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ARISTOTLE'S WONDERING CHILDREN

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Abstract

Wonder is undoubtedly a term that floats around in today's academic discussion both on ancient philosophy and on philosophy of education. Back in the 4th century B.C., Aristotle underlined the fact that philosophy begins in *wonder* (θαυμάζειν), without being very specific about the conditions and the effects of its emergence. He focused a great deal on children's education, emphasizing its fundamental role in human beings' moral fulfillment, though he never provided a systematic account of children's moral status. The aim of this paper is to examine, on the one hand, if, to what extent, and under what conditions, Aristotle allows for philosophical wonder to emerge in children's souls, and, on the other hand, how his approach to education may shed light to the link between wonder and the ultimate moral end, i.e. human flourishing. We will, thus, 1) try to offer a unified outlook of the philosopher's views on children's special cognitive and moral state, and 2) illustrate how wonder contributes in overcoming their imperfect state of being.

Introduction¹

It is beyond controversy that wonder is given much attention in today's academic discussion on ancient philosophy and on philosophy of education. Plato is the first great philosopher who points out that philosophy begins in wondering.² Aristotle follows his teacher in taking wonder to be the very beginning of philosophy. Wonder is inseparably connected to *aporiai*, meaning the philosophical puzzles that one confronts while contemplating a subject.³ The person who wonders considers attentively the

¹ Acknowledgement: This paper is part of the research project "The moral status of the child in Plato and Aristotle: The transition from mere living (ζῆν) to living well (εὖ ζῆν)," which is implemented through the Operational Program "Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning" and is co-financed by the European Union (European Social Fund) and Greek national funds.

² *Theaet.* 155d.

³ *Met.* I 982b12-28.

perplexities and the contradictions of his subject, and his contemplation comes with astonishment and awe. For Aristotle, wonder has a specific cognitive character. It entails one's awareness of his own ignorance and his simultaneous direction to knowledge. He who wonders is able to use his rational capacities and move from ignorance to knowledge.

Aristotle never provided a systematic account of children's moral status and neither did he explicitly illustrate if and how children are able to experience wonder. However, he dwelled on their education and emphasized its role to human beings' fulfillment. In this paper we examine, on the one hand, if, to what extent, and under what conditions, Aristotle implies that education has the power to invoke philosophical wonder in children's minds, and, on the other hand, how his approach to education may shed light to the link between wonder and the ultimate moral end, i.e. human flourishing.

Aristotle shares with his teacher, Plato, the understanding of education's crucial role in the attainment of human flourishing (εὐδαιμονία). He illustrates that moral education, which co-occurs with cognitive development, consists in transforming children's natural dispositions into stable virtues of character through habituation. Given the fact that children's rational capacity has not yet been activated, children cannot experience wonder properly. Until they enter the process of education, they remain *pre-wondering* beings or, in other words, they are *potentially* wondering children. What we suggest is that *wondering* children are those who enter the educational program, and 1) carefully observe and reflect on the various particulars they perceive with their senses at the beginning of the inductive method, and 2) thoughtfully examine the particular moral actions they are encouraged to perform during their habituation. In the course of the educational program, children develop an imperfect kind of character friendship with their educators, whom they may even come to appreciate as moral models. They are continuously engaged in discussions with them concerning at first the application of the set moral standards and then the contribution of the latter in their own fulfillment as human beings. Wondering children are, thus, those who, not only find themselves in the transition from mere living (ζῆν) to—as Aristotle would hope—living well (εὖ ζῆν), but also those who are on their way to understand the difference between these two kinds of living.

Following the above sketchy description, our paper will examine Aristotle's perspective on children's wondering nature, the latter being indissolubly related to the long process of their cognitive and moral development. At the same time, we will designate wonder as the crucial experience that motivates human flourishing in the direction of the excellence of reason.

I. Children's Cognitive and Moral Conditions for Wondering

Let us first query whether the practice of wondering is applicable to children. As we mentioned before, a certain development of intellectual skills allows for wonder to appear in an individual. Therefore, the inquiry regarding wonder in children presupposes an examination primarily of children's cognitive state, and, in turn, of

their moral condition, which is essentially determined by the presence or the lack of knowledge. The Aristotelian account of human soul is presented both in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *De Anima*. Desire (ὄρεξις), which is the source of soul's motivation, functions either rationally or irrationally. A soul in which the rational part prevails stays still and calm. Aristotle points out that knowledge consists in a restful state of the soul and it is wrong to associate it with any kind of movement.⁴ At this point, the inference about children's cognitive deficiency is noteworthy: it is obvious that children lack knowledge, because we see them being in endless motion and unrest.⁵ In *Politics* I 1260a10-14, we encounter a similar remark about their cognitive state. There, Aristotle compares children to slaves and women, and claims that all parts of the soul (both the rational and the irrational ones) are present to all of them.

Aristotle asserts that children's cognitive condition specifies their moral status. Since children are deprived of the rational capacity (λόγος), their behavior is dictated by senses. As a result, they are motivated by the irrational part of their soul; they constantly pursue pleasures and seek to satisfy their insatiable desires.⁶ In the *EN*, Aristotle identifies the rational character of deliberation (βούλευσις) and choice (προαίρεσις). Deliberation is the attentive examination of the given facts, which prepares human soul to make a decision and choose an action. Choice follows deliberation in selecting the final action among various alternatives.⁷ Given that reason is absent from children's soul, the capacities of deliberation and choice are also absent. Therefore, children cannot engage in any deliberations or choices, and they are not able to reason about final ends. What is more, their lack of the capacity to choose implies lack of moral virtues. A moral virtue, as Aristotle defines it, is a disposition that is chosen for its own sake. Additionally, if a human being is not able to make a choice, then she cannot be morally virtuous either. Moral and intellectual virtues consist of an indissoluble unity, which means that the lack of one implies the lack of the other.⁸

Meanwhile, children possess natural dispositions. Natural virtues are the admirable dispositions (ἔξεις) that all animals, humans included, bear right from their birth.⁹ These natural features, like courage, justice and intelligence, do not have a specific ethical quality. They fluctuate between good and evil, but often are able to function as inclinations towards the good. Given that they are not supervised by reason, these dispositions operate as raw, mechanical impulses, and can sometimes be harmful. A child who behaves courageously does so due to his natural attraction to actions of this sort; an attraction that motivates the child to act courageously at random. However,

⁴ See *Phys.* VII 247b14-25.

⁵ See *ibid.* 247b25-248a3.

⁶ See *EN* III 1119b5-8; VII 1152b19-20; VII 1153a32-37.

⁷ See *ibid.* III 1113a10-11; VI 1139b4-5.

⁸ See *ibid.* VI 1144a36-b1; VI 1144b30-1145a2; X 1178a16-19.

⁹ See *ibid.* VI 1144b3-17.

she does not evaluate, deliberate or choose her action as a properly virtuous person would do. Proper virtues are settled dispositions that determine people's choices and actions by necessity. The fact that children possess natural dispositions is indicative of their resemblance to beasts and slaves. In the *EN*, Aristotle draws a parallel between children and beasts.¹⁰ Children's moral state is similar to that of beasts, given that they both bear inherent, natural dispositions which define their behavior. They both pursue pleasures, and specifically the harmful ones.¹¹ They also perform voluntary actions (ἐκούσιον), but are not capable of choosing them, because they lack προαίρεσις. Furthermore, children are morally analogous to slaves. Children, just like beasts, share with slaves the feature of behaving out of irrational desire and not out of deliberation and choice.¹² Both children and slaves are considered to be parts of their masters and not free moral agents.¹³

And here lies the problem: for Aristotle, wonder has a very specific cognitive character. He who wonders looks thoughtfully at a subject, feels confused and astonished, and is eager to get to know it. Given that children are deprived of cognitive skills and moral virtues, how are they capable at all of experiencing wonder and moving from ignorance to knowledge?

II. Children as Pre-Wondering Beings

Although children lack rational capacities, they carry a fundamental tool of knowledge: senses. Aristotle's thesis on the significant role of the senses in reaching knowledge, specifically in grasping the universal principles through the method of induction, is clear. In the first book of the *Metaphysics*, the philosopher argues that all people desire knowledge by nature. This is the reason why they take delight in their senses, and especially in the sense of sight.¹⁴ Within the process of acquiring knowledge, senses are explicitly described as the initiation phase.¹⁵ The philosopher illustrates the importance of senses with an impressive statement in the *Posterior Analytics*: "Sense perception is the innate faculty of discrimination in humans".¹⁶ Children cognitively stand exactly where senses lie: on the very starting point of knowledge. Now a crucial

¹⁰ See *ibid.* III 1111a24-27; VI 1144b3-17. Also, *HA* VII (VIII) 588a17-b4 and *Phys.* II 197b7-8.

¹¹ See *EN* III 1119b6.

¹² See *ibid.* 1111b8-11. See, also, *EE* II 1224a24-30.

¹³ See *EN* V 1134b10-11; *Pol.* I 1254a8-11.

¹⁴ See *Met.* I 980a21-24. See Mary Michael Spangler, *Aristotle on Teaching* (Lanham/New York/Oxford: University Press of America, 1998), 105. Spangler, following Thomas Aquinas, explains people's natural desire of knowledge in terms of their natural desire to reach perfection, and specifically, of the inclination of the potential intellect to become actual.

¹⁵ See *Met.* I 980a28-981a7. And *An. Post.* II 99b35-39.

¹⁶ *An. Post.* II 99b35-36, trans. Hugh Tredennick & Edward Seymour Forster (Loeb Classical Library, 1960).

question can be articulated. How are children going to be detached from the irrational world of appetites and psychic disturbances? Under what conditions will they get provoked by the complications they encounter to make a move forward, wonder, and direct themselves to knowledge?

In *Politics*, Aristotle acknowledges that the deliberative faculty (βουλευτικόν) appears incomplete or undeveloped (ἀτελής) in children's souls.¹⁷ The inadequate presence of the deliberative faculty implies here that reason is not completely absent from children's souls; in our reading, it exists in children's souls *potentially* (δυνάμει).¹⁸ The potential existence of reason in children indicates that reason exists in a subordinate and undeveloped way, in contrast to the complete, mature way in which something fully functional exists. At the same time, reason's existence in a state of *potentiality* "promises" that it will eventually enter its complete existence, i.e. it will be *actualized*.

The assumption that children participate in reason *in a potential way*, that is by having the incomplete capacity of deliberation, allows us to query whether children are eligible at least for some kind of virtue.¹⁹ The philosopher argues that children cannot be virtuous in the same way perfect adults are. Proper virtue occurs in excellent souls, but children's souls have limited capacities. The poor participation of children's souls to reason can only justify their limited approximation to virtue, which can be comprehended again in terms of *potentiality*. Children's possession of natural dispositions cannot justify an eternal similarity between them, beasts and slaves. To the extent that children possess natural dispositions *at present* (κατὰ τὸν χρόνον τοῦτον), they resemble beasts and slaves. But as potential bearers of the full virtue that they will acquire *in the future* (τῶν ὕστερον ἔξω ἐσομένων), they bear a similarity to full-fledged human beings.²⁰ Children's natural dispositions place them only temporarily in the inferior position of being morally similar to beasts and slaves. Their *natural virtues* can at the right time be transformed into *full, perfect virtues*. As excellent traits of human character, they are expected to be developed after natural virtues are cultivated and rationalized. In children, virtue merely exists in its imperfect version as *potentiality*, while in educated full-fledged moral agents, full virtue exists in its perfect version as *actuality*.

Aristotle states that when a living being is born "it starts at something and grows towards something else";²¹ specifically, it moves towards its future end, which is dictated by its nature. Both intellect and virtues, when in the state of *potentiality*, are children's *powers* which are going to be activated at the right time. Children are

¹⁷ See *Pol.* I 1260a10-14 and, also, VII 1334b23-25.

¹⁸ See Charlotte Witt, *Ways of Being: Potentiality and Actuality in Aristotle's "Metaphysics"* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 7-11, 38-39 and 45.

¹⁹ See *Pol.* I 1259b30-35.

²⁰ See *HA* VII (VIII) 588a30-b1.

²¹ *Phys.* II 193b16-18, trans. Philip Henry Wicksteed & Francis McDonald Cornford (Loeb Classical Library, 1957).

thus gifted with all the powers needed,²² so that they can become what their human nature determines. What is implied here is that children are not going to live forever in the immature cognitive and moral state of the senses. They are naturally inclined to achieve the fulfillment of their human essence. Children are not identical to beasts and slaves, but not to mature free men either. They are transitional beings, driving towards their physical, intellectual and moral completion. For as long as they are children, they live their proper lives *potentially*, and they possess *powers* awaiting to be *actualized*.

However, there might be a more precise depiction of children's lives. Children are full of motions. Every actualization process is a motion. According to Aristotle's definition in *Physics* III, motion is an *incomplete entelechy*, because all through its duration the potentialities have not been actualized yet.²³ It stands to reason that children can be described as living in this *incomplete entelechy*. Having some of their powers active and others inactive, they move continually towards the perfection of their natural properties. The *incomplete entelechy* signifies that children are in continuous motion, on the way to their achievements. If wonder presupposes cognitive skills and intellectual virtues, and if children are potentially knowledgeable and virtuous, then it goes without saying that they are *potentially wondering beings*. Children's potential wonder is not sufficient in order to render them *wondering beings*. However, we do not err in saying that children are *pre-wondering beings*. If certain conditions are met, potential wonder will be actualized. Hence, it is time to pose the question: how and when does this actualization occur?

The key to identify how children's wonder is able to flourish is their *reason-responsive soul*.²⁴ In humans the *generally desiderative* (ὄλως ὀρεκτικόν) part of the soul, although irrational by its nature, is capable of obeying to reason and it can be trained to harmonize with it.²⁵ What exists potentially must be brought to actuality by something already actual.²⁶ Thus, the student who possesses potential knowledge will move to actual knowledge under the conduction of someone who actively knows.²⁷ Children's obedient response to parental guidance and to tutors' instructions verifies that the irrational part of a human soul can be persuaded and ruled by reason.²⁸ The

²² See Rebekah Johnston, "Aristotle's *De Anima*: On Why the Soul is Not a Set of Capacities," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 19/2 (April 2011): 185-200. Johnston argues that, while human soul possesses inherent powers, defining soul as a coherent whole of powers would be contrary to the Aristotelian statement that soul is *entelechy*.

²³ See *Phys.* III 201b30ff. See, also, *Met.* IX 1048b28-35.

²⁴ We are borrowing the term *reason-responsive soul* from: Kristen Anne Inglis, "Aristotle on the Virtues of Slaves, Women and Children" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 2011), 14-15.

²⁵ See *EN* I 1102b13-1103a3; X 1180b3-7. Also, *EE* II 1220a10-11; *Pol.* VII 1333a16-18.

²⁶ See *Met.* IX 1049b24-26.

²⁷ See Spangler, *Aristotle on Teaching*, 5.

²⁸ See Sarah Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 63.

voice of the reason in charge of illuminating the irrational desire can be either external in the case of children who conform to the rational instructions of their parents and teachers, or internal in the case of adults who follow their reason instead of the tempting directions of their desire.

The reason-responsive soul of children, together with all the intellectual and moral powers it includes, explains why children are capable of following an educational program. The educators possess knowledge *actually*, and they are able to assist young pupils activate their powers and drive them to advanced knowledge. It is within the educational process that children experience wonder for the first time, when they are called to contemplate a problem and deal with its difficulties.

It is now obvious that children's ability to wonder is inextricably connected to their inherent inclination to respond to reason and be conducted from *natural* living to *rational* living, i.e. from living under the strong influence of emotion (κατὰ πάθος) to living under the command of their reason (κατὰ προαίρεσιν).²⁹ Their potential of advancing in knowledge and reaching the moral completion that befits free full-fledged humans is what makes them stand out as the very special beings who can achieve the transition from an irrational life to a life which is regulated by reason.

The expectation of children's cognitive and moral development inevitably stimulates our next inquiry on the methods and the purposes of children's education. We will now elaborate on the process of the education that Aristotle visualizes for children and attempt to trace the instances of wonder that children may experience throughout their evolution and in their relation to their tutors.

III. Becoming Wondering Pupils

As we mentioned above, children, qua human beings, have the disposition to overcome their natural state of character (φυσική ἀρετή) and acquire virtue in the proper sense (κυρία ἀρετή). In order that one be properly virtuous, one must develop the fluctuating natural character traits towards the right direction, and at the same time acquire the intellectual virtue of practical wisdom. In the integration of character virtues and practical wisdom (φρόνησις) lies the essence of human virtue, which is manifested in the deliberative choice of the right goal and the right means to pursue that goal.³⁰ Human life is defined by the *rational activity of the soul*, and, more specifically, the rational activity of the soul that is in accordance with *perfect virtue* (τελεία ἀρετή).³¹ The complete human being is the virtuous human being, and the virtuous human being is the one that aims primarily not at mere living (ζῆν) but at

²⁹ See Gavin Lawrence, "Acquiring Character: Becoming Grown-up," in *Moral Psychology and Human Action in Aristotle*, eds. Michael Pakaluk & Giles Pearson (UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), 233-83, esp. 236-7.

³⁰ See *EN* VI 1144a6-8.

³¹ See *ibid.* I 1097b23-1098a16; 1102a5.

living well (εὖ ζῆν).

But, is moral development a natural process? In other words, do all children reach, in virtue of their nature, a human being's full actuality? Aristotle, in *EN* II, is absolutely clear about that: "moral virtue comes about as a result of habit [...] none of the moral virtues arises in us by nature; for nothing that exists by nature can form a habit contrary to its nature". Accordingly, regarding intellectual virtue, he states: "intellectual virtue owes mainly both its birth and its growth to teaching (for which reason it requires experience and time)".³² Human beings must, along with the natural process of their biological development, undergo an educational process of character and intellectual cultivation as well, in order that they become fulfilled human beings and not human beings only by name. Moral development consists, in fact, in the unification of virtues of character and intellectual virtues—especially that of practical wisdom. What we assert here is that wondering is introduced in the above integrative process of education as a crucial factor for its progress. As soon as they are introduced in this process, which is for the most part a long process of habituation, children are *ready to experience wonder*.

Habituation starts already in early childhood within the household and involves the gradual transformation of the unstable natural dispositions into stable dispositions of character; the latter become eventually a human being's "second nature." By repeatedly performing particular good actions, under the constant guidance first of their parents and then of their teachers, who transmit morally good standards, children are trained to act like virtuous people do. For example, they acquire some familiarity with justice by performing a series of just actions under various conditions. Such a concept of moral habituation coincides with the description of the *inductive* process of cognitive development in *An. Post.* II 100a3-8. According to that passage, it is through the experience of particulars that people are led to the perception of the universal, i.e. of what is common to many individual cases, and, furthermore, to the grasp of its essence. Wonder emerges during the cognitive phase of induction.³³ When children perceive external objects through their senses, educators prepare them to go beyond their sensory perceptions, use their memory to retain their representations, create a unified experience of them and finally arrive at the universal principles.³⁴ In the very beginning of induction, wonder is plausibly stimulated by the educators. The pupils are called to deal with a problem presented by their tutors, linger on its difficulties and contemplate its complications. As they confront their *aporiai* with astonishment, they actualize their progression to knowledge.

At the same time, during the phase of habituation, pupils become acquainted with virtue as a fact that they do not question. They learn to perform like actions one

³² *Ibid.* II 1103a14-19. Trans. (modified) David Ross and rev. James Opie Urmson (*The Complete Works of Aristotle*, 1984; sixth printing with corrections, 1995).

³³ Spangler, *Aristotle on Teaching*, 121-2 and 157.

³⁴ Concerning induction, see *An. Post.* II 99b35ff.

after the other, reflecting only on what connects and differentiates those particular actions. It is only later that they acquire a unified perception of the instances they have experienced so far, moving thereby into a deeper comprehension of what they have been doing all this time. By performing just actions, for example, children progressively understand why their actions have been just and why they have been acting like just people essentially do.³⁵ In other words, children gradually move from knowing *that* (τὸ ὅτι) towards knowing *why* (τὸ διότι) something is virtuous, or towards grasping the essence of their good actions. The end of the moral educational process is, thus, identified with the condition of human beings that a) have knowledge of what they do, b) choose their actions for those actions' own sake, and c) act out of a firm state of virtuous character.³⁶

Children's engagement in the process of habituation requires that their cognitive capacities be activated in addition to the capacities of the sensitive (αἰσθητικόν) and desiderative (ὀρεκτικόν) faculties of their soul. In *EN*,³⁷ the desiderative faculty is characterized as the irrational part of the soul that participates πῶς (in a way) in reason, on the grounds that it has the tendency to be "persuaded" by the power of reason, which is progressively activated later in people's life.³⁸ Although children, as bearers of the desiderative faculty, are motivated only by what is pleasant (ἡδύ), by cultivating the potential of their rational faculty in the direction of virtue, they will eventually manage to bring the choice of pleasant into line with the choice of good.³⁹

The establishment of the above harmony between pleasant and good is first pursued through imitation, which is at the same time a source of pleasure and a medium of learning.⁴⁰ *Imitation* of good actions is significantly involved both in children's play

³⁵ James G. Lennox, "Aristotle on the Biological Roots of Virtue: The Natural History of Natural Virtue," in *Bridging the Gap between Aristotle's Science and Ethics*, eds. Devin Henry & Karen Margrethe Nielsen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 212. Lennox describes, quite comprehensively, the above process as follows: "This process of education and training is a matter of being encouraged to perform the actions that their caretakers know to be the just, temperate, or benevolent actions on each specific occasion. Gradually, children learn to use their own developing practical intelligence to determine (now for themselves) the appropriate actions and reactions to the concrete situations in which their lives consist and thus learn to integrate, as their caretakers have, practical intelligence and virtue of character. They now have a state expressed in deliberative choices to act and react in the manner defined by the person of practical intelligence; that is, they now have complete virtue".

³⁶ See *EN* II 1105a30-33.

³⁷ See *ibid* 1102b28-1103a19.

³⁸ See *Pol.* VII 1334b24-25.

³⁹ On the rearrangement of the three motives of choice in the soul of the virtuous human being, see Myles F. Burnyeat, "Aristotle on Learning to Be Good," in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 69-92.

⁴⁰ See *Poet.* I 4 1448b5-9.

activities (παιδιαί) and in their musical education. At a very early age, children are encouraged to perform good actions through playing games based on imaginary situations and stories; these actions are *imitations* (μιμήσεις) of the good actions that they are expected to perform when they become adults.⁴¹ In like manner, when, at a later age, they are exposed to musical compositions, they are also exposed to *likenesses* (ὁμοιώματα) of all kinds of character traits and their corresponding actions. By listening to and performing the right kinds of musical representations, they become habituated to delight in the virtuous character qualities and noble actions. Thereby, they will come, in the end, to get pleasure from the actual virtuous qualities and actions.⁴²

Moral practice through habituation, even within the context of imitation we described above, does not occur on the basis of a blind repetition of like actions, and, thus, can scarcely be mechanical. Instead, as Sherman insightfully points out, the repetition is “critical.”⁴³ More specifically, the particular actions can by no means be identical, since on most occasions different conditions are encountered, which in turn call for different responses. In a sense, most particular cases are deviations—no matter how slight they may be—from the exemplary type, while other cases may be outstanding exceptions. Children are constantly invited to practice their judgment. They perceive, compare and classify the various cases of the particular virtuous actions, and explore the limits of the acknowledged moral standards. The gradual development of their cognitive capacities in parallel with the continuing moral practice enable children to act by having their eyes fixed on virtuous goals, and, on account of the instructions they are being given, to decide how to apply their increasing experience and knowledge to concrete cases.

However, the pattern very often changes, leaving children in a state of wonder (ἀπορία). In such instances, children are puzzled at how they should act and whether this or that course of action is the right application of the model they have in mind. The most natural and reasonable way to overcome such recurrent moments of bewilderment is to address their *aporiai* to their educators.

IV. Children as Wondering Friends

The medium of communication between children and the adults most proximate to them, i.e. parents and teachers, is λόγος/speech. The “sharing in speech and thought” (κοινωνεῖν λόγων καὶ διανοίας) is what makes the fundamental difference between

⁴¹ See *Pol.* VII 1336a29-34.

⁴² See *ibid.* VIII 1339b11-1340b29. These two habitual practices are thoroughly discussed by Leunissen in Mariska Leunissen, *From Natural Character to Moral Virtue in Aristotle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 116-23.

⁴³ Nancy Sherman, *The Fabric of Character: Aristotle's Theory of Virtue* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 179.

human beings' and other living beings' socializing activities.⁴⁴ The most worthy kind of sharing speech, which is peculiar to a full human being's nature, is not a kind of casual conversation, but a certain kind of fruitful conversation that improves human beings both intellectually and morally.

Engagement in such purposeful discussion is a significant element in Aristotle's conception of character friendship—the type of friendship founded on the recognition of the other person's moral goodness. In cases of perfect (τελεία) character friendship (ἡ τῶν ἡθῶν φιλία), conversation takes place between equal parties. Children and their parents are, nevertheless, bound with a particular type of character friendship, which is developed between unequal individuals.⁴⁵ And, although it is nowhere discussed in detail, a similar type of friendship, i.e. between unequal parties, is developed between educators and children. More concretely, children are indeed imperfect character friends, because they are not yet virtuous; they are still learners and, thus, morally and intellectually dependent on their superior friends. However, they can still participate in character friendship, as far as they are - or, at least, learn to be - associated with other people primarily in virtue of the good qualities of character that they recognize and admire (θαυμάζειν) in them, and not in virtue of mere pleasure and/or benefit.

In light of the process of habituation, the above kind of relationship with their educators forms a context in which children seem to unfold their wondering nature. Apart from setting the guidelines for the course of actions, educators (and parents) set moral examples by the way they themselves live and act. Children detect in their moral actions patterns and aspects of moral character, which they may come to admire. But it is mainly through conversation, which in the course of time becomes more and more challenging, that children move closer to the essence of virtuous actions, until they accomplish full virtue.⁴⁶ At this point, they will have already acquired the disposition to establish perfect friendships as equal, virtuous partners, who shape each other to such an extent that the one becomes the other's "other self."⁴⁷

Discourses and presentation of arguments (and counterarguments), as well as lecturing by superior friends, are critical for the full comprehension of virtuous actions, but what is surely presupposed is the fact that the junior friends have been previously involved in a personal inquiry of the virtuous actions' characteristics.⁴⁸ Wonder-full education in Aristotle starts with a growing devotion to actions that express virtue and proceeds towards the firm understanding of what virtue is. Through habituation,

⁴⁴ See *EN IX 1170b10-14*. A similar view is expressed in *EE VII 1245a12-18*. See, also, Anthony Kenny, *Aristotle on the Perfect Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 50-1.

⁴⁵ See, e.g., *EN VIII 1158b10ff*.

⁴⁶ On the method of dialogue between friends in Aristotle character education, see Kristjan Kristjánsson, *Aristotelian Character Education* (London/ New York: Routledge, 2017), 123-7.

⁴⁷ *EE VII 1245a30*.

⁴⁸ Such human beings already have a kinship to virtue: "δεῖ δὴ τὸ ἦθος προϋπάρχειν πως οἰκείων τῆς ἀρετῆς" (*EN X 1179b29-30*). See, also, *EN I 1095b3-8*.

children form an intimate attachment to virtue, while, through discourses, they become motivated to reflect on the nature of virtue and on virtue's contribution to εὐδαιμονία. Wondering has a share in both the above methods adopted in education and is defined by the relation in which they stand to each other. Namely, the context of the discourses is, as we previously described, determined to a great extent by the course of habituation. One cannot simply persuade, via lecturing and argumentation, either a person with no previous attachment to good actions to be good or a person habituated to good actions to shift to bad habits.

Human beings brought up in good habits do not start from scratch; they do not actually wonder why a life in accordance with virtue is the life they should live. Such human beings are almost already convinced about the value of a virtuous life, i.e. the kind of life that pertains to their species, so that they do not need to explicitly ask why they should pursue such a life. The transition from the "that" to the "because" does not occur abruptly, but it happens continuously as the process of moral education takes place. Wondering, under these circumstances, does not really concern "why" questions but rather more refined "how" questions.⁴⁹ Namely, the person who attempts to understand why virtue is the most preferable way to the attainment of εὐδαιμονία, is actually the one who poses more advanced questions about how and under what conditions any human being should generally proceed in life in order to flourish; this is, most probably, the kind of young person Aristotle addresses in his ethical treatises.

Conclusion

All the above considered, we can infer that Aristotle assigns to wonder an active role. More concretely, when tracing the occasions of wonder in the educational process, we basically look at a state of mind that is expressed as an *aporia* or a series of *aporiai*. This kind of wonder signifies, not only a state of astonishment over the incomprehensible (θαυμάζειν), but also—and for the most part—a state of puzzlement (ἀπορεῖν) one tries to overcome by calling for clarifications and raising more and more specific *aporiai*. Wondering, in such a context, is experiencing a kind of productive embarrassment or uneasiness, which stimulates children's intellectual and moral inclinations to move towards a firm grasp both of the ultimate goal of human life, i.e. εὐδαιμονία, and of the means to achieve this goal in the most appropriate way to a human being's nature.

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⁴⁹ On that matter, see Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*, 193-7.

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