Aristotle (384–322 BCE)

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Aristotle (384–322 BCE) was born in the northern Greek city of Stagira. In his youth he came to Athens and joined Plato's Academy, remaining there until Plato's death twenty years later. After leaving the Academy he served as tutor to the future king Alexander the Great of Macedon. Aristotle later returned to Athens, where he founded his own philosophical school, the Lyceum. Threatened by anti-Macedonian sentiment following the death of Alexander in 323, he again left Athens and died soon afterward.

Although Aristotle is known to have written dialogues and other works intended for a wide readership, his surviving works consist almost entirely of technical treatises on topics such as physics, biology, cosmology, metaphysics, philosophical psychology, ethics, and politics. His thought has often been regarded in modern times as opposed to that of Plato in important ways. But in late antiquity and much of the Middle Ages, it was often considered to be largely in harmony with Plato, and this view is receiving increasing attention and acceptance today. While criticizing certain versions of a "theory of ideas," he retains the Platonic understanding of intelligible form as primary reality (*ousia*) and argues that all changeable things, which are composites of form and matter, depend on a first principle which is immaterial, changeless, and divine and is at once intellect and intelligible reality. Hence, as in Plato, our intellect is the divine element in our soul, and intellectual contemplation is our share in immortality.

Nicomachean Ethics, Book X (Chs. 8–9)

7. If happiness is activity in accordance with excellence, it is reasonable that it should be in accordance with the highest excellence; and this will be that of the best thing in us. Whether it be intellect or something else that is this element which [1177a15] is thought to be our natural ruler and guide and to take thought of things noble and divine, whether it be itself also divine or only the most divine element in us, the activity of this in accordance with its proper excellence will be complete happiness. That this activity is contemplative we have already said.

Now this would seem to be in agreement both with what we said before and [1177a20] with the truth. For this activity is the best (since not only is intellect the best thing in us, but the objects of intellect are the best of knowable objects); and, secondly, it is the most continuous, since we can contemplate truth more continuously than we can *do* anything. And we think happiness has pleasure mingled with it, but the activity of wisdom is admittedly the pleasantest of excellent activities; at all events philosophy is thought to offer pleasures marvelous for their purity and their [1177a25] enduringness, and it is to be expected that those who know will pass their time more pleasantly than those who inquire. And the self-sufficiency that is spoken of must belong most to the contemplative activity. For while a wise man, as well as a just man and the rest, needs the necessaries of life, when they are sufficiently equipped with things of that sort, the just man needs people toward whom and with whom he [1177a30] shall act justly, and the temperate man, the brave man, and each of the others is in the same case; but the wise man, even when by himself, can contemplate truth, and the better the wiser he is; he can perhaps do so better if he has fellow workers, but still he is the most self-sufficient. And this activity alone would seem to be loved for [1177b1] its own sake; for nothing arises from it apart from the contemplating, while from practical activities we gain more or less apart from the action. And happiness is thought to depend on leisure; for we are busy that we may have leisure, and make [1177b5] war that we may live in peace. Now the activity of the practical excellences is exhibited in political or military affairs, but the actions concerned with these seem to be unleisurely. Warlike actions are completely so (for no one chooses to be at war, or provokes war, for the

sake of being at war; any one would seem absolutely [1177b10] murderous if he were to make enemies of his friends in order to bring about battle and slaughter); but the action of the statesman is also unleisurely, and—apart from the political action itself—aims at despotic power and honors, or at all events happiness, for him and his fellow citizens—a happiness different from political action, and evidently sought as being different. So if among excellent actions [1177b15] political and military actions are distinguished by nobility and greatness, and these are unleisurely and aim at an end and are not desirable for their own sake, but the activity of intellect, which is contemplative, seems both to be superior in worth and to aim at no end beyond itself, and to have its pleasure proper to itself (and this [1177b20] augments the activity), and the self-sufficiency, leisureliness, unweariedness (so far as this is possible for man), and all the other attributes ascribed to the blessed man are evidently those connected with this activity, it follows that this will be the complete happiness of man, if it be allowed a complete term of life (for none of the [1177b25] attributes of happiness is *in*complete).

But such a life would be too high for man; for it is not insofar as he is man that he will live so, but insofar as something divine is present in him; and by so much as this is superior to our composite nature is its activity superior to that which is the exercise of the other kind of excellence. If intellect is divine, then, in comparison [1177b30] with man, the life according to it is divine in comparison with human life. But we must not follow those who advise us, being men, to think of human things, and, being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us; for even if it be small in bulk, much more does it in power and worth surpass everything. This would [1178a1] seem, too, to be each man himself, since it is the authoritative and better part of him. It would be strange, then, if he were to choose not the life of himself but that of [1178a5] something else. And what we said before will apply now; that which is proper to each thing is by nature best and most pleasant for each thing; for man, therefore, the life according to intellect is best and pleasantest, since intellect more than anything else is man. This life therefore is also the happiest.

8. But in a secondary degree the life in accordance with the other kind of [1178a10] excellence is happy; for the activities in accordance with this befit our human estate. Just and brave acts, and other excellent acts, we do in relation to each other, observing what is proper to each with regard to contracts and services and all manner of actions and with regard to passions; and all of these seem to be human. Some of them seem even to arise from the body, and excellence of character to be in [1178a15] many ways bound up with the passions. Practical wisdom, too, is linked to excellence of character, and this to practical wisdom, since the principles of practical wisdom are in accordance with the moral excellences and rightness in the moral excellences is in accordance with practical wisdom. Being connected with the [1178a20] passions also, the moral excellences must belong to our composite nature; and the excellences of our composite nature are human, so, therefore, are the life and the happiness which correspond to these. The excellence of the intellect is a thing apart; we must be content to say this much about it, for to describe it precisely is a task greater than our purpose requires. It would seem, however, also to need external [1178a25] equipment but little, or less than moral excellence does. Grant that both need the necessaries, and do so equally, even if the statesman's work is more concerned with the body and things of that sort; for there will be little difference there; but in what they need for the exercise of their activities there will be much difference. The liberal man will need money for the doing of his liberal deeds, and the just man too [1178a30] will need it for the returning of services (for wishes are hard to discern, and even people who are not just pretend to wish to act justly); and the brave man will need power if he is to accomplish any of the acts that correspond to his excellence, and the temperate man will need opportunity; for how else is either he or any of the others to be recognized? It is debated, too, whether the choice or the deed is more essential to excellence, which is assumed to involve both; it is surely clear that its [1178b1] completion involves both; but for deeds many things are needed, and more, the greater and nobler the deeds are. But the man who is contemplating the truth needs no such thing, at least with a view to the exercise of his activity; indeed, they are, one [1178b5] may say, even hindrances, at all events to his contemplation; but insofar as he is a man and lives with a number of people, he chooses to do excellent acts; he will therefore need such aids to living a human life.

But that complete happiness is a contemplative activity will appear from the following consideration as well. We assume the gods to be above all other beings [1178b10] blessed and happy; but what sort of actions must we assign to them? Acts of justice? Will not the gods seem absurd if they make contracts and return deposits, and so on? Acts of a brave man, then,

confronting dangers and running risks because it is noble to do so? Or liberal acts? To whom will they give? It will be strange if they are [1178b15] really to have money or anything of the kind. And what would their temperate acts be? Is not such praise tasteless, since they have no bad appetites? If we were to run through them all, the circumstances of action would be found trivial and unworthy of gods. Still, every one supposes that they *live* and therefore that they are active; we cannot suppose them to sleep like Endymion. Now if you take away from a living [1178b20] being action, and still more production, what is left but contemplation? Therefore, the activity of the god, which surpasses all others in blessedness, must be contemplative; and of human activities, therefore, that which is most akin to this must be most of the nature of happiness.

This is indicated, too, by the fact that the other animals have no share in happiness, being completely deprived of such activity. For while the whole life of the [1178b25] gods is blessed, and that of men too insofar as some likeness of such activity belongs to them, none of the other animals is happy, since they in no way share in contemplation. Happiness extends, then, just so far as contemplation does, and those to whom contemplation more fully belongs are more truly happy, not [31178b0] accidentally, but in virtue of the contemplation; for this is in itself precious. Happiness, therefore, must be some form of contemplation.

But, being a man, one will also need external prosperity; for our nature is not self-sufficient for the purpose of contemplation, but our body also must be healthy and must have food and other attention. Still, we must not think that the man who is to be happy will need many things or great things, merely because he cannot be [1179a1] blessed without external goods; for self-sufficiency and action do not depend on excess, and we can do noble acts without ruling earth and sea; for even with moderate advantages one can act excellently (this is manifest enough; for private [1179a5] persons are thought to do worthy acts no less than despots—indeed even more); and it is enough that we should have so much as that; for the life of the man who is active in accordance with excellence will be happy. Solon, too, was perhaps sketching well the happy man when he described him as moderately furnished with externals but [1179a10] as having done (as Solon thought) the noblest acts, and lived temperately; for one can with but moderate possessions do what one ought. Anaxagoras also seems to have supposed the happy man to be neither rich nor a despot, when he said that he would not be surprised if the happy man were to seem to most people a strange [1179a15] person; for they judge by externals, since these are all they perceive. The opinions of the wise seem, then, to harmonize with our arguments. But while even such things carry some conviction, the truth in practical matters is discerned from the facts of life; for these are the decisive factor. We must therefore survey what we have [1179a20] already said, bringing it to the test of the facts of life, and if it harmonizes with the facts, we must accept it; but if it clashes with them, we must suppose it to be mere theory. Now he who exercises his intellect and cultivates it seems to be both in the best state and most dear to the gods. For if the gods have any care for human affairs, as they are thought to have, it would be reasonable both that they should delight in [1179a25] that which was best and most akin to them (i.e., intellect) and that they should reward those who love and honor this most, as caring for the things that are dear to them and acting both rightly and nobly. And that all these attributes belong most of all to the wise man is manifest. He, therefore, is the dearest to the gods. And he who [1179a30] is that will presumably be also the happiest; so that in this way too the wise man will more than any other be happy.

On the Soul, Book II

[412a1] 1. Let the foregoing suffice as our account of the views concerning the soul which have been handed on by our predecessors; let us now make, as it were, a completely fresh start, endeavoring to answer the question, What is soul? that is, to [412a5] formulate the most general possible account of it …

(412a10) Among realities are by general consent reckoned bodies and especially natural bodies; for they are the principles of all other bodies. Of natural bodies, some have life in them, others not; by life we mean self-nutrition and growth and decay. It [412a15] follows that every natural body which has life in it is a reality in the sense of a composite.

Now given that there are bodies of such and such kind, viz. having life, the soul cannot be a body; for the body is the subject or matter, not what is attributed to [412a20] it. Hence, the soul must be reality (*ousia*) in the sense of the form of a natural body having life potentially within it. But reality is actuality, and thus soul is the actuality of a body as characterized earlier. Now there

are two kinds of actuality corresponding to knowledge and to reflecting. It is obvious that the soul is an actuality like knowledge; for both sleeping and waking presuppose the existence of [412a25] soul, and of these waking corresponds to reflecting, sleeping to knowledge possessed but not employed, and knowledge of something is temporally prior.

That is why the soul is an actuality of the first kind of a natural body having life potentially in it. The body so described is a body which is organized …

We have now given a general answer to the question, What is soul? It is [412b10] reality in the sense which corresponds to the account of a thing. That means that it is what it is to be for a body of the character just assigned. Suppose that a tool, for example an axe, were a *natural* body, then being an axe would have been its essence, and so its soul; if this disappeared from it, it would have ceased to be an axe, except in name. As it is, it is an axe; for it is not of a body of that sort that what it is to be, that is [412b15], its account, is a soul, but of a natural body of a particular kind, viz. one having in itself the power of setting itself in movement and arresting itself. Next, apply this doctrine in the case of the parts of the living body. Suppose that the eye were an animal—sight would have been its soul, for sight is the reality of the eye which corresponds to the account, the eye being merely the matter of seeing; when seeing [412b20] is removed, the eye is no longer an eye, except in name—no more than the eye of a statue or of a painted figure. We must now extend our consideration from the parts to the whole living body; for what the part is to the part, that the whole faculty of sense is to the whole sensitive body as such.

From this it is clear that the soul is inseparable from its body, or at any rate that certain parts of it are (if it has parts)—for the [413a5] actuality of some of them is the actuality of the parts themselves. Yet some may be separable because they are not the actualities of any body at all.

2. … (413a20) We resume our inquiry from a fresh starting point by calling attention to the fact that what has soul in it differs from what has not in that the former displays life. Now this word has more than one sense, and provided any one alone of these is found in a thing we say that thing is living—viz. thinking or perception or local [413a25] movement and rest, or movement in the sense of nutrition, decay, and growth. Hence, we think of plants also as living, for they are observed to possess in themselves an originative power through which they increase or decrease in all spatial directions; they do not grow up but not down—they grow alike in both, indeed in all, directions; [413a30] and that holds for everything which is constantly nourished and continues to live, so long as it can absorb nutriment.

This power of self-nutrition can be separated from the other powers mentioned, but not they from it—in mortal beings at least. The fact is obvious in plants; for it is the only psychic power they possess.

[413b1] This is the originative power the possession of which leads us to speak of things as *living* at all, but it is the possession of sensation that leads us for the first time to speak of living things as *animals*; for even those beings which possess no power of local movement but do possess the power of sensation we call animals and not merely living things.

The primary form of sense is touch, which belongs to all animals. Just as the [413b5] power of self-nutrition can be separated from touch and sensation generally, so touch can be separated from all other forms of sense. (By the power of self-nutrition we mean that part of the soul which is common to plants and animals: all animals whatsoever are observed to have the sense of touch.) What the explanation of these [413b10] two facts is, we must discuss later. At present we must confine ourselves to saying that soul is the source of these phenomena and is characterized by them, viz. by the powers of self-nutrition, sensation, thinking, and movement …

[413b25] We have no evidence as yet about intellect or the contemplative power; it seems to be a different kind of soul, differing as what is eternal from what is perishable; it alone is capable of being separated. All the other parts of soul, it is evident from what we have said, are, in spite of certain statements to the contrary, incapable of separate existence though, of course, distinguishable by definition …

On the Soul, Book III

[429a10] 4. Turning now to the part of the soul with which the soul knows and thinks (whether this is separable from the others in definition only, or spatially as well) we have to inquire what differentiates this part, and how thinking can take place.

If thinking is like perceiving, it must be either a process in which the soul is acted upon by the intelligible, or a process different from but [429a15] analogous to that. The thinking part of the soul must therefore be, while impassible, capable of receiving the form; that is, it must be potentially such without being this. Intellect must be to the intelligibles, as sense is to the sensible.

Therefore, since it thinks all things, intellect in order, as Anaxagoras says, to dominate, that is, to know, must be pure from all admixture; [429a20] for the copresence of what is alien to its nature is a hindrance and a block: it follows that it can have no nature of its own, other than that of having a certain capacity. Thus, that in the soul which is called intellect (by intellect I mean that whereby the soul thinks and judges) is, before it thinks, not actually any real thing. For this [429a25] reason it cannot reasonably be regarded as blended with the body: if so, it would acquire some quality, for example warmth or cold, or even have an organ like the sensitive faculty: as it is, it has none. It was a good idea to call the soul "the place of forms," though this description holds only of the intellective soul, and even this is the forms only potentially, not actually …

[429b5] … When it has become each thing in the way in which a man who actually knows is said to do so (this happens when he is now able to exercise the power on his own initiative), its condition is still one of potentiality, but in a different sense from the potentiality which preceded the acquisition of knowledge by learning or discovery; and it is then able to think itself …

[429b20] … To sum up, insofar as the things it knows are capable of being separated from their matter, so it is also with the powers of intellect …

[430a1] … Intellect is itself intelligible in exactly the same way as the intelligibles. For in the case of things without matter, what thinks and what is thought are identical; for contemplative knowledge and that which is known in this way are identical. (Why it is [430a55] not always thinking we must consider later.) In things which have matter, each of the intelligibles is only potentially present. It follows that while they will not have intellect in them (for intellect is a potentiality of such things as are without matter) thought may yet be intelligible.

[430a10] 5. Since in every class of things, as in nature as a whole, we find two factors involved, a matter which is potentially all the particulars included in the class, a cause which is productive in the sense that it makes them all (the latter standing to the former, as, for example, an art to its material), these distinct elements must likewise be found within the soul.

And in fact intellect, as we have described it, is what it is by virtue of becoming [430a15] all things, while there is another which is what it is by virtue of making all things: this is a sort of positive state like light; for in a sense light makes potential colors into actual colors.

Intellect in this sense of it is separable, impassible, unmixed, since it is in its essential nature activity (for always the active is superior to the passive factor, the originating force to the matter).

[430a20] Actual knowledge is identical with the thing: in the individual, potential knowledge is in time prior to actual knowledge, but absolutely it is not prior even in time. It does not sometimes think and sometimes not think. When separated it is alone just what it is, and this alone is immortal and eternal (we do not remember [430a25] because, while this is impassible, passive intellect is perishable); and without this nothing thinks.

Metaphysics, Book XII (Chs. 7, 9)

7. … [1072a20] … There is, then, something which is always moved with an unceasing motion, which is motion in a circle; and this is plain not in theory only but in fact. Therefore, the first heavens must be eternal. There is therefore also something which moves them. And since that which [1072a25] is moved and moves is intermediate, there is a mover which moves without being moved, being eternal, reality (*ousia*), and actuality. And the desirable and the intelligible move in this way; they move without being moved. The primary desirables and intelligibles are the same. For the apparent beautiful is the object of appetite, and the real beautiful is the primary object of wish. But desire is consequent on opinion rather than opinion on desire; for intellection is the starting-point. And [1072a30] intellect is moved by the intelligible, and one side of the list of opposites is in itself the intelligible; and in this, reality is first, and in reality, that which is simple and exists actually. (The one and the simple

are not the same; for "one" means a measure, but "simple" means that the thing itself has a certain [1072a35] nature.) But the beautiful, also, and that which is in itself desirable are on this same side of the list; and the first in any class is always best, or analogous to the best.

[1072b1] That that for the sake of which is found among the unmovables is shown by making a distinction; for that for the sake of which is both that *for* which and that *toward* which, and of these the one is unmovable and the other is not. Thus, it produces motion by being loved, and it moves the other moving things. Now if something is moved, it is capable of being otherwise than as it is. Therefore, if the [1072b5] actuality of the heavens is primary motion, then insofar as they are in motion, in *this* respect they are capable of being otherwise—in place, even if not in substance. But since there is something which moves while itself unmoved, existing actually, this can in no way be otherwise than as it is. For motion in space is the first of the kinds of change, and motion in a circle the first kind of spatial motion; and this the [1072b10] first mover *produces*. The first mover, then, of necessity exists; and insofar as it is necessary, it is good, and in this sense a first principle. For the necessary has all these senses—that which is necessary perforce because it is contrary to impulse, that without which the good is impossible, and that which cannot be otherwise but is *absolutely* necessary.

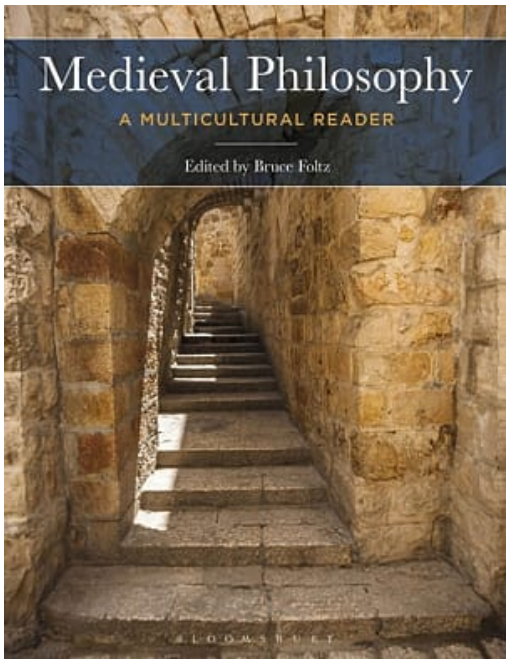
On such a principle, then, depend the heavens and the world of nature. And it is a way of life such as the best which we enjoy, and enjoy for but a short time. For it is ever in [1072b15] this state (which we cannot be), since its actuality is also pleasure. (And therefore waking, perception, and intellection are most pleasant, and hopes and memories are so because of their reference to these.) And intellection in itself deals with that which is best in itself, and that which is intellection in the fullest sense with that which is best in the fullest sense. And intellect thinks itself by participation in the intelligible [1072b20]; for it becomes intelligible in touching and thinking, so that intellect and intelligible are the same. For that which is receptive of the intelligible, that is, reality, is intellect. And it is *active* in possessing. Therefore, the latter rather than the former is the divine element which thought seems to contain, and the act of contemplation is what is most pleasant and best. If, then, the god is always in that good state in which we sometimes are, this compels our wonder; and if in a better state, this [1072b25] compels it yet more. And the god *is* in a better state. And life also belongs to the god; for the actuality of thought is life, and he is that actuality; and his essential actuality is life most good and eternal. We say therefore that the god is a living being, eternal, most good, so that life and duration continuous and eternal belong to the god; [1072b30] for this *is* the god …

[1073a1] … It is clear then from what has been said that there is a reality which is eternal and unmovable and separate from sensible things. It has been shown also [1073a5] that this reality cannot have any magnitude, but is without parts and indivisible.

[1074b15] 9. The nature of the intellect involves certain problems; for while it is held to be the most divine of phenomena, the question what it must be in order to have that character involves difficulties. For if it thinks nothing, what is there here of dignity? It is just like one who sleeps. And if it thinks, but this depends on something else, then (as that which is its reality is not the act of thinking, but [1074b20] a capacity) it cannot be the best reality; for it is through thinking that its value belongs to it. Further, whether its reality is the faculty of thought or the act of thinking, what does it think? Either itself or something else; and if something else, either the same always or something different. Does it matter, then, or not, whether it thinks the beautiful or any chance thing? Are there not some things about which it is [1074b25] incredible that it should think? Evidently, then, it thinks that which is most divine and precious, and it does not change; for change would be change for the worse, and this would be already a movement. First, then, if it is not intellection but a capacity, it would be reasonable to suppose that the continuity of its intellection is [1074b30] wearisome to it. Secondly, there would evidently be something else more precious than intellect, viz. that which is thought. For thinking and intellection will belong even to one who thinks that which is worst. Therefore, if this ought to be avoided (and it ought, for there are even some things which it is better not to see than to see), intellection cannot be the best of things. Therefore, it must think itself (since it is the most excellent of things), and intellection is an intellection of intellection.

[1074b35] But evidently knowledge and perception and opinion and understanding are always of something else, and of themselves only by the way. Further, if thinking and being thought are different, in respect of which does goodness belong to thought? For to be an act of thinking and to be that which is thought are not the [1075a1] same. We answer that in some cases

the knowledge is the thing. In the productive sciences (if we abstract from the matter) the substance in the sense of essence, and in the theoretical sciences the formula or the intellection, *is* the thing. As, then, intellect and that which is thought are not different in the case of things that have not matter, they will be the same, that is, the intellection will be one with that which is thought.



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