THE NICOMACHEAN ETHICS OF ARISTOTLE

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NOTE MARKED PAGE NUMBERS TO IDENTIFY DIFFERENT TOPICS AND SECTIONS

THE NICOMACHEAN ETHICS OF ARISTOTLE.

BOOK I.

THE END.

1 1. EVERY art and every kind of inquiry, and likewise every act and purpose, seems to aim at some good: and so it has been well said that the good is that at which everything aims.

In all he does man seeks some good as end or means.

2 But a difference is observable among these aims or ends. What is aimed at is sometimes the exercise of a faculty, sometimes a certain result beyond that exercise. And where there is an end beyond the act, there the result is better than the exercise of the faculty.

3 Now since there are many kinds of actions and many arts and sciences, it follows that there are many ends also; *e.g.* health is the end of medicine, ships of shipbuilding, victory of the art of war, and wealth of economy.

4 But when several of these are subordinated to

some one art or science,—as the making of bridles and other trappings to the art of horsemanship, and this in turn, along with all else that the soldier does, to the art of war, and so on,*—then the end of the master-art is always more desired than the ends of the subordinate arts, since these are pursued for its sake. And this is 5 equally true whether the end in view be the mere exercise of a faculty or something beyond that, as in the above instances.

The end is THE good; our subject is this and its science Politics.

2. If then in what we do there be some end which 1 we wish for on its own account, choosing all the others as means to this, but not every end without exception as a means to something else (for so we should go on *ad infinitum*, and desire would be left void and objectless),—this evidently will be the good or the best of all things. And surely from a practical point 2 of view it much concerns us to know this good; for then, like archers shooting at a definite mark, we shall be more likely to attain what we want.

If this be so, we must try to indicate roughly what 3 it is, and first of all to which of the arts or sciences it belongs.

It would seem to belong to the supreme art or 4 science, that one which most of all deserves the name of master-art or master-science.

Now Politics † seems to answer to this description. 5

* Reading τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ.

† To Aristotle Politics is a much wider term than to us; it covers the whole field of human life, since man is essentially social (7, 6); it has to determine (1) what is the good?—the question of this treatise (§ 9)—and (2) what can law do to promote this good?—the question of the sequel, which is specially called "The Politics:" *cf.* X. 9.

6 For it prescribes which of the sciences a state needs, and which each man shall study, and up to what point; and to it we see subordinated even the highest arts, such as economy, rhetoric, and the art of war.

7 Since then it makes use of the other practical sciences, and since it further ordains what men are to do and from what to refrain, its end must include the ends of the others, and must be the proper good of man.

8 For though this good is the same for the individual and the state, yet the good of the state seems a grander and more perfect thing both to attain and to secure; and glad as one would be to do this service for a single individual, to do it for a people and for a number of states is nobler and more divine.

9 [illegible]

1 **3.** We must be content if we can attain to so much precision in our statement as the subject before us admits of; for the same degree of accuracy is no more to be expected in all kinds of reasoning than in all kinds of handicraft.

Exactness not permitted by subject nor to be expected by student, who needs experience and training.

2 Now the things that are noble and just (with which Politics deals) are so various and so uncertain, that some think these are merely conventional and not natural distinctions.

3 There is a similar uncertainty also about what is good, because good things often do people harm: men have before now been ruined by wealth, and have lost their lives through courage.

4 Our subject, then, and our data being of this

* i.e. covers a part of the ground only: see preceding note.

nature, we must be content if we can indicate the truth roughly and in outline, and if, in dealing with matters that are not amenable to immutable laws, and reasoning from premises that are but probable, we can arrive at probable conclusions.*

The reader, on his part, should take each of my statements in the same spirit; for it is the mark of an educated man to require, in each kind of inquiry, just so much exactness as the subject admits of: it is equally absurd to accept probable reasoning from a mathematician, and to demand scientific proof from an orator.

5 But each man can form a judgment about what he knows, and is called "a good judge" of that—of any special matter when he has received a special education therein, "a good judge" (without any qualifying epithet) when he has received a universal education. And hence a young man is not qualified to be a student of Politics; for he lacks experience of the affairs of life, which form the data and the subject-matter of Politics.

6 Further, since he is apt to be swayed by his feelings, he will derive no benefit from a study whose aim is not speculative but practical.

7 But in this respect young in character counts the same as young in years; for the young man's disqualification is not a matter of time, but is due to the fact that feeling rules his life and directs all his desires. Men of this character turn the knowledge

* The expression τὰ ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολύ covers both (1) what is generally though not universally true, and (2) what is probable though not certain.

they get to no account in practice, as we see with those we call incontinent; but those who direct their desires and actions by reason will gain much profit from the knowledge of these matters.

8

Men agree that the good is happiness, but differ as to what this is.

1 4. Since—to resume—all knowledge and all purpose aims at some good, what is this which we say is the aim of Politics; or, in other words, what is the highest of all realizable goods?

2 As to its name, I suppose nearly all men are agreed; for the masses and the men of culture alike declare that it is happiness, and hold that to "live well" or to "do well" is the same as to be "happy."

But they differ as to what this happiness is, and the masses do not give the same account of it as the philosophers.

3 The former take it to be something palpable and plain, as pleasure or wealth or fame; one man holds it to be this, and another that, and often the same man is of different minds at different times,—after sickness it is health, and in poverty it is wealth; while when they are impressed with the consciousness of their ignorance, they admire most those who say grand things that are above their comprehension.

Some philosophers, on the other hand, have thought that, beside these several good things, there is an "absolute" good which is the cause of their goodness.

4 As it would hardly be worth while to review all the opinions that have been held, we will confine ourselves to those which are most popular, or which seem to have some foundation in reason.

were, it would not help us here.

further consideration of the idea; for even granting that this term good, which is applied to all these different things has one and the same meaning throughout, or that there is an absolute good apart from these particulars, it is evident that this good

but it is a good of this kind that we are now seeking.

14 theless be well to make ourselves acquainted with this universal good with a view to the goods that are

may be said we shall more readily discern our own good, and discerning achieve it.

15 ment, but it seems to be at variance with the existing

and striving to make up their deficiencies they neglect

sciences should not know, nor even look for, what would help them so much.

16 or the carpenter would be furthered in his art by a

be rendered more able to heal the sick or to command

For it seems to me that the physician does not even

is individuals that he has to heal.

The good is

7. Leaving these matters, then, let us return once 1

more to the question, what this good can be of which we are in search. *the final end, and happiness is this.*

It seems to be different in different kinds of action and in different arts,—one thing in medicine and another in war, and so on. What then is the good in each of these cases? Surely that for the sake of which all else is done. And that in medicine is health, in war is victory, in building is a house,—a different thing in each different case, but always, in whatever we do and in whatever we choose, the end. For it is always for the sake of the end that all else is done.

If then there be one end of all that man does, this end will be the realizable good,—or these ends, if there be more than one.

2 By this generalization our argument is brought to the same point as before.* This point we must try to explain more clearly.

3 We see that there are many ends. But some of these are chosen only as means, as wealth, flutes, and the whole class of instruments. And so it is plain that not all ends are final.

But the best of all things must, we conceive, be something final.

If then there be only one final end, this will be what we are seeking,—or if there be more than one, then the most final of them.

4 Now that which is pursued as an end in itself is more final than that which is pursued as means to something else, and that which is never chosen as means than that which is chosen both as an end in itself and as means, and that is strictly final which

* 2, 1. See Stewart.

is always chosen as an end in itself and never as means.

5 Happiness seems more than anything else to answer to this description: for we always choose it for itself, and never for the sake of something else; while honour and pleasure and reason, and all virtue or excellence, we choose partly indeed for themselves (for, apart from any result, we should choose each of them), but partly also for the sake of happiness, supposing that they will help to make us happy. But no one chooses happiness for the sake of these things, or as a means to anything else at all.

6 We seem to be led to the same conclusion when we start from the notion of self-sufficiency.

The final good is thought to be self-sufficing [or all-sufficing]. In applying this term we do not regard a man as an individual leading a solitary life, but we also take account of parents, children, wife, and, in short, friends and fellow-citizens generally, since man is naturally a social being. 7 Some limit must indeed be set to this; for if you go on to parents and descendants and friends of friends, you will never come to a stop. But this we will consider further on: for the present we will take self-sufficing to mean what by itself makes life desirable and in want of nothing. And happiness is believed to answer to this description.

8 And further, happiness is believed to be the most desirable thing in the world, and that not merely as one among other good things: if it were merely one among other good things [so that other things could be added to it], it is plain that the addition of the least

of other goods must make it more desirable; for the addition becomes a surplus of good, and of two goods the greater is always more desirable.

Thus it seems that happiness is something final and self-sufficing, and is the end of all that man does.

To find it we ask, What is man's function?

9 But perhaps the reader thinks that though no one will dispute the statement that happiness is the best thing in the world, yet a still more precise definition of it is needed.

10 This will best be gained, I think, by asking, What is the function of man? For as the goodness and the excellence of a piper or a sculptor, or the practiser of any art, and generally of those who have any function or business to do, lies in that function, so man's good would seem to lie in his function, if he has one.

11 But can we suppose that, while a carpenter and a cobbler has a function and a business of his own, man has no business and no function assigned him by nature? Nay, surely as his several members, eye and hand and foot, plainly have each his own function, so we must suppose that man also has some function over and above all these.

12 What then is it?

Life evidently he has in common even with the plants, but we want that which is peculiar to him. We must exclude, therefore, the life of mere nutrition and growth.

Next to this comes the life of sense; but this too he plainly shares with horses and cattle and all kinds of animals.

13 There remains then the life whereby he acts—the

life of his rational nature,* with its two sides or divisions, one rational as obeying reason, the other rational as having and exercising reason.

But as this expression is ambiguous,† we must be understood to mean thereby the life that consists in the exercise of the faculties; for this seems to be more properly entitled to the name.

The function of man, then, is exercise of his vital faculties [or soul] on one side in obedience to reason, and on the other side with reason. 14

But what is called the function of a man of any profession and the function of a man who is good in that profession are generically the same, *e.g.* of a harper and of a good harper; and this holds in all cases without exception, only that in the case of the latter his superior excellence at his work is added; for we say a harper's function is to harp, and a good harper's to harp well.

(Man's function then being, as we say, a kind of life—that is to say, exercise of his faculties and action of various kinds with reason—the good man's function is to do this well and beautifully [or nobly]. But the function of anything is done well when it is done in accordance with the proper excellence of that thing.) ‡ 15

* *πρακτική τις τοῦ λόγον ἔχοντος.* Aristotle frequently uses the terms *πρᾶξις, πρακτός, πρακτικός* in this wide sense, covering all that man does, *i.e.* all that part of man's life that is within the control of his will, or that is consciously directed to an end, including therefore speculation as well as action.

† For it might mean either the mere possession of the vital faculties, or their exercise.

‡ This paragraph seems to be a repetition (I would rather say a re-writing) of the previous paragraph. See note on VII. 3, 2.

Resulting definition of happiness.

If this be so the result is that the good of man is exercise of his faculties in accordance with excellence or virtue, or, if there be more than one, in accordance with the best and most complete virtue.*

16 But there must also be a full term of years for this exercise;† for one swallow or one fine day does not make a spring, nor does one day or any small space of time make a blessed or happy man.

17

18

19

* This "best and most complete excellence or virtue" is the trained faculty for philosophic speculation, and the contemplative life is man's highest happiness. *Cf.* X. 7, 1.

† *Cf.* 9, 11.

15 But nevertheless happiness plainly requires external goods too, as we said; for it is impossible, or at least not easy, to act nobly without some furniture of fortune. There are many things that can only be done through instruments, so to speak, such as friends 16 and wealth and political influence: and there are some things whose absence takes the bloom off our happiness, as good birth, the blessing of children, personal beauty; for a man is not very likely to be happy if he is very ugly in person, or of low birth, or alone in the world, or childless, and perhaps still less if he has worthless children or friends, or has lost good ones that he had.

17

Division of the faculties and resulting division of the virtues.

13. Since happiness is an exercise of the vital 1 faculties in accordance with perfect virtue or excellence, we will now inquire about virtue or excellence; for this will probably help us in our inquiry about happiness.

And indeed the true statesman seems to be espe- 2 cially concerned with virtue, for he wishes to make the citizens good and obedient to the laws. Of this 3 we have an example in the Cretan and the Lacedæmonian lawgivers, and any others who have resembled them. But if the inquiry belongs to Politics or the 4 science of the state, it is plain that it will be in accordance with our original purpose to pursue it.

The virtue or excellence that we are to consider is, 5 of course, the excellence of man; for it is the good of man and the happiness of man that we started to seek. And by the excellence of man I mean excel- 6 lence not of body, but of soul; for happiness we take to be an activity of the soul.

If this be so, then it is evident that the statesman 7 must have some knowledge of the soul, just as the man who is to heal the eye or the whole body must have some knowledge of them, and that the more in proportion as the science of the state is higher and better than medicine. But all educated physicians take much pains to know about the body.

As statesmen [or students of Politics], then, we 8

must inquire into the nature of the soul, but in so doing we must keep our special purpose in view and go only so far as that requires; for to go into minuter detail would be too laborious for the present undertaking.

9 Now, there are certain doctrines about the soul which are stated elsewhere with sufficient precision, and these we will adopt.

Two parts of the soul are distinguished, an irrational and a rational part.

10 Whether these are separated as are the parts of the body or any divisible thing, or whether they are only distinguishable in thought but in fact inseparable, like concave and convex in the circumference of a circle, makes no difference for our present purpose.

11 Of the irrational part, again, one division seems to be common to all things that live, and to be possessed by plants—I mean that which causes nutrition and growth; for we must assume that all things that take nourishment have a faculty of this kind, even when they are embryos, and have the same faculty when they are full grown; at least, this is more reasonable than to suppose that they then have a different one.

12 The excellence of this faculty, then, is plainly one that man shares with other beings, and not specifically human.

14 However, we need not pursue this further, and may dismiss the nutritive principle, since it has no place in the excellence of man.

15 But there seems to be another vital principle that is irrational, and yet in some way partakes of reason. In the case of the continent and of the incontinent man alike we praise the reason or the rational part, for it exhorts them rightly and urges them to do what is best; but there is plainly present in them another principle besides the rational one, which fights and struggles against the reason. 16 For just as a paralyzed limb, when you will to move it to the right, moves on the contrary to the left, so is it with the soul; the incontinent man's impulses run counter to his reason. Only whereas we see the refractory member in the case of the body, we do not see it in the case of the soul. But we must nevertheless, I think, hold that in the soul too there is something beside the reason, which opposes and runs counter to it (though in what sense it is distinct from the reason does not matter here).

17 It seems, however, to partake of reason also, as we said: at least, in the continent man it submits to the reason; while in the temperate and courageous man we may say it is still more obedient; for in him it is altogether in harmony with the reason.

18 The irrational part, then, it appears, is twofold.

There is the vegetative faculty, which has no share of reason; and the faculty of appetite or of desire in general, which in a manner partakes of reason or is rational as listening to reason and submitting to its sway,—rational in the sense in which we speak of rational obedience to father or friends, not in the sense in which we speak of rational apprehension of mathematical truths. But all advice and all rebuke and exhortation testify that the irrational part is in some way amenable to reason.

19 If then we like to say that this part, too, has a share of reason, the rational part also will have two divisions: one rational in the strict sense as possessing reason in itself, the other rational as listening to reason as a man listens to his father.

20 Now, on this division of the faculties is based the division of excellence; for we speak of intellectual excellences and of moral excellences; wisdom and understanding and prudence we call intellectual, liberality and temperance we call moral virtues or excellences. When we are speaking of a man's moral character we do not say that he is wise or intelligent, but that he is gentle or temperate. But we praise the wise man, too, for his habit of mind or trained faculty; and a habit or trained faculty that is praiseworthy is what we call an excellence or virtue.

BOOK II.

MORAL VIRTUE.

Moral virtue is acquired by the repetition of the corresponding acts.

1. EXCELLENCE, then, being of these two kinds, intellectual and moral, intellectual excellence owes its birth and growth mainly to instruction, and so requires time and experience, while moral excellence is the result of habit or custom (ἔθος), and has accordingly in our language received a name formed by a slight change from ἔθος.* 1

From this it is plain that none of the moral excellences or virtues is implanted in us by nature; for that which is by nature cannot be altered by training. For instance, a stone naturally tends to fall downwards, and you could not train it to rise upwards, though you tried to do so by throwing it up ten thousand times, nor could you train fire to move downwards, nor accustom anything which naturally behaves in one way to behave in any other way. 2

The virtues,† then, come neither by nature nor 3

* ἔθος, custom; ἦθος, character; ἠθικὴ ἀρετή, moral excellence: we have no similar sequence, but the Latin *mos, mores*, from which "morality" comes, covers both ἔθος and ἦθος.

† It is with the moral virtues that this and the three following books are exclusively concerned, the discussion of the intellectual virtues being postponed to Book VI. ἀρεταί is often used in these books, without any epithet, for "moral virtues," and perhaps is so used here.

against nature, but nature gives the capacity for acquiring them, and this is developed by training.

4 Again, where we do things by nature we get the power first, and put this power forth in act afterwards: as we plainly see in the case of the senses; for it is not by constantly seeing and hearing that we acquire those faculties, but, on the contrary, we had the power first and then used it, instead of acquiring the power by the use. But the virtues we acquire by doing the acts, as is the case with the arts too. We learn an art by doing that which we wish to do when we have learned it; we become builders by building, and harpers by harping. And so by doing just acts we become just, and by doing acts of temperance and courage we become temperate and courageous.

1 **6.** We have thus found the genus to which virtue belongs; but we want to know, not only that it is a trained faculty, but also what species of trained faculty it is.

viz., the habit of choosing the mean.

We may safely assert that the virtue or excellence 2 of a thing causes that thing both to be itself in good condition and to perform its function well. The excellence of the eye, for instance, makes both the eye and its work good; for it is by the excellence of the eye that we see well. So the proper excellence of the horse makes a horse what he should be, and makes him good at running, and carrying his rider, and standing a charge.

If, then, this holds good in all cases, the proper 3 excellence or virtue of man will be the habit or trained faculty that makes a man good and makes him perform his function well.

How this is to be done we have already said, but 4 we may exhibit the same conclusion in another way, by inquiring what the nature of this virtue is.

Now, if we have any quantity, whether continuous or discrete,* it is possible to take either a larger [or too large], or a smaller [or too small], or an equal [or fair] amount, and that either absolutely or relatively to our own needs.

By an equal or fair amount I understand a mean amount, or one that lies between excess and deficiency.

By the absolute mean, or mean relatively to the 5 thing itself, I understand that which is equidistant from both extremes, and this is one and the same for all.

By the mean relatively to us I understand that

* A line (or a generous emotion) is a "continuous quantity;" you can part it where you please: a rouleau of sovereigns is a "discrete quantity," made up of definite parts, and primarily separable into them.

which is neither too much nor too little for us; and this is not one and the same for all.

6 For instance, if ten be larger [or too large] and two be smaller [or too small], if we take six we take the mean relatively to the thing itself [or the arithmetical mean]; for it exceeds one extreme by the same amount by which it is exceeded by the other

7 extreme: and this is the mean in arithmetical proportion.

But the mean relatively to us cannot be found in this way. If ten pounds of food is too much for a given man to eat, and two pounds too little, it does not follow that the trainer will order him six pounds: for that also may perhaps be too much for the man in question, or too little; too little for Milo, too much for the beginner. The same holds true in running and wrestling.

8 And so we may say generally that a master in any art avoids what is too much and what is too little, and seeks for the mean and chooses it—not the absolute but the relative mean.

Virtue, then, is a habit or trained faculty of choice, 15

* μεσότης, the abstract name for the quality, is quite untranslatable.

the characteristic of which lies in moderation or observance of the mean relatively to the persons concerned, as determined by reason, *i.e.* by the reason by which the prudent man would determine it. And it is a moderation, firstly, inasmuch as it comes in the middle or mean between two vices, one on the side of excess, the other on the side of defect;
16 and, secondly, inasmuch as, while these vices fall short of or exceed the due measure in feeling and in action, it finds and chooses the mean, middling, or moderate amount.

17 Regarded in its essence, therefore, or according to the definition of its nature, virtue is a moderation or middle state, but viewed in its relation to what is best and right it is the extreme of perfection.

18 But it is not all actions nor all passions that admit of moderation; there are some whose very names imply badness, as malevolence, shamelessness, envy, and, among acts, adultery, theft, murder. These and all other like things are blamed as being bad in themselves, and not merely in their excess or deficiency. It is impossible therefore to go right in them; they are always wrong: rightness and wrongness in such things (*e.g.* in adultery) does not depend upon whether it is the right person and occasion and manner, but the mere doing of any one of them is wrong.

19 It would be equally absurd to look for moderation or excess or deficiency in unjust cowardly or profligate conduct; for then there would be moderation in excess or deficiency, and excess in excess, and deficiency in deficiency.

20 The fact is that just as there can be no excess

or deficiency in temperance or courage because the mean or moderate amount is, in a sense, an extreme, so in these kinds of conduct also there can be no moderation or excess or deficiency, but the acts are wrong however they be done. For, to put it generally, there cannot be moderation in excess or deficiency, nor excess or deficiency in moderation.

This must be applied to the several virtues.

7. But it is not enough to make these general statements [about virtue and vice]: we must go on and apply them to particulars [*i.e.* to the several virtues and vices]. For in reasoning about matters of conduct general statements are too vague,* and do not convey so much truth as particular propositions. It is with particulars that conduct is concerned:† our statements, therefore, when applied to these particulars, should be found to hold good. 1

These particulars then [*i.e.* the several virtues and vices and the several acts and affections with which they deal], we will take from the following table.‡

Moderation in the feelings of fear and confidence is courage: of those that exceed, he that exceeds in fearlessness has no name (as often happens), but he that exceeds in confidence is foolhardy, while he that exceeds in fear, but is deficient in confidence, is cowardly. 2

* Or "cover more ground, but convey less truth than particular propositions," if we read *κοινότεροι* with most manuscripts.

† In a twofold sense: my conduct cannot be virtuous except by exhibiting the particular virtues of justice, temperance, etc.; again, my conduct cannot be just except by being just in particular cases to particular persons.

‡ The Greek seems to imply that this is a generally accepted list, but Aristotle repeatedly has to coin names: *cf. infra*, § 11.

3 Moderation in respect of certain pleasures and also (though to a less extent) certain pains is temperance, while excess is profligacy. But defectiveness in the matter of these pleasures is hardly ever found, and so this sort of people also have as yet received no name: let us put them down as "void of sensibility."

4 In the matter of giving and taking money, moderation is liberality, excess and deficiency are prodigality and illiberality. But both vices exceed and fall short in giving and taking in contrary ways: the prodigal exceeds in spending, but falls short in taking; while the illiberal man exceeds in taking, but falls short in

5 spending. [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible])

6 But, besides these, there are other dispositions in the matter of money: there is a moderation which is called magnificence (for the magnificent is not the same as the liberal man: the former deals with large sums, the latter with small), and an excess which is called bad taste or vulgarity, and a deficiency which is called meanness; and these vices differ from those which are opposed to liberality: how they differ will be explained later.

7 With respect to honour and disgrace, there is a moderation which is high-mindedness, an excess which may be called vanity, and a deficiency which is little-mindedness.

8 But just as we said that liberality is related to magnificence, differing only in that it deals with small sums, so here there is a virtue related to high-minded-

ness, and differing only in that it is concerned with small instead of great honours. A man may have a due desire for honour, and also more or less than a due desire: he that carries this desire to excess is called ambitious, he that has not enough of it is called unambitious, but he that has the due amount has no name. There are also no abstract names for the characters, except "ambition," corresponding to ambitious. And on this account those who occupy the extremes lay claim to the middle place. And in common parlance, too, the moderate man is sometimes called ambitious and sometimes unambitious, and sometimes the ambitious man is praised and sometimes the unambitious. 9 Why this is we will explain afterwards; for the present we will follow out our plan and enumerate the other types of character.

10 In the matter of anger also we find excess and deficiency and moderation. The characters themselves hardly have recognized names, but as the moderate man is here called gentle, we will call his character gentleness; of those who go into extremes, we may take the term wrathful for him who exceeds, with wrathfulness for the vice, and wrathless for him who is deficient, with wrathlessness for his character.

11

4 * The virtues or excellences of the mind or soul, it will be remembered, we divided † into two classes, and called the one moral and the other intellectual. The moral excellences or virtues we have already discussed in detail; let us now examine the other class, the intellectual excellences, after some preliminary remarks about the soul.

5 We said before that the soul consists of two parts, the rational and the irrational part. We will now make a similar division of the former, and will assume that there are two rational faculties: (1) that by which we know those things that depend on invariable principles, (2) that by which we know those things that are variable. For to generically different objects must correspond generically different faculties, if, as we hold, it is in virtue of some kind of likeness or kinship with their objects that our faculties are able to know them.

6

* This really forms quite a fresh opening, independent of §§ 1–3; and it is one among many signs of the incomplete state in which this part of the treatise was left, that these two openings of Book VI. were never fused together. The scheme of the treatise, as unfolded in Book I. (*cf.* especially I. 7, 18; 13, 20), gives the intellectual virtues an independent place alongside of, or rather above, the moral virtues; now that the latter have been disposed of it naturally remains to consider the former: this is the natural transition which we have in § 4. But besides this the dependence of the moral virtues upon the intellectual virtues makes an examination of the latter absolutely necessary to the completion of the theory of the former; thus we get the transition of §§ 1–3.

† *Supra*, I. 13, 20.

But its excellence will bear direct reference to its proper function.

The function of the intellect, both in practice and speculation, is to attain truth.

2. Now, the faculties which guide us in action and in the apprehension of truth are three: sense, reason,* and desire. 1

The first of these cannot originate action, as we see from the fact that brutes have sense but are incapable of action. 2

If we take the other two we find two modes of reasoning, viz. affirmation and negation [or assent and denial], and two corresponding modes of desire, viz. pursuit and avoidance [or attraction and repulsion].

Now, moral virtue is a habit or formed faculty of choice or purpose, and purpose is desire following upon deliberation.

It follows, then, that if the purpose is to be all it should be, both the calculation or reasoning must be true and the desire right, and that the very same things must be assented to by the former and pursued by the latter.

This kind of reasoning, then, and this sort of truth has to do with action.

* νοῦς: the word is used here in its widest sense.

3 But speculative reasoning that has to do neither with action nor production is good or bad according as it is true or false simply: for the function of the intellect is always the apprehension of truth; but the function of the practical intellect is the apprehension of truth in agreement with right desire.

4 Purpose, then, is the cause—not the final but the efficient cause or origin—of action, and the origin of purpose is desire and calculation of means; so that purpose necessarily implies on the one hand the faculty of reason and its exercise, and on the other hand a certain moral character or state of the desires; for right action and the contrary kind of action are alike impossible without both reasoning and moral character.

5 Mere reasoning, however, can never set anything going, but only reasoning about means to an end—what may be called practical reasoning (which practical reasoning also regulates production; for in making anything you always have an ulterior object in view—what you make is desired not as an end in itself, but only as a means to, or a condition of, something else; but what you do is an end in itself, for well-doing or right action is the end, and this is the object of desire).

Purpose, then, may be called either a reason that desires, or a desire that reasons; and this faculty of originating action constitutes a man.

6

On this account some people say that all the virtues are forms of prudence, and in particular Socrates held this view, being partly right in his inquiry and partly wrong—wrong in thinking that all the virtues are actually forms of prudence, but right in saying that they are impossible without prudence. 3

This is corroborated by the fact that nowadays every one in defining virtue would, after specifying its field, add that it is a formed faculty or habit in accordance with right reason, "right" meaning "in accordance with prudence." 4

Thus it seems that every one has a sort of inkling that a formed habit or character of this kind (*i.e.* in accordance with prudence) is virtue.

Only a slight change is needed in this expression. Virtue is not simply a formed habit *in accordance with* right reason, but a formed habit *implying* right reason.* But right reason in these matters is prudence. 5

So whereas Socrates held that the [moral] virtues are forms of reason (for he held that these are all modes of knowledge), we hold that they imply reason.

* μετὰ λόγου: the agent must not only be guided by reason, but by his own reason, not another's.

Pleasures differ according to the activities. The standard is the good man.

But the exercises of the intellectual faculties are 2 specifically different from the exercises of the senses, and the several kinds of each from one another; therefore the pleasures which complete them are also different.

The same conclusion would seem to follow from the close connection that exists between each pleasure and the exercise of faculty which it completes. For the exercise is increased by its proper pleasure; *e.g.* people are more likely to understand any matter, and

to go to the bottom of it, if the exercise is pleasant to them. Thus, those who delight in geometry become geometricians, and understand all the propositions better than others; and similarly, those who are fond of music, or of architecture, or of anything else, make progress in that kind of work, because they delight in it. The pleasures, then, help to increase the exercise; but that which helps to increase it must be closely connected with it: but when things are specifically different from one another, the things that are closely connected with them must also be specifically different.

3 The same conclusion follows perhaps still more clearly from the fact that the exercise of one faculty is impeded by the pleasure proper to another; *e.g.* a lover of the flute is unable to attend to an argument if he hears a man playing, since he takes more delight in flute-playing than in his present business; the pleasure of the flute-player, therefore, hinders the exercise of the reason.

4 The same result follows in other cases, too, whenever a man is exercising his faculties on two things at a time; the pleasanter business thwarts the other, and, if the difference in pleasantness be great, thwarts it more and more, even to the extent of suppressing it altogether. Thus, when anything gives us intense delight, we cannot do anything else at all, and when we do a second thing, we do not very much care about the first; and so people who eat sweetmeats in the theatre do this most of all when the actors are bad.

5 Since its proper pleasure heightens the exercise of a faculty, making it both more prolonged and better, while pleasure from another source spoils it,

it is evident that there is a great difference between these two pleasures. Indeed, pleasure from another source has almost the same effect as pain from the activity itself. For the exercise of a faculty is spoilt by pain arising from it; as happens, for instance, when a man finds it disagreeable and painful to write or to calculate; for he stops writing in the one case and calculating in the other, since the exercise is painful. The exercise of a faculty, then, is affected in opposite ways by its proper pleasure and its proper pain; and by "proper" I mean that which is occasioned by the exercise itself. But pleasure from another source, we have already said, has almost the same effect as its proper pain; *i.e.* it interferes with the exercise of the faculty, though not to the same extent.

6 Again, as the exercises of our faculties differ in goodness and badness, and some are to be desired and some to be shunned, while some are indifferent, so do the several pleasures differ; for each exercise has its proper pleasure. The pleasure which is proper to a good activity, then, is good, and that which is proper to one that is not good is bad: for the desire of noble things is laudable, and the desire of base things is blamable; but the pleasures which accompany the exercises of our faculties belong to them even more than the desires do, since the latter are distinct both in time and in nature, while the former are almost coincident in time, and so hard to distinguish from them that it is a matter of debate whether the exercise be not identical with the pleasure.

7 It seems, however, that the pleasure is not the same as the act of thinking or of feeling; that is in-

As, then, the exercises of the faculties vary, so do their respective pleasures. Sight is purer than touch, hearing and smell than taste*: there is a corresponding difference, therefore, between their pleasures; and the pleasures of the intellect are purer than these pleasures of sense, and some of each kind are purer than others.

* Sight and touch are classed together on the one hand, and hearing, smell, and taste on the other, because, while the announcements of all the senses are, in the first instance, of secondary qualities (colours, sounds, etc.), it is mainly from the announcements of sight and touch that we advance to the knowledge of the mathematical properties or primary qualities (number, figure, motion, etc.).

7. But if happiness be the exercise of virtue, it is reasonable to suppose that it will be the exercise of the highest virtue; and that will be the virtue or excellence of the best part of us.

Of the speculative life as happiness in the highest sense.

Now, that part or faculty—call it reason or what you will—which seems naturally to rule and take the lead, and to apprehend things noble and divine—

* τὰ σπουδαῖα. It is impossible to convey in a translation the play upon the words σπουδή and σπουδαῖος: σπουδή is earnestness; σπουδαῖος usually = good: here, however, σπουδαῖος carries both senses, earnest or serious, and good.

whether it be itself divine, or only the divinest part of us—is the faculty the exercise of which, in its proper excellence, will be perfect happiness.

That this consists in speculation or contemplation we have already said.

2 This conclusion would seem to agree both with what we have said above, and with known truths.

This exercise of faculty must be the highest possible; for the reason is the highest of our faculties, and of all knowable things those that reason deals with are the highest.

Again, it is the most continuous; for speculation can be carried on more continuously than any kind of action whatsoever.

3 We think too that pleasure ought to be one of the ingredients of happiness; but of all virtuous exercises it is allowed that the pleasantest is the exercise of wisdom.* At least philosophy † is thought to have pleasures that are admirable in purity and steadfastness; and it is reasonable to suppose that the time passes more pleasantly with those who possess, than with those who are seeking knowledge.

4 Again, what is called self-sufficiency will be most of all found in the speculative life. The necessaries of life, indeed, are needed by the wise man as well as by the just man and the rest; but, when these have been provided in due quantity, the just man further needs persons towards whom, and along with whom, he may act justly; and so does the temperate and the courageous man and the rest; while the

* *ἡ κατὰ τὴν σοφίαν ἐνέργεια*, the contemplation of absolute truth.

† The search for this truth.

wise man is able to speculate even by himself, and the wiser he is the more is he able to do this. He could speculate better, we may confess, if he had others to help him, but nevertheless he is more self-sufficient than anybody else.

5 Again, it would seem that this life alone is desired solely for its own sake; for it yields no result beyond the contemplation, but from the practical activities we get something more or less besides action.

6 Again, happiness is thought to imply leisure; for we toil in order that we may have leisure, as we make war in order that we may enjoy peace. Now, the practical virtues are exercised either in politics or in war; but these do not seem to be leisurely occupations:—

War, indeed, seems to be quite the reverse of leisurely; for no one chooses to fight for fighting's sake, or arranges a war for that purpose: he would be deemed a bloodthirsty villain who should set friends at enmity in order that battles and slaughter might ensue.

But the politician's life also is not a leisurely occupation, and, beside the practice of politics itself, it brings power and honours, or at least happiness, to himself and his fellow-citizens, which is something different from politics; for we [who are asking what happiness is] also ask what politics is, evidently implying that it is something different from happiness.

7 If, then, the life of the statesman and the soldier, though they surpass all other virtuous exercises in nobility and grandeur, are not leisurely occupations,

and aim at some ulterior end, and are not desired merely for themselves, but the exercise of the reason seems to be superior in seriousness (since it contemplates truth), and to aim at no end beside itself, and to have its proper pleasure (which also helps to increase the exercise), and further to be self-sufficient, and leisurely, and inexhaustible (as far as anything human can be), and to have all the other characteristics that are ascribed to happiness, it follows that the exercise of reason will be the complete happiness of man, *i.e.* when a complete term of days is added; for nothing incomplete can be admitted into our idea of happiness.

8 But a life which realized this idea would be something more than human; for it would not be the expression of man's nature, but of some divine element in that nature—the exercise of which is as far superior to the exercise of the other kind of virtue [*i.e.* practical or moral virtue], as this divine element is superior to our compound human nature.*

If then reason be divine as compared with man, the life which consists in the exercise of reason will also be divine in comparison with human life. Nevertheless, instead of listening to those who advise us as men and mortals not to lift our thoughts above what is human and mortal, we ought rather, as far as possible, to put off our mortality and make every effort to live in the exercise of the highest of our faculties; for though it be but a small part of us, yet in power and value it far surpasses all the rest.

* *i.e.* our nature as moral agents, as compounds of reason and desire.

9 And indeed this part would even seem to constitute our true self, since it is the sovereign and the better part. It would be strange, then, if a man were to prefer the life of something else to the life of his true self.

Again, we may apply here what we said above—for every being that is best and pleasantest which is naturally proper to it. Since, then, it is the reason that in the truest sense is the man, the life that consists in the exercise of the reason is the best and pleasantest for man—and therefore the happiest.

Of the practical life as happiness in a lower sense, and of the relation between the two. Prosperity, how far needed.

* *i.e.* the principles of morals cannot be proved, but are accepted without proof by the man whose desires are properly trained. *Cf. supra*, I. 4, 6.