

UNITED WISDOM

Talent, environment and accumulated practice

Freedom and Action

Andrey Zarinsh & Maria Evilkut

A-22-N05 · EN

@andrey.zarinsh @ilkutki

Talent, environment and accumulated practice

Epigraph

> *By nature, men are nearly alike*

— Analects XVII.2, first clause, translated by James Legge.

What this article is about

Talent can express admiration while saying little about how a particular ability develops and is sustained. The word sometimes obscures years of work, assistance and available conditions; sometimes it recognises an ability someone has not yet chosen to use. This article examines talent without two promises: that a gift alone secures an outcome, or that equal effort brings everyone to the same level. Consider a hypothetical editorial situation: Anton readily invents melodies by ear, and friends call him talented. Joining an ensemble for the first time, he encounters another task: keeping a shared pulse, hearing his partners and reliably performing an agreed part. His earlier ability has not disappeared, but it does not establish everything required of his participation. This example distinguishes observable ability, ways of practising, access conditions and recognition. Aristotle and Confucian texts provide historical ethical perspectives. They establish neither a genetic proportion, the value of each practice hour nor a limit to possible achievement.

I. Naming an ability and describing an action

A conversation about talent benefits from identifying what was noticed. Does Anton quickly find a melodic idea, remember what he hears or combine phrases into a complete theme? Those observations differ. They may reveal a genuine ability, but calling him musical combines them too broadly. Ensemble participation also requires understanding an entrance, a pause's duration and his part among the others. Naming particular actions does not deprive him of recognition. It makes recognition accurate enough to avoid expecting faultlessness where experience is still lacking.

There is a difference between saying that something worked and saying it is always easy for him. The first describes an observed episode; the second requires information about many attempts and their conditions. Friends may have heard a successful melody without seeing discarded alternatives or the time Anton spent at the instrument. He too may remember mainly the moment of discovery. The result need not be attributed entirely to work or entirely to an

innate characteristic. An impression from one performance should simply not become knowledge of the whole history. Admiration can remain while the causal explanation stays open where evidence is absent.

The judgement matters particularly when an offer is based on it. Giving Anton a difficult part solely because he is considered talented lets the word replace a check that never occurred. He can be invited to try a particular passage, told what preparation is needed and then discuss participation. Friends simply wishing to hear a new melody present different requirements. Recognition has no single compulsory sequel. It does not require choosing a profession, accepting every performance commitment or immediately proving exceptional ability before a new audience.

II. One ability does not replace another

Inventing a melody alone and performing it with others are different forms of participation. Anton may find an interesting turn while changing a phrase's duration according to his own feeling, as his partners retain the agreed metre. Asking whether he is sufficiently talented does not resolve this mismatch. The action that departed from the arrangement needs identification. The part may require a different rhythmic pattern, the agreement may have been unclear or he may not yet be able to maintain that sequence. A label cannot decide among these possibilities, but each can be discussed concretely.

Broad praise can make the discussion harder. Anton may hear a correction as the withdrawal of every earlier recognition, although the issue is one entrance. Partners may avoid a precise comment for fear of offending a talented musician. The relationship between parts then remains unclear. Both valid observations can be preserved: his melody is interesting, and the selected entrance needs work. Accuracy need not humiliate. It distinguishes what he already does well from what others cannot yet reliably depend on in a shared performance.

Distinguishing abilities need not break music into an endless inventory of operations. Anton participates in a whole performance, where phrasing and shared expression also matter. A particular difficulty still needs a sufficiently definite description. The difference presently obstructing collaboration can be selected without declaring it music's only value. Technical reliability and artistic intention need not compete for precedence in every conversation. Their relationship is examined within the part: which accuracy it requires and which freedom it actually permits without disrupting the other musicians' participation.

@andrey.zarinsh @ilkutki

III. Accumulating actions and the quality of practice

In Nicomachean Ethics II.1, Aristotle connects acquired ethical dispositions with activity and compares this with craft. His argument allows the same activity to form good or poor performance. This is a historical philosophical perspective, rather than a measurement of rehearsal efficacy. For Anton, it raises a limited question about the quality of the action repeated. A performance count does not identify what he is sustaining. He may play a part repeatedly without noticing where its duration differs from the shared arrangement.

Practice can be described through its content: the passage chosen, the difference someone is trying to hear and the evidence used to judge an attempt. Anton can play a transition with a partner and identify where their entrances diverge, then check it after an explanation. One successful alignment with a prompt is significant without establishing reliability across the whole part. This accuracy promises no linear improvement. It preserves the possibility of understanding what happened rather than replacing a result's description with a general report of hours spent.

Repetition need not always serve the same purpose. Anton may play a familiar melody for enjoyment, explore another version or prepare a performance. These activities have different conditions of sufficiency. Free exploration should not be judged solely through error-free repetition, and preparing an agreed part cannot be justified simply by inspiration. Identifying today's aim makes it possible to select relevant work. This does not require turning every musical minute into an exercise. It distinguishes personal enjoyment from promised participation on which someone else's performance depends.

IV. Explanation and feedback are also part of the work

Someone may not independently see the difference between an attempt and what the ensemble needs. Anton hears the melody as a complete thought, while a partner notices an entrance arriving earlier than agreed after a pause. Useful feedback needs a particular location. Saying he plays incorrectly does not identify the action to change; explaining that one more beat is expected after this pause supplies something to check. Clear wording still does not guarantee that he can immediately make the change. An explanation and an acquired action should be considered separately.

Feedback can also be incorrect, incomplete or addressed to another intention. If one participant expects fidelity to a recording while another proposed a new arrangement, they first need to clarify the version chosen. Anton need not treat every correction automatically as proof of his error. Equally, calling something creative does not remove questions about the agreed performance. He can ask what supports the comment, who decides about this passage

and whether alternatives are permitted. The discussion remains open to examination rather than becoming a contest between personal certainties.

Identifying a mentor's or partner's contribution does not reduce Anton's participation. His action may have depended on a precise explanation, patient joint examination and another person's time. That origin does not invalidate the result, but makes its account fuller. Explaining a performance solely through the soloist's natural gift makes others' work disappear. Anton's artistic idea can be recognised alongside those who helped bring it into a shared sound. Recognising different contributions requires neither invented percentages of the outcome's value nor a claim that any participant could easily replace another.

V. Environment means available conditions, rather than an explanation of everything

Environment becomes a useful term when it refers to definite circumstances. Does Anton have a suitable instrument, a place to practise, access to the score and an opportunity to hear his partners? Who explained the rehearsal arrangement? Can he reach the meeting without losing necessary work? These questions identify participation conditions without explaining the whole nature of ability. A convenient instrument does not compose a melody for him, and lacking expensive equipment does not establish a lack of talent. Conditions should be discussed through what they actually permit and which obstacle remains unresolved.

An obstacle may allow several responses. If Anton cannot play loudly at home in the evening, another time, room or quiet way of working on a particular passage may be possible. Not every condition can be changed, however, and not every alternative serves the necessary action. Silent work does not replace every check of sound. Seeking another route should not become an obligation never to acknowledge a limit. What is currently available can be described and the timing or ensemble role revised. This is more honest than promising readiness solely in the hope that suitable conditions will somehow emerge.

A supportive environment need not consist of endless praise. In the ensemble, it may mean an understandable agreement, the ability to ask again and a precise comment about a difficulty. Constant dissatisfaction does not become good instruction simply by being called demanding. Feedback should be examined for whether it makes the task understandable and allows participation without humiliation. This article does not infer motives from one episode. It proposes assessing the particular treatment and conversational conditions. A leader's experience can be respected while discussing an arrangement in which a learner can still ask questions.

VI. Recognition conditions and unseen work

An ability becomes visible to someone in a particular situation. Anton may have been fortunate to meet a musician who heard his melody and invited collaboration. Someone else with interesting ideas may lack such a listener. That difference does not prove equal ability, but it prevents invitation counts from being treated as a pure talent measure. Invitations also involve acquaintance, availability and the selected repertoire. An artistic judgement of what was heard should remain distinct from the history of opportunities to be heard. Otherwise, visible success starts explaining its own origin while significant conditions disappear from the account.

Anton's own work may remain unseen. He may have spent years examining songs, trying alternatives and remembering unsuccessful combinations without calling it practice. Or this may genuinely be his first melody that others appreciated. A convenient story cannot be selected without evidence. The result's history can be discussed and the answer kept within its limits. Failure to remember every attempt does not make an account false; it limits its precision. Describing an idea as arriving by itself may convey the experience of discovery without establishing the absence of prior experience.

Different conditions also matter when learners are compared. Daily access to an instrument and explanations differs from seeing the instrument only during lessons; an identical assignment does not create identical preparation opportunities. This does not predetermine future outcomes. It requires an honest statement of what is compared: today's performance under differing conditions. A role can be assigned according to actual readiness while available support is sought for someone lacking it. Neither fairness nor accuracy requires declaring an unprepared performance ready. They require avoiding a claim that differing opportunities reveal a person's nature completely.

VII. Differences between people do not establish an overall rank

Anton and a partner may learn the same part differently. One readily hears its melodic shape; another works more easily from notation. Experience, conditions and characteristics of the particular participation may differ. Respect does not require denying those observations. They establish neither a difference in human worth nor an obligation to achieve someone else's outcome. Dignity is not allocated through musical hearing accuracy. A genuine difference in preparation for this task can be recognised while respect remains for the participant unable to perform that action at the required level.

Analects XVII.2 places nature and habitual practice within an ancient ethical reflection. It does not measure contemporary musical talent; the adjoining XVII.3 proposes unchangeable highest and lowest ranks, which this article rejects. The short epigraph therefore establishes neither biological identity nor an identical achievable outcome for everyone. Its limited role is to keep

acquired ways of acting in view. Anton's present decision requires examining the particular part and available conditions. An ancient saying should not close a question requiring other evidence.

The reverse promise is excessive too: that enough work eliminates every difference. This article has no basis for asserting it. Careful practice may still fail to produce the expected outcome under the selected conditions. A specific difficulty then needs examination rather than automatically being attributed to insufficient diligence. Absence of a guarantee does not make effort pointless. It leaves effort a chosen action with an open outcome. Anton can work on a limited ability and examine what happens without assuming either that every goal is attainable or that his own progress is impossible.

VIII. An ability does not require unlimited use of oneself

Praise can carry a demand: because Anton composes, he should prepare more melodies, perform at every celebration or abandon another activity. Ability and consent are different grounds. Someone can discuss the scope, time and conditions of participation even when the contribution is valued highly. An accepted performance promise needs honest treatment, but new requests do not automatically belong to it. Other people's interest in music can be recognised while a boundary is stated. A gift does not entitle others to decide in advance how its bearer should use every available part of life.

Anton may also turn talent into a demand upon himself. If another melody does not arrive quickly, he may believe he lost what others valued. One delayed idea does not establish the fate of an entire ability. The present requirement needs clarification: finding an idea, completing an arrangement or preparing a part. Leaving a thought unfinished while attending to another accepted commitment may be reasonable. This does not promise that inspiration returns after a pause. It preserves the right not to make every minute an examination of whether he still deserves praise once received from friends.

The second Aristotelian passage, II.4, distinguishes a craft product's quality from the ethical conditions of action. Well-performed music does not certify honesty in every action by the musician. This supplies a significant boundary for present participation: artistic ability does not permit humiliating partners, concealing agreements or appropriating others' work. Obligations are examined through the actions themselves. Conversely, someone may participate responsibly while still unable to play a difficult part. Technical expertise need not certify overall virtue, and ethical respect need not remove checks of the quality promised in a performance.

IX. Checking a result without competing biographies

To understand whether Anton's participation suits the ensemble, evidence relevant to the actual part is needed. An agreed transition can be played, the entrance checked with a partner and the remaining discrepancy discussed. A course title or years spent near an instrument do not replace that action. Equally, one successful rehearsal does not certify every future performance's reliability. An honest description remains limited: this passage worked under these conditions, while another needs checking. It supports a decision about further work without a promise the observation cannot yet sustain, and without turning one result into a general examination of whether a gift exists.

Artistic judgement is not always reducible to one unambiguous correction. Partners may hear a melody's expression differently and choose another performance character. An agreed technical condition should be distinguished from a disputed artistic preference. If the ensemble chose an arrangement, Anton accepts its conditions for this performance or discusses a change beforehand. Rejection of his version does not establish that it has no value at all. The decision's scope needs precision: what was chosen for the shared performance, what remains his personal intention and which disagreement remains unresolved. This preserves participants' independence without undoing the particular agreement.

A result can be compared with a previous attempt when the differences in conditions are understood. Was the passage changed, did someone supply a prompt, or was another instrument used? Significant conditions should not disappear from the account for the sake of an attractive progress chart. If no change is visible, Anton can reconsider the way of working or seek a relevant explanation. This article prescribes no required attempt count and derives no final limit from today's difficulty. The need is for an honest basis for the next decision rather than certainty about future exceptional status. That decision may involve continuing, changing the part, reallocating participation or withdrawing from this performance while acknowledging consequences for the others.

X. A relationship with a gift remains a choice

An ability may become important in someone's life without determining all its value. Anton can remain an amateur, play with friends, study from interest or consider a professional path after examining its conditions. None follows automatically from admiration. The decision requires understanding what he wishes to do, what he is willing to give up and which commitments he accepts. Composing can be valued without subordinating every other relationship to it. Music can also be chosen seriously without making every difficulty evidence that the choice itself was mistaken. An open outcome does not erase the meaning of considered participation.

@andrey.zarinsh @ilkutki

A relationship with a gift also concerns those who help give it form. Anton can remember the instrument at home, the first listener to his melody and the partner who explained a difficult transition. Gratitude requires neither denying his own idea nor accepting an unlimited debt. It helps keep the result's history sufficiently complete. That account can also include what remains unlearned: unanswered questions do not make an ability unreal. They should not, however, disappear from promised participation. A gift can be recognised without a myth of complete readiness, and assistance without a myth that his own contribution means nothing.

Rather than settle a general contest between talent, environment and practice, a nearer task can be addressed. Which action does Anton want to perform? What has been observed? Which conditions are available and what help is needed? Which result is he willing to present, and what can he not yet promise? These questions assign neither final causal proportions nor a person's destiny. They make one definite choice possible. Ability retains significance while ceasing to excuse every instance of unreadiness or require endless proof of exceptional status. It can enter a shared activity with accuracy, gratitude and freedom to discuss one's own participation.

What this means in practice

The following practice is an editorial proposal for ordinary learning, without demonstrated efficacy or a guaranteed outcome. It does not measure natural talent or determine psychological characteristics. Choose one limited action that presently matters; the musical scene is an example rather than a required model.

Describe an observed ability through an action. Anton writes that he can invent a melodic idea and repeat it by ear. Alongside this, he identifies the ensemble's new requirement: entering after an agreed pause with a partner. These descriptions preserve an existing ability and identify a separate task that general praise does not resolve. Do not add abilities that have not been checked.

Name the attempt's conditions: instrument, material, available time and another person's participation. Distinguish what is available from what is assumed. If a condition is missing, consider a limited alternative and its boundaries. Quiet practice does not provide the same opportunity as checking a shared sound. Agree the particular scope of assistance rather than assume another person is permanently available.

Choose the subject of one check. Anton plays a transition and asks where the entrances diverge. He then preserves the clarification and notes what worked with a prompt and without it. A repetition count can describe a working condition without replacing the result. One successful passage should not be taken to establish readiness across the whole part.

@andrey.zarinsh @ilkutki

After the attempt, identify contributions and remaining questions. What did the participant do, what did a partner explain and which version remains unchecked? Distinguish a disputed artistic preference from an agreed technical requirement. A shared performance needs a selected version; a personal intention can be preserved separately without being represented as everyone's agreement.

Finish with a nearer decision: continue working on this action, revise conditions or the role, choose another project or decline a new offer. An already accepted promise requires a separate honest revision. Substitute neither a success guarantee nor a verdict that talent is absent for that decision. It is enough to identify what can now be relied upon and which participation you freely accept.

Key quotation

> *states of character arise out of like activities.*

— Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics II.1, clause excerpt, translated by W. D. Ross.

Here this provides a historical reason to ask about repetition's quality; it does not measure Anton's musical talent.

Connections between traditions

Aristotelian ethics → activity quality matters in forming ethical dispositions; craft serves as a comparison.

Confucian tradition → habit and learning belong to ethical education, rather than a contemporary biological model.

Different purposes → artistic achievement, virtue and the Confucian worthy person are not made one measure.

Boundary of application → ancient hierarchies, immutable human ranks and guarantees of identical achievement are rejected.

United Wisdom → action, access, work and recognition are distinguished to support an honest nearer choice of participation.

Primary sources

1. Aristotle. Nicomachean Ethics II.1 and II.4. W. D. Ross translation, Internet Classics Archive. Two selected continuous sections read, II.1 and II.4; key quotation is an excerpt from II.1. The electronic transcription’s exact print-edition imprint is not independently established.

2. Analects XVII.2–8. James Legge translation, The Chinese Classics, Volume I; Wikisource. Selected continuous English text read; Chinese original not independently checked. Epigraph is the first clause of XVII.2. The immutable human ranks of neighbouring XVII.3 are rejected. Exact print-imprint metadata for this electronic transcription is not independently verified.

Russian quotations are United Wisdom translations of the named English texts. Rights outside the USA are not separately established; no worldwide unrestricted licence is asserted. Full sources are neither imported nor vectorised. Historical ethical thought establishes neither practice efficacy nor causal talent proportions.

Tags

talent, abilities, environment, practice, accumulated experience, practice quality, learning, expertise, music, ensemble, melody, rhythm, shared activity, feedback, explanation, mentor, assistance, access, participation conditions, recognition, unseen work, comparison, dignity, choice, commitment, gratitude, boundaries, artistic intention, Aristotle, Confucius, ethical education, next step

About the authors

Andrey Zarinsh is the author and founder of United Wisdom. He explores inner transformation, the unity of traditions, intercultural dialogue, and contemporary spiritual discipline. Instagram: @andrey.zarinsh.

Maria Evilkut is a co-author of United Wisdom. Alongside her research, she seeks to test these ideas in practice and observe how principles of unity and mutual understanding work in real life between people and cultures. Instagram: @ilkutki.