process of acquiring the virtuous disposition. Sarah Broadie argues that "Aristotle's view of the relation between pleasure in acting justly and a just disposition seems to be that the pleasure is in the exercise of the already established disposition" (Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*, 122). Jimenez argues that Broadie goes too far in denying that those who do not already possess a firm disposition cannot experience pleasure in the noble (Jimenez, "Aristotle on 'Steering the Young,'" 144).
20. Manent describes the three great motives as the pleasant, the useful (the good), and the honest (the noble and the just) in Pierre Manent, *Natural Law and Human Rights: Toward a Recovery of Practical Reason* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2020), 101–3.
21. Manent, *Natural Law and Human Rights*, 110.