

# Aristotelian Elements in Nietzsche's Work Related to the Philosophy of Education

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In the author's opinion Nietzsche has adopted the three Aristotelian factors, i.e., logic, learning and experience, showing the nihilistic element in the educational system of his days. By means of the term "formal education", Nietzsche implies the education comprises the development of the intellectual faculties of the learner. According to Nietzsche, logic is connected with learning, and this is connected with habituation through which the students internalize patterns of behaviour. Nietzsche connects learning and habituation with experience. The person acquires experience from everyday life and through the senses from the external world. Nietzsche adopts the Aristotelian concept of activation of the intellectual faculties of students as the main purpose of the educational process. This activation presupposes the sound guidance and activation of learners' experience. Based on the three Aristotelian factors, according to Nietzsche, the teacher is called to shape and activate all these elements, which are inherent in the genius.

*Keywords:* education, experience, learning, logic, knowledge, habituation, activation, genius

## Introduction

Nietzsche was one of the greatest thinkers of the 19th century and his views significantly influenced representatives of modern philosophy. Nietzsche wrote five lectures, entitled "On the Future of our Educational Institutions". In the lectures, he made an appeal anew for us to aspire to the visions of learning and to be led to review our educational course as well as the guidance of young generations.

Nietzsche presented his lectures using the Platonic dialogue. He aimed at inviting readers to participate in these dialogues and prompts them to participate dialectically in the active practice of philosophy. Nietzsche expressed his views on a philosophy of education, while presenting his educational plan (We should point out that in this article, we limit ourselves only to views that Nietzsche presented his lectures, recognizing that many of his views he revised in his other works. Reference is also made to extracts from his treatise *The Twilight of Idols*). His demand for a philosophy of education related to his strict criticism of the educational system of his era and in particular, the two most important types of educational institutions, i.e., secondary schools and the university (Nietzsche, 1998), which is details about Nietzsche's life, personality, philosophical work and reflections (Benie, 2001, pp. 436-471). Nietzsche described a negative picture of German education and expressed his views for the future of educational institutions in 19th century Germany (Nietzsche, 1998, pp. 182-183).

A revised view of philosophy of Nietzsche's education constitutes, in the author's opinion, an important

quest of modern times, so that contemporary people can reflect on how appropriate education for the young is supposed to be provided. Education, according to Nietzsche, was not a type of provision and acquisition. He considered education a personal work of art that never stops progressing. Education is a work of art that aims at a permanent aesthetic shaping of human character. Nietzsche, in his criticisms of the disadvantages of the educational system, used as a starting-point of the philosophy of the Greek educational spirit. Starting with ancient Greek reflection, in his pedagogic planning, Nietzsche attempted to approach the quest for a philosophy of education through the Aristotelian perception of three factors. These factors which are formal education (learning), habituation and experience (senses) are directly related to the educational process.

### **Aristotelian Elements in Nietzsche's Philosophy of Education**

Aristotle was the first thinker who systematically faced the institution of education from a political, educational and philosophical viewpoint. Aristotle defined the aims of education in his *Politics* and presented the cultivation of reason as the final stage of education. In his viewpoint, man is able to exceed nature and habituation through logic (Voros, 1997, p. 19). Aristotle presented his views on education in the last two books of *Politics* (seventh and eighth). Aristotle refers to three factors that are directly related to the educational practice in his work *Metaphysics* (Aristotle, 1047b, pp. 31-33). According to Aristotle, logic contributes to the process of learning, through which the mind is cultivated. Learning, through which we make use of habituation, is considered a basic factor of the educational process that is completed through the senses, which comprise the power of experience. Experience is the basis of science and art. Aristotle based human faculties on learning, habituation and experience (Voros, 1999, pp. 50-55). Nietzsche approached the importance of these three factors in a special and prompt manner. Obviously, he knew Aristotle's educational views, if we take into consideration the admiration, he had for ancient philosophers. In the author's opinion, Nietzsche, in pointing out these three factors, revealed the nihilistic character that dominated the educational system of his era. At the same time, he gave the guidelines that a genuinely educated person is supposed to follow. Nietzsche practised severe criticism of the entire system of tertiary education in his treatise *The Twilight of Idols*. In that work, Nietzsche emphasized that the most important things in education, i.e., the aim and the means for the achievement of this aim, were lost. He pointed out that it was forgotten that education, i.e., "Bildung" (and not the Reich) is an aim in itself and that they need educators (and not secondary school teachers and university tutors) in order for this aim to be achieved" (Nietzsche, 1994, p. 54).

In the second lecture, Nietzsche considered formal education as the first basic factor for the shaping of learners' personality. By using the term formal education (ειδολογική μόρφωση), he implied education that comprizes the development of the intellectual faculties of the learner rather than the transmission of knowledge. The main realm of formal education is secondary school. Formal education concerns a student's reasoning through which he decided on his her actions (Aristotle, 1334b, pp. 15-17; Nietzsche, 1998, p. 64). Exceptional educators see to it that they provide learners with formal education, "one of highest objectives which are to have an educational influence on written language, to shape serious, rigorous habits and views". Nietzsche supported that formal education is presented as a state of prudence in sound written works. This means that the teacher is the educated educator who should educate the learners to use their intellect in such a way so as to shape serious views with their rational thinking and actually express their reflections. Here, the author attempts a cognitive identification of formal education with prudence, because prudence constituted for Aristotle the most basic and superior intellectual asset. Moreover, for a learner, in order to practise and express his/her

reasoning appropriately in writing, he/she should acquire a sound knowledge of his/her mother tongue. Proper learning of one's mother tongue in the oral and written forms, constitutes, according to Nietzsche, a "sacred duty" (Nietzsche, 1998, p. 73), because this knowledge also involves the recognition of its value. The pedagogue Nietzsche successfully clarified the three elements formal education including for which an educator is needed: powerful will, the use of reasoning and learning how to speak and write one's mother tongue. Nietzsche mentioned these three elements in his concise treatise *The Twilight of Idols*. Nietzsche reported that one should learn to see, should learn to think, should learn to speak and write: the aim of all three together is to acquire noble culture (Nietzsche, 1994, p. 55).

In the same treatise, Nietzsche defined that learning to see means that the eye gets used to serenity, patience, allowing things to come to it, postponing judgement, learning to go round and conceiving each individual case from all aspects. Nietzsche considered as the first step of learning for spirituality that a learner should not react to a stimulus, but gain control of all hindering and excluding instincts. Consequently, according to Nietzsche, learning to see in effect means having a powerful will (Nietzsche, 1994, pp. 55-56). Nietzsche, when he referred to learning to see, he seems to consider it as an obligation of the educator to help learners practise the prudence of reflection. The application of prudence of reflection refers to the Aristotelian will that is the correctness of volition and requires the right use of reasoning. According to Nietzsche, the use of reasoning is a technique, a programme of teaching, a will for the acquisition of dominance possession (Nietzsche, 1994, p. 56). Learning to think concerns the practical philosophy of education and the teacher presents learners with the educative value that knowledge of one's mother tongue has. It is knowledge that constitutes a basic condition for prudence of oral and written speech. In fact, it refers to learning how to speak and write. Prudence acts both in sounds reasoning that is represented here by knowledge of one's mother tongue—and in collaboration with it (Aristotle, 1144b, pp. 26-27), in regard to the power and habit of prudence in Aristotle (Koutras, 2002, pp. 49-61; Skaltsas, 1993, pp. 19-45; Ross, 1991, pp. 37-94).

The practise of reasoning is the ultimate aim of the completion and shaping of the personality of a learner. Nietzsche considered that habituation should be exploited by teachers. A teacher should help learners get addicted to strict linguistic self-discipline. The genuine work of a teacher is to use the living as living. The teacher will educate learners to use their mother tongue as a living entity and not to use it as a dead language, as if we had no duty vis-a-vis the present and the future of this language (Nietzsche, 1998, p. 65). Linguistic self-discipline of learners and habituation in observing and applying certain necessary linguistic rules is useful learning. This learning encloses inherent value that prepares learners for proper integration in society and helps to some extent in the formation of their character. The right knowledge of one's mother tongue contributes to the right reading and interpretation of the works of classic writers. Through these works, learners are able to internalize various models of behaviour. Habituation is connected both to the possibility of knowledge of one's mother tongue and the relation between this knowledge and the possibility of knowledge shaping a learner's personality (Nietzsche, 1998, pp. 79-80) in regard to habituation (Aristotle, 1334b, pp. 8-12; Skaltsas, 1993, pp. 48-58) and discipline and self-discipline (Delikonstantis, 2001, p. 85).

Nietzsche attempts to connect learning and habituation with experience. He emphasizes the importance of action that is the essential element of true education, based on the educational principal that our mother tongue is the realm where a learner should learn to act properly (Nietzsche, 1998, p. 66). In fact, Nietzsche, in his fifth lecture, underlined that one's sum of experiences, which includes information acquired through the senses,

one's emotions, wishes, intentions, visions and thoughts and gave rise to fundamental philosophical questions that concern the development of a deeper and nobler education (Nietzsche, 1998, p. 173). The philosopher-teacher Nietzsche showed that such experiences are meaningful in two intertwined ways for young people. On the one hand, experiences are experience gained through everyday life. On the other hand, the same experiences, acquired through the senses from the external world, are directly related to personal incidents, and guide one's metaphysical reflection leading to the outcome of an eternal problem (Nietzsche, 1998, p. 173). This is exactly where the contribution of the educator is essential. He would direct learners to empirical and independent action, because the puzzle of their existence has also led them to the lack of self-confidence. Sharing J. Dewey's views, Nietzsche also believed that knowledge is not dissociated from action. According to Nietzsche, sound guidance and activation of learners' experience are included in education, aiming at action and the activation of their intellectual faculties, which Aristotle considered as the cultivation of the educational process (Aristotle, 1332b, pp. 6-8; Voros, 1999, p. 55; Delikonstantis, 2001, p. 76). In the content of sound use of one's mother tongue and independence aiming at learning, Nietzsche proposed in his fourth lecture, not to disturb the simplistic, fully confident as well as personal and direct relationship of the young person with nature (Nietzsche, 1998, p. 130). Consequently, he considers the relation of the young person with nature important, because it constitutes one of the bases of personality shaping, provided that in the great allegory of nature the learner senses, unconsciously, the metaphysical unity of all beings and, therefore, he will touch upon their indestructible continuity and necessity (Nietzsche, 1998, p. 131). Nietzsche turned his attention to necessity so that the young may acquire comprehension of nature through personal experience and contact with it, while denying the mechanical learning of phytology, geology and chemistry that often lead to a different perception of nature. Nietzsche, in perceiving learners as subjects of the educational process, supported that with the existence of the three faculties (formal education, habituation and experience) and the right education a genius is shaped. The genius is called upon to shape and activate all elements inherent in his being. In this manner, a genius creates a harmonious combination between his internal content and the exterior form of his existence. With the analysis of these faculties, Nietzsche demanded self-knowledge, which occurs, provided the select individual matures in the motherly embrace of popular schooling (Nietzsche, 1998, p. 104; Rosenow, 1989, pp. 307-316; Johnston, 1998, p. 79). Nietzsche did not simply limit himself to the identification of the innermost essence of a person. He proceeds to make an important observation that is timeless and important for the educational practice and does not leave outside the responsibility the state has for it. Nietzsche, with an attempt to compare the role and place of the state vis-a-vis education, pointed out that in antiquity education was not a means to serve the aims of the state, but an ultimate aim and direction in itself (Nietzsche, 1998, pp. 119-120).

In Nietzsche's educational programme, education is the aim and not the means. This awareness, on the part of state power, can lead to a comprehensive philosophy of education. The foundation of this education will comprise the three basic Aristotelian conditions: logic, learning and experience. Nietzsche, the teacher, is a radical saviour not only for his era, but our times as well, because Nietzsche alerted us by declaring that education should serve no power and no aim, but also rather that education should be served as a holy mission. Reflecting on Nietzsche's views, we perceive his tendency to consider education as an art, the aesthetic outcome of which is a human being who is involved as an artist and a creator, through action and planning. This human work of art also reflects the shaping of the personality of a genius, which attracted the research interest of Nietzsche's examiners.

### Summary

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