

THE NICOMACHEAN ETHICS OF ARISTOTLE.



BOOK I.

THE END.

- 1 1. EVERY art and every kind of inquiry, and like- In all he does
man seeks
some good
as end or
means.
wise every act and purpose, seems to aim at some
good: and so it has been well said that the good is
that at which everything aims.
- 2 But a difference is observable among these aims or
ends. What is aimed at is sometimes the exercise of
a faculty, sometimes a certain result beyond that
exercise. And where there is an end beyond the act,
there the result is better than the exercise of the
faculty.
- 3 Now since there are many kinds of actions and
many arts and sciences, it follows that there are many
ends also; *e.g.* health is the end of medicine, ships
of shipbuilding, victory of the art of war, and wealth
of economy.
- 4 But when several of these are subordinated to

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

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

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

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

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

Now Politics † seems to answer to this description.

* Reading τὸν ἀρτὸν δὲ.

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

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

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

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

9 This then is the aim of the present inquiry, which is a sort of political inquiry.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* The expression τὰ ὅτι ἐστὶ τὸ πᾶσι covers both (1) what is generally though not universally true, and (2) what is probable though not certain.

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

8 So much then by way of preface as to the student, and the spirit in which he must accept what we say, and the object which we propose to ourselves.

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

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

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

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

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

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

We must reason from facts accepted without question by the man of trained character.

But we must not omit to notice the distinction 5 that is drawn between the method of proceeding from your starting-points or principles, and the method of working up to them. Plato used with fitness to raise this question, and to ask whether the right way is from or to your starting-points, as in the race-course you may run from the judges to the boundary, or *vice versa*.

Well, we must start from what is known.

But "what is known" may mean two things: "what is known to us," which is one thing, or "what is known" simply, which is another.

I think it is safe to say that *we* must start from what is known to *us*.

And on this account nothing but a good moral 6 training can qualify a man to study what is noble and just—in a word, to study questions of Politics. For the undemonstrated fact is here the starting- 7 point, and if this undemonstrated fact be sufficiently evident to a man, he will not require a "reason why." Now the man who has had a good moral training either has already arrived at starting-points or principles of action, or will easily accept them when pointed out. But he who neither has them nor will accept them may hear what Hesiod says *—

"The best is he who of himself doth know;
Good too is he who listens to the wise;
But he who neither knows himself nor heeds
The words of others, is a useless man."

The good cannot be pleasure, nor honour, nor virtue.

5. Let us now take up the discussion at the point 1 from which we digressed.

* "Works and Days," 291-295.

It seems that men not unreasonably take their notions of the good or happiness from the lives actually led, and that the masses who are the least refined suppose it to be pleasure, which is the reason why they aim at nothing higher than the life of enjoyment.

For the most conspicuous kinds of life are three: this life of enjoyment, the life of the statesman, and, thirdly, the contemplative life.

3 The mass of men show themselves utterly slavish in their preference for the life of brute beasts, but their views receive consideration because many of those in high places have the tastes of Sardanapalus.

4 Men of refinement with a practical turn prefer honour; for I suppose we may say that honour is the aim of the statesman's life.

But this seems too superficial to be the good we are seeking: for it appears to depend upon those who give rather than upon those who receive it; while we have a presentiment that the good is something that is peculiarly a man's own and can scarce be taken away from him.

5 Moreover, these men seem to pursue honour in order that they may be assured of their own excellence,—at least, they wish to be honoured by men of sense, and by those who know them, and on the ground of their virtue or excellence. It is plain, then, that in their view, at any rate, virtue or excellence is better than honour; and perhaps we should take this to be the end of the statesman's life, rather than honour.

6 But virtue or excellence also appears too incomplete to be what we want; for it seems that a man

might have virtue and yet be asleep or be inactive all his life, and, moreover, might meet with the greatest disasters and misfortunes; and no one would maintain that such a man is happy, except for argument's sake. But we will not dwell on these matters now, for they are sufficiently discussed in the popular treatises.

The third kind of life is the life of contemplation: 7 we will treat of it further on.*

As for the money-making life, it is something 8 quite contrary to nature; and wealth evidently is not the good of which we are in search, for it is merely useful as a means to something else. So we might rather take pleasure and virtue or excellence to be ends than wealth; for they are chosen on their own account. But it seems that not even they are the end, though much breath has been wasted in attempts to show that they are.

Various arguments to show against the Platonists that there cannot be one universal good.

6. Dismissing these views, then, we have now to 1 consider the "universal good," and to state the difficulties which it presents; though such an inquiry is not a pleasant task in view of our friendship for the authors of the doctrine of ideas. But we venture to think that this is the right course, and that in the interests of truth we ought to sacrifice even what is nearest to us, especially as we call ourselves philosophers. Both are dear to us, but it is a sacred duty to give the preference to truth.

In the first place, the authors of this theory them- 2 selves did not assert a common idea in the case of things of which one is prior to the other; and for this

* Cf. VI. 7, 12, and X. 7, 8.

reason they did not hold one common idea of numbers. Now the predicate good is applied to substances and also to qualities and relations. But that which has independent existence, what we call "substance," is logically prior to that which is relative; for the latter is an offshoot as it were, or [in logical language] an accident of a thing or substance. So [by their own showing] there cannot be one common idea of these goods.

3 Secondly, the term good is used in as many different ways as the term "is" or "being:" we apply the term to substances or independent existences, as God, reason; to qualities, as the virtues; to quantity, as the moderate or due amount; to relatives, as the useful; to time, as opportunity; to place, as habitation, and so on. It is evident, therefore, that the word good cannot stand for one and the same notion in all these various applications; for if it did, the term could not be applied in all the categories, but in one only.

4 Thirdly, if the notion were one, since there is but one science of all the things that come under one idea, there would be but one science of all goods; but as it is, there are many sciences even of the goods that come under one category; as, for instance, the science which deals with opportunity in war is strategy, but in disease is medicine; and the science of the due amount in the matter of food is medicine, but in the matter of exercise is the science of gymnastic.

5 Fourthly, one might ask what they mean by the "absolute:" in "absolute man" and "man" the word "man" has one and the same sense; for in respect of manhood there will be no difference between them;

and if so, neither will there be any difference in respect of goodness between "absolute good" and "good."

Fifthly, they do not make the good any more good by making it eternal; a white thing that lasts a long while is no whiter than what lasts but a day.

There seems to be more plausibility in the doctrine of the Pythagoreans, who [in their table of opposites] place the one on the same side with the good things [instead of reducing all goods to unity]; and even Speusippus * seems to follow them in this.

However, these points may be reserved for another occasion; but objection may be taken to what I have said on the ground that the Platonists do not speak in this way of all goods indiscriminately, but hold that those that are pursued and welcomed on their own account are called good by reference to one common form or type, while those things that tend to produce or preserve these goods, or to prevent their opposites, are called good only as means to these, and in a different sense.

It is evident that there will thus be two classes of goods: one good in themselves, the other good as means to the former. Let us separate then from the things that are merely useful those that are good in themselves, and inquire if they are called good by reference to one common idea or type.

Now what kind of things would one call "good in themselves"?

Surely those things that we pursue even apart from their consequences, such as wisdom and sight

* Plato's nephew and successor.

and certain pleasures and certain honours; for although we sometimes pursue these things as means, no one could refuse to rank them among the things that are good in themselves.

If these be excluded, nothing is good in itself except the idea; and then the type or form will be meaningless.*

- 11 If however, these are ranked among the things that are good in themselves, then it must be shown that the goodness of all of them can be defined in the same terms, as white has the same meaning when applied to snow and to white lead.

But, in fact, we have to give a separate and different account of the goodness of honour and wisdom and pleasure.

Good, then, is not a term that is applied to all these things alike in the same sense or with reference to one common idea or form.

- 12 But how then do these things come to be called good? for they do not appear to have received the same name by chance merely. Perhaps it is because they all proceed from one source, or all conduce to one end; or perhaps it is rather in virtue of some analogy, just as we call the reason the eye of the soul because it bears the same relation to the soul that the eye does to the body, and so on.

- 13 But we may dismiss these questions at present; for to discuss them in detail belongs more properly to another branch of philosophy.

And for the same reason we may dismiss the *Even if there*

* For there is no meaning in a form which is a form of nothing, in a universal which has no particulars under it.

*were, it
would not
help us here.*
 further consideration of the idea; for even granting that this term good, which is applied to all these different things, has one and the same meaning throughout, or that there is an absolute good apart from these particulars, it is evident that this good will not be anything that man can realize or attain: but it is a good of this kind that we are now seeking.

It might, perhaps, be thought that it would never-
 theless be well to make ourselves acquainted with
 this universal good, with a view to the goods that are
 attainable and realizable. With this for a pattern, it
 may be said, we shall more readily discern our own
 good, and discerning achieve it.

There certainly is some plausibility in this argu-
 ment, but it seems to be at variance with the existing
 sciences; for though they are all aiming at some good
 and striving to make up their deficiencies, they neglect
 to inquire about this universal good. And yet it is
 scarce likely that the professors of the several arts and
 sciences should not know, nor even look for, what
 would help them so much.

And indeed I am at a loss to know how the weaver
 or the carpenter would be furthered in his art by a
 knowledge of this absolute good, or how a man would
 be rendered more able to heal the sick or to command
 an army by contemplation of the pure form or idea.
 For it seems to me that the physician does not even
 seek for health in this abstract way, but seeks for the
 health of man, or rather of some particular man, for it
 is individuals that he has to heal.

The good is
 7. Leaving these matters, then, let us return once

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* 2, 1. See Stewart.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- 9 But perhaps the reader thinks that though no one will dispute the statement that happiness is the best thing in the world, yet a still more precise definition of it is needed. To And it so ask, What is man's function?
- 10 This will best be gained, I think, by asking, What is the function of man? For as the goodness and the excellence of a piper or a sculptor, or the practiser of any art, and generally of those who have any function or business to do, lies in that function, so man's good would seem to lie in his function, if he has one.
- 11 But can we suppose that, while a carpenter and a cobbler has a function and a business of his own, man has no business and no function assigned him by nature? Nay, surely as his several members, eye and hand and foot, plainly have each his own function, so we must suppose that man also has some function over and above all these.
- 12 What then is it?
Life evidently he has in common even with the plants, but we want that which is peculiar to him. We must exclude, therefore, the life of mere nutrition and growth.
Next to this comes the life of sense; but this too he plainly shares with horses and cattle and all kinds of animals.
- 13 There remains then the life whereby he acts—the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

17 This, then, may be taken as a rough outline of the good; for this, I think, is the proper method,—first to sketch the outline, and then to fill in the details. But it would seem that, the outline once fairly drawn, any one can carry on the work and fit in the several items which time reveals to us or helps us to find. And this indeed is the way in which the arts and sciences have grown; for it requires no extraordinary genius to fill up the gaps.

18 We must bear in mind, however, what was said above, and not demand the same degree of accuracy in all branches of study, but in each case so much as the subject-matter admits of and as is proper to that kind
19 of inquiry. The carpenter and the geometer both look for the right angle, but in different ways: the former only wants such an approximation to it as his work requires, but the latter wants to know what constitutes a right angle, or what is its special quality; his aim is to find out the truth. And so in other cases we must follow the same course, lest we spend more

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

† Cf. 9, 11.

time on what is immaterial than on the real business in hand.

Nor must we in all cases alike demand the reason why; sometimes it is enough if the undemonstrated fact be fairly pointed out, as in the case of the starting-points or principles of a science. Undemonstrated facts always form the first step or starting-point of a science; and these starting-points or principles are arrived at some in one way, some in another—some by induction, others by perception, others again by some kind of training. But in each case we must try to apprehend them in the proper way, and do our best to define them clearly; for they have great influence upon the subsequent course of an inquiry. A good start is more than half the race, I think, and our starting-point or principle, once found, clears up a number of our difficulties.

*this view
harmonizes
various
current
views.*

8. We must not be satisfied, then, with examining this starting-point or principle of ours as a conclusion from our data, but must also view it in its relation to current opinions on the subject; for all experience harmonizes with a true principle, but a false one is soon found to be incompatible with the facts.

Now, good things have been divided into three classes, external goods on the one hand, and on the other goods of the soul and goods of the body; and the goods of the soul are commonly said to be goods in the fullest sense, and more good than any other.

But "actions and exercises of the vital faculties or soul" may be said to be "of the soul." So our account is confirmed by this opinion, which is both of long

standing and approved by all who busy themselves with philosophy.

8 But, indeed, we secure the support of this opinion by the mere statement that certain actions and exercises are the end; for this implies that it is to be ranked among the goods of the soul, and not among external goods.

4 Our account, again, is in harmony with the common saying that the happy man lives well and does well; for we may say that happiness, according to us, is a living well and doing well.

5 And, indeed, all the characteristics that men expect to find in happiness seem to belong to happiness as we define it.

6 Some hold it to be virtue or excellence, some prudence, others a kind of wisdom; others, again, hold it to be all or some of these, with the addition of pleasure, either as an ingredient or as a necessary accompaniment; and some even include external prosperity in their account of it.

7 Now, some of these views have the support of many voices and of old authority; others have few voices, but those of weight; but it is probable that neither the one side nor the other is entirely wrong, but that in some one point at least, if not in most, they are both right.

8 First, then, the view that happiness is excellence or a kind of excellence harmonizes with our account; for "exercise of faculties in accordance with excellence" belongs to excellence.

9 But I think we may say that it makes no small difference whether the good be conceived as the mere

possession of something, or as its use—as a mere habit or trained faculty, or as the exercise of that faculty. For the habit or faculty may be present, and yet issue in no good result, as when a man is asleep, or in any other way hindered from his function; but with its exercise this is not possible, for it must show itself in acts and in good acts. And as at the Olympic games it is not the fairest and strongest who receive the crown, but those who contend (for among these are the victors), so in life, too, the winners are those who not only have all the excellences, but manifest these in deed.

And, further, the life of these men is in itself 10 pleasant. For pleasure is an affection of the soul, and each man takes pleasure in that which he is said to love,—he who loves horses in horses, he who loves sight-seeing in sight-seeing, and in the same way he who loves justice in acts of justice, and generally the lover of excellence or virtue in virtuous acts or the manifestation of excellence.

And while with most men there is a perpetual 11 conflict between the several things in which they find pleasure, since these are not naturally pleasant, those who love what is noble take pleasure in that which is naturally pleasant. For the manifestations of excellence are naturally pleasant, so that they are both pleasant to them and pleasant in themselves.

Their life, then, does not need pleasure to be added 12 to it as an appendage, but contains pleasure in itself.

Indeed, in addition to what we have said, a man is not good at all unless he takes pleasure in noble deeds. No one would call a man just who did not

take pleasure in doing justice, nor generous who took no pleasure in acts of generosity, and so on.

13 If this be so, the manifestations of excellence will be pleasant in themselves. But they are also both good and noble, and that in the highest degree—at least, if the good man's judgment about them is right, for this is his judgment.

14 Happiness, then, is at once the best and noblest and pleasantest thing in the world, and these are not separated, as the Delian inscription would have them to be:—

“What is most just is noblest, health is best,
Pleasantest is to get your heart's desire.”

For all these characteristics are united in the best exercises of our faculties; and these, or some one of them that is better than all the others, we identify with happiness.

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

17 As we said, then, happiness seems to stand in need of this kind of prosperity; and so some identify it

with good fortune, just as others identify it with excellence.

*Is happiness
acquired, or
the gift of
Gods or
of chance?*

9. This has led people to ask whether happiness 1
is attained by learning, or the formation of habits, or
any other kind of training, or comes by some divine
dispensation or even by chance.

Well, if the Gods do give gifts to men, happiness 2
is likely to be among the number, more likely, indeed,
than anything else, in proportion as it is better than
all other human things.

This belongs more properly to another branch of in- 3
quiry; but we may say that even if it is not heaven-
sent, but comes as a consequence of virtue or some
kind of learning or training, still it seems to be one
of the most divine things in the world; for the prize
and aim of virtue would appear to be better than
anything else and something divine and blessed.

Again, if it is thus acquired it will be widely 4
accessible; for it will then be in the power of all
except those who have lost the capacity for excellence
to acquire it by study and diligence.

And if it be better that men should attain happi- 5
ness in this way rather than by chance, it is reasonable
to suppose that it is so, since in the sphere of nature
all things are arranged in the best possible way, and 6
likewise in the sphere of art, and of each mode of
causation, and most of all in the sphere of the noblest
mode of causation. And indeed it would be too
absurd to leave what is noblest and fairest to the
dispensation of chance.

But our definition itself clears up the difficulty;* 7

* Cf. *supra*, 7. 21.

for happiness was defined as a certain kind of exercise of the vital faculties in accordance with excellence or virtue. And of the remaining goods [other than happiness itself], some must be present as necessary conditions, while others are aids and useful instruments to happiness. And this agrees with what we said at starting. We then laid down that the end of the art political is the best of all ends; but the chief business of that art is to make the citizens of a certain character —that is, good and apt to do what is noble. It is not without reason, then, that we do not call an ox, or a horse, or any brute happy; for none of them is able to share in this kind of activity.

10 For the same reason also a child is not happy; he is as yet, because of his age, unable to do such things. If we ever call a child happy, it is because we hope he will do them. For, as we said, happiness requires not only perfect excellence or virtue, 11 but also a full term of years for its exercise. For our circumstances are liable to many changes and to all sorts of chances, and it is possible that he who is now most prosperous will in his old age meet with great disasters, as is told of Priam in the tales of Troy; and a man who is thus used by fortune and comes to a miserable end cannot be called happy.

1 10. Are we, then, to call no man happy as long as he lives, but to wait for the end, as Solon said? Can no man be called happy during life?

2 And, supposing we have to allow this, do we mean that he actually is happy after he is dead? Surely that is absurd, especially for us who say that happiness is a kind of activity or life.

But if we do not call the dead man happy, and if 3
Solon meant not this, but that only then could we
safely apply the term to a man, as being now beyond
the reach of evil and calamity, then here too we
find some ground for objection. For it is thought
that both good and evil may in some sort befall a
dead man (just as they may befall a living man,
although he is unconscious of them), *e.g.* honours
rendered to him, or the reverse of these, and again the
prosperity or the misfortune of his children and all
his descendants.

But this, too, has its difficulties; for after a man 4
has lived happily to a good old age, and ended as he
lived, it is possible that many changes may befall him
in the persons of his descendants, and that some of
them may turn out good and meet with the good
fortune they deserve, and others the reverse. It is
evident too that the degree in which the descendants
are related to their ancestors may vary to any extent.
And it would be a strange thing if the dead man were 5
to change with these changes and become happy and
miserable by turns. But it would also be strange to
suppose that the dead are not affected at all, even for
a limited time, by the fortunes of their posterity.

But let us return to our former question; for its 6
solution will, perhaps, clear up this other difficulty.

The saying of Solon may mean that we ought to 7
look for the end and then call a man happy, not
because he now is, but because he once was happy.

But surely it is strange that when he is happy
we should refuse to say what is true of him, because
we do not like to apply the term to living men in view

of the changes to which they are liable, and because we hold happiness to be something that endures and is little liable to change, while the fortunes of one and
8 the same man often undergo many revolutions: for, it is argued, it is plain that, if we follow the changes of fortune, we shall call the same man happy and miserable many times over, making the happy man "a sort of chameleon and one who rests on no sound foundation."

9 We reply that it cannot be right thus to follow fortune. For it is not in this that our weal or woe lies; but, as we said, though good fortune is needed to complete man's life, yet it is the excellent employment of his powers that constitutes his happiness, as the reverse of this constitutes his misery.

10 But the discussion of this difficulty leads to a further confirmation of our account. For nothing human is so constant as the excellent exercise of our faculties. The sciences themselves seem to be less abiding. And the highest of these exercises* are the most abiding, because the happy are occupied with them most of all and most continuously (for this seems to be the reason why we do not forget how to do them †).

11 The happy man, then, as we define him, will have this required property of permanence, and all through life will preserve his character; for he will be occupied continually, or with the least possible interruption, in

* The "highest exercise of our faculties" is, of course, philosophic contemplation, as above, I. 7, 15; cf. X. 7, 1.

† We may forget scientific truths that we have known more easily than we lose the habit of scientific thinking or of virtuous action; cf. X. 7, 2; VI. 5, 8.

excellent deeds and excellent speculations; and, whatever his fortune be, he will take it in the noblest fashion, and bear himself always and in all things suitably, since he is truly good and "foursquare without a flaw."

But the dispensations of fortune are many, some 12 great, some small. The small ones, whether good or evil, plainly are of no weight in the scale; but the great ones, when numerous, will make life happier if they be good; for they help to give a grace to life themselves, and their use is noble and good; but, if they be evil, will enfeeble and spoil happiness; for they bring pain, and often impede the exercise of our faculties.

But nevertheless true worth shines out even here, in the calm endurance of many great misfortunes, not through insensibility, but through nobility and greatness of soul. And if it is what a man does that deter- 13 mines the character of his life, as we said, then no happy man will become miserable; for he will never do what is hateful and base. For we hold that the man who is truly good and wise will bear with dignity whatever fortune sends, and will always make the best of his circumstances, as a good general will turn the forces at his command to the best account, and a good shoemaker will make the best shoe that can be made out of a given piece of leather, and so on with all other crafts.

If this be so, the happy man will never become 14 miserable, though he will not be truly happy if he meets with the fate of Priam.

But yet he is not unstable and lightly changed: he

will not be moved from his happiness easily, nor by any ordinary misfortunes, but only by many heavy ones; and after such, he will not recover his happiness again in a short time, but if at all, only in a considerable period, which has a certain completeness, and in which he attains to great and noble things.

15 We shall meet all objections, then, if we say that a happy man is "one who exercises his faculties in accordance with perfect excellence, being duly furnished with external goods, not for any chance time, but for a full term of years:" to which perhaps we should add, "and who shall continue to live so, and shall die as he lived," since the future is veiled to us, but happiness we take to be the end and in all ways perfectly final or complete.

16 If this be so, we may say that those living men are blessed or perfectly happy who both have and shall continue to have these characteristics, but happy as men only.

1 11. Passing now from this question to that of the fortunes of descendants and of friends generally, the doctrine that they do not affect the departed at all seems too cold and too much opposed to popular
 2 opinion. But as the things that happen to them are many and differ in all sorts of ways, and some come home to them more and some less, so that to discuss them all separately would be a long, indeed an endless task, it will perhaps be enough to speak of them in general terms and in outline merely.

Cannot the fortunes of survivors affect the dead?

3 Now, as of the misfortunes that happen to a man's self, some have a certain weight and influence on his life, while others are of less moment, so is it also with

what happens to any of his friends. And, again, it 4
 always makes much more difference whether those
 who are affected by an occurrence are alive or dead
 than it does whether a terrible crime in a tragedy be
 enacted on the stage or merely supposed to have
 already taken place. We must therefore take these 5
 differences into account, and still more, perhaps, the
 fact that it is a doubtful question whether the dead
 are at all accessible to good and ill. For it appears
 that even if anything that happens, whether good
 or evil, does come home to them, yet it is something
 unsubstantial and slight to them if not in itself;
 or if not that, yet at any rate its influence is not of
 that magnitude or nature that it can make happy
 those who are not, or take away their happiness from
 those that are.

It seems then—to conclude—that the prosperity, 6
 and likewise the adversity, of friends does affect the
 dead, but not in such a way or to such an extent as to
 make the happy unhappy, or to do anything of the
 kind.

*Happiness as
 absolute end
 is above
 praise.*

12. These points being settled, we may now inquire 1
 whether happiness is to be ranked among the goods
 that we praise, or rather among those that we revere;
 for it is plainly not a mere potentiality, but an actual
 good.

What we praise seems always to be praised 2
 as being of a certain quality and having a certain
 relation to something. For instance, we praise the
 just and the courageous man, and generally the good
 man, and excellence or virtue, because of what they do
 or produce; and we praise also the strong or the swift-

footed man, and so on, because he has a certain gift or faculty in relation to some good and admirable thing.

3 This is evident if we consider the praises bestowed on the Gods. The Gods are thereby made ridiculous by being made relative to man; and this happens because, as we said, a thing can only be praised in relation to something else.

4 If, then, praise be proper to such things as we mentioned, it is evident that to the best things is due, not praise, but something greater and better, as our usage shows; for the Gods we call blessed and happy, and "blessed" is the term we apply to the most god-like men.

And so with good things: no one praises happiness as he praises justice, but calls it blessed, as something better and more divine.

5 On these grounds Eudoxus is thought to have based a strong argument for the claims of pleasure to the first prize: for he maintained that the fact that it is not praised, though it is a good thing, shows that it is higher than the goods we praise, as God and the good are higher; for these are the standards by reference to which we judge all other things,—giving praise to excellence or virtue, since it makes us apt to do what is noble, and passing encomiums on the results of virtue, whether these be bodily or psychical.

7 But to refine on these points belongs more properly to those who have made a study of the subject of encomiums; for us it is plain from what has been said that happiness is one of the goods which we revere and count as final.

And this further seems to follow from the fact that 8
it is a starting-point or principle: for everything we
do is always done for its sake; but the principle and
cause of all good we hold to be something divine and
worthy of reverence.

*Division of
the faculties
and result-
ing division
of the
virtues.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And this is confirmed by the fact that in sleep this part of the soul, or this faculty, is thought to be most active, while the good and the bad man are undistinguishable when they are asleep (whence the saying that for half their lives there is no difference between the happy and the miserable; which

indeed is what we should expect; for sleep is the cessation of the soul from those functions in respect of which it is called good or bad), except that they are to some slight extent roused by what goes on in their bodies, with the result that the dreams of the good man are better than those of ordinary people.

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

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

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

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

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

- 19 If then we like to say that this part, too, has a share of reason, the rational part also will have two divisions: one rational in the strict sense as possessing reason in itself, the other rational as listening to reason as a man listens to his father.
- 20 Now, on this division of the faculties is based the division of excellence; for we speak of intellectual excellences and of moral excellences; wisdom and understanding and prudence we call intellectual, liberality and temperance we call moral virtues or excellences. When we are speaking of a man's moral character we do not say that he is wise or intelligent, but that he is gentle or temperate. But we praise the wise man, too, for his habit of mind or trained faculty; and a habit or trained faculty that is praiseworthy is what we call an excellence or virtue.

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