ARISTOTLE

Nicomachean Ethics

Third Edition

Translated, with Introduction, Notes, and Glossary, by
Terence Irwin

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Assumptions that underlie his central ethical terms, we understand a good bit of his philosophy. It is useful to look up the passages cited in the entries in the Glossary and to examine them in their context. We need to keep two complications in mind:

1. In line with his method in ethical inquiry (see §5 above), Aristotle does not use many technical terms (i.e., terms that are explicitly defined for a specific theoretical purpose). His main terms (e.g., 'happiness', 'virtue', 'decision') are ordinary Greek words used in their ordinary senses. Aristotle, however, sometimes disagrees with ordinary usage about what these terms apply to, or with the criteria that should be used in applying them (so that, e.g., not everything that might normally count as a decision counts as a DECISION by Aristotle's standards). The Glossary tries to point out some of these complex relations between Aristotle's usage and ordinary Greek.

2. The relevant Greek terms often correspond only partially to natural English renderings. 'Happiness', 'voluntary', 'prudence', for instance, may mislead us about Aristotle's terms, unless we keep in mind the assumptions that underlie his use of the relevant Greek terms. Moreover, several English terms are sometimes needed to translate one Greek term in different contexts. It is often useful to bear in mind that Aristotle uses the same term without equivocation because its sense coincides only partially with any one English term (see, e.g., PRINCIPLE).

A superscript number in the translation marks the end of a passage that is discussed in the Notes. A word in capital letters in the notes refers to the relevant entry in the Glossary. Aristotle's works are cited throughout by the abbreviated titles given in the list of Abbreviations and Conventions.
§2 Then surely knowledge of this good also carries great weight for one's way of life, and if we know it, we are more likely, like archers who have a target to aim at, to hit the right mark.\(^2\)  §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.\(^3\)

§4 Now it seems proper to the most controlling science—the highest ruling science,\(^4\) §5 And this appears characteristic of political science.\(^5\) §6 For it prescribes which of the sciences ought to be studied 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 it. §7 And since it uses the other sciences concerned with action,\(^6\) / and moreover legislates what must be done and what avoided, its end will include the ends of the other sciences,\(^7\) 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 to acquire and preserve.\(^8\) For while it is satisfactory to acquire and preserve the good even for an individual, / it is finer and more divine to acquire and preserve it for a people and for cities.\(^9\)

And so our discipline aims at these things,\(^10\) being a sort of political science.\(^11\)

3 [The method of political science]

But our discussion will be adequate if we make things perspicuous enough to accord with the subject matter; for we should not seek the same degree of exactness in all sorts of arguments alike, any more than in the products of different crafts.\(^1\) §2 Now fine and just things, / which political science examines, differ and vary so much\(^2\) as to seem to rest on convention only, not on nature.\(^3\) §3 But 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 bravery.\(^4\) §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, and since our subject and our premises are things that hold good usually, we shall be satisfied to draw conclusions of the same sort.

Each of our claims, then, ought to be accepted in the same way. For the educated person seeks exactness in a given area to the extent that the nature of the subject allows; for apparently it is just as mistaken to demand demonstrations from a rhetorician as to accept<br>merely<br>persuasive arguments from a mathematician.\(^5\) §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 educated in that area, and the unqualifiedly good judge is the person educated in every area.

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 premisses of our arguments. §6 Moreover, since he tends to follow his feelings, his study will be futile and useless, since the goal is action, not knowledge.\(^6\) §7 And 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 follow reason in forming their desires and in their actions, knowledge of these things will be of great benefit.

§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.\(^7\)

4

[Common beliefs]

c2 Let us, then, begin again.\(^1\) Since every sort of knowledge and decision\(^2\) / pursues some good, what is the good that we say political science seeks, and what is the highest of all the goods achievable in action?

§2 As far as its name goes, most people practically 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.\(^3\) But about what happiness is they disagree, and the many do not give the same answer as the wise.\(^4\)

§3 For the many think it is one of the obvious and evident things, such as pleasure, or wealth, or honour. 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.
Some, 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.\(^5\)

\(^4\) 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.

\(^5\) We must notice, however, the difference between arguments from principles and arguments towards principles.\(^6\) For Plato also was right to be puzzled about this, when he used to ask if <the argument> set out from the principles or led towards them?\(^7\)—just as on a race course the path may go from the starting line to the far end,\(^8\) or back again. For we should begin from things known, but things are known in two ways;\(^9\) for some are known to us, some known without qualification. Presumably, then, we ought to begin from things known to us.

\(^6\) 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 the <belief> that <something is true> is the beginning, and if this is apparent enough to us, we will not need <, at this stage, to know> why <it is true> as well;\(^10\) and someone who is well brought up has the beginnings, or would easily acquire them.\(^11\)

Someone who neither has them nor can acquire them / should listen to Hesiod.\(^12\) '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.'

\(5\) [The three lives]

[c3] But let us begin again from the point from which we digressed.\(^1\) For, it would seem, people, not unreasonably, reach their conception of the good / and of happiness, from the lives. \(^2\) For there are roughly three most favoured 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. \(^3\) In this they appear completely slavish, / since the life they decide on is a life for grazing animals.\(^4\) Still, they have some argument in their defence, since many in positions of power feel as Sardanapalus\(^5\) felt, <and choose this life>.

\(6\) [The Platonic Form of the Good]

[c4] Presumably, though, we had better examine the universal good, and go through the puzzles about what is meant in speaking of it.\(^1\) This sort of inquiry is, to be sure, unwelcome to us, because those who introduced the Forms were friends\(^2\) 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. And 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.
§2 Those who introduced this view did not mean to produce an Idea for any <series> in which they spoke of prior and posterior; that was why they did not mean to establish an Idea for numbers either.7

But the good is spoken of both in what-it-is <i.e., substance>, and in quality and relative; and what exists in its own right, i.e., 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.

§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 predications, not in them all.

§4 Further, if a number of things have / one Idea, there is also one science of them; hence <if there were an Idea of Good> there would also be one 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.7

§5 One might be puzzled about what they / really 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 neither will they differ at all insofar as each is good.10

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

§7 But 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.11 §8 But let us leave this for another discussion.

A dispute emerges, however, about what we have said, because the arguments / <for the Idea> are not concerned with every sort of good. Rather, 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 goods because of these.12 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 would one 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 honours?13 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?14 §11 But if these other things are also goods in their own right, then 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.15 In fact, however, honour, prudence, and pleasure have different and dissimilar accounts, / in the respect in which they are goods. Hence the good is not something common corresponding to a single Idea.

§12 But how, then, is good spoken of, since it is not like homonyms resulting from chance?16 Is it spoken of from the fact that goods derive from one thing or all contribute to one thing? Or is it spoken of by analogy? For as sight is to body, so understanding is to soul, and so on for other cases.17

§13 / Presumably, though, we should leave these questions for now, since their exact treatment is more appropriate for another <branch of> philosophy.18 And the same is true about the Idea. For even if there is some one good predicated in common,19 or some separable good, itself in its own right, clearly that is not the sort of good a human being can 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 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.20 §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 surely it would
not be reasonable for all craftsmen to know nothing about such an important aid, 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 viewed the Idea Itself. For what the doctor appears to consider is not even health, 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]

[c5] / 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, but if there are more ends than one, it 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, what we are looking for will be this end, but if more ends than one are complete, it will be the most complete of these.

§4 Now 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 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 qualification. / For this we choose always because of itself, never because of something else. But honour, pleasure, understanding, and every virtue we choose because of themselves also—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, however, no one ever chooses for their sake, or for the sake of anything else at all.

§6 The same conclusion also appears to follow from self-sufficiency. For the complete good seems to be self-sufficient. But what we count as self-sufficient is not what suffices for a solitary 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.) But we take what is self-sufficient to be whatever all / by itself 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 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 [c6] But presumably the remark that the best good is happiness is apparently something <generally> agreed, and we still feel the need of a clearer statement of what the best good is. §10 Perhaps, then, we shall find 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.

§11 Then do the carpenter and the leatherworker 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?
§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.

§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. We have found, then, that the human function is activity of the soul in accord with reason or requiring reason.

§14 Now we say that the function of a kind of thing, such as a harpist, is the same in kind as the function of an excellent individual of the kind, such as an excellent harpist. 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.

§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 in accord with the best and most complete virtue, if there are more virtues than one, and, further, 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.

§17 [c7] Let this, then, be our sketch of the good; for, presumably, we must draw the outline first, and fill it in later. If the sketch is good, it would seem to be everyone’s task to 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; for it is everyone’s task to supply what is lacking.

§18 But we ought also to remember our previous remarks, and not to 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 discipline. §19 For the inquiries of the carpenter and of the geometer about the right angle are also different; for 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, so that digressions do not overwhelm our main task.

§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. This is so, for instance, with principles, where the fact that something is true is the first thing and the principle. §21 Now among principles some 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 And 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

[Defence of the account of the good]

[c8] We should examine the principle, however, not only from the conclusion and premises, but also from the things 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, one type called external, another goods of the soul, and another 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 practically said that the end is a sort of living well and doing well.
§5 [c9] Further, all the features that people look for in happiness appear to belong to the good we have described. §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, including pleasure or requiring it; 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 or some type of 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 its activity. 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.

§10 Moreover, the life of these active people is also pleasant in itself. For being pleased is a condition 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.

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

§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.

§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 these things are not distinguished, as the Delian inscription says they are: ‘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 one of them, the best one.

§15 Nonetheless, happiness evidently also needs external goods to be added, as we said; for 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.

§17 As we have said, therefore, 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?]

[c10] This also leads to a puzzle: Is happiness acquired by learning, or habituation, or by some other type 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 reasonable 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. 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 through some sort of learning / and attention.

§5 And since it is better to be happy in this way than because of fortune, it is reasonable for this to be the way we become happy. For whatever 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.²

§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.³ Of the other goods, some are necessary conditions of happiness, while others are naturally useful and co-operative as instruments.

§8 Further, this conclusion agrees with our opening remarks. For we took / the goal of political science to be the best good; and most of its attention is devoted to the character of the citizens, to make them good people who do fine actions.⁴

§9 It is not surprising, then, that we regard neither ox nor horse nor 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, as we have said, happiness requires both complete virtue / and a complete life.⁵

§11 It needs a complete life because life includes many reversals of fortune, good and bad, and the most prosperous person may fall into a terrible disaster in old age, as the Trojan stories tell us about Priam.⁶ If someone has suffered these sorts of misfortunes and comes to a miserable end, no one counts him happy.

10

[Can we be happy during our lifetime?]

[c11] /Then should we count no human being happy during his lifetime, but follow Solon's advice to wait to see the end?² §2 But if we agree with Solon, can someone really be happy during the time after he has died? Surely that is altogether strange, especially when we say happiness is an activity.

§3 /We do not say, then, that someone is happy during the time he is dead, and Solon's point is not this, but rather that when a human being has died, we can safely pronounce <that he was> blessed, on the assumption that he is now finally beyond evils and misfortunes.² 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 honours or dishonours, and his children, and descendants in general, do well or suffer misfortune.³

§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 a strange 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.⁴ §5 But / it would also be strange if the condition of descendants did not affect their ancestors at all or for any length of time.

§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 strange, then, if, at the very time when he is happy, / we refused to ascribe truly to him the happiness he has?² Such refusal results from / reluctance to call him happy during his lifetime, because of its ups and downs; for we suppose happiness is enduring and definitely not prone to fluctuate, but the same person's fortunes often turn to and / from.⁶ §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.

§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.² 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 the sciences.⁸/ Indeed, the most honourable 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> he is looking for and keeps the character he has throughout his life. For 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, four-square, 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 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, 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 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 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 the forces available to him in 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. Nor 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 neither be easily shaken from his happiness / nor shaken by just any misfortunes. But he will be shaken from it 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 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, 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> 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 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 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 difference, / 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 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 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 honour]

[c12] / Now that we have determined these points, let us consider whether happiness is something praiseworthy, or instead something honourable; for clearly it is not a capacity.
§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 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. 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 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 how it appears. For the gods and the most godlike of men are not 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 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. 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 presumably more proper for specialists in celebrations. For us, anyhow, it is clear from what has been said that happiness is something honourable and complete.

§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 honourable and divine.

13
[Introduction to the virtues]

[13] / 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. Moreover, the true politician seems to have put more effort into virtue than into anything else, since he wants to make the citizens good and law-abiding. And we find an example of this in the Spartan and Cretan legislators and in any others who share their concerns. Since, then, the examination of virtue is proper for political science, the inquiry clearly fits our decision at the beginning.

§5 Now it is clear that the virtue we must examine is human virtue, since we are also seeking the human good and human happiness. §6 Now 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 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 honourable 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 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.

§9 We have discussed the soul sufficiently in 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 non-rational, while one has reason. But are these distinguished as parts of a body and of everything divisible into parts? Or are they two in definition, and inseparable by nature, as the convex and the concave are in a surface? It does not matter for present purposes.

§11 Consider the non-rational 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. 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. 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.

§15 Another nature in the soul would also seem to be non-rational, though in a way it shares in reason. For in the / continent and the incontinent person we praise their reason and the <part> of the soul that has reason, because it exerts them correctly and towards whatever 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 uncontrolled 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. §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. 12 §18 The non-rational <part>, then, as well <as the whole soul> apparently has two parts. For while the plantlike <part> shares <in reason not at all, the <part> that has appetites and in general desires<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> The non-rational part also <obeys and> is persuaded in some way by reason, as is shown by correction, and by every sort / of reproof and exhortation.

§19 If, then, we ought to say that this <part> also has reason, then the <part> that has reason, as well <as the non-rational 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.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> 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 wise person for his state, / and those states that are praiseworthy we call virtues.

**Book II**

[**Virtue of character**]

1

[**How a virtue of character is acquired**]

Virtue, then, is of two sorts, virtue of thought and virtue / of character.<sup>1</sup> Virtue of thought arises and grows mostly from teaching; that is why it needs experience and time. Virtue of character <i.e.,</i> of <i>éthos</i> results from habit <i>éthos</i>; hence its name 'ethical', slightly varied from 'éthos'.<sup>2</sup> §2 Hence it is also clear that none of the virtues of character arises in 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 arise in us neither by nature nor against / nature. Rather, we are by nature able to acquire them, and we are completed through habit.<sup>3</sup> §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 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 performed the actions. 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.<sup>4</sup> §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