

THE HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

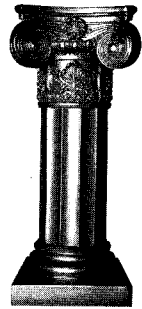
VOICES OF EDUCATIONAL PIONEERS



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CHAPTER 1

Education in the Early Cultures



Education is, in its broadest sense, the process of transmission of culture from one generation to the next.¹ What is culture but the way the members of the group think, believe, and live; what they do, say, and hold as values. There has been some sort of education ever since human beings existed. First was the great human achievement of spoken language, followed by learning how to make and use tools, hunt and gather food, and make fire. Then the first societies developed and humans lived in villages, farming, and making pottery and things from copper and bronze.²

Education in primitive society was informal. It consisted of teaching the young to survive by hunting for food and (eventually) by planting crops; to secure shelter; to make tools and other utensils; and to learn the tribes' values and rules. Boys learned to make tools, to hunt, and fish. Girls learned to gather and prepare food. Primitive education knew nothing of books and schools. It was motivated by the need for self-preservation; it was direct and effective; and it was carried on by the active participation of the learner as he imitated adult activities or was shown how to make tools, engage in the hunt, or fish. Parents were, from the beginning, the primary educators of their children. They were helped by other members of their tribe who taught children the practical skills needed, and who told them stories that explained the customs (mores) of the tribe.³ Moral education was thus an integral part of the educative process from the beginning.

Language: The Mark of Civilization

Language, the ability to communicate orally, is the mark of civilization. Education emphasized language learning by using songs, stories, and rituals that formed the groups' cultural inheritance. Unique to human beings is the ability to use abstract thought; conceptualize, and communicate in oral and written language; this has tremendous

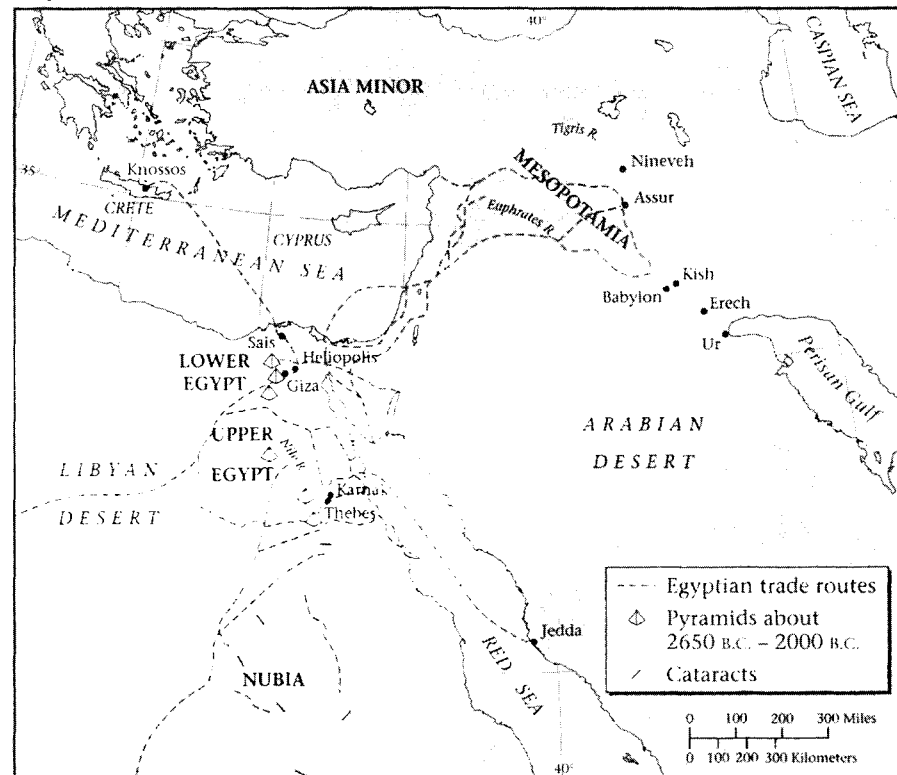
educational consequences. As primitive man began to scratch rough pictures of the world around him on the walls of caves, he was laying the basis for a process that would later culminate in written symbols of communication.

Education in the Near East

It is impossible to determine the exact date that schools first came into existence. However, we know that written language was developed around 4000 B.C. Once there was a written language, there was a need for a more formal kind of education.⁴ The earliest civilizations that left records were a group of city-states formed in the Tigris-Euphrates River valley in Mesopotamia (now Iraq; see Map 1.1 of the Near East). Known as Sumeria, these city states became the basis for later social and educational developments in China, India, and Egypt. Although the Sumerians did not have an alphabet, they developed symbols that came to be known as *cuneiform* that were made by pressing a wedge-shaped stylus into a soft clay tablet. In Babylon (and later in Egypt), this process at first took the form of *picture writing* or *pictograms*. The picture referred not only to the object portrayed but also had meaning beyond the actual object.

Recent discoveries in Iraq have turned up cuneiform mathematics textbooks used by schoolboys in Sumeria as early as 2000 B.C.⁵ One can assume that some form of schools probably existed at that time. There is considerable evidence that by the time of Hammurabi (1792–1750 B.C.) there was an elaborate system of schools for the elite, devoted to

Map 1.1 Ancient Civilizations and Trade Routes of the Near East



Source: From Anthony Esler, *The Human Venture, Combined Volume: From Prehistory to the Present*, 5th edition, 2004. Reprinted by permission of Pearson Education.

the education of priests, scribes, and civil servants. The Phoenicians developed a system of 22 signs, each of which represented a consonant sound, around 1000 B.C. This was the beginning of the development of an alphabet as we know it today.

Females could attend school and a woman could manage her husband's business and household affairs when he was away. In the Old Babylonian period, women could act as witnesses and be scribes. There are even reports of women physicians.

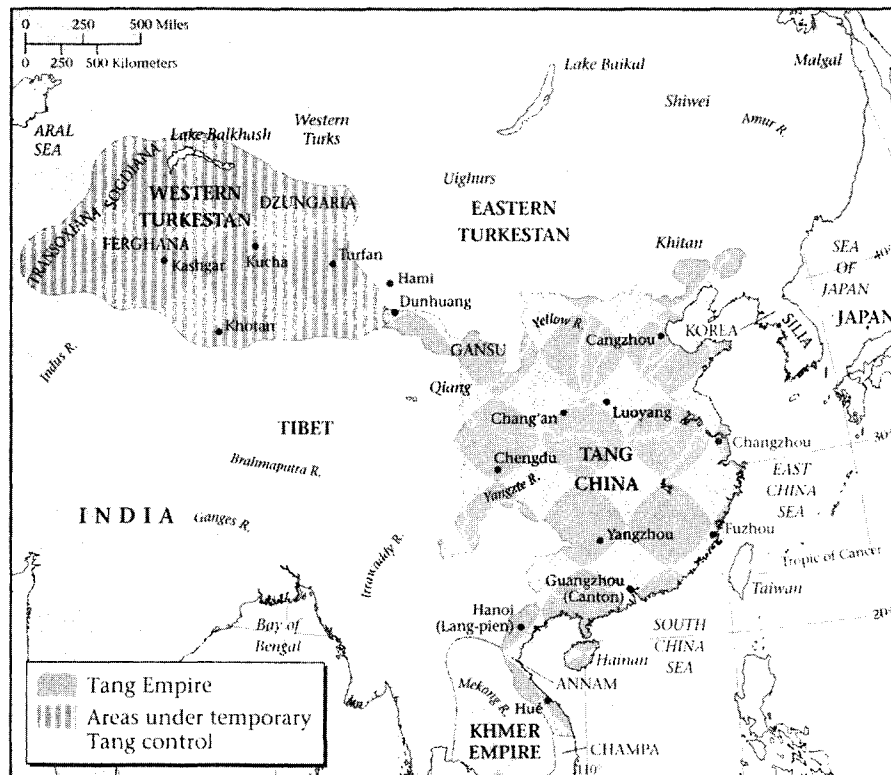
Earliest Written Literature

By 2700 B.C., cuneiform was also used for works of literature. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is the earliest known written work of literature. It deals with the profound themes of friendship, the reality of death, and the quest for eternal life.

Education in China

China has also been a civilized society for a very long time. There is evidence to suggest that formal schools existed in China during the Hsia and Shang dynasties, perhaps as early as 2000 B.C.⁶ (see Map 1.2 of China). Religion has always been one of the fundamental factors in Chinese life and education. The Chinese have a great devotion to tradition. This is evident in the family, where the father has absolute power to enforce obedience to himself as the carrier of tradition. The state was but an enlargement of the family, and the

Map 1.2 China



Source: From Anthony Esler, *The Human Venture, Combined Volume: From Prehistory to the Present*, 5th edition, 2004. Reprinted by permission of Pearson Education.

emperor functioned as the Great Father of all the people. Filial piety was important, as was dedication to the country. Chinese education aimed to conserve the past and maintain things as tradition dictated.

The Chinese Curriculum

Around the seventh century B.C., we see the Chinese curriculum leaning heavily on tradition. Classical subjects were studied in a prescribed curriculum: history, poetry, literature of antiquity, government documents, and law. China had no state system of schools nor public education. Formal education was strictly for men, and only those men who could pay for it. In general, the education of women was limited to that which they needed in order to be polished in social situations, but there are reported incidents of women receiving some formal education. They, like men, were able to quote from the *Book of Poetry* and other books. Some even participated in public affairs. Wives of kings held the reins of power when their husbands were away.⁷

Chinese Educational Institutions

There were three levels of ancient Chinese education: elementary, academies, and examinations. The elementary school met in the teacher's house. The hours were long and the work severe. The private academies were more like "cram" or "drill" schools in which the youth studied the Chinese classics, grammar, and prose in order to pass the examinations. The methodology at every level of Chinese education was extremely formal, emphasizing memorization and an exact reproduction of textual material. The classroom was a scene of confusion and ear-splitting noise as the children studied their lessons and recited aloud. To motivate students to this rote memory and absolute imitation, the teacher had to exert harsh discipline.

Chinese education has always been characterized by tradition, morality, and conformity—all designed to help the students to become the kind of human person envisioned by oriental thought. We traditionally credit the philosophers and thinkers of Greece and Rome with establishing the foundations of our intellectual educational thought. However, it is interesting to study Eastern thought to see that, in the same time period, a similar system of ideas was established in China. Eastern thought is different from Western thought in that it is cyclical, emphasizing harmony while also juxtaposing opposites.

Confucius was the first private teacher in China who taught men the value of teaching itself. It will do us well, therefore, to begin this book of educational writings with a work from one of China's great thinkers, the famous philosopher Confucius, who wrote about the importance of education for society. This will help us to see that educational issues are perennial and cross cultures, civilizations, and time periods.

For Further Research on the Internet

Site with information on ancient Babylonia, Egypt, and other ancient civilizations. <http://home.echo-on.net/~smithda/>

Information on the Sumerians of Babylonia and other ancient civilizations. <http://www.eliki.com/ancient/civilizations/>

Lesson plans on the ancient civilizations. <http://lessonplans.com>

Many links to ancient China, Egypt, and India. <http://www.crystalinks.com/ancient.html>

Notes

1. Edward Power, *Philosophy of Education: Studies in Philosophies, Schooling and Educational Practices* (Evanston, IL: Waveland Press, 1990).
2. Marvin Perry et al., *Western Civilization: Ideas, Politics & Society* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000).
3. Tim Megarry, *Society in Prehistory: The Origin of Human Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 1996).
4. Yun Lee Too, *The Pedagogical Contract: The Economics of Teaching and Learning in the Ancient World* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).
5. Eleanor Robson, *Mesopotamian Mathematics, 2100–1600 B.C.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999).
6. Ray Huang, *China: A Macro History* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1997).
7. Conrad Schirokauer, *A Brief History of Chinese Civilization* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991).

Section 1.1: Confucius (552–479 B.C.)

Proverbs and maxims are one of the most effective ways of teaching moral principles because when learned young, they stick with you all your life. We all remember our parents' quoting: "Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise." Confucius was the great moral teacher who taught using maxims.



Confucius' Life and Times

Confucius (born Kung Chiu, meaning Chiu of the Kung family, later stylized as Chung-ni meaning "second son") was born to a poor but noble aristocratic family in the country of Lu in 552 B.C. His father was a distinguished soldier who died in battle when Confucius was only three years old. Confucius' mother was diligent in her drive to provide a sound education for her four sons.

His Education

It was the custom of the times to appoint a private tutor to educate the sons of the noble classes.¹ Confucius was, therefore, well trained in the great classics of Chinese literature as well as in history, poetry, music, and archery. Poetry and music were to have a special influence on him. At the age of fifteen, he entered a local school in his village where he was taught by his elders the etiquette of respectful service and good morals as well as the course of studies.² As a young adult, he quickly earned a reputation for fairness, politeness, and love of learning. After studying in the village school, he went to the establishment for higher learning in the Lu imperial capital of Zhou where he met and spoke with Lao Zi, the founder of Taoism. He traveled extensively. Confucius married at the age of

nineteen. He had at least one son, Li Poyu, and a daughter.³ (See the timeline of Confucius' life shown in Figure 1.1.)

Confucius, the Great Teacher

Upon his return to Lu at the age of thirty, Confucius began his career in teaching. Tradition tells us that he used his own house as a school and charged small fees for his students whom he instructed in his favorite subjects: history, poetry, government, morality, and music. He taught the art of thinking through conversation with his students about their own opinions on important matters, much in the style of Socrates. Beginning with just a few students, Confucius rapidly developed a reputation as a great teacher. He had an incredible ability to inspire others to see the truths of the great ideas. He loved learning and he sought out pupils who shared this love. By the time he died, he had mentored more than 3,000 male students who carried on his teachings as his disciples.

His success as a teacher led to his receiving a major civil appointment. During Confucius' reign as minister of justice, society ran very smoothly and the crime rate dropped substantially. This was attributed to Confucius' principle of "rule by good example" rather than "strong fist force." When other nobles began plotting against Confucius' position, he retired from public life to concentrate on teaching and studying. He spent the rest of his years teaching and writing, dying in 479 B.C. at the age of 72.⁴

Confucius' Importance for Educational Thought

Prior to the time of Confucius, all branches of learning had been in the official custody of hereditary aristocrats. Except for schools of archery, there were no schools in China to provide what we consider a basic education. Reading and writing were learned at home. Confucius was the first to offer to instruct private individuals and to set up a sort of school for all young men, irrespective of their social status and means.

Confucius' Philosophy of Education

Confucius' aim was to provide all students with an education that would be both practical and moral; an education that would "cultivate the person" and teach them to solve the daily problems of governmental service and bring the best benefits to the people they served. Confucius saw his role as a teacher to be a "transmitter of knowledge," one who should inspire students with the truths of the great ideas. His method of instruction consisted of conversation and dialogue; sometimes he would question his students and comment on their answers, like Socrates. Confucius expected his students to be motivated and active learners who would take the initiative in their learning. He established the curriculum of reading and studying the six Chinese classics instead of acquiring practical

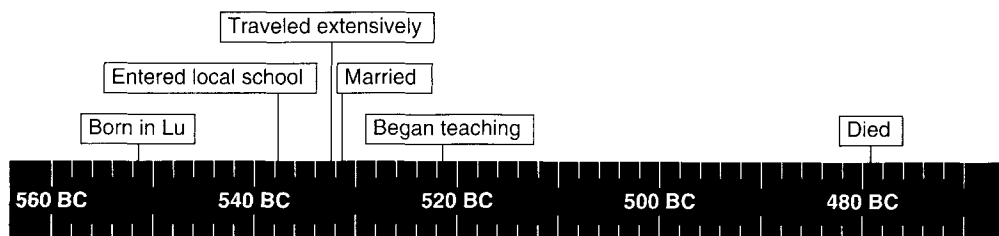


Figure 1.1 Confucius' Life and Times

knowledge. His emphasis on liberal instead of vocational education had significant influence on the history of Chinese education.⁵

Moral Role of Education. Confucius was deeply convinced that learning and morality were inseparable. Education, he felt, improved the moral character of a person as well as the intellect. Morality needs good education, and a good education is one based on the moral principles. Confucius set up a universal ethical system.⁶

Confucius taught that there were key cardinal virtues that all people needed to develop. However, all virtues are interrelated because the human being is an interrelational creature. The development of virtues brought harmony. Students should be taught filial piety and fraternal love. Education is central to building up a strong society. The dream of Confucius was a world as it *should* be.

Confucius and his followers have had a tremendous impact on Chinese society and education. The traditional values advocated by Confucius—filial respect, moderation, and truthfulness—still play an important part in Chinese people's lives as does the principle that education should be for all as it has a social purpose. According to Confucius, "Those who excel in office should learn; those who excel in learning should take office."⁷

For Further Research on the Internet

A short biography of Confucius with an explanation of Chinese characters. <http://www.friesian.com/confuci.htm>

A publishing company concentrating on disseminating the work of Confucius. <http://www.confucius.org/maine.htm>

A site dedicated to Confucius and his writings. <http://www.cifnet.com/~geenius/kongfuzi/>

Notes

1. Shigeki Kaizuka, *Confucius: His Life and Thought* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2002), pp. 42, 62.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
3. Paul Strathern, *The Essential Confucius* (London: Virgin Publications, 2002), p. 20.
4. Kaizuka, p. 45.
5. Jianping Shen, *Confucius* (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 2–3.
6. Strathern, p. 30.
7. Shen, pp. 3–4.

Questions to Guide Your Reading

1. Diagrams help us to understand the logic of arguments. See if you can diagram Confucius' explanation of *The Great Learning* and *The Doctrine of the Mean* as you read these selections.
2. Of what well-known literary form found in the *Bible* do *The Analytics* remind you? Why is the use of maxims an effective learning device? Can you mention some maxims that hold true in both Eastern and Western societies?
3. Can you find Confucius' version of *The Golden Rule*? Using the Internet, see if you can research other versions of the Golden Rule as found in different cultures and religions.

READING 1.1: CONFUCIUS, THE MASTER TEACHER

The Great Learning

1. What the Great Learning teaches, is to illustrate illustrious virtue; to renovate the people; and to rest in the highest excellence.

2. Things have their root and their branches. What is first and what is last will lead near to what is taught in the *Great Learning*.

3. The ancients who wished to illustrate illustrious virtue throughout the kingdom, first ordered well their own States. Wishing to order well their States, they first regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things.

4. Things being investigated, knowledge became complete. Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere. Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were then rectified. Their hearts being rectified, their persons were cultivated. Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated. Their families being regulated, their States were rightly governed. Their States being rightly governed, the whole kingdom was made tranquil and happy.

5. From the Sun of Heaven down to the mass of the people, all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of everything besides.

6. It cannot be, when the root is neglected, that what should spring from it will be well ordered. It never has been the case that what was of great importance has been slightly cared for, and, at the same time, that what was of slight importance has been greatly cared for.

Chapter VII

7. What is meant by, 'The cultivation of the person depends on rectifying the mind,' *may be thus illustrated*: If a man be under the influence of passion, he will be incorrect in his conduct. He will be the same if he is under the influence of terror, or under the influence of fond regard, or under that of sorrow and distress.

8. When the mind is not present, we look and do not see; we hear and do not understand; we eat and do not know the taste of what we eat.

9. This is what is meant by saying that the cultivation of the person depends on the rectifying of the mind.

Confucian Analects

2:11 The Master said, 'If a man keeps cherishing his old knowledge, so as continually to be acquiring new, he may be a teacher of others.'

2:15 The Master said, 'Learning without thought is labor lost; thought without learning is perilous.'

2:17 The Master said, 'Yu, shall I teach you what knowledge is? When you know a thing, to hold that you know it; and when you do not know a thing, to allow that you do not know it;—this is knowledge.'

4:16 The Master said, 'The mind of the superior man is conversant with righteousness; the mind of the mean man is conversant with gain.'

4:17 The Master said, 'When we see men of worth, we should think of equaling them; when we see men of a contrary character, we should turn inwards and examine ourselves.'

7:1 The Master said, '[I am a] transmitter and not a maker, believing in and loving the ancients. . . .'

7:8 The Master said, 'I do not open up the truth to one who is not eager to get knowledge, nor help out any one who is not anxious to explain himself. When I have presented one corner of a subject to anyone, and he cannot from it learn the other three, I do not repeat my lesson.'

7:19 The Master said, 'I am not one who was born in the possession of knowledge; I am one who is fond of antiquity, and earnest in seeking it there.'

7:21 The Master said, 'When I walk along with two others, they may serve me as my teachers. I will select their good qualities and follow them, their bad qualities and avoid them.'

7:24 There were four things which the Master taught,—letters, ethics, devotion of soul, and truthfulness.

9:4 There were four things from which the Master was entirely free. He had no foregone conclusions, no arbitrary predeterminations, no obstinacy, and no egoism.

12:16 The Master said, 'The superior man seeks to perfect the admirable qualities of men, and does not seek to perfect their bad qualities. The mean man does the opposite of this.'

15:23 Tsze-kung asked, saying, 'Is there one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life?' The Master said, 'Is not reciprocity such a word? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.'

17:2 The Master said, 'By nature, men are nearly alike; by practice, they get to be wide apart.'

The Doctrine of the Mean

1:4 While there are no stirrings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, or joy, the mind may be said to be in the state of EQUILIBRIUM. When those feelings have been stirred, and they act in their due degree, there ensues what may be called the state of HARMONY. This EQUILIBRIUM is the great root from which grows all the human acting in the world, and this HARMONY is the universal path which they all should pursue.

1:5 Let the states of equilibrium and harmony exist in perfection, and a happy order will prevail throughout heaven and earth, and all things will be nourished and flourish.

2:3 The Master said, 'Perfect is the virtue which is according to the Mean! Rare have they long been among the people, who could practice it!'

8:3 [The Master said] 'When one cultivates to the utmost the principles of his nature, and exercises them on the principle of reciprocity, he is not far from the path. What you do not like done to yourself, do not do to others.'

15:5 The Master said, 'In archery we have something like the way of the superior man. When the archer misses the center of the target, he turns round and seeks the cause of his failure in himself.'

20:11 [The Master said] 'He who knows these three things [knowledge, magnanimity, and energy], knows how to cultivate his own character. Knowing how to cultivate his own character, he knows how to govern other men. Knowing how to govern other men, he knows how to govern the kingdom with all its States and families.'

21:21 [The Master said] 'When we have intelligence resulting from sincerity, this condition is to be ascribed to nature; when we have sincerity resulting from intelligence, this condition is to be ascribed to instruction. But given the sincerity, and there shall be intelligence; given the intelligence, and there shall be the sincerity.'

25:1 Sincerity is that whereby self-completion is effected and its way is that by which man must direct himself.

25:2 Sincerity is the end and beginning of things; without sincerity there would be nothing. On this account, the superior man regards the attainment of sincerity as the most excellent thing.

25:3 The possessor of sincerity does not merely accomplish the self-completion of himself. With this quality he completes other men and things also. The completing of himself shows his perfect virtue. The completing of other men and things shows his knowledge.

Discussion Questions

1. Oriental thought is cyclical. Confucius sees a perfect relationship between the values of the family, the state and the person. How would Confucius solve the problem we face today in our schools when the values of a student's family clash with the values of the school and society?

2. Confucius says the “the cultivation of the person is the root of everything besides.” Do you think that this is the main goal of education today? If not, what do schools today say is their mission toward students?
3. What is *The Doctrine of the Mean* according to Confucius? Is this similar or different from Western philosophy’s understanding of virtue as a mean between two defects, one of excess and the other of deficiency? What do you think Confucius would say about the current character education movement in schools and their definition of virtue? (Look at the *character.org* site to help you answer this question.)
4. Confucius explains his philosophy of the teacher as “[I am] a transmitter and not a maker. . . .” Is this an accurate metaphor to use to describe the teacher in today’s schools? If not, can you propose a more accurate metaphor? What do you think Confucius would say about the status, prestige, and role of teachers in the schools today? Do you think they are given the respect they were given in Chinese society?
5. The Chinese were one of the first groups to extensively use examinations and tests to measure learning. Compare and contrast their use of tests to our current use of standardized tests in the “No Child Left Behind” legislation. In what ways does this show that some educational issues are perennial?
6. Contrast the political ideas of Confucius with those of a later Chinese ruler, Mao Tse-Tung, who led the Communist revolution and created a new China based on Marxist ideology.

For Further Research on the Internet

Internet site with pictures of Confucius and links to Chinese history. <http://www.crystalinks.com/confucius.html>

A publishing company dedicated to the writings of Confucius. <http://www.confucius.org/index.html>

An interactive site on ancient China, Confucius, and Chinese literature. <http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/ANCCHINA/ANCCHINA.HTM>

Suggestions for Further Reading

Confucius. *The Wisdom of Confucius*. New York: Partridge Green Citadel, 2001.

Kaizuka, Shigeki. *Confucius: His Life and Thought*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2002.

Shen, Jianping. “Confucius.” In Joy Palmer, *Fifty Major Thinkers on Education: From Confucius to Dewey*. New York: Routledge Publishers, 2001.

Strathern, Paul. *The Essential Confucius*. London: Virgin Publications, 2002.

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

Linking the Past to the Present

Compare and contrast aspects of education in early cultures to education in modern times. How do these differences influence contemporary educational practice? Write a paper in which you discuss the influence of these differences on modern educational practice.

TABLE 1.1 Education in Early Society Compared to Education in Modern Society

Education in Early Society	Education in Modern Society
Simple, homogeneous, integrated	Complex, diverse, dispersed
Daily experience is educational	Only schools educate (businesses now educating too)
Objectives self-evident—survival	Students unable to see the importance of the curriculum
The family is always an important educational agent	The breakdown of the family
Education serves to prepare for important roles in society	Education may not get you a job in the current job market
Each generation accepts the standards and values of its predecessors	Generation gap—rejection of norms and mores of parents
Security, survival	Confusion, lack of aims

Developing Your Philosophy of Education

Reflect on the importance the family had in Confucius' educational system and in Chinese society. Write about the role the family will have in your educational philosophy. How will you interact with the parents of the children you educate? How will you communicate with them? Will you invite them into your classroom? For what purposes? What will you do if the parents of your students subscribe to different values than those of the school?

Connecting Theory to Practice

1. In your classroom clinical experience, observe the teacher-student relationship. How are the students taught appropriate behaviors? Does the teacher emphasize the development of virtues in the students? Do the students respect the teacher? Is there a general atmosphere of harmony in the classroom and school?
2. Can you give three reasons why the study of the history and philosophy of education will help you as a teacher?
3. Give two examples of how knowledge of the history of education will assist you in solving modern educational problems and prevent you from "reinventing the wheel" or repeating the errors of the past.

Educators' Philosophies and Contributions to Education

1. Using Table 1.2 of educational contributions from the various early cultures, make a list of current educational contributions made by the modern American culture.

TABLE 1.2 Educational Contributions from Early Cultures

Sumerians	Egyptians
First written language around 4000 B.C. Developed cuneiform writing with stylus in clay Invented picture writing or pictograms First cuneiform math books	Invented papyrus (paper) Created hieroglyphic writing system Started first libraries Developed a complete school system and curriculum
Babylonians	Chinese
Earliest written literature— <i>Gilgamesh</i> Elaborate system of schools for the elite	Invented gunpowder, compass Developed first “universities”/schools of higher learning Developed printing First to use “standardized tests”

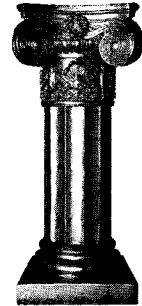
2. What contribution does Confucius make to modern-day educators? Review Table 1.3 for ideas.

TABLE 1.3 Confucius’ Philosophy of Education

Educator	Role of Teacher & Learner	View of Curriculum & Methodology	Purpose or Goal of Education	Major Contribution
Confucius	The teacher is “The Master”—a transmitter of knowledge—and the student is an active learner who takes the initiative in learning	<i>The Liberal Arts: The Five Classics and the Four Books</i> (ethics, wisdom, spirit, truthfulness) are taught using the informal method of conversation and dialogue	Transmit a cultural heritage in order to cultivate the moral person that knows how to solve the problems of society and government	An ethics and value system that still inspires people today

CHAPTER 2

Education in Ancient Greece



We turn to Greece to find the origins of many of our educational policies and systems. Greece is the originating source of Western civilization. Greek ideas about education and their educational practices have been very influential on other cultures. We will see that Rome's greatest service to mankind is that it carried the Greek tradition to all the Western lands.

Greek civilization developed between 1200 and 490 B.C. From the fifth century to the third century B.C. Greece, and particularly Athens, enjoyed a flourishing level of culture and education. They colonized much of the Mediterranean area, including towns in Italy and along the French borders during these years. It is in the Age of Pericles, around 500 B.C., that we see the first organized effort in a Western society toward formal education.¹

Education in Sparta

It was in Sparta, a city in the mountains of Greece, cut off from others, that the concept of the state's (or polis') obligation for the proper training of its citizens was first developed. Previous to this, in other Greek states and other countries, families educated their children. In Sparta, every detail of the child's life, and of adult life, was controlled by the State. The State needed well-trained warriors who could defend their country against invaders. A distinctive feature of the Spartan system was the attention paid to the training of women. (Elsewhere in Greece girls were brought up in the seclusion of the home and only received domestic training.) Spartans had a clear view of the value of education for all. They educated their women because they had to become worthy mothers who would be the primary educators of their sons from birth to age seven. The mothers taught the young children at home, while the father was busy with the duties of citizenship. At about age 7, young boys began their education under the tutorship of older males. As far back

as we can trace the history of Greek culture, schoolmasters appear as a regular feature of Greek social life. The Spartan model of an educated man was a brave warrior whose goal was to become a courageous military hero.² (See Map 2.1 of ancient Greece.)

Education in Athens

In Athens, the education of the young was looked at as a public rather than a private matter and was entrusted exclusively to professional hands. Athenian citizens were expected to be able to read and write, to count, and sing or play the lyre. Education began in Athens around 640–550 B.C. with Solon's edict that every boy should be taught to swim and to read in schools and *palaestrae*, or gymnastic schools. Solon did not define the curriculum or the methods but only the age and rank of students and the qualifications of the **pedagogues**, that is, the slaves who tutored each student. Today, when we use the word pedagogy we are referring to its Greek derivation from “*paid*” + “*agoge*” that meant “the leading of the child/slave.” Using the term pedagogy instead of education specifically refers to this social process of teaching and learning in recognition of that fact that education is a political process.³ Schools in Athens were not a creation of the state but a private enterprise with the teacher supported by tuition payments. The Greek style of education tended to be a male-to-male tutorial, often involving a close personal relationship between the older and younger male. School was not compulsory in Athens, nor was it open to all, but only to the male children of the citizens. Between the ages of eight and sixteen some Athenian boys attended a series of public schools.

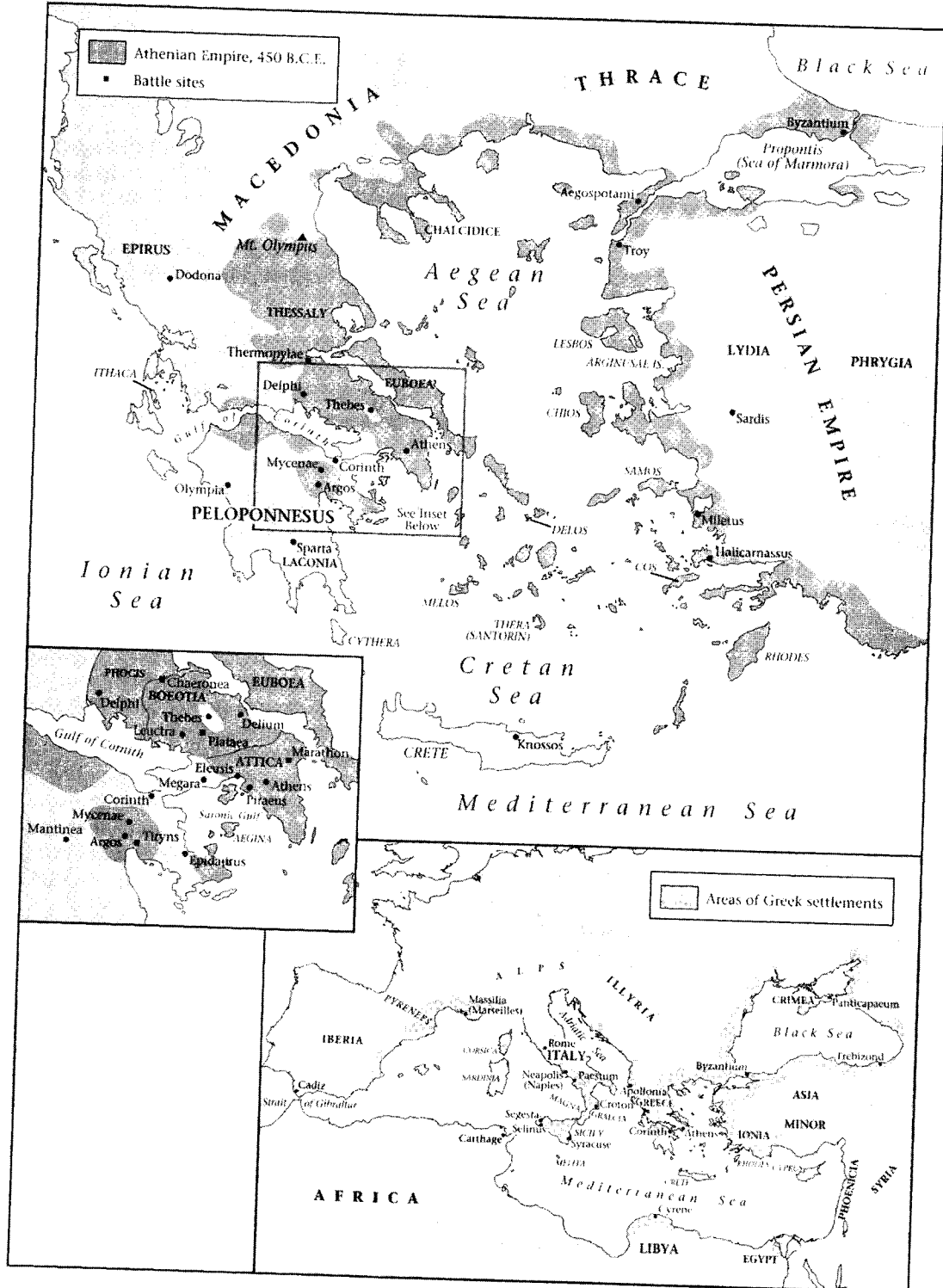
The Greek School System

The Greek schools included a grammar school or **grammatica** to learn reading, writing, and counting, a gymnastic school (**palaestra**) to learn sports and games, and a music school, or **cithara**, that taught history, drama, poetry, speaking, and science as well as music. By 335 B.C., political and social changes lead to the requiring of compulsory military training for all Athenian males ages eighteen to twenty before they were granted full citizenship.⁴ The Athenian educated ideal was a well-rounded, liberally educated individual who was capable in politics, military affairs, and general community life and could take part in the direct participatory democracy.

Education of Athenian Women

The aim of education for Athenian women was more at the level of training, enabling them to master domestic tasks rather than intellectual. Most Athenian girls were only educated in the home. However, a few women's schools did exist. Sappho of Lesbos, most notably, operated a school that taught women of rank such subjects as singing, music, dancing, and sports.⁵ Greek women may have lacked the breadth and cultural value given to boys in their education, but they learned more than the home crafts of spinning, weaving, and embroidery; they were also familiar with the rich folk lore of their people, which was culture itself, and their music and dances. Most characteristic of Athenian life was the general opinion that education—cultural and civic education—was an art to be learned by each individual.⁶

Map 2.1 Ancient Greece



Source: From Anthony Esler, *The Human Venture, Combined Volume: From Prehistory to the Present*, 5th edition, 2004. Reprinted by permission of Pearson Education.

Sophism, Stoicism, and Epicureanism

The Sophists flourished from 470–370 B.C. in Athens and sought an education that would lead to political power and social status by emphasizing rhetoric, or persuasive speech, as practical education.⁷ Socrates and Plato did much to discourage the Athenian youth from seeking this practical, utilitarian education and instead encouraged them to seek the truth, or true education, i.e., the love of wisdom or philosophy.

The conquests of Alexander the Great in the fourth century extended the Greek culture to much of the eastern Mediterranean, Asia Minor, and northern Africa. The Hellenistic philosophies of Stoicism and Epicureanism challenged the Athenian ideas. Epicurus had a materialistic view of life with its only goal being to avoid pain and secure pleasure. Stoicism was a contrary philosophy that saw the body as unimportant, so one should free themselves from their passions. Both Plato and Aristotle challenged these two world views with their philosophy of life.

A Greek Philosophy of Education

The study of ancient Greek civilization provides valuable lessons on citizenship and civic education that illustrate the important role of education in shaping good citizens. In these next selections, we will be presented with the Greek thinkers' views on the purpose of education, what it is that should be taught to others, and how the teacher should impart this knowledge. The study of Greek educational thought illuminates many problems today's educators face: Who are worthy models for children to imitate? How does education help to shape good citizenship? How does education serve humankind's search for truth? Sappho, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle each dealt with these questions and their ideas are relevant to us today as we too search for answers for our schools.

For Further Research on the Internet

The Classics Page has information about life, literature, art, and archeology in ancient Greece. <http://www.classicspage.com/>

This site has many links to ancient Greek resources on line. <http://www.webcom.com/shownet/medea/grklink.html>

Notes

1. Mark Griffin, *Public and Private in Early Greek Education* (Leiden, Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2001), pp. 66–67.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 46–47; Aubrey Gwynn, *Roman Education from Cicero to Quintilian* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), pp. 26–29; Sara Pomeroy, *Spartan Women* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).
3. Yun Lee Too, *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity* (Leiden, Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2001), pp. 13–14.
4. Griffin, pp. 46–47; Gerald Gutek, *A History of the Western Educational Experience* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 1995), p. 29; H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), p. 63.
5. Anne Haward, *Penelope to Poppaea: Women in Greek and Roman Society* (Surrey, England: Nelson, 1992).
6. Josiah Ober, The Debate over Civic Education in Classical Athens, in *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity* (Leiden, Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2001), p. 179.
7. Gutek, p. 35.

Section 2.1: Sappho (630?–572? B.C.).

Most of us probably learned music in school and maybe we even learned to play an instrument. Sappho was the first female music teacher we know of who also wrote poetry and read it to the accompaniment of her lyre. In addition, she was the first health and physical education teacher for girls.

Sappho's Life and Times

Sappho was born around 630 B.C. in either the city of Mytilene or Eresus, both located on the island of Lesbos, to an aristocratic family (see the timeline of Sappho's life shown in Figure 2.1). The oldest bibliographical source in existence, the Byzantine Encyclopedic work *Suda* written about 100 A.D., gives us this fact and what little else we know about Sappho. From this and what Sappho tells us in her poems, we believe that her father was Scamandronymous and her mother was Cleis of Mytilene, and that she had three brothers.¹

From ancient art, especially decorated vases with portraits of Sappho, we know that she played a type of lyre called a "barbita." Sappho enjoyed immense popularity for the beauty of her language and the directness and power of her expression, but to the fourth century Athenian, the most remarkable thing about her was that she was a woman.²

Her Family and "Friends"

It seems that Sappho married Cercylas of Andros, a very wealthy man who traded from Andros, and had one child by him, a daughter names Cleis (named after Sappho's mother). Sappho was from a family of some social prominence and an aristocratic world view is represented in her poetry. In fact, it is this status that enabled her to dedicate herself to her work, and gave her the leisure for music-making and for having her work valued and preserved.

According to the *Suda*, Sappho had three companions and friends, and "acquired a bad reputation for her shameful friendship with them."³ Sappho, although married, had other male lovers; Archilocus and Hipponaxare are two mentioned in her poems. Fragments of Greek biography found on papyrus from the second and third century state that Sappho was accused by some of being irregular in her ways and a woman lover.⁴ Some find it hard to reconcile Sappho's involvement in the institution of marriage with the passionate love



Sappho, Greek lyric poet. © Bettmann/Corbis

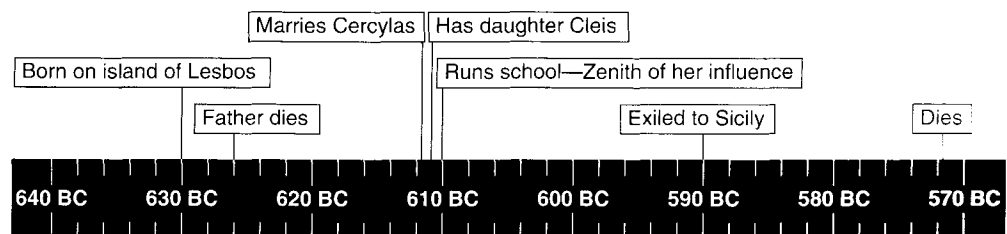


Figure 2.1 Sappho's Life and Times

poetry she addresses to other women. It seems that Sappho herself did not regard marriage and lesbianism as mutually exclusive; in other words, the two could co-exist in her world.⁵ An inscription on a marble from the island of Paros records that Sappho fled from Mytilene to Sicily some time between 605 and 590 B.C., probably for these social and political reasons.⁶ Others maintain that Sappho was not bi-sexual, but had deep relations with both men and women as was common in the Greek culture of her time.

Seventh Century Greece

The time in which Sappho lived, the seventh century B.C., was the archaic Greek period characterized by the lively interchange of people, products, and ideas. This was a period of great change with efforts being made to colonize other areas and to expand trade. In this climate of economic and social change, the women of Lesbos enjoyed a freedom similar to that of the women in Sparta, giving them the opportunity for self-development. They were known not only for their beauty and culture but also for their skill in the art of heterosexual love-making. Sappho was an educated woman who wrote about love.⁷

Sparta's educational system had spread throughout the Greek world. Although it included education for both boys and girls, they were segregated from one another. This reflected the Greek societal norms; men and women usually separated into groups according to both gender and status and those groups were divided by age; boys in a group separate from men, girls from women.⁸

Sappho's School for Girls

Tradition has Sappho as the head of a girls' school. The *Suda* names some of her pupils and fragments of poetry list other names; nineteen different students in all.⁹ As Jane McIntosh Snyder states, she "must have been a model of purity for no one would send young women from a distance to study under a woman unless she had a wonderful reputation."¹⁰ The institution that she headed trained young women according to the customs of the time. They studied poetry and music, chorus dancing, and singing under Sappho's guidance. However, one day they do "go away again" and return to their homes to marry; now cultured women.

The issues raised by her school regarding the relationship of the pupil and the instructor remain relevant to our current concerns.¹¹ The relationship between Sappho and her students was similar to that of Socrates and his disciples, that of a mentor with followers (see the next section of this chapter). Sappho foreshadows the development of mentoring as an important way to help teachers develop their practical teaching skills.

Sappho's Poetry

Sappho composed lyric poetry, that is, songs with lyre accompaniment. According to the *Suda*, "she invented the plectrum. She wrote epigrams, elegiacs, iambics and solo songs."¹² (The plectrum is like a guitar pick; the epigram, a short poem used for commemorative purposes, is a genre popular at this time; the elegiac is poetry written in couplets.) Sappho is best known for the poem meter named after her: a "Sapphic" poem is made up of stanzas consisting of three lines of eleven syllables followed by a single line of five syllables, the syllables follow a formal pattern of "long" and "short".¹³ The circumstances for which Sappho's poems were written are shrouded in mystery as we are not sure who heard them or performed them. Sappho herself may have performed her poems, but perhaps they were not written down until after her death. As far as we know, writing was only in limited use in Sappho's lifetime and for some time afterwards. It was, nevertheless, customary for the upper class to be accomplished in the art of music and to have a repertoire of songs memorized. Like others of her time period, Sappho may have written copies of her poems in lead or gold and dedicated them in the temple. Using an image

of female creativity, Sappho's poems are called her "daughters."¹⁴ Sappho's "Hymn to Aphrodite" is her only complete poem that has been widely translated, for in 1073 authorities in Rome and Constantinople publicly burned all known poems by Sappho due to their homoeroticism. About one hundred years ago, archeologists discovered fragments of her poems while excavating some coffins at Oxyrhynchus, Egypt, renewing research and translations of this ancient poet.¹⁵

Sappho was one of the first to write using the first person, describing her feelings about love and loss from her perspective. In addition, she is the first woman we know of who defined women in terms of themselves rather than in terms of men.¹⁶ We will see that her work will influence other important women writers and educators such as Hildegard and Christine de Pizan (see sections 5.2 and 6.1). Sappho could be considered the first liberated woman and feminist; she is certainly the first female independent thinker. Plato called her "the tenth muse" and throughout the history of western literature, women who write, and especially those who write in Latin and Greek, are celebrated as "the tenth muse" or "another Sappho."¹⁷ Sappho lived on in later literature as the main character in Greek comedies and dramas, popular plays, and even a French opera was named for her, *Sappho*, in 1851.

It is said that Sappho has inspired the work of the following modern poets: Michael Field, Pierre Louys, Renee Vivien, Marie Madeleine, Amy Lowell, and H.D.¹⁸ (Hilda Doolittle).

Legends About Sappho

Now we get into the world of legend that has Sappho doing many different things. Supposedly after marrying Cercylas and having a child, Sappho fell in love with Phaon, the handsome ferryman on the island of Lesbos, but when he spurned her love she leapt to her death by jumping off the cliff, or White Rock of Leukas, off the west coast of Greece. Works of literature, art, and history refer to this legend of her suicidal leap in various ways, saying that it signifies all sorts of things from guilty despair, passionate abandon, and poetic inspiration.¹⁹ Other traditions build upon what is said in poem Fragment #99 and say that Sappho died peacefully in bed, tended by her daughter Cleis.²⁰

Sappho's Importance for Educational Thought

Sappho of Lesbos is important in western civilization both as an author and as an educator. She is the most highly regarded woman poet of Greek and Roman antiquity. Her work is the earliest literature by a woman writer that has survived the passage of time and the perhaps willful attempts to silence the voices of women. Sappho is the first voice of a woman speaking about her own sex.²¹

Sappho, the Music Teacher

It is difficult to separate legend from truth in describing Sappho's actual role in education as it has changed throughout the ages. Some see Sappho as a music teacher, others as a sex educator or a physical education instructor, others see her as the head of her school.²² All of these roles were important, especially that of head of the girls' school that she began on the island of Lesbos. It was one of the first of its kind, and certainly one of the most elite, for she had many different students, all from aristocratic parents. According to the *Suda*, Sappho educated nobly born girls, not only from local families but also from Ionia. It was more than a school, it was a house for those who cultivated the Muses, and together they formed a *thiasos* in which they bound themselves to each other and to their leader by ties of great strength and intimacy. The young women studied with her, learning poetry and music, chorus dancing and singing. Their parents sent them to study with her,

most celebrated lyricist of the day, who accepted them as her students and companions. Sappho's school was a kind of boarding school, similar to a finishing school, that prepared girls for marriage. Culture, deportment, and dress were all matters for study among Sappho's girls, but music was at the core of the curriculum.²³

Sappho, the Dance Teacher

For over two centuries, choral dancing was recognized as central to the educational process. The circumstances for which Sappho's poems were composed have been a matter of controversy, but one theory sees them composed for girls' choruses. Sappho is thus allowed an educational role, leading groups of *parthenoi*, or young women, in the prime of their life before they are married. It is this aspect of her role that has given her the description as a sex education instructor.

Sappho, the Reading Teacher

Sappho's poems, once written down, were probably used as reading and writing exercises when, probably shortly after her lifetime, literacy started to become a standard part of education. We might imagine a generation of school children (girls as well as boys) learning to read aloud from texts of Sappho or laboriously incising them on their own waxed tablets. By the fifth century, it is likely that Sappho's texts found a more permanent state in the standard form of books of that time: the papyrus roll. By far the most important scholarly endeavor relating to the study of Sappho was that of the librarians at Alexandria, for without them we might have none of Sappho's poetry today. Since Sappho was considered one of the nine great lyric poets, they collected her work into nine books and later transformed them from papyrus to parchment, and then to the codex (most like the modern book). The work of other poets was not considered as "popular," was not transcribed, and thus was lost.²⁴

Sappho's Philosophy of Education

Sappho believed in the education of the whole student and so she gave equal importance to all the areas of education. She developed human virtues and social graces in her students; cared for their intellectual development by having them memorize and write poetry; promoted their physical development by teaching them to dance; and their spiritual development by teaching them to sing to the muses. Sappho emphasized the important role of the teacher as a mentor for her students for the goal of education was to help these girls develop and mature so that they could marry and become outstanding Greek women. Sappho also speaks to us today about the importance of the teacher–learner relationship.

Sappho saw the purpose of education as a finishing school to help these young aristocratic girls develop their social, physical, and emotional potential so as to prepare them for marriage and for taking their place as contributing members of high Greek society.

Sappho wrote, "I say that even later someone will remember us."²⁵

Notes

1. *Suda*, cited in Margaret Williamson, *Sappho's Immortal Daughters* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 1.
2. Jane McIntosh Snyder, *The Woman and the Lyre: Women Writers in Classical Greece and Rome* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989), p. 8.
3. *Suda*, cited in Williamson, p. 2.
4. Margaret Williamson, *Sappho's Immortal Daughters* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 28.

5. Snyder, p. 33.
6. Williamson, p. 65.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 23, Snyder, p. 2.
8. Williamson, pp. 76–77.
9. Margaret Reynolds, *The Sappho Companion* (New York: Palgrave for St. Martin's Press, 2001), p. 4.
10. Snyder, p. 12.
11. L. Glenn Smith and Joan K. Smith, *Lives in Education: A Narrative of People and Ideas*, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), p. 8.
12. *Suda*, cited in Williamson, p. 2.
13. Alison Sharrock and Rhiannon Ash, "Sappho," in *Fifty Key Classical Authors*, edited by A. Sharrock and R. Ash (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 25.
14. Williamson, pp. 15, 37.
15. Smith and Smith, p. 8.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
17. Sharrock and Ash, p. 26.
18. URL: <http://www.sappho.com/poetry/sappho.html>, p. 2, accessed 10/16/03.
19. Williamson, p. 9.
20. Mary Barnard, *Sappho: A New Translation* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958), p. 97.
21. Verna Zinserling, *Women in Greece and Rome*, translated by L. A. Jones (New York: Abner Schram, 1973), p. 8.
22. Holt Parker, "Sappho Schoolmistress," in *Re-Reading Sappho: Reception and Transmission*, edited by E. Green (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 149ff.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 151–52.
24. Williamson, pp. 38–42.
25. Sappho in Fragment 147, cited in Snyder, *The Woman and the Lyre: Women Writers in Classical Greece and Rome* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989).

Questions to Guide Your Reading

An effective way to read poetry is to read it out loud. It is also helpful to work in groups in which you can pair-share your understanding of the poem. Try first to understand the text of the poem itself, then relate the text to yourself, and finally, see how/if the text can relate to the world of education. Use these questions to guide your discussion.

1. What kind of school does Sappho run according to the poem *The Show Pupil*? Is it like today's magnet schools with selective admissions or is it more like a private school?
2. Some think that Fragment #94 explains Sappho's school. What kinds of things did they do in the school? In what ways does this fragment show the whole purpose of Sappho's school: getting a girl ready for marriage? In what way is Fragment #94 a farewell poem? What has changed that they must part?
3. The *Hymn to Aphrodite* is the one complete poem that we have of Sappho's. It is a celtic hymn: the speaker calls on the goddess with several epithets. Can you find and list some of them? Can you also find "epic language" used? What do you think it symbolizes? Do you think that the *Hymn to Aphrodite* is a prayer? Is the goddess being invoked to help Sappho or does she exert some kind of power over her?

READING 2.1: THE SONGS OF SAPPHO

The Show Pupil

You seek through Mica entrance to my school,
The House of Song, but this I must deny.
A Penthilus* pupil taught to write by rule!
Would play the mischief with my girls.

For I have taught them to sing as does the nightingale,
That, hid in leafy nook of dewy green,
Pours forth his unpremeditated tale,
"Show Pupil?" Poets should be heard, not seen.

(*Mica is shortened for Mnasidca;
House of Penthilus refers to a rival school or Thiasoso)

#94- Lament for a Lost Student

No MORE returns my Atthis dear
Since to Andromeda she fled,
And ne'er will come again I fear
Ah me! I wish that I were dead.

Yet on her parting from me-still
I see her bosom heave with strain
Of sobbing, eyes with tear-drops fill
From springs of seeming grief; again

I hear her trembling voice-she cried,
"Sappho, how terribly we grieve
I swear" (with oaths have ever lied)
"Wantons against my will I leave."

And I, poor dupe, made brave essay
To stop my tears, and with a smile
Rejoiced: "Rejoicing go your way,
Dear, but remember me the while."

For well you know I love you. Yet,
Even should you doubt me, still recall
That which you seemingly forget,
Our deeds of dalliance, graven all

On my heart's 'tablet: When a chain
Of myriad blossoms you entwined
To throw around my neck, as fain
Me captive of your love to bind.

When with a zone of roses red
And violets blue you girdled me,
My long locks bound therein, and said,
"Were but Alcreus here to see!"

When royal myrrh from dainty vase
You took, and rubbed my cheeks aglow,
And cried, "Come, Cypris, on her gaze
If you would beauty's secret know!"

When, as we lay in fond embrace
Upon a couch mid nibbled cates
And cups half-drained, to Muse and Grace
You called, "Thus Sappho passion sates"

All this you may forget, or, worse,
Remember but to turn to jest,
Saying, "Twill serve for Sappho's verse
I hope she tells how I was dressed!"

Hymn to Aphrodite

Throned in splendor, beauteous maid of mighty Zeus,
wile-weaving, immortal Aphrodite,
Smile again; thy frowning so affrays me
Woe overweighs me.

Come to me now; if ever in the olden!
Days thou didst hearken afar, and from the golden
Halls of thy Father fly with all speeding
Unto my pleading.

Down through midaether from Love's empyral regions
Swan-drawn in car convoyed by lovely legions
Of bright-hued doves beclouding with their pinions
Earth's broad dominions,

Quickly thou camest; and, Blessed One, with smiling
Countenance immortal my heavy heart beguiling,
Askedst the cause of my pitiful condition
Why my petition:

Source: Robinson, David M. and Miller, Marion Mills, translator. 1925. *The Songs of Sappho: Including the Recent Egyptian discoveries*. The Maxwellton Co., Lexington, Kentucky.

What most I craved in brain-bewildered yearning;
Whom would I win, so winsome in her spurning;
"Who is she, Sappho, evilly requiting
Fond love with slighting?"

"She who flees thee soon shall turn pursuing,
Cold to thy love now, weary thee with wooing,

Gifts once scorned with greater gifts reclaiming
Unto her shaming."

Come thus again; from cruel cares deliver;
Of all that my heart wills graciously be given
greatest of gifts, thy loving self and tender
To be my defender.

Discussion Questions

1. Sappho had a school just for girls. What does some of the current research on single-sex schools show? What does Sappho say to us today about the education of women and the role of women in education?
2. Sappho was the first sex and health educator. What do you think she would do or say today about the spreading of AIDS, the rising number of teen-aged, unwed mothers, and other issues regarding sexuality?
3. What do you think is Sappho's major contribution to education? What does she say to us about the teacher-student relationship? Do you think you should befriend your students? Why or why not?

For Further Research on the Internet

A biography of Sappho with links to her poems. <http://www.sappho.com/poetry/sappho.html>

A site dedicated to understanding Sappho's poetry with links to her poetry and pictures of her. <http://www.temple.edu/classics/sappho.html>

Suggestions for Further Reading

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Section 2.2: Socrates (470–399 B.C.)

Don't you enjoy classes where you discuss the material read? A skilled teacher will ask provocative questions and have the students analyze the reading through their answers. We have Socrates to thank for popularizing this method that now bears his name—the Socratic Method.



Socrates' Life and Times

Socrates was a native-born Athenian. He was the son of Sophroniscus, a well-known stonemason and a respected Athenian citizen, and Phaenarete, a midwife. Socrates' early years were typical of other Athenian youth: he received an 'elementary' education and became well-versed in mathematics and astronomy, a capable athlete, and a distinguished member of the city's military corps.

Socrates continued in his father's profession as a sculptor, cutting and shaping stone; it is said that he also continued his mother's profession as a midwife of ideas. At age 35, he fought with exceptional courage and distinction in the Peloponnesian War, saving Xenophon's and Alcibiades' life. Socrates married Xanthippe and they had three sons. Socrates' wife had a difficult temper but he knew how to humor her.¹

Socrates is described in *Meno* as "an ugly man with a snub nose and pop eyes" and in *Symposium* as having wide nostrils, protruding eyes, thick lips, and a paunch.² He traveled barefoot, wore simple clothes, and strutted like a pelican. People called him a torpedo fish because he benumbed everyone that came near him with his questions.

Socrates, the Philosopher

After the war, Socrates gave up his trade and devoted himself wholly to teaching the youth of Athens because he heard an "inner voice" from the gods that told him to seek the good.³ Socrates felt that he was the only wise man he could find because he was the only one who knew that he did not know anything. Socrates could be found in the *palaestrae*, in the market place, in the gymnasium, or in the streets asking people questions and probing for answers. He believed that there was a moral truth that held for all human beings and that if one did not live by it, one acted wrongly.⁴ Socrates was not a relativist and was very much against the sophists of his time that believed only in the logic of their arguments and not the reality of what they were saying.

Socrates taught primarily by asking questions and inducing his listeners to answer, challenging their beliefs. Socratic education is based on the principle that both the teacher and the student harbor knowledge as well as ignorance within themselves. Socrates did not teach by inculcating his own ideas and views into another, but by guiding and questioning and leading others to recollect what is in some way already within them. In his role as teacher, he tried to nourish the seeds of knowledge within his students.⁵

Socrates' *Apology* and Death

Socrates was loyal to his principles and his mission to arouse his fellow citizens out of their lethargic acceptance of previously accepted beliefs about man's place in the world. In 406 B.C. Socrates angered the oligarchic rulers who had overthrown the democratic government and passed the power to a junta of thirty.⁶ (See the timeline for Socrates' life in Figure 2.2.) In 399 B.C., when Socrates was 70 years old, he was put on trial for corrupting the youth and not believing in the gods. The *Apology* is a dialogue in which Socrates gives a defense of his life. He could have been exiled, but he felt that exile for an Athenian was to be a non-person, so he chose to accept his sentence and drink the hemlock. Plato was so moved by the death of his teacher that he dedicated much of his life to writing down the lessons he had learned in dialogues with Socrates. In Plato's opinion, Socrates was "the best man of his time as well as the wisest and most just."⁷

Socrates' Importance for Education

Socrates was one of the first Greek philosophers. Socrates' philosophy was a simple ethic that held that man's only reason for being was to develop moral excellence. The man who is excellent as a human being is one whose actions are governed by reason.

Although Socrates is the central figure in *Meno* and the other dialogues, he left no actual writings; what we have is a transcription of Socrates' words by his dedicated student, Plato. Socrates dialogued with his students using leading questions that were meant to stimulate the student to examine and ponder basic human concerns. Socrates called his method *elenchos* (pronounced eh-lenk-us) which means *to examine*. The technique of question and answer, or dialogue, between teacher and student is known today as the *Socratic Method*. Socrates is one of the most important philosophers in history because he taught us how to examine, analyze, and dissect ideas using this method of inquiry.⁸

Socrates' Philosophy of Education

Socrates is important in educational history because he developed an explicit educational theory that, in a way, was the very first philosophy of education. He has clear opinions on the role of the teacher, the student, the curriculum, the method, and the reason for teaching. He had a unique concept of teacherless education in which the teacher's role was to draw the knowledge out of the student. He firmly defended the teacher's academic freedom to think, question, and teach. He believed that knowledge could not be transmitted from a teacher to the students, but that the students had to discover the knowledge that

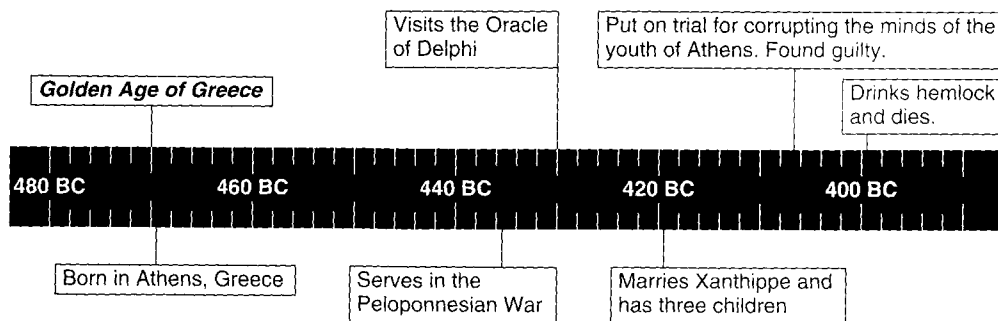


Figure 2.2 Socrates' Life and Times

was within them. The teacher's role was to ask the right question so that the students would think about the issue and solve the problem themselves. Use of the *Socratic Method* requires skillful questioning on the part of the teacher. It is still used today in education but is often referred to as *higher order questioning* or *developing higher order thinking skills and stimulating critical thinking*. Socrates stressed that the purpose of genuine education was to cultivate morally excellent people.⁹

Socrates believed that moral education is the only defensible educational objective for any society and that knowledge was to be sought for the good of the person and the state. Socrates is important because he began the dialogue on "virtue ethics" that has continued to intrigue educational philosophers (including Plato and Aristotle) through the ages.¹⁰

In the reading from *Meno*, some of Socrates' key doctrines are revealed regarding virtue, knowledge, and teaching men to do good. Meno is a wealthy young Thessalian who spends some time with Socrates on a visit to Athens.¹¹ They discuss virtue and how it comes to be as they follow Socrates guiding principle "Know thyself. The unexamined life is not worth living."

Notes

1. C. C. W. Taylor, *Socrates: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 5.
2. Gary Allan Scott, *Plato's Socrates as Educator* (Albany: State University of New York, 2000), p. 11.
3. Colin Davies, *Socrates* (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications Pvt., Ltd., 2000), p. 71.
4. Hope May, *On Socrates* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, Inc., 2000), p. 2.
5. Scott, pp. 44–47.
6. Taylor, p. 11.
7. Davies, p. 78.
8. May, p. 57.
9. Paul Woodruff, *Socratic Education* (London: Routledge, 1998).
10. Mark Lutz, *Socrates' Education to Virtue* (Albany: State University of New York, 1998), pp. 50–51, 182–183.
11. Christopher Bruell, *On the Socratic Education* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), p. 16+.

Questions to Guide Your Reading

1. Read out loud at least pages 29 and 30 of this selection with a classmate. As you role play Socrates and Meno, experience the Socratic method of questioning.
2. As you read, try to make an outline of the logic of Socrates' three main arguments found in the *Meno*. (*Socrates helps you to do this at the end of the selection.*)
3. List the different definitions of virtue as they are presented in the dialogue. Which one(s) does Socrates seem to like?
4. Why does Meno call Socrates a "torpedo fish"?

READING 2.2: MENO

by Plato

Persons of the Dialogue:

- ◆ Meno
- ◆ A Slave of Meno
- ◆ Socrates
- ◆ Anytus

Meno. Can you tell me, Socrates, whether virtue is acquired by teaching or by practice; or if neither by teaching nor practice, then whether it comes to man by nature, or in what other way?

Socrates. O Meno, there was a time when the Thessalians were famous among the other Hellenes only for their riches and their riding; but now, if I am not mistaken, they are equally famous for their wisdom . . . I am certain that if you were to ask any Athenian whether virtue was natural or acquired, he would laugh in your face, and say: "Stranger, you have far too good an opinion of me, if you think that I can answer your question. For I literally do not know what virtue is, and much less whether it is acquired by teaching or not." And I myself, Meno, living as I do in this region of poverty, a man poor as the rest of the world; and I confess with shame that I know literally nothing about virtue; and when I do not know the "quid" of anything how can I know the "quale"?

Men. But are you in earnest, Socrates, in saying that you do not know what virtue is? And am I to carry back this report of you to Thessaly?

Soc. Not only that, my dear boy, but you may say further that I have never known of any one else who did, in my judgment . . .

Soc. By the gods, Meno, be generous, and tell me what you say that virtue is; for I shall be truly delighted to find that I have been mistaken, and that you and Gorgias do really have this knowledge; although I have been just saying that I have never found anybody who had.

Men. There will be no difficulty, Socrates, in answering your question. Let us take first the virtue of a man—he should know how to administer the state, and in the administration of it to benefit his friends and harm his enemies; and he must also be careful not to suffer harm himself. A woman's virtue, if you wish to know about that, may also be easily described: her

duty is to order her house, and keep what is indoors, and obey her husband. Every age, every condition of life, young or old, male or female, bond or free, has a different virtue: there are virtues numberless, and no lack of definitions of them; for virtue is relative to the actions and ages of each of us in all that we do. And the same may be said of vice, Socrates.

Soc. How fortunate I am, Meno! When I ask you for one virtue, you present me with a swarm of them, which are in your keeping. Suppose that I carry on the figure of the swarm, and ask of you, What is the nature of the bee? and you answer that there are many kinds of bees, and I reply: But do bees differ as bees, because there are many and different kinds of them; or are they not rather to be distinguished by some other quality, as for example beauty, size, or shape? How would you answer me?

Men. I should answer that bees do not differ from one another, as bees.

Soc. And if I went on to say: That is what I desire to know, Meno; Tell me what is the quality in which they do not differ, but are all alike;—would you be able to answer?

Men. I should.

Soc. And so of the virtues, however many and different they may be, they have all a common nature which makes them virtues; and on this he who would answer the question, "What is virtue?" would do well to have his eye fixed: Do you understand?

Men. I am beginning to understand; but I do not as yet take hold of the question as I could wish.

Soc. Now, in your turn, you are to fulfill your promise, and tell me what virtue is in the universal; and do not make a singular into a plural, as the facetious say of those who break a thing, but deliver virtue to me whole and sound, and not broken into a number of pieces: I have given you the pattern.

Men. Well then, Socrates, virtue, as I take it, is when he, who desires the honorable, is able to provide it for himself; so the poet says, and I say too—*Virtue is the desire of things honorable and the power of attaining them.*

Soc. And does he who desires the honorable also desire the good?

Men. Certainly.

Soc. Then are there some who desire the evil and others who desire the good? Do not all men, my dear sir, desire good?

Men. I think not.

Soc. There are some who desire evil?

Men. Yes.

Soc. Do you mean that they think the evils that they desire, to be good; or do they know that they are evil and yet desire them?

Men. Both, I think.

Soc. And do you really imagine, Meno, that a man knows evils to be evils and desires them notwithstanding?

Men. Certainly I do.

Soc. And desire is of possession?

Men. Yes, of possession.

Soc. And does he think that the evils will do good to him who possesses them, or does he know that they will do him harm?

Men. There are some who think that the evils will do them good, and others who know that they will do them harm.

Soc. And, in your opinion, do those who think that they will do them good know that they are evils?

Men. Certainly not.

Soc. Is it not obvious that those who are ignorant of their nature do not desire them; but they desire what they suppose to be goods although they are really evils; and if they are mistaken and suppose the evils to be good they really desire goods?

Men. Yes, in that case. That appears to be the truth, Socrates, and I admit that nobody desires evil.

.....

Soc. Then begin again, and answer me, What, according to you and your friend Gorgias, is the definition of virtue?

Men. O Socrates, I used to be told, before I knew you, that you were always doubting yourself and making others doubt; and now you are casting your spells over me, and I am simply getting bewitched and enchanted, and am at my wits' end. And if I may venture to make a jest upon you, you seem to me both in your appearance and in your power over others to be very like the flat torpedo fish, who torpifies those who come near him and touch him, as you have now torpified me, I think. For my soul and my tongue are really torpid, and I do not know how to answer you; and though I have been delivered of an infinite variety of speeches about virtue before now,

and to many persons—and very good ones they were, as I thought—at this moment I cannot even say what virtue is. And I think that you are very wise in not voyaging and going away from home, for if you did in other places as you do in Athens, you would be cast into prison as a magician . . .

Soc. Then, as we are agreed that a man should enquire about that which he does not know, shall you and I make an effort to enquire together into the nature of virtue?

Men. By all means, Socrates. And yet I would much rather return to my original question, Whether in seeking to acquire virtue we should regard it as a thing to be taught, or as a gift of nature, or as coming to men in some other way?

Soc. Had I the command of you as well as of myself, Meno, I would not have enquired whether virtue is given by instruction or not, until we had first ascertained "what it is." . . . At any rate, will you condescend a little, and allow the question "Whether virtue is given by instruction, or in any other way," to be argued upon hypothesis? . . . And we too, as we know not the nature and qualities of virtue, must ask, whether virtue is or not taught, under a hypothesis: as thus, if virtue is of such a class of mental goods, will it be taught or not? Let the first hypothesis be that virtue is or is not knowledge; in that case will it be taught or not? or, as we were just now saying, "remembered"? For there is no use in disputing about the name. But is virtue taught or not? or rather, does not everyone see that knowledge alone is taught?

Men. I agree.

Soc. Then if virtue is knowledge, virtue will be taught?

Men. Certainly.

Soc. Then now we have made a quick end of this question: if virtue is of such a nature, it will be taught; and if not, not?

Men. Certainly.

Soc. The next question is, whether virtue is knowledge or of another species?

Men. Yes, that appears to be the question that comes next in order.

Soc. Do we not say that virtue is a good? This is a hypothesis that is not set aside.

Men. Certainly.

Soc. Now, if there be any sort of good which is distinct from knowledge, virtue may be that good; but if knowledge embraces all good, then we shall be right in thinking that virtue is knowledge?

Men. True.

Soc. And virtue makes us good?

Men. Yes.

Soc. But if the good are not by nature good, are they made good by instruction?

Men. There appears to be no other alternative, Socrates. On the supposition that virtue is knowledge, there can be no doubt that virtue is taught.

Soc. I will try and tell you why, Meno. I do not retract the assertion that if virtue is knowledge it may be taught; but I fear that I have some reason in doubting whether virtue is knowledge: for consider now, and say whether virtue, and not only virtue but anything that is taught, must not have teachers and disciples?

Men. Surely.

Soc. And conversely, may not the art of which neither teachers nor disciples exist be assumed to be incapable of being taught?

Men. True; but do you think that there are no teachers of virtue?

Soc. I have certainly often enquired whether there were any, and taken great pains to find them, and have never succeeded; and many have assisted me in the search, and they were the persons whom I thought the most likely to know. . . . And these are the sort of men from whom you are likely to learn whether there are any teachers of virtue, and who they are. Please, Anytus, help me and your friend Meno in answering our question, Who are the teachers?

Soc. If neither the Sophists nor the gentlemen are teachers, clearly there can be no other teachers?

Men. No.

Soc. And if there are no teachers, neither are there disciples?

Men. Agreed.

Soc. And we have admitted that a thing cannot be taught of which there are neither teachers nor disciples?

Men. We have.

Soc. And there are no teachers of virtue to be found anywhere?

Men. There are not.

Soc. And if there are no teachers, neither are there scholars?

Men. That, I think, is true.

Soc. Then virtue cannot be taught?

Men. Not if we are right in our view. But I cannot believe Socrates, that there are no good men: And if there are, how did they come into existence?

Soc. Seeing then that men become good and useful to states, not only because they have knowledge, but because they have right opinion, and that neither knowledge nor right opinion is given to man by nature or acquired by him (do you imagine either of them to be given by nature?)

Men. Not I.

Soc. Then if they are not given by nature, neither are the good by nature good?

Men. Certainly not.

Soc. And nature being excluded, then came the question whether virtue is acquired by teaching?

Men. Yes.

Soc. If virtue was wisdom [or knowledge], then, as we thought, it was taught?

Men. Yes.

Soc. And if it was taught it was wisdom?

Men. Certainly.

Soc. And if there were teachers, it might be taught; and if there were no teachers, not?

Men. True.

Soc. But surely we acknowledged that there were no teachers of virtue?

Men. Yes.

Soc. Then we acknowledged that it was not taught, and was not wisdom?

Men. Certainly.

Soc. And yet we admitted that it was a good?

Men. Yes.

Soc. And the right guide is useful and good?

Men. Certainly.

Soc. And the only right guides are knowledge and true opinion—these are the guides of man; for things that happen by chance are not under the guidance of man: but the guides of man are true opinion and knowledge.

Men. I think so too.

Soc. But if virtue is not taught, neither is virtue knowledge.

Men. Clearly not.

Soc. Then of two good and useful things, one, which is knowledge, has been set aside, and cannot be supposed to be our guide in political life.

Men. I think not.

Soc. And therefore not by any wisdom, and not because they were wise, did Themistocles and those others of whom Anytus spoke govern states. This was the reason why they were unable to make others like themselves—because their virtue was not grounded on knowledge.

Men. That is probably true, Socrates.

Soc. But if not by knowledge, the only alternative which remains is that statesmen must have guided states by right opinion, which is in politics what divination is in religion; for diviners and also prophets say many things truly, but they know not what they say.

Men. So I believe.

.....
Soc. To sum up our enquiry—the result seems to be, if we are at all right in our view, that virtue is neither natural nor acquired, but an instinct given by God to the virtuous. Nor is the instinct accompanied by reason, unless there may be supposed to be

among statesmen someone who is capable of educating statesmen. . . .

Men. That is excellent, Socrates.

Soc. Then, Meno, the conclusion is that virtue comes to the virtuous by the gift of God. But we shall never know the certain truth until, before asking how virtue is given, we enquire into the actual nature of virtue. I fear that I must go away, but do you, now that you are persuaded yourself, persuade our friend Anytus. And do not let him be so exasperated; if you can conciliate him, you will have done good service to the Athenian people.

Discussion Questions

1. From where do you think virtue comes? Are we born with it or are we taught it? There is a movement in the schools today to teach character education. Do you think that virtue can be taught in schools? Why or why not?
2. Do you think that the Socratic method of teaching through questioning is effective with all students or only with some students? Explain your reasoning.
3. Socrates says that the unexamined life is not worth living. Through a series of questions, Socrates encourages his students to examine their ideas. How can this type of self-examination be implemented in today's classrooms?
4. Do you agree with Socrates that everyone in the world desires to do good? How would he explain the bad and/or evil things that people do? Can education in the good and the virtuous solve all of these problems?
5. In *Meno* Socrates presents his philosophy of education. Explain his view of the teacher and the student, what he thinks the curriculum should be and how it should be taught, and what he thinks is the purpose of education.

For Further Research on the Internet

A brief discussion of the life and works of Socrates, with links to electronic texts.

<http://www.philosophypages.com/ph/socr.htm>

Richard Hooker's site on Socrates with links to major Greek historical events. <http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/GREECE/SOCRATES.HTM>

Suggestions for Further Reading

Bruell, Christopher. *On the Socratic Education*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999.

Davies, Colin. "Socrates." In *Socrates (469–399 B.C.)*, edited by S. Mukherjee and S. Ramaswamy. New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications Pvt., Ltd., 2000.

Lutz, Mark. *Socrates' Education to Virtue: Learning the Love of the Noble*. Albany: State University of New York, 1998.

May, Hope. *On Socrates*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, Inc., 2000.

Scott, Gary Allan. *Plato's Socrates as Educator*. Albany: State University of New York, 2000.

Taylor, C. C. W. *Socrates: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Woodruff, Paul. "Socratic Education." In *Philosophers on Education: New Historical Perspectives*, edited by A. O. Rorty. London: Routledge, 1998.

Section 2.3: Plato (427–347 B.C.)

Do you think students should be tracked according to their ability into basic, vocational, and college preparatory courses in high school? Well, Plato thought that each person (including women) should be given all the education they were capable of receiving and needed in order to do the job for which they were suited in the Republic. According to Plato, those who ruled the country should receive education in philosophy until they were fifty years old!



Plato's Life and Family

We know about Plato and his family from the comments he makes in his dialogues. Plato was born in 427 B.C., the son of Ariston and Perictione, both of whom were descended from distinguished Athenians of royalty. His father died when Plato was a few years old and his mother remarried. Plato was the youngest of four children. In *The Republic*, he mentions his brothers, Glaucon and Adeimantus, and his sister, Potone, who became the mother of Speusippus, who succeeded his uncle Plato as the head of the Academy, the school of philosophy Plato established in Athens.¹

In *The Republic*, Plato outlines the normal education of a Greek boy, which he also received—learning to read and write and study the poets. Plato grew up in a city at war; the Peloponnesian war began before he was born and lasted until he was 23 years old. He served in the military from the age of 18 until the end of the war. Plato's family was prominent in Athenian affairs and he was influenced by his uncles, Charmides and Critas, and their political views. The demoralization of Athens due to defeat during the war led to an oligarchy revolution, followed by a savage tyranny that finally gave way to the reestablishment of a democratic constitution. During this turmoil, Socrates was put to death on a charge of impiety and corrupting the youth. Some scholars maintain that Plato served as the “defense attorney” for Socrates during his trial. The fact that he lost the case, and his beloved mentor, had a profound effect on him, making him anxious to preserve the memory of Socrates.²

Plato was forced to leave Athens after the death of Socrates. Plato traveled to Asia Minor, Egypt, and Italy, studying the mathematical ideas of Euclid and of the Pythagoreans and the political ideas of Dionysis. He became a tutor for a royal household in Sicily.³

What do we know about the character and personality of Plato from his writings? He had a keen sense of humor and an impressive intellect, which allowed him to be single-minded and clever. Plato was courageous in the face of danger, which gave him a somewhat intimidating austerity and aloofness. However, he had nothing but sympathy and courtesy for his students. Plato enjoyed painting, poetry, good food, good drink, good society, and fine dress; he was a brilliant conversationalist. He never married.⁴

The Academy

When Plato returned to Athens, he founded the **Academy** in 387 B.C., the first institution of higher learning in Greece. It became the intellectual center in Greece and the equivalent of the first university in the history of Europe. It continued for over 900 years until it

was dissolved by Justin in 529 A.D. along with other pagan institutions.⁵ The ultimate object of all activities at the Academy was to achieve final philosophic truth. The method of teaching was by question and answer, argument, and discussion. Plato did give some lectures but his main method was oral discussion and dialogue (comparable to the modern day seminar class). The subjects taught at the academy included philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, and geometry.⁶ It is interesting to note that two women students were members of the academy: the idea of collegiate co-education is apparently as old as the idea of a college itself. This, like other ideas proposed by the school, provoked criticism, as higher education for women went directly against the tradition of the times.⁷ The Academy was a great success. (Aristotle came to Plato's Academy in 367 B.C. at the age of 17 and remained there until Plato died in 347 B.C.) Plato wrote the *Meno* and *Protagoras* around the same time as he founded the Academy; one can clearly see in the dialogues how much Plato was thinking about education and educational issues at the time.⁸ (See the timeline for Plato's life in Figure 2.3.)

Plato, the Philosopher

Plato dedicated his life to the vindication of Socrates' memory and teachings. He wrote thirty-four dialogues; all the dialogues before *The Republic* were Socratic teachings, the later dialogues are Plato's teachings. Socrates was interested in making men lead better lives and asked such questions as: What is virtue? What is goodness? What is justice? and What is temperance? Plato went beyond these to question the conceptual meaning of things, asking: What is a tree or triangle? Why do we name things the way we do? It is the thing in our mind, not the word with which we are concerned. Plato wrote metaphorically; he engaged people in the process of philosophizing and discovering the truth (as Socrates did) rather than systematically expounding his own views.

Later Life

Plato made three trips to Sicily from 364–361 B.C. for philosophic and political purposes. Plato dreamed of founding an ideal state with such citizens as philosopher-kings, warriors, farmers, and artisans like those he had written about in *The Republic*. His disciples thought he would start this state in Sicily, but he returned to Athens when he saw the unfavorable political climate.⁹

Plato remained at the Academy teaching, writing, and living comfortably until he died in 347 B.C. at the age of 81. Aristotle eulogized his teacher by saying that Plato “clearly revealed by his own life and by the methods of his words that to be happy is to be good.”¹⁰

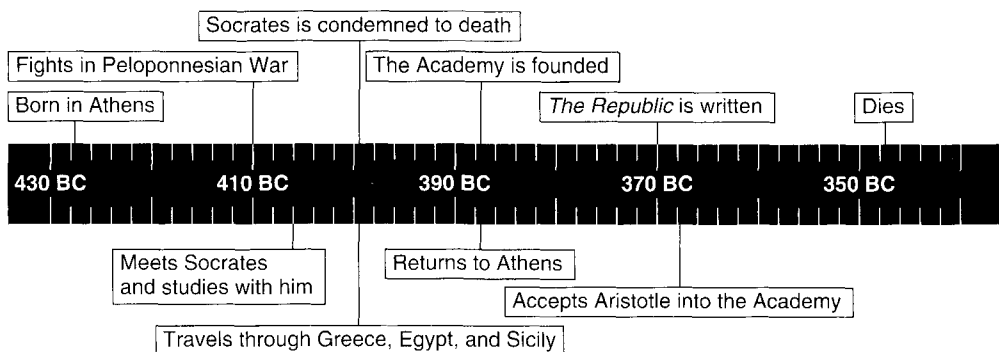


Figure 2.3 Plato's Life and Times

Plato's Contribution to Educational Thought

Plato was one of the first to propose equal education for men and women based on their ability to learn, not on their gender. He supported a type of vocational education, education to complete your role in life. For Plato, learning was more than having knowledge of the subject matter. It was the comprehensive process of the development of intellect, emotions, and will conducted according to the child's stages of development.¹¹ A good teacher helps students discover knowledge for themselves through dialogue.

The Republic

One of the astounding facts in the history of culture is that the first coherent treatise on government and education which we possess in Western civilization, Plato's *The Republic*, is the most profound. Plato's penetrating mind revealed the problems with which mankind has struggled, consciously or unconsciously, ever since it has had an organized society and education. Plato treats the subject of education in *The Republic* as an integral and vital part of a wider subject of the well-being of human society.

In *The Republic*, Plato tried to construct an ideal political system on the basis of education, showing how people can achieve justice through education. Plato outlined the nature of the just man and the ideal state in which man must develop virtues. The ultimate aim of education is to help people know the Idea of the Good, which is to be virtuous.¹² According to Plato, a just society always tries to give the best education to all of its members in accordance with their ability.

Plato's Philosophy of Education

In *The Republic*, Plato sets up a theory of what education means for both the individual and the state, focusing on the important role of those who must carefully choose the material to teach the future guardians of the state. The purpose of education is to help the students to grow and develop their character and ability to do good. Plato's curriculum is carefully chosen to include training for the spirit (music) and training for the body (gymnastics), with more difficult academic subjects added when the child is developmentally ready. Plato's educational theories have the practical aim of training for citizenship and leadership; his chief interest is education for character.¹³ An important maxim proposed by Plato is, "The quality of the State depends on the kind of education that the members (groups) of the state receive."

Notes

1. Jane Day, *Plato's Meno in Focus* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 4–5.
2. T. M. Hare, *Plato* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 113.
3. David Cooper, *Plato* (New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 10.
4. Hare, p. 105.
5. Day, p. 7.
6. Zhang Loshan, *Plato's Counsel on Education* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 37–38.
7. Rabbi Solomon Frank, *Education of Women According to Plato* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 302–3.
8. Day, p. 11.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 114–15; Losev, Alexei and Axa Takho-God, *Aristotle* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1990), p. 27.
10. L. Glenn Smith and Joan K. Smith, *Lives in Education: A Narrative of People and Ideas* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), p. 25.
11. Myungjoon Lee, *Plato's Philosophy of Education: Its Implications for Current Education* (Milwaukee: Marquette University, 1994), p. 41.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
13. R. C. Lodge, *Plato's Theory of Education* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 12–14, 65.

Questions to Guide Your Reading

1. Write down the key subjects Plato includes in the curriculum of his schools in *The Republic*.
2. Is Plato in favor of the education of women? Why or why not? Do you agree with his argument?
3. As you read, do you think that Plato is an advocate of liberal education or vocational education?
4. Try to make a chart of the plan for education found in Book VII. List the ages of the students and what subjects they will be taught at those ages.

READING 2.3: THE REPUBLIC

by Plato

Persons of the Dialogue:
Socrates, who is the narrator;
Cephalus; Glaucon; Thrasymachus;
Adeimantus; Cleitophon;
Polemarchus;
and others who are mute auditors.

The scene is laid in the house of Cephalus at the Piraeus; and the whole dialogue is narrated by Socrates, the day after it actually took place, to Timaeus, Hermocrates, Critias, and a nameless person, who are introduced in the Timaeus.

Book II The Individual, The State, and Education (Socrates, Glaucon)

Then he who is to be a really good and noble guardian of the State will require to unite in himself philosophy and spirit and swiftness and strength?

Undoubtedly.

Then we have found the desired natures; and now that we have found them, how are they to be reared and educated? Is not this an inquiry which may be expected to throw light on the greater inquiry which is our final end—How do justice and injustice grow up in States? for we do not want either to omit what is to the point or to draw out the argument to an inconvenient length.

.....
 Come then and let us pass a leisure hour in story telling, and our story shall be the education of our heroes.

By all means.

And what shall be their education? Can we find a better than the traditional sort?—And this has two divisions, gymnastics for the body, and music for the soul.

True.

Shall we begin education with music, and go on to gymnastics afterward?

By all means.

And when you speak of music, do you include literature or not?

I do.

And literature may be either true or false?

Yes.

And the young should be trained in both kinds, and we begin with the false?

I do not understand your meaning, he said.

You know, I said, that we begin by telling children stories which, though not wholly destitute of truth, are in the main fictitious; and these stories are told them when they are not of an age to learn gymnastics.

Very true.

That was my meaning when I said that we must teach music before gymnastics.

Quite right, he said.

You know also that the beginning is the most important part of any work, especially in the case of a young and tender thing; for that is the time at which the character is being formed and the desired impression is more readily taken.

Quite true.

And shall we just carelessly allow children to hear any casual tales which may be devised by casual persons, and to receive into their minds ideas for the most part the very opposite of those which we should wish them to have when they are grown up?

We cannot.

Then the first thing will be to establish a censorship of the writers of fiction, and let the censors receive any tale of fiction which is good, and reject the bad; and we will desire mothers and nurses to tell their children the authorized ones only. Let them fashion the mind with such tales, even more fondly than they mould the body with their hands; but most of those which are now in use must be discarded.

But what stories do you mean, he said; and what fault do you find with them?

The narrative of Hephaestus binding Here his mother, or how on another occasion Zeus sent him flying for taking her part when she was being beaten, and all the battles of the gods in Homer—these tales must not be admitted into our State,

whether they are supposed to have an allegorical meaning or not. For a young person cannot judge what is allegorical and what is literal; anything that he receives into his mind at that age is likely to become indelible and unalterable; and therefore it is most important that the tales which the young first hear should be models of virtuous thoughts.

Book V On Matrimony and Philosophy (Socrates, Glaucon, Adeimantus)

Let us further suppose the birth and education of our women to be subject to similar or nearly similar regulations; then we shall see whether the result accords with our design.

Then, if women are to have the same duties as men, they must have the same nurture and education?

Yes.

The education, which was assigned to the men, was music and gymnastics.

Yes.

Then women must be taught music and gymnastics and also the art of war, which they must practice like the men?

Yes.

And if, I said, the male and female sex appear to differ in their fitness for any art or pursuit, we should say that such pursuit or art ought to be assigned to one or the other of them; but if the difference consists only in women bearing and men begetting children, this does not amount to a proof that a woman differs from a man in respect of the sort of education she should receive; and we shall therefore continue to maintain that our guardians and their wives ought to have the same pursuits.

By all means.

One woman has a gift of healing, another not; one is a musician, and another has no music in her nature?

Very true.

And one woman has a turn for gymnastic and military exercises, and another is unwarlike and hates gymnastics?

Certainly.

And one woman is a philosopher, and another is an enemy of philosophy; one has spirit, and another is without spirit?

That is also true.

Then one woman will have the temper of a guardian, and another not. Was not the selection of the male guardians determined by differences of this sort?

Yes.

Men and women alike possess the qualities that make a guardian; they differ only in their comparative strength or weakness.

Obviously.

And those women who have such qualities are to be selected as the companions and colleagues of men who have similar qualities and whom they resemble in capacity and in character?

Very true.

And ought not the same natures to have the same pursuits?

They ought.

Then, as we were saying before, there is nothing unnatural in assigning music and gymnastics to the wives of the guardians—to that point we come round again.

Certainly not. . . .

You will admit that the same education that makes a man a good guardian will make a woman a good guardian; for their original nature is the same?

Yes.

. . . And can there be anything better for the interests of the State than that the men and women of a State should be as good as possible?

There can be nothing better.

Book VII On Shadows and Realities in Education (Socrates, Glaucon)

And, for all these reasons, arithmetic is a kind of knowledge in which the best natures should be trained, and which must not be given up.

I agree.

Let this then be made one of our subjects of education. And next, shall we inquire whether the kindred science also concerns us?

You mean geometry?

Exactly so.

And surely you would not have the children of your ideal State, whom you are nurturing and educating—if the ideal ever becomes a reality—you would not allow the future rulers to be like posts, having no reason in them, and yet to be set in authority over the highest matters?

Certainly not.

Then you will make a law that they shall have such an education as will enable them to attain the greatest skill in asking and answering questions?

Yes, he said, you and I together will make it.

Dialectic, then, as you will agree, is the coping stone of the sciences, and is set over them; no other science can be placed higher—the nature of knowledge can no further go?

I agree, he said.

And, therefore, calculation and geometry and all the other elements of instruction, which are a preparation for dialectic, should be presented to the mind in childhood; not, however, under any notion of forcing our system of education. . . .

Yes, I remember.

The same practice may be followed, I said, in all these things—labors, lessons, dangers—and he who is most at home in all of them ought to be enrolled in a select number.

At what age?

At the age when the necessary gymnastics are over: the period, whether of two or three years, which passes in this sort of training is useless for any other purpose; for sleep and exercise are unpropitious to learning; and the trial of who is first in gymnastic exercises is one of the most important tests to which our youth are subjected.

Certainly, he replied.

After that time those who are selected from the class of twenty year olds will be promoted to higher honor, and the sciences which they learned without any order in their early education will now be brought together, and they will be able to see the natural relationship of them to one another and to true being.

Yes, he said, that is the only kind of knowledge which takes lasting root. . . .

These, I said, are the points which you must consider; and those who have most of this comprehension, and who are most steadfast in their learning, and in their military and other appointed duties, when they have arrived at the age of thirty will have to be chosen by you out of the select class, and elevated to higher honor; and you will have to prove them by the help of dialectic, in order to learn which of them is able to give up the use of sight and the other senses, and in company with truth to attain absolute being: And here, my friend, great caution is required.

Therefore, that your feelings may not be moved to pity about our citizens who are now thirty years of age, every care must be taken in introducing them to dialectic.

Certainly. . . .

Suppose, I said, the study of philosophy to take the place of gymnastics and to be continued dili-

gently and earnestly and exclusively for twice the number of years which were passed in bodily exercise—will that be enough?

Would you say six or four years? he asked.

Say five years, I replied; at the end of the time they must be sent down again into the den and compelled to hold any military or other office which young men are qualified to hold: in this way they will get their experience of life, and there will be an opportunity of trying whether, when they are drawn all manner of ways by temptation, they will stand firm or flinch.

And how long is this stage of their lives to last?

Fifteen years, I answered; and when they have reached fifty years of age, then let those who still survive and have distinguished themselves in every action of their lives, and in every branch of knowledge, come at last to their consummation: the time has now arrived at which they must raise the eye of the soul to the universal light which lightens all things, and behold the absolute good; for that is the pattern according to which they are to order the State and the lives of individuals, and the remainder of their own lives also; making philosophy their chief pursuit, but, when their turn comes, toiling also at politics and ruling for the public good, not as though

they were performing some heroic action, but simply as a matter of duty; and when they have brought up in each generation others like themselves and left them in their place to be governors of the State.

You are a sculptor, Socrates, and have made statues of our governors faultless in beauty.

Yes, I said, Glaucon, and of our governesses too; for you must not suppose that what I have been saying applies to men only and not to women as far as their natures can go.

There you are right, he said, since we have made them to share in all things like the men.

How will they proceed?

They will begin by sending out into the country all the inhabitants of the city who are more than ten years old, and will take possession of their children, who will be unaffected by the habits of their parents; these they will train in their own habits and laws, I mean in the laws which we have given them: and in this way the State and constitution of which we were speaking will soonest and most easily attain happiness, and the nation which has such a constitution will gain most.

There is no difficulty, he replied; and I agree with you in thinking that nothing more need be said.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you agree with Plato that "the young are not able to distinguish what is and what is not allegory but whatever opinions are taken into the mind at that age are wont to prove indelible and unalterable"? Do you think that books should be censored? Why or why not? What is the policy in the school district in which you hope to teach? Why is this important to know?
2. Plato is a strong advocate of the value of music in the curriculum. He mentions that it is education of the soul. What value do schools today place on music in the curriculum? Have you seen a change in your school district recently regarding the importance given to music instruction, bands, and choruses? What is research showing regarding the value of music as an area of study and students' enjoyment of school?
3. Gymnastics is also given an important place in the curriculum of *The Republic*. Some people think that American schools emphasize sports too much. How do you think Plato would reply to this criticism?
4. What is the role of education according to Plato's *The Republic*? Do you think that today's communities are accepting their responsibility for contributing to the education of the youth as outlined by Plato? What are some particular areas needing improvement?
5. Think about how much Socrates the teacher influenced his student Plato. Reflect on teachers in your past. Have any of them influenced you in a similar way? Explain.
6. Compare and contrast the Athens of Plato's time to contemporary United States. What are some similar economic, social, political, and educational issues in both societies, and in what way are the issues very different?

Plato Jigsaw Cooperative Problem-Solving Groups

- a. Form Home Groups of 4 to 6 persons.
- b. Each member of the Home Group discusses the Book of Plato's *The Republic* assigned to the group. Use the questions below to guide your discussion. See which aspect of Plato's philosophy of education is defined in the Book you read.
- c. At the signal, two people will stay Home to share their findings with other groups. Two students will go to each of the other Expert Groups on the different Books of *The Republic*. Record answers given in the other groups regarding Plato's philosophy of education.
- d. Return to your Home Group. Each person in the Home Group shares their findings from the other groups. See if you can construct a complete summary of Plato's philosophy of education.
 - i. Who is the student according to Plato?
 - ii. Who is the teacher and what is his/her role?
 - iii. What is being taught, or should be taught?
 - iv. How should it be taught?
 - v. Why is it being taught?

For Further Research on the Internet

A brief biography of Plato with links to his life and works. <http://www.philosophypages.com/ph/plat.htm>

Home page on Plato with links to his dialogues. <http://plato-dialogues.org/plato.htm>
<http://classics.mit.edu/Browse/browse-Plato.html>

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Section 2.4: Aristotle (384–322 B.C.)

Did you know that we use Aristotle's terms all the time? If you are a secondary English major, you use Aristotle's literary ideas of the protagonist, climax, and denouement; biology secondary education majors use his genus, species classification often; all of us use the principles of his logic and ethics.



Aristotle's Life and Times

Aristotle was born in the summer of 384 B.C. in Stagira, a small town in Macedonia, Greece. His father, Nicomachus, a renowned physician, and his mother, Phaestis, had three children, two boys and a girl. Aristotle was introduced to medicine and biology at an early age and received a good education in natural science from his father. As a youth, he developed a great love for science, biology, and the study of the human person. Aristotle was a scrawny youth with skinny legs and tiny eyes who spoke with a lisp. He liked to wear expensive rings and style his hair. His father died when he was still young, so Aristotle was brought up by his older sister and her husband, Proxenus.

Aristotle Studies with Plato

Proxenus was a friend of Plato and some accounts say that he took Aristotle, then 17, to study with Plato at the Academy in Athens in 367 B.C.¹ Aristotle spent half of his active life in Athens, but never became an Athenian. Aristotle remained at the Academy for about twenty years. Plato was, by far, the most important formative influence on Aristotle's thought. Aristotle was a devoted pupil of Plato and his most brilliant student and he probably knew the author of *The Republic* best. At first, Aristotle adhered to the principles of Platonic Philosophy, but later departed from them. Plato recognized Aristotle as the Academy's brightest student, but also called him "a colt kicking his own mother" for foals kick their mother when they have had enough milk. Aristotle had a profound love for Plato and says in *The Ethics* that Plato was his friend but "piety requires us to honor truth above our friends."² Aristotle brought the work started by Socrates and Plato to a glorious completion. He gathered up all that was good in his predecessors and rejected what he deemed faulty. Aristotle significantly brought philosophy to completion, not that he finished it, but he formulated its broad outlines upon which many future generations of philosophers could build. Plato raised philosophy to unequalled heights. Aristotle anchored philosophy in reality.

Plato died in 347 B.C. and the question of who should succeed him as the head of the Academy arose. Plato's nephew, Speusippus, was chosen over Aristotle. Aristotle left Athens at 37 years of age, a philosopher and scientist in his own right, and traveled through Macedonia and Asia Minor. He married Pythias, and the couple had a daughter whom Aristotle called Pythias. When Pythias died, Aristotle had a son named Nicomachus. Aristotle's *Essays in Logic* and *The Nicomachean Ethics* are mentioned in

Aristotle, the Teacher

In 343 or 342 B.C., Philip II, king of Macedonia, invited Aristotle to become the tutor for his young son, Alexander. The education Alexander received from Aristotle was quite solid and contributed greatly to the personality of the future conqueror. However, a few years later, in 336 B.C., Philip was assassinated and Alexander became the head of the state.⁴ (See the timeline of Aristotle's life in Figure 2.4.)

Around 334 B.C., Aristotle returned to Athens and, at the age of fifty, founded a school called the Lyceum in the northeast section of the city in a 200-year-old gymnasium. Since he was not an Athenian, Aristotle could not buy the land. Aristotle's followers, like those of Plato, were called *peripatetics* because they taught by walking around asking questions. Aristotle worked in the Lyceum for thirteen years, giving lectures in the morning and afternoon and leading scholarly discussions at night while dining with friends.⁵ Aristotle lectured extensively on such subjects as physics, astronomy, zoology, botany, logic, ethics, and metaphysics. He wrote letters, poetry, and extensive literary works in the form of dialogues, like Plato, which were praised for their style and eloquence. Aristotle wrote nearly 150 different titles, but most of his writings were lost and we have less than one-fifth of his total writings. We have his lecture notes; although they are a little difficult to read, they are very logical, orderly, and rich in insight. They are mutilated and incomplete as the only edition found was hidden in a well for a century and a half.⁶

Aristotle's writings cover every branch of human knowledge known in his time. He thought that all things could be understood as unities of form and matter. He developed the four causes of nature: material, efficient, final, and formal. Science was to know things by their causes according to Aristotle, and philosophy was the study of the ultimate causes of all beings.

Aristotle was a good speaker, a lucid lecturer, and a persuasive conversationalist. He had to leave Athens after Alexander the Great died due to the political turmoil that developed; some were charging Aristotle with impiety as they had charged Socrates. Aristotle settled in the city of Chaleis on the island of Eubola.

Aristotle died in the autumn of 322 B.C., suffering from poor digestion. He was 62 years old and at the height of his influence.⁷

Aristotle's Contributions to Educational Theory

Aristotle's contributions to western intellectual thought include: his development of the science of biology, his development of the syllogism and the science of *Logic*, his explanation of virtue as the golden mean in his *Ethics*, the foundation of the study of literary crit-

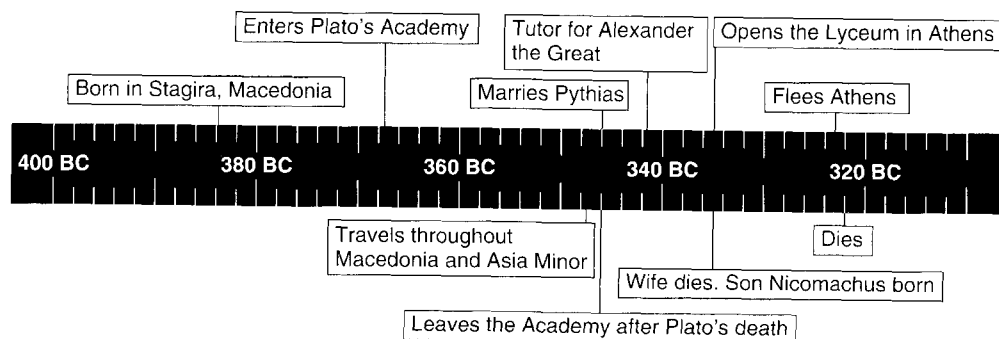


Figure 2.4 Aristotle's Life and Times

icism begun in his *Poetics*, and a the coherent philosophy of education he developed in *The Politics*.

Philosopher, educator, and scientist, Aristotle was one of the greatest and most influential thinkers in Western culture. In a number of his works, Aristotle dealt at length with the subject of education, examining education in relation to human and civic excellence in both the *Nicomachean Ethics* and *The Politics*. For Aristotle, ethics and politics both study practical knowledge, which is knowledge that enables people to act properly and live happily.

In *The Politics*, Aristotle's educational theory states that the good community is based on the cultivation of rationality. If education is neglected, the community suffers. Aristotle states that the highest aim of education is to produce virtuous men for the good of society.⁸

As education cultivated both the rational person and the rational society, Aristotle recommended compulsory public schools. Although his discussion of the ideal curriculum is incomplete because some pages of his manuscripts were never recovered, the plan he proposes shows how important he felt the education of youth was for the good of the community.

Aristotle's Philosophy of Education

Aristotle considered education to be an especially difficult art or skill that belonged by nature to the sphere of ethics and practical wisdom. A methodology had to be used that encouraged thinking and reflecting and then allowed for practice of the skills. The liberal education curriculum would train men to be good citizens and rulers, but also to make good use of leisure.⁹

The teacher is an expert who will take into consideration the successive stages in education which must be adjusted to the physical and psychological development of the individual student: the body, appetite, and reason must be taken successfully in hand as they develop.¹⁰

Aristotle saw the student as a human being, a "rational animal" whose function is to reason. Aristotle's ideal person practices behaving reasonably and properly until he or she can do so naturally and without effort. The result is a happy person, and happiness is the goal of all human beings. Aristotle believed that moral virtue is a matter of avoiding extremes in behavior and finding instead the mean that lies between the extremes. The aim of education is to help man shape himself as a human being, developing his intellectual knowledge and moral virtues, and at the same time conveying to him the spiritual heritage of the nation and civilization with which he is involved.

"We are the sum of our actions," Aristotle tells us, "and therefore our habits make all the difference."

Notes

1. Alexei Losev and Axa Takho-God, *Aristotle* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1990), p. 21.
2. Jonathan Barnes, *Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 219.
3. Losev and Takho-God, p. 64.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
5. Barnes, p. 200; Losev and Takho-God, 1990, p. 80.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 196.
7. Losev and Takho-God, 1990, p. 134.
8. Andrea Wilson Nightingale, *Liberal Education in Plato's Republic and Aristotle's Politics* (Leiden, Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2001), p. 155.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
10. D. Frede, *Aristotle's Education in Lyceum* (Frederick, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), p. 5.

Questions to Guide Your Reading—*The Politics*

1. What evidence from *The Politics* would convince you that Aristotle was an advocate of liberal education or vocational education?
2. Try to outline Aristotle's system of education as you read the following selection. What are the age divisions and what is the subject matter taught at each age division? What does Aristotle think is the most important thing to be learned?
3. What kind of education does Aristotle recommend for women? What is the rationale for his policy? Do you agree or disagree with his position?
4. Would Aristotle approve of the emphasis on sports in today's schools? Why or why not?
5. After you read this selection, how you would summarize Aristotle's view of the role of the school?

READING 2.4: THE POLITICS

There are three things that make men good and virtuous: these are nature, habit, and reason. In the first place, everyone must be born a man and not some other animal; in the second place, he must have a certain character, both of body and soul. But some qualities there is no use having at birth, for they are altered by habit, and some gifts of nature may be turned by habit to good or bad. . . . We have already determined what natures are likely to be most easily molded by the hands of the legislator. All else is the work of education. We learn some things by habit and some by instruction.

. . . All these points the statesman should keep in view when he frames his laws; he should consider the parts of the soul and their functions, and above all the better and the end; he should also remember the diversities of human lives and actions. . . . In such principles children and persons of every age which requires education should be trained.

We have already determined that nature and habit and reason are required, and what should be the character of the citizens has also been defined by us. But we have still to consider whether the training of early life is to be that of reason or habit,

for these two must accord, and when in accord they will then form the best of harmonics. In the second place, as the soul and body are two, we see also that there are two parts of the soul, the rational and the irrational, and the corresponding state, reason and appetite. And as the body is prior in order of generation to the soul, so the irrational is prior to the rational. The proof is that anger and will and desire are implanted in children from their very birth, but reason and understanding are developed as they grow older. Wherefore, the care of the body ought to precede that of the soul, and the training of the appetitive part should follow: none the less our care of it must be for the sake of the reason, and our care of the body for the sake of the soul.

After the children have been born, the manner of rearing may be supposed to have a great effect on their bodily strength. . . . Also, all the motions to which children can be subjected at their early age are very useful. . . . Such care should attend them in the first stage of life.

The next period lasts to the age of five; during this no demand should be made upon the child for study or labor, lest its growth be impeded; and there should be sufficient motion to prevent the limbs from being inactive. This can be secured, among other ways, by amusement, but the amusement should

not be vulgar or tiring or riotous. The Directors of Education, as they are termed, should be careful what tales or stories the children hear, for the sports of children are designed to prepare the way for the business of later life, and should be for the most part imitations of the occupations which they will hereafter pursue in earnest. . . . Besides other duties, the Directors of Education should have an eye to their bringing up, and should take care that they are left as little as possible with slaves. For until they are seven years old they must live at home; and therefore, even at this early age, all that is mean and low should be banished from their sight and hearing. . . .

No one will doubt that the legislator should direct his attention above all to the education of youth, or that the neglect of education does harm to states. The citizen should be molded to suit the forum of government under which he lives. For each government has a peculiar character which is originally formed and which continues to preserve it.

Now for the exercise of any faculty or art a previous training and habituation are required; clearly, therefore, for the practice of virtue. And since the whole city has one end, it is manifest that education should be one and the same for all, and that it should be public, and not private—not as at present, when everyone looks after his own children separately, and gives them separate instruction of the sort which he thinks best; the training in things which are of common interest should be the same for all. Neither must we suppose that any one of the citizens belongs to himself, for they all belong to the state, and are each of them a part of the state, and the care of each part is inseparable from the care of the whole. In this particular the Lacedaemonians are to be praised, for they take the greatest pains about their children and make education the business of the state.

That education should be regulated by law and should be an affair of state is not to be denied, but what should be the character of this public education, and how young persons should be educated, are questions which remain to be considered. For men are by no means agreed about the things to be taught, whether we look to virtue or the best life.

Neither is it clear whether education is more concerned with intellectual or with moral virtue. The existing practice is perplexing; no one knows on what principle we should proceed—should the use of money, or should virtue, or should the higher knowledge, be the aim of our training; all three opinions have been entertained. Again, about the means

there is no agreement; for different persons, starting with different ideas about the nature of virtue, naturally disagree about the practice of it.

There can be no doubt that children should be taught those useful things which are really necessary, but not all things; for occupations are divided into liberal and illiberal; and to young children should be imparted only such kinds of knowledge as will be useful to them without vulgarizing them. And any occupation, art, or science, which makes the body or soul or mind of the freeman less fit for the practice or exercise of virtue, is vulgar; wherefore we call those arts vulgar which tend to deform the body, and likewise all paid employments, for they absorb and degrade the mind.

The customary branches of education are four in number: (1) reading and writing, (2) exercises, (3) music, to which is sometimes added (4) drawing. Of these, reading and writing and drawing are regarded as useful for the purposes of life in a variety of ways, and gymnastic exercises are thought to infuse courage. Concerning music a doubt may be raised. In our own days most men cultivate it for the sake of pleasure, but originally it was included in education because nature herself, as has often been said, requires that we should be able not only to work well but to use leisure well, for I must state once again that the first principle of all action is leisure. Both are necessary, but leisure is better than occupation and is its end. . . .

It is clear, then, that some branches of learning and education must be studied merely with a view to leisure spent in intellectual activity. These are to be valued for their own sake, whereas those kinds of knowledge which are useful in business are to be deemed necessary and exist for the sake of other things. That explains why our fathers accepted music as a part of education, not because of its necessity or its utility, since it is not necessary or useful in the same manner as reading and writing, which are useful in money-making, in running a household, in acquiring knowledge, and in politics. . . . There remains, then, the use of music for intellectual enjoyment in leisure, and this is evidently the reason for its introduction.

It is evident, then, that there is a sort of education in which parents should train their sons, not as being useful or necessary, but because it is liberal or noble. Whether this is of one kind only or of more than one, and if so, what they are and how they are to be imparted, must still be determined. This much

we are now in a position to say, that the ancients witness to us, for their opinion may be inferred from the fact that music is one of the received and traditional branches of education.

Furthermore, it is clear that children should be instructed in some useful things—for example, in reading and writing—not only for their usefulness but also because many other sorts of knowledge are acquired through them. With a like view they may be taught drawing, not to prevent their making mistakes in their own purchases, or in order that they may not be imposed upon in the buying or selling of articles, but rather because it makes them judges of the beauty of the human form. To be seeking always after the useful does not become free and exalted souls. Now it is clear that in education habit must go

before reason, and the body before the mind; and therefore boys should be handed over to the trainer, who creates in them the proper habit of body, and to the wrestling master, who teaches them their exercises.

Of these states which in our own day seem to take the greatest care of children, some aim at producing in them an athletic habit, but they only injure their forms and stunt their growth. But in truth, as we have often repeated, education should not be exclusively directed to this or to any other single end. And parents who devote their children to gymnastics while they neglect their necessary education, in reality vulgarize them; for they make them useful to the state in one quality only and even in this the argument proves them to be inferior to others. . . .

Discussion Questions—*The Politics*

1. Compare Aristotle's curriculum plan to that proposed by Plato in *The Republic*. Which seems to be closer to the actual curriculum plan we have today?
2. Do you agree with Aristotle that anger, will, and desire are implanted in children from their very birth? Does this mean that it is impossible to form a child's character for it is all a matter of heredity?
3. Why does Aristotle endorse a uniform public education for all? Would he support private schools? home schooling? In what way could Aristotle be considered the first advocate of equal educational opportunity for all?
4. Do you think children are "molded" by their environment or are their lives open to individual choices and experiences?
5. Aristotle says that we achieve our happiness when we fulfill our function. Is our function determined by what we learn in school, or are we born with a predetermined function? How do we figure out what our function in society will be according to Aristotle? Is this relevant to school children today?

Questions to Guide Your Reading—*Nicomachean Ethics*

1. What is the difference between moral and intellectual virtues according to Aristotle? How does this distinction help answer Meno's question, Can virtue be taught?
2. What is Aristotle's definition of virtue? Compare and contrast this to Socrates' definition of virtue in *Meno*.
3. What are the two parts of the soul according to Aristotle? Does modern science uphold this dual understanding of the person or how would it define the person?
4. Make a chart of the virtues Aristotle mentions with the virtue in the middle and the extreme on one side and the deficiency on the other. For example:

Deficiency	Virtue	Extreme
Cowardice	Courage	Foolhardiness

READING 2.5: NICOMACHEAN ETHICS

Book II

Virtue, then, is 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 *ethike* is one that is formed by a slight variation from the word *ethos* (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. . . . 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. . . .

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.

Since, then, the present inquiry does not aim at theoretical knowledge like the others (for we are inquiring not in order to know what virtue is, but in order to become good, since otherwise our inquiry

would have been of no use), we must examine the nature of actions; namely how we ought to do them; for these determine also the nature of the states of character that are produced, as we have said. Now, that we must act according to the right rule is a common principle and must be assumed—it will be discussed later, i.e. both what the right rule is and how it is related to the other virtues. . . .

I mean moral virtue; for it is this that is concerned with passions and actions, and in these there is excess, defect, and the intermediate. For instance, both fear and confidence and appetite and anger and pity and in general pleasure and pain may be felt both too much and too little, and in both cases not well; but to feel them at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way, is what is both intermediate and best, and this is characteristic of virtue. Similarly with regard to actions also there is excess, defect, and the intermediate. . . . Therefore virtue is a kind of mean, since, as we have seen, it aims at what is intermediate.

For these reasons also, then, excess and defect are characteristic of vice, and the mean of virtue; For men are good in but one way, but bad in many. 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 to its substance and the definition which states its essence virtue is a mean, with regard to what is best and right and 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

Source: The *Nicomachean Ethics* of Aristotle, Chase, D. P. Publication: London: J. M. Dent & Sons; New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1928.

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. . . .

With regard to feelings of fear and confidence, courage is the mean; of the people who exceed, he who exceeds in fearlessness has no name (many of the states have no name), while the man who exceeds in confidence is rash, and he who exceeds in fear and falls short in confidence is a coward. With regard to pleasures and pains—not all of them, and not so much with regard to the pains—the mean is temperance, the excess self-indulgence. . . .

That moral virtue is a mean, then, and in what sense it is so, that it is a mean between two vices—the one involving excess, the other deficiency, and that it is such because its character is to aim at the intermediate in passions and in actions, has been sufficiently stated. Hence also it is no easy task to be good. For in everything it is an easy task to find the middle, e.g. to find the middle of a circle is not for every one but for him who knows; so, too, any one can get it once—that is easy—but to do this to the right person, to the right extent, at the right time, with the right motive, and in the right way, *that is* not for every one, nor is it easy; wherefore goodness is both rare and laudable and noble.

Discussion Questions

1. Compare Aristotle's theory of virtue with that of Socrates and of Confucius. In what ways are they similar and in what ways do they differ? Do they support today's current understanding of virtues as character attributes?
2. Do you agree with Aristotle that there is a medium point for every virtue? Are there some virtues for which there is no excess or deficiency? Give some examples.
3. What does Aristotle have to offer to the character education movement in the schools today? Is it possible for the schools to help children develop character in the way that Aristotle suggests? i.e., how can students be given the opportunity to "become just by doing just acts"?

For Further Research on the Internet

Biographical information on Aristotle with links to his philosophical thought. <http://www.philosophypages.com/ph/aris.htm>

The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy with links to his biography and works. <http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/a/aristotl.htm>

A homepage developed by Lawrence Hinman emphasizing Aristotle's virtue ethics including conference lectures on real audio. <http://ethics.acusd.edu/aristotle.html>

Suggestions for Further Reading

Barnes, Jonathan. "Aristotle." In *Greek Philosophers*, edited by K. Thomas. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Losev, Alexei, and Axa Takho-God. *Aristotle*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1990.

Nightingale, Andrea Wilson. "Liberal Education in Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Politic*." In *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity*, edited by Y. L. Too. Leiden, Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2001.

Reeve, C. D. C. "Aristotelian Education." In *Philosophers on Education*, edited by A. O. Rorty. London: Routledge, 1998.

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

Linking the Past to the Present

1. Design a lesson plan on a current issue using the Socratic Method. Write the whole lesson as a series of questions getting the students to explore the different sides of the issue.
2. Choose one of the following to debate with a fellow student:
 - a. Do you think books should be censored?
 - b. Do you think students should be grouped according to ability?
 - c. Do you think vocational education is more important so that students can 'get a job'?

Developing Your Philosophy of Education

What will be the role of character development in your philosophy of education? Will you teach it as a subject, model it as a teacher, or leave it to the realm of the home?

Connecting Theory to Practice

In your clinical experience find out how grouping is used in the classroom and in courses. What criteria is used for grouping students? Interview your teacher and ask him/her to explain their philosophy of grouping.

Educators' Philosophies and Contributions to Education

TABLE 2.1 Philosophy and Contributions of Greek Educators

Educator	Role of Teacher & Learner	View of Curriculum & Methodology	Purpose or Goal of Education	Major Contribution
Sappho	The teacher is a mentor for the girls who believes in the education of the whole person	Taught music, poetry, dancing, and reading by getting the girls involved and doing each activity	To prepare girls to be cultured, married women	First school for girls, first feminist who inspired many later women educators
Socrates	The teacher draws the knowledge out of the student	To ask questions in such a way that students discover the knowledge within and grow in virtue	To cultivate morally excellent people	Socratic Method
Plato	The teacher should carefully choose and censor the material the child is to learn	Training of the spirit (music), of the body (gymnastics), and of the mind (philosophy)	Help people know the Good and be virtuous members of the state	<i>The Republic</i> . The first to advocate teaching men and women basing their education on their ability, not on their gender
Aristotle	The teacher is the expert who teaches students how to think and act virtuously	Liberal education, intellectual and moral virtues taught through dialogue with the master teacher	To produce virtuous men for the good of society	Virtue ethics, also developed the sciences of biology, logic, and literary criticism