ARISTOTLE

Nicomachean Ethics

Translated with an Introduction and Notes by
MARTIN OSTWALD

Library of Liberal Arts

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BOOK I

1. *The good as the aim of action*

Every art or applied science [1] and every systematic investigation, and similarly every action and choice,[2] seem to aim at some good; the good, therefore, has been well defined as that at which all things aim.[3] But it is clear that there is a difference in the ends at which they aim: in some cases the activity [4] is the end, in others the end is some product [5] beyond the activity. In cases where the end lies beyond the action the product is naturally superior to the activity. 1094a 5

Since there are many activities, arts, and sciences,[6] the number of ends is correspondingly large: of medicine the end is health, of shipbuilding a vessel, of strategy, victory, and of household management, wealth. In many instances several such pursuits are grouped together under a single capacity: [7] the art of bridle-making, for example, and everything else pertaining to the equipment of a horse are grouped together under horsemanship; horsemanship in turn, along with every other military action, is grouped together under strategy; and other pursuits are grouped together under other capacities. In all these cases the ends of the master sciences are preferable to the ends of the subordinate sciences, since the latter are 10 15

1 See Glossary, *technē,* and VI. 4.

2 See Glossary, *proairesis;* Introduction, pp. xxii-xxiii; and III. 2.

3 We do not know who first gave this definition of the good. It is certainly implied in the Platonic dialogues, especially in *Republic* VI; but the most likely candidate for the formulation here is Eudoxus, for whom see below, X. 2, 1172b9-15. But it is clear from this passage, from X. 2, 1172b35-36, and from *Rhetoric* I. 6, 1362a23 that Aristotle himself subscribed to this definition.

4 See Glossary, *energeia.*

5 See Glossary, *ergon.*

6 See Glossary, *epistēmē,* and VI. 3 and 6.

7 See Glossary, *dynamis.*

pursued for the sake of the former. This is true whether the ends of the actions lie in the activities themselves or, as is the case in the disciplines just mentioned, in something beyond the activities.

2. *Politics as the master science of the good*

Now, if there exists an end in the realm of action which we desire for its own sake, an end which determines all our other desires; if, in other words, we do not make all our
20 choices for the sake of something else—for in this way the process will go on infinitely so that our desire would be futile and pointless—then obviously this end will be the good, that is, the highest good. Will not the knowledge of this good, consequently, be very important to our lives? Would it not better equip us, like archers who have a target to aim at, to hit the proper mark? If so, we must try to comprehend in
25 outline at least what this good is and to which branch of knowledge or to which capacity it belongs.

This good, one should think, belongs to the most sovereign and most comprehensive master science, and politics[8] clearly fits this description. For it determines which sciences ought to exist in states, what kind of sciences each group of citizens
1094b must learn, and what degree of proficiency each must attain. We observe further that the most honored capacities, such as strategy, household management, and oratory, are contained in politics. Since this science uses the rest of the sciences,
5 and since, moreover, it legislates what people are to do and what they are not to do, its end seems to embrace the ends of the other sciences. Thus it follows that the end of politics is the good for man. For even if the good is the same for the individual and the state, the good of the state clearly is the

[8] *Politikē* is the science of the city-state, the *polis*, and its members, not merely in our narrow 'political' sense of the word but also in the sense that a civilized human existence is, according to Plato and Aristotle, only possible in the *polis*. Thus *politikē* involves not only the science of the state, 'politics,' but of our concept of 'society' as well.

greater and more perfect thing to attain and to safeguard. The attainment of the good for one man alone is, to be sure, a source of satisfaction; yet to secure it for a nation and for states is nobler and more divine. In short, these are the aims of our investigation, which is in a sense an investigation of social and political matters.

3. *The limitations of ethics and politics*

Our discussion will be adequate if it achieves clarity within the limits of the subject matter. For precision cannot be expected in the treatment of all subjects alike, any more than it can be expected in all manufactured articles. Problems of what is noble and just, which politics examines, present so much variety and irregularity that some people believe that they exist only by convention and not by nature. The problem of the good, too, presents a similar kind of irregularity, because in many cases good things bring harmful results. There are instances of men ruined by wealth, and others by courage. Therefore, in a discussion of such subjects, which has to start from a basis of this kind, we must be satisfied to indicate the truth with a rough and general sketch: when the subject and the basis of a discussion consist of matters that hold good only as a general rule, but not always, the conclusions reached must be of the same order. The various points that are made must be received in the same spirit. For a well-schooled man is one who searches for that degree of precision in each kind of study which the nature of the subject at hand admits: it is obviously just as foolish to accept arguments of probability from a mathematician as to demand strict demonstrations from an orator.

Each man can judge competently the things he knows, and of these he is a good judge. Accordingly, a good judge in each particular field is one who has been trained in it, and a good judge in general, a man who has received an all-round schooling. For that reason, a young man is not equipped to be a student of politics; for he has no experience in the actions

which life demands of him, and these actions form the basis and subject matter of the discussion. Moreover, since he follows his emotions,[9] his study will be pointless and unprofitable, for the end of this kind of study is not knowledge but action. Whether he is young in years or immature in character makes no difference; for his deficiency is not a matter of time but of living and of pursuing all his interests under the influence of his emotions. Knowledge brings no benefit to this kind of person, just as it brings none to the morally weak. But those who regulate their desires and actions by a rational principle[10] will greatly benefit from a knowledge of this subject. So much by way of a preface about the student, the limitations which have to be accepted, and the objective before us.

4. *Happiness is the good, but many views are held about it*

To resume the discussion: since all knowledge and every choice is directed toward some good, let us discuss what is in our view the aim of politics, i.e., the highest good attainable by action. As far as its name is concerned, most people would probably agree: for both the common run of people and cultivated men call it happiness, and understand by "being happy" the same as "living well" and "doing well." But when it comes to defining what happiness is, they disagree, and the account given by the common run differs from that of the philosophers. The former say it is some clear and obvious good, such as pleasure, wealth, or honor; some say it is one thing and others another, and often the very same person identifies it with different things at different times: when he

[9] See Glossary, *pathos*.

[10] The fundamental meaning of *logos* is 'speech,' 'statement,' in the sense of a coherent and rational arrangement of words; but it can apply to a rational principle underlying many things, and may be translated in different contexts by 'rational account,' 'explanation,' 'argument,' 'treatise,' or 'discussion.' In chaps. 7 and 13 below, *logos* is used in a normative sense, describing the human faculty which comprehends and formulates rational principles and thus guides the conduct of a good and reasonable man.

is sick he thinks it is health, and when he is poor he says it is wealth; and when people are conscious of their own ignorance, they admire those who talk above their heads in accents of greatness. Some thinkers used to believe that there exists over and above these many goods another good, good in itself and by itself, which also is the cause of good in all these things. An examination of all the different opinions would perhaps be a little pointless, and it is sufficient to concentrate on those which are most in evidence or which seem to make some sort of sense.

Nor must we overlook the fact that arguments which proceed from fundamental principles [11] are different from arguments that lead up to them. Plato, too, rightly recognized this as a problem and used to ask whether the discussion was proceeding from or leading up to fundamental principles, just as in a race course there is a difference between running from the judges to the far end of the track and running back again.[12] Now, we must start with the known. But this term has two connotations: "what is known to us" and "what is known" pure and simple. Therefore, we should start perhaps from what is known to us. For that reason, to be a competent student of what is right and just, and of politics generally, one must first have received a proper upbringing in moral conduct. The acceptance of a fact as a fact is the starting point, and if this is sufficiently clear, there will be no further need to ask why it is so. A man with this kind of background has or can easily acquire the foundations from which he must start. But if he neither has nor can acquire them, let him lend an ear to Hesiod's words:

> That man is all-best who himself works out
> every problem. . . .
> That man, too, is admirable who follows one
> who speaks well.

[11] See Glossary, *archē*.

[12] A Greek race course was U-shaped with the starting line at the open end, which is also where the judges would have their place. The race was run around a marker set up toward the opposite end of the U, and back again to the starting line.

He who cannot see the truth for himself, nor,
hearing it from others,
store it away in his mind, that man
is utterly useless.[13]

5. *Various views on the highest good*

But to return to the point from which we digressed.[14] It is not unreasonable that men should derive their concept of the good and of happiness from the lives which they lead. The common run of people and the most vulgar identify it with pleasure, and for that reason are satisfied with a life of enjoyment. For the most notable kinds of life are three: the life just mentioned, the political life, and the contemplative life.

The common run of people, as we saw, betray their utter slavishness in their preference for a life suitable to cattle; but their views seem plausible because many people in high places share the feelings of Sardanapallus.[15] Cultivated and active men, on the other hand, believe the good to be honor, for honor, one might say, is the end of the political life. But this is clearly too superficial an answer: for honor seems to depend on those who confer it rather than on him who receives it, whereas our guess is that the good is a man's own possession which cannot easily be taken away from him. Furthermore, men seem to pursue honor to assure themselves of their own worth; at any rate, they seek to be honored by sensible men and by those who know them, and they want to be honored on the basis of their virtue or excellence.[16] Obviously, then,

[13] Hesiod, *Works and Days* 293, 295-297, as translated by Richmond Lattimore in *Hesiod: The Works and Days; Theogony; The Shield of Herakles* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959).

[14] The "digression" is the last paragraph of chap. 4 above.

[15] Sardanapallus is the Hellenized name of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal (669-626 B.C.). Many stories about his sensual excesses were current in antiquity.

[16] *Aretē* denotes the functional excellence of any person, animal, or thing—that quality which enables the possessor to perform his own particular function well. Thus the *aretai* (plural) of man in relation to other men are his qualities which enable him to function well in society.

excellence, as far as they are concerned, is better than honor. 30
One might perhaps even go so far as to consider excellence rather than honor as the end of political life. However, even excellence proves to be imperfect as an end: for a man might possibly possess it while asleep or while being inactive all his life, and while, in addition, undergoing the greatest suffering 1096a
and misfortune. Nobody would call the life of such a man happy, except for the sake of maintaining an argument. But enough of this: the subject has been sufficiently treated in our publications addressed to a wider audience.[17] In the third place there is the contemplative life, which we shall examine 5
later on. As for the money-maker, his life is led under some kind of constraint: clearly, wealth is not the good which we are trying to find, for it is only useful, i.e., it is a means to something else. Hence one might rather regard the aforementioned objects as ends, since they are valued for their own sake. But even they prove not to be the good, though many words have been wasted to show that they are. Accordingly, we may dismiss them. 10

6. *Plato's view of the Good*

But perhaps we had better examine the universal good and face the problem of its meaning, although such an inquiry is

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The translation 'virtue' often seems too narrow, and accordingly 'excellence' and 'goodness,' or a combination of these, will also be used. See Glossary for a more complete explanation.

[17] The exact meaning of *ta enkyklia* has been the subject of much controversy. The basic sense of the term is 'common,' 'ordinary,' 'run-of-the-mill,' and Aristotle seems to use it in reference to his more popular treatises, such as the *Eudemus, Protrepticus, On Kingship,* etc., some of which were written in the form of dialogues. These writings, now largely lost, were addressed to a wider public and not exclusively to Aristotle's pupils in the Lyceum. Moreover, it is likely that *ta enkyklia* refers to the same publications as *hoi exōterikoi logoi* (cf. below, chap. 13, 1102a26-27, and VI. 4, 1140a3), literally: 'outside discussions or treatises,' i.e., non-technical philosophical writings addressed to an audience 'outside' the circle of Aristotle's students proper. For a recent discussion of the problem, see R. A. Gauthier and J. Y. Jolif, *L'Éthique à Nicomaque,* Vol. I (Louvain, 1958), pp. 36*-40*.

repugnant, since those who have introduced the doctrine of Forms [18] are dear to us. But in the interest of truth, one should perhaps think a man, especially if he is a philosopher,
15 had better give up even ⟨theories that once were⟩ his own and in fact must do so. Both are dear to us, but it is our sacred duty to honor truth more highly ⟨than friends⟩.[19]

The proponents of this theory did not make Forms out of those classes within which they recognized an order involving priority and posteriority; for that reason they made no provision, either, for a Form comprising all numbers.[20] However,

[18] The reference is of course to Plato's theory of *eidē* or *ideai* and especially the Form of the Good, which is Aristotle's chief target here. Aristotle gives us his own understanding of that theory in two important passages. The first is above, chap. 4, 1095a26-28: "Some thinkers used to believe that there exists over and above these many goods [*sc.* pleasure, wealth, honor, etc.] another good, good in itself, which is also the cause of good in all these things." The second is in *Eudemian Ethics* I. 8, 1217b2-16:

> For they say that the Good itself is the best of all ⟨good things⟩, and that the Good itself has the attribute of being the first of the goods and of being by its presence the cause of goodness in the other goods. Both these attributes, they say, inhere in the Form of the Good. . . . For the Good is most truly defined in terms of the Form of the Good (since all other goods are good ⟨only⟩ in terms of participating in it or resembling it), and it is the first of the goods: for if that in which things participate were to be destroyed, the things participating in the Form would also be destroyed, viz., the things which derive their definition from their participation in the Form. Now, this is the relation existing between the first and the later ⟨members of a series⟩. Hence the Good itself is the Form of the Good, for it exists separate from the things which participate in it, just as the other Forms do.

See also H. H. Joachim's remarks on this passage in his *Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics* (Oxford, 1951), pp. 31-33.

[19] It is often taken for granted that the proverb *amicus Plato, sed magis amica veritas* stems from this passage. However, while the sentiment expressed here is at least as old as Plato himself (cf. *Republic* X. 595b-c and 607c), the proverb itself is probably based on a thirteenth-century Latin translation of an older Greek biography of Aristotle.

[20] Since for Plato and his followers the Forms are absolute being, in which there is no room for becoming or any kind of development, they do not recognize a Form of a developing series, in which each successive member implies the preceding members of the same series. But, as

the term "good" is used in the categories of substance, of quality, and of relatedness alike; but a thing-as-such, i.e., a substance, is by nature prior to a relation into which it can enter: relatedness is, as it were, an offshoot or logical accident of substance. Consequently, there cannot be a Form common to the good-as-such and the good as a relation.

Secondly, the term "good" has as many meanings as the word "is": it is used to describe substances, e.g., divinity and intelligence are good; qualities, e.g., the virtues are good; quantities, e.g., the proper amount is good; relatedness, e.g., the useful is good; time, e.g., the right moment is good; place, e.g., a place to live is good; and so forth. It is clear, therefore, that the good cannot be something universal, common to all cases, and single; for if it were, it would not be applicable in all categories but only in one.

Thirdly, since the things which are included under one Form are the subject matter of a single science, there should be a single science dealing with all good things. But in actual fact there are many sciences dealing even with the goods that fall into a single category. To take, for example, the right moment: in war it is the proper concern of strategy, whereas in treating a disease it is part of the study of medicine. Or to take the proper amount: in food it is the subject of medicine; in physical training, of gymnastics.

One might even ⟨go further and⟩ raise the question what

Aristotle proceeds to show, the term "good" belongs to such a developing series: if we call a certain quality, e.g., blueness, "good," we have to assume first that there is such a thing as blueness, i.e., we have to predicate it in the category of substance before we can predicate it in the category of quality.

A few words ought to be said here about Aristotle's "categories." The categories constitute a list of the general types of predicates that can be assigned to any subject. The first and most basic category is that of substance or being: this includes all predicates which attempt to answer the question, "what is it?" Examples would be: "a man," "an animal," "a mountain." After we have identified what the thing is (substance), we may say how large it is (quantity), what sort of thing it is (quality), in what relation it stands to something else (relatedness), and so forth. The matter is treated in detail in Aristotle's *Categories*.

35 exactly they mean by a "thing-as-such"; for the selfsame defini-
1096b tion of "man" applies to both "man-as-such" and a particular man. For inasmuch as they refer to "man," there will be no difference between the two; and if this is true, there will be no difference, either, between "good-as-such" and "good," since both are good. Nor indeed will the "good-as-such" be more of a good because it is everlasting: after all, whiteness which lasts for a long time is no whiter than whiteness which lasts only for a day.

5 The argument of the Pythagoreans on this point seems to be more convincing. They give unity a place in the column of goods; and indeed even Speusippus seems to follow them. But more about this elsewhere.[21]

An objection might be raised against what we have said on the ground that the ⟨Platonic⟩ doctrine does not refer to every kind of good, and that only things which are pursued and
10 loved for their own sake are called "good" by reference to one single Form. That which produces good or somehow guarantees its permanence, ⟨the Platonists argue,⟩ or that which prevents the opposite of a good from asserting itself is called "good" because it is conducive to the intrinsically good and in a different sense. Now, the term "good" has obviously two different meanings: (1) things which are intrinsically good, and (2) things which are good as being conducive to the intrinsically good. Let us, therefore, separate the intrinsically good
15 things from the useful things and examine whether they are called "good" by reference to a single Form.

What sort of things could be called intrinsically good? Are they the goods that are pursued without regard to additional benefits, such as thought, sight, certain pleasures and honors? For even if we pursue these also for the sake of something else, one would still classify them among things intrinsically good.
20 Or is nothing good except the Form of Good? If that is the case, the Form will be pointless. But if, on the contrary,

21 For the Pythagorean table of opposites, see *Metaphysics* A. 986a22-26. Speusippus was a disciple of Plato and succeeded him as head of the Academy.

thought, sight, etc. also belong to the group of intrinsically good things, the same definition of "good" will have to be manifested in all of them, just as, for example, the definition of whiteness is the same in snow and in white paint. But in actual fact, the definitions of "good" as manifested in honor, thought, and pleasure are different and distinct. The good, therefore, is not some element common to all these things as derived from one Form.

What, then, is the meaning of "good" ⟨in these different things⟩? Surely, it is not that they merely happen to have the same name. Do we call them "good" because they are derived from a single good, or because they all aim at a single good? Or do we rather call them "good" by analogy, e.g., as sight is good in the body, so intelligence is good in the soul, and so other things are good within their respective fields?

But perhaps this subject should be dismissed for the present, because a detailed discussion of it belongs more properly to a different branch of philosophy, ⟨namely, first philosophy⟩. The same applies to the Form ⟨of the Good⟩: for, assuming that there is some single good which different things possess in common, or that there exists a good absolutely in itself and by itself, it evidently is something which cannot be realized in action or attained by man. But the good which we are now seeking must be attainable.

Perhaps one may think that the recognition of an absolute good will be advantageous for the purpose of attaining and realizing in action the goods which can be attained and realized. By treating the absolute good as a pattern, ⟨they might argue,⟩ we shall gain a better knowledge of what things are good for us, and once we know that, we can achieve them. This argument has, no doubt, some plausibility; however, it does not tally with the procedure of the sciences. For while all the sciences aim at some good and seek to fulfill it, they leave the knowledge of the absolute good out of consideration. Yet if this knowledge were such a great help, it would make no sense that all the craftsmen are ignorant of it and do not even attempt to seek it. One might also wonder what benefit a

weaver or a carpenter might derive in the practice of his own art from a knowledge of the absolute Good, or in what way a physician who has contemplated the Form of the Good will become more of a physician or a general more of a general. For actually, a physician does not even examine health in this fashion; he examines the health of man, or perhaps better, the health of a particular man, for he practices his medicine on particular cases. So much for this.

7. *The good is final and self-sufficient; happiness is defined*

Let us return again to our investigation into the nature of the good which we are seeking. It is evidently something different in different actions and in each art: it is one thing in medicine, another in strategy, and another again in each of the other arts. What, then, is the good of each? Is it not that for the sake of which everything else is done? That means it is health in the case of medicine, victory in the case of strategy, a house in the case of building, a different thing in the case of different arts, and in all actions and choices it is the end. For it is for the sake of the end that all else is done. Thus, if there is some one end for all that we do, this would be the good attainable by action; if there are several ends, they will be the goods attainable by action.

Our argument has gradually progressed to the same point at which we were before,[22] and we must try to clarify it still further. Since there are evidently several ends, and since we choose some of these—e.g., wealth, flutes, and instruments generally—as a means to something else, it is obvious that not all ends are final. The highest good, on the other hand, must be something final.[23] Thus, if there is only one final end, this will be the good we are seeking; if there are several, it will be the most final and perfect of them. We call that which is pursued as an end in itself more final than an end which is pursued for the sake of something else; and what is never chosen

[22] The reference is to the beginning of chap. 2 above.

[23] See Glossary, *teleios*.

as a means to something else we call more final than that which is chosen both as an end in itself and as a means to something else. What is always chosen as an end in itself and never as a means to something else is called final in an unqualified sense. This description seems to apply to happiness above all else: for we always choose happiness as an end in itself and never for the sake of something else. Honor, pleasure, intelligence, and all virtue we choose partly for themselves—for we would choose each of them even if no further advantage would accrue from them—but we also choose them partly for the sake of happiness, because we assume that it is through them that we will be happy. On the other hand, no one chooses happiness for the sake of honor, pleasure, and the like, nor as a means to anything at all.

We arrive at the same conclusion if we approach the question from the standpoint of self-sufficiency. For the final and perfect good seems to be self-sufficient. However, we define something as self-sufficient not by reference to the "self" alone. We do not mean a man who lives his life in isolation, but a man who also lives with parents, children, a wife, and friends and fellow citizens generally, since man is by nature a social and political being.[24] But some limit must be set to these relationships; for if they are extended to include ancestors, descendants, and friends of friends, they will go on to infinity. However, this point must be reserved for investigation later.[25] For the present we define as "self-sufficient" that which taken by itself makes life something desirable and deficient in nothing. It is happiness, in our opinion, which fits this description. Moreover, happiness is of all things the one most desirable, and it is not counted as one good thing among many others. But if it were counted as one among many others, it is obvious that the addition of even the least of the goods would make it more desirable; for the addition would produce an extra amount of good, and the greater amount of good is always more desirable than the lesser. We see then that happi-

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[24] Cf. *Politics* I. 2, 1253a3, and Glossary, *politikē*.

[25] See below, chaps. 10 and 11, and IX. 10.

ness is something final and self-sufficient and the end of our actions.

To call happiness the highest good is perhaps a little trite, and a clearer account of what it is, is still required. Perhaps this is best done by first ascertaining the proper function [26] of man. For just as the goodness and performance of a flute player, a sculptor, or any kind of expert, and generally of anyone who fulfills some function or performs some action, are thought to reside in his proper function, so the goodness and performance of man would seem to reside in whatever is his proper function. Is it then possible that while a carpenter and a shoemaker have their own proper functions and spheres of action, man as man has none, but was left by nature a good-for-nothing without a function? [27] Should we not assume that just as the eye, the hand, the foot, and in general each part of the body clearly has its own proper function, so man too has some function over and above the functions of his parts? What can this function possibly be? Simply living? He shares that even with plants, but we are now looking for something peculiar to man. Accordingly, the life of nutrition and growth must be excluded.[28] Next in line there is a life of sense perception. But this, too, man has in common with the horse, the ox, and every animal. There remains then an active life of the rational element. The rational element has two parts: one is rational in that it obeys the rule of reason, the other in that it possesses and conceives rational rules. Since the expression "life of the rational element" also can be used in two senses, we must make it clear that we mean a life determined by the activity,[29] as

[26] See Glossary, *ergon*.

[27] The translation here has to be more explicit than the Greek: *argon* is a *double-entendre*, which means literally 'without function' or 'doing no work' but was also used colloquially to denote a 'loafer.'

[28] Cf. Aristotle's later work, the *De Anima* II. 2, 413a20 ff., where the different kinds of life are elaborated to include the life of nutrition, of sense perception, of thought, and of movement, to which desire is added in II. 3, 414a31. See also below, p. 30, note 47.

[29] See Glossary, *energeia*.

opposed to the mere possession, of the rational element. For the activity, it seems, has a greater claim to be the function of man.

The proper function of man, then, consists in an activity of the soul in conformity with a rational principle or, at least, not without it. In speaking of the proper function of a given individual we mean that it is the same in kind as the function of an individual who sets high standards for himself: [30] the proper function of a harpist, for example, is the same as the function of a harpist who has set high standards for himself. The same applies to any and every group of individuals: the full attainment of excellence must be added to the mere function. In other words, the function of the harpist is to play the harp; the function of the harpist who has high standards is to play it well. On these assumptions, if we take the proper function of man to be a certain kind of life, and if this kind of life is an activity of the soul and consists in actions performed in conjunction with the rational element, and if a man of high standards is he who performs these actions well and properly, and if a function is well performed when it is performed in accordance with the excellence appropriate to it; we reach the conclusion that [31] the good of man is an activity of the soul in conformity with excellence or virtue, and if there are several virtues, in conformity with the best and most complete.

But we must add "in a complete life." For one swallow does

[30] This is the first occurrence in the *Nic. Eth.* of the *spoudaios* (literally, 'serious man'), whom Aristotle frequently invokes for purposes similar to those which make modern laws invoke the "reasonable man." However, Aristotle's stress is less on the reasonableness of a man under particular circumstances than on a person who has a sense of the importance of living his life well and of fulfilling his function in society in accordance with the highest standards.

[31] There is no good reason to follow Bywater in bracketing lines 12-16 ("if we take the proper function of man . . . we reach the conclusion that") on the grounds that they merely repeat the preceding argument. On the contrary, they provide an excellent summary and should be retained.

not make a spring, nor does one sunny day; similarly, one day or a short time does not make a man blessed[32] and happy.
20 This will suffice as an outline of the good: for perhaps one ought to make a general sketch first and fill in the details afterwards. Once a good outline has been made, anyone, it seems, is capable of developing and completing it in detail, and time is a good inventor or collaborator in such an effort. Advances
25 in the arts,[33] too, have come about in this way, for anyone can fill in gaps. We must also bear in mind what has been said above, namely that one should not require precision in all pursuits alike, but in each field precision varies with the matter under discussion and should be required only to the extent to which it is appropriate to the investigation. A carpenter and a geometrician both want to find a right angle, but they
30 do not want to find it in the same sense: the former wants to find it to the extent to which it is useful for his work, the latter, wanting to see truth, ⟨tries to ascertain⟩ what it is and what sort of thing it is. We must, likewise, approach other subjects in the same spirit, in order to prevent minor points from assuming a greater importance than the major tasks.
1098b Nor should we demand to know a causal explanation in all matters alike; in some instances, e.g., when dealing with fundamental principles, it is sufficient to point out convincingly that such-and-such is in fact the case. The fact here is the primary thing and the fundamental principle. Some fundamental principles can be apprehended by induction, others by sense perception, others again by some sort of habituation,[34] and

[32] The distinction Aristotle seems to observe between *makarios*, 'blessed' or 'supremely happy,' and *eudaimōn*, 'happy,' is that the former describes happiness insofar as it is god-given, while the latter describes happiness as attained by man through his own efforts.

[33] For the Greek sense of "art," *technē*, see Glossary.

[34] This, according to Aristotle, is the way in which the fundamental principles of ethics are learned, and for that reason a person must be mature in order to be able to study ethics properly. It is most important for the modern reader to note that Aristotle is not trying to persuade his listener of the truth of these principles, but takes it for granted that he has learned them at home. Cf. also above, chap. 3, 1095a2-11, and II. 1.

others by still other means. We must try to get at each of them in a way naturally appropriate to it, and must be scrupulous in defining it correctly, because it is of great importance for the subsequent course of the discussion. Surely, a good beginning is more than half the whole, and as it comes to light, it sheds light on many problems.

8. *Popular views about happiness confirm our position*

We must examine the fundamental principle with which we are concerned, ⟨happiness,⟩ not only on the basis of the logical conclusion we have reached and on the basis of the elements which make up its definition, but also on the basis of the views commonly expressed about it. For in a true statement, all the facts are in harmony; in a false statement, truth soon introduces a discordant note.

Good things are commonly divided into three classes: (1) external goods, (2) goods of the soul, and (3) goods of the body. Of these, we call the goods pertaining to the soul goods in the highest and fullest sense. But in speaking of "soul," we refer to our soul's actions and activities.[35] Thus, our definition tallies with this opinion which has been current for a long time and to which philosophers subscribe. We are also right in defining the end as consisting of actions and activities; for in this way the end is included among the goods of the soul and not among external goods.

Also the view that a happy man lives well and fares well fits in with our definition: for we have all but defined happiness as a kind of good life and well-being.

Moreover, the characteristics which one looks for in happiness are all included in our definition. For some people think that happiness is virtue, others that it is practical wisdom, others that it is some kind of theoretical wisdom;[36] others again believe it to be all or some of these accompanied by, or not devoid of, pleasure; and some people also include external pros-

[35] See Glossary, *energeia*.

[36] See Glossary, *phronēsis* and *sophia*.

perity in its definition.[37] Some of these views are expressed by many people and have come down from antiquity, some by a few men of high prestige, and it is not reasonable to assume that both groups are altogether wrong; the presumption is rather that they are right in at least one or even in most respects.

Now, in our definition we are in agreement with those who
30 describe happiness as virtue or as some particular virtue, for our term "activity in conformity with virtue" implies virtue. But it does doubtless make a considerable difference whether we think of the highest good as consisting in the possession or in the practice of virtue, viz., as being a characteristic[38] or an activity. For a characteristic may exist without producing any
1099a good result, as for example, in a man who is asleep or incapacitated in some other respect. An activity, on the other hand, must produce a result: ⟨an active person⟩ will necessarily act and act well. Just as the crown at the Olympic Games is not awarded to the most beautiful and the strongest but to the
5 participants in the contests—for it is among them that the victors are found—so the good and noble things in life are won by those who act rightly.

The life of men active in this sense is also pleasant in itself. For the sensation of pleasure belongs to the soul, and each man derives pleasure from what he is said to love: a lover of horses from horses, a lover of the theater from plays, and in
10 the same way a lover of justice from just acts, and a lover of

[37] It is possible to identify the proponents of some of the views mentioned here with a fair degree of assurance. The view that virtue alone constitutes happiness was espoused by Antisthenes and the Cynics (and later by the Stoics); in VI. 13, 1144b17-21, the doctrine that all virtues are forms of *phronēsis* or 'practical wisdom' is attributed to Socrates; theoretical wisdom as virtue may perhaps be attributed to Anaxagoras and his doctrine of *Nous;* the view that pleasure must be added to virtue and wisdom is that of Plato's *Philebus* 27d, 60d-e, and 63e; and the ancient commentators on this passage identify Xenocrates, Plato's pupil and later head of the Academy, as regarding external goods as essential for the good life.

[38] See Glossary, *hexis,* and II. 5.

virtue in general from virtuous acts. In most men, pleasant acts conflict with one another because they are not pleasant by nature, but men who love what is noble derive pleasure from what is naturally pleasant. Actions which conform to virtue are naturally pleasant, and, as a result, such actions are not only pleasant for those who love the noble but also pleasant in themselves. The life of such men has no further need of pleasure as an added attraction, but it contains pleasure within itself. We may even go so far as to state that the man who does not enjoy performing noble actions is not a good man at all. Nobody would call a man just who does not enjoy acting justly, nor generous who does not enjoy generous actions, and so on. If this is true, actions performed in conformity with virtue are in themselves pleasant.

Of course it goes without saying that such actions are good as well as noble, and they are both in the highest degree, if the man of high moral standards displays any right judgment about them at all; and his judgment corresponds to our description. So we see that happiness is at once the best, noblest, and most pleasant thing, and these qualities are not separate, as the inscription at Delos makes out:

> The most just is most noble, but health is the best,
> and to win what one loves is pleasantest.

For the best activities encompass all these attributes, and it is in these, or in the best one of them, that we maintain happiness consists.

Still, happiness, as we have said, needs external goods as well. For it is impossible or at least not easy to perform noble actions if one lacks the wherewithal. Many actions can only be performed with the help of instruments, as it were: friends, wealth, and political power. And there are some external goods the absence of which spoils supreme happiness, e.g., good birth, good children, and beauty: for a man who is very ugly in appearance or ill-born or who lives all by himself and has no children cannot be classified as altogether happy; even less happy perhaps is a man whose children and friends are

worthless, or one who has lost good children and friends through death. Thus, as we have said,[39] happiness also requires well-being of this kind, and that is the reason why some classify good fortune with happiness, while others link it to virtue.

9. *How happiness is acquired*

This also explains why there is a problem whether happiness is acquired by learning, by discipline, or by some other kind of training, or whether we attain it by reason of some divine dispensation or even by chance. Now, if there is anything at all which comes to men as a gift from the gods, it is reasonable to suppose that happiness above all else is god-given; and of all things human it is the most likely to be god-given, inasmuch as it is the best. But although this subject is perhaps more appropriate to a different field of study, it is clear that happiness is one of the most divine things, even if it is not god-sent but attained through virtue and some kind of learning or training. For the prize and end of excellence and virtue is the best thing of all, and it is something divine and blessed.[40] Moreover, if happiness depends on excellence, it will be shared by many people; for study and effort will make it accessible to anyone whose capacity for virtue is unimpaired. And if it is better that happiness is acquired in this way rather than by chance, it is reasonable to assume that this is the way in which it is acquired. For, in the realm of nature, things are naturally arranged in the best way possible—and the same is also true of the products of art and of any kind of causation, especially the highest. To leave the greatest and noblest of things to chance would hardly be right.

A solution of this question is also suggested by our earlier definition, according to which the good of man, happiness, is some kind of activity of the soul in conformity with virtue.[41] All the other goods are either necessary prerequisites for

[39] See above, 1098b26-29.

[40] See p. 18, note 32.

[41] See above, chap. 7, 1098a16-17.

happiness, or are by nature co-workers with it and useful instruments for attaining it. Our results also tally with what we said at the outset: [42] for we stated that the end of politics is the best of ends; and the main concern of politics is to engender a certain character in the citizens and to make them good and disposed to perform noble actions.

We are right, then, when we call neither a horse nor an ox nor any other animal happy, for none of them is capable of participating in an activity of this kind. For the same reason, a child is not happy, either; for, because of his age, he cannot yet perform such actions. When we do call a child happy, we do so by reason of the hopes we have for his future. Happiness, as we have said, requires completeness in virtue as well as a complete lifetime. Many changes and all kinds of contingencies befall a man in the course of his life, and it is possible that the most prosperous man will encounter great misfortune in his old age, as the Trojan legends tell about Priam. When a man has met a fate such as his and has come to a wretched end, no one calls him happy.

10. *Can a man be called "happy" during his lifetime?*

Must we, then, apply the term "happy" to no man at all as long as he is alive? Must we, as Solon would have us do, wait to see his end? [43] And, on this assumption, is it also true that a man is actually happy after he is dead? Is this not simply absurd, especially for us who define happiness as a kind of activity? Suppose we do not call a dead man happy, and interpret Solon's words to mean that only when a man is dead can we safely say that he has been happy, since he is now beyond the reach of evil and misfortune—this view, too, is open to objection. For it seems that to some extent good and evil really exist for a dead man, just as they may exist for a

[42] See above, chap. 2, 1094a27-b7.

[43] This is one of the main points made by Solon, Athenian statesman and poet of the early sixth century B.C., in his conversation with the Lydian king, Croesus, in Herodotus I. 32.

man who lives without being conscious of them, for example,
20 honors and disgraces, and generally the successes and failures of his children and descendants.[44] This presents a further problem. A man who has lived happily to his old age and has died as happily as he lived may have many vicissitudes befall his descendants: some of them may be good and may be
25 granted the kind of life which they deserve, and others may not. It is, further, obvious that the descendants may conceivably be removed from their ancestors by various degrees. Under such circumstances, it would be odd if the dead man would share in the vicissitudes of his descendants and be happy at one time and wretched at another. But it would also be odd if the fortunes of their descendants did not affect the
30 ancestors at all, not even for a short time.

But we must return to the problem raised earlier, for through it our present problem perhaps may be solved. If one must look to the end and praise a man not as being happy but as having been happy in the past, is it not paradoxical that at a time when a man actually is happy this attribute, though
35 true, cannot be applied to him? We are unwilling to call the
1100b living happy because changes may befall them and because we believe that happiness has permanence and is not amenable to changes under any circumstances, whereas fortunes revolve many times in one person's lifetime. For obviously, if

[44] The comment on this passage by J. Burnet, *The Ethics of Aristotle* (London, 1900), p. 49, is worth quoting:

> There is no question here as to the departed being aware of what goes on in this world. On the contrary, the point is that what happens after a man's death may affect our estimate of his life in just the same way as what happens in his lifetime without his being aware of it. Neither makes any difference to the man himself, but the popular belief is . . . that it must affect our estimate of it. We cannot call that life a success which leads to failure, even though the man himself may never know of his failure, or may die in time to escape it. So with the fortunes of children. Even now we say 'what would his father think, if he were alive?'

It should be added, however, that the Greeks had a much stronger feeling for the cohesion of the family than we do; cf. G. Glotz, *La solidarité de la famille dans le droit criminel en Grèce* (Paris, 1904).

we are to keep pace with a man's fortune, we shall frequently have to call the same man happy at one time and wretched at another and demonstrate that the happy man is a kind of chameleon, and that the foundations ⟨of his life⟩ are unsure. Or is it quite wrong to make our judgment depend on fortune? Yes, it is wrong, for fortune does not determine whether we fare well or ill, but is, as we said, merely an accessory to human life; activities in conformity with virtue constitute happiness, and the opposite activities constitute its opposite.

The question which we have just discussed further confirms our definition. For no function of man possesses as much stability as do activities in conformity with virtue: these seem to be even more durable than scientific knowledge. And the higher the virtuous activities, the more durable they are, because men who are supremely happy spend their lives in these activities most intensely and most continuously, and this seems to be the reason why such activities cannot be forgotten.

The happy man will have the attribute of permanence which we are discussing, and he will remain happy throughout his life. For he will always or to the highest degree both do and contemplate what is in conformity with virtue; he will bear the vicissitudes of fortune most nobly and with perfect decorum under all circumstances, inasmuch as he is truly good and "four-square beyond reproach." [45]

But fortune brings many things to pass, some great and some small. Minor instances of good and likewise of bad luck obviously do not decisively tip the scales of life, but a number of major successes will make life more perfectly happy; for, in the first place, by their very nature they help to make life attractive, and secondly, they afford the opportunity for noble and good actions. On the other hand, frequent reverses can crush and mar supreme happiness in that they inflict pain and thwart many activities. Still, nobility shines through even in such circumstances, when a man bears many great misfor-

[45] A quotation from a poem of Simonides (*ca.* 556-468 B.C.), which is discussed by Socrates and Protagoras in Plato's *Protagoras* 338e-318a.

tunes with good grace not because he is insensitive to pain but because he is noble and high-minded.

If, as we said, the activities determine a man's life, no supremely happy man can ever become miserable, for he will never do what is hateful and base. For in our opinion, the man who is truly good and wise will bear with dignity whatever fortune may bring, and will always act as nobly as circumstances permit, just as a good general makes the most strategic use of the troops at his disposal, and a good shoemaker makes the best shoe he can from the leather available, and so on with experts in all other fields. If this is true, a happy man will never become miserable; but even so, supreme happiness will not be his if a fate such as Priam's befalls him. And yet, he will not be fickle and changeable; he will not be dislodged from his happiness easily by any misfortune that comes along, but only by great and numerous disasters such as will make it impossible for him to become happy again in a short time; if he recovers his happiness at all, it will be only after a long period of time, in which he has won great distinctions.

Is there anything to prevent us, then, from defining the happy man as one whose activities are an expression of complete virtue, and who is sufficiently equipped with external goods, not simply at a given moment but to the end of his life? Or should we add that he must die as well as live in the manner which we have defined? For we cannot foresee the future, and happiness, we maintain, is an end which is absolutely final and complete in every respect. If this be granted, we shall define as "supremely happy" those living men who fulfill and continue to fulfill these requirements, but blissful only as human beings. So much for this question.

11. *Do the fortunes of the living affect the dead?*

That the fortunes of his descendants and of all those near and dear to him do not affect the happiness of a dead man

at all, seems too unfeeling a view and contrary to the prevailing opinions. Many and different in kind are the accidents that can befall us, and some hit home more closely than others. It would, therefore, seem to be a long and endless task to make detailed distinctions, and perhaps a general outline will be sufficient. Just as one's own misfortunes are sometimes momentous and decisive for one's life and sometimes seem comparatively less important, so the misfortunes of our various friends affect us to varying degrees. In each case it makes a considerable difference whether those who are affected by an event are living or dead; much more so than it matters in a tragedy whether the crimes and horrors have been perpetrated before the opening of the play or are part of the plot. This difference, too, must be taken into account and perhaps still more the problem whether the dead participate in any good or evil. These considerations suggest that even if any good or evil reaches them at all, it must be something weak and negligible (either intrinsically or in relation to them), or at least something too small and insignificant to make the unhappy happy or to deprive the happy of their bliss. The good as well as the bad fortunes of their friends seem, then, to have some effect upon the dead, but the nature and magnitude of the effect is such as not to make the happy unhappy or to produce any similar changes.

12. *The praise accorded to happiness*

Now that we have settled these questions, let us consider whether happiness is to be classified among the things which we praise or rather among those which we honor; for it is clear that it is not a potential ⟨but an actual good⟩.[46]

[46] Cf. *Magna Moralia* I. 2, 1183b20-30:
Some things are goods we honor, others things we praise, and others again are potential goods. By goods we honor I mean things such as the divine; things which are better ⟨than the ordinary⟩, such as the soul or the intelligence; things which are older ⟨than most⟩, such as the original source and the like. . . . By goods we praise I mean, for

The grounds on which we bestow praise on anything evidently are its quality and the relation in which it stands to other things. In other words, we praise a just man, a courageous man, and in general any good man, and also his virtue or excellence, on the basis of his actions and achievements; moreover, we praise a strong man, a swift runner, and so forth, because he possesses a certain natural quality and stands in a certain relation to something good and worth while. Our feelings about praising the gods provide a further illustration of this point. For it is ridiculous to refer the gods to our standards; but this is precisely what praising them amounts to, since praise, as we said, entails a reference to something else. But if praise is appropriate only for relative things, it is clear that the best things do not call for praise but for something greater and better, as indeed is generally recognized: for we call the gods "blessed" and "happy" and use these terms also for the most godlike man. The same is true of good things: no one praises happiness in the same sense in which he praises justice, but he exalts its bliss as something better and more nearly divine.

Eudoxus, too, seems to have used the right method for advocating that pleasure is the most excellent, for he took the fact that pleasure, though a good, is not praised as an indication of its superiority to the things that are praised, as god and the good are, for they are the standards to which we refer everything else.

Praise is proper to virtue or excellence, because it is excellence that makes men capable of performing noble deeds. Eulogies, on the other hand, are appropriate for achievements of the body as well as of the mind. However, a detailed analysis of this subject is perhaps rather the business of those who have

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example, the virtues, since actions done in conformity with them bring praise; and potential goods are, for instance, political power, wealth, strength, and beauty, for a man of high moral principles has the capacity to use these well and a bad man to use them badly. Therefore such goods are called potential.

made a study of eulogies. For our present purposes, we may draw the conclusion from the preceding argument that happiness is one of the goods that are worthy of honor and are final. This again seems to be due to the fact that it is a starting point or fundamental principle, since for its sake all of us do everything else. And the source and cause of all good things we consider as something worthy of honor and as divine.

13. *The psychological foundations of the virtues*

Since happiness is a certain activity of the soul in conformity with perfect virtue, we must now examine what virtue or excellence is. For such an inquiry will perhaps better enable us to discover the nature of happiness. Moreover, the man who is truly concerned about politics seems to devote special attention to excellence, since it is his aim to make the citizens good and law-abiding. We have an example of this in the lawgivers of Crete and Sparta and in other great legislators. If an examination of virtue is part of politics, this question clearly fits into the pattern of our original plan.

There can be no doubt that the virtue which we have to study is human virtue. For the good which we have been seeking is a human good and the happiness a human happiness. By human virtue we do not mean the excellence of the body, but that of the soul, and we define happiness as an activity of the soul. If this is true, the student of politics must obviously have some knowledge of the workings of the soul, just as the man who is to heal eyes must know something about the whole body. In fact, knowledge is all the more important for the former, inasmuch as politics is better and more valuable than medicine, and cultivated physicians devote much time and trouble to gain knowledge about the body. Thus, the student of politics must study the soul, but he must do so with his own aim in view, and only to the extent that the objects of his inquiry demand: to go into it in greater detail would perhaps be more laborious than his purposes require.

Some things that are said about the soul in our less technical discussions [47] are adequate enough to be used here, for instance, that the soul consists of two elements, one irrational and one rational. Whether these two elements are separate, like the parts of the body or any other divisible thing, or
30 whether they are only logically separable though in reality indivisible, as convex and concave are in the circumference of a circle, is irrelevant for our present purposes.

Of the irrational element, again, one part seems to be common to all living things and vegetative in nature: I mean that part which is responsible for nurture and growth. We must assume that some such capacity of the soul exists in everything
1102b that takes nourishment, in the embryonic stage as well as when the organism is fully developed; for this makes more sense than to assume the existence of some different capacity at the latter stage. The excellence of this part of the soul is, therefore, shown to be common to all living things and is not exclusively human. This very part and this capacity seem to be
5 most active in sleep. For in sleep the difference between a good man and a bad is least apparent—whence the saying that for half their lives the happy are no better off than the wretched. This is just what we would expect, for sleep is an inactivity of the soul in that it ceases to do things which cause it to be called good or bad. However, to a small extent some bodily movements do penetrate to the soul in sleep, and in this sense
10 the dreams of honest men are better than those of average people. But enough of this subject: we may pass by the nutritive part, since it has no natural share in human excellence or virtue.

In addition to this, there seems to be another integral ele-

[47] See p. 9, note 17. It is interesting to note that in this connection Aristotle does not mention the extant *De Anima,* which differs considerably from his remarks here and even contradicts them, but refers instead to an earlier work now lost, perhaps the *Protrepticus.* The reason for this is presumably that the *De Anima* was written later than this section of the *Nic. Eth.;* cf. F. Nuyens, *L'évolution de la psychologie d'Aristote* (Louvain, 1948), pp. 189-93. The same is probably true also of the discussion of the soul in VI. 1, 1139a3-17.

ment of the soul which, though irrational, still does partake of reason in some way. In morally strong and morally weak men we praise the reason that guides them and the rational element of the soul, because it exhorts them to follow the right path and to do what is best. Yet we see in them also another natural strain different from the rational, which fights and resists the guidance of reason. The soul behaves in precisely the same manner as do the paralyzed limbs of the body. When we intend to move the limbs to the right, they turn to the left, and similarly, the impulses of morally weak persons turn in the direction opposite to that in which reason leads them. However, while the aberration of the body is visible, that of the soul is not. But perhaps we must accept it as a fact, nevertheless, that there is something in the soul besides the rational element, which opposes and reacts against it. In what way the two are distinct need not concern us here. But, as we have stated, it too seems to partake of reason; at any rate, in a morally strong man it accepts the leadership of reason, and is perhaps more obedient still in a self-controlled [48] and courageous man, since in him everything is in harmony with the voice of reason.

Thus we see that the irrational element of the soul has two parts: the one is vegetative and has no share in reason at all, the other is the seat of the appetites and of desire in general and partakes of reason insofar as it complies with reason and accepts its leadership; it possesses reason in the sense that we say it is "reasonable" to accept the advice of a father and of friends, not in the sense that we have a "rational" understanding of mathematical propositions. That the irrational element can be persuaded by the rational is shown by the fact that admonition and all manner of rebuke and exhortation are possible. If it is correct to say that the appetitive part, too, has reason, it follows that the rational element of the soul has two subdivisions: the one possesses reason in

[48] The problems involved in self-control and in moral strength are discussed in III. 10-12, and VII, respectively. For the distinction between *sōphrōn*, 'self-controlled,' and *enkratēs*, 'morally strong,' see the Glossary.

the strict sense, contained within itself, and the other possesses reason in the sense that it listens to reason as one would listen to a father.

Virtue, too, is differentiated in line with this division of the soul. We call some virtues "intellectual" and others "moral": theoretical wisdom, understanding, and practical wisdom are intellectual virtues, generosity and self-control moral virtues. In speaking of a man's character, we do not describe him as wise or understanding, but as gentle or self-controlled; but we praise the wise man, too, for his characteristic, and praiseworthy characteristics are what we call virtues.