

This article compares classical Greek and Chinese conceptions of education. It deals with the similarities and diversities between the classical Chinese philosophers — Confucius, Mencius, and Hsun Tzu — and their Greek counterparts — Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle — on philosophical issues, notably, ethics, politics, metaphysics, human nature, as well as their implications for educational theory and practice.

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Comparison of Classical Greek and Chinese Conceptions of Education**

The present article will analyze and compare classical Greek and Chinese conceptions of education, by tracing their historical continuities and by searching out such philosophical foundations as may underlie their similarities and diversities.

For the sake of clarity, the expression “classical Greek conceptions of education” may be defined as referring to the conceptions of education held by Socrates (470-399 B.C.), Plato (428-347 B.C.), and Aristotle (384-322 B.C.). The expression “classical Chinese conception of education” may be defined as referring to the conceptions of education held by three outstanding Chinese philosophers, i.e., Confucius (551-479 B.C.), Mencius (371-289 B.C.), and Hsun-Tzu (298-238 B.C.). The inquiry will compare similarities and diversities in their conceptions of education.

Socrates and Confucius have much in common. Each of them is regarded as one of the greatest philosophers in the history of mankind; both of them developed a system of philosophy which has exercised tremendous effects on the development of human thought.

Generally speaking, the system of Greek philosophy was first established by Socrates, and after his death, his school of thought was modified, developed, and expanded by Plato and Aristotle, and finally became the foundations of Western philosophy. As Kaufmann put it, “Socrates is widely considered one of the greatest human beings of all time.”¹

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¹Walter Kaufmann, *Philosophic Classics*, (Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961), p. 91.

Similarly, the system of Chinese philosophy was first established by Confucius, and after his death, his school of thought was modified, developed, and expanded by Mencius and Hsun-Tzu, and finally became the foundations of Chinese thought. Feng, an outstanding Chinese philosopher, once remarked,

Confucius . . . holds a place in Chinese history comparable to that of Socrates in the West. The position of Mencius in Chinese history is comparable to that of Plato, his temperament and philosophy both being idealistic; while Hsun-Tzu's is similar to that of Aristotle, both his temperament and philosophy being realistic.²

The basic similarity between Confucius' conception of education and that of Socrates consists in their method of teaching. The basis of Socrates' method of teaching is to create the conditions under which spontaneous learning can take place. He held that one basic condition the teacher must create is the pupil's awareness of his own ignorance. Thus, Socrates' method of teaching is based upon the conviction that only when a student really becomes aware of his own ignorance, will he seriously try to remedy the situation by gaining knowledge for himself. Socrates said,

I am so far like the midwife that I cannot myself give birth to wisdom, and the common reproach is true, that, though I question others, I can myself bring nothing to light because there is no wisdom in me.³

According to Socrates, learning does not take place unless the learners, like the woman who suffers the pains of labor in childbirth, become full of distress and thus anxious to get rid of that distress. When the conditions under which the students become anxious to learn are created, they will acquire knowledge through their own efforts. Therefore, the students have not, in fact, directly learned from their teacher. Instead, they can only acquire knowledge by themselves under the conditions created by the teacher. Hence, the role of the teacher is to create the conditions of spontaneous learning. Since Socrates draws an analogy between the teaching method and the method used by a midwife, the Socratic method is most commonly referred to as an art of midwifery. In his teaching, Socrates would question his students in such a way that they are pushed back step by step until they finally discovered that they were contradicting themselves. When they find themselves contradicting what they have originally assumed to be true, it is easy for them to become anxious to learn. This is the essence of the Socratic method of teaching.

Similarly, the basic element of Confucius' method of teaching is to stimulate the student's ability to think for himself. In fact, his remark, "Those who learn but do not think may have only vague ideas; those who think but do not learn may be blindly carried away by his own thinking,"⁴

²Yu-Lan Feng, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, (Princeton University Press, 1952), Vol. 1, p. 106.

³*The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, (Pantheon Books, 1963), p. 855.

⁴*The Analects*, 2:15.

is often compared to Kant's famous doctrine, "Thoughts without content are empty; intuitions without concepts are blind."

Like Socrates, Confucius also spelled out the principle of teaching by saying that to teach effectively, the teacher needs to encourage his student to raise questions. But while Socrates often responds to his student's question by putting another related question to him, Confucius prefers to answer the question either directly or in such a detail that the student is capable of taking his answer as a starting-point in his search for the answer. Confucius said:

I do not try to explain anything to the student unless he is really eager to understand something but does not know how to achieve it. I do not try to show the student how to express himself unless he is really eager to convey something but does not know how to get it across.⁵

Both Socrates and Confucius also tried to assist the student in developing clear thinking, though this point is more explicit in Socrates than in Confucius. In his teaching, Socrates always attempted to help his student strike out confusions and contradictions so that clear thinking may result. By the same token, Confucius also made clear thinking the objective of teaching. He said,

To know what one really knows, and to know what one does not really know is to have true knowledge.⁶

In addition, both Socrates and Confucius believed that knowledge will guarantee conduct and affect character. What Socrates calls a philosopher is referred to by Confucius as a superior man. A philosopher or a superior man is one who possesses a good deal of knowledge. The ultimate objective of education is, then, to turn out as many philosophers or superior men as possible. Both of them were of the opinion that human knowledge is innate and thus can be developed from within. Socrates held that the soul is immortal and that all learning is but recollection. In *Meno* he even tried to demonstrate his point by teaching a boy geometry. The boy, according to Socrates, has learned geometry simply by recollecting what he does not remember. In short, Socrates maintained that knowledge exists in the soul and thus learning is nothing but a process of recollection.

Likewise in the case of Confucius who advocated that those who are born with knowledge belong to the highest class of students. He said,

Those who are born with knowledge are of the highest quality. Those who obtain knowledge by learning are of lower quality.⁷

Socrates' conception of education is based upon metaphysical assumptions, whereas Confucius' is not. This may be considered the major difference between the two ancient philosophers. For Socrates, education

⁵*Ibid.*, 7:8.

⁶*Ibid.*, 2:17.

⁷*Ibid.*, 16:9.

is aimed at the cultivation of philosophers, but a philosopher can only find "the greatest blessing in the next world when his life is finished."⁸ On the other hand, for Confucius, the cultivation, in education, of superior men is not aimed at finding the greatest blessing in the next world, but rather at preparing themselves for political leadership. In this respect, Confucius' conception of education closely resembles that of Plato.

Plato, very much dissatisfied with the existing state of affairs, was preoccupied with the idea of founding a better society, i.e., a republic in which knowledge would function as ruling principles of the government. The only possible way to found such a republic was, according to Plato, under the leadership of a philosopher king. The main purpose of education, then, was to act as a selection agency by which each individual may be educated according to his capacity so that at the end of the process, education may turn out philosophers who come into the possession of the highest form of knowledge, which was the knowledge of the essential nature of Goodness. Only the philosophers with such knowledge were deemed competent to rule the state.

The same can also be said of Confucius who held that the acquiring of knowledge is indispensable to a good ruler. A competent ruler must be capable of defining his role in the government, and knowing how to define the role which a given member of society should play is a very important aspect of education. According to *The Analects*,

Tzu-Lu asked, "The ruler of Wei is anticipating your assistance in the administration. What would your top priority be?" Confucius replied, "I would give top priority to defining correctly and adequately the social status of each person."⁹

Indeed, to define correctly and adequately the social status of each person is the most essential aspect of governing a state, and it is the duty of the superior men to assume such a responsibility.

According to Confucius, there are five modes of human relationships, i.e., the emperor - minister relationships, the father - son relationships, the husband - wife relationships, the relationships between brothers, and the relationships between friends. The nature of these five modes of human relationships was spelled out by Mencius as: loyalty, affection, division of duty, family status according to the age, and faithfulness. Mencius said,

The father - son relationships must be characterized by affection; the emperor - minister relationships must be characterized by loyalty; the husband - wife relationships must be characterized by division of duty; the relationships between brothers must be such that the younger ones have respect for the elder ones; the relations between friends must be characterized by faithfulness.¹⁰

Therefore, the role which a person is supposed to play was defined by Confucius in terms of the characteristics of five modes of human relation-

⁸*The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, p. 46.

⁹*The Analects*, 13:3.

¹⁰*Mencius*, 3A:4.

ships. If the five modes of human relationships are followed out, and their accompanying five standards of human conduct acted upon by all the members of the state, the stability of the state will be maintained, and the welfare of the people promoted.

The training of the mind and the training of the body are equally important in education. This point constitutes another striking similarity between Plato and Confucius. The types of education needed by future rulers of a just state, according to Plato, would have to consist in the training of the mind and the training of the body. As Plato said,

What is this education to be, then? Perhaps we shall hardly invent a system better than the one which long experience has worked out, with its two branches for the cultivation of the mind and of the body.¹¹

In order to cultivate the mind, the student must go through a prolonged period of intellectual training, and in order to train the body, he must go through a period of military training. The subjects of study proposed by Plato include poetry, drama, music, religious myth, military and physical training, arithmetic, geometry, sciences, dialectic, and philosophy.

Somewhat similar to Plato's conception of education as the cultivation of the mind and the body is Confucius' educational program which suggests that a superior man, like a philosopher in Plato's sense, must undertake physical as well as intellectual training. According to *The Analects*, "Confucius taught four subjects: arts, conduct, loyalty, and faithfulness."¹² Aside from conduct, loyalty, and faithfulness which include the theoretical as well as the practical aspect of education, and may be subsumed under the common title "moral education," what is called arts in this context includes the Six Arts: poetry, history, rites, music, the Book of Changes, and the Spring and Autumn Annals. The aim of the Six Arts is obviously a sort of intellectual training designed to cultivate the mind. In addition, also included in Confucius' educational program are archery and charioteering which are to serve the aim of training the body.

One of the striking differences between Plato and Confucius is that while Plato advocated that girls and boys should be taught the same things in the same fashion, women simply had no place in Confucius' educational scheme. Another significant difference between the two is that while Plato tried to abolish the family in order to free its members to take up other positions in society, Confucius maintained that the family is the backbone of the society.

The emphasis placed by Mencius on the desirability of bringing into existence a kingly government makes his conception of education closely resemble that of Plato who advocated the desirability of an aristocratic

¹¹*The Republic of Plato*, Translated with Introduction and Notes by Francis MacDonald Cornford (Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 68.

¹²*The Analects*, 7:24.

government. Mencius wanted to overthrow the totalitarian government and replace it with what he called "a kingly government" or the government of moral power. He drew a distinction between the totalitarian government and the kingly government by saying,

He who resorts to force on the pretence of realizing humanistic ideals is a dictator. A dictator needs the natural resources of a major state in order to maintain his status as a ruler. He who practices virtue for the purpose of realizing humanistic ideals is a king. A king does not need plentiful natural resources of a major state in order to maintain his status as a ruler. For example, T'ang — founder of the Shang Dynasty — had a state of only seventy miles square, and King Wen had a state of only a hundred miles square. When one subdues people by force, the people will not submit at heart. They submit only due to their lack of strength to resist. When one subdues people by virtue, the people will submit from the bottom of their hearts as was the case when Confucius' seventy disciples submitted to him.¹³

Mencius' main point is that there are two aspects of education, one is intrinsic while the other is instrumental. The intrinsic aspect of education is to develop human nature, which will be discussed later in this article, and the instrumental aspect of education is to prepare the young for the construction of a kingly government by developing such individuals as possess the moral virtues for the purpose of realizing humanistic ideals. This is parallel to Plato's conception of education as a means for constructing a state governed by an aristocratic government. Plato, in *The Republic*, also discussed five forms of government among which aristocracy was judged the best. The five forms of government include timocracy (or timarchy) which is based on the love of honor; oligarchy which is property qualification wherein the rich hold office and the poor man is excluded; democracy, which is the government of the many; tyranny, which is government by the one; aristocracy, or "government of the best, which has the approval of the many."¹⁴

According to Plato, then, the instrumental aspect of education is to serve a social and political function, i.e., to prepare the young for the construction of an aristocratic state. It seems that Plato and Mencius are basically in agreement on this point. However, it must be pointed out that what Plato called aristocracy is quite different from what Mencius called a kingly government, that is to say, aristocracy and a kingly government are two best forms of government in two different senses. When Plato talked about aristocracy, he had in mind the government ruled by philosophers who possessed the highest form of knowledge, dialectical as well as philosophical. On the other hand, when Mencius talked about a kingly government, he had in mind the government ruled by those who possessed moral virtues. Therefore, the difference between Plato's conception of education and that of Mencius primarily consists of two aspects: one, the meaning each of them assigned to the form of the best government; two, the way in which education should contribute to the construction of the best form of government.

¹³*Mencius*, 2A:3.

¹⁴*The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, p. 190.

It has been stated that Plato and Mencius assigned two different meanings to aristocracy and a kingly government respectively, and it must be further observed that each of them, by virtue of this fact, proposed a different way in which education may contribute to the construction of an ideal state. According to Plato, education must be construed as a process of seeking knowledge, and according to Mencius, education must be construed as a process of developing human nature. This constitutes the second major difference between Plato and Mencius.

Since Plato maintained that education is a process of acquiring knowledge, it is essential to ask: What is meant by knowledge? In *Sophist*, Plato wrote,

Knowledge also is surely one, but each part of it that commands a certain field is marked off and given a special name proper to itself. Hence language recognizes many arts and forms of knowledge.¹⁵

From Plato's standpoint, knowledge *qua* knowledge is to be distinguished from knowledge of something. This is the reason that in *Theaetetus*, Socrates insisted,

. . . when we are asked what knowledge is, it is absurd to reply by giving the name of some art. The answer is 'knowledge of so - and - so,' but that was not what the question called for.¹⁶

This means that, according to Plato, when the question is asked, What is knowledge? the answer we anticipate is a universal definition of knowledge. What, then, is the universal definition of knowledge? Plato's answer to this question is that knowledge is the comprehension of universal and eternal Forms.

Plato's doctrine of Forms stands in need of clarification. According to Plato, the world is created by God in accordance with the patterns of the Forms (or Ideas) which are also God's creations. In fact, the concept of Forms in Plato's philosophy may be correctly understood as referring to a number of fundamental patterns by which the world is created. These fundamental patterns are the objects of knowledge. In *Timaeus*, Plato advocated,

. . . all sensible things are apprehended by opinion and sense, and are in a process of creation. Now that which is created must . . . of necessity be created by a cause . . . This question, however, we must ask about the world. Which of the patterns had the artificer in view when he made it — the pattern of the unchangeable or of that which is created? . . . Everyone will see that he must have looked to the eternal, for the world is the fairest of creations and he is the best of causes. And having been created in this way, the world has been framed in the likeness of that which is apprehended by reason and mind and is unchangeable, and must therefore of necessity, if this is admitted, be a copy of something.¹⁷

In other words, the world is, according to Plato, a copy of the Forms created by God. However, it should be observed that Plato is, in fact,

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 1004.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 852.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 1161-1162.

using the word "creation" in three different senses. First of all, when Plato says that God creates the world or that God creates himself, he is using creation in the divine sense. Second, when Plato tells us, in *Timaeus*, that God committed "the creation of the mortal"¹⁸ to his offspring, he is using creation in the ordinary sense, because he is referring to the things which are man-made, such as houses, chairs, books, and the like. Third, the word creation is also used by Plato to mean imitation. For example, a poet writes poems by imitating or describing the actual events of human life. The poems are the poet's own creations in this third sense.

Plato's example in his *Republic* provides us with a typical way in which the three senses of creation are to be understood. He states that there are three couches, so to speak; one is created by God, which really and in itself is, while another is created or made by the carpenter. The carpenter does not make that which really is, he can only make something that resembles the one created by God. The third couch is created by the painter who imitates the works of the craftsmen.

As the world is created by God in accordance with the patterns of the Forms which are universal and eternal, it follows that to have true knowledge of the world means to grasp such universal and eternal Forms. This is Plato's definition of knowledge. Although Plato does not specify the exact number of the Forms, we may follow the convention and assert that in general there are three most fundamental Forms, i.e., Truth, Beauty, and Goodness, which fall within the areas of science, aesthetics, and ethics, respectively. In *Phaedo*, Plato wrote, "the reason why other things are called after the forms is that they participate in the forms." For example, a chair is a true chair if, and only if, it participates in the form of truth, and a chair is a good chair, if and only if, it participates in the form of goodness.

Plato maintains that among all universal and eternal Forms, the Form of goodness is the highest. However, the question that arises is: In what sense can the Form of goodness be said to be the highest among all other Forms? Plato himself does not give a straightforward answer to this question, and thus his theory in this regard is subject to two interpretations. The first interpretation is, by all odds, more faithful to Plato's original position, but the second interpretation will make his theory more acceptable from the modern standpoint.

The first interpretation is that the Form of goodness is the highest in the sense that it is the cause of all other Forms. In *Republic*, Plato declared that the Form of goodness "is indeed the cause for all things of all that is right and beautiful . . . being the authentic sources of truth and reason"¹⁹ and that "the objects of knowledge not only receive

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 1193.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 749-750.

from the presence of the good their being known, but their existence and essence is derived to them from it.”²⁰ Plato tried to illustrate this point by the use of an analogy. He told us that just as the sun is the cause of vision and all the visible objects, so too the Form of goodness is the cause of the power of knowing and all the objects of knowledge. This means that without the Form of goodness, none of us would be able to acquire true knowledge. That is to say, all true knowledge can only be acquired in the light of the Form of goodness.

The weakness of the first interpretation we have just made is that just as soon as we try to understand Plato’s view from a modern standpoint, we are confronted with the question: Do we really need to know the good in order to know the truth and beauty? From a modern standpoint, it is more rational to think that the pursuit of truth and that of goodness are two different enterprises, though they may sometimes be connected with each other. In other words, it is possible for us to know, for example, that this object is a *true* chair without also knowing it is a *good* chair.

The second interpretation of Plato’s assertion in this regard is that the Form of goodness is the highest in that all knowledge, including our knowledge of truth and beauty, is worth pursuing only to the extent that it is good for us to pursue it. Therefore, the Form of goodness becomes the ultimate principle of value judgments. In *The Republic*, Plato wrote,

. . . the greatest thing to learn is the idea of good by reference to which just things and all the rest become useful and beneficial.²¹

It has been pointed out earlier that both Plato and Mencius argued that the instrumental aspect of education is to construct a good government, and that the intrinsic aspect of education is to develop what is good in the world. While Mencius agreed with Plato on this point, he would take exception to Plato’s contention that it is necessary in education to pursue the Form of goodness in order to achieve its instrumental objective. Mencius argued that the highest good consists in the inherent goodness of human nature. For this reason, if education is to achieve its instrumental objective of constructing a good government, it must develop the inherent goodness of human nature. Mencius said,

Good conduct could spring from the natural feelings of a person. This is what is meant by “the inherent goodness of human nature.” Human conduct that is not good does not spring from the inherent nature of man. The inability to bear the sufferings of others is a state of mind shared by all human beings; the feeling of shame and dislike is shared by all human beings; the sense of respect for others is shared by all human beings; the capacity for distinguishing right from wrong is shared by all human beings. The inability to bear the sufferings of others is the origin of humanity; the feeling of shame and dislike is the origin of justice; the sense of respect for others is the origin of propriety; the capacity for distinguishing right from wrong is the origin of wisdom. The

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 744.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 740.

origins of humanity, justice, propriety, and wisdom are not imposed upon us from without, rather they exist within us. We are unaware of their existence simply because we do not reflect upon them.²²

According to Mencius, then, there are two aspects of education, i.e., intrinsic and instrumental. The intrinsic aspect of education is to develop the inherent goodness of human nature, which consists in humanity, justice, propriety, and wisdom. And the instrumental aspect of education is to construct a kingly government which is supposed to be the expression of humanity, justice, propriety, and wisdom in the political life of the people. This brings out another similarity between Plato and Mencius, because on the one hand, Mencius drew a parallel between the political life and the moral life by asserting that the political life of the people should remain parallel to their moral life — which is a life characterized by humanity, justice, propriety, and wisdom; on the other hand, Plato also compared the state to the individual by asserting that the moral life of an individual may be better considered in the political life of the state where the matter is written, as it were, in magnified letters. That is to say, neither Plato nor Mencius tried to draw a sharp distinction between the moral principles of the individual and the political principles of the state. And both of them advocated that the political principles of the state should reflect the moral principles of the individual.

A few passing remarks on Rousseau at this point may throw some light on our understanding of Mencius' doctrine of human nature. Rousseau also advocated the theory of the inherent goodness of human nature by saying that to live a moral life is to live according to nature. At the beginning of his *Emile*, Rousseau explicitly put forward the thesis that all is good as it comes from the hand of God, and that all degenerates under the hands of man. Therefore, education must follow the course of nature; it should be a process by which human nature is to be developed.

However, there are two essential differences between Mencius and Rousseau. First, while Rousseau argued that to live morally and to live according to reason are incompatible with each other, Mencius held that they mean precisely the same thing. Second, while Rousseau placed human nature in direct opposition to society, Mencius held that if education were focused on the development of human nature, social reform would be a natural outcome. Thus, Mencius has completely bypassed Rousseau's celebrated paradox, i.e., man must be "forced to be free."²³

It was Coleridge who said, "Every man is born an Aristotelian, or a Platonist."²⁴ The philosophy of Mencius resembles that of Plato, while the philosophy of Hsun-Tzu resembles that of Aristotle. Both Aristotle and Hsun-Tzu were keenly interested in nature, they were scientists in a

²²*Mencius*, 6A:6.

²³Vide Frederick Copleston, S.J., *A History of Philosophy*, (New York: Image Books, 1964), Vol. 6, Part 1, p. 109.

²⁴Vide Maurice Natanson, ed., *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, (New York: Random House, 1963), p. 3.

classical sense. Therefore, just as Aristotle accused Socrates and Plato of busying themselves “about ethical matters and neglecting the world of nature as a whole but seeking the universal in these ethical matters,”²⁵ so Hsun-Tzu accused Confucius and Mencius of preaching the false doctrine that “all things are complete within us.”²⁶ From Hsun-Tzu’s point of view, such doctrine is not only false, it is also, as he put it, “peculiar, contradictory and without standards.”²⁷

Hsun-Tzu held that no happiness can be achieved unless man tries to understand nature and control it. He said,

Instead of exalting Heaven and thinking about it, why not heap up wealth and use it advantageously? Instead of obeying Heaven and praising it, why not adapt Heaven’s Fate (T’ien Ming) and make use of it?²⁸

Thus, according to Hsun-Tzu, if education is to contribute to human happiness, it cannot neglect the study of nature. This was a new dimension in Chinese educational thought.

It is a well-known fact that Aristotle also placed great emphasis on the study of nature in his thinking about education. While Aristotle agreed with Plato on many points, he was not particularly satisfied with Plato’s concept of being. He argued that instead of explaining the universe in terms of being, the universe may better be conceived as a process of *becoming*. Thus, according to Aristotle, nature consists of the totality of changing objects and natural science is concerned about the thing “which has the principle of its movement and rest present in itself . . .”²⁹

However, there is a significant difference between Hsun-Tzu and Aristotle concerning the objective of studying nature. Generally speaking, Hsun-Tzu was of the opinion that man’s investigation into nature is primarily and solely to promote human happiness. That is to say, according to Hsun-Tzu, if man is to live happily on this globe, it is necessary for him “to control Heaven’s seasons and Earth’s material resources, and utilize them.”³⁰ On the other hand, Aristotle held that man should conduct an investigation into nature “in order to escape from ignorance . . . in order to know, and not for any utilitarian end.”³¹

Another significant difference between Hsun-Tzu and Aristotle consists in their conceptions of nature. What is nature? To this question, Hsun-Tzu and Aristotle offered different answers. While Aristotle attempted to speculate about nature and even proceeded to make various metaphysi-

²⁵The Basic Works of Aristotle, Edited and with introduction by Richard McKeon, (New York: Random House, 1941), pp. 700-701.

²⁶Feng, Yu-Lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), Vol. 1, p. 281.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 281.

²⁸Feng, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, p. 285.

²⁹The Basic Works of Aristotle, p. 778.

³⁰Feng, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, p. 285.

³¹The Basic Works of Aristotle, p. 692.

cal statements about the real *nature* of nature, Hsun-Tzu refrained from doing this. Instead, he contended that all that man can do about nature is to observe it, investigate it, control it, and finally, to make use of it. Nature as such has no end, it is nothing but "a constant regularity of activity."³²

The conception of human nature and its educational implications make up an interesting similarity between Hsun-Tzu and Aristotle. Both advocated that human nature is inherently evil and that in education, discipline is far more essential than the development of the individual's interests. Why is it the case that human nature is inherently evil? To this question, Hsun-Tzu's answer is more definite than Aristotle's. According to Hsun-Tzu, human nature refers to the original desires of man which are not learned. Since all men are born with some desires, and if a man attempts to satisfy his desires as he pleases, he will do violence to the moral standards of the society. He said,

Now man, by his nature, at birth loves profit, and if he follows this tendency, strife and rapacity come about, whereas courtesy and yielding disappear. Man at birth is envious and hateful, and if he follows these tendencies, injury and destruction result, whereas loyalty and faithfulness disappear.³³

If human nature is inherently evil, it follows that in education "the civilizing of teachers and laws, and the guidance of the rules of proper conduct and standards of justice are absolutely necessary."³⁴

By the same logic, Aristotle maintained that there are two parts of the soul, rational and irrational. If a man follows the tendency of the irrational part of his soul, such as anger, wishing, and desire, he will necessarily do something evil. Since most children tend to follow the natural tendency of the irrational part of the soul, they ought to be brought up in a particular way in which punishment should play an important role.

As Aristotle put it, "a bad man, whose desire is for pleasure, is corrected by pain like a beast of burden."³⁵ If children tend to live by passion, they can be made good only through fear of punishment, because passion seems to yield not to argument but to force.

If the question were asked whether all men are made good by punishment, Aristotle's answer would be that some people are good by nature, others are made good by teaching, still others are made good by punishment. This brings out a contrast between Aristotle and Hsun-Tzu who spoke of all men indiscriminately as being evil and can only be made good by discipline.

In conclusion, there is a historical continuity in the classical Greek conception of education in the sense that all the Greek thinkers have put

³²Feng, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, p. 285.

³³*Ibid.*, p. 286.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 287.

³⁵*The Basic Works of Aristotle*, p. 1108.

some emphasis on the relevance of metaphysics and virtue in education. Likewise, there is a historical continuity in the classical Chinese conception of education in the sense that all the Chinese thinkers discussed here have put some emphasis on the relevance of moral knowledge and five cardinal virtues in education. While the ancient Greek thinkers have constantly tried to transcend human existence in this world and enter into the spheres of metaphysics, theology, astronomy, and what not, the ancient Chinese thinkers have largely confined themselves to the discussion of human beings and their relationships to each other. It is also important to note that both the ancient Greek and Chinese thinkers have taken politics and morality into serious consideration whenever an educational issue presents itself. This constitutes one of their major similarities.