There are three works of moral philosophy in the Aristotelian corpus: the Eudemian Ethics, the Magna Moralia (considered by many scholars not to be a genuine work of Aristotle), and the Nicomachean Ethics. Of these it is the last—one of the greatest works in all of moral philosophy—that represents the culmination of his mature thought.

In the extensive excerpts provided below, Aristotle discusses happiness and human good (Book I); the nature of moral virtue (Book II); moral responsibility, deliberation, and praise and blame (Book III); justice (Book V); the intellectual virtues and practical wisdom (Book VI); weakness of the will (Book VII); and happiness and contemplation (Book X).

Book I

1

Every craft and every investigation, and likewise every action and decision, seems to aim at some good; hence the good has been well described as that at which everything aims.

However, there is an apparent difference among the ends aimed at. For the end is sometimes an activity, sometimes a product beyond the activity; and when there is an end beyond the action, the product is by nature better than the activity.

Since there are many actions, crafts and sciences, the ends turn out to be many as well; for health is the end of medicine, a boat of boatbuilding, victory of generalship, and wealth of household management.

But whenever any of these sciences are subordinate to some one capacity—as e.g. bridlemaking and every other science producing equipment for horses are subordinate to horsemanship, while this and every action in warfare are in turn subordinate to generalship, and in the same way other sciences are subordinate to further ones—in each of these the end of the ruling science is more choiceworthy than all the ends subordinate to it, since it is the end for which those ends are also pursued. And here it does not matter whether the ends of the actions are the activities themselves, or some product beyond them, as in the sciences we have mentioned.

Translated by T. Irwin
Suppose, then, that (a) there is some end of the things we pursue in our actions which we wish for because of itself, and because of which we wish for the other things; and (b) we do not choose everything because of something else, since (c) if we do, it will go on without limit, making desire empty and futile; then clearly (d) this end will be the good, i.e. the best good.

Then surely knowledge of this good is also of great importance for the conduct of our lives, and if, like archers, we have a target to aim at, we are more likely to hit the right mark. If so, we should try to grasp, in outline at any rate, what the good is, and which science or capacity is concerned with it.

It seems to concern the most controlling science, the one that, more than any other, is the ruling science. And political science apparently has this character.

(1) For it is the one that prescribes which of the sciences ought to be studied in cities, and which ones each class in the city should learn, and how far.

(2) Again, we see that even the most honored capacities, e.g. generalship, household management and rhetoric, are subordinate to it.

(3) Further, it uses the other sciences concerned with action, and moreover legislates what must be done and what avoided.

Hence its end will include the ends of the other sciences, and so will be the human good.

<This is properly called political science;> for though admittedly 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. 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. And so, since our investigation aims at these <goods, for an individual and for a city>, it is a sort of political science.

Our discussion will be adequate if its degree of clarity fits 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.

Moreover, what is fine and what is just, the topics of inquiry in political science, differ and vary so much that they seem to rest on convention only,

1. and if . . . right mark: Or: 'like archers who have a target to aim at, we are more likely to hit what is right <if we know what the target is>. The version in the text implies that knowledge of the good gives us a target we would otherwise lack (cf. Plato, Rep. 519c2); the alternative version does not imply this.
not on nature. Goods, however, also vary in the same sort of way, since they cause harm to many people; for it has happened that some people have been destroyed because of their wealth, others because of their bravery.

Since these, then, are the sorts of things we argue from and about, it will be satisfactory if we can indicate the truth roughly and in outline; since "that is to say" we argue from and about what holds good usually "but not universally", it will be satisfactory if we can draw conclusions of the same sort.

Each of our claims, then, ought to be accepted in the same way "as claiming to hold good usually", since the educated person seeks exactness in each 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 "merely" persuasive arguments from a mathematician.

Further, each person judges well what he knows, and is a good judge about that; hence the good judge in a particular area is the person educated in that area, and the unconditionally 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 political science argues from and about.

Moreover, since he tends to be guided by his feelings, his study will be futile and useless; for its end is action, not knowledge. And here 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 being guided in his life and in each of his pursuits by his feelings; for an immature person, like an incontinent person, gets no benefit from his knowledge.

If, however, we are guided by reason in forming our desires and in acting, then this knowledge will be of great benefit.

These are the preliminary points about the student, about the way our claims are to be accepted, and about what we intend to do.

Let us, then, begin again. Since every sort of knowledge and decision pursue some good, what is that good which we say is the aim of political science? What "in other words" is the highest of all the goods pursued in action?

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

For the many think it is something obvious and evident, e.g. pleasure, wealth or honor, some thinking one thing, others another; and indeed the
same person keeps changing his mind, since in sickness he thinks it is health, in poverty wealth. And when they are conscious of their own ignorance, they admire anyone who speaks of something grand and beyond them.

<Among the wise,> however, some used to think that besides these many goods there is some other good that is something in itself, and also causes all these goods to be goods.

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.

We must notice, however, the difference between arguments from origins and arguments towards origins. For indeed Plato was right to be puzzled about this, when he used to ask if <the argument> set out from the origins or led towards them—just as on a race course the path may go from the starting-line to the far end, or back again.

For while we should certainly begin from origins that are known, things are known in two ways; for some are known to us, some known unconditionally <but not necessarily known to us>. Presumably, then, the origin we should begin from is what is known to us.

This is why we need to have been brought up in fine habits if we are to be adequate students of what is fine and just, and of political questions generally. For the origin we begin from is the belief that something is true, and if this is apparent enough to us, we will not, at this stage, need the reason why it is true in addition; and if we have this good upbringing, we have the origins to begin from, or can easily acquire them. Someone who neither has them nor can acquire them should listen to Hesiod: 'He who understands everything himself is best of all; he is noble also who listens to one who has spoken well; but he who neither understands it himself nor takes to heart what he hears from another is a useless man.'

But let us begin again from <the common beliefs> from which we digressed. For, it would seem, people quite reasonably reach their conception of the good, i.e. of happiness, from the lives <they lead>; for there are 17, 18

2. far end: Lit. 'limit'. Aristotle thinks of a Greek stadium, in which the midpoint of the race is at the end farthest from the starting line.

3. For the origin . . . acquire them: Lit. 'For the origin is the that, and if this appears adequately, he will not at all need in addition the because. Such a one has origins or would get them easily.' The origins we are looking for are those known without qualification, and we do not have them simply as a result of good upbringing; these tell us the 'because' or 'reason why'. The origins we have from good upbringing are simply those that allow us to begin the inquiry. See 1095a2, 1179b25.
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 happi-
ness as pleasure, and hence they also like the life of gratification. Here they
appear completely slavish, since the life they decide on is a life for grazing
animals; and yet they have some argument in their defense, since many in
positions of power feel the same way as Sardanapallus<sup>4</sup> <and also choose
this life>.

The cultivated people, those active <in politics>, conceive the good as
honor, since this is more or less the end <normally pursued> in the politi-
cal life. This, however, appears to be too superficial to be what we are
seeking, since it seems to depend more on those who honor than on the one
honored, whereas we intuitively believe that the good is something of our
own and hard to take from us.

Further, it would seem, they pursue honor to convince themselves that
they are good; at any rate, they seek to be honored by intelligent people,
among people who know them, and for virtue. It is clear, then, that in the
view of active people at least, virtue is superior <to honor>.

Perhaps, indeed, one might conceive virtue more than honor to be the
end of the political life. However, this also is apparently too incomplete <to
be the good>. For, it seems, someone might possess virtue but be asleep or
inactive throughout his life; or, further, he might suffer the worst evils and
misfortunes; and if this is the sort of life he leads, no one would count him
happy, except to defend a philosopher's paradox. Enough about this, since it
has been adequately discussed in the popular works<sup>5</sup> also.

The third life is the life of study, which we will examine in what follows.

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

But let us return once again to the good we are looking for, and consider
just what it could be, since 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.

5. the popular works: (enkuklia) Probably these are by Aristotle himself, and are
the same as the 'popular' (or 'external', exōterika) works of 1102a26.
What, then, is the good in each of these cases? Surely it is that for the sake of which the other things are done; and 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 things.

And so, if there is some end of everything that is pursued in action, this will be the good pursued in action; and if there are more ends than one, these will be the goods pursued in action.

Our argument has progressed, then, to the same conclusion <as before, that the highest end is the good>; but we must try to clarify this still more.

Though apparently there are many ends, we choose some of them, e.g. wealth, flutes and, in general, instruments, because of something else; hence it is clear that not all ends are complete. But the best good is apparently something complete. Hence, if only one end is complete, this will be what we are looking for; and if more than one are complete, the most complete of these will be what we are looking for.

An end pursued in itself, we say, is more complete than an end pursued because of something else; and an end that is never choiceworthy because of something else is more complete than ends that are choiceworthy both in themselves and because of this end; and hence an end that is always <choiceworthy, and also> choiceworthy in itself, never because of something else, is unconditionally complete.

Now happiness more than anything else seems unconditionally complete, since we always <choose it, and also> choose it because of itself, never 1097b because of something else.

Honor, pleasure, understanding and every virtue we certainly choose because of themselves, since we would choose each of them even if it had no further result, but we also choose them for the sake of happiness, supposing that through them we shall be happy. Happiness, by contrast, no one ever chooses for their sake, or for the sake of anything else at all.

The same conclusion <that happiness is complete> also appears to follow from self-sufficiency, since the complete good seems to be self-sufficient.

Now 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>. 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.

Anyhow, we regard something as self-sufficient when all by itself it makes a life choiceworthy and lacking nothing; and that is what we think happiness does.

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 that the addition of the smallest of goods would make it more choiceworthy; for <the smallest good> that is added becomes an extra quantity of goods <so creating a good larger than the original good>, and the larger of two goods is always more choiceworthy.

But we do not think any addition can make happiness more choiceworthy; hence it is most choiceworthy.

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

But presumably the remark that the best good is happiness is apparently something <generally> agreed, and what we miss is a clearer statement of what the best good is.

Well, perhaps we shall find the best good if we first find 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.

Then do the carpenter and the leatherworker have their functions and actions, while a human being has none, and is by nature idle, without any function? Or, just as eye, hand, foot and, in general, every <bodily> part apparently has its functions, may we likewise ascribe to a human being some function besides all of theirs?

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. The remaining possibility, then, is some sort of life of action of the <part of the soul> that has reason.

Now this <part has two parts, which have reason in different ways>, one as obeying the reason6 <in the other part>, the other as itself having reason and thinking.7 <We intend both.> 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 to a fuller extent.

(a) We have found, then, that the human function is the soul's activity that expresses reason <as itself having reason> or requires reason <as obeying reason>. (b) Now the function of F, e.g. of a harpist, is the same in kind, so we say, as the function of an excellent F, e.g. an excellent harpist.

6. obeying the reason: Cf. 1102b26.

7. 'One as obeying the reason' (a4) = 'requires reason'—lit. 'not without reason'—(a8) and refers to the role of non-rational desires. 'Itself having reason and thinking' (a5) = 'expresses reason'—lit. 'according to reason'—(a7) and refers to the role of reason and rational desires. On these rational and non-rational parts of the soul see 1102b26.
(c) The same true unconditionally in every case, when we add to the function the superior achievement that expresses the virtue; for a harpist's function, e.g. is to play the harp, and a good harpist's is to do it well. (d) Now we take the human function to be a certain kind of life, and take this life to be the soul's activity and actions that express reason. (e) <Hence by (c) and (d)> the excellent man's function is to do this finely and well. (f) Each function is completed well when its completion expresses the proper virtue. (g) Therefore <by (d), (e) and (f)> the human good turns out to be the soul's activity that expresses virtue.

And if there are more virtues than one, the good will express the best and most complete virtue. Moreover, it will be 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.

This, then, is a sketch of the good; for, presumably, the outline must come first, to be filled in later. If the sketch is good, then anyone, it seems, can advance and articulate it, and in such cases time is a good discoverer or <at least> a good co-worker. That is also how the crafts have improved, since anyone can add what is lacking <in the outline>.

However, we must also remember our previous remarks, so that we do not look for the same degree of exactness in all areas, but the degree that fits the subject-matter in each area and is proper to the investigation. For the carpenter's and the geometer's inquiries about the right angle are different also; the carpenter's is confined to the right angle's usefulness for his work, whereas the geometer's concerns what, or what sort of thing, the right angle is, since he studies the truth. We must do the same, then, in other areas too, <seeking the proper degree of exactness>, so that digressions do not overwhelm our main task.

Nor should we make the same demand for an explanation in all cases. Rather, in some cases it is enough to prove that something is true without explaining why it is true. This is so, e.g. with origins, where the fact that something is true is the first principle, i.e. the origin.8

Some origins are studied by means of induction, some by means of perception, some by means of some sort of habituation, and others by other means. In each case we should try to find them out by means suited to their nature, and work hard to define them well. For they have a great

8. Rather, in . . . i.e. the origin: Lit. 'But it is enough in some cases for the that to be proved well, e.g. in the case of origins and the that is first and origin.' Here Aristotle uses the phrase 'the that' for the origins known without qualification, i.e. the first principles of his theory (in this case, the account of happiness), and not (as in 1095b6) for the origins known to us, the starting-points in our inquiry. Starting-points are beliefs that need some further 'because'. First principles provide the necessary 'because', and a further 'because' cannot be given for the first principles, since they are first, and themselves give the 'because'.
influence on what follows; for the origin seems to be more than half the whole, and makes evident the answer to many of our questions.

8

However, we should examine the origin not only from the conclusion and premises <of a deductive argument>, but also from what is said about it; for all the facts harmonize with a true account, whereas the truth soon clashes with a false one.

Goods are divided, then, into three types, some called external, some goods of the soul, others goods of the body; and the goods of the soul are said to be goods to the fullest extent and most of all, and the soul's actions and activities are ascribed to the soul. Hence the account <of the good> is sound, to judge by this belief anyhow—and it is an ancient belief agreed on by philosophers.

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

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

Further, all the features that people look for in happiness appear to be true of the end described in our account. For to some people it seems to be virtue; to others intelligence; to others some sort of wisdom; to others again it seems to be these, or one of these, involving pleasure or requiring its addition; and others add in external prosperity as well. Some of these views are traditional, held by many, while others are held by a few reputable men; and it is reasonable for each group to be not entirely in error, but correct on one point at least, or even on most points.

First, our account agrees with those who say happiness is virtue <in general> or some <particular> virtue; for activity expressing virtue is proper to virtue. Presumably, though, it matters quite a bit whether we suppose that the best good consists in possessing or in using, i.e. in a state or in an activity <that actualizes the state>. For while someone may be in a

9. the origin seems . . . : A Greek proverb—i.e., 'well begun is more than half done'.
10. are said: Lit. 'we say'; but Aristotle must be reporting it as a widely held belief.
11. involving . . . addition: Lit. 'with pleasure or not without pleasure'. Aristotle seems to be distinguishing (a) life consisting of activities that are sources of pleasure in themselves, and (b) life consisting in activities that are not in themselves sources of pleasure, plus added sources of pleasure. The same distinction is assumed at 1099a15.
state that achieves no good, if, e.g., he is asleep or inactive in some other way, this cannot be true of the activity; for it will necessarily do actions and do well in them. And just as Olympic prizes are not for the finest and strongest, but for contestants, since it is only these who win; so also in life the fine and good people who act correctly win the prize.

Moreover, the life of these people is also pleasant in itself. For being pleased is a condition of the soul, <hence included in the activity of the soul>. Further, each type of person finds pleasure in whatever he is called a lover of, so that a horse, e.g. pleases the horse-lover, a spectacle the lover of spectacles, and similarly what is just pleases the lover of justice, and in general what expresses virtue pleases the lover of virtue. Hence the things that please most people conflict, because they are not pleasant by nature, whereas the things that please lovers of what is fine are things pleasant by nature; and actions expressing virtue are pleasant in this way; and so they both please lovers of what is fine and are pleasant in themselves.

Hence their life does not need pleasure to be added as some sort of ornament; 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 him just, e.g., if he did not enjoy doing just actions, or generous if he did not enjoy generous actions, and similarly for the other virtues. If this is so, then actions expressing the virtues are pleasant in themselves.

Moreover, these actions are good and fine as well as pleasant; indeed, they are good, fine and pleasant more than anything else, since on this question the excellent person has good judgement, and his judgement agrees with our conclusions.

Happiness, then, is best, finest and most pleasant, and these three features are not distinguished in the way suggested by the Delian inscription: '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 happiness we say is these activities, or <rather> one of them, the best one.

Nonetheless, happiness evidently also needs external goods to be added to the activity, as we said, since we cannot, or cannot easily, do fine actions if we lack the resources.

For, first of all, in many actions we use friends, wealth and political power just as we use instruments. Further, deprivation of certain <externals>—e.g. 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 have it even less, presumably, if our children or friends are totally bad, or were good but have died.

And so, as we have said, happiness would seem to need this sort of
prosperity added also; that is why some people identify happiness with
good fortune, while others <reacting from one extreme to the other> iden-
tify it with virtue.

9

This <question about the role of fortune> raises a puzzle: Is happiness
acquired by learning, or habituation, or by some other form of cultivation?
Or is it the result of some divine fate, or even of fortune?

First, then, if the gods give any gift at all to human beings, it is reason-
able for them to give happiness also; indeed, it is reasonable to give hap-
appiness more than any other human <good>, insofar as it is the best of
human <goods>. 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.

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.

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, and so are 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.

The answer to our question is also evident from our account <of hap-
piness>. For we have said it is a certain sort of activity of the soul expressing
virtue, <and hence not a product of fortune>; and some of the other goods
are necessary conditions <of happiness>, others are naturally useful and
cooperative as instruments <but are not parts of it>.

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
dine actions, <which is reasonable if happiness depends on virtue, not on
fortune>.

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

<Happiness needs a complete life.> For 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; but if someone has suffered these sorts of misfortunes and comes to a miserable end, no one counts him happy.

13

Since happiness is an activity of the soul expressing 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 spent more effort on virtue than on anything else, since he wants to make the citizens good and law-abiding. We find an example of this in the Spartan and Cretan legislators and in any others with their concerns. Since, then, the examination of virtue is proper for political science, the inquiry clearly suits our original decision to pursue political science.

It is clear that the virtue we must examine is human virtue, since we are also seeking the human good and human happiness. And 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. If this is so, then it is clear that the politician must acquire some knowledge about the soul, just as someone setting out to heal the eyes must acquire knowledge about the whole body as well. This is all the more true to the extent that political science is better and more honorable than medicine—and even among doctors the cultivated ones devote a lot of effort to acquiring knowledge about the body. Hence the politician as well as the student of nature must study the soul.

But he must study it for the purpose of inquiring into virtue, as far as suffices for what he seeks; for a more exact treatment would presumably take more effort than his purpose requires. We have discussed the soul sufficiently for our purposes in our popular works as well as our less popular, and we should use this discussion.

We have said, e.g., that one part of the soul is nonrational, while one has reason. Are these distinguished as parts of a body and everything divisible into parts are? Or are they two only in account, and inseparable by nature, as the convex and the concave are in a surface? It does not matter for present purposes.

Consider the nonrational part. One part of it, i.e. the cause of nutrition and growth, is seemingly plant-like and shared with other living things: for we can ascribe this capacity of the soul to everything that is

12. decision: The decision made in 1.2.

13. in our . . . as well: Or perhaps 'even in the popular works', on which see note to 1096a3.
nourished, including embryos, and the same one to complete 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 capacity more than others seem to be active in sleep, and here the good and the bad person are least distinct, which is why happy people are said to be no better off than miserable people for half their lives.

And 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. Enough about this, however, and let us leave aside the nutritive part, since by nature it has no share in human virtue.

Another nature in the soul would also seem to be nonrational, though in a way it shares in reason.

Clearly it is nonrational. For in the continent and the incontinent person we praise their reason, i.e. the part of the soul that has reason, because it exhorts them correctly and towards what is best; but they evidently also have in them some other part that is by nature something besides reason, conflicting and struggling with reason.

For just as paralysed 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. 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 a part besides reason, contrary to and countering reason. The precise way it is different does not matter.

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.

The nonrational part, then, as well as the whole soul apparently has two parts. For while the plant-like part shares in reason not at all, the part with appetites and in general desires shares in reason in a way, insofar as it both listens to reason and obeys it.

It listens in the way in which we are said to 'listen to reason' from father or friends, not in the way in which we 'give the reason' in mathematics.

The nonrational part also is persuaded in some way by reason, as is shown by chastening, and by every sort of reproof and exhortation.

If we ought to say, then, that this part also has reason, then the

14. listen to reason: Alternatively, 'take account'—lit., have logos (reason, account)—'of father or friends, not in the way in which we [give an account]. . . .'
that has reason, as well <as the nonrational part> will have two parts, one that has reason to the full extent by having it within itself, and another <that has it> by listening to reason as to a father.

The distinction between virtues also reflects this difference. For some virtues are called virtues of thought, others virtues of character; wisdom, comprehension and intelligence are called virtues of thought, generosity and temperance virtues of character.

For when we speak of someone's character we do not say that he is wise or has good comprehension, but that he is gentle or temperate. <Hence these are the virtues of character.> And yet, we also praise the wise person for his state, and the states that are praiseworthy are the ones we call virtues. <Hence wisdom is also a virtue.>

Book II

1

Virtue, then, is of two sorts, virtue of thought and virtue of character. Virtue of thought arises and grows mostly from teaching, and hence needs experience and time. Virtue of character <i.e. of ethos> results from habit <ethos>; hence its name 'ethical', slightly varied from 'ethos'.

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, e.g., 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.

Thus the virtues arise in us neither by nature nor against nature. Rather, we are by nature able to acquire them, and reach our complete perfection through habit.

Further, if something arises in us by nature, we first have the capacity for it, and later display the activity. This is clear in the case of the senses; for we did not acquire them by frequent seeing or hearing, but 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 previously activated them. For we learn a craft by producing the same product that we must produce when we have learned it, becoming builders, e.g., by building and harpists by playing the harp; so also, then, we become just by doing just actions, temperate by doing temperate actions, brave by 1103b doing brave actions.

What goes on in cities is evidence for this also. For the legislator makes the citizens good by habituating them, and this is the wish of every legisla-
tor; if he fails to do it well he misses his goal. <The right> habituation is what makes the difference between a good political system and a bad one.

Further, just as in the case of a craft, the sources and means that develop each virtue also ruin it. For playing the harp makes both good and bad harpists, and it is analogous in the case of builders and all the rest; for building well makes good builders, building badly, bad ones. If it were not so, no teacher would be needed, but everyone would be born a good or a bad craftsman.

It is the same, then, with the virtues. For actions in dealings with <other> human beings make some people just, some unjust; actions in terrifying situations and the acquired habit of fear or confidence make some brave and others cowardly. The same is true of situations involving appetites and anger; for one or another sort of conduct in these situations makes some people temperate and gentle, others intemperate and irascible.

To sum up, then, in a single account: A state <of character> arises from <the repetition of> similar activities. Hence we must display the right activities, since differences in these imply corresponding differences in the states. It is not unimportant, then, to acquire one sort of habit or another, right from our youth; rather, it is very important, indeed all-important.

2

Our present inquiry does not aim, as our others do, at study; for the purpose of our examination is not to know what virtue is, but to become good, since otherwise the inquiry would be of no benefit to us. Hence we must examine the right way to act, since, as we have said, the actions also control the character of the states we acquire.

First, then, actions should express correct reason. That is a common <belief>, and let us assume it; later we will say what correct reason is and how it is related to the other virtues.

But let us take it as agreed in advance that every account of the actions we must do has to be stated in outline, not exactly. As we also said at the start, the type of accounts we demand should reflect the subject-matter; and questions about actions and expediency, like questions about health, have no fixed <and invariable answers>.

And when our general account is so inexact, the account of particular cases is all the more inexact. For these fall under no craft or profession, and the agents themselves must consider in each case what the opportune action is, as doctors and navigators do.

The account we offer, then, in our present inquiry is of this inexact sort; still, we must try to offer help.

First, then, we should observe that these sorts of states naturally tend to be ruined by excess and deficiency. We see this happen with strength and
health, which we mention because we must use what is evident as a witness to what is not.\textsuperscript{15} For both excessive and deficient exercises ruin strength; and likewise, too much or too little eating or drinking ruins health, while the proportionate amount produces, increases and preserves it.

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

The same actions, then, are the sources and causes both of the emergence and growth of virtues and of their ruin; but further, the activities of the virtues will be found in these same actions. For this is also true of more evident cases, e.g. strength, which arises from eating a lot and from withstanding much hard labor, and it is the strong person who is most able to do these very things. It is the same with the virtues. Refraining from pleasures makes us become temperate, and when we have become temperate we are most able to refrain from pleasures. And it is similar with bravery; \textsuperscript{1104b} habituation in disdaining what is fearful and in standing firm against it makes us become brave, and when we have become brave we shall be most able to stand firm.

3

But \textit{actions are not enough}; we must take as a sign of someone's state his pleasure or pain in consequence of his action. For if someone who abstains from bodily pleasures enjoys the abstinence itself, then he is temperate, but if he is grieved by it, he is intemperate. Again, if he stands firm against terrifying situations and enjoys it, or at least does not find it painful, then he is brave, and if he finds it painful, he is cowardly.

\textit{Plasures and pains are appropriately taken as signs} because virtue of character is concerned with pleasures and pains.

(1) For it is pleasure that causes us to do base actions, and pain that causes us to abstain from fine ones. Hence we need to have had the appropriate upbringing—right from early youth, as Plato says—to make us find enjoyment or pain in the right things; for this is the correct education.

(2) Further, virtues are concerned with actions and feelings; but every feeling and every action implies pleasure or pain; hence, for this reason too, virtue is concerned with pleasures and pains.

\textsuperscript{15} For the maxim 'we must use . . .' cf. Anaxagoras, DK 59B21a.
(3) Corrective treatment <for vicious actions> also indicates <the relevance of pleasure and pain>, since it uses pleasures and pains; it uses them because such correction is a form of medical treatment, and medical treatment naturally operates through contraries.

(4) Further, as we said earlier, every state of soul is naturally related to and concerned with whatever naturally makes it better or worse; and pleasures and pains make people worse, from pursuing and avoiding the wrong ones, at the wrong time, in the wrong ways, or whatever other distinctions of that sort are needed in an account.

These <bad effects of pleasure and pain> are the reason why people actually define the virtues as ways of being unaffected and undisturbed <by pleasures and pains>. They are wrong, however, because they speak <of being unaffected> unconditionally, not of being unaffected in the right or wrong way, at the right or wrong time, and the added specifications.

We assume, then, that virtue is the sort of state <with the appropriate specifications> that does the best actions concerned with pleasures and pains, and that vice is the contrary. The following points will also make it evident that virtue and vice are concerned with the same things.

(5) There are three objects of choice—fine, expedient and pleasant—and three objects of avoidance—their contraries, shameful, harmful and painful. About all these, then, the good person is correct and the bad person is in error, and especially about pleasure. For pleasure is shared with animals, and implied by every object of choice, since what is fine and what is expedient appear pleasant as well.

(6) Further, since pleasure grows up with all of us from infancy on, it is hard to rub out this feeling that is dyed into our lives; and we estimate actions as well <as feelings>, some of us more, some less, by pleasure and pain. Hence, our whole inquiry must be about these, since good or bad enjoyment or pain is very important for our actions.

(7) Moreover, it is harder to fight pleasure than to fight emotion, <though that is hard enough>, as Heraclitus says. Now both craft and virtue are concerned in every case with what is harder, since a good result is even better when it is harder. Hence, for this reason also, the whole inquiry, for virtue and political science alike, most consider pleasures and pains; for if we use these well, we shall be good, and if badly, bad.

In short, virtue is concerned with pleasures and pains; the actions that are its sources also increase it or, if they are done differently, ruin it; and its activity is concerned with the same actions that are its sources.

4

However, someone might raise this puzzle: 'What do you mean by saying that to become just we must first do just actions and to become temperate
we must first do temperate actions? For if we do what is grammatical or musical, we must already be grammarians or musicians. In the same way, then, if we do what is just or temperate, we must already be just or temperate.

But surely this is not so even with the crafts, for it is possible to produce something grammatical by chance or by following someone else's instructions. To be a grammarian, then, we must both produce something grammatical and produce it in the way in which the grammarian produces it, i.e. expressing grammatical knowledge that is in us.

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

As conditions for having a craft these three do not count, except for the knowing itself. As a condition for having a virtue, however, the knowing counts for nothing, or <rather> for only a little, whereas the other two conditions are very important, indeed all-important. And these other two conditions are achieved by the frequent doing of just and temperate actions.

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

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

The many, however, do not do these actions but take refuge in arguments, thinking that they are doing philosophy, and that this is the way to become excellent people. In this they are like a sick person who listens attentively to the doctor, but acts on none of his instructions. Such a course of treatment will not improve the state of his body; any more than will the many's way of doing philosophy improve the state of their souls.

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

By feelings I mean appetite, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, love, hate, longing, jealousy, pity, in general whatever implies pleasure or pain.
By capacities I mean what we have when we are said to be capable of
these feelings—capable of, e.g., being angry or afraid or feeling pity.

By states I mean what we have when we are well or badly off in relation
to feelings. If, e.g., our feeling is too intense or slack, we are badly off in
relation to anger, but if it is intermediate, we are well off;¹⁶ and the same is
true in the other cases.

First, then, neither virtues nor vices are feelings. (a) For we are called
excellent or base insofar as we have virtues or vices, not insofar as we have
feelings. (b) We are neither praised nor blamed insofar as we have feelings;
for we do not praise the angry or the frightened person, and do not blame
the person who is simply angry, but only the person who is angry in a
particular way. But we are praised or blamed insofar as we have virtues or
vices. (c) We are angry and afraid without decision; but the virtues are
decisions of some kind, or <rather> require decision. (d) Besides, insofar
as we have feelings, we are said to be moved; but insofar as we have virtues
or vices, we are said to be in some condition rather than moved.

For these reasons the virtues are not capacities either; for we are neither
called good nor called bad insofar as we are simply capable of feelings.

Further, while we have capacities by nature, we do not become good or bad
by nature; we have discussed this before.

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

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

It should be said, then, that every virtue causes its possessors to be in a
good state and to perform their functions well; the virtue of eyes, e.g.,
makes the eyes and their functioning excellent, because it makes us see
well; and similarly, the virtue of a horse makes the horse excellent, and
thereby good at galloping, at carrying its rider and at standing steady in
the face of the enemy. If this is true in every case, then the virtue of a
human being will likewise be the state that makes a human being good and
makes him perform his function well.

¹⁶. By states . . . well off: 'state', hexis, lit. 'having', is formed from echein, 'to
have'. 'Well (badly) off' translates echein with the adverb, lit. 'have well (badly)'.
(Greek says 'How do you have?' for the English 'How do you do?' or 'How are
you?') Here Aristotle argues that a state is not merely a capacity. He does not deny,
but indeed believes, that a state is a type of capacity; see e.g. 'able to' in 1104a32–
b3, indicating the type of capacity that is included in the state of character.
We have already said how this will be true, and it will also be evident from our next remarks, if we consider the sort of nature that virtue has.

In everything continuous and divisible we can take more, less and equal, and each of them either in the object itself or relative to us; and the equal is some intermediate between excess and deficiency.

By the intermediate in the object I mean what is equidistant from each extremity; this is one and the same for everyone. But relative to us the intermediate is what is neither superfluous nor deficient; this is not one, and is not the same for everyone.

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

This, then, is how each science produces its product\(^\text{17}\) well, by focusing on what is intermediate and making the product conform to that. This, indeed, is why people regularly comment on well-made products that nothing could be added or subtracted, since they assume that excess or deficiency ruins a good \( \text{result} \) while the mean preserves it. Good craftsmen also, we say, focus on what is intermediate when they produce their product. And since virtue, like nature, is better and more exact than any craft, it will also aim at what is intermediate.

By virtue I mean virtue of character; for this \( \text{pursues the mean because} \) it is concerned with feelings and actions, and these admit of excess, deficiency and an intermediate condition. We can be afraid, e.g., or be confident, or have appetites, or get angry, or feel pity, in general have pleasure or pain, both too much and too little, and in both ways not well; but \( \text{having these feelings} \) at the right times, about the right things, towards the right people, for the right end, and in the right way, is the intermediate and best condition, and this is proper to virtue. Similarly, actions also admit of excess, deficiency and the intermediate condition.

Now virtue is concerned with feelings and actions, in which excess and deficiency are in error and incur blame, while the intermediate condition is correct and wins praise, which are both proper features of virtue. Virtue, then, is a mean, insofar as it aims at what is intermediate.

\(^{17}\) product: Ergon, also translated ‘FUNCTION’ in a16–24.
Moreover, there are many ways to be in error, since badness is proper to what is unlimited, as the Pythagoreans pictured it, and good to what is limited; but there is only one way to be correct. That is why error is easy and correctness hard, since it is easy to miss the target and hard to hit it. And so for this reason also excess and deficiency are proper to vice, the mean to virtue; 'for we are noble in only one way, but bad in all sorts of ways.'

Virtue, then, is (a) a state that decides, (b) <consisting> in a mean, (c) the mean relative to us, (d) which is defined by reference to reason, (e) i.e., to the reason by reference to which the intelligent person would define it. It is a mean between two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency.

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

Hence, as far as its substance and the account stating its essence are concerned, virtue is a mean; but as far as the best <condition> and the good <result> are concerned, it is an extremity.

But not every action or feeling admits of the mean. For the names of some automatically include baselessness, e.g. spite, shamelessness, envy <among feelings>, and adultery, theft, murder, among actions. All of these and similar things are called by these names because they themselves, not their excesses or deficiencies, are base.

Hence in doing these things we can never be correct, but must invariably be in error. We cannot do them well or not well—e.g. by committing adultery with the right woman at the right time in the right way; on the contrary, it is true unconditionally that to do any of them is to be in error.

>To think these admit of a mean>, therefore, is like thinking that unjust or cowardly or intemperate action also admits of a mean, an excess and a deficiency. For then there would be a mean of excess, a mean of deficiency, an excess of excess and a deficiency of deficiency.

Rather, just as there is no excess or deficiency of temperance or of bravery, since the intermediate is a sort of extreme <in achieving the good>, so also there is no mean, and no excess or deficiency, of these <vicious actions> either, but whatever way anyone does them, he is in error. For in general there is no mean of excess or of deficiency, and no excess or deficiency of a mean.

Book III

1

1109b Virtue, then, is about feelings and actions. These receive praise or blame when they are voluntary, but pardon, sometimes even pity, when they are involuntary. Hence, presumably, in examining virtue we must define the