

THE ROLE OF PHILOSOPHY IN CHARACTER FORMATION: CULTIVATING VIRTUE, REASON AND MORAL INTEGRITY

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Abstract

Philosophy, as the love of wisdom, plays a vital role in shaping character by influencing how individuals think, evaluate moral choices, and behave in society. Through critical reasoning, ethical reflection, and the pursuit of truth, philosophy encourages the development of virtues such as honesty, justice, courage, and self-discipline. This paper employs expository and critical methods to explore how philosophical traditions from classical thinkers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle to contemporary moral philosophers have contributed to understanding and nurturing good character. It also examines the connection between philosophical education and personal growth, demonstrating how philosophical inquiry promotes the internalisation of values and ethical principles that guide human conduct. In this way, the paper contends that philosophy is not merely theoretical but also highly practical, fostering moral maturity, responsible citizenship, and the integrity essential for personal and community well-being.

Keywords: Philosophy, Character, Formation, Reason, Virtue and Moral Integrity

Introduction

According to Plato, a philosopher is a man of wisdom and truth, someone who possesses both intellectual and moral excellence. Such a person is genuinely educated. And a person who is truly educated must have two wings² in order to glide very well, namely, intellectual formation and moral formation. We live in a world

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². Pope John Paul II (1998). *Fides et Ratio* (Encyclical on Relationship Between Faith and Reason, Introduction, paragraph 1

increasingly influenced by rapid technological progress, moral ambiguity, and shifting cultural norms across political, technological, and cultural spheres. No one should doubt the importance of cultivating good character in this age, which has often been neglected or given little attention; it remains a fundamental concern for individuals and societies alike. The current situation in Nigeria exemplifies this reality. This paper, therefore, examines the vital relationship between philosophy and character formation, drawing from classical, modern, and contemporary perspectives. It argues that philosophy plays a crucial role not only in the intellectual growth of individuals but also in shaping conscience, empathy, and moral resilience. Ultimately, a philosophical approach to life enables individuals to live reflectively, act ethically, and make a meaningful contribution to society.

The Concept of Character Formation

The idea of character formation is not straightforward. It has undergone some changes over the years, which have led to new definitions and interpretations. Additionally, it has been vulnerable to numerous falsehoods by inflating one or more of its constituent attributes or by merely confusing good behaviour with moral character. It is good to know that there are different types of characters. We have a continent character,³ which indicates one who has selfish, amoral or immoral desires but exhibits control in the service of acting morally. There is also the Incontinent character. This person knows the right or virtuous thing to do, but lacks the

³ James Arthur, (2019). *The Formation of Character in Education: From Aristotle to the 21st Century*. Routledge. London & New York. Pg.2.

self-control to act morally right. The third category is the vicious character, or what Aristotle referred to as brutishness.⁴ This type feels no conflict between inclinations and moral duty because the person has no moral sense of the good. Lastly, the virtuous character desires to be good and so feels no conflict between emotional inclinations and moral duty. This is because, having trained himself or herself, his or her emotional system has been aligned with his or her moral inclinations. The virtuous character wants to be good.⁵ Virtuous character or moral character is the preference of this paper.

Etymologically, the term “character” comes from the ancient Greek term *charaktêr*, which initially referred to the mark impressed upon a coin. The term *charaktêr* later came to refer more generally to any distinctive feature by which one thing is distinguished from others. Along this general line, in contemporary usage, character often refers to a set of qualities or characteristics that can be used to differentiate between persons. It is used this way, for example, commonly in literature. In philosophy, however, the term character is typically used to refer to the moral dimension of a person. For instance, Aristotle most often used the term *êthê* for character, which is etymologically linked to “ethics” and “morality” (via the Latin equivalent *mores*).⁶

⁴. Aristotle (2004). *Nicomachean Ethics, Book VII, Chapter I*. edited by Roger Crisp, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom. paragraph 1145b.pg., 119.

⁵. Jomel B. Pinera, (2022). “Character Formation, Nationalism and Patriotism”. Scribd. Retrieved from <https://www.studocu.com/ph/document/cagayan.state-university/bachelor-of-science-in-criminology/cflm-1-lecture-notes-character-formation-1/113278714>.

⁶. Kevin Timpe, “Moral Character”. Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

The word character in the Greek term is called *éthos* (ἦθος), which is precisely the etymological root of ethics. This term, in its original meaning, indicates the habitual behaviour characteristic not only of a people, but of an individual as well. It is a set of customs, a way of acting and at the same time the visible form of an identity.⁷

Simply put, character has to do with the aggregate of the features that distinguish a person. It points to the quality of an individual's personality. Character is the total of those traits in a person that set him/her apart from others. It is a unique mark of personal identity. In this sense, one can talk of good character or bad character. Character formation, therefore, is a kind of education that is focused on the behavioural and moral development of an individual. It is also called character education. Character formation has to do with all the environmental factors that are geared towards making an individual a moral agent. It is a kind of learning experience that helps to make an individual responsible.⁸

Character formation also refers to the process by which individuals develop their moral and ethical traits, their values, and behaviours. Understanding character formation is crucial because it has significant implications for personal growth, social responsibility,

⁷. Roberto Mordacci, (2021) "Three Concepts of Character", *Phenomenology and Mind*, 21. P.154-166. Retrieved from <https://journals.openedition.org/phenomenology/368>. Sourced 03/08/2025.

⁸. Ejikemeuwa, J.O. Ndubuisi, (2019). "Education as Character Formation" in *Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies* (SGOJAHDS), Vol.2 No.2 December, pg. 16 – 20.

and overall well-being.⁹ It is the ensemble of moral virtues, habits, and principles that shape how individuals respond to life's challenges. It is neither innate nor accidental. Rather, it is cultivated over time through reflection, discipline, and guidance. Philosophy, as the pursuit of wisdom and the art of thinking well about life, offers a foundational path toward the development of character. Philosophy provides not only the theoretical resources but also the practical guide to life and the critical tools for self-examination, ethical discernment, and the consistent practice of virtue.

Philosophical Foundations of Character Formation

Character formation has occupied a central place in moral philosophy from antiquity to the present. Philosophers have sought to explain how stable moral dispositions emerge, what faculties shape moral agency, and how individuals become virtuous members of society. While some traditions emphasise reason and habituation, others stress emotion, social ritual, narrative, and communal belonging. This article did not exhaust all the foundations but focused on a few through virtue ethics, moral sentimentalism, Confucian philosophy, Enlightenment rationalism, and contemporary moral theory, showing that character is formed through a dynamic interaction of reason, sentiment, habit, and social practice. For example, according to Heraclitus, character is destiny, and how each person learns to know reality, discover the truth, assume it effectively, and act accordingly will depend on how

⁹. Sarah Lee, (2025). "The Ultimate Guide to Character Formation: Exploring the Intersection of Freedom and Determinism in Shaping Human Character". Retrieved from <https://www.numberanalytics.com/blog/ultimate-guide-character-for...>Sourced 20/08/2025

they trace their own life and the fruit of it.¹⁰ One of the famous quotes of Socrates says that “the unexamined life is not worth living”,¹¹ a statement that captures philosophy's deep concern with self-knowledge and moral introspection. It further signifies the importance of self-reflection, critical thinking, and actively engaging with one's own values and beliefs to live a meaningful life. Socrates believed that without this examination, one's actions and choices are based on unexamined assumptions and can lead to a life lacking purpose and fulfilment. Likewise, in *The Republic*, Plato envisioned justice as the harmony of the soul, where reason governs spirit and appetite to cultivate moral integrity.¹² In the same manner, Aristotle was more practical. He described character as the result of habituation, asserting that “we become just by the practice of just actions”.¹³ For Aristotle, virtue lies in the mean between extremes, achieved through deliberate choice and guided by reason.¹⁴ He further noted that the concept of character is based on the model of the wise person, who shapes his/her feelings according to reason.¹⁵

^{10.} Daniela Salgado, *et al.*, (2025): “Character education and virtues development as a path to human flourishing beyond borders”, in *Research in Human Development*. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, LLC. DOI: 10.1080/15427609.2025.2524296. Pg. 2.

^{11.} Plato, (1999) *Apology*, 38a. In *Classics of Western Philosophy, Fifth edition*, ed. By Steven M. Cahn. Hackett Publishing, INC., Indianapolis/Cambridge. Pg. 39.

^{12.} Plato, (1991). *The Republic*, Book IV, 435e–441c. In *Classics of Western Philosophy, Fifth edition*, ed. By Steven M. Cahn. Hackett Publishing, INC., Indianapolis/Cambridge. Pg. 117-120.

^{13.} Aristotle, (1962). *Nicomachean Ethics*, II.1, 1103a. Translated with an Introduction and Notes by Martin Ostwald. Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632, USA. Pg. 34.

^{14.} Aristotle, (1992). *Nicomachean Ethics*, II.6. Translated with an Introduction and Notes by Martin Ostwald. Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632, USA. Pg. 41-42.

^{15.} Roberto Mordacci, (2021) “Three Concepts of Character”, *Phenomenology and Mind*, 21. P.154-166. Retrieved from <https://journals.openedition.org/phenomenology/368>. Sourced 20/08/2025.

Later, the Stoic philosophers, in the persons of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, taught that character is forged by mastering one's inner life, emphasising the importance of rational control, resilience, and acceptance of what cannot be changed.¹⁶ In these traditions, philosophy is not merely speculative; it is also a *praxis*, a way of life concerned with moral development.

Modern philosophers were not excluded from this discussion. They also contributed to this vision. For example, “the Humean character is based exclusively on feelings, having as a criterion the feeling of approval for virtue and disapproval for vice, while the Kantian character is based on freedom as autonomy and the feeling of respect”.¹⁷ Immanuel Kant was interested in the role of autonomy and moral duty, claiming that a good will, which implies acting according to the moral law out of respect for it, is the cornerstone of moral character.¹⁸ In contrast, thinkers like John Dewey emphasised education and reflective thinking as the means through which moral habits are developed and sustained within democratic communities.¹⁹ Confucius teaches that character is formed through Participation in ritual practices. It teaches that “If one is guided by virtue and regulated by ritual, one will have a sense of shame and moreover will become upright”.²⁰ It is believed that, previously, the

¹⁶. (Epictetus, (2008). *Discourses and Selected Writings*, Book I. trans. Robert Dobbin, Penguin Classics. & Aurelius, (2023). *Meditations*, II.1 trans. Gregory Hays, Modern Library.

¹⁷. Roberto Mordacci, (2021) “Three Concepts of Character”, *Phenomenology and Mind*, 21. P.154-166. Retrieved from <https://journals.openedition.org/phenomenology/368>. Sourced 20/08/2025

¹⁸. Immanuel Kant, (1998.) *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

¹⁹. John Dewey, (1909). *Moral Principles in Education*, University of Chicago Press.

²⁰. Confucius (2003). *The Analects*, trans. Edward Slingerland, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., Indianapolis/Cambridge, 2.3. Pg. 8.

primary purpose of educating a child was to help them cultivate moral character. Unfortunately, that has changed in today's society. This is one of the reasons this article remains relevant. What then are the influences?

Drivers of Character Formation

Family: When we were growing up, our parents would sometimes call us very early in the morning to advise us on how to behave both at home and outside the family. They have this concern about us. They will remind us always to represent our family well by conducting ourselves properly. This implies that the family serves as the first environment for character formation. Aristotle, in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, pointed out that virtue is acquired through habituation, and repeated actions instilled in early life become part of one's moral fabric.²¹ In African philosophy, the concept of communalism speaks about the centrality of family upbringing in shaping moral conduct. It further illustrates that communal relationships form the basis of personal identity and virtue, which could be observed from the Ubuntu concept, I am because we are, and because we are, I am, and the Igwebuike concept, which emphasises the power of unity and love. According to Pius, he argues that being-in-community, or better communitarianism, communalism or 'Afro-communitarianism', as seen in the beliefs and practices of the indigenous black peoples below the Sahara Desert, forms the conceptual basis of well-being and happiness.²²

^{21.} Aristotle (1962). *Nicomachean Ethics*, II.1, 15. Translated with an Introduction and Notes by Martin Ostwald. Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632, USA. Pg. 33

^{22.} Pius Mosima, (2024). "Being-in-Community as the Basis of Well-Being in African Philosophy" in *Well-Being in African Philosophy: Insights for a Global Ethics of Development*. Edited by Bolaji Bateye, Mahmoud Masaeli, Louise F. Müller and Angela Roothaan. Lexington Books, Lanham, Boulder, New York, London. Pg. 67.

What the family does is a process of moulding and building the character of its individuals. When she constantly admonishes her members, especially children, telling them not to steal, lie, fight, etc. In doing that, the family becomes the foundation or the first influence on character formation. In that case, parents become the first character moulders. This is why family background speaks volumes in the life of everyone within society.

Teachers: Teachers also have a major impact on the formation of character. They too have the responsibility to instil values and discipline in the children they teach or mentor. In other words, education becomes a powerful tool in the formation of character. There is a quote that says, 'Catch them young.' This quote emphasises the importance of forming habits, values and skills early in life. Even the bible was explicit on this. In the book of Proverbs, it says, "Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray."²³ Many Christian educators apply 'Catch them young' to this Bible quotation. That should apply to every parent and teacher.

Culture and Society: The values, norms, and expectations of society significantly influence an individual's perceptions of right and wrong. MacIntyre argues in *After Virtues* that virtues are intelligible only within the traditions that sustain them.²⁴ Religion and its spirituality are not left out. In fact, it contributes greatly to the formation of an individual's character. For example, in St. Augustine's confession, he realised that true character formation is

^{23.} The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version, (1989). Proverbs 22:6. Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford

^{24.} Alasdair Macintyre, (2007). *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory, third edition. (PDF)*. University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Indiana. Pg. 184

achieved when the 'human will' is aligned with God's divine order, with virtues such as humility, love, and charity central to the moral life. In his journey of conversion, Augustine describes his inner struggle of will and how he could not form a virtuous character by his own strength until he surrendered to God.²⁵

Role models and mentors, peers and social interactions contribute immensely to the formation of character. John Locke, in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, argued that “the human mind at birth is a tabula rasa, a blank slate, upon which ideas are imprinted as the mind encounters the external world and reflects upon its own activities”.²⁶ These are shaped through experience and association. Peers thus play a formative role in reinforcing or corrupting character. Another significant influence on character formation is the media and technology. Reading books, watching movies, and listening to music. These also influence character formation. Lastly, the paper added that experiences also have a significant influence on the formation of character.

Philosophy as a Tool for Self-Reflection and Moral Growth

The first concern at this point is to clarify what philosophy and self-reflection are. Most often, I hear people saying that they dislike philosophy because it is very abstract. The question that the researcher asks is whether philosophy is known only as an abstract course. The answer, of course, is no. According to Onyeocha, “the starting point of philosophy is human activity, especially the human acts of knowing and willing, which are the first immediately given reality for humans. In the acts of knowing, willing, judging and

^{25.} Augustine, (1991). *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Book VIII, chs. 11–12, Pg. 152–154.

^{26.} John Locke, (1975). *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Oxford University Press, New York. Pg. xii

deciding, humans become aware of their own existence and that of others.²⁷ Thus, philosophy serves as a tool for personal growth and clarity, especially in complex situations. When individuals engage with philosophical concepts and frameworks, they can gain deeper insights into their own values, beliefs, and behaviours. This is possible because part of the role of philosophy is to study fundamental questions concerning existence, knowledge, values, reason, mind, and language, etc. Another outstanding feature of philosophy is that it encourages critical thinking.

Philosophers have long claimed that studying philosophy sharpens one's mind. What sets philosophy apart from other fields is that it is not so much a body of knowledge as an activity and a form of inquiry. Doing philosophy involves trying to answer fundamental questions about humanity and the world we live in and subjecting proposed answers to critical scrutiny: constructing logical arguments, drawing subtle distinctions and following ideas to their ultimate – often surprising – conclusions.²⁸

It is not just abstract thinking as many believe. “It is not empty thinking in the sense of daydreaming. It has a very practical aspect to it. It is a systematic, creative type of thinking about anything and everything that exists”.²⁹ This is an essential skill which enables

^{27.} Izu Marcel Onyeocha, (2009). *Introfil: A First Encounter with Philosophy. Second edition.* The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, Washington, DC, USA. Pg. 8

^{28.} Michael Vazquez & Prinzing, M. (2025). “Studying philosophy does make people better thinkers, according to new research on more than 600,000 college grads”. Journal of the American Philosophical Association. Retrieved from [https:// theconversation.com/top ics/research:/brief/83231](https://theconversation.com/top-ics/research:/brief/83231). Sourced 23/08/25

^{29.} Izu Marcel Onyeocha, (2009). *Introfil: A First Encounter with Philosophy. Second edition.* Pg.18

humans to navigate life's complexities. Thus, by critically questioning assumptions and examining the validity of our beliefs, we cultivate clarity regarding our values and priorities. This practice of inquiry can certainly lead to profound personal growth. This will take us to the second point, which is the clarification of self-reflection.

Self-reflection is the process of introspectively examining one's thoughts, emotions, and actions. It serves as a fundamental aspect of human existence and personal growth. Philosophically, it represents a crucial practice for understanding oneself and the world, leading to deeper self-awareness and meaningful change.³⁰ The root of the word self-reflection is identified with Socrates, particularly in his famous proclamation, "The unexamined life is not worth living."³¹ "Socrates' assertion highlights the intrinsic value of examining one's own life, beliefs, and actions. For Socrates, self-reflection was not merely an intellectual exercise but a path to understanding the essence of one's existence and the nature of virtue."³² In addition to Socratic thought, the philosophical tradition of existentialism further emphasises the role of self-reflection in human life. Existentialists like Jean-Paul Sartre and Søren Kierkegaard argue that individuals must confront the absurdity of existence and the weight of their own freedom. Self-reflection, in this context, becomes a means to navigate the

^{30.} Nathan Foust, (2024). "The Art of Self-Reflection: A Philosophical Exploration". Retrieved from <https://www.wholeo-awakening.com/post/the-art-of-self-reflection-a-p....> Sourced 20/08/2025.

^{31.} Plato, (1999) *Apology*, 38a. In *Classics of Western Philosophy, Fifth edition*, ed. By Steven M. Cahn. Hackett Publishing, INC., Indianapolis/Cambridge. Pg. 39.

^{32.} Nathan Foust, (2024). "The Art of Self-Reflection: A Philosophical Exploration".

complexities of existence, make authentic choices, and create meaning in a seemingly indifferent universe.³³

In summary, the paper asserts that philosophy is essential not just for human development but also for character formation based on the fact that it helps individual's reason and think correctly, facilitates the cultivation of a rational, reflective, and critical mind, and contributes to the development of a healthy mind and body.³⁴

Philosophy and Education in Character Formation

The researcher learnt of a story involving a female student in SS2 who committed an offence that resulted in her teacher disciplining her. During the incident, blood was unexpectedly seen dripping from her arm. She was taken to the principal's office, where she was asked to remove her shirt. To everyone's surprise, it was discovered that the bleeding originated from an implant device lodged in her upper arm. The implant, medically known as a contraceptive device, is designed to prevent pregnancy during sexual intercourse. Once inserted, it can stay in the body for up to three years. When questioned, the student admitted that she was not the only one carrying such a device. A school-wide investigation revealed that at least 40 female students were found with similar implants. This type of story contradicts the core reason for sending a child to school. The essence of education is to learn good behaviour, not to be corrupted. It is to be a good citizen, not to become a harlot or armed robber, etc. Education is indeed not a matter of accumulating information and knowledge from books or other people, which

³³. Nathan Foust, (2024). "The Art of Self-Reflection: A Philosophical Exploration".

³⁴. Rae Fairbanks Moshe, (2024). "The Way Philosophy Advances Our Growth as Individuals?" storychanges.com. retrieved from <https://storychanges.com>
› the-way-philosophy-advance...Sourced 22?08?2025.

those who can read do. The ultimate goal of education is the formation of character. Education must be related to life. This presupposes that education, to worth its name, must relate to the practical life of the individual. The hallmark of education is the development of positive values that enable individuals to understand themselves and relate to others as social beings.³⁵

Ndubuisi further illustrated that.

Socrates maintains that there is a serious nexus between education and character formation. In fact, he sees the goal of education as character formation. For him, “knowledge (Education) is virtue”. Socrates argues that it is practically impossible for one to be educated and continue to do wrong things. He is of the view that ignorance is the root cause of wrongdoing in our society. In this regard, proper education brings about proper character formation. If people are properly educated, then there will be less evil in society.... Any form of knowledge acquisition that does not influence the character of an individual is dead. Aristotle maintains that the goal of education is the moral and intellectual development of an individual.³⁶

This is all the more reason we need to start teaching Philosophy in our schools. Because philosophy promotes critical thinking, empathy, and responsibility, as mentioned above. Therefore, it is the role of the teachers and mentors to help the students in this area of character formation. What it means is that the teachers should be

³⁵. Ejikemeuwa, J.O. Ndubuisi, (2019). “Education as Character Formation” in *Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies (SGOJAHDS)*, Vol. 2 No.2 December, pg. 16–20.

³⁶. Ejikemeuwa, J.O. Ndubuisi, (2019). “Education as Character Formation”, Pg, 10.

role models.

Concluding Reflections

Some individuals believe that philosophy is too abstract to be used for practical moral development. This reflects the mentality of certain people. It is accurate to say that some philosophical concepts can be complex or even abstract, but not all philosophy. Philosophy, rather, offers a well-structured foundation that is highly applicable for cultivating a strong moral character. It goes beyond simple rules by teaching how to think, not just what to think. Philosophy provides tools from different perspectives that can be used to analyse moral problems or difficulties. Instead of relying on gut feelings, one can use tools such as deontology (duty-based ethics), utilitarianism (consequence-based ethics), and virtue ethics (character-based ethics) to help systematically evaluate one's options. This process can help in making more reasoned and consistent moral decisions. To elaborate on this point, moral growth is impossible without self-reflection or self-awareness. Philosophy encourages the Socratic process of questioning one's beliefs, values, and motivations. By asking "Why do I believe this?" or "What are the assumptions behind my actions?" one can identify and correct moral inconsistencies. This self-examination is a continuous process that strengthens moral integrity.

Philosophy also faces criticism that moral Standards are relative, which means that they are subjective. The reason is that in philosophy, different philosophers define virtue and other concepts differently, which is interpreted as a lack of consensus among philosophers. The fact remains that philosophy is different from other disciplines. Thus, the diversity of different perspectives does not invalidate philosophy; rather, it enriches the dialogue. It makes

philosophy interesting. The role of philosophy is to train people to think critically, to evaluate competing claims and to reason toward shared moral principles such as justice, dignity, and human flourishing. While philosophy faces challenges in shaping character, it remains indispensable because it trains people to think critically, cultivate virtues intentionally, and ground moral integrity in reasoned reflection. It may not be sufficient on its own, but without philosophy, character formation risks being blind, dogmatic, or unexamined.

Many philosophical traditions, especially virtue ethics (which is the specific tool applied in this paper), emphasise that moral character is not developed overnight. It is built through repeated practice. Aristotle, for example, argued that virtue is a habit; one becomes just by performing just acts and courageous by performing courageous acts.³⁷ Philosophy offers the intellectual foundation to understand why these habits matter, making the practice of virtue more mindful and meaningful. In conclusion, this paper asserts that, at its core, philosophy provides the "why" behind morality, transforming it from a mere list of rules into a deeply personal and rational pursuit of living a good life. It encourages individuals to become more thoughtful and deliberate moral agents.

Finally, in light of the conference theme on philosophy and social change, this paper underscores character formation as philosophy's enduring contribution to the moral renewal of society. Through the cultivation of virtue, disciplined reason, and moral integrity, philosophy prepares persons to act as conscientious agents of

³⁷. Aristotle, (1962). *Nicomachean Ethics*, II.1, 1103a. Translated with an Introduction and Notes by Martin Ostwald. Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632, USA. Pg. 34.

transformation. Authentic social change, from this perspective, is rooted not merely in external reform but in the interior formation of persons whose lives are ordered toward truth, justice, and the common good.

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