

# SELECTIONS FROM ARISTOTLE'S NICOMACHEAN ETHICS

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[Note: The division of the treatise into books goes back to antiquity (though, perhaps not to Aristotle himself). The chapter divisions were imposed in the Renaissance. The titles of the books and chapters (and the division of some chapters into parts) is something I added as an aid to comprehension.]

## BOOK I: THE GOOD

### CHAPTER 1: GOODS AS ENDS OF ACTIONS

Every art and every pursuit, and similarly every action and decision, seems to aim at some good. 1094a  
That's why the good has been aptly described as that at which all things aim.

But a certain difference is found among ends: some are activities; others are products apart from the activities that produce them. Where there are ends apart from the actions, it is the 5  
nature of the products to be better than the activities.

Now, as there are many actions, arts, and sciences, their ends also are many. The end of the medicine is health, that of shipbuilding a vessel, that of generalship victory, that of household management wealth. But where such arts fall under a single capacity—as bridle-making and the 10  
other arts concerned with the equipment of horses fall under the art of riding, and this and every military action under generalship, (other arts fall under yet others in the same way), in all of these the ends of the master arts are to be preferred to all the subordinate ends. For it is for the 15  
sake of the former that the latter are pursued. It makes no difference whether the activities themselves are the ends of the actions, or something else apart from the activities, as in the case of the sciences just mentioned.

### CHAPTER 2: THE GOOD AS THE ULTIMATE END OF ACTION

Then what if there is some end of the things we do, which we desire for its own sake (everything else being desired for the sake of this), and we do not choose everything for the sake of 20  
something else (for at that rate the process would go on to infinity, so that our desire would be empty and vain)? Clearly this end must be the good and the chief good. Won't the knowledge of it, then, have a great influence on life? If we have it, won't we, like archers who have a mark to aim at, be more likely to hit on what is right? If so, we must try, in outline at least, to determine 25  
what it is, and of which of the sciences or capacities it is the object.

It would seem to belong to the most authoritative art and that which is most truly the master art. And statesmanship appears to be of this nature; for it is what ordains which of the sciences should be studied in a state, and which each class of citizens should learn, and up to what point 1094b  
they should learn them; and we see even the most highly esteemed of capacities to fall under this—e.g. strategy, economics, rhetoric. Now, since statesmanship uses the rest of the sciences, 5  
and since, again, it legislates as to what we are to do and what we are to abstain from, the end of

this science must include those of the others, so that this end must be the good for man. For even if the end is the same for a single man and for a state, that of the state seems at all events something greater and more complete to attain or to preserve; though it is worthwhile to attain the end merely for one man, it is finer and more godlike to attain it for a nation or for state. 10  
These, then, are the ends at which our discipline aims, since it is statesmanship, in one sense of that term.

### CHAPTER 3: THE METHODS OF STATESMANSHIP

Our discussion will be adequate if it has as much clearness as the subject-matter admits of, for precision is not to be sought for alike in all discussions, any more than in all the products of the crafts. Now fine and just actions, which statesmanship investigates, admit of much variety and fluctuation of opinion, so that they may be thought to exist only by convention, and not by nature. And goods also give rise to a similar fluctuation because they bring harm to many people; for before now men have been undone because of their wealth, and others, because of their courage. We must be content, then, in speaking of such subjects and with such premises to indicate the truth roughly and in outline, and in speaking about things which are only for the most part true and with premises of the same kind to reach conclusions that are no better. In the same spirit, therefore, should each type of statement be received; for it is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits; it is evidently equally foolish to accept probable reasoning from a mathematician and to demand from a rhetorician scientific proofs. 15 20 25

Now each man judges well the things he knows, and of these he is a good judge. And so the man who has been educated in a subject is a good judge of that subject, and the man who has received an all-round education is a good judge in general. Hence a young man is not a proper hearer of lectures on statesmanship; for he is inexperienced in the actions that occur in life, but its discussions start from these and are about these; and, further, since he tends to follow his passions, his study will be vain and unprofitable, because the end aimed at is not knowledge but action. And it makes no difference whether he is young in years or youthful in character; the deficiency does not depend on time, but on his living and going after each successive object, as passion directs. For immature men, like the incontinent get no benefit from their knowledge. But men who desire and act with reason will get a great benefit from knowing about these things. 1095a 5 10

These remarks about the student, the way our claims should be received, and the purpose of the pursuit, may be taken as our preface.

### CHAPTER 4: THE DISPUTED NATURE OF HAPPINESS

Let us resume our account and state, in view of the fact that all knowledge and every pursuit aims at some good, what it is that we say statesmanship aims at and what is the highest of all goods achievable by action. Verbally there is very general agreement; for both the general run of men and people of superior refinement say that it is happiness, and identify living well and doing well with being happy; but with regard to what happiness is they differ, and the many do not give the same account as the wise. For the former think it is something plain and obvious, like pleasure, wealth, or honor; they differ, however, from one another, and often even the same man identifies it with different things (with health when he is ill, with wealth when he is poor), but when they're conscious of their ignorance, they admire those who proclaim some great ideal that is above their comprehension. Now some thought that apart from these many goods there is another which exists on its own and causes the goodness of all these as well. To examine all the opinions that have been held were perhaps somewhat fruitless; it's enough to examine those that are most prevalent or that seem to be arguable. 15 20 25

Let us not fail to notice, however, that there is a difference between arguments from and those to the principles. For Plato, too, was right in raising this question and asking, as he used to do, “are we on the way from or to the principles?” There is a difference, as there is in a race-course between the course from the judges to the turning-point and the way back. For, while we must begin with what is known, things are objects of knowledge in two senses: some are known to us, some without qualification. Presumably, then, we must begin with things known to us. Hence anyone who is to listen intelligently to lectures about what is fine and just, and generally, about the subjects of statesmanship must have been brought up in good habits. For the fact is the starting-point<sup>1</sup>, and if this is sufficiently plain to him, he will not at the start need the reason as well; and the man who has been well brought up has or can easily get starting points. And as for him who neither has nor can get them, let him hear the words of Hesiod:

Far best is he who knows all things himself;  
Good, he that hearkens when men counsel right;  
But he who neither knows, nor lays to heart  
Another's wisdom, is a useless man

## CHAPTER 5: THREE COMMON VIEWS OF THE GOOD

However, let’s resume our discussion from the point at which we digressed. To judge from the lives that men lead, most men, and men of the most vulgar type, seem (not without some ground) to identify the good, or happiness, with pleasure; which is the reason why they love the life of enjoyment. For there are, we may say, three prominent types of life: that just mentioned, the political, and thirdly the contemplative life. Now the mass of mankind are evidently quite slavish in their tastes, preferring a life suitable to beasts, but they get some ground for their view from the fact that many of those in high places share the tastes of Sardanapallus.

A consideration of the prominent types of life shows that people of superior refinement and of active disposition identify happiness with honor; for this is, roughly speaking, the end of the political life. But it seems too superficial to be what we are looking for, since it seems to depend on those who bestow honor rather than on him who receives it, but the good we divine to be something proper to a man and not easily taken from him.

Further, men seem to pursue honor to convince themselves that they are good; at least it is by men of prudence that they seek to be honored, and among those who know them, and on the ground of their virtue; clearly, then, according to them, at any rate, virtue is better. And perhaps one might even suppose this to be, rather than honor, the end of the political life.

But even this appears somewhat incomplete; for possession of virtue seems actually compatible with being asleep, or with lifelong inactivity, and, further, with the greatest sufferings and misfortunes; but a man who was living so no one would call happy, unless he were maintaining a thesis at all costs. But enough of this; for the subject has been sufficiently treated even in the current discussions. Third comes the contemplative life, which we shall consider later.

The life of money-making is one undertaken under compulsion, and wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking; for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else. And so one might rather take the aforementioned objects to be ends; for they are loved for themselves. It is evident that not even these are ends; yet many arguments have been thrown away in support of them. Let us leave this subject, then.

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<sup>1</sup> *archē*

CHAPTER 7, PART 1: ARISTOTLE'S CRITERIA FOR AN ACCOUNT OF THE GOOD

Let us again return to the good we are seeking, and ask what it can be. It seems different in different actions and arts; it is different in medicine, in strategy, and in the other arts likewise. 1097a  
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What then is the good of each? Surely, that for whose sake everything else is done. In medicine this is health, in generalship victory, in architecture a house, in any other sphere something else; 20  
and, in every action and pursuit, it is the end; for it is for the sake of this that all men do whatever else they do. Therefore, if there is an end for all that we do, this will be the good achievable by action, and if there are more than one, these will be the goods achievable by action.

So the argument has by a different course reached the same point; but we must try to state this even more clearly. Since there are evidently more than one end, and we choose some of these (e.g. wealth, flutes, and in general instruments) for the sake of something else, clearly not all ends are ultimate; but the chief good is evidently something ultimate. Therefore, if there is only one ultimate end, this will be what we are seeking, and if there are more than one, the most ultimate of these will be what we are seeking. Now we call that which is desirable in itself more ultimate than that which is desirable for the sake of something else; and, if something is desirable in itself and never desirable for the sake of anything else, we call it more ultimate than things that are desirable both in themselves and for the sake of something else. Therefore we call something "ultimate without qualification" if it is always desirable in itself and never desirable for the sake of something else. 25  
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Now happiness, above all else, is held to be such a thing; for we always choose happiness for itself and never for the sake of something else. While we do choose honor, pleasure, reason, and every virtue we choose for themselves (for if nothing resulted from them we should still choose each of them), we also choose them for the sake of happiness, judging that by means of them we shall be happy. Happiness, on the other hand, no one chooses for the sake of these, nor, in general, for anything other than itself. 1097b  
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From the point of view of independence the same result seems to follow; for the final good seems to be independent. Now by independent we do not mean that which is enough for a man by himself—for someone who lives a solitary life—but also for parents, children, wife, and in general for his friends and fellow citizens, since man is born for citizenship. But some limit must be set to this; for if we extend our requirement to ancestors and descendants and friends' friends we are in for an infinite series. Let's examine this question, however, on another occasion. For now we define the independent as that which when isolated makes life desirable and lacking in nothing; and we think happiness is like this. Further we think that it is the most desirable of all things, without being counted as one good thing among others. If it were counted as one good amongst others, it would clearly be made more desirable by the addition of even the least of goods; for that which is added becomes an extra good, and of goods the greater is always more desirable. Happiness, then, is something ultimate and independent, and is the end of action. 10  
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CHAPTER 7, PART 2: ARISTOTLE'S OWN ACCOUNT OF THE GOOD

Presumably, however, to say that happiness is the chief good seems a platitude, and a clearer account of what it is still desired. This might perhaps be given, if we could first ascertain the function of man. For just as for a flute-player, a sculptor, or an artist, and, in general, for all things that have a function or activity, the good and the "well" seems to reside in the function, so would it seem to be for man, if he has a function. 25

Have the carpenter, then, and the tanner certain functions or activities, and has man none? Is he born without a function? Or as eye, hand, foot, and in general each of the parts evidently has a function, may we likewise ascribe to man a function apart from all these? 30

What then could this be? Life seems to be common even to plants, but we are seeking what is peculiar to man. Let us exclude, therefore, the life of nutrition and growth. Next there would be a life of perception, but it also seems to be common even to the horse, the ox, and every animal. 1098a

There remains, then, an active life of the part that has reason. Of this, one part has reason in the sense of obeying reason, the other in the sense of having reason and thinking. And, since “life of the rational part” also has two meanings, we must state that we mean life in the sense of activity; for this seems to be the more proper sense of the term. 5

So, man’s function is an activity of soul in accord with reason (or not without reason). We say that the function of a thing is the same in kind as the function of an outstanding thing of the same type. For example, the function of a lyre player and of an outstanding lyre player are the same in kind. The same goes for all cases without qualification, if we add superiority in accordance with virtue to the function (for the function of a lyre player is to play the lyre, and that of an outstanding lyre player is to do so well). We say that man’s function is a certain kind of life, and that it is activity or actions of the soul involving reason, so the function of an outstanding man is to do these actions well and finely. And, if any action is done well when it is done with the appropriate virtue, the human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are more than one virtue, with the best and most ultimate. 10 15

But we must add “in a complete life”. For one swallow does not make a summer, nor does one day; and so too one day, or a short time, does not make a man blessed and happy.

Let this serve as an outline of the good; for we must presumably first sketch it roughly and then later fill in the details. But it would seem that any one is capable of carrying on and articulating something, once it’s been outlined well and that time is a good discoverer or partner in such a work—this is how the arts have improved, for any one can add what is lacking to the outline. We must also remember what we said before, and not look for precision in all things alike. Rather, in each class of things, we should look for the sort of precision as accords with the subject-matter, and for the amount that is appropriate to the pursuit. For a carpenter and a geometer investigate the right angle in different ways; the former does so in so far as the right angle is useful for his work, while the latter inquires in to what it is or what sort of thing it is; for he is a spectator of the truth. We must act in the same way, then, in all other matters as well. This way we’ll avoid subordinating our main task to minor questions. And we shouldn’t demand the cause in all matters alike; it is enough in some cases that the fact be well established, as in the case of the principles; the fact is the primary or the principle. Now we study some principles by induction, some by perception, some by a certain habituation, and we also study others in other ways. But we must try to investigate each set of principles in the natural way, and we must take pains to state them definitely, since they have a great influence on what follows. For the beginning seems to be more than half of the whole, and many of the questions we ask are cleared up by it. 20 25 30 1098b 5

### CHAPTER 13: VIRTUE AND THE SOUL

Since happiness is an activity of soul with complete virtue, we must consider the nature of virtue; for perhaps this will enable us to study happiness better. Plus the true student of statesmanship seems to have studied virtue above all things; for he wishes to make his fellow citizens good and obedient to the laws. As an example of this we have the lawgivers of the Cretans and the Spartans, and any others of the kind that there may have been. And if this inquiry belongs to statesmanship, clearly the pursuit of it will be in accordance with our original plan. 1102a5 10

But clearly the virtue we must study is human virtue; for the good we were seeking was human good and the happiness human happiness. By human virtue we don’t mean virtue of the 15

body but virtue of the soul; and we also call happiness an activity of soul. But if this is so, clearly the student of statesmanship must know somehow about the soul, as the man who is to heal the eyes or the body as a whole must know about the eyes or the body. All the more so, since statesmanship is more prized and better than medicine; but even among doctors the best educated spend put a lot of work into acquiring knowledge of the body. The student of statesmanship, then, must study the soul, and must study it with these objects in view, and he must do so just to the extent which is sufficient for the questions we are discussing; for further precision may take more work than our purposes require.

We have made some points about the soul adequately even in our popular works, and we must use these. For example, we said that one part of the soul is non-rational and one has reason. Are these parts separated like the parts of the body or of anything divisible are, or are they distinct in definition but inseparable by nature, like convex and concave in the circumference of a circle? It does not matter for our present purposes.

One part of the non-rational part seems to be widely distributed and is plantlike in its nature. I mean the part that causes nutrition and growth; for we can assign this capacity to nurslings and to embryos, and also assign this same capacity to full-grown creatures (since this is more reasonable than assigning some other capacity to them). Now the virtue of this part seems to be common to all species and is not specifically human; for this part or capacity seems to be most active during sleep, when goodness and badness are at their least distinct (that's why people say that "happy people are no better off than miserable people for half their lives"). This isn't surprising, because sleep is inactivity of the soul insofar as it is called great or base, unless perhaps some of the movements actually penetrate a little so that the dreams of great men are better than those of ordinary people. Enough of this subject, however; let us leave the nutritive part alone, since it has by its nature no share in human virtue.

There seems to be also another non-rational part in the soul—one which in a sense, however, shares in reason. For we praise the rational part of the continent man and of the incontinent, i.e. the part of their souls that has reason, since it urges them correctly and towards the best objects; but we also find in them another part naturally opposed to reason, which fights against it and resists it. It's just like when we try to turn paralyzed limbs to the right and they do the contrary and move to the left. That's how it is in the soul: the impulses of incontinent people move in contrary directions. But in the case of the body we see the part that goes astray, and in the soul we do not. Nevertheless, we must suppose that there is something in the soul contrary to reason, resisting and opposing it. In what sense it is distinct from the other parts does not concern us. Now even non-rational part seems to have a share in reason, as we said; at any rate in the continent man it obeys reason and presumably in the temperate and brave man it's even more obedient; for in him it speaks, on all matters, with the same voice as reason.

Therefore the non-rational part also appears to be two-fold. For the plantlike part in no way shares in reason, but the appetitive and in general the desiring part in a sense shares in it, in that it listens to and obeys it; this is the sense in which we speak of "listening to reason" from your father or your friends, not that in which we speak of "give reasons" in mathematics. Our practices of giving advice and admonishing and exhorting people also indicates that the non-rational part is persuaded by reason in some sense. And if we must say that this part has reason, then the part that has reason (as well as the part that doesn't) will be bipartite: one subdivision will have it in the strict sense and in itself, and the other will have it in the sense of obeying, like one does with one's father.

Virtue is also divided this way; for we say that some of the virtues are "virtues of thought" and that others are "virtues of character". Theoretical wisdom, comprehension, and prudence are virtues of thought, and generosity and temperance are virtues of character. For in speaking about a man's character we do not say that he is wise or comprehending but that he is mild or temperate; yet we praise the wise man also because of his state, and we call praiseworthy states "virtues".

## BOOK II: THE VIRTUES OF CHARACTER

### CHAPTER 1: THE SOURCES OF VIRTUE

Virtue, then, is of two kinds, virtue of thought and virtue of character. Virtue of thought arises and grows mostly through teaching (for which reason it requires experience and time), while virtue of character comes about as a result of habit. This is where it gets its name (*ethike*), which is formed by a slight variation on the word *ethos* (habit). 1103a  
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This makes it clear that none of the virtues of character arises in us by nature; for nothing that exists by nature can form a habit contrary to its nature. For instance the stone which by nature moves downwards cannot be habituated to move upwards, not even if one tries to train it by throwing it up ten thousand times; nor can fire be habituated to move downwards, nor can anything else that by nature behaves in one way be trained to behave in another. Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit. 20  
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Again, of all the things that come to us by nature we first acquire the potentiality and later exhibit the activity (this is plain in the case of the senses; for it was not by often seeing or often hearing that we got these senses, but on the contrary we had them before we used them, and did not come to have them by using them); but the virtues we get by first exercising them, as also happens in the case of the arts as well. For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them, e.g. men become builders by building and lyre players by playing the lyre; so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts. 30  
1103b

This is confirmed by what happens in cities; for legislators make the citizens good by forming habits in them, and this is the wish of every legislator, and those who do not effect it miss their mark, and it is in this that a good constitution differs from a bad one. 5

Again, it is from the same causes and by the same means that every virtue is both produced and destroyed, and similarly every art; for it is from playing the lyre that both good and bad lyre players are produced. And the corresponding statement is true of builders and of all the rest; men will be good or bad builders as a result of building well or badly. For if this were not so, there would have been no need of a teacher, but all men would have been born good or bad at their craft. 10

This, then, is the case with the virtues also; by doing the acts that we do in our transactions with other men we become just or unjust, and by doing the acts that we do in the presence of danger, and being habituated to feel fear or confidence, we become brave or cowardly. The same is true of appetites and feelings of anger; some men become temperate and mild, others licentious and irascible, by behaving in one way or the other in the appropriate circumstances. 15  
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Thus, in one word, states of character arise out of like activities. This is why the activities we exhibit must be of a certain kind; it is because the states of character correspond to the differences between these. It makes no small difference, then, whether we form habits of one kind or of another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather all the difference. 25

### CHAPTER 2: HABITUATION AS THE SOURCE OF VIRTUE OF CHARACTER

Our present pursuit is not for the sake of theoretical knowledge as our others are; for we are not inquiring in order to know what virtue is, but in order to become good, since otherwise our endeavor will be of no use. Because of this, we must examine the right ways of acting; for, as we have said, these determine also the nature of the states of character that are produced. Now, 30

that we must act according to correct reason is a common principle and must be assumed. Later we will discuss both what correct reason is, and how it is related to the other virtues. 1104a

But we must agree from the start, that the whole account of matters of conduct must be given in outline and not precisely. As we said at the very beginning, the accounts we demand must be in accordance with the subject-matter; matters concerned with conduct and questions of what is good for us have no fixed answers, like matters of health. Because the general account is of this nature, the account of particular cases is even more lacking in exactness; for they do not fall under any art or precept, and the agents themselves must consider in each case what is appropriate to the occasion, as happens also in the art of medicine or of navigation. 5

Although our present account is of this nature, we must give what help we can. First, then, let us observe that it is the nature of such states to be destroyed by deficiency and excess, as we see in the case of strength and of health (for to gain light on things imperceptible we must use the evidence of sensible things); both excessive and deficient exercise destroys the strength, and similarly drink or food which is above or below a certain amount destroys the health, while that which is proportionate both produces and increases and preserves it. So too is it, then, in the case of temperance and courage and the other virtues. For the man who flies from and fears everything and does not stand his ground against anything becomes a coward, and the man who fears nothing at all but goes to meet every danger becomes rash; and similarly the man who indulges in every pleasure and abstains from none becomes licentious, while the man who shuns every pleasure, as boors do, becomes in a way insensible; temperance and courage, then, are destroyed by excess and deficiency, and preserved by the mean. 10 15 20 25

But not only are the sources and causes of their origination and growth the same as those of their destruction, but also the sphere of their activity will be the same; for this is also true of the things which are more evident to sense. For example, strength is produced by taking much food and undergoing much exertion, and it is the strong man that will be most able to do these things. So too is it with the virtues; by abstaining from pleasures we become temperate, and it is when we have become so that we are most able to abstain from them; and similarly too in the case of courage; for by being habituated to despise things that are terrible and to stand our ground against them we become brave, and it is when we have become so that we shall be most able to stand our ground against them. 30 35 1104b

### CHAPTER 3: VIRTUE'S CONCERN WITH PLEASURE AND PAIN

We must take the pleasure or pain that someone feels after acting as a sign his state of character. For the man who abstains from bodily pleasures and delights in this very fact is temperate, while the man who is annoyed at it is licentious, and he who stands his ground against things that are terrible and delights in this or at least is not pained is brave, while the man who is pained is a coward. For virtue of character is concerned with pleasures and pains. It is on account of the pleasure that we do bad things, and on account of the pain that we abstain from fine ones. Hence we ought to have been brought up in a particular way from our very youth, as Plato says, so as both to delight in and to be pained by the things that we ought; for this is the right education. 5 10

Again, the virtues are concerned with actions and passions, and every passion and every action is accompanied by pleasure and pain. For this reason also, virtue will be concerned with pleasures and pains. This is indicated also by the fact that punishment is inflicted by these means; for it is a kind of cure, and it is the nature of cures to be effected by contraries. 15

Again, as we just said, every state of soul has a nature relative to and concerned with the kind of things by which it tends to be made worse or better; but it is by reason of pleasures and pains that men become bad, by pursuing and avoiding these—either by pursuing and avoiding the wrong ones, or at the wrong time or in the wrong way, or whatever other distinctions of this 20



sort are needed. Because of this men even define the virtues as certain states of being unaffected and undisturbed. This is not a good definition, however, because they speak of being unaffected absolutely instead of being unaffected in the right or wrong way, at the right or wrong time, etc. We assume, then, that this kind of virtue tends to do what is best with regard to pleasures and pains, and vice does the contrary. 25

The following facts also may show us that virtue and vice are concerned with pleasure and pain. There being three objects of choice and three of avoidance, the fine, the advantageous, the pleasant, and their contraries, the base, the injurious, the painful, about all of these the good man tends to go right and the bad man to go wrong, and especially about pleasure; for this is common to the animals, and also it accompanies all objects of choice; for even the fine and the advantageous appear pleasant. 30 35

Again, pleasure and pain have grown up with us all from our infancy; this is why it is difficult to rub off this passion, engrained as it is in our life. And we measure even our actions, some of us more and others less, by the rule of pleasure and pain. For this reason, then, we must be wholly concerned with these; for to feel delight and pain rightly or wrongly has no small effect on our actions. 1105a 5

Again, it is harder to fight with pleasure than with anger, to use Heraclitus' phrase', but both art and virtue are always concerned with what is harder; for even the good is better when it is harder. Therefore for this reason also the whole concern both of virtue and of statesmanship is with pleasures and pains; for the man who uses these well will be good and the man who uses them badly will be bad. 10

Let us take the following as said: virtue is concerned with pleasures and pains, the actions that are its sources also increase it, and, if they are done differently, destroy it, and it's activity is concerned with these same actions. 15

#### CHAPTER 4: HOW IT IS POSSIBLE TO PRACTICE VIRTUOUS ACTIONS BEFORE ACQUIRING VIRTUE

Someone might ask what we mean by saying that we must become just by doing just acts, and temperate by doing temperate acts. If men do just and temperate acts, aren't they already just and temperate? For, one might suppose that if someone takes a grammatical or musical action, he must be a grammarian or musician. 20

But is this right, even in the case of the arts? It is possible to do something that is in accordance with the laws of grammar, either by chance or at the suggestion of another. A man will be a grammarian, then, only when he has both done something grammatical and has done it grammatically; and this means doing it in accordance with his own grammatical knowledge. 25

Anyway, the cases of virtue and art are not the same. For the products of the arts have their goodness in themselves, and so they count as good if they have certain qualities. But even if actions have certain qualities, it does not follow that they are done justly or temperately. The agent also must be in a certain condition when he does them. First, he must have knowledge; second, he must choose the actions, and choose them for their own sakes; and third, his action must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character. 30

Of these three, only the possession of the bare knowledge is counted as a condition for the possession of the arts. But as a condition of the possession of the virtues knowledge has little or no weight, while the other two conditions are important, indeed all-important. These two conditions result from often doing just and temperate acts. 1105b

Actions, then, are called just and temperate when they are such as the just or the temperate man would do; but it is not any man who does these that counts as just and temperate, but the man who also does them as just and temperate men do them. It is well said, then, that a man comes to be just by doing just actions and temperate by doing temperate actions. Without doing these things no one would have even a prospect of becoming good. 5 10

But the many do not do these things, but take refuge in theory and think they are being philosophers and that they will become good in this way. They behave like patients who listen attentively to their doctors, but do none of the things they are ordered to do. This course of treatment will not improve their bodies, nor will the many improve their souls by this attitude towards philosophy. 15

#### CHAPTER 5: THE GENUS OF VIRTUE OF CHARACTER

Next we must consider what virtue is. Since things that are found in the soul are of three kinds: passions, capacities, and states, virtue must be one of these. By passions I mean appetite, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, love, hatred, longing, jealousy, pity, and in general whatever feelings are accompanied by pleasure or pain. By capacities I mean the things in virtue of which we are said to be capable of feeling these, e.g. of becoming angry or being pained or feeling pity. By states, I mean the things in virtue of which we are well or badly off with in relation to the passions; e.g. we are badly off in relation to anger if we feel it violently or too weakly, and we are well off if we feel it moderately; and the same goes for the other passions. 20 25

Now neither the virtues nor the vices are passions, because we are not called good or bad on the ground of our passions, but we are so called on the ground of our virtues and our vices. Again, we are neither praised nor blamed for our passions (for the man who feels fear or anger is not praised, nor is the man who simply feels anger blamed, but the man who feels it in a certain way), but we are praised or blamed for our virtues and vices. 30 1106a

Further, we feel anger and fear without decision, but the virtues are decisions of some kind or they involve decision. Besides, we are said to be moved by the passions, but we are not said to be moved by our virtues and vices, but to be in a certain condition. 5

For these same reasons the virtues and vices cannot be capacities either; for we are neither called good nor bad, nor praised nor blamed, for the simple capacity of feeling the passions; again, we have the capacities by nature, but we are not made good or bad by nature (we have spoken of this before).

If, then, the virtues are neither passions nor capacities, the only possibility is that they are states. Thus we have stated what virtue is in respect of its genus. 10

#### CHAPTER 6: THE DIFFERENTIA OF VIRTUE OF CHARACTER

We must, however, not only describe virtue as a state, but also say what sort of state it is. We may remark, then, that every virtue causes its possessors to be in a good state and to perform their functions well well; e.g. the virtue of the eye makes both the eye and its work great; because it makes us see well. Similarly the virtue of the horse makes a horse both great in itself and good at running and at carrying its rider and at awaiting the attack of the enemy. Therefore, if this is true in every case, the virtue of man also will be the state of character which makes a man good and which makes him do his own work well. 15 20

We have already said how this is true, but it will also be clear if we consider the sort of nature that virtue has. In everything that is continuous and divisible it is possible to take more, less, or an equal amount, and to do so either in terms of the thing itself or relative to us. The equal is an intermediate between excess and deficiency. By the intermediate in the object I mean that which is equidistant from each of the extremes, which is one and the same for all men. By the intermediate relative to us I mean that which is neither too much nor too little. And this is not one and the same for all. men For instance, if ten is many and two is few, six is the intermediate, taken in terms of the object; for it exceeds and is exceeded by an equal amount (this is intermediate according to arithmetical proportion). But the intermediate relative to us cannot be found in this way. If ten pounds of food is too much for a particular person to eat and 25 30 35 1106b

two pounds is too little, it does not follow that the trainer will order six pounds; for this might also be too much for the person who is to take it, or too little. (It would be too little for Milo the wrestler, but too much for the beginner in athletic exercises.) The same is true of running and wrestling. Thus a master of any art avoids excess and deficiency, but seeks the intermediate and chooses this: the intermediate, not in the object, but relative to us. 5

So, every art does its work well by looking to the intermediate and judging its works by this standard. This is why we often say of good works of art that it is not possible either to take away or to add anything, implying that excess and deficiency destroy the goodness of works of art, while the mean preserves it. Good artists, as we say, look to this mean in their work. Virtue is more exact and better than any art (as nature also is), so virtue must have the quality of aiming at the intermediate. 10 15

I am speaking here about virtue of character; for it is this that is concerned with passions and actions, and in these there is excess, deficiency, and the intermediate. For instance, both fear and confidence and appetite and anger and pity and in general pleasure and pain may be felt both too much and too little, and in both cases not well; but to feel them at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way, is what is both intermediate and best, and this is characteristic of virtue. Similarly with regard to actions also there is excess, deficiency, and the intermediate. Now virtue is concerned with passions and actions, in which excess is a form of failure, and so is deficiency, while the intermediate is praised and is a form of success; and being praised and being successful are both characteristics of virtue. Therefore virtue is a kind of mean, since, as we have seen, it aims at what is intermediate. 20 25

Again, it is possible to fail in many ways (for badness belongs to the unlimited, as the Pythagoreans conjectured, and good to the limited), while to succeed is possible only in one way. (This is why it is easy to miss the mark and difficult to hit it.) For these reasons also, then, excess and deficiency are characteristic of vice, and the mean of virtue: "For men are good in but one way, but bad in many." 30 35

Virtue, then, is a state concerned with decision, lying in a mean relative to us, which is determined by reason, i.e., by the reason with by reference to which a prudent man would determine it. Now it is a mean between two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency; and again it is a mean because the vices respectively fall short of or exceed what is right in both passions and actions, while virtue both finds and chooses that which is intermediate. Hence, if we consider its essence and the account of what it is, virtue is a mean. But, if we consider what is best and right, virtue is an extreme. 1107a 5

Now not every action nor every passion admits of a mean; for some have names that already imply badness, e.g. spite, shamelessness, envy, and in the case of actions adultery, theft, murder. All of these and similar actions imply by their names that they are themselves bad, not the excesses or deficiencies of them. It is not possible, then, ever to be right when doing these things; one must always be wrong. It's not the case what whether we do them well or badly depends factors like whether we commit adultery with the right woman, at the right time, and in the right way. Rather it is simply wrong to do these things at. 10 15

It would be equally absurd, then, to expect that in unjust, cowardly, and licentious action there should be a mean, an excess, and a deficiency; for at that rate there would be a mean of excess and of deficiency, an excess of excess, and a deficiency of deficiency. But as there is no excess and deficiency of temperance and courage because what is intermediate is in a sense an extreme, so too of the actions we have mentioned there is no mean nor any excess and deficiency, but however they are done they are wrong; for in general there is neither a mean of excess and deficiency, nor excess and deficiency of a mean. 20 25

CHAPTER 7: THE INDIVIDUAL VIRTUES OF CHARACTER

We must, however, not only make this general statement, but also apply it to the individual facts. For among statements about conduct those which are general apply more widely, but those which are particular are more genuine, since conduct has to do with individual cases, and our statements must harmonize with the facts in these cases. We may take these cases from our table. 30

With regard to feelings of fear and confidence courage is the mean; of the people who exceed, he who exceeds in fearlessness has no name (many of the states have no name), while the man who exceeds in confidence is rash, and he who exceeds in fear and falls short in confidence is a coward. 1107b

With regard to pleasures and pains—not all of them, and not so much with regard to the pains—the mean is temperance, the excess licentiousness. Persons deficient with regard to the pleasures are not often found; hence such persons also have received no name. But let us call them 'insensible'. 5

With regard to giving and taking of money the mean is generosity, the excess and the deficiency wastefulness and ungenerosity. In these actions people exceed and fall short in contrary ways; the wasteful exceeds in spending and falls short in taking, while the ungenerous man exceeds in taking and falls short in spending. (At present we are giving a mere outline or summary, and are satisfied with this; later these states will be more exactly determined.) 10 15

With regard to money there are also other dispositions—a mean, munificence (for the munificent man differs from the generous man: the former deals with large sums, the latter with small ones), an excess, tastelessness and vulgarity, and a deficiency, niggardliness; these differ from the states opposed to generosity, and the mode of their difference will be stated later. 20

With regard to honor and dishonor the mean is pride, the excess is known as a sort of vanity, and the deficiency is humility.

As we said generosity was related to elegance, differing from it by dealing with small sums, so there is a state similarly related to pride, being concerned with small honors while pride is concerned with great ones. For it is possible to desire honor as one ought, and more than one ought, and less, and the man who exceeds in his desires is called ambitious, the man who falls short unambitious, while the intermediate person has no name. The dispositions also are nameless, except that that of the ambitious man is called ambition. Hence the people who are at the extremes lay claim to the middle place; and we ourselves sometimes call the intermediate person ambitious and sometimes unambitious, and sometimes praise the ambitious man and sometimes the unambitious. The reason of our doing this will be stated in what follows; but now let us speak of the remaining states according to the method which has been indicated. 25 30 1108a

With regard to anger also there is an excess, a deficiency, and a mean. Although they can scarcely be said to have names, yet since we call the intermediate person mild let us call the mean mildness; of the persons at the extremes let the one who exceeds be called irascible, and his vice irascibility, and the man who falls short an inirascible sort of person, and the deficiency inirascibility. 5

There are also three other means, which have a certain likeness to one another, but differ from one another: for they are all concerned with intercourse in words and actions, but differ in that one is concerned with truth in this sphere, the other two with pleasantness; and of this one kind is exhibited in giving amusement, the other in all the circumstances of life. We must therefore speak of these too, that we may the better see that in all things the mean is praiseworthy, and the extremes neither praiseworthy nor right, but worthy of blame. Now most of these states also have no names, but we must try, as in the other cases, to invent names ourselves so that we may be clear and easy to follow. 10 15

With regard to truth, then, the intermediate is a truthful sort of person and the mean may be called truthfulness, while the pretence which exaggerates is boastfulness and the person 20

characterized by it a boaster, and that which understates is modesty and the person characterized by it modest.

With regard to pleasantness in the giving of amusement the intermediate person is witty and the disposition wit, the excess is buffoonery and the person characterized by it a buffoon, while the man who falls short is a sort of boor and his state is boorishness. 25

With regard to the remaining kind of pleasantness, that which is exhibited in life in general, the man who is pleasant in the right way is friendly and the mean is friendliness, while the man who exceeds is an obsequious person if he has no end in view, a flatterer if he is aiming at his own advantage, and the man who falls short and is unpleasant in all circumstances is a quarrelsome and surly sort of person.

There are also means in the passions and concerned with the passions; since shame is not a virtue, and yet praise is extended to the modest man. For even in these matters one man is said to be intermediate, and another to exceed, as for instance the bashful man who is ashamed of everything; while he who falls short or is not ashamed of anything at all is shameless, and the intermediate person is modest. Righteous indignation is a mean between envy and spite, and these states are concerned with the pain and pleasure that are felt at the fortunes of our neighbors; the man who is characterized by righteous indignation is pained at undeserved good fortune, the envious man, going beyond him, is pained at all good fortune, and the spiteful man falls so far short of being pained that he even rejoices. But these states there will be an opportunity of describing elsewhere; with regard to justice, since it has not one simple meaning, we shall, after describing the other states, distinguish its two kinds and say how each of them is a mean; and similarly we shall treat also of the rational virtues. 30 35 1108b 5 10

## CHAPTER 8: THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MEAN AND EXTREME STATES

There are three kinds of disposition, then, two of them vices, involving excess and deficiency respectively, and one (the mean) a virtue. All are in a sense opposed to all; for the extreme states are contrary both to the intermediate state and to each other, and the intermediate to the extremes; as the equal is greater relatively to the less, less relatively to the greater, so the middle states are excessive relatively to the deficiencies, deficient relatively to the excesses, both in passions and in actions. For the brave man appears rash relative to the coward, and cowardly relative to the rash man; and similarly the temperate man appears licentious relative to the insensible man, insensible relative to the licentious, and the generous man appears wasteful relative to the ungenerous man and ungenerous relative to the wasteful man. Hence also the people at the extremes push the intermediate man each over to the other, and the brave man is called rash by the coward, cowardly by the rash man, and correspondingly in the other cases. 15 20 25

Because the states are opposed to each other in this way, the greatest contrariety is that of the extremes to each other, rather than to the intermediate; for these are further from each other than from the intermediate (as the great is further from the small and the small from the great than both are from the equal). Again, to the intermediate some extremes show a certain likeness, as that of rashness to courage and that of wastefulness to generosity; but the extremes show the greatest unlikeness to each other; now contraries are defined as the things that are furthest from each other, so that things that are further apart are more contrary. 30 35

In some cases the deficiency is more opposed to the mean and in some the excess is more opposed; e.g. it is not rashness, which is an excess, but cowardice, which is a deficiency, that is more opposed to courage, and not insensibility, which is a deficiency, but licentiousness, which is an excess, that is more opposed to temperance. 1109a

This happens from two reasons. One reason derives from the thing itself: because one extreme is nearer and liker to the intermediate, we oppose the contrary extreme to the intermediate condition more than the closer one. For example, since rashness seems more like 5

and nearer to courage, and cowardice more unlike, we oppose cowardice to courage; for things that are further from the intermediate are thought more contrary to it. This, then, is one cause, drawn from the thing itself. 10

Another cause is drawn from ourselves. The things to which we ourselves are more naturally drawn seem more contrary to the intermediate. For instance, we are drawn more naturally to pleasures, and hence are more easily carried away towards licentiousness than towards orderliness. So, we say that the direction in which we are more inclined to lapse is contrary to the mean, and therefore licentiousness, which is an excess, is the more contrary to temperance. 15

## CHAPTER 9: HOW TO HIT THE MEAN

We have said enough to show that virtue of character is a mean, in what sense it is so, that it is a mean between two vices, the one involving excess, the other deficiency, and that it is such because its character is to aim at what is intermediate in passions and in actions. 20

Hence also it is no easy task to be great. For in everything it is no easy task to find the middle—for example, not everyone can find the middle of a circle, only someone who knows how. Similarly, any one can get angry—that is easy—or give or spend money; but as for doing this to the right person, to the right extent, at the right time, with the right motive, and in the right way, not everyone can do that, nor is it easy; which is why greatness is both rare and laudable and fine. 25

Hence he who aims at the intermediate must first depart from what is the more contrary to it, as Calypso advises: “Hold the ship out beyond that surf and spray.” 30

For of the extremes one is more erroneous, one less so; therefore, since to hit the mean is extremely hard, we must as a second best (as people say) take the least of the evils; and this will be done best in the way we describe. 35

But we must consider the things towards which we ourselves also are easily carried away; for some of us tend to one thing, some to another; and this will be recognizable from the pleasure and the pain we feel. We must drag ourselves away to the contrary extreme; for we shall get into the intermediate state by drawing well away from error, as people do in straightening sticks that are bent. 1109b 5

Now in everything the pleasant or pleasure is most to be guarded against; for we do not judge it impartially. We ought, then, to feel towards pleasure as the elders of the people felt towards Helen, and in all circumstances repeat their saying; for if we dismiss pleasure thus we are less likely to go astray. It is by doing this, then, (to sum the matter up) that we shall best be able to hit the mean. 10

But this is no doubt difficult, and especially in individual cases; for or is not easy to determine both how and with whom and on what provocation and how long one should be angry; for we too sometimes praise those who fall short and call them mild, but sometimes we praise those who get angry and call them manly. 15

The man, however, who deviates little from goodness is not blamed, whether he does so in the direction of the more or of the less. Only the man who deviates more widely is blamed; for he does not fail to be noticed. But it is not easy to define in an account how far and to what extent a man must deviate before he becomes blameworthy. For nothing perceptible is easily defined. Such things depend on particular facts, and the decision rests with perception. 20

This much, then, is clear: the intermediate state is in all things to be praised, but that we must incline sometimes towards the excess, sometimes towards the deficiency; for so shall we most easily hit the mean and what is right. 25

**States of Character recognized by Aristotle**

<b>Area of Concern</b>	<b>State (virtue followed by excess and then deficiency)</b>
feelings of fear and confidence (concerning dangers related to a fine death)	<b>courage</b>
	confidence rashness
	cowardice
	fear (unnamed)
(bodily) pleasures	<b>temperance</b>
	licentiousness
	insensibility
giving and taking wealth (but especially giving)	<b>generosity</b>
	wastefulness
	ungenerosity
large-scale giving	<b>munificence</b>
	tastelessness or vulgarity
	niggardliness
honors, (in particular the superlative honors befitting a virtuous person)	<b>pride</b>
	vanity
	humility
trivial honors	(unnamed)
	ambitiousness
	unambitiousness
anger	<b>mildness</b>
	irascibility
	inirascibility
truth-telling in social situations.	<b>truthfulness</b>
	boastfulness
	modesty
amusement in social situations (joking in particular)	<b>wit</b>
	buffoonery
	boorishness
pleasures involved in meeting people	<b>friendliness</b>
	obsequiousness or flattery (depending on the motive)
	quarrelsomeness or surliness
proportionality in distribution and rectification	<b>justice</b>
	injustice

## BOOK IV: SOME PARTICULAR VIRTUES OF CHARACTER

### CHAPTER 3: PRIDE AS THE CROWN OF THE VIRTUES

Pride seems even from its name<sup>2</sup> to be concerned with great things. What sort of great things is the first question we must try to answer. It makes no difference whether we consider the state or the man who has it. 1123a  
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Now the proud man seems to be the one who thinks he deserves great things and does deserve them. For a man who thinks he deserves great things and does not deserve them is a fool and no virtuous man is foolish or silly. The proud man, then, is the man we have described. For, men who deserve little and think they deserve little are temperate, but not proud; for pride implies greatness, as beauty implies a good-sized body, and little people may be neat and well-proportioned but cannot be beautiful. 1123b  
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On the other hand, men who think they deserve great things but do not deserve them are vain; though not everyone who thinks he deserves more than he really does is vain. Men who think they deserve less than they really do are humble, whether they deserve great things or moderate things or they deserve little but claim even less. And the man who deserves great things but claims little seems humblest; for what would he have claimed if he had deserved less? The proud man, then, is an extreme in respect of the greatness of his claims, but a mean in respect of the rightness of them; for he claims what is accordance with his merits, while the others go to excess or fall short. 10

If, then, he deserves and claims great things (especially the greatest things), he will be concerned with one thing in particular. To deserve means to deserve external goods; and we suppose that the greatest of these is the one that we give to the gods, the one that people of position most aim at, the one that is the prize awarded for the finest deeds; and this is honor. Honor is surely the greatest of external goods. Therefore, the proud man has the right concern with honors and dishonors. And even apart from argument proud men appear to be concerned with honor; for they claim honor most of all, but they do so in accordance with what they deserve. 15  
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The humble man falls short both in comparison with his own merits and in comparison with the proud man's claims. The vain man goes to excess in comparison with his own merits, but does not exceed the proud man's claims. 25

Now the proud man, since he deserves most, must be the best man; for the better man always deserves more, and the best man deserves the most. Therefore the truly proud man must be good. And greatness in every virtue would seem to be characteristic of a proud man. It would be most unbecoming for a proud man to fly from danger, swinging his arms by his sides, or to wrong another; for to what end should he do disgraceful acts, he to whom nothing is great? If we consider him point by point we shall see the utter absurdity of a proud man who is not good. Nor, again, would he be worthy of honor if he were bad; for honor is the prize of virtue, and it is to the good that it is rendered. Pride, then, seems to be a sort of crown of the virtues; for it makes them greater, and it is not found without them. 30  
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1124a

Therefore it is hard to be truly proud; for it is impossible without fineness and goodness of character. It is chiefly with honors and dishonors, then, that the proud man is concerned; and at honors that are great and conferred by great men he will be moderately pleased, thinking that he is getting what is proper to him, or even less (for there can be no honor that is worthy of complete virtue). But he will still accept honors from virtuous people, since they have nothing greater to bestow on him. But he will utterly despise honor from casual people and on trifling grounds, since this is not what he deserves. And he will despise dishonor too, since in his case it 5  
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<sup>2</sup> The Greek word is *megalopsuchia*, which means literally "greatness of soul".



cannot be just.

In the first place, then, as has been said, the proud man is concerned with honors; yet he will also bear himself with moderation towards wealth and power and all good or evil fortune, whatever may befall him, and will be neither overjoyed by good fortune nor over-pained by evil. Since he does not even regard honor as the greatest good. Power and wealth are desirable for the sake of honor (at least those who have them wish to get honor by means of them). Thus, if even honor matters little to a man, so will the other goods. This is why proud men seem arrogant. 15

The goods of fortune also are thought to contribute towards pride. For men who are well-born are thought to deserve honor, and so are those who enjoy power or wealth. This is because they are in a superior position, and everything that has a superiority in something good is held in greater honor. Hence even such things make men prouder; for they are honored by some for having them; but in truth the only good man should be honored. 20

Still, anyone who has both virtue and these advantages is more readily thought to deserve honor. But those who lack virtue but have these other goods not justified in making great claims and they are not properly called proud, for desert and pride require complete virtue. Without virtue, men become arrogant and insolent, when they have such goods; for without virtue it is not easy to gracefully bear the goods of fortune; and, being unable to bear them, and thinking themselves superior to others, they despise others and themselves do what they please. They imitate the proud man without being like him wherever they can; so they do not act virtuously, but they do look down on others. The proud man is justified when he looks down on others (since his beliefs are true), but the many look down on others arbitrarily. 25

The proud man does not run into trifling dangers, nor is he fond of danger, because he honors few things; but he will face great dangers, and when he does he is unsparing of his life, knowing that there are conditions on which life is not worth having. 30

And he is the sort of man to confer benefits, but he is ashamed of receiving them; for the one is the mark of a superior, the other of an inferior. And he is apt to confer greater benefits in return; for thus the original benefactor besides being paid will incur a debt to him, and will be the gainer by the transaction. 1124b

Proud men seem also to remember any service they have done, but not those they have received (for he who receives a service is inferior to him who has done it, but the proud man wishes to be superior). And they seem to take pleasure in hearing of the services they have done, and to take displeasure in hearing of services that they have received. This seems to be why Thetis did not mention to Zeus the services she had done him, and why the Spartans did not recount their services to the Athenians, but recounted those they had received. 5

It is a mark of the proud man also to ask for nothing or scarcely anything, but to give help readily, and to be dignified towards people who enjoy high position and good fortune, but unassuming towards those of the middle class. Superiority over the first group a difficult and lofty thing, but it is easy to be superior to the second group, and a lofty bearing over the first group is no mark of ill-breeding, but among humble people it is as vulgar as a display of strength against the weak. 20

Again, it is characteristic of the proud man not to aim at the things commonly held in honor, or the things in which others excel; to delay and hold back except where great honor or a great work is at stake, and to be a man of few deeds, but of great and notable ones. 25

He must also be open in his hate and in his love (for to conceal one's feelings, i.e. to care less for truth than for what people will think, is the role of a coward). The proud man must speak and act openly; for he is free of speech because he is contemptuous, and he is given to telling the truth, except when he speaks in irony to the many. 30

He must be unable to make his life revolve round another, unless it be a friend. For making your life revolve around someone else is slavish; that is why all flatterers are servile and people lacking in self-respect are flatterers. 1125a

The proud man is not given to marvel; for nothing to him is great.

Nor is he mindful of wrongs; for it is not the part of a proud man to have a long memory, especially for wrongs, but rather to overlook them.

Nor is he a gossip; for he will speak neither about himself nor about another, since he cares not to be praised nor for others to be blamed; nor again is he given to praise; and for the same reason he is not an evil-speaker, even about his enemies, except from haughtiness.

With regard to necessary or small matters he is the last man of all to lament or ask for favors; those are the behaviors of someone who takes these things seriously.

His possessions will be beautiful and profitless things rather than profitable and useful ones; for this is more proper to an independent character.

Further, the proud man seems to have a slow step, a deep voice, and a calm speech. Since he takes few things seriously, he is not likely to be hurried and since he counts nothing as great, he is not likely to be excited; while a shrill voice and a rapid gait are the results of hurry and excitement.

Such, then, is the proud man; the man who falls short of him is humble, and the man who goes beyond him is vain. Now even these are not thought to be bad (for they are not malicious), but only mistaken.

For the humble man, deserving good things, robs himself of what he deserves. He has something bad in him because he does not think he deserves good things, and seems also not to know himself, or else he would have desired the things he deserved, since they are good. Yet such people are not thought to be fools, but rather hesitant. But their belief seems to actually make them worse; for each sort of man aims at what he thinks he deserves, and these men hold back even from fine actions and undertakings, and from external goods, because they think they do not deserve them.

Vain people, on the other hand, are fools and ignorant of themselves. This is obvious, because they attempt honorable undertakings when they are not deserving of them, so they are found out. They adorn themselves with clothing and outward show and such things, and wish their strokes of good fortune to be made public, and speak about them as if they would be honored for them. However, humility is more opposed to pride than vanity is; for it is both commoner and worse.

Pride, then, is concerned with honor on the grand scale, as has been said.

## CHAPTER 5: MILDNESS AS THE VIRTUE CONCERNED WITH ANGER

Mildness is a mean with respect to anger. The middle state is unnamed, and the extremes are almost nameless as well. We place mildness in the middle position, though it inclines towards the deficiency, which is without a name. The excess might be called a sort of “irascibility”. For the passion is anger, while its causes are many and diverse.

The man who is angry at the right things and with the right people, and, also as he ought, when he ought, and as long as he ought, is praised. This will be the mild man, then, since mildness is praised. For the mild man tends to be unperturbed and not to be led by passion, but to be angry in the manner, at the things, and for the length of time, that reason dictates. He seems to err more in the direction of deficiency; for the mild man ready to pardon, not eager to exact a penalty.

The deficiency, whether it is a sort of “inirascibility” or whatever it is, is blamed. For those who are not angry at the things they should be angry at seem to be fools, and so are those who are not angry in the right way, at the right time, or with the right persons; for such a man seems not to feel things nor to be pained by them, and, since he does not get angry, he seems unlikely to defend himself; and to endure being insulted and put up with insult to one's friends is slavish.

The excess can be manifested in all the points that have been named (for one can be angry with the wrong persons, at the wrong things, more than is right, too quickly, or too long); yet all

are not found in the same person. Indeed they could not; for evil destroys even itself, and if it is complete becomes unbearable. Now hot-tempered people get angry quickly and with the wrong persons and at the wrong things and more than is right, but their anger ceases quickly—which is the best point about them. This happens to them because they do not restrain their anger but retaliate openly owing to their quickness of temper, and then their anger ceases. By reason of excess choleric people are quick-tempered and ready to be angry with everything and on every occasion; whence their name. Sulky people are hard to appease, and retain their anger long; for they repress their passion. But it ceases when they retaliate; for revenge relieves them of their anger, producing in them pleasure instead of pain. If this does not happen they retain their burden; for owing to its not being obvious no one even reasons with them, and to digest one's anger in oneself takes time. Such people are most troublesome to themselves and to their dearest friends. We call bad-tempered those who are angry at the wrong things, more than is right, and longer, and cannot be appeased until they inflict vengeance or punishment.

To mildness we oppose the excess rather than the deficiency; for not only is it more common since it comes more naturally to men to exact a penalty than to overlook an offence, and bad-tempered people are worse to live with.

What we have said in our earlier treatment of the subject is plain also from what we are now saying. It is not easy to define how, with whom, at what, and how long one should be angry, and at what point right action ceases and wrong begins. For the man who strays a little from the path, either towards the more or towards the less, is not blamed; since sometimes we praise those who exhibit the deficiency, and call them mild, and sometimes we call angry people manly, as being capable of ruling. How far, therefore, and how a man must stray before he becomes blameworthy, it is not easy to state in words; for the decision depends on the particular facts and on perception. But at least this much is clear: the middle state is praiseworthy—the state from which we are angry with the right people, at the right things, in the right way, and so on, while the excesses and deficiencies are blameworthy—slightly so if they are present in a low degree, more if in a higher degree, and very much if in a high degree. Evidently, then, we must cling to the middle state. Enough of the states relative to anger.

## BOOK VI: THE VIRTUES OF THOUGHT

### CHAPTER 1: THE MEAN AS DETERMINED BY A VIRTUE OF THOUGHT

Since we have previously said that one ought to choose that which is intermediate, not the excess nor the deficiency, and that the intermediate is determined by the dictates of correct reason, let us discuss the nature of these dictates.

In all the states of character we have mentioned, as in all other matters, there is a mark to which the man who has reason looks, and heightens or relaxes his activity accordingly, and there is a standard which determines the mean states that we say are intermediate between excess and deficiency, because they are in accord with correct reason.

But such a statement, though true, is by no means clear; for not only here but in all other pursuits directed by a science it is indeed true to say that we must not exert ourselves nor relax our efforts too much nor too little, but to an intermediate extent and as correct reason dictates. But we had only this knowledge we would be none the wiser about, for example, what sort of medicines to apply to our body if someone were to say “all those which the medical art prescribes, and which agree with the practice of one who possesses the art”. Hence it is necessary with regard to the states of the soul also not only that this true statement should be made, but also that it should be determined what is correct reason and what its standard is.

We divided the virtues of the soul and said that some are virtues of character and others of

thought. Now we have discussed in detail the virtues or character; with regard to the others let us express our view as follows, beginning with some remarks about the soul. 1139a

We said before that there are two parts of the soul: one that has reason and another that is non-rational. Let us now draw a similar distinction within the part that has reason. And let it be assumed that there are two parts which have reason: one with which we contemplate the kind of things whose principles do not admit of being otherwise, and one by which we contemplate things whose principles do admit of being otherwise. For where objects differ in kind the part of the soul answering to each of the two is different in kind, since it is in virtue of a certain likeness and kinship with their objects that they have the knowledge they have. 5 10

Let one of these parts be called the scientific and the other the calculative; for to deliberate and to calculate are the same thing, but no one deliberates about the invariable. Therefore the calculative is one part of the part of the soul that has reason. We must, then, learn what is the best state of the scientific part and what is the best state of the calculative part; for this is the virtue of each. 15

## CHAPTER 2: THE FUNCTIONS OF THE RATIONAL PARTS OF THE SOUL

The virtue of a thing is relative to its proper work. Now there are three things in the soul which control action and truth: perception, intellect, desire.

Of these perception originates no action; this is plain from the fact that the lower animals have perception but no share in action. 20

What affirmation and negation are in thinking, pursuit and avoidance are in desire; so that since virtue of character is a state of character concerned with choice, and choice is deliberate desire, therefore both the reasoning must be true and the desire right, if the choice is to be good, and the latter must pursue just what the former asserts. Now this kind of intellect and of truth is practical; of the intellect which is contemplative, not practical nor productive, the good and the bad state are truth and falsity respectively (for this is the work of everything intellectual); while of the part which is practical and intellectual the good state is truth in agreement with right desire. 25 30

The origin of action—the source of motion, not the goal—is decision, and that of decision is desire and reasoning with a view to an end. This is why choice cannot exist either without reason and thought or without a state of character; for good action and its opposite cannot exist without a combination of thought and character. Thought itself, however, moves nothing, but only the thought which aims at an end and is practical; for this rules the productive thought, as well, since everyone who produces something produces it for an end, and that which is produced is not an end in the unqualified sense (but only an end in a particular relation, and the end of a particular operation)—only that which is done is that; for good action is an end, and desire aims at this. Hence choice is either desiderative reason or ratiocinative desire, and such an origin of action is a man. 35 1139b

(It is to be noted that nothing that is past is an object of choice, e.g. no one chooses to have sacked Troy; for no one deliberates about the past, but about what is future and capable of being otherwise, while what is past is not capable of not having taken place; hence Agathon is right in saying: 'For this alone is lacking even to God, To make undone things that have once been done.' 5 10

The function of both the thinking parts, then, is truth. Therefore the states that are most strictly those in respect of which each of these parts will reach truth are the virtues of the two parts.

### CHAPTER 3: SCIENTIFIC-KNOWLEDGE (EPISTĒMĒ) AS DEMONSTRATED FROM PRINCIPLES

Let us begin, then, from the beginning, and discuss these states once more. Let it be assumed that the states by virtue of which the soul possesses truth by way of affirmation or denial are five in number, i.e. art, scientific-knowledge, prudence, wisdom, intellect (we do not include judgment and opinion because in these we may be mistaken). 15

Now what scientific-knowledge is, if we are to speak exactly and not follow mere similarities, is clear from what follows. We all suppose that what we know scientifically is not even capable of being otherwise. Whenever something that can be otherwise escapes observation, we do not notice whether it exists or not. Therefore the object of scientific-knowledge is something necessary. Therefore it must be eternal; for things that are necessary in the unqualified sense are all eternal; and things that are eternal cannot be created or destroyed. 20

Again, every science seems to be capable of being taught, and its object of being learned. And all teaching starts from what is already known, as we maintain in the *Analytics* also; for it proceeds sometimes through induction and sometimes by deduction. Now induction leads to the principle, i.e. the universal, while deduction proceeds from universals. There are therefore principles from which deduction proceeds, which are not reached by deduction; it is therefore by induction that they are acquired. 25 30

Scientific-knowledge is, then, a state or capacity to demonstrate, and has the other limiting characteristics which we specify in the *Analytics*, for it is when a man believes in a certain way and the principles are known to him that he has scientific-knowledge, since if they are not better known to him than the conclusion, he will have his knowledge only incidentally.

Let this, then, be taken as our account of scientific-knowledge. 35

### CHAPTER 4: ART AS RATIONAL PRODUCTION

Things that can vary include both products and actions; producing and acting are different; so that the rational state concerned with action is different from the rational state concerned with production. And neither of these is included in the other; for neither is action production nor is production action. 1140a 5

Now building, for example, is an art and is essentially a certain rational state concerned with production, and there is no art that is not such a state, nor any such state that is not an art. Art is identical with a state concerned with production involving a true reason. 10

All art is concerned with coming into being—i.e. with contriving and considering how something can come to be that is capable of either being or not being has its principle in the maker and not in the thing made; for art is concerned neither with things that are, nor with those that come into being by necessity, nor with things that do so in accordance with nature (since these have their origin in themselves). 15

Because production and action are different, art must be a matter of production not of action. And in a sense chance and art are concerned with the same objects; as Agathon says, “art loves chance and chance, art.”

Art, then, as has been is a state concerned with production, involving a true reason, and lack of art is the contrary state concerned with production, involving a false reason. Both are concerned with what is variable. 20

### CHAPTER 5: PRUDENCE (PHRONĒSIS)

We can get at the truth regarding prudence by considering the sort of people who we call prudent. Now it seems to be the mark of a man of prudence to be able to deliberate well about what is good and expedient for oneself, not in some particular area (e.g., about what sorts of 25

thing conduce to health or to strength), but about what sorts of thing conduce to the good life in general. This is shown by the fact that we credit men with prudence in some particular area when they have calculated well with a view to some good end which is not the object of any art. It follows that in the general sense also the man who is capable of deliberating has prudence. 30

Now no one deliberates about things that are invariable, nor about things that it is impossible for him to do. Therefore, since scientific-knowledge involves demonstration, but there is no demonstration of things whose first principles are variable (for all such things might actually be otherwise), and since it is impossible to deliberate about things that are of necessity, prudence cannot be scientific knowledge nor art. It cannot be scientific-knowledge because actions are capable of being otherwise. It can't be art because action and production are different kinds of thing. 35 1140b

The remaining possibility, then, is that prudence is a rational state that grasps the truth with regard to the things that are good or bad for man. For while production has an end other than itself, action cannot; for good action itself is its end. 5

It is for this reason that we think Pericles and men like him have prudence: they can see what is good for themselves and what is good for men in general. We consider household managers and politicians to be such men. 10

This is why we call temperance (*sophrosune*) by this name; we imply that it preserves one's prudence (*sozousa tan phronsin*). Now what it preserves is a judgment of the kind we have described. For pleasant and painful objects do not destroy and pervert every judgment; for example, they do not destroy or pervert the judgment that the triangle has or has not its angles equal to two right angles. They only destroy and pervert judgments about what is to be done. For the principle of action is the goal it seeks. But a man who has been corrupted by pleasure or pain fails to see any such principle, and he fails to see that this ought to be the goal of everything he chooses and does; for vice corrupts the principle. Prudence, then, must be a rational and true state concerned with action in relation to human goods. 15 20

But further, while there is such a thing as excellence in art, there is no such thing as excellence in prudence; and in art men who err willingly are preferable to ones who err unwillingly, but in prudence, as in the virtues, the man who errs willingly is worse than the one who does so unwillingly. Clearly, then, prudence is a virtue and not an art. Since there are two parts of the soul that have reason, prudence must be the virtue of one of the two. It must be the virtue of the part that forms opinions; for opinion is about variable things and so is prudence. But yet it is not only a rational state; this is shown by the fact that a state of that sort can be forgotten but prudence cannot. 25 30

## CHAPTER 6: INTELLECT (NOUS)

Scientific-knowledge is judgment about things that are universal and necessary, and the conclusions of demonstration, and all scientific-knowledge, follow from principles (for scientific-knowledge involves reason). This being so, the principle from which what is scientifically-known follows cannot be an object of scientific knowledge, of art, or of prudence; for that which can be scientifically-known can be demonstrated, and art and prudence deal with things that are variable. Nor are these principles the objects of wisdom (*sophia*), for it is a mark of the philosopher to have demonstration about some things. If, then, the states of mind by which we have truth and are never deceived about things invariable or even variable are scientific-knowledge, prudence, wisdom, and intellect (*nous*), and it cannot be any of the three (i.e. prudence, scientific-knowledge, or wisdom), the remaining alternative is that it is intellect that grasps the first principles. 35 1141a 5

CHAPTER 7: WISDOM

In the arts we ascribe wisdom to the people who have the most exact skill, for example to Phidias as a sculptor and to Polyclitus as a maker of portrait-statues. When we call these people wise, we mean nothing by wisdom except excellence in art, but we think that some people are wise in general, not in some particular field or in any other limited respect, as Homer says in the Margites:

Him did the gods make neither a digger nor yet a ploughman  
Nor wise in anything else.

Therefore wisdom must plainly be the most exact form of knowledge. It follows that the wise man must not only know what follows from the principles, but must also possess truth about the principles. Therefore wisdom must be intellect combined with scientific-knowledge—scientific-knowledge of the highest objects.

Of the highest objects, we say; for it would be strange to think that the art of politics, or prudence, is the best knowledge, since man is not the best thing in the world. Now if what is healthy or good is different for men and for fishes, but what is white or straight is always the same, any one would say that what is wise is the same but what is prudent is different; for it is to that which observes well the various matters concerning itself that one ascribes prudence, and it is to this that one will entrust such matters. This is why we say that some even of the lower animals have prudence, viz. those which are found to have a power of foresight with regard to their own life. It is evident also that wisdom and the art of politics cannot be the same; for if the state of mind concerned with a man's own interests is to be called wisdom, there will be many wisdoms; there will not be one concerned with the good of all animals (any more than there is one art of medicine for all existing things), but a different wisdom about the good of each species.

But if someone argues that man is the best of the animals, this makes no difference; for there are other things much more divine in their nature even than man, e.g., most conspicuously, the bodies of which the heavens are framed. From what has been said it is plain, then, that philosophic wisdom is scientific knowledge, combined with intuitive reason, of the things that are highest by nature. This is why we say Anaxagoras, Thales, and men like them have wisdom, but not prudence, when we see them ignorant of what is to their own advantage, and why we say that they know things that are remarkable, admirable, difficult, and divine, but useless; viz. because it is not human goods that they seek

Prudence, as opposed to wisdom, is concerned with human things and things about which it is possible to deliberate. For we say deliberation is above all the work of the prudent man, but no one deliberates about things invariable, nor about things which have not an end, and that a good that can be brought about by action. The man who is without qualification good at deliberating is the man who is capable of aiming in accordance with calculation at the best for things for man that are attainable by action.

Prudence is not concerned only with universals: it must also recognize the particulars; for it is concerned with action, and action is about particulars. This is why some people who lack scientific-knowledge, especially those who have experience, are more able to act than others who have knowledge; for if a man knew that light meats are digestible and wholesome, but did not know which sorts of meat are light, he would not produce health, but the man who knows that chicken is wholesome is more likely to produce health.

Now prudence is concerned with action; therefore prudent men need both universal knowledge and particular knowledge, but especially particular knowledge. Here too, however, there must be some ruling kind.

CHAPTER 8: THE TYPES OF PRUDENCE

Statesmanship and prudence are the same state, but their being is not the same. There are two types of prudence, insofar as it is concerned with a city-state. The one which plays the role of ruling is legislation. The other type is concerned with particulars and is called statesmanship, although this name is common to both types. This type of statesmanship has to do with action and deliberation; for a decree is a thing to be carried out in the form of an individual act. This is why the exponents of this art are the only ones said to practice statesmanship; for only they practice statesmanship in the way that artisans practice their arts. 25

Prudence also is identified especially with the form of it that is concerned with a man himself—with the individual. This is known by the name prudence, which is common to all the types. The other kinds of prudence are called household management, legislation, and statesmanship, respectively. One part of statesmanship is called deliberative and the other judicial. 30

Now knowing what is good for oneself will be one kind of knowledge, but it is very different from the other kinds; and the man who knows and concerns himself with his own interests seems to have prudence, while politicians are thought to be busybodies; hence the word of Euripides: 1142a

But how could I be wise, who might at ease,  
Numbered among the army's multitude,  
Have had an equal share?

For those who aim too high and do too much. 5

Those who think this way seek their own good, and consider it right to do so. This opinion, then, is the source of the view that such men have prudence. But one's own good cannot exist without household management and government. Further, it is unclear (and should be examined) how one should order one's own affairs. 10

What has been said is confirmed by the fact that while young men become geometricians and mathematicians and wise in matters like these, it seems that a young man of prudence cannot be found. The cause is that such wisdom is concerned not only with universals but with particulars, which become familiar from experience, but a young man has no experience, for it is length of time that gives experience. Similarly, one might ask this why a youth can become a mathematician, but not a philosopher or a physicist. It is because the objects of mathematics exist by abstraction, while the principles of these other subjects come from experience. Young men have no conviction about the latter but merely use the proper language, while the essence of mathematical objects is clear enough to them. 15

Further, error in deliberation may be either about the universal or about the particular; we may fall to know either that all water that weighs heavy is bad, or that this particular water weighs heavy. 20

It is evident that prudence is not scientific knowledge; for, as has been said, it is concerned with the ultimate particular fact, since the action is of this nature. It is opposed, then, to intellect; for intellect is of the first terms, for which no account can be given, while prudence is concerned with the ultimate particular, which is the object not of scientific-knowledge but of perception. (I do not mean the perception of qualities peculiar to one sense, but a perception like the one by which we perceive that the particular figure before us is a triangle; for it stops there too. But this is perception rather than prudence, even though it is a different kind of perception than the one we have of the qualities peculiar to each sense.) 30



CHAPTER 12, EXCERPT 1: PRUDENCE AND WISDOM AS NECESSARY FOR HAPPINESS

Even if they do not produce anything, both prudence and wisdom must be choice worthy because they are the virtues of the two rational parts of the soul. 1144a

However, they do produce something, not in the way that the art of medicine produces health, but in the way that health produces health. It is in this way that wisdom produces happiness. Since wisdom is a part of the whole of virtue, it makes us happy by being possessed and exercised. 5

Again, the function of a man is achieved only in accordance with prudence as well as virtue of character; for virtue makes the goal right and prudence makes us find the right path to it. (There is no excellence of the fourth part of the soul—the nutritive—because there are no actions which it is up to it either to do or not do.) 10

CHAPTER 12, EXCERPT 2: PRUDENCE AS OPPOSED TO CLEVERNESS

There is a capacity called cleverness. It enables us to take the actions that tend towards a mark that we have set, and to hit it. Now if this mark is fine, the cleverness is laudable, but if the mark is bad, cleverness is villainous. Hence we call both prudent men and villains clever. 1144a  
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Prudence is not this cleverness, but it requires this faculty. And, as we have said, it is clear that prudence, this eye of the soul, requires virtue to reach its developed state. For inferences about actions have a principle: ‘since the end, i.e. the best good, is this sort of thing’ (for the sake of argument let it be whatever you like). And this end is only evident to the good man; for vice perverts us and deceives us about the principles of actions. Therefore it is evident that it is impossible to be prudent without being good.. 30  
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### The Virtues of the Different Parts of the Soul

Part of Soul	Virtue
<p><b>nutritive:</b> This is the part of the soul that all organisms have. It is responsible for non-conscious life processes, like growth, digestion, and respiration.</p>	<p><b>none:</b> This part of the soul does not have any human virtue because the virtues are excellences of <i>reason</i>, and this part of the soul has no share in reason.</p>
<p><b>perceptual:</b> This is the part of the soul that differentiates animals from plants. It is the source of perception, desire, and locomotion. Animals form desires perceptually and satisfy them by moving.</p>	<p><b>the virtues of character:</b> In human beings, this part of the soul “listens to reason like a father”, and so it does have virtues. These virtues of character are dispositions to feel and desire in accordance with reason.</p>
<p><b>rational:</b> This is the part of the soul that differentiates men from animals. It is the part with which we think. It has two subparts.</p>	<p><b>art:</b> An art is a state from which we are able to produce something.</p>
<p><b>calculative:</b> This part of the soul contemplates the things that a person is able to change, and deliberates about them.</p>	<p><b>prudence (<i>phronēsis</i>):</b> This is “a state grasping the truth, involving reason, concerned with action about things that are good or bad for a man”. It is the state from which we deliberate about what to do.</p>
<p><b>scientific:</b> This part of the soul contemplates things that cannot be changed (like the laws of science) and tries to understand them.</p>	<p><b>scientific-knowledge (<i>epistēmē</i>):</b> This is the state we are in when we not only know that something is the case, but also understand why it has to be the case, because we see it as following from causes.</p>
	<p><b>intellect (<i>nous</i>):</b> This is the state we are in when we grasp principles (first causes).</p>
	<p><b>wisdom (<i>sophia</i>):</b> This is the combination of intellect and scientific-knowledge. It consists in grasping principles and understanding their consequences as consequences of them.</p>

## BOOK VII: OTHER STATES RELATED TO VIRTUE AND VICE

### \*CHAPTER 1: CURRENT OPINIONS ABOUT INCONTINENCE AND CONTINENCE

Both continence and endurance are thought to be included among the good and praiseworthy things, and both incontinence and softness among the bad and blameworthy things; and the same man is thought to be continent and ready to abide by the result of his calculations, or incontinent and ready to abandon them. Also the incontinent man, knowing that what he does is bad, does it as a result of passion, while the continent man, knowing that his appetites are bad, refuses because of reason to follow them. 1145  
10

Everyone calls temperate men continent and disposed to endurance, while some maintain that the any continent man is temperate but others do not; and some call the licentious man incontinent and the incontinent man licentious indiscriminately, while others distinguish them. 15

Sometimes it's said that a prudent man cannot be incontinent, but sometimes it's said that some prudent and clever people are incontinent.

Also people are called incontinent also with respect to anger, honor, and gain.

These, then, are the things that are said.

20

### \*CHAPTER 2: QUESTIONS ABOUT INCONTINENCE

Now we may wonder how a man who judges rightly can behave incontinently. Some say it is impossible for him to behave this way when he has knowledge. For Socrates thought it would be strange if when knowledge was in a man something else could master it and drag it around like a slave. 25

Socrates was entirely opposed to the view in question, holding that there is no such thing as incontinence. For he thought that no one supposes, while he acts, that his action conflicts with what is best; it is only due to ignorance that people act against what is best.

Now this view plainly contradicts the observed facts, and we must inquire about what happens to such a man; if he acts due to ignorance, what sort of ignorance does he have? For it's evident that someone who behaves incontinently does not, before he gets into this state, think he ought to act in the way he does. 30

There are some who concede certain of Socrates' contentions but not others. They admit that nothing is stronger than knowledge, but not that on one acts contrary to what has seemed to him the better course. Therefore, they say that the incontinent man doesn't have knowledge when he is mastered by his pleasures, but only belief. But if it is belief and not knowledge—if what resists the action is not a strong conviction but a weak one, as with hesitant men—we sympathize with their failure to stand by such convictions against strong appetites. But we do not sympathize with vice, nor with any of the other blameworthy states. 35  
1146a

Then is it prudence whose resistance is mastered? That is the strongest of all states. But this is absurd; the same man will be at once prudent and incontinent, but no one would say that it is the part of a prudent man to do willingly the basest acts. Besides, it has been shown before that the prudent man is one who will act (for he is a man concerned with the individual facts) and who has the other virtues. 5

Further, if continence involves having strong and bad appetites, the temperate man will not be continent nor the continent man temperate; for a temperate man will have neither excessive nor bad appetites. But the continent man must; for if the appetites are good, the state of character that restrains us from following them is bad, so that not all continence will be good; while if they are weak and not bad, there is nothing admirable in resisting them, and if they are weak and 15

bad, there is nothing great in resisting these either.

Further, if continence makes a man ready to stand by any and every belief, it is bad—i.e. if it makes him stand even by a false belief; and if incontinence makes a man apt to abandon any and every belief, there will be a good incontinence, of which Sophocles' Neoptolemus in the Philoctetes will be an instance; for he is to be praised for not standing by what Odysseus persuaded him to do, because he is pained at telling a lie. 20

Further [...] there is an argument from which it follows that folly coupled with incontinence is virtue; for a man does the opposite of what he judges, owing to incontinence, but judges what is good to be bad and something that he should not do, and as a result he will do what is good and not what is bad. 30

Further, someone who does and pursues what is pleasant because he is convinced and decides to seems to be better than someone who does so as a result not of calculation but of incontinence. For the first man is easier to cure, since he may be convinced to change his mind. But the incontinent man illustrates the proverb "when water chokes, what is one to wash it down with?" If he had been convinced of the rightness of what he does, he would have desisted when he was convinced to change his mind; but now he acts in spite of his being convinced of something quite different. 35

### \*CHAPTER 3: ARISTOTLE'S OWN ACCOUNT OF INCONTINENCE

As for the suggestion that it is true belief and not knowledge against which we act incontinently, that makes no difference to the account; for some people when in a state of belief do not hesitate, but think they know exactly. If, then, the notion is that due to their weak conviction those who have belief are more likely to act against their judgment than those who know, we answer that there need be no difference between knowledge and belief in this respect; for some men are no less convinced of what they think than others of what they know; as is shown by the of Heraclitus. 1146b  
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However, since we use the word "know" (*epistēmē*) in two senses (for both the man who has knowledge but is not using it and the one who is using it are said to know), it will make a difference whether, when a man does what he should not, he has the knowledge but is not exercising it, or is exercising it; for the latter seems strange, but not the former. 30

Further, since there are two kinds of premises, there is nothing to prevent a man's having both premises and acting against his knowledge, provided that he is using only the universal premise and not the particular; for it is particular acts that have to be done. 35  
1147a

And there are also two kinds of universal term; one is predicable of the agent, the other of the object; e.g. "dry food is good for every man", and "I am a man", or "such and such food is dry". But what about whether "this food is such and such"? The incontinent man either doesn't have this knowledge or he is not exercising it. 5

So, first of all, there will be an enormous difference between these sorts of knowing, so that to know in one way when we act incontinently would not seem to be anything strange, while to know in the other way would be extraordinary.

And further, there is another sense than those we've described in which knowledge is possessed by men. For within the case of having knowledge but not using it we see a difference of state, admitting of the possibility of having knowledge in a sense and yet not having it, as in the instance of a man who is asleep, mad, or drunk. But now this is just the condition of men who are under the influence of passions; for evidently outbursts of anger and sexual appetites and some other such passions actually alter our bodily condition, and in some men even produce fits of madness. 10  
15

It is clear, then, that incontinent people must be said to be in a similar condition to men

asleep, mad, or drunk. The fact that men use the language that flows from knowledge proves nothing; for even men under the influence of these passions utter scientific proofs and verses of Empedocles, and those who have just begun to learn a science can string together its phrases, but do not yet know it; for it has to become part of themselves, and that takes time; so that we must suppose that the use of language by men in an incontinent state means no more than its utterance by actors on the stage. 20

Again, we may also view the cause as follows with reference to the facts of human nature. The one belief is universal, the other is concerned with the particular facts, and the latter is within the sphere of perception. When a single belief results from the two, the soul must in one type of case affirm the conclusion, while in the case of beliefs concerned with production it must immediately act. (E.g., if “everything sweet ought to be tasted”, and “this is sweet”, in the sense of being one of the particular sweet things, the man who can act and is not prevented must at the same time actually act accordingly). So, when the universal belief is present in us forbidding us to taste, and there is also the belief that “everything sweet is pleasant”, and that “this is sweet” (this being the belief that is active), and when appetite happens to be present in us, the one belief bids us avoid the object, but appetite leads us towards it (for it can move each of our bodily parts); so that it turns out that a man behaves incontinently under the influence (in a sense) of reason and a belief. And the belief is not contrary to correct reason in itself, but only incidentally—for the appetite is contrary, not the belief. It also follows that this is why the lower animals are not incontinent: because they have no universal judgment but only imagination and memory of particulars. 25 30 35

The explanation of how the ignorance is dissolved and the incontinent man regains his knowledge, is the same as in the case of the man who’s drunk or asleep and is not peculiar to this condition. We must go to the students of natural science for it. Now, since the last premise is both being a belief about a perceptible object and what determines our actions, this man either doesn’t have it when he is in the state of passion, or has it in the sense in which having knowledge did not mean knowing but only talking, as a drunken man may utter the verses of Empedocles. And because the last term is not universal nor equally an object of scientific knowledge with the universal term, the position that Socrates sought to establish actually seems to result; for it is not in the presence of what is thought to be knowledge proper that the affection of incontinence arises (nor is it this that is “dragged about” as a result of the state of passion), but in that of perceptual knowledge. 1147b 5 10

This must suffice as our answer to the question of action with and without knowledge, and how it is possible to behave incontinently with knowledge. 15

## BOOK IX: FRIENDSHIP

### CHAPTER 8: SELFISHNESS

The question is also debated, whether a man should love himself most, or someone else. People criticize those who love themselves most, and call them selfish, using this as an epithet of disgrace.<sup>3</sup>A bad man seems to do everything for his own sake, and the more so the more wicked he is. So men reproach him; they say, for instance, that he doesn’t do anything unless you make 1168a 30

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<sup>3</sup> The term I’m translating “selfishness” is *philautia*, which means literally “love of self.” “Self-love” is the more typical translation and in many ways is a better one, because it captures the tie to the issue of how much one should love oneself, and to the more general topic of love (or friendship), which is the subject of the surrounding chapters. However, the term carries the same negative connotations as the modern day “selfishness,” and these are important to Aristotle’s reasoning here and, especially, to the themes that we will be discussing in class. So, for our purposes I have chosen to use “selfishness” as a translation.

him. The decent man, on the other hand, acts for honor's sake, and the more so the better he is, and he acts for his friend's sake, neglecting his own interest.

But the facts clash with these arguments, and this is not surprising. For men say that one ought to love one's best friend best. And a man's best friend is one who wishes him well for his own sake, even if no one will know about it. These attributes are found most of all in a man's attitude towards himself, and so are all the other attributes by which a friend is defined; for, as we have said, it is from this relation that all the characteristics of friendship have extended to our neighbors. 1168b 5

All the proverbs, too, agree with this. They speak for example of friends sharing 'a single soul', and say 'what friends have is common property', and 'friendship is equality', and 'charity begins at home'; for all these marks will be found most in a man's relation to himself; he is his own best friend and therefore he ought to love himself best.

So it reasonable to be puzzled over which of the two views we should follow; for both are plausible. Perhaps we ought to mark off the arguments from each other and determine how far and in what respects each view is right. Now if we grasp the sense in which each understands 'selfishness', the truth may become evident. 10

Those who use the term as one of reproach ascribe selfishness to people who assign themselves the greater share of wealth, honors, and bodily pleasures. For these are the things that most people desire, and they busy themselves about them as though they were the best of all things. This is also the reason why these things become objects of competition. So those who are greedy with regard to these things gratify their appetites and in general their feelings and the irrational part of the soul. Most men are of this nature (which is the reason why the term "selfishness" has come to be used as it is: it takes its meaning from the prevailing type of selfishness, which is a bad one). 15 20

It is just, therefore, that men who are selfish in this way are reproached for being so. It's clear that the men who give themselves the preference in regard to objects of this sort are the ones people usually call selfish. For if a man were always anxious that he himself, above all things, should act justly, temperately, or in accordance with any other of the virtues, and in general, if he always tried to secure the honorable course for himself, no one will call such a man a selfish or blame him. 25

But such a man seems to be more selfish than the other. In any event, he assigns himself the finest and best things and gratifies and obeys the most authoritative part of himself. Just as a city or any other systematic whole is most properly identified with the most authoritative part of it, so is a man; and therefore, the man who loves this and gratifies it is the most selfish of all. 30

Besides, a man is called continent or incontinent based on whether or not his intellect is in control, on the assumption that this is the man himself. And acts involving reason seem especially to be our own acts and to be voluntary. Clearly, then this is what a man is, or he is this more than anything else. The outstanding man loves this part of himself the most. 35 1169a

This is why he is truly selfish, but a different kind of selfish from the kind that is reproached. The two types are as different as living according to reason is from living as passion dictates, and desiring what is fine from desiring what seems advantageous. 5

All men praise and approve of men who busy themselves in an exceptional degree with fine actions. And if all were to strive towards what is fine and strain every nerve to do the finest deeds, everything that should be done for the common good would be done, and every one would secure for himself the goods that are greatest, since virtue is the greatest of goods. 10

Therefore the good man should be selfish (for he will both himself profit by doing fine acts, and will benefit his fellows), but the wicked man should not; for he will hurt both himself and his neighbors, following as he does evil passions. For what the wicked man does clashes with the right actions, but the good man does the right things; for reason in each of its possessors chooses what is best for itself, and the good man obeys his reason. 15

It is also true that the outstanding man does many acts for the sake of his friends and his 20

country, and will die for them if necessary. For he will throw away both wealth and honors and in general the goods that are objects of competition, gaining what is fine for himself. He would prefer a short period of intense pleasure to a long one of mild enjoyment, a year living finely to many years of humdrum existence, and one great and fine action to many trivial ones. Now those who die for others doubtless attain this result; it is therefore a great prize that they choose for themselves. 25

Outstanding men will also throw away wealth on condition that their friends will gain more; for, when a man's friend gains wealth, he himself achieves what is fine. He is, therefore, assigning the greater good to himself. The same too is true of honor and office; for he will give up all of these for a friend, since this is fine and praiseworthy for himself. So this kind of person is rightly thought to be outstanding, since he chooses what is fine before everything else. But he might even give up the opportunity to take actions to his friend; it may be finer to be the cause of his friend's acting than to act himself. 30

In everything praiseworthy, then, we can see that the outstanding man assigns himself the greater share of what is fine. In this sense, then, as has been said, we should be selfish, but in the sense in which the many are selfish, we should not be. 35 1169b

## BOOK X: HAPPINESS

### CHAPTER 6 (EXCERPT): REVIEW OF ESSENTIAL POINTS ABOUT HAPPINESS

Now that we have spoken of the virtues, the forms of friendship, and the varieties of pleasure, what remains is to discuss in outline the nature of happiness, since this is what we say is the end of human action. 1176a 30

Our discussion will be the more concise if we first sum up what we have said already. We said, then, that it is not a state. For if it were a state, someone might have it even if he slept for his whole life and led the life of a plant. Or someone might be happy even while suffering the greatest misfortunes. If these implications are unacceptable, and we must count happiness as an activity, as we have said before. 35 1176b

Some activities are necessary, i.e. desirable for the sake of some other goal, while others are desirable in themselves. Evidently happiness must be one of the ones that are desirable in themselves, not one of the ones that are desirable for the sake of something else. For happiness does not lack anything and is independent. 5

Now an activity is desirable in itself if nothing is sought beyond the activity. And virtuous actions seem to be like this; for to do fine and good deeds is desirable for its own sake.

### CHAPTER 7: HAPPINESS AS A LIFE OF CONTEMPLATION

If happiness is activity in accordance with virtue, it is reasonable that it should be in accordance with the highest virtue; and this will be that of the best thing in us. This is intellect, or whatever it is that seems to be the natural ruler and guide and to think of fine and divine things. Complete happiness will be activity in accord with the proper virtue of thing, whether it is divine itself or simply the most divine part of us. We have already said that this activity is contemplation. 1177a 15

Now this seems to agree both with what we said before and with the truth. For, firstly, this activity is the best (since not only is reason the best thing in us, but the objects of reason are the best of knowable objects); and secondly, it is the most continuous, since we can contemplate truth more continuously than we can do anything. And we think happiness has pleasure mingled with it, and the activity of wisdom is admittedly the pleasantest of virtuous activities. In any event, the pursuit of contemplation seems to offer pleasures that are marvelous for their purity 25

and their enduringness, and it is to be expected that those who have knowledge will pass their time more pleasantly than those who seek it.

And the independence that is spoken of must belong most to the contemplative activity. For while a wise man, as well as a just man or one possessing any other virtue, needs the necessities of life, when they are sufficiently equipped with things of that sort, the just man needs people towards whom and with whom he shall act justly, and the temperate man, the brave man, and each of the others is in the same situation, but the wise man can contemplate truth even when by himself, all the more so the wiser he is. Perhaps he can contemplate better if he has colleagues, but still he is the most independent type of person. 30 1177b

And contemplation seems to be loved only for its own sake; for nothing arises from it except the contemplating, while with virtues concerned with action we try (to a greater or lesser extent) to gain something apart from the action.

Besides, happiness seems to depend on leisure; for we work in order to have leisure, and we fight wars so in order to live in peace. Now the virtues concerned with action have their activities in political or military affairs, and these actions seem to be unpleasurably. Warlike actions are completely unpleasurably; for no one chooses to be at war, or provokes war, for the sake of being at war; for if someone made enemies of his friends in order to bring about battle and slaughter, he would seem to be absolutely murderous. The actions of the statesman are also unpleasurably. Apart from the political activities themselves, they aim at power and honors, or at least happiness for him and his fellow citizens (a happiness different from political action, and evidently sought on the assumption that it is different). 5 10 15

So among virtuous actions, political and military actions are distinguished for being fine and great. But they are unpleasurably, aim at an end, and are not desirable for the sake of something else. On the other hand, the activity of intellect, which is contemplative, seems to be superior in seriousness, to aim at no end beyond itself, and to have its own proper pleasure (which augments the activity). It also seems to possess independence, leisureliness, unweariedness (so far as this is possible for man), and all the other attributes ascribed to the supremely happy man. It follows that this will be the complete happiness of man—if it spans a complete life (for none of the attributes of happiness is incomplete). 20 25

But such a life would be superior to a human life. For it is not in so far as he is man that he will live this way, but in so far as something divine is present in him. And the activity of this divine part would be as far superior to our composite nature as its activity is superior to that which is the exercise of the other kind of virtue. If intellect is divine, then, in comparison with man, the life according to it is divine in comparison with a human life. 30

But we must not follow those who advise us, being men, to think of human things, and, being mortal, of mortal things. We must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us; for even if it be small in bulk, it surpasses everything by far in power and worth. 1178a

Also each man seems to be his intellect, since it is the authoritative and better part of him. It would be strange, then, if he were to choose something else's life instead of his own.

And what we said before will apply now: that which is proper to each thing is by nature best and most pleasant for that thing. For man, therefore, the life in accordance with intellect is best and pleasantest, since intellect more than anything else is the man. This life, then, is also the happiest. 5

## CHAPTER 8: CONTEMPLATION AND THE VIRTUES

But in a secondary degree the life in accordance with the other kind of virtue is happy; for the activities in accordance with this are human. We do just and brave acts, and other virtuous acts, in relation to each other, observing our respective obligations in contracts and services and all 10



manner of actions and with regard to passions. All of these things are manifestly human.

Some of passions even seem to arise from the body, and in general virtue of character seems to be bound up with the passions. Prudence, too, is linked to virtue of character, and virtue of character to prudence, since the principles of prudence are in accordance with the virtues of character and rightness of character is in accordance with prudence. Because they are also connected to the passions, the virtues of character must also belong to our composite nature; and the virtues of our composite nature are human. Therefore, the life and the happiness which correspond to these virtues are also human.

The virtue of the intellect is a separate thing and we must be content to say no more about it. For to describe it precisely is a task greater than our purpose requires. But also, it would seem to need only a little external equipment, less than virtue of character does. Let us grant that both need the necessaries, and do so equally (for there will be little difference, even if the statesman's work is the more concerned with the body and things of that sort). Still there will be a big difference in what they need for the exercise of their activities. The generous man will need money for the doing of his generous deeds, and the just man too will need it for the returning of services (for wishes are hard to discern, and even people who are not just pretend to wish to act justly); and the brave man will need power if he is to accomplish any of the acts that correspond to his virtue, and the temperate man will need opportunity; for how else is either he or any of the others to be recognized?

It is debated, too, whether the will or the deed is more essential to virtue, which is assumed to involve both; it is surely clear that complete virtue involves both; but many things are needed for deeds, and the greater and finer the deeds are, the more things are needed.

But the man who is contemplating the truth needs no such things, at least with a view to the exercise of his activity. Indeed, we might even say that these things are hindrances to his contemplation. But in so far as he is a man and lives with a number of people, he chooses to do virtuous acts; he will therefore need such aids to living a human life.

That complete happiness is a contemplative activity will also be evident from the following consideration. We assume that the gods above all other things are blessed and happy; but what sort of actions must we assign to them? Acts of justice? Wouldn't the gods seem absurd if they make contracts and return deposits, and so on? Acts of a brave man, then, confronting dangers and running risks because it is fine to do so? Or generous acts? To whom will they give? It will be strange if they are really to have money or anything of the kind. And what would their temperate acts be? Is not such praise tasteless, since they have no bad appetites? If we were to run through them all, the circumstances of action would be found trivial and unworthy of gods. Still, every one supposes that they live and therefore that they are active; we cannot suppose them to sleep like Endymion. Now if you take away from a living being action, and still more production, what is left but contemplation? Therefore the gods' activity, which surpasses all others in blessedness, must be contemplative. It follows that, among human activities, the one which is most like this will have the character of happiness more than any of the others..

This is indicated, too, by the fact that the other animals have no share in happiness, being completely deprived of such activity. For while the whole life of the gods is blessed, and human life is blessed insofar as it includes something like this sort of activity, none of the other animals is happy, since they in no way share in contemplation. Happiness extends, then, just so far as contemplation does, and the more someone contemplates the happier he is, not as a mere coincidence but insofar as he contemplates; for this is precious in itself. Happiness, therefore, must be some form of contemplation.

But, being a man, one will also need external prosperity; for our nature is not independent for the purpose of contemplation. Our body also must be healthy and must have food and other attention.

Still, we must not think that the man who is to be happy will need many things or great things, merely because he cannot be supremely happy without external goods; for independence

and action do not involve excess, and we can do fine acts without ruling earth and sea. For even with moderate advantages one can act virtuously. This is clear enough; for private persons seem to do worthy acts no less than powerful men—indeed even more. If we have moderate resources, that is enough; for the life of the man whose activity accords with virtue will be happy. 5

Solon, too, was perhaps sketching well the happy man when he described him as moderately furnished with external goods, had what he regarded as the finest acts, and lived temperately. For one can do right actions even if he has only moderate possessions. 10

Anaxagoras also seems to have supposed the happy man not to be rich nor powerful, when he said that he would not be surprised if the happy man seemed to be a strange person to the many. For they judge by externals, since these are all they perceive. 15

The opinions of the wise seem, then, to harmonize with our arguments. But while such things carry some weight, the truth in practical matters is discerned from the facts of life. For these are the decisive factor. We must therefore survey what we have already said, bringing it to the test of the facts of life, and if it harmonizes with the facts we must accept it, but if it clashes with them we must suppose it to be mere theory. 20

Now the man who exercises his intellect and cultivates it seems to be in the best condition and most dear to the gods. For if the gods have any care for human affairs, as they are thought to have, it would be reasonable both that they should delight in that which was best and most akin to them (i.e., intellect) and that they should reward those who love and honor this most, because these people care for the things that are dear to the gods and act both rightly and finely. And it is clear that all these attributes belong most of all to the wise man. He, therefore, is the dearest to the gods. And presumably this same person will also be the happiest; so that in this way also the wise man, more than anyone else, will be happy. 25 30