

NICOMACHEAN ETHICS

BOOK I

[HAPPINESS]

1

[Ends and Goods]

§1 Every craft and every line of inquiry, and likewise every action and decision, seems to seek some good;* that is why some people were right to describe the good as what everything seeks.* §2 But the ends [that are sought] appear to differ; some are activities, and others are products apart from the activities.* Wherever there are ends apart from the actions, the products are by nature better than the activities. 1094a 5

§3 Since there are many actions, crafts, and sciences, the ends turn out to be many as well; for health is the end of medicine, a boat of boat building, victory of generalship, and wealth of household management. §4 But some of these pursuits are subordinate to some one capacity; for instance, bridle making and every other science producing equipment for horses are subordinate to horsemanship, while this and every action in warfare are, in turn, subordinate to generalship, and in the same way other pursuits are subordinate to further ones.* In all such cases, then,* the ends of the ruling sciences are more choiceworthy than all the ends subordinate to them, since the lower ends are also pursued for the sake of the higher. §5 Here it does not matter whether the ends of the actions are the activities themselves, or something apart from them, as in the sciences we have mentioned. 10 15

2

[The Highest Good and Political Science]

§1 Suppose, then, that the things achievable by action have some end that we wish for because of itself, and because of which we wish for the other things, and that we do not choose everything because of something else—for if we do, it will go on without limit, so that desire will prove to be empty and futile. Clearly, this end will be the good, that is to say, the best good.* 20

1094a §2 Then does knowledge of this good carry great weight for [our] way
of life, and would it make us better able, like archers who have a target to
25 aim at, to hit the right mark?* §3 If so, we should try to grasp, in outline
at any rate, what the good is, and which is its proper science or capacity.

§4 It seems proper to the most controlling science—the highest ruling
science.* §5 And this appears characteristic of political science.
1094b §6 For it is the one that prescribes which of the sciences ought to be stud-
ied in cities, and which ones each class in the city should learn, and how
far; indeed we see that even the most honored capacities—generalship,
household management, and rhetoric, for instance—are subordinate to
5 it. §7 And since it uses the other sciences concerned with action,* and
moreover legislates what must be done and what avoided, its end will
include the ends of the other sciences, and so this will be the human
good. §8 For even if the good is the same for a city as for an individual,
still the good of the city is apparently a greater and more complete good
10 to acquire and preserve. For while it is satisfactory to acquire and pre-
serve the good even for an individual, it is finer and more divine to
acquire and preserve it for a people and for cities.* And so, since our line
of inquiry seeks these [goods, for an individual and for a community], it
is a sort of political science.*

3

[The Method of Political Science]

Our discussion will be adequate if we make things perspicuous enough
to accord with the subject matter; for we would not seek the same degree
of exactness in all sorts of arguments alike, any more than in the products
15 of different crafts.* §2 Now, fine and just things, which political science
examines, differ and vary so much as to seem to rest on convention only,
not on nature.* §3 But [this is not a good reason, since] goods also vary
in the same way, because they result in harm to many people—for some
have been destroyed because of their wealth, others because of their
20 bravery.* §4 And so, since this is our subject and these are our premises,
we shall be satisfied to indicate the truth roughly and in outline; since our
subject and our premises are things that hold good usually [but not uni-
versally], we shall be satisfied to draw conclusions of the same sort.

Each of our claims, then, ought to be accepted in the same way [as
claiming to hold good usually]. For the educated person seeks exactness
25 in each area to the extent that the nature of the subject allows; for appar-
ently it is just as mistaken to demand demonstrations from a rhetorician
as to accept [merely] persuasive arguments from a mathematician.*
1095a §5 Further, each person judges rightly what he knows, and is a good
judge about that; hence the good judge in a given area is the person edu-

cated in that area, and the unqualifiedly good judge is the person educated in every area. 1095a

This is why a youth is not a suitable student of political science; for he lacks experience of the actions in life, which are the subject and premises of our arguments. §6 Moreover, since he tends to follow his feelings, his study will be futile and useless; for the end [of political science] is action, not knowledge.* §7 It does not matter whether he is young in years or immature in character, since the deficiency does not depend on age, but results from following his feelings in his life and in a given pursuit; for an immature person, like an incontinent person, gets no benefit from his knowledge. But for those who accord with reason in forming their desires and in their actions, knowledge of political science will be of great benefit. 10

§8 These are the preliminary points about the student, about the way our claims are to be accepted, and about what we propose to do.*

4

[Common Beliefs]

Let us, then, begin again.* Since every sort of knowledge and decision* pursues some good, what is the good that we say political science seeks? What, [in other words,] is the highest of all the goods achievable in action? 15

§2 As far as its name goes, most people virtually agree; for both the many and the cultivated call it happiness, and they suppose that living well and doing well are the same as being happy.* But they disagree about what happiness is, and the many do not give the same answer as the wise.* 20

§3 For the many think it is something obvious and evident—for instance, pleasure, wealth, or honor. Some take it to be one thing, others another. Indeed, the same person often changes his mind; for when he has fallen ill, he thinks happiness is health, and when he has fallen into poverty, he thinks it is wealth. And when they are conscious of their own ignorance, they admire anyone who speaks of something grand and above their heads. [Among the wise,] however, some used to think that besides these many goods there is some other good that exists in its own right and that causes all these goods to be goods.* 25

§4 Presumably, then, it is rather futile to examine all these beliefs, and it is enough to examine those that are most current or seem to have some argument for them. 30

§5 We must notice, however, the difference between arguments from principles and arguments toward principles.* For indeed Plato was right to be puzzled about this, when he used to ask if [the argument] set out from the principles or led toward them*—just as on a race course the path may go from the starting line to the far end,* or back again. For we should 1095b

1095b certainly begin from things known, but things are known in two ways;* for some are known to us, some known without qualification. Presumably, then, *we* ought to begin from things known to *us*.

- 5 §6 That is why we need to have been brought up in fine habits if we are to be adequate students of fine and just things, and of political questions generally. §7 For we begin from the [belief] that [something is true]; if this is apparent enough to us, we can begin without also [knowing] why [it is true].* Someone who is well brought up has the beginnings, or can easily acquire them.* Someone who neither has them nor
10 can acquire them should listen to Hesiod:* 'He who grasps everything himself is best of all; he is noble also who listens to one who has spoken well; but he who neither grasps it himself nor takes to heart what he hears from another is a useless man.'

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[The Three Lives]

- But let us begin again from the point from which we digressed.* For, it would seem, people quite reasonably reach their conception of the good,
15 i.e., of happiness, from the lives [they lead]; §2 for there are roughly three most favored lives: the lives of gratification, of political activity, and, third, of study.*

- The many, the most vulgar, would seem to conceive the good and happiness as pleasure, and hence they also like the life of gratification.
20 §3 In this they appear completely slavish, since the life they decide on is a life for grazing animals.* Still, they have some argument in their defense, since many in positions of power feel as Sardanapallus* felt, [and also choose this life].

- §4 The cultivated people, those active [in politics], conceive the good as honor, since this is more or less the end [normally pursued] in the political life. This, however, appears to be too superficial to be what we
25 are seeking;* for it seems to depend more on those who honor than on the one honored, whereas we intuitively believe that the good is something of our own and hard to take from us.* §5 Further, it would seem, they pursue honor to convince themselves that they are good; at any rate, they seek to be honored by prudent people, among people who know them,
30 and for virtue. It is clear, then, that—in their view at any rate—virtue is superior [to honor].

- §6 Perhaps, indeed, one might conceive virtue more than honor to be the end of the political life. However, this also is apparently too incomplete [to be the good]. For it seems possible for someone to possess virtue
1096a but be asleep or inactive throughout his life, and, moreover, to suffer the worst evils and misfortunes. If this is the sort of life he leads, no one would count him happy, except to defend a philosopher's paradox.*

Enough about this, since it has been adequately discussed in the popular works* as well. 1096a

§7 The third life is the life of study, which we shall examine in what follows.* 5

§8 The moneymaker's life is in a way forced on him [not chosen for himself];* and clearly wealth is not the good we are seeking, since it is [merely] useful, [choiceworthy only] for some other end. Hence one would be more inclined to suppose that [any of] the goods mentioned earlier is the end, since they are liked for themselves. But apparently they are not [the end] either; and many arguments have been presented against them.* Let us, then, dismiss them. 10

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[The Platonic Form of the Good]

Presumably, though, we had better examine the universal good, and puzzle out what is meant in speaking of it.* This sort of inquiry is, to be sure, unwelcome to us, because those who introduced the Forms were friends* of ours; still, it presumably seems better, indeed only right, to destroy even what is close to us if that is the way to preserve truth. We must especially do this as philosophers, [lovers of wisdom]; for though we love both the truth and our friends, reverence is due to the truth first. 15

§2 Those who introduced this view did not mean to produce an Idea for any [series] in which they spoke of prior and posterior [members];* that was why they did not mean to establish an Idea [of number] for [the series of] numbers. But the good is spoken of both in what-it-is [that is, substance], and in quality and relative;* and what exists in its own right, that is, substance, is by nature prior to the relative,* since a relative would seem to be an appendage and coincident of being. And so there is no common Idea over these. 20

§3 Further, good is spoken of in as many ways as being [is spoken of]:* in what-it-is, as god and mind;* in quality, as the virtues; in quantity, as the measured amount; in relative, as the useful; in time, as the opportune moment; in place, as the [right] situation; and so on. Hence it is clear that the good cannot be some common and single universal; for if it were, it would be spoken of in only one [of the types of] predication, not in them all. 25

§4 Further, if a number of things have a single Idea, there is also a single science of them; hence [if there were an Idea of good] there would also be some single science of all goods. But, in fact, there are many sciences even of the goods under one [type of] predication; for the science of the opportune moment, for instance, in war is generalship, in disease medicine. And similarly the science of the measured amount in food is medicine, in exertion gymnastics. [Hence there is no single science of the good, and so no Idea.] 30

1096a35 §5 One might be puzzled about what [the believers in Ideas] really
 1096b mean in speaking of the So-and-So Itself,* since Man Itself and man* have one and the same account of man; for insofar as each is man, they will not differ at all. If that is so, then [Good Itself and good have the same account of good]; hence they also will not differ at all insofar as each is good, [hence there is no point in appealing to Good Itself].

§6 Moreover, Good Itself will be no more of a good by being eternal;
 5 for a white thing is no whiter if it lasts a long time than if it lasts a day.

§7 The Pythagoreans would seem to have a more plausible view about the good, since they place the One in the column of goods. Indeed, Speusippus seems to have followed them. §8 But let us leave this for another discussion.

A dispute emerges, however, about what we have said, because the
 10 arguments [in favor of the Idea] are not concerned with every sort of good. Goods pursued and liked in their own right are spoken of as one species of goods, whereas those that in some way tend to produce or preserve these goods, or to prevent their contraries, are spoken of as goods because of these and in a different way. §9 Clearly, then, goods are spoken of in two ways, and some are goods in their own right, and others
 15 goods because of these.* Let us, then, separate the goods in their own right from the [merely] useful goods, and consider whether goods in their own right correspond to a single Idea.

§10 But what sorts of goods may we take to be goods in their own right? Are they the goods that are pursued even on their own—for instance, prudence, seeing, some types of pleasures, and honors?* For even if we also pursue these because of something else, we may nonetheless take them to be goods in their own right. Alternatively, is nothing except the Idea good in its own right, so that the Form will be futile?*
 20 §11 But if these other things are also goods in their own right, then, [if there is an Idea of good,] the same account of good will have to turn up in all of them, just as the same account of whiteness turns up in snow and in chalk.* In fact, however, honor, prudence, and pleasure have different
 25 and dissimilar accounts, precisely insofar as they are goods. Hence the good is not something common corresponding to a single Idea.

§12 But how, then, is good spoken of? For it is not like homonyms resulting from chance.* Is it spoken of from the fact that goods derive from one thing or all contribute to one thing? Or is it spoken of more by analogy? For as sight is to body, so understanding is to soul, and so on for other cases.*

30 §13 Presumably, though, we should leave these questions for now, since their exact treatment is more appropriate for another [branch of] philosophy.* And the same is true about the Idea. For even if there is some one good predicated in common,* or some separable good, itself in its own right, clearly that is not the sort of good a human being can
 35 achieve in action or possess; but that is the sort we are looking for now.

§14 Perhaps, however, someone might think it is better to get to know the Idea with a view to the goods that we can possess and achieve in action; for [one might suppose that] if we have this as a sort of pattern, we shall also know better about the goods that are goods for us, and if we know about them, we shall hit on them. §15 This argument certainly has some plausibility, but it would seem to clash with the sciences. For each of these, though it aims at some good and seeks to supply what is lacking, leaves out knowledge of the Idea; but if the Idea were such an important aid, surely it would not be reasonable for all craftsmen to know nothing about it and not even to look for it.

§16 Moreover, it is a puzzle to know what the weaver or carpenter will gain for his own craft from knowing this Good Itself, or how anyone will be better at medicine or generalship from having gazed on the Idea Itself. For what the doctor appears to consider is not even health [universally, let alone good universally], but human health, and presumably the health of this human being even more, since he treats one particular patient at a time.*

So much, then, for these questions.

7

[An Account of the Human Good]

But let us return once again to the good we are looking for, and consider just what it could be.* For it is apparently one thing in one action or craft, and another thing in another; for it is one thing in medicine, another in generalship, and so on for the rest. What, then, is the good of each action or craft? Surely it is that for the sake of which the other things are done; in medicine this is health, in generalship victory, in house-building a house, in another case something else, but in every action and decision it is the end, since it is for the sake of the end that everyone does the other actions.* And so, if there is some end of everything achievable in action, the good achievable in action will be this end; if there are more ends than one, [the good achievable in action] will be these ends.*

§2 Our argument, then, has followed a different route to reach the same conclusion.* But we must try to make this still more perspicuous.*

§3 Since there are apparently many ends, and we choose some of them (for instance, wealth, flutes, and, in general, instruments) because of something else, it is clear that not all ends are complete.* But the best good is apparently something complete. And so, if only one end is complete, the good we are looking for will be this end; if more ends than one are complete, it will be the most complete end of these.*

§4 We say that an end pursued in its own right is more complete than an end pursued because of something else, and that an end that is never choiceworthy because of something else is more complete than ends that

1097a are choiceworthy both in their own right and because of this end. Hence an end that is always choiceworthy in its own right,* never because of something else, is complete without qualification.

§5 Now happiness, more than anything else, seems complete without
1097b qualification.* For we always choose it because of itself,* never because of something else. Honor, pleasure, understanding, and every virtue we certainly choose because of themselves, since we would choose each of them even if it had no further result; but we also choose them for the sake of happiness, supposing that through them we shall be happy.* Happiness, by contrast, no one ever chooses for their sake, or for the sake of anything else at all.

§6 The same conclusion [that happiness is complete] also appears to follow from self-sufficiency. For the complete good seems to be self-sufficient.* What we count as self-sufficient is not what suffices for a solitary
10 person by himself, living an isolated life, but what suffices also for parents, children, wife, and, in general, for friends and fellow citizens, since a human being is a naturally political [animal].* §7 Here, however, we must impose some limit; for if we extend the good to parents' parents and children's children and to friends of friends, we shall go on without limit; but we must examine this another time.

15 Anyhow, we regard something as self-sufficient when all by itself it makes a life choiceworthy and lacking nothing; and that is what we think happiness does. §8 Moreover, we think happiness is most choiceworthy of all goods, [since] it is not counted as one good among many.* [If it were] counted as one among many,* then, clearly, we think it would be more choiceworthy if the smallest of goods were added; for the good that is added becomes an extra quantity of goods, and the larger of two goods
20 is always more choiceworthy.*

Happiness, then, is apparently something complete and self-sufficient, since it is the end of the things achievable in action.*

§9 But presumably the remark that the best good is happiness is apparently something [generally] agreed, and we still need a clearer statement of what the best good is.* §10 Perhaps, then, we shall find
25 this if we first grasp the function of a human being. For just as the good, i.e., [doing] well, for a flautist, a sculptor, and every craftsman, and, in general, for whatever has a function and [characteristic] action, seems to depend on its function,* the same seems to be true for a human being, if a human being has some function.

30 §11 Then do the carpenter and the leather worker have their functions and actions, but has a human being no function?* Is he by nature idle, without any function?* Or, just as eye, hand, foot, and, in general, every [bodily] part apparently has its function, may we likewise ascribe to a human being some function apart from all of these?*

1098a §12 What, then, could this be? For living is apparently shared with plants, but what we are looking for is the special function of a human

being; hence we should set aside the life of nutrition and growth.* The life next in order is some sort of life of sense perception; but this too is apparently shared with horse, ox, and every animal.* 1098a

§13 The remaining possibility, then, is some sort of life of action* of the [part of the soul] that has reason.* One [part] of it has reason as obeying reason; the other has it as itself having reason and thinking.* Moreover, life is also spoken of in two ways [as capacity and as activity], and we must take [a human being's special function to be] life as activity, since this seems to be called life more fully.* §14 We have found, then, that the human function is activity of the soul in accord with reason or requiring reason.* 5

Now we say that the function of a [kind of thing]—of a harpist, for instance—is the same in kind as the function of an excellent individual of the kind—of an excellent harpist, for instance. And the same is true without qualification in every case, if we add to the function the superior achievement in accord with the virtue; for the function of a harpist is to play the harp, and the function of a good harpist is to play it well.* Moreover, we take the human function to be a certain kind of life, and take this life to be activity and actions of the soul that involve reason; hence the function of the excellent man is to do this well and finely. 10

§15 Now each function is completed well by being completed in accord with the virtue proper [to that kind of thing].* And so the human good proves to be activity of the soul in accord with virtue,* and indeed with the best and most complete virtue, if there are more virtues than one.* §16 Moreover, in a complete life.* For one swallow does not make a spring, nor does one day; nor, similarly, does one day or a short time make us blessed and happy. 15 20

§17 This, then, is a sketch of the good; for, presumably, we must draw the outline first, and fill it in later.* If the sketch is good, anyone, it seems, can advance and articulate it, and in such cases time discovers more, or is a good partner in discovery. That is also how the crafts have improved, since anyone can add what is lacking [in the outline]. 25

§18 We must also remember our previous remarks, so that we do not look for the same degree of exactness in all areas, but the degree that accords with a given subject matter and is proper to a given line of inquiry.* §19 For the carpenter's and the geometer's inquiries about the right angle are different also; the carpenter restricts himself to what helps his work, but the geometer inquires into what, or what sort* of thing, the right angle is, since he studies the truth. We must do the same, then, in other areas too, [seeking the proper degree of exactness], so that digressions do not overwhelm our main task. 30

§20 Nor should we make the same demand for an explanation in all cases. On the contrary, in some cases it is enough to prove rightly that [something is true, without also explaining why it is true]. This is so, for 1098b

1098b instance, with principles, where the fact that [something is true] is the first thing, that is to say, the principle.*

§21 Some principles are studied by means of induction, some by means of perception, some by means of some sort of habituation, and others by other means.* §22 In each case we should try to find them out by means suited to their nature, and work hard to define them rightly. §23 For they carry great weight* for what follows; for the principle seems to be more than half the whole,* and makes evident the answer to many of our questions.

8

[Defense of the Account of the Good]

We should examine the principle, however, not only from the conclusion and premises [of a deduction], but also from what is said about it;* for all the facts harmonize with a true account, whereas the truth soon clashes with a false one.*

§2 Goods are divided, then, into three types, some called external, some goods of the soul, others goods of the body.* We say that the goods of the soul are goods most fully, and more than the others, and we take actions and activities of the soul to be [goods] of the soul. And so our account [of the good] is right, to judge by this belief anyhow—and it is an ancient belief, and accepted by philosophers.

§3 Our account is also correct in saying that some sort of actions and activities are the end; for in that way the end turns out to be a good of the soul, not an external good.

§4 The belief that the happy person lives well and does well also agrees with our account, since we have virtually said that the end is a sort of living well and doing well.

§5 Further, all the features that people look for in happiness appear to be true of the end described in our account.* §6 For to some people happiness seems to be virtue; to others prudence; to others some sort of wisdom; to others again it seems to be these, or one of these, involving pleasure or requiring it to be added; others add in external prosperity as well. §7 Some of these views are traditional, held by many, while others are held by a few men who are widely esteemed. It is reasonable for each group not to be completely wrong, but to be correct on one point at least, or even on most points.

§8 First, our account agrees with those who say happiness is virtue [in general] or some [particular] virtue; for activity in accord with virtue is proper to virtue. §9 Presumably, though, it matters quite a bit whether we suppose that the best good consists in possessing or in using—that is to say, in a state or in an activity [that actualizes the state].* For someone

may be in a state that achieves no good—if, for instance, he is asleep or inactive in some other way—but this cannot be true of the activity; for it will necessarily act and act well. And just as Olympic prizes are not for the finest and strongest, but for the contestants—since it is only these who win—the same is true in life; among the fine and good people, only those who act correctly* win the prize. 1099a
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§10 Moreover, the life of these active people is also pleasant in itself.* For being pleased is a condition of the soul, [and hence is included in the activity of the soul]. Further, each type of person finds pleasure in whatever he is called a lover of; a horse, for instance, pleases the horse-lover, a spectacle the lover of spectacles. Similarly, what is just pleases the lover of justice, and in general what accords with virtue pleases the lover of virtue. 10

§11 Now the things that please most people conflict,* because they are not pleasant by nature, whereas the things that please lovers of the fine are things pleasant by nature. Actions in accord with virtue are pleasant by nature, so that they both please lovers of the fine and are pleasant in their own right. 15

§12 Hence these people's life does not need pleasure to be added [to virtuous activity] as some sort of extra decoration; rather, it has its pleasure within itself.* For besides the reasons already given, someone who does not enjoy fine actions is not good; for no one would call a person just, for instance, if he did not enjoy doing just actions, or generous if he did not enjoy generous actions, and similarly for the other virtues. 20

§13 If this is so, actions in accord with the virtues are pleasant in their own right. Moreover, these actions are good and fine as well as pleasant; indeed, they are good, fine, and pleasant more than anything else is, since on this question the excellent person judges rightly, and his judgment agrees with what we have said.

§14 Happiness, then, is best, finest, and most pleasant, and the Delian inscription is wrong to distinguish these things: 'What is most just is finest; being healthy is most beneficial; but it is most pleasant to win our heart's desire.*' For all three features are found in the best activities, and we say happiness is these activities, or [rather] one of them, the best one.* 25

§15 Nonetheless, happiness evidently also needs external goods to be added, as we said, since we cannot, or cannot easily, do fine actions if we lack the resources.* For, first of all, in many actions we use friends, wealth, and political power just as we use instruments. §16 Further, deprivation of certain [externals]—for instance, good birth, good children, beauty—mars our blessedness. For we do not altogether have the character of happiness* if we look utterly repulsive or are ill-born, solitary, or childless; and we have it even less, presumably, if our children or friends are totally bad, or were good but have died. 1099b
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§17 And so, as we have said, happiness would seem to need this sort of prosperity added also. That is why some people identify happiness with good fortune, and others identify it with virtue.

9

[How Is Happiness Achieved?]

1099b This also leads to a puzzle: Is happiness acquired by learning, or habitua-
 10 tion, or by some other form of cultivation? Or is it the result of some
 divine fate, or even of fortune?*

§2 First, then, if the gods give any gift at all to human beings, it is rea-
 sonable for them to give us happiness more than any other human good,
 insofar as it is the best of human goods. §3 Presumably, however, this
 question is more suitable for a different inquiry.

15 But even if it is not sent by the gods, but instead results from virtue
 and some sort of learning or cultivation, happiness appears to be one of
 the most divine things, since the prize and goal of virtue appears to be the
 best good, something divine and blessed. §4 Moreover [if happiness
 comes in this way] it will be widely shared; for anyone who is not
 deformed [in his capacity] for virtue will be able to achieve happiness
 20 through some sort of learning and attention.

§5 And since it is better to be happy in this way than because of for-
 tune, it is reasonable for this to be the way [we become] happy. For what-
 ever is natural is naturally in the finest state possible. §6 The same is
 true of the products of crafts and of every other cause, especially the best
 cause; and it would be seriously inappropriate to entrust what is greatest
 and finest to fortune.*

25 §7 The answer to our question is also evident from our account. For
 we have said that happiness is a certain sort of activity of the soul in
 accord with virtue, [and hence not a result of fortune]. Of the other goods,
 some are necessary conditions of happiness, while others are naturally
 useful and cooperative as instruments [but are not parts of it].

§8 Further, this conclusion agrees with our opening remarks. For we
 30 took the goal of political science to be the best good; and most of its atten-
 tion is devoted to the character of the citizens, to make them good people
 who do fine actions.*

§9 It is not surprising, then, that we regard neither ox, nor horse, nor
 1100a any other kind of animal as happy; for none of them can share in this sort
 of activity. §10 For the same reason a child is not happy either, since his
 age prevents him from doing these sorts of actions. If he is called happy,
 he is being congratulated [simply] because of anticipated blessedness; for,
 5 as we have said, happiness requires both complete virtue and a complete
 life.*

§10 It needs a complete life because life includes many reversals of for-
 tune, good and bad, and the most prosperous person may fall into a terri-
 ble disaster in old age, as the Trojan stories tell us about Priam. If
 someone has suffered these sorts of misfortunes and comes to a miserable
 end, no one counts him happy.

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[Can We Be Happy during Our Lifetime?]

Then should we count no human being happy during his lifetime, but follow Solon's advice to wait to see the end? §2 But if we agree with Solon, can someone really be happy during the time after he has died? Surely that is completely absurd, especially when we say happiness is an activity. 1100a10

§3 We do not say, then, that someone is happy during the time he is dead, and Solon's point is not this [absurd one], but rather that when a human being has died, we can safely pronounce [that he was] blessed [before he died], on the assumption that he is now finally beyond evils and misfortunes.* But this claim is also disputable. For if a living person has good or evil of which he is not aware, a dead person also, it seems, has good or evil, if, for instance, he receives honors or dishonors, and his children, and descendants in general, do well or suffer misfortune.* 15 20

§4 However, this conclusion also raises a puzzle. For even if someone has lived in blessedness until old age, and has died appropriately, many fluctuations of his descendants' fortunes may still happen to him; for some may be good people and get the life they deserve, while the contrary may be true of others, and clearly they may be as distantly related to their ancestor as you please. Surely, then, it would be an absurd result if the dead person's condition changed along with the fortunes of his descendants, so that at one time he would turn out to have been happy [in his lifetime] and at another time he would turn out to have been miserable.* §5 But it would also be absurd if the condition of descendants did not affect their ancestors at all or for any length of time. 25 30

§6 But we must return to the previous puzzle, since that will perhaps also show us the answer to our present question. §7 Let us grant that we must wait to see the end, and must then count someone blessed, not as now being blessed [during the time he is dead] but because he previously was blessed. Would it not be absurd, then, if, at the very time when he is happy, we refused to ascribe truly to him the happiness he has? §8 For clearly, if we take our cue from his fortunes, we shall often call him happy and then miserable again, thereby representing the happy person as a kind of chameleon, insecurely based. 35 1100b 5

§9 But surely it is quite wrong to take our cue from someone's fortunes. For his doing well or badly does not rest on them.* A human life, as we said, needs these added, but activities in accord with virtue control happiness, and the contrary activities control its contrary. §10 Indeed, the present puzzle is further evidence for our account [of happiness]. For no human achievement has the stability of activities in accord with virtue, since these seem to be more enduring even than our knowledge of 10

1100b15 the sciences.* Indeed, the most honorable among the virtues themselves are more enduring than the other virtues, because blessed people devote their lives to them more fully and more continually than to anything else—for this continual activity would seem to be the reason we do not forget them.

§11 It follows, then, that the happy person has the [stability] we are looking for and keeps the character he has throughout his life. For
20 always, or more than anything else, he will do and study the actions in accord with virtue, and will bear fortunes most finely, in every way and in all conditions appropriately, since he is truly ‘good, foursquare, and blameless’.*

§12 Many events, however, are subject to fortune; some are minor, some major. Hence, minor strokes of good or ill fortune clearly will not
25 carry any weight for his life. But many major strokes of good fortune will make it more blessed; for in themselves they naturally add adornment to it, and his use of them proves to be fine and excellent.* Conversely, if he suffers many major misfortunes, they oppress and spoil his blessedness,
30 since they involve pain and impede many activities. And yet, even here what is fine shines through, whenever someone bears many severe misfortunes with good temper, not because he feels no distress, but because he is noble and magnanimous.*

§13 And since it is activities that control life, as we said, no blessed
35 person could ever become miserable, since he will never do hateful and base actions. For a truly good and prudent person,* we suppose, will bear
1101a strokes of fortune suitably, and from his resources at any time will do the finest actions, just as a good general will make the best use of his forces in
5 war, and a good shoemaker will make the finest shoe from the hides given to him, and similarly for all other craftsmen.

§14 If this is so, the happy person could never become miserable, but neither will he be blessed if he falls into misfortunes as bad as Priam’s.* Nor, however, will he be inconstant and prone to fluctuate, since he will
10 neither be easily shaken from his happiness nor shaken by just any misfortunes.* He will be shaken from it, though, by many serious misfortunes, and from these a return to happiness will take no short time. At best, it will take a long and complete length of time that includes great and fine successes.

15 §15 Then why not say that the happy person is the one whose activities accord with complete virtue, with an adequate supply of external goods, not for just any time but for a complete life? Or should we add that he will also go on living this way and will come to an appropriate end, since the future is not apparent to us, and we take happiness to be the end, and altogether complete in every way? §16 Given these facts
20 [about the future and about happiness], we shall say that a living person who has, and will keep, the goods we mentioned is blessed, but blessed as a human being is.* So much for a determination of this question.

11

[How Happiness Can Be Affected after One's Death]

Still, it is apparently rather unfriendly and contrary to the [common] 1101a
beliefs to claim that the fortunes of our descendants and all our friends
contribute nothing. §2 But since they can find themselves in many and 25
various circumstances, some of which affect us more, some less, it is
apparently a long—indeed endless—task to differentiate all the particular
cases. Perhaps a general outline will be enough of an answer.

§3 Misfortunes, then, even to the person himself, differ, and some 30
have a certain gravity and weight for his life, whereas others would seem
to be lighter. The same is true for the misfortunes of his friends; §4 and
it matters whether they happen to living or to dead people—much more
than it matters whether lawless and terrible crimes are committed before
a tragic drama begins or in the course of it.*

§5 In our reasoning, then, we should also take account of this differ- 35
ence, but even more account, presumably, of the puzzle about whether
the dead share in any good or evil. For if we consider this, anything good 1101b
or evil penetrating to the dead would seem to be weak and unimportant,
either without qualification or for them. Even if the good or evil is not so
weak and unimportant, still its importance and character are not enough
to make people happy who are not already happy, or to take away the 5
blessedness of those who are happy. §6 And so, when friends do well,
and likewise when they do badly, it appears to contribute something to
the dead, but of a character and size that neither makes happy people not
happy nor anything of this sort.

12

[Praise and Honor]

Now that we have determined these points, let us consider whether hap- 10
piness is something praiseworthy, or instead something honorable; for
clearly it is not a capacity [which is neither praiseworthy nor honorable].

§2 Whatever is praiseworthy appears to be praised for its character
and its state in relation to something.* We praise the just and the brave
person, for instance, and in general the good person and virtue, because 15
of their actions and achievements; and we praise the strong person, the
good runner, and each of the others because he naturally has a certain
character and is in a certain state in relation to something good and
excellent. §3 This is clear also from praises of the gods; for these praises
appear ridiculous because they are referred to us, but they are referred to 20
us because, as we said, praise depends on such a reference.

§4 If praise is for these sorts of things, then clearly for the best things
there is no praise, but something greater and better. And indeed this is

1101b how it appears. For the gods and the most godlike* of men are [not
 25 praised, but] congratulated for their blessedness and happiness. The same is true of goods; for we never praise happiness, as we praise justice, but we count it blessed, as something better and more godlike [than anything that is praised].

§5 Indeed, Eudoxus seems to have used the right sort of argument in defending the supremacy of pleasure.* By not praising pleasure, though it
 30 is a good, we indicate—so he thought—that it is superior to everything praiseworthy; [only] the god and the good have this superiority since the other goods are [praised] by reference to them.

§6 [Here he seems to have argued correctly.] For praise is given to virtue, since it makes us do fine actions; but celebrations are for achievements, either of body or of soul. §7 But an exact treatment of this is
 35 presumably more proper for specialists in celebrations. For us, anyhow, it is clear from what has been said that happiness is something honorable and complete.
 1102a

§8 A further reason why this would seem to be correct is that happiness is a principle; for [the principle] is what we all aim at in all our other actions,* and we take the principle and cause of goods to be something honorable and divine.

13

[Introduction to the Virtues]

5 Since happiness is a certain sort of activity of the soul in accord with complete virtue, we must examine virtue; for that will perhaps also be a way to study happiness better.* §2 Moreover, the true politician* seems to have put more effort into virtue than into anything else, since
 10 he wants to make the citizens good and law-abiding. §3 We find an example of this in the Spartan and Cretan legislators and in any others who share their concerns. §4 Since, then, the examination of virtue is proper for political science, the inquiry clearly suits our decision at the beginning.*

§5 It is clear that the virtue we must examine is human virtue, since
 15 we are also seeking the human good and human happiness. §6 By human virtue we mean virtue of the soul, not of the body, since we also say that happiness is an activity of the soul. §7 If this is so, it is clear
 20 that the politician must in some way know about the soul, just as someone setting out to heal the eyes must know about the whole body as well.* This is all the more true to the extent that political science is better and more honorable than medicine; even among doctors, the cultivated ones devote a lot of effort to finding out about the body. Hence the politician as well [as the student of nature] must study the soul.* §8 But he must
 25 study it for his specific purpose, far enough for his inquiry [into virtue];

for a more exact treatment would presumably take more effort than his purpose requires.* 1102a

§9 [We] have discussed the soul sufficiently [for our purposes] in [our] popular works as well [as our less popular],* and we should use this discussion. We have said, for instance, that one [part] of the soul is nonrational, while one has reason. §10 Are these distinguished as parts of a body and everything divisible into parts are? Or are they two [only] in definition, and inseparable by nature, as the convex and the concave are in a surface? It does not matter for present purposes.* 30

§11 Consider the nonrational [part]. One [part] of it, i.e., the cause of nutrition and growth, would seem to be plantlike and shared [with all living things]; for we can ascribe this capacity of the soul to everything that is nourished, including embryos, and the same capacity to full-grown living things, since this is more reasonable than to ascribe another capacity to them.* 1102b

§12 Hence the virtue of this capacity is apparently shared, not [specifically] human. For this part and this capacity more than others seem to be active in sleep, and here the good and the bad person are least distinct; hence happy people are said to be no better off than miserable people for half their lives. §13 This lack of distinction is not surprising, since sleep is inactivity of the soul insofar as it is called excellent or base, unless to some small extent some movements penetrate [to our awareness], and in this way the decent person comes to have better images [in dreams] than just any random person has. §14 Enough about this, however, and let us leave aside the nutritive part, since by nature it has no share in human virtue. 5 10

§15 Another nature in the soul would also seem to be nonrational, though in a way it shares in reason. For in the continent and the incontinent person we praise their reason, that is to say, the [part] of the soul that has reason, because it exhorts them correctly and toward what is best; but they evidently also have in them some other [part] that is by nature something apart from reason, clashing and struggling with reason. For just as paralyzed parts of a body, when we decide to move them to the right, do the contrary and move off to the left, the same is true of the soul; for incontinent people have impulses in contrary directions. §16 In bodies, admittedly, we see the part go astray, whereas we do not see it in the soul; nonetheless, presumably, we should suppose that the soul also has something apart from reason, countering and opposing reason. The [precise] way it is different does not matter. 15 20 25

§17 However, this [part] as well [as the rational part] appears, as we said, to share in reason. At any rate, in the continent person it obeys reason; and in the temperate and the brave person it presumably listens still better to reason, since there it agrees with reason in everything.*

§18 The nonrational [part], then, as well [as the whole soul] apparently has two parts. For while the plantlike [part] shares in reason not at 30

1102b all, the [part] with appetites and in general desires* shares in reason in a way, insofar as it both listens to reason and obeys it. This is the way in which we are said to 'listen to reason' from father or friends, as opposed to the way in which [we 'give the reason'] in mathematics.* The nonrational part also [obeys and] is persuaded in some way by reason, as is shown by correction, and by every sort of reproof and exhortation.

1103a §19 If, then, we ought to say that this [part] also has reason, then the [part] that has reason, as well [as the nonrational part], will have two parts. One will have reason fully, by having it within itself; the other will have reason by listening to reason as to a father.*

5 The division between virtues accords with this difference. For some virtues are called virtues of thought, others virtues of character; wisdom, comprehension, and prudence are called virtues of thought, generosity and temperance virtues of character.* For when we speak of someone's character we do not say that he is wise or has good comprehension, but that he is gentle or temperate. And yet, we also praise the
10 wise person for his state, and the states that are praiseworthy are the ones we call virtues.

BOOK II

[VIRTUE OF CHARACTER]

1

[How a Virtue of Character Is Acquired]

15 Virtue, then, is of two sorts, virtue of thought and virtue of character. Virtue of thought arises and grows mostly from teaching; that is why it needs experience and time. Virtue of character [i.e., of *ēthos*] results from habit [*ethos*]; hence its name 'ethical', slightly varied from 'ethos'.*

§2 Hence it is also clear that none of the virtues of character arises in
20 us naturally. For if something is by nature in one condition, habituation cannot bring it into another condition. A stone, for instance, by nature moves downwards, and habituation could not make it move upwards, not even if you threw it up ten thousand times to habituate it; nor could habituation make fire move downwards, or bring anything that is by nature in one condition into another condition. §3 And so the virtues
25 arise in us neither by nature nor against nature. Rather, we are by nature able to acquire them, and we are completed through habit.*

§4 Further, if something arises in us by nature, we first have the capacity for it, and later perform the activity. This is clear in the case of the
30 senses; for we did not acquire them by frequent seeing or hearing, but we already had them when we exercised them, and did not get them by exercising them. Virtues, by contrast, we acquire, just as we acquire crafts, by

having first activated them. For we learn a craft by producing the same product that we must produce when we have learned it; we become builders, for instance, by building, and we become harpists by playing the harp. Similarly, then, we become just by doing just actions, temperate by doing temperate actions, brave by doing brave actions. 1103a
1103b

§5 What goes on in cities is also evidence for this. For the legislator makes the citizens good by habituating them, and this is the wish of every legislator; if he fails to do it well he misses his goal.* Correct habituation distinguishes a good political system from a bad one. 5

§6 Further, the sources and means that develop each virtue also ruin it, just as they do in a craft. For playing the harp makes both good and bad harpists, and it is analogous in the case of builders and all the rest; for building well makes good builders, and building badly makes bad ones. §7 Otherwise no teacher would be needed, but everyone would be born a good or a bad craftsman. 10

It is the same, then, with the virtues. For what we do in our dealings with other people makes some of us just, some unjust; what we do in terrifying situations, and the habits of fear or confidence that we acquire, make some of us brave and others cowardly. The same is true of situations involving appetites and anger; for one or another sort of conduct in these situations makes some temperate and mild, others intemperate and irascible. To sum it up in a single account: a state [of character] results from [the repetition of] similar activities.* 15
20

§8 That is why we must perform the right activities, since differences in these imply corresponding differences in the states.* It is not unimportant, then, to acquire one sort of habit or another, right from our youth. On the contrary, it is very important, indeed all-important. 25

2

[Habituation]

Our present discussion does not aim, as our others do, at study; for the purpose of our examination is not to know what virtue is, but to become good, since otherwise the inquiry would be of no benefit to us.* And so we must examine the right ways of acting; for, as we have said, the actions also control the sorts of states we acquire. 30

§2 First, then, actions should accord with the correct reason.* That is a common [belief], and let us assume it. We shall discuss it later, and say what the correct reason is and how it is related to the other virtues.

§3 But let us take it as agreed in advance that every account of the actions we must do has to be stated in outline, not exactly. As we also said at the beginning, the type of accounts we demand should accord with the subject matter; and questions about actions and expediency, like questions about health, have no fixed answers.* 1104a

1104a5 §4 While this is the character of our general account, the account of particular cases is still more inexact. For these fall under no craft or profession; the agents themselves must consider in each case what the opportune action is, as doctors and navigators do.* §5 The account we offer, then, in our present inquiry is of this inexact sort; still, we must try to offer help.*

§6 First, then, we should observe that these sorts of states naturally tend to be ruined by excess and deficiency. We see this happen with strength and health—for we must use evident cases [such as these] as witnesses to things that are not evident.* For both excessive and deficient exercise ruin bodily strength, and, similarly, too much or too little eating or drinking ruins health, whereas the proportionate amount produces, increases, and preserves it.

20 §7 The same is true, then, of temperance, bravery, and the other virtues. For if, for instance, someone avoids and is afraid of everything, standing firm against nothing, he becomes cowardly; if he is afraid of nothing at all and goes to face everything, he becomes rash. Similarly, if he gratifies himself with every pleasure and abstains from none, he becomes intemperate; if he avoids them all, as boors do, he becomes some sort of insensible person. Temperance and bravery, then, are ruined by excess and deficiency, but preserved by the mean.*

§8 But these actions are not only the sources and causes both of the emergence and growth of virtues and of their ruin; the activities of the virtues [once we have acquired them] also consist in these same actions.* For this is also true of more evident cases; strength, for instance, arises from eating a lot and from withstanding much hard labor, and it is the strong person who is most capable of these very actions. §9 It is the same with the virtues. For abstaining from pleasures makes us become temperate, and once we have become temperate 1104b we are most capable of abstaining from pleasures. It is similar with bravery; habituation in disdain for frightening situations and in standing firm against them makes us become brave, and once we have become brave we shall be most capable of standing firm.

3

[The Importance of Pleasure and Pain]

5 But we must take someone's pleasure or pain following on his actions to be a sign of his state.* For if someone who abstains from bodily pleasures enjoys the abstinence itself, he is temperate; if he is grieved by it, he is intemperate.* Again, if he stands firm against terrifying situations and enjoys it, or at least does not find it painful, he is brave; if he finds it painful, he is cowardly. For virtue of character is about pleasures and pains.*

For pleasure causes us to do base actions, and pain causes us to abstain from fine ones. §2 That is why we need to have had the appropriate upbringing—right from early youth, as Plato says*—to make us find enjoyment or pain in the right things; for this is the correct education. 1104b10

§3 Further, virtues are concerned with actions and feelings; but every feeling and every action implies pleasure or pain;* hence, for this reason too, virtue is about pleasures and pains. §4 Corrective treatments also indicate this, since they use pleasures and pains; for correction is a form of medical treatment, and medical treatment naturally operates through contraries. 15

§5 Further, as we said earlier, every state of soul is naturally related to and about whatever naturally makes it better or worse; and pleasures and pains make people base, from pursuing and avoiding the wrong ones, at the wrong time, in the wrong ways, or whatever other distinctions of that sort are needed in an account. These [bad effects of pleasure and pain] are the reason why people actually define the virtues as ways of being unaffected and undisturbed [by pleasures and pains].* They are wrong, however, because they speak of being unaffected without qualification, not of being unaffected in the right or wrong way, at the right or wrong time, and the added qualifications. 20 25

§6 We assume, then, that virtue is the sort of state that does the best actions concerning pleasures and pains, and that vice is the contrary state.

§7 The following will also make it evident that virtue and vice are about the same things. For there are three objects of choice—fine, expedient, and pleasant—and three objects of avoidance—their contraries, shameful, harmful, and painful.* About all these, then, the good person is correct and the bad person is in error, and especially about pleasure. For pleasure is shared with animals, and implied by every object of choice, since what is fine and what is expedient appear pleasant as well. 30 35 1105a

§8 Further, pleasure grows up with all of us from infancy on. That is why it is hard to rub out this feeling that is dyed into our lives. We also estimate actions [as well as feelings]—some of us more, some less—by pleasure and pain. §9 For this reason, our whole discussion must be about these; for good or bad enjoyment or pain is very important for our actions. 5

§10 Further, it is more difficult to fight pleasure than to fight spirit—and Heracleitus tells us [how difficult it is to fight spirit].* Now both craft and virtue are in every case about what is more difficult, since a good result is even better when it is more difficult. Hence, for this reason also, the whole discussion, for virtue and political science alike, must consider pleasures and pains; for if we use these well, we shall be good, and if badly, bad. 10

§11 To sum up: Virtue is about pleasures and pains; the actions that are its sources also increase it or, if they are done badly, ruin it; and its activity is about the same actions as those that are its sources. 15

4

[Virtuous Actions versus Virtuous Character]

1105a Someone might be puzzled, however, about what we mean by saying that we become just by doing just actions and become temperate by doing temperate actions.* For [one might suppose that] if we do grammatical or
 20 musical actions, we are grammarians or musicians, and, similarly, if we do just or temperate actions, we are thereby just or temperate.

§2 But surely actions are not enough, even in the case of crafts;* for it is possible to produce a grammatical result by chance, or by following someone else's instructions. To be grammarians, then, we must both pro-
 25 duce a grammatical result and produce it grammatically—that is to say, produce it in accord with the grammatical knowledge in us.

§3 Moreover, in any case, what is true of crafts is not true of virtues.* For the products of a craft determine by their own qualities whether they have been produced well; and so it suffices that they have the right qualities when they have been produced.* But for actions in accord with the
 30 virtues to be done temperately or justly it does not suffice that they themselves have the right qualities.* Rather, the agent must also be in the right state when he does them. First, he must know [that he is doing virtuous actions]; second, he must decide on them, and decide on them for themselves; and, third, he must also do them from a firm and unchanging state.

1105b As conditions for having a craft, these three do not count, except for the bare knowing.* As a condition for having a virtue, however, the knowing counts for nothing, or [rather] for only a little, whereas the other two conditions are very important, indeed all-important. And we achieve
 5 these other two conditions by the frequent doing of just and temperate actions.

§4 Hence actions are called just or temperate when they are the sort that a just or temperate person would do. But the just and temperate person is not the one who [merely] does these actions, but the one who also does them in the way in which just or temperate people do them.

10 §5 It is right, then, to say that a person comes to be just from doing just actions and temperate from doing temperate actions; for no one has the least prospect of becoming good from failing to do them.

§6 The many, however, do not do these actions. They take refuge in arguments, thinking that they are doing philosophy, and that this is the
 15 way to become excellent people. They are like a sick person who listens attentively to the doctor, but acts on none of his instructions. Such a course of treatment will not improve the state of the sick person's body; nor will the many improve the state of their souls by this attitude to philosophy.*

5

[Virtue of Character: Its Genus]

Next we must examine what virtue is. Since there are three conditions arising in the soul—feelings, capacities, and states—virtue must be one of these.* 1105b20

§2 By feelings I mean appetite, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, love, hate, longing, jealousy, pity, and in general whatever implies pleasure or pain. By capacities I mean what we have when we are said to be capable of these feelings—capable of being angry, for instance, or of being afraid* or of feeling pity. By states I mean what we have when we are well or badly off in relation to feelings.* If, for instance, our feeling is too intense or slack, we are badly off in relation to anger, but if it is intermediate, we are well off; the same is true in the other cases. 25

§3 First, then, neither virtues nor vices are feelings. For we are called excellent or base insofar as we have virtues or vices, not insofar as we have feelings. Further, we are neither praised nor blamed insofar as we have feelings; for we do not praise the angry or the frightened person, and do not blame the person who is simply angry, but only the person who is angry in a particular way. We are praised or blamed, however, insofar as we have virtues or vices.* §4 Further, we are angry and afraid without decision; but the virtues are decisions of some kind, or [rather] require decision.* Besides, insofar as we have feelings, we are said to be moved; but insofar as we have virtues or vices, we are said to be in some condition rather than moved. 30 1106a 5

§5 For these reasons the virtues are not capacities either; for we are neither called good nor called bad, nor are we praised or blamed, insofar as we are simply capable of feelings. Further, while we have capacities by nature, we do not become good or bad by nature; we have discussed this before.* 10

§6 If, then, the virtues are neither feelings nor capacities, the remaining possibility is that they are states. And so we have said what the genus of virtue is.

6

[Virtue of Character: Its Differential]

But we must say not only, as we already have, that it is a state, but also what sort of state it is.* 15

§2 It should be said, then, that every virtue causes its possessors to be in a good state and to perform their functions well.* The virtue of eyes, for instance, makes the eyes and their functioning excellent, because it makes us see well; and similarly, the virtue of a horse makes the horse excellent, and thereby good at galloping, at carrying its rider, and at 20

1106a standing steady in the face of the enemy. §3 If this is true in every case, the virtue of a human being will likewise be the state that makes a human being good and makes him perform his function well.

25 §4 We have already said how this will be true, and it will also be evident from our next remarks, if we consider the sort of nature that virtue has.*

In everything continuous and divisible we can take more, less, and equal, and each of them either in the object itself or relative to us; and the
30 equal is some intermediate between excess and deficiency. §5 By the intermediate in the object I mean what is equidistant from each extremity; this is one and the same for all. But relative to us the intermediate is what is neither superfluous nor deficient; this is not one, and is not the same for all.*

§6 If, for instance, ten are many and two are few, we take six as inter-
35 mediate in the object, since it exceeds [two] and is exceeded [by ten] by an equal amount, [four]. §7 This is what is intermediate by numerical proportion. But that is not how we must take the intermediate that is relative
1106b to us. For if ten pounds [of food], for instance, are a lot for someone to eat, and two pounds a little, it does not follow that the trainer will prescribe six, since this might also be either a little or a lot for the person who is to take it—for Milo [the athlete] a little, but for the beginner in gymnastics a
5 lot; and the same is true for running and wrestling. §8 In this way every scientific expert avoids excess and deficiency and seeks and chooses what is intermediate—but intermediate relative to us, not in the object.

§9 This, then, is how each science produces its product well, by focus-
10 ing on what is intermediate and making the product conform to that.* This, indeed, is why people regularly comment on well-made products that nothing could be added or subtracted; they assume that excess or deficiency ruins a good [result], whereas the mean preserves it. Good craftsmen also, we say, focus on what is intermediate when they produce
15 their product. And since virtue, like nature, is better and more exact than any craft, it will also aim at what is intermediate.*

§10 By virtue I mean virtue of character; for this is about feelings and actions, and these admit of excess, deficiency, and an intermediate condition. We can be afraid, for instance, or be confident, or have appetites, or
20 get angry, or feel pity, and in general have pleasure or pain, both too much and too little, and in both ways not well. §11 But having these feelings at the right times, about the right things, toward the right people, for the right end, and in the right way, is the intermediate and best condition, and this is proper to virtue. §12 Similarly, actions also admit of excess, deficiency, and an intermediate condition.

25 Now virtue is about feelings and actions, in which excess and deficiency are in error and incur blame, whereas the intermediate condition is correct and wins praise,* which are both proper to virtue. §13 Virtue, then, is a mean, insofar as it aims at what is intermediate.

30 §14 Moreover, there are many ways to be in error—for badness is proper to the indeterminate, as the Pythagoreans pictured it, and good to

the determinate. But there is only one way to be correct. That is why error is easy and correctness is difficult, since it is easy to miss the target and difficult to hit it. And so for this reason also excess and deficiency are proper to vice, the mean to virtue; 'for we are noble in only one way, but bad in all sorts of ways.'* 1106b 35

§15 Virtue, then, is a state that decides, consisting in a mean, the mean relative to us, which is defined by reference to reason, that is to say, to the reason by reference to which the prudent person would define it.* It is a mean between two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency. 1107a

§16 It is a mean for this reason also: Some vices miss what is right because they are deficient, others because they are excessive, in feelings or in actions, whereas virtue finds and chooses what is intermediate. 5

§17 That is why virtue, as far as its essence and the account stating what it is are concerned, is a mean, but, as far as the best [condition] and the good [result] are concerned, it is an extremity.

§18 Now not every action or feeling admits of the mean.* For the names of some automatically include baseness—for instance, spite, shamelessness, envy [among feelings], and adultery, theft, murder, among actions.* For all of these and similar things are called by these names because they themselves, not their excesses or deficiencies, are base. Hence in doing these things we can never be correct, but must invariably be in error. We cannot do them well or not well—by committing adultery, for instance, with the right woman at the right time in the right way. On the contrary, it is true without qualification that to do any of them is to be in error. 10 15

§19 [To think these admit of a mean], therefore, is like thinking that unjust or cowardly or intemperate action also admits of a mean, an excess and a deficiency. If it did, there would be a mean of excess, a mean of deficiency, an excess of excess and a deficiency of deficiency. §20 On the contrary, just as there is no excess or deficiency of temperance or of bravery (since the intermediate is a sort of extreme), so also there is no mean of these vicious actions either, but whatever way anyone does them, he is in error. For in general there is no mean of excess or of deficiency, and no excess or deficiency of a mean. 20 25

7

[The Particular Virtues of Character]

However, we must not only state this general account but also apply it to the particular cases. For among accounts concerning actions, though the general ones are common to more cases, the specific ones are truer, since actions are about particular cases, and our account must accord with these.* Let us, then, find these from the chart.* 30

1107b §2 First, then, in feelings of fear and confidence the mean is bravery. The excessively fearless person is nameless (indeed many cases are nameless), and the one who is excessively confident is rash. The one who is excessive in fear and deficient in confidence is cowardly.

5 §3 In pleasures and pains—though not in all types, and in pains less than in pleasures*—the mean is temperance and the excess intemperance. People deficient in pleasure are not often found, which is why they also lack even a name; let us call them insensible.

10 §4 In giving and taking money the mean is generosity, the excess wastefulness and the deficiency ungenerosity. Here the vicious people have contrary excesses and defects; for the wasteful person is excessive in spending and deficient in taking, whereas the ungenerous person is excessive in taking and deficient in spending. §5 At the moment we are
15 speaking in outline and summary, and that is enough; later we shall define these things more exactly.

§6 In questions of money there are also other conditions. Another mean is magnificence; for the magnificent person differs from the generous by being concerned with large matters, while the generous person is
20 concerned with small. The excess is ostentation and vulgarity, and the deficiency is stinginess. These differ from the vices related to generosity in ways we shall describe later.

§7 In honor and dishonor the mean is magnanimity, the excess something called a sort of vanity, and the deficiency pusillanimity. §8 And
25 just as we said that generosity differs from magnificence in its concern with small matters, similarly there is a virtue concerned with small honors, differing in the same way from magnanimity, which is concerned with great honors. For honor can be desired either in the right way or more or less than is right. If someone desires it to excess, he is called an
30 honor-lover, and if his desire is deficient he is called indifferent to honor, but if he is intermediate he has no name. The corresponding conditions have no name either, except the condition of the honor-lover, which is called honor-loving.

This is why people at the extremes lay claim to the intermediate area. Moreover, we also sometimes call the intermediate person an honor-lover, and sometimes call him indifferent to honor; and sometimes we
1108a praise the honor-lover, sometimes the person indifferent to honor.* §9 We will mention later the reason we do this; for the moment, let us speak of the other cases in the way we have laid down.

5 §10 Anger also admits of an excess, deficiency, and mean. These are all practically nameless; but since we call the intermediate person mild, let us call the mean mildness. Among the extreme people, let the excessive person be irascible, and his vice irascibility, and let the deficient person be
a sort of inirascible person, and his deficiency inirascibility.

10 §11 There are also three other means, somewhat similar to one another, but different. For they are all concerned with common dealings

in conversations and actions, but differ insofar as one is concerned with truth telling in these areas, the other two with sources of pleasure, some of which are found in amusement, and the others in daily life in general. Hence we should also discuss these states, so that we can better observe that in every case the mean is praiseworthy, whereas the extremes are neither praiseworthy nor correct, but blameworthy. Most of these cases are also nameless, and we must try, as in the other cases also, to supply names ourselves, to make things clear and easy to follow. 1108a 15

§12 In truth-telling, then, let us call the intermediate person truthful, and the mean truthfulness; pretense that overstates will be boastfulness, and the person who has it boastful; pretense that understates will be self-deprecation, and the person who has it self-deprecating. 20

§13 In sources of pleasure in amusements let us call the intermediate person witty, and the condition wit; the excess buffoonery and the person who has it a buffoon; and the deficient person a sort of boor and the state boorishness. 25

In the other sources of pleasure, those in daily life, let us call the person who is pleasant in the right way friendly, and the mean state friendliness. If someone goes to excess with no [ulterior] aim, he will be ingratiating; if he does it for his own advantage, a flatterer. The deficient person, unpleasant in everything, will be a sort of quarrelsome and ill-tempered person. 30

§14 There are also means in feelings and about feelings. Shame, for instance, is not a virtue, but the person prone to shame as well as [the virtuous people we have described] receives praise. For here also one person is called intermediate, and another—the person excessively prone to shame, who is ashamed about everything—is called excessive; the person who is deficient in shame or never feels shame at all is said to have no sense of disgrace; and the intermediate one is called prone to shame. 35 1108b

§15 Proper indignation is the mean between envy and spite; these conditions are concerned with pleasure and pain at what happens to our neighbors. For the properly indignant person feels pain when someone does well undeservedly; the envious person exceeds him by feeling pain when anyone does well, while the spiteful person is so deficient in feeling pain that he actually enjoys [other people's misfortunes].* 5

§16 There will also be an opportunity elsewhere to speak of these. We must consider justice after these.* Since it is spoken of in more than one way, we shall distinguish its two types and say how each of them is a mean. Similarly, we must also consider the virtues that belong to reason. 10

8

[Relations between Mean and Extreme States]

Among these three conditions, then, two are vices—one of excess, one of deficiency—and one, the mean, is virtue. In a way, each of them is

1108b opposed to each of the others, since each extreme is contrary both to the intermediate condition and to the other extreme, while the intermediate is
 15 contrary to the extremes.

§2 For, just as the equal is greater in comparison to the smaller, and smaller in comparison to the greater, so also the intermediate states are excessive in comparison to the deficiencies and deficient in comparison to
 20 the excesses—both in feelings and in actions. For the brave person, for instance, appears rash in comparison to the coward, and cowardly in comparison to the rash person; the temperate person appears intemperate in comparison to the insensible person, and insensible in comparison with the intemperate person; and the generous person appears wasteful in comparison to the ungenerous, and ungenerous in comparison to the
 25 wasteful person.* §3 That is why each of the extreme people tries to push the intermediate person to the other extreme, so that the coward, for instance, calls the brave person rash, and the rash person calls him a coward, and similarly in the other cases.

§4 Since these conditions of soul are opposed to each other in these ways, the extremes are more contrary to each other than to the intermediate. For they are further from each other than from the intermediate, just
 30 as the large is further from the small, and the small from the large, than either is from the equal.

§5 Further, sometimes one extreme—rashness or wastefulness, for instance—appears somewhat like the intermediate state, bravery or generosity. But the extremes are most unlike one another; and the things that
 35 are furthest apart from each other are defined as contraries. And so the things that are further apart are more contrary.

1109a §6 In some cases the deficiency, in others the excess, is more opposed to the intermediate condition. For instance, cowardice, the deficiency, not rashness, the excess, is more opposed to bravery, whereas intemperance, the excess, not insensibility, the deficiency, is more opposed to temperance.

§7 This happens for two reasons: One reason is derived from the object itself. Since sometimes one extreme is closer and more similar to the intermediate condition, we oppose the contrary extreme, more than this closer one, to the intermediate condition.* Since rashness, for
 10 instance, seems to be closer and more similar to bravery, and cowardice less similar, we oppose cowardice, more than rashness, to bravery; for what is further from the intermediate condition seems to be more contrary to it. This, then, is one reason, derived from the object itself.

§8 The other reason is derived from ourselves. For when we ourselves have some natural tendency to one extreme more than to the other, this extreme appears more opposed to the intermediate condition. Since, for
 15 instance, we have more of a natural tendency to pleasure, we drift more easily toward intemperance than toward orderliness. Hence we say that an extreme is more contrary if we naturally develop more in that direc-

tion; and this is why intemperance is more contrary to temperance, since 1109a
it is the excess [of pleasure].

9

[How Can We Reach the Mean?]

We have said enough, then, to show that virtue of character is a mean and 20
what sort of mean it is; that it is a mean between two vices, one of excess
and one of deficiency; and that it is a mean because it aims at the interme-
diate condition in feelings and actions.

§2 That is why it is also hard work to be excellent. For in each case it is 25
hard work to find the intermediate; for instance, not everyone, but only
one who knows, finds the midpoint in a circle. So also getting angry, or
giving and spending money, is easy and everyone can do it; but doing it
to the right person, in the right amount, at the right time, for the right
end, and in the right way is no longer easy, nor can everyone do it. Hence
doing these things well is rare, praiseworthy, and fine. 30

§3 That is why anyone who aims at the intermediate condition must
first of all steer clear of the more contrary extreme, following the advice
that Calypso also gives: 'Hold the ship outside the spray and surge.*
For one extreme is more in error, the other less. §4 Since, therefore, it
is hard to hit the intermediate extremely accurately,* the second-best
tack, as they say, is to take the lesser of the evils. We shall succeed best 35
in this by the method we describe. 1109b

We must also examine what we ourselves drift into easily. For different
people have different natural tendencies toward different goals, and we
shall come to know our own tendencies from the pleasure or pain that 5
arises in us. §5 We must drag ourselves off in the contrary direction; for
if we pull far away from error, as they do in straightening bent wood, we
shall reach the intermediate condition.

§6 And in everything we must beware above all of pleasure and its
sources; for we are already biased in its favor when we come to judge it.
Hence we must react to it as the elders reacted to Helen, and on each 10
occasion repeat what they said; for if we do this, and send it off, we shall
be less in error.*

§7 In summary, then, if we do these things we shall best be able to
reach the intermediate condition. But presumably this is difficult, espe-
cially in particular cases, since it is not easy to define the way we should 15
be angry, with whom, about what, for how long. For sometimes, indeed,
we ourselves praise deficient people and call them mild, and sometimes
praise quarrelsome people and call them manly.

§8 Still, we are not blamed if we deviate a little in excess or deficiency
from doing well, but only if we deviate a long way, since then we are eas- 20
ily noticed. But how great and how serious a deviation receives blame is

1109b not easy to define in an account; for nothing else perceptible is easily defined either. Such things* are among particulars,* and the judgment depends on perception.*

§9 This is enough, then, to make it clear that in every case the intermediate state is praised, but we must sometimes incline toward the excess, 25 sometimes toward the deficiency; for that is the easiest way to hit the intermediate and good condition.

BOOK III

[PRECONDITIONS OF VIRTUE]

1

[Voluntary Action]

30 Virtue, then, is about feelings and actions. These receive praise or blame if they are voluntary, but pardon, sometimes even pity, if they are involuntary.* Hence, presumably, in examining virtue we must define the voluntary and the involuntary. §2 This is also useful to legislators, both for 35 honors and for corrective treatments.*

1110a §3 Now it seems that things coming about by force or because of ignorance are involuntary.*

What is forced has an external principle, the sort of principle in which the agent, or [rather] the victim,* contributes nothing*—if, for instance, a wind or people who have him in their control were to carry him off.

5 §4 But what about actions done because of fear of greater evils, or because of something fine?* Suppose, for instance, a tyrant tells you to do something shameful, when he has control over your parents and children, and if you do it, they will live, but if not, they will die.* These cases raise dispute about whether they are voluntary or involuntary.

§5 However, the same sort [of unwelcome choice] is found in throwing 10 cargo overboard in storms.* For no one willingly throws cargo overboard, without qualification,* but anyone with any sense throws it overboard to save himself and the others.

§6 These sorts of actions, then, are mixed,* but they are more like voluntary actions. For at the time they are done they are choiceworthy, and the goal of an action accords with the specific occasion; hence we should also call the action voluntary or involuntary on the occasion when he 15 does it. Now in fact he does it willingly. For in such actions he has within him the principle of moving the limbs that are the instruments [of the action]; but if the principle of the actions is in him, it is also up to him to do them or not to do them.* Hence actions of this sort are voluntary, though presumably the actions without [the appropriate] qualification are involuntary, since no one would choose any such action in its own right.