GUIDE FOR READING ARISTOTLE'S *NICOMACHEAN ETHICS*

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Philosophy 609

STRUCTURE OF THE *NICOMACHEAN ETHICS*

Book I:	Introductory material, problems to be treated.
Book II:	The definition of virtue.
Book III:	Chapters 1-5: the voluntary, deliberation, choice.
	Chapters 6-12: courage and temperance.
Book IV:	Other moral virtues.
Book V:	Justice.
Book VI:	The intellectual virtues.
Book VII:	Chapters 1-10: weakness and self-mastery, or incontinence and continence.
	Chapters 11-14: pleasure and pain.
Book VIII:	Friendship.
Book IX:	Friendship.
Book X:	Chapters 1-5: pleasure and pain.
	Chapters 6-9: happiness.

Note that Books I-VI deal with virtue and vice.
Book VII, 1-10 deals with continence and incontinence.

Our procedure will be as follows.

We begin with Chapter 13 of Book I, which provides Aristotle's analysis of the parts of the human being that are relevant to moral conduct.

Then we will analyze Book VII, Chapters 1-10. The distinctions made in that section are strategic for our analysis of moral conduct.

Then we will treat Books II-VI, discussing the structure of virtue and vice and many of their instances.

We will then discuss Books VIII-IX, on friendship.

Then we will treat Book VII, Chapters 11-14 and Book X, Chapters 1-5, the two treatments of pleasure and pain.

Then we will examine Book X, Chapters 6-9, the conclusion of the work.

Finally, we will examine Book I. We can understand this book best after we have seen the answers to the questions it raises, hence we study it after we have studied the rest of the *Ethics*. As an introduction, it is tentative and inconclusive.

BOOK I, CHAPTER 13

This is an easy but important chapter in which Aristotle distinguishes certain parts of the soul, the parts that show up in us as human beings. The parts in question are those that are important for speaking about moral conduct.

Note the remark at the end of paragraph one: we must study the living thing with only the precision that our ethical interests demand. We need not study it with the precision it might require "in itself." Aristotle sometimes (I 7) uses an analogy with mathematics: the carpenter will know the right angle only to the degree to which it is useful for his carpentry; the geometrician will study the right angle in itself, and will of course study it with far greater exactness, the exactness that the thing in itself permits. Analogously, in regard to the soul, a work like the *De Anima* might study the living thing in itself and with greater precision, but in our ethical reflection we are satisfied with a less exact treatment.

In the second paragraph he observes that the nature of the "parts" that he distinguishes will not be clarified here in this work. It is enough for us to distinguish the parts. (The further question concerning what sort of parts they are would be a good example of a metaphysical question.) Aristotle then distinguishes between:

(A) The reasoning, the thoughtful part.

(B) The part without reason, which is further subdivided into:
- (a) the vegetative;
- (b) the appetitive.

The appetitive can be permeated by reason, the vegetative cannot.

Aristotle uses the cases of the continent and the incontinent agents to illustrate the fact that the appetitive part of the soul can sometimes be mastered by reason. And at the end he distinguishes between moral and intellectual virtues.

BOOK VII, 1-10: CONTINENCE AND INCONTINENCE

Chapter 1.

Aristotle distinguishes the following kinds of moral agents:

		–the godlike
		–the virtuous
–the continent		–the enduring
–the incontinent		–the soft
		–the vicious
		–the brutish

At the end of paragraph two he says he will, in this Book, especially study the two middle states of character: continence and endurance, and incontinence and softness. Note the final remarks about method: if we can refute objections and preserve common opinions, we will have done our job sufficiently well. Paragraph two is a list of common opinions and questions concerning these topics.

Chapter 2.

In this chapter Aristotle tries to explain how a human being can behave incontinently; how is it possible that we can know what we should do, and want to do it, and yet actually do the opposite? For example, I know I should not smoke, I want to give up smoking, but in the presence of cigarettes I start smoking again; I know I should lose weight, I want to lose weight, but in the presence of cake I eat the cake. How is this possible? Do we lose our reason when we act in this way?

A number of interesting questions are raised about this issue. For example, perhaps it is not knowledge that is overcome by passion but opinion; or perhaps it is prudence that is overcome, not knowledge as such. Aristotle rejects both views. Other questions and paradoxes are raised, and some valuable points are made. But the issue itself is addressed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3.

We will examine especially the following issues: (a) is the incontinent agent defined by being related to a certain kind of object of action or desire? (b) Or is he defined by being related to something in a certain manner? Aristotle begins by answering the first question: the incontinent man is related to the same kind of objects as the self-indulgent man is related to (bodily pleasures, especially those of touch, and of taste insofar as it is a form of touch). But the incontinent is different from the self-indulgent in that the self-indulgent chooses the improper pleasure for its own sake and wants to have it, whereas the weak does not choose it for itself and wants not to succumb to it, but falls into it anyway. How is this incontinent state of mind and character possible?

He begins by observing that the difference between knowledge and opinion is irrelevant; as regards control over actions, the two are equally strong. But whether we deal with knowledge or opinion, the following will hold (and here Aristotle develops one of his elegant sequences):

(a) There will be a difference between just knowing something and actually using or activating the knowledge at the moment in question. Clearly, we must deal with knowledge that is being activated at the moment.

(b) Also, there are two premises, a general and a particular (“Fatty foods should be avoided”; “This hamburger is fatty”). And the two premises can apply either to the object or to the agent (“Diabetics should not eat sweets;” “I am diabetic and this is a sweet”). There is no difficulty if we are only exercising the major premise but not the particular one; the problem of incontinence arises only if both premises are activated.

(c) And sometimes we can possess and activate both premises, but we do so in a state of passion; this is similar to the way we exercise our knowledge while partly asleep, or drunk, or sick. We might say the words properly, but in fact we are activating our knowledge in a vague way. This is the sort of thinking that occurs in the case of the incontinent.

(d) What actually happens in incontinence (the logic of incontinence) is as follows. There are two syllogisms at work:

(1)	(2)
"Sweet things are pleasant"	"Fattening foods are harmful to me"
"This cake is sweet"	"This cake is fattening"
---	---
[I eat the cake]	[I turn away from the cake]

Note the important point that the conclusion of a practical syllogism is an action, not a statement or proposition.

Both lines of reasoning are at work in the incontinent agent, but (1) has the advantage of having desire on its side; it has the advantage of assistance from a passion. (2) does not have this assistance and so, in the conflict, the incontinent man eats the cake. But the point Aristotle is making is that the agent remains a rational agent because he continues to reason: syllogism (1) is at work in him. Therefore he remains a rational animal, a rational being, and knowledge is not entirely obliterated by passion in him.

In the last paragraph of the chapter, Aristotle observes that the incontinent "comes back to his senses" in a way similar to the way that the intoxicated man comes back to himself. How he does so is a physiological question. Furthermore, he also repeats the idea that the minor premise of (2) is active only in the way knowledge is activated by an inebriated man. Therefore, true knowledge is not overcome by passion in incontinence. For this reason, Socrates seems to be correct in saying that knowledge could not be overcome by emotion; in fact the strongest form of knowing, the kind expressed in the major premise, is not overcome by passion. Only the minor premise, which is closer to perception, is overcome. The incontinent never really gives up his universal opinion, the major premise. He just does not apply it to this case.

Chapter 4.

In Chapter 3 Aristotle discussed the manner in which an incontinent person is related to things; in Chapter 4 he discusses what sort of things the incontinent is related to. He distinguishes between:

(a) Things that are desirable in themselves: honor, victory, wealth; and
(b) things that are necessary but not desirable in themselves: the pleasures of food and sex.

Incontinence as such is directed toward (b), the things toward which self-indulgence is directed. Persons who are weak in regard to these things are "incontinent simply." Those who are excessive or uncontrolled in their desire of (a) are not incontinent simply, but "incontinent in a qualified way."

The self-indulgent and the incontinent are related to the same things, but in different ways. The self-indulgent choose the excessive pleasure for itself; they want to be this way; in their opinion, this is how people should act; but the incontinent pursue these pleasures out of weakness, thinking that they should not do what they do.

Chapter 5.

Aristotle here discusses the brutish state, the one opposed to the godlike. The brutish desire things that are not normally desired by human beings, but it is possible for human appetite to deteriorate in such a way as to make such

things appear desirable to individuals. He distinguishes the brutish, the diseased, and the corrupt. He distinguishes these from incontinence, which remains the central theme throughout the Book.

Chapter 6.

In Chapter 4 Aristotle observed that the "simply incontinent" deal with bodily pleasures, but that there is an incontinence "in a qualified way" in regard to other things such as anger. Here he shows why incontinence in regard to anger--the activity of people who are disposed to "fly off the handle" and are afterward sorry for getting angry--is less ignoble than simple incontinence. (1) There is more presence of reason in incontinence in regard to anger; (2) the inclination to anger is more common among human beings; (3) anger is more open, less secret than lust; (4) there is more reluctance in the incontinence connected with anger. There are interesting detailed moral observations in this chapter.

In the last paragraph he refers again to brutishness, the theme of Chapter 5, and observes that we sometimes speak analogously of excessive brutality even among animals, when there is a departure from what is normal. The final four sentences make some comparisons between vice and brutishness and show that although the brutish is more alarming than vice, it does less evil because it does not engage intelligence and choice, whereas vice does. Vice can do more harm.

Chapter 7.

Note the remark in the first paragraph, that most people are located between continence and incontinence, rigidity and softness.

This chapter discusses the "painful" analogues of continence and incontinence; they are endurance and softness. As continence and incontinence are to temperance, endurance and softness are to courage or fortitude. In endurance we rigidly master our responses to pain, our aversions; in softness we weakly collapse and offer no resistance to the painful. It is not that we run away or become cowardly; rather we just give in, with regrets.

He begins paragraph two by describing the incontinent and the self-indulgent again, and makes the important remark that the self-indulgent is unlikely to repent (whereas the incontinent is always repenting) because he chooses his self-indulgent actions. Likewise, some people avoid bodily pains by choice (the cowardly), but others just collapse: their state is softness. And the opposite of softness is endurance. Endurance, however, is different from courage, as "not losing" is different from "winning".

The person who loves amusements excessively is not really self- indulgent but soft (paragraph four). In paragraph five Aristotle further subdivides incontinence into the impetuous and the weak. The impetuous never really deliberate; the weak deliberate but then cannot hold to what they conclude. Finally, he even subdivides the impetuous, into the keen and the excitable: the keen are too quick-minded, their reason is too labile to let the real argument assert itself for them; the excitable have emotions that are too agitated to allow reason to work at all.

Chapter 8.

Some helpful comparisons of vice and incontinence:

vice:	incontinence:
–unrepentant	–always repentant
–incurable	–curable
–permanent badness	–temporary badness
–unconscious of itself	–conscious of itself

Incontinence therefore is not vice, even though it is morally a bad state: for Aristotle, the term "bad action" is analogous, applying to vice, incontinence, and brutishness in different ways. The term "good action" is also

analogous, applying diversely to virtue, continence, and the godlike. The actual performance may be the same in vice and incontinence, but the mode of peformance is different: the incontinent do vicious acts but they are not vicious.

Paragraph three: the reason, the power of thinking (*logos*) of the vicious agent has become bad; that is what makes him vicious. Virtue preserves and vice destroys the moral mind, moral thinking. And argument does not correct the corrupted mind: you need habituation or natural virtue. Then paragraph four has an excellent summary of Aristotle's teaching on incontinence, with a brief remark about continence.

Chapter 9.

(1) When we speak of reason in regard to continence and incontinence, we do not mean any opinion at all but right opinion.

(2) A moral type similar to the continent is the stubborn or the thick-headed: hard to persuade at first, hard to change once persuaded. They are subdivided into the opinionated, the ignorant, and the boorish. The opinionated really delight in seeming to win arguments (hence they really are like the incontinent, since they tend to be overcome by a kind of pleasure). But the stubborn are not like the continent, because the reason of the continent remains flexible and adaptable whereas that of the stubborn does not.

(3) Some people have their reason overcome not by base pleasures but by noble ones; they are not incontinent.

(4) Still another moral type, something we could call puritanism or depression: this agent has less delight in bodily pleasures than one should have. [This is the opposite extreme to self-indulgence; it is the extreme of deficiency, not excess.] Continence is in between incontinence and puritanism. However, puritanism is a rare phenomenon in human affairs.

(5) Final contrasts.

Chapter 10.

Final observations:

(1) You cannot have prudence and incontinence in one agent.
(2) Prudence involves not only knowing but being able to act.
(3) Cleverness is reconcilable with incontinence.
(4) Cleverness and prudence are similar in sheer reasoning, but not in purpose.
(5) Reason in the incontinent man is not clearly active, but like that of men asleep or drunk.
(6) The incontinent acts voluntarily but does not choose what he does; so he is only half-wicked.
(7) Analogy with the city: the incontinent is like a city that has good laws but does not use them; the vicious like a city with bad laws.
(8) The incontinence of the excitable is more curable than that of the quick-witted.
(9) Incontinence due to habituation is more curable than the innate.

BOOK II. THE DEFINITION OF MORAL VIRTUE

A. Moral virtue and actions; the production
and manifestation of moral virtues.

Chapter 1.

Aristotle begins this elegant chapter by contrasting intellectual and moral virtue. He says that the first arises through teaching and the second through habituation. Then he makes three points:

(1) The moral virtues do not arise in us by nature, by natural development, because nature does not allow developments that are contrary to nature, but it is possible for us to develop vices, which are contrary to our natural behavior. So we must get our virtues, as well as our vices, through exercise.

(2) In the case of natural capacities, we first have the power and then the activity, but in the case of habits we must first exercise the activity (under the guidance of others) and then we acquire the power to act on our own. Both the virtues and the arts come to us through exercise.

(3) It is the activities that generate the agent or the practitioner, both good and bad. Aristotle closes by mentioning the great importance of early habituation.

Chapter 2.

In the first paragraph he observes that we must look now to actions (i.e. to that which is both the outcome of our habits, and also generates the habits we have). And we must do so with the appropriate precision. He introduces the idea that the appropriate "reasoning" that will guide our actions will depend on the insight of the good agent when we come to particulars.

In the second paragraph he observes that a habit is *destroyed* by actions that are excessive or deficient and *established and preserved* by actions which are neither excessive or defective, but appropriate. (Thus the good first comes to light in contrast with the bad; it comes to light as against the two forms of going wrong that flank it). He uses physical analogies: virtue is analogous to health or strength.

In the third paragraph he intensifies the positive relationship between the "middle" action and good habits. Such action not only establishes virtue, but it is also the actualization of virtue. Virtue is a potentiality that is actualized in the middle action, flanked by the two possible ways of going wrong, by excess or deficiency.

Chapter 3.

Several points are made concerning pleasure and pain in our actions. Note especially the triple distinction in paragraph four, between the noble, the advantageous, and the pleasant, and the base, the harmful, and the painful.

Chapter 4.

(1) He first shows a similarity between virtues and arts: we act virtuously or "artistically" when our performance not only is what we ought to do, but when we do it through our knowledge of the virtue or the art (i.e. it is not the case that we perform "by chance" or "by the guidance of another").

(2) Then he distinguishes between virtues and arts: the activities in the arts are more external; for the arts it is important only that the performance be well done, and done through our knowledge (not by chance or through someone else's guidance). But virtuous action (a) requires knowledge; (b) requires that it be chosen

for its own sake (a work of art can be excellent even though it is done for money or honor); (c) requires that it be done through a firm and stable character (i.e. it not be just done once, or coincidentally; someone who is generally cowardly but acts in one situation in a courageous way has not yet really acted courageously).

(3) The final paragraph has some excellent remarks on the ineluctable role of action in establishing virtue and goodness. He also observes that most people want to be good just by listening to speeches; but hearing speeches will never establish virtue in them.

B. The definition of virtue.

Chapter 5.

This looks like a simple chapter but it is very elegant.

(1) Aristotle first distinguishes three things in the soul: passion (*pathos*), power (*dunamis*), and disposition or habit (*hexis*). Note the relation among these: we all know what passion is. He gives a list of instances and relates them to pleasure and pain. Power is the innate ability we have to undergo a passion (v.g. to be afraid). Disposition or habit is the way we have been modified or trained or conditioned to undergo a passion, to undergo it well or badly (v.g. to be too much or too little afraid). Note how the center of this analysis is passion, which is an obvious feature of the human being, and how both power and habit are related to passion.

(2) Then he says virtue and vice do not reside in passion as such because passion as such does not make us appear to be good or bad, and does not evoke praise or blame. Also we do not choose passion as such; passions are just part of what we are. There is no sediment of choice in them (but there is a sediment of our earlier choices in the way we are disposed to undergo passion).

(3) The same reason shows that virtue and vice do not reside in powers.

(4) So we are left with habit or disposition, *hexis*, as the genus within which we are going to define virtue and vice.

Chapter 6.

We have the genus for virtue and vice; what is the specific difference?

(1) He begins by distinguishing between the thing that is active and the activity of that thing. Virtue or excellence perfect both of these: it perfects the thing and makes the thing do its work well.

(2) Then he develops some interesting ideas concerning the continuum: every continuum is indefinitely divisible. The range of human action and human emotion (passion) is such a continuum, and it is possible for us to "cut" this continuum at an indefinite number of points. Some of these points will constitute a "middle" between extremes; however, we must distinguish two senses of middle:
(a) in the thing itself;
(b) for us.

A good example of the middle in thing itself is the mathematical middle, four as middle between two and six. But in morals, as in medicine, we are concerned with the middle "for us".

(3) He says the arts also deal with a middle between too much and too little: the middle is that condition in which any removal or addition would spoil the excellence of the thing. And morals call for even greater accuracy and exactness than do the arts, they call for greater intellectual insight. Both excess and defect are forms of failure, and we can fail in many ways, but success is usually quite restricted.

(4) He finally gives his definition of virtue in paragraph five. He goes on to point out that the names of some actions are already names for an excess or a deficiency, so that the "frame" of middle-versus-extremes cannot be applied to them: there is no middle for gluttony, for example.

Chapter 7.

A list of colorful examples of the middle and extremes in regard to various domains of human action and emotion. Note how widely the application ranges and how effectively it brings out moral phenomena.

Chapter 8.

He observes that the "view" from persons situated in the extremes is distorted: for a coward, the courageous man seems rash, for the rash man the courageous seems cowardly. For the intemperate man, chastity is seen as a bad thing. Only the agent situated at the middle has the true perspective on things.

In paragraph three he observes that sometimes one of the extremes is more common and more opposed to the middle than the other extreme, so we may limit the "triad" of excess-middle-deficiency to a "dyad", to temperance versus self-indulgence, for example.

Chapter 9.

Some remarks on how difficult it is to hit the right action and emotion, to exercise an action and a passion in just the right measure. The role of pleasure and pain is also mentioned.

It is possible to deviate a little from the excellent middle without being blameworthy, but at a certain point we deviate too much and become blameworthy. The decision rests with perception, and we must have good characters to be able to perceive well.

Note that the middle in question applies not only to actions but also to passions. The good agent not only acts, say, courageously, but also experiences the appropriate degree of fear in a dagerous situation. The good agent enjoys harmony in action and in feeling.

BOOK III, 1-5. THE VOLUNTARY AND THE CHOSEN

These five chapters deal with what we could call "human freedom." They do not examine "free will"; rather they discuss human behavior insofar as it can be the object of moral praise and blame. The following topics are treated:

- the voluntary and the involuntary: behavior that is done willingly or done unwillingly;
- the chosen: behavior that is not only done willingly, but done with deliberation, done with more thoughtfulness than merely voluntary behavior (the voluntary is a genus for the chosen);
- deliberation: the thinking through of how to bring about a particular end in particular circumstances;
- end: that in view of which we choose, that in view of which we deliberate;
- wish: just wanting something but not acting to bring it about;
- praise and blame: the public uptake of voluntary human actions, the public response to thoughtful moral behavior;
- pity and pardon: the public uptake of involuntary behavior.

Chapter 1.

Aristotle brings out what we mean by the voluntary and involuntary; note the reference to praise/blame and pity/pardon.

THE VOLUNTARY: that which is neither (a) compelled nor (b) done through ignorance.

(a) He treats compulsion first, in paragraphs two to six, and he treats it by looking and two possible exceptions:

(1) Does fear bring about compulsion? No; he discusses fear and shows that acting out of fear is still voluntary. Fear may even sharpen the voluntary character. However, when we do something because of fear of something else, it is true that we are not doing it for its own sake, in view of itself. The praise/blame response is also analyzed. And he observes that there are some things that no one should do even under great threat.

(2) Are we compelled by the noble and the pleasant? Of course not; this would make all acts involuntary.

It is interesting that most of this section is dedicated to things that are not compulsory (fear and the noble and pleasant); the compulsory is defined by considering its exceptions.

(b) Then he treats ignorance, in paragraphs seven to ten:

(1) He distinguishes between the not-voluntary and the involuntary. We are only concerned with the involuntary, that which pains the agent.

(2) He distinguishes between acting in ignorance and acting out of ignorance.

(3) The ignorance in question is spelled out most clearly by showing that it is not the kind of ignorance that a wicked man has of what he ought to do. Rather, it is ignorance of the elements or particulars of our action.

(4) He then lists the kind of things we could be ignorant about when we act.

(c) Finally, there is a concluding paragraph in which he defines what the voluntary is. Once again, however, he looks at possible exceptions (as he did in treating the compulsory), and says that acts done out of anger or appetite should not be called involuntary.

--One important note implied here is that both children and animals are capable of voluntary and involuntary conduct.

Chapter 2.

This chapter examines choice. Choice is a kind of voluntary, but the voluntary is wider than choice. He contrasts choice against:

(1) appetite and anger; he gives various reasons; note the reference to the incontinent man;

(2) wish; note the things we can wish for:
  (a) impossibles;
  (b) possibles, but ones that we ourselves cannot attain;
  (c) ends, while choice is directed toward means;

(3) opinion; some very interesting features are mentioned which illuminate very vividly the nature of both opinion and choice.

Finally, he implies in the last paragraph that choice will involve deliberation, i.e. a prior thinking about how we are to do what we want to do. This is developed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3.

He discusses deliberation by asking, in the first two paragraphs, what the object of deliberation is; what do we deliberate about? There is an elegant sequence to the topics he describes. We will examine not what a "fool or madman" would deliberate about, but only what someone with a mind would deliberate about.

(1) Not about eternal and changeless things.

(2) Not about things that change but always in the same way.

(3) Not about things that change in different ways, but now in one way and now in another.

(4) Not about things that happen by chance.

(5) Not even about all human affairs: not about the affairs of other people (because they are not to be done by us).

(6) We do deliberate about –things in our power;
–that can indeed be done.
Thus we exclude what is done by nature, necessity, chance.

(7) But even in some things that we do, we do not deliberate about how we might do them because they are exactly prescribed (vg. we do not deliberate about how an "A" should look).

(8) We do deliberate about what we are to do when these things can be done in different ways.

(9) And the more scope there is for us to determine, the more extensive our deliberation is.

He closes the paragraph by a summary of what we deliberate about. He also remarks about the importance of friends in our deliberations. We usually do not deliberate in solitude.

The third paragraph is an excellent description of the kind of thinking involved in deliberation.

(1) We do not deliberate about ends but about things done in view of the end. The end is determined for us by what we are. A doctor does not, for example, deliberate whether he will cure or not, because his being a doctor sets up "curing" as a permanent end for him. With the ends set down, we do deliberate about how we are to realize them.

(2) The procedure of reasoning is to begin with the end and to work back to what is needed for the end to be accomplished; we keep working back until we come to something we can do here and now. This thing to be done, which is last in the order of discovery, is first in the order of doing. When we come to this point, we initiate the action. (Some people are better than others at shaking out the ends and the things that must be done in view of the ends. Many people just slip into simple voluntaries when they should deliberate and choose.)

(3) Note that if our deliberation comes to impossibilities, we stop deliberating. We see the impossibility, and that ends our thinking. Our deliberation runs into the sand.

In paragraph four he identifies the deliberated with the chosen. The chosen is what we have come to in our deliberation and the deliberation determines the chosen. Note: it is not the case that when the deliberation comes to its term, we then have to persuade ourselves to act; rather, since we were engaged in thinking about what we wanted to do (the end), when our deliberation comes to its conclusion we choose what we have determined. The chosen is the deliberated.

Chapter 4.

Here he discusses wish. We can wish for what is impossible; or for what is possible but not achievable by us; or for what is achievable by us but not immediately, only as an end which has to be reached through intermediate choices, through means.

Then Aristotle shows the importance of the character that we have developed, because different types of people will wish for different ends. He works out a distinction between the apparent good and the true good, between the good "for someone" and the good "in itself." The good man is the one who is able to appreciate the true good; what is apparent for the good agent is what is good in itself (the good in itself is also the good for him). The good man sees the true good in all areas of human action.

Chapter 5.

In this chapter Aristotle summarizes what he has done in the past four chapters. He says that we are responsible for the character we have developed because it stems from our own acts. Once we form our character, it may be less possible for us to change the habits we have. In paragraph six he says we are somehow responsible for the moral appearances that show up to us.

BOOK III, 6-12, BOOK IV: VARIOUS VIRTUES AND VICES

Chapters 6-9.

These chapters deal with courage. It is interesting that courage is the first virtue he treats. Without courage all the other virtues are useless. Courage and temperance are taken first, the virtues that deal, respectively, with the painful or the terrible and the pleasant.

Note how the brave man is to do the courageous thing, but also to have the appropriate kind and amount of fear. Note the paradigmatic character of military valor. Note the nuances of the excess and deficiency as described in Chapter 7. Note the remarks about military courage toward the end of Chapter 9.

Chapters 10-12.

These deal with temperance. Just as courage deals with the fearful, so temperance deals with the pleasant, and more specifically with the bodily pleasures, and more specifically still with the pleasures associated with touch (and taste insofar as it is a kind of touch). This is the most animal sort of human pleasure (and hence temperance could well be called the special virtue of man as "rational animal"; it introduces reason into animal appetite).

In Chapter 12 he compares temperance and courage. He also observes that children live primarily in unregulated appetite and need to be "rationalized" in order to develop as human beings. To follow only appetite will result in the expulsion of reason.

Book IV discusses other virtues and their associated vices, and closes with a treatment of shame, which is not really a virtue but more like a passion. Use the outline for Book IV in the Table of Contents for guidance. There are many remarkable moral observations, with many nuances and insights, in these pages. Many things are treated as moral or ethical which we do not normally include under "ethics" in the modern sense, such as good humor (Chapter 8) and magnificence (Chapter 2).

Perhaps the most controversial section in that on pride or great- souledness, Chapter 3. Pride is said to be the crown of the other moral virtues; it is the mentality of someone who is really a fine and noble character, and is, of course, aware of it. There are various interpretations of this section.

(a) Some think that it shows Aristotle to be haughty, arrogant, stuffy, and that it casts disrepute on the rest of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

(b) Others think that Aristotle is being ironic in these passages, that he will ultimately say that not moral virtue but intellectual virtue, the life of thinking, is the greatest human good, and that this rather ridiculous image of the proud man is meant to show that the very crown of moral virtue is hardly something that we would admire.

(c) Still others say that the passage is serious and that it is an accurate description of a good form of human pride and self-confidence.

--note that in the third paragraph the proud man is really beyond honor, because although he will accept it, he does not need it to confirm his awareness of his own nobility.

--the nobility expresses itself even in his bodily form, in his voice and movement.

BOOK V. JUSTICE

An entire book is dedicated to justice. Remember that justice for Aristotle is a virtue of an individual. It is the ability to transcend your own desire for your own advantage and to see things from a more objective point of view, in which your own good is compared with the goods of others.

A. The object of justice and the kinds of justice.

Chapter 1.

In the second paragraph he observes that there is an important difference between an intellectual virtue (a science) and power on the one hand, and a moral virtue on the other. In the former, we become able to perform two opposing things: a doctor can both cure or kill with his skill. But in the latter, we are enabled only to perform one of the opposing things: justice makes us capable of performing the just act, not of also performing the unjust.

The term "justice" is ambiguous and there are two kinds of justice, general justice and particular justice. General justice is lawfulness, being law-abiding. Such general justice is equivalent to virtue in its entirety, but with respect to other people. Particular justice or fairness is not equivalent to virtue in general, it is only a part of virtue. It is concerned with not wanting or taking more than your share of things. There are two corresponding senses of the unjust: being lawless and being grasping, wanting or taking too much, wanting or taking more than is appropriate.

Paragraph four deals with (a) the grasping and unfair, paragraph five with (b) the lawless.

(a) The grasping agent wants more for himself, and the kind of things he wants more of are those that deal with prosperity and adversity. These are not always good in themselves (they are not like the noble or the virtuous) hence he really does not want more of the true good for himself.

(b) In paragraph five Aristotle talks about civil laws. He implies that there is something rational and good about law in itself. The laws try to impose objectivity and reason into our passions and our doings. They even encourage temperance and other moral virtues.

In paragraph six he observes that the form of justice he has been describing in (b), the one that deals with justice as law-abidingness, is complete virtue, because it extends the virtuous man from his excellence in himself to an excellence toward others as well. Achieving this direction toward others is better than individual virtue. Through such virtue we become able to accomplish the advantage of others as well as our own. We transcend our own needs and goods. Aristotle calls this general form of justice a completion of virtue in its entirety.

Chapter 2.

However, we want to define another kind of justice, one that is only a part of virtue in its entirety. This will be a more specific kind of justice, one that does not overlap with the other virtues. Paragraphs one to three introduce this special kind of justice.

Paragraph four defines it. He turns from the "law-abiding" type of justice described in Chapter 1 to the "fairness" aspect of justice described there. He observes that the "fairness" or "equality" aspect of justice (that related to *isos*, equal), is only part of justice. This will be the theme of the new, more specific sense of justice to be developed here. There are two senses in which the issue of equality arise, the issue in which we can have more or less than we should get:

(A) one deals with the goods that can be distributed among citizens (honor, money, etc.); often called distributive justice;

(B) one deals with correcting disorders that have arisen in human exchanges; often called rectificatory or corrective justice.

Chapter 3.

This chapter deals with distributive justice, developing the theme of inequality. An inequality can involve two extremes, too much and too little, and the middle is the equal. This middle is the just.

But besides the more or less, we also deal with two people. Thus the equality and the middle has to be achieved within four terms, not two. And the amount (of honor, power, money etc.) that is distributed will look not only to the mathematical middle, but also to the quality of the persons involved. Therefore it will be a proportional equality, not a simple one: for this person to get X, is equal to that person's getting Y. Aristotle also mentions how much argument there is about what constitutes proper equality in these matters. We tend to think highly of ourselves and think we deserve more than others.

Chapter 4.

This chapter deals with corrective justice. Here we do not deal with proportional equalities; the quality of the person does not play a role. If there has been some damage inflicted, correction requires that the same amount be restored, no matter who did the damage. It is the role of the judge to determine how much damage was done and how the loss can be restored. Again, justice emerges as a middle between loss and gain.

Chapter 5.

This chapter deals with reciprocity, with determining equality in exchanges. The topic is different from both distributive and corrective justice. In the second paragraph, Aristotle points out that (a) it is hard sometimes to determine the equality between different things that are being exchanged; (b) but money has been established as measure of equality in such cases; all things can be measured by money; (c) but on a deeper level demand is the true measure of equality; money only represents demand; (d) money also serves as a kind of measure still available for future exchanges or acquisitions, and it is somewhat more stable than the goods it measures. (e) Aristotle often mentions that such mutual needs and exchanges help to hold men together in society.

In the third paragraph Aristotle summarizes his ideas on the just agent, and says the just agent is the one who is able to see and bring about equalities both between himself and others and among others.

Chapter 6.

In this chapter, in paragraph two, Aristotle observes that the justice he is discussing is primarily political justice, the kind that involves law. It is among citizens who are ruled by law that you have the most objective and equal justice, the primary instance of justice. The relationships of equality and distribution are determined not by an individual, not by the rule of a man, but by reason. Aristotle observes that those who are in authority in such situations also deserve a recompense, but it can only be honor and privilege (not money or power as such); those for whom honor is not enough become tyrants.

In the third paragraph Aristotle speaks of more derived forms of justice, analogous forms of justice, such as the kind that can exist within a family and other prepolitical forms of community.

Chapter 7.

Within political justice, however, we can distinguish (a) the part that is by nature and (b) the part that is by convention. The part by convention is the part that we have to determine by some sort of decision (driving on the right side of the road, establishing what sort of penalty a crime will incur, etc.). The natural is the part that arises pretty much everywhere.

He then says that some people deny that there are any things just by nature, since there is so much change and variability in regard to what is considered just. In responding to this, Aristotle says that even what is just by nature can be realized in different ways in different places without becoming merely conventionally just.

> (Perhaps he means something like this: the laws will always have some sort of protection of human life; how they enact this protection may be very different, but the fact that they attempt to protect human life in principle is by nature and not merely by convention.)
>
> (Another possibility: it is by nature that parents should care for their children; in some circumstances it may becomes best if certain children are not cared for by their parents and the laws should take them away from their parents, but in such cases it still is by nature that this is done; the variability of the situation does not make the care of children by parents into someting conventional.)

B. Being an unjust agent; doing unjust acts.

Chapter 8.

The truly just or unjust acts must be done voluntarily; if we do the act under compulsion or through ignorance, we are not acting unjustly or justly.

Then some voluntary acts have the further precision of being chosen in themselves. This gives them a further quality. Aristotle is able to distinguish:

- misadventures;
- mistakes;
- voluntary acts: unjust acts, but not necessarily an unjust man;
- chosen acts: an unjust man acting unjustly. Amplified in paragraph three.

The remarks about the voluntary and the chosen in regard to justice provide a good illustration of what Aristotle means by the voluntary and choice.

Chapter 9.

Some further details: the voluntariness of justice and injustice; the voluntariness of being treated unjustly; the difficulty of doing just acts justly, and unjust acts unjustly (paragraph five); some good observations regarding incontinence.

Chapter 10.

Equity as a supplement, adaptation, and correction of justice; how it is the same as justice and how different; how it corrects the universality of the law.

Chapter 11.

The question whether a man can be unjust toward himself. Note the rigorous understanding of law in paragraph one and also the claim that in unlawfully injuring oneself one is acting unjustly toward the city.

BOOK VI: INTELLECTUAL VIRTUE

A. Introduction.

Chapter 1.

Aristotle points out a deficiency in what we have said so far. What we have said is still rather formal and needs to be supplemented. We have said that one should follow right reason (*orthos logos*), but we have to say more about how we get to right reason.

He goes back to the parts of the soul, the parts we can distinguish in ourselves as living, thoughtful beings. One part does not in itself possess reason, the other part does. Earlier he distingushed two subparts within the irrational part (the subpart that does not obey reason and the subpart that does). Now he subdivides the thoughtful part into:

(a) the subpart that is in touch with eternal and changeless things, or things that have to be the way they are and are seen as having to be such; let us call this the scientific part (*epistemonikon*);

(b) the subpart that is in touch with things that are variable; let us call this the calculative part (*logistikon*). (It will turn out to be practical reason, since it thinks about situations that need to be determined by what we do.)

And he asks what the virtue or excellence is for each of these subparts.

Chapter 2.

He distinguishes (a) sensation, (b) reason, (c) desire, as factors involved in action and truth.

Sensation does not initiate action (it may initate movement or emotion but not action; action is not merely movement).

Then in paragraph three he draws some complicated but important distinctions and relations:

thinking =	affirmation	+	negation;
desire =	pursuit	+	avoidance.

In contemplative thinking, the only issue is the true and false, or affirmation and negation just by themselves.

In practical thinking, you have both the true and the false and also pursuit and avoidance. You have to perfect both aspects. You have to have true thinking as well as right desire to have the excellence of practical thinking. (There is no need for right desire in theoretical thinking because we do not desire the objects that we think about. They are not the kind of thing one can desire; they just are there.)

And note the sequence:

- moral virtue is concerned with choice;
- choice is deliberate desire (desire penetrated by deliberation);
- so you need both: good thinking (deliberation) and right desire to establish the perfection of virtue;
- the desire must pursue what the thinking asserts.

Note the sequence in paragraph four as well:

–the origin of action is choice;
–the origin of choice is desire and deliberation;

Hence, you need both desire and thinking to originate a good action, and since desire and thinking emerge from character and intellect, you need both character and intellect to initiate an action.

Then he goes on to say that if you were to isolate the intellect just by itself, you would not have a human being as an origin of action. The mind by itself just knows, it does not move into action. What you need is mind combined with desire, or desire penetrated by mind, if you are to have human action. A human being is precisely such an origin of action, a combination of reason and desire.

He closes with a remark about the impossibility of deliberating about the past, because the past is not open to revision; the past is not an object of practical thinking.

B. The chief intellectual virtues.

Chapter 3.

SCIENCE is defined by its object: in it we know things that are invariable, always the same; they have to be the way they are. And we know them in their necessity. We know why they have to be as they are, or we know that they have to be as they are. (Note that we cannot do anything about such things, not because we are weak, but because they are the kind of thing that cannot be affected by action. Nothing could be done about them.)

Chapter 4.

ART is the kind of knowledge and thinking involved in making. It deals with something variable: the object of our activity might possibly not be (hence it is not an object of science as such); it exists only because we make it (hence its origin is in us and not in itself or in its nature). However, making is not the same as acting (Aristotle develops this theme in this chapter).

Chapter 5.

PRUDENCE (practical wisdom, *phronēsis*) is the thinking and knowledge concerned with acting well. Aristotle develops it by looking at the person who possesses it. It is contrasted with science and art. It is concerned with the good for human agents, whether individually or as a community. Vice destroys this sort of thinking, makes one incapable of exercising it.

Some important points are made in paragraph two.

(a) There is no such thing as excellence in prudence, because prudence is already an excellence and a virtue.

(b) A deliberate error in the arts is a sign of skill, but a deliberate error in action is not a sign of prudence, but a sign of its opposite, of vice.

(c) In regard to the thoughtful part of the soul, prudence is a form of that part of the mind that possesses opinion, not of that part that possesses science, since prudence deals with the variable.

(d) However, it is not only an opinion, not only a form of thinking, because an opinion can be forgotten but prudence cannot. (It is the most stable element in our minds.)

Chapter 6.

INTUITIVE REASON or insight (*nous*) is the direct knowledge of first principles or origins. All sciences depend on first principles as their premises, but the first principles cannot be proved by means of other first principles. Hence, we have another way of getting to them, and we call this intellectual ability intuitive reason. It is the grasp of the definitions and distinctions from which all other reasoning takes its origin. It is the understanding of basic truths that underlies any application or reasoning that can follow from it. It differs from art and prudence because it deals with the invariable and the necessary.

Chapter 7.

WISDOM is the highest intellectual virtue: it involves a combination of science and intuitive reason concerning the first principles of science, and it is directed toward the most important things.

Wisdom is not equivalent to political prudence, because man is not the best thing in the world and hence the political good is not the greatest of all goods. The object of wisdom is more invariable than is the political or the human good. Man may be the best of animals, but not the best being. Prudence has to deal with universals or generalities, but also with particulars and application, whereas wisdom will deal with what is more general. Aristotle further distinguishes prudence and wisdom by observing that some men who are wise may be inept at achieving their own practical good.

Chapter 8.

After discussing the five major intellectual virtues, Aristotle discusses the relationship between political prudence and personal prudence. After making several useful points in the first two paragraphs, he observes in the third paragraph that young people can be good at geometry but are generally not good at politics because they do not have the experience that is necessary for a mastery of the particulars of action. Young people may be able to use the words associated with political things, but will probably not grasp the realities. (Cf. I 3; VI 11.) Note how he emphasizes perception as a factor in prudence in paragraph five.

C. Other intellectual virtues concerned with conduct.

Chapter 9.

A more thorough analysis of DELIBERATION as an intellectual excellence, a supplement to what he wrote in Book III, Chapter 3. Deliberation is distinguished from (a) science, (b) guessing well, (c) shrewdness, (d) opinion. A refinement is made: there is no such thing as error of knowledge (if there were an error, you would not have knowledge; "knowledge" is a success-word); and opinion is directed to what already exists, while deliberation is of what is to come into being. However, there is a correctness involved in deliberation, and deliberation can be called a kind of (e) correctness of thinking. However, it is a thinking that does not arrive at assertion but at action.

In paragraph two he shows that deliberation is not just any sort of correctness of thinking: (a) it is not the kind of correct thinking that the incontinent person exercises, nor is it the kind of cleverness that the vicious agent may exercise; (b) nor does it resemble false syllogisms that happen to hit on the right thing to do; (c) it ought to be relatively quick, not inappropriately long and drawn out, if it is to be a virtue; (d) it will deal with goods in general and not be limited to just a particular area of human goods or a particular good.

Chapter 10.

UNDERSTANDING (*sunesis*) is a general knowledge of moral matters, a knowledge that gives one the ability to judge about moral cases that we may be talking about; but it is general and not particular, and it enables us to judge

well but it may not enable us to act well. It differs from science because understanding deals with the variable, but in a general way.

Chapter 11.

JUDGMENT is the ability to determine well what is equitable. After describing judgment, Aristotle brings out some relations in the intellectual virtues he has described. He also observes that intuitive reason (*nous*) is exercised both in regard to ultimate universal truths and in regard to particulars, those given to thoughtful perception. He closes with another remark about the importance of age and experience in morals.

D. The relation of wisdom and prudence.

Chapter 12.

The relation between wisdom and prudence is hard to clarify. On the one hand, wisdom is clearly higher than prudence because it deals with higher and better things than does prudence. On the other hand, since wisdom is a human activity, it has to be subordinated to prudence in some sense; the theoretical life has to be integrated into a personal life, and it also has to become part of a political community. How can something greater than prudence and politics be governed by prudence and politics?

Some items: (a) Note how wisdom makes us happy (paragraph four): not as medicine produces health, but as health produces health. (b) Note how virtue is said to make us aware of the ends we should pursue, and prudence helps us achieve those ends (paragraph five). (c) In paragraph six he observes that to be morally good it is not enough just to have an intellectual virtue; we must also have the right character, we must also be virtuous and want the right things. To bring this out he distinguishes between cleverness, which a wicked man might have, and prudence, which involves cleverness but demands a good moral character as well. You cannot be prudent without being good because goodness makes clear to you what you should be aiming at.

Chapter 13.

Just as cleverness alone does not give us virtue, so also, at the other extreme, natural dispositions as such (without the thoughtful component) do not constitute moral virtue. The natural dispositions have to be integrated into a thoughtful, prudent life if they are to become full moral virtues. You have to have acted in order to be virtuous.

You can't be virtuous without prudence, nor can you be prudent without virtue. Therefore, using words in their strict sense, if you acquire prudence you also, by definition, acquire all moral virtues.

Then in the last paragraph he mentions in what way prudence can be said to rule over wisdom: not by using it, but by providing for its coming into being. In the same way, medicine rules over health, not by using it but by providing for its coming into being and its preservation.

BOOKS VIII AND IX: FRIENDSHIP.

A. Kinds of friendship.

Chapter 1.

A description of friendship and its features; it either is a virtue or implies virtue and it is most necessary for living; no one would choose to live without friends. Friendship is:

(a) an opportunity for beneficence;
(b) a help in adversity and danger;
(c) a guide, support, and opportunity for good action and thinking;
(d) spontaneous among animals, fellow-nationals, and human beings generally;
(e) that which holds cities together and supports and transcends justice;
(f) noble as well as good.

Some people have tried to explain friendship in terms of natural forces, such as like to like; we do not move into this level, but look at it as a human phenomenon with its human causes, involving character and emotion.

Chapter 2.

The difference between the true good and the apparent good.

"Wishing well to another" as the first feature of friendship; but it must also be reciprocated and recognized (otherwise it will be merely goodwill, not friendship).

Chapter 3.

We can love things for three reasons:

(a) for their utility;
(b) for the pleasure they give;
(c) for their own sakes, because of their perfection, goodness, nobility; because they are what they are.

And there are friendships corresponding to all of these.

The first two kinds of friendship are incidental, since some other person who could provide the usefulness or the pleasure would be loved in the same way. The old tend toward friendships of utility, the young toward friendships of pleasure.

The metaphysics of friendship, the playing off of the apparent good and the real good, the incidental good and the good in itself, is exemplified most fully and accurately in the friendship of good people; this is the truest and most durable form of friendship, and only the good can enjoy it (hence its presence is a sign that one is a good man), but its form of excellence does not bring it about that the other forms of friendship are somehow not friendships. They are friendships too, but of a different sort. And clearly the best friendships are infrequent.

Chapter 4.

Comparisons and interactions between the forms of friendship. Only the good can be friends in the best sense, the bad can be friends for utility or pleasure. Note how the best form of friendship is proof against slander: you know that someone would never do what people say he has done. Friendship is a kind of security for reputation. The primary form of friendship is the paradigm in relation to which the other forms are called friendship.

Chapter 5.

Friendship as enhanced by common activity and by living together; weakened by loss of activity; if the absence is lasting the friendship can be forgotten; the old and the sour; the difference between being well-disposed and being friends; a friend is good in himself and good for the friend; wishing well and choosing for the sake of the friend indicate that friendship is based on character and not just a matter of feeling.

Chapter 6.

One cannot have a great number of friends in the primary sense, but one can have many friends in the friendship of utility and pleasure; for people in authority, useful friends are rarely pleasant friends and vice versa; the derivative forms are related to the primary form of friendship.

B. Reciprocity in friendship.

Chapter 7.

Friendships among unequals; less equality in what each obtains in the friendship; in friendship equality is not based on proportional merit but is rather quantitative equality; very great intervals make friendship impossible, no friendship between men and gods; no one wishes that his friend would become a god.

Chapter 8.

Flattery; honor is wanted (a) from those in authority because of the hope it generates; (b) from the good because this confirms our opinion of ourselves; being loved is greater than being honored, because being loved is wanted for its own sake and honor is not; however, friendship is primarily in loving and not in being loved; friendship can even overcome differences among the friends; other remarks about the forms of friendship and their stabilities.

C. Friendship in politics and in the family.

Chapter 9.

Justice and friendship, and how each deal with a common life, with having things or activities in common; the various communities and how they are related to the primary community, the political one.

Chapter 10.

A sketch of various forms of political community (in Chapter 11 he will show how friendship occurs in each):

good forms:	deviant forms:
–monarchy	–tyranny
–aristocracy	–oligarchy
–timocracy (polity)	–anarchic democracy

and there are analogues to these political forms in the various familial relationships.

Chapter 11.

In paragraph one he shows how justice and friendship work together in the good political forms and in their familial analogues. In paragraph two he shows that justice and friendship both are lacking in the deviant forms of political society and in the personal relationships analogous to them. There is nothing in common, no common life, therefore neither justice nor friendship apply. One cannot be friends with a slave as slave, but one can be friends with him as a man.

Chapter 12.

Mere friendships of association; friendships beteen parents and children and between siblings; friendships between husband and wife.

D. Practical problems of equality among friends.

Chapter 13.

(a) In friendships among equals:

Friendship of utility most gives rise to complaints about lack of equality in the exchanges; legal and uncontracted forms of friendship of utility; the former are clearer as regards the equalities, and the postponement shows a certain trust and friendship; the latter are less precise and give rise to complaints; “all or most men wish for the noble but choose the advantageous”. Paragraph five: if we run into a problem concerning equalities, we should be ready to repay adequately. Paragraph six: do we measure what has been given by the benefit to the receiver or by the cost to the giver? By the former, in exchanges of utility; but by the latter, in exchanges of virtuous friendship.

Chapter 14.

(b) In friendships among unequals:

Equalities in friendships among unequals; the superior should get more honor and the inferior more gain; you cannot get wealth from the common stock and honor as well; those who are willing to be paid; must equalize the friendship; no one can repay his parents or the gods.

Book IX, Chapter 1.

(c) In friendships in which the friends' motives are different:

Complaints when people love not the character but qualities the person has; qualities can change but character is the most stable thing we have as human beings; money as the measuring element; teachers of philosophy as similar to parents and gods; in general the one who receives the benefit first should determine the equality of repayment.

Chapter 2.

Other practical problems; one does not sacrifice everything to Zeus, one does not give one's father preference in everything; each beneficiary receives a certain kind of benefit appropriate to him; difficulty of giving general and precise answers to these questions.

Chapter 3.

Breaking off friendships; easiest in friendships of utility and pleasure; cases of mistaken intepretations of the friendship; if in friendships of virtue the friend becomes very different, one should first try to correct him, but if it is impossible the friendship will cease; when one friend develops far beyond the other the friendship will also cease, but a memory will remain.

E. Friendship and one's own self, community.

Chapter 4.

Paragraph one: some basic features of friendship.
Paragraph two: how the features of friendship also apply to a harmonious relationship with one's own self. We should be friends to ourselves. Can we imagine ever being someone else? No one would want anything, no matter how good, on the condition of no longer being himself. A harmonious man lives well with himself: good memories, good hopes, good things to think about. He has no regrets.
Paragraph three: we are friends to ourselves insofar as we are each two or more in some sense (see Chapter 8).
Paragraph four: how the incontinent and wicked are not at peace with themselves; the wicked shun their own company, they are torn apart.
Paragraph five: virtue allows us to be friends with ourselves.

Chapter 5.

GOODWILL: wanting things to go well for someone, wishing another well. Not friendship, not an emotion but a disposition, does not even involve doing well for another. Only a beginning of friendship, as delight to the eye can be a beginning of love. Something like inactive friendship.

Chapter 6.

UNANIMITY (being of one mind): not identity of opinion, but (a) identity of thought concerning common interest; (b) disposition to choose to do the same actions; (c) doing what is resolved in common. Unanimity deals with important practical matters; faction is opposed to unanimity; unanimity is political friendship; it is most readily and fully attained among the good.

Chapter 7.

Benefactors love their beneficiaries because the beneficiaries are like the work or the activity of the benefactors; activity is the most pleasant of all; memory of noble things is pleasant but not that of the useful; the reverse is true of expectation.

Chapter 8.

We should love ourselves and be friends with ourselves; the bad sense of self-love concerns ignoble “goods” and pleasures; good sense of self-love concerns wanting noble goods for oneself, such as the virtues and honor; our reason is most our own self, the part that is most ourselves (paragraph four); the good should love themselves, the wicked should not; a good man may give up wealth and obtain honor, or he may even allow his friend to act instead of acting himself, and thus again obtain honor.

F. The need of friends.

Chapter 9.

This is the most important chapter on friendship. It clarifies the being of friendship. It also straddles sections (E) and (F), because it talks about community and selfhood, as did (E), but also about the need for friendship, as does (F).

(a) Suppose we have a virtuous, happy man, as self-sufficient as a human being can be. Does he also need friends or could he live in solitude? Clearly he needs friends in some sense; no one would want to live alone, and there are some things that can be done only in a community of friends. He may not need the useful friends and the friends of pleasure.

(b) But he does need friends; why? Because happiness is an activity, and it must also be our own, and we can "see" or contemplate the good actions of our friend better than we can see our own actions: but as our friend, his actions are in a way our own actions and he reflects us to ourselves. So in seeing him we see ourselves and what is our own.

(c) Furthermore, our good actions can be more continuous when their performance is shared with others than when we do them alone. So there is more stability and continuity in our actions with friends.

(d) The metaphysics of this is discussed in paragraph five. As human beings we live in the activities of perception and thought. But there is a kind of reflective self-possession in this activity. We not only see, but we also perceive that we see; we not only walk, but perceive that we walk; we not only think, but are aware that we think. This reflective perception, however, is more vivid and clear when directed not just toward our own activity, but toward that of our friend, and toward the activity that is shared by both of us. In our friend we see ourselves active, or we see the activity that we both of us share. This sort of enhanced perception is not possible without friends, so the good activity of living well would fail to reach its full climax without friendship. Hence, friends are necessary for the good man.

–Aristotle says that a friend is another self, another "me". This does not mean that I force my own views on a friend; it is not that I start with a complete self and then make another one just like myself, a kind of clone; but rather that the selfhood of a person is dual or shared in friendship. If a friend is another me, I also am another "self" to the friend. Human beings exist in this shared way.

–An excellent and helpful parallel to NE IX 9 can be found in *Eudemian Ethics* VII 12.

Chapter 10.

How many friends should one have? Distinction as regards the three kinds of friendship.

Chapter 11.

Do we need them more in good fortune or bad? More necessary in bad, more noble in good fortune; lightening of grief; but the presence of friends can also make our grief greater, because we are pained at having them suffer it as well; we should most readily invite them to share our good fortune, least readily invite them to share the bad; most generously we must invite them when they can help us greatly with little inconvenience to themselves; and we must be ready to help our friends when they are in distress, but also to share their happiness.

Chapter 12.

Friends enjoy living and acting together, and especially in those activities that are loved by the group in question. Even the wicked come together to be active in vice, but such communities do not last because the activity is bad. Good men help one another to be good in their activities.

BOOK VII, 11-14 AND BOOK X, 1-5: PLEASURE AND PAIN

Chapter 11.

Major opinions concerning the goodness and badness of pleasure. The rest of the book is essentially a treatment of these opinions.

Chapters 12 and 13.

In item (A:b) he observes that there are some pleasures that involve pain, such as the pleasure of eating, which overcomes the pain of hunger; but there are also pleasures that do not involve pain, such as the pleasure of thinking or that of listening to music. In the former case we can enjoy the painful aspect as a concomitant of the pleasure. In item (D) he observes that bodily pleasures are the kind that involved pain as concomitant, and children and animals pursue especially these pleasures.

Item (A:c) gives the metaphysical status of pleasure. Pleasure is not a motion or process. It is an activity and an end. Pleasure is not attached to a process or motion or becoming, but to an activity (he observes at the end of the paragraph that most people cannot distinguish between a motion and an activity). Some pleasures involve an end other than themselves, if they are attached to an activity leading up to an end (vg. practicing music is pleasant in view of being able to play the piece later on). However, many pleasures are attached to the end itself, to the activity that we do for its own sake. [Pleasure could be called an activity attached to an activity.] It could be called an unimpeded activity of a natural state.

In item (F) he uses this definition very effectively and gives us a clear sense of what he means by pleasure's being involved in the unimpeded activity of one or other of our powers. [From this you can see how virtue can bring about pleasure of its own: virtue is a disposition we have obtained through our own prior choices, a disposition to act well morally, and the unimpeded exercise of this disposition--free from the impediments, say, that the continent or the incontinent suffer--will be pleasant for us.]

Item (B) observes that pleasures can make us perform the relevant activity all the more intensely.

Item (F) observes that all things pursue their own pleasure, all things have something divine in them, many people confuse external goods with happiness because such external goods do in fact remove some of the impediments that could prevent pleasure, but in fact the external goods do not provide the activity itself that supports true pleasure. The life of the good man is indeed more pleasant because his activities are the most pleasant.

Chapter 14.

Discusses why the bodily pleasures seem to be the highest good to so many people. The beginning of paragraph two has an interesting methodological remark, that we must not only explain what is true, but also give the reason for errors, show why the false appears to be true. He gives several reasons:

(a) Because the bodily pleasures do overcome pains and hence seem doubly good.
(b) Because they tend to be violent and intense; because many people do not enjoy other kinds of pleasures and hence turn more fully toward these, since people do not like to be in a neutral state; and the young and the excitable are always undergoing some pains that need to be relieved, and the turning toward pleasures to relieve the pain may make the people in question self-indulgent. But there are other forms of pleasure that do not involve pain, but simply activate us more fully. Such pleasures are in their nature less addictive than those that involved in relieving pain.
(c) We are very changeable beings, unlike the gods, and our pleasures tend to be variable as well.

Book X, Chapter 1.

Importance of pleasure in life; actions speak louder than arguments in practical matters; most people do not draw distinctions; true arguments that conform with good behavior, on the other hand, can be of great value.

Chapter 2.

The teaching of Eudoxus that pleasure is the primary end in itself; “that which everyone thinks to be so, really must be so”; remarks about pleasure and pain.

Chapter 3.

Paragraph three: the metaphysics of pleasure; pleasure is not a motion because there is no slowness or quickness about it; it is not a becoming but an activity.

Paragraph four: not all pleasures involve pains, not even all bodily pleasures are replenishments (vg. the pleasures of some senses, such as those of vision and smell, as well as memories and expectations).

Paragraph five: disgraceful pleasures may be pleasant to some people, but this does not make them pleasant in themselves: the fact that something tastes sour to a sick person does not make it into a sour thing in itself.

Paragraph six: pleasure is not the last word; it all depends on the activity the pleasure is attached to: no one would want to live his whole life as a child with childish enjoyments.

Chapter 4.

After canvassing a lot of opinions about pleasure and giving his own response to them, he here formulates his own direct and positive teaching about pleasure.

Paragraph one: pleasure is not a motion or a becoming because there is no fast/slow about it; pleasure is a whole all at once, an activity (like a thought or a seeing); it does not become more complete as it goes on, hence it is not a motion; some excellent descriptions of motions that take time and are made up of diverse parts and reach their end only at the conclusion: building a house, for example; in contrast, pleasure is achieved wholly as soon as it occurs; it takes place in a moment.

Paragraph two: there is no coming into being of pleasure; it just occurs.

Paragraph three: let us consider a well-functioning power, such as the healthy, seeing eye functioning smoothly with no impediments, and viewing something that is worthy of being seen, something beautiful; the pleasure completes this, not in the way that the object completes the viewing, but in a further way, the way the bloom of youth completes the beauty of young people; it is a further activity to the activity, a crown of the activity, an end that supervenes over the end of seeing.

Paragraph four: and we cannot be pleased continuously because we cannot be active continuously; we must slacken after a while.

Paragraph five: we aim at pleasure because we always aim at activity, especially of that which we do well; and there is no sense to the question whether we want the pleasure or the activity, since both are so closely interwoven: no pleasure without the activity, and no activity without the completion of pleasure.

Chapter 5.

Different activities have different pleasures, hence there are different kinds of pleasure (you differentiate them primarily by differentiating the activities); pleasures intensify the activities; one kind of pleasure can disrupt other kinds of activities, and pains hinder activity as well; the worthiness of a particular type of pleasure to be chosen really depends on the worthiness of the activity to which it is attached; even different kinds of animals have different pleasures because they have different kinds of primary activities; and among men, better men can enjoy better pleasures because they can act better: also the good agents are the judges of what is true pleasure, just as a healthy man is a judge of true tastes; disgraceful pleasures are good only to those who are corrupt, and one must mention their corruption in explaining why such pleasures appear good; they are not good in themselves. Thus the highest functioning of man will also bring about the highest pleasure (this leads into the issue of happiness in the next chapter).

BOOK X, CHAPTERS 6-9: HAPPINESS

Chapter 6.

Aristotle now will conclude his treatment of the final good, the final end for man, the issue that he raised in the first chapters of the first book. In Chapter 6 he describes some features of happiness: it is not a disposition but an activity, an activity that is desirable in itself, and virtuous action is this kind of activity.

Paragraph two: amusements seem to fall into this class, since many spend their time in them and tyrants seem to enjoy such amusements; but these would be unworthy of being our highest ends; amusement might be all right as a means toward activity, but it could not be the crown of a lifetime's effort.

Paragraph three: virtuous action is more important than amusement.

Chapter 7.

We are looking for virtuous activity, and the activity of the best part in us: and this is our thoughtful part. The life that exercises our thoughtful part is the life of thinking, the life of contemplation.

Paragraph two: he lists the characteristics of happiness and shows how they apply to the life of thinking: it is the best activity; the most continuous; the most pleasant; the most self-sufficient; most leisurely and done for its own sake (he shows how the arts of war and statesmanship all aim at something beyond themselves).

Paragraph three: this activity is the most divine activity in man; and although it is beyond us, we ought to try as much as we can to attain it; though small and rare it is the best in us; the life of the mind is most our own and most our selves, the best and most authoritative part of us; reason more than anything else is man.

--This chapter is really the only treatment in the *Ethics* of the life of the mind as the highest life. This life is presented here as the highest; it sets the paradigm for human life. Then in the next chapter he returns to human action and shows that it is the best life in a secondary sense.

Chapter 8.

But the moral virtues and moral activities are more appropriate to us as human beings: they are responses to necessity, involve the body and passions, require prudence, and require many more conditions and externals than does the life of thinking; and moral actions require that we initiate changes in the world, whereas thinking does not have to insert itself into the condition of things; but as living with others in a community, we must perform moral actions.

Paragraph two: the gods are not subject to the sorts of conditions and necessities that require moral actions, but they can carry out the life of the mind; therefore it is a higher life.

Paragraph three: and animals, at the other extreme, do not share in happiness because they do not share in thinking; (implies that even practical living involves a share in the life of the mind).

Paragraph four: but even to contemplate, one needs some external things, but far fewer than are needed for the more public lives. The life of the mind is closest to the gods and the happiest life.

Chapter 9.

Having claimed that the life of the mind is the best life, and having shown the goodness but the secondary station of the life of action, he now, in this long last chapter, shows how the moral life can be extended to many people through

the rule of law. Most people are not capable by themselves of enjoying the happiness of virtuous action, but they can be brought to a share in this happiness by good laws that bring reason into their lives. Recall the importance of law as generating the general sense of justice in V 1.

Paragraph one: has our task come to an end? Not really; our purpose was not just to talk about these matters but to do them; but arguments alone will not make people act well; arguments may inspire those who have innately good natures, but most people are not like this; most obey fear and not shame, most follow passion and avoid pain and seek pleasure; argument is helpless against such character and habituation.

Paragraph two: if arguments are to work with a person, he must already have been shaped by habit and exercise to be a docile person; passion does not yield to argument but to force.

Paragraph three: laws are essential in shaping the habits of the young (by obeying the laws they become aware of the noble goods); also essential in governing men of all ages.

Paragraph four: a man habituated to be good will listen to argument, a bad man will yield only to fear of punishment.

Paragraph five: and the law is a kind of embodied reason which is also endowed with force, hence it has what one needs to form the lives of those who lack reason and are in need of it (paternal authority has reason but not the force that law has); furthermore, people resent being ordered by other men but bear less resentment about being ordered by the impersonal law.

Paragraph six: only Sparta seems to have such an understanding of law; most cities do not. Paragraph seven: to bring about order in the lives of others, one ought to become a legislator; it may be important to attend to details and applications, but above this it is essential to have a sense of the universal things dealing with human action. Paragraph eight: one must learn to legislate if one is to help others live properly.

Paragraph nine: how do we learn to legislate? The sophists try to teach this, but they have no experience; and the statesmen have experience but more by virtue of a knack or skill rather than by possession of something teachable; but experience is an essential factor.

Paragraph ten: the teaching of the sophists is vain because they do not even know what politics is (they placed it as a form of rhetoric); it is helpful to read constitutions and laws (laws being the “work” of the political art), but if we do not have experience the reading will not profit us very much.

Paragraph eleven: let us then approach the study of legislation, let us determine what politics is; this will complete the study of human things we began in this work; and this will help us put political things in their proper order.

Note the progression at the end of Book X:

Ch. 7: the life of thinking or reason as such;
Ch. 8: the life of action; reason as shared with one's own emotion and action;
Ch. 9: the life of politics: reason shared with others through law.

BOOK I: THE GOOD FOR MAN

A. Subject of our inquiry.

Chapter 1.

Aristotle begins by observing that all human performances aim at a good. He spells this out by distinguishing:

- art (craft, skill, *technē*) = the disposition to be able to do something;
- inquiry (*methodos*, way of investigating) = the disposition or style of finding something out;

and also:

- action (*praxis*) = the actual human performance;
- pursuit (decision, choice, *proairesis*) = determination of a way of acting.

All of these are obviously done in view of a good, and therefore "the good" is that at which all things aim.

Having given a rough idea of what we mean by "good," Aristotle immediately introduces two differences among goods. He introduces another important word, *telos* or end, that in which an action or an activity comes to its conclusion, that in which the action or activity comes to rest.

(1) Sometimes the *telos* or end is in the activity itself, while in other cases the *telos* or end is in a product apart from the activity; consider the difference between simply thanking someone, in which the act of thanking is the end, and making a table, in which the table, and not the act of making, is the end. When you have the latter, the product is "better"--a greater good--than the activity itself.

(2) Also you can have many (a) actions (b) arts (c) sciences; you will therefore have many ends or goods. Sometimes these are subordinated to one another: the craft of making cars is subordinated to the activity of driving them; military skill is subordinated to the political; the skill of the cook is subordinated to that of the dietician. (These subordinations are inscribed in the nature of the activities; they are not the result of a human decision.) In this case the good of the superior science or techne or action is "better"--a greater good--than that of the subordinated one. Aristotle adds that it does not matter whether you are dealing with products or with goods that rest in the activity itself.

Aristotle has introduced a number of important terms:

telos: that in which an activity comes to its completion, that in which the activity reaches perfection and rests.
energeia: activity: best understood by induction through examples: a mathematician doing math (as opposed to sleeping or watching TV); a doctor curing; a tree growing; an animal running, hunting, eating; etc.
praxis: specifically human activity; often called ethical or moral activity; human action which includes awareness and decision; a "human act" as opposed to an "act of man".
technē: craft, skill in making or functioning; but usually contrasted with praxis, which is simply the "doing" aspect of human performance.
proairesis: choice, decision.
agathon: good.
epistēmē: science, knowledge (as opposed to opinion).
dunamis: power, ability to perform.

Chapter 2.

After spelling out the relationships among various goods and ends, Aristotle says that IF there is a final good, something both ultimate and comprehensive, then it will be important for us to know which science-and-ability (*epistēmē* and *dunamis*) deals with it. So far he hasn't shown that there definitely is such a good; the whole *Ethics* is designed to show whether there is such a thing and what it could be.

He observes that if there is such a good, politics seems to be the science-and-ability that deals with it, because both the other sciences and the other abilities seem to be governed by politics.
He says that it is more noble and better to attain the good for a city than to obtain the good for an individual life, even if both goods are essentially the same.

Conclusion: the science-and-ability directed toward the highest good seems to be politics. (Note: he is not saying that politics is the highest good; only that it is directed toward the highest good.)

B. Nature of the science.

Chapter 3.

This is an elegant chapter that describes the kind of precision we must look for in the investigation we are going to perform. We have to be aware that different subjects call for different levels of precision; you cannot look for mathematical precision in politics, for example.

Aristotle recognizes variety in these matters.

(1) The admirable (*kalon*) and the just (*dikaion*) admit of great variety and fluctuation: they are found to be very different in different societies, and they change a lot. They seem to exist only by convention, not by nature.

(2) Furthermore, goods (*agatha*) fluctuate a lot, and can be good at one time or in one aspect and bad at another time or under another aspect.

So we should accept the imprecisions that are appropriate to the matter at hand. It is part of a mature understanding to do so.

In the second paragraph, Aristotle makes several telling points.

(a) We are good at judging what we are well trained to do; a good butcher is a good judge of meat, a good mechanic a good judge of cars. But there is also a type of person who is a good judge generally about human affairs. A good education and upbringing is the training required for this.

(b) A young man is not a good "listener" of lectures on political matters because:

  (1) he is inexperienced in regard to human actions, and politics starts from these and is about them;

  (2) being young he tends to follow his emotions and to think he is acting when he is really only excited or acting passionately. He cannot distinguish between acting and feeling. And politics is about actions, so there is a great danger of confusion here.

(c) By "young" we do not necessarily mean young in years, since "older" people can be emotional and can live in the immediate stimulus, not allowing reason to function. For such persons, hearing about politics is of no value. They are like the incontinent.

C. What is the good for man?

Chapter 4.

What then is the highest good? It is the one (a) sought by every science and decision; (b) the target of political science and ability; (c) the highest good achievable by action.

Verbally there is no disagreement: it is happiness, *eudaimonia*. This is what everyone strives for. But what people mean by the word can be very different: there is especially a difference between ordinary people and the wise in regard to this.

(a) Some people take it to mean something obvious: pleasure, wealth, honor. But they differ among themselves about which thing it should be, and they even differ within themselves about what it should be. Because of this diversity, such men tend to admire those who proclaim that happiness is something beyond all these obvious things, something great and beyond what they can understand. They admire what the wise have to say.

(b) One of the teachings of the wise (that of the Platonists) is that happiness is one separate, distinct good that is beyond all the normal goods: beyond health, wealth, honor, pleasure, etc., something that makes all these to be good.

We will examine some important opinions concerning this.

In the second paragraph, Aristotle makes a methodological remark. We have to distinguish between discussions that are leading up to origins, establishing them as origins, and those that are moving away from origins, those that are drawing conclusions or making applications of the first principles.

What are the first principles, the original principles, of human action and happiness? You have to distinguish between the origins "for us" and those "in themselves."

"For us," the origins are that certain things must be known to be so, we must know certain "thats" (for example, we must know that it is good to honor your parents, that honesty is preferable to dishonesty, that generosity is better than avarice, that courage is better than cowardice). We get the knowledge of such "thats" by a good upbringing. Hence, a good upbringing is a necessary condition for beginning the study of human happiness. Nothing can replace it.

Once we have the knowledge of such "thats", we can easily get to the "whys" behind the "thats". But if we don't have the "thats", we can never get to the "whys," and if we are merely told the "whys" alone, this will not establish the convictions "that" that are in us. (For a parallel passage, see I 7.)

Then in the citation from Hesiod, Aristotle observes that there are three types of person:

(a) some have knowledge by themselves;
(b) some have it by obtaining it from others;
(c) some do not have it at all, neither by themselves nor from others. These, Hesiod says, are useless persons.

I.e. Aristotle observes, through Hesiod, that we are good if we know such things on our own or through others, but if we achieve neither, then we are useless (and there are such unhappy persons).

Chapter 5.

Aristotle goes back to the opinions he mentioned at the beginning of Chapter 4, those of the ordinary people. He distinguishes three lives: (1) the life seeking pleasure; (2) that seeking political achievement; (3) the life of thinking.

(1) The first kind is not different from that of animals; many prominent people do in fact pursue this sort of life.

(2) The life of political achievement, in which honor is the greatest good, is the kind of life pursued by distinguished persons. However, this kind of good cannot be the final good:

  (a) it depends so much on the giver of honor, hence it is not truly independent, and is not truly owned by the one who attains it;

  (b) we want honor not just for its own sake, but to confirm our goodness; honor is a derivative good, dependent on own goodness; hence virtue seems to be higher than honor;

  (c) and even virtue does not seem to be a final good, because sometimes it is not being exercised, and sometimes it may meet with great trouble.

(3) The life of thinking: we will discuss this later.

(4) The economic life, for which wealth is the highest good. But wealth is clearly not a good or an end in itself, and this sort of life is subordinated to many necessities. It does not seem to be free and independent.

Chapter 6.

Recall that in Chapter 3 Aristotle distinguished between the general opinions of men and the opinions of the wise. In Chapter 5 he discussed general opinions, in Chapter 6 he discusses the opinions of the wise or of some philosophers. We will not examine this chapter in detail; it is an attempt to refute the teachings of some Platonists. But we do make some observations.

(1) Note the remark in the first paragraph on not allowing friendship to overcome truth.

(2) The point of the chapter is to refute the teaching that over and above all the various goods we seek, there is yet another single, separate "good in itself" that makes all the other goods to be desirable. Aristotle argues in various ways against this; for him, the various goods we seek *are* good in themselves. They are not made to be good by something separate from them. He also argues that to posit a separate good is to assert something that would be empty and also unnecessary; it would be a kind of duplication of the obvious goods we seek.

(3) In the last twelve lines of the chapter, Aristotle observes that no one would be helped by knowledge of this "good in itself." A doctor just promotes health, for example, and to know something about a separate good would not add to his knowledge of how to promote health nor to his appreciation of health as good.

Chapter 7.

Having looked at the opinions of the many and the opinions of the wise, Aristotle turns back to the nature of happiness itself.

In Chapter 6 he resisted the idea that there is a good separate from the various goods we seek. But Aristotle also does not want to say that we are merely left with a collection of various goods. He wants to find something that is the same in all of them, something that is present in them all.

He repeats the understanding we have of "ends" and asks whether there is a general end for all that we do (first paragraph). He makes the question more precise and observes that perhaps there is one single final end, or perhaps several; if there are several, we will want to find the most ultimate of them all (second paragraph).

In the third paragraph, he gives a name to the final end: happiness. We do everything for this, and we do not seek happiness in view of anything beyond it.

In the fourth paragraph he observes that the "independence" we associate with the ultimate good does seem to belong to happiness. If we achieve happiness we have the self-sufficient good. And he does not mean that the self-sufficiency should be that of a single man alone, but rather a happiness that he shares with relatives, friends, and fellow citizens. However, we have to put a limit on the extent of this sharing; it cannot go on indefinitely.

Note also how happiness is to be related to other goods: it is not one more good added to the others (to health, honor, friendship, etc.), but it is somehow in all of them and yet distinct from any one of them.

In the fifth paragraph, he relates the search for happiness to the function (or "work") of man. Is there any activity that is special to man as such? We know there are activities proper to doctors, teachers, mathematicians, carpenters etc., and also activities proper to the eye, the arm, the stomach, etc.; is there an activity proper to man as such? He raises several possibilities:

(a) Life as nutrition and growth is common to men, animals, and plants, so this form of life is not the activity we are looking for.

(b) Perception is shared by men and animals, so this also is not specific as the "work" of man.

(c) We come to the activity or life of reason, of thinking. And this is specific to man, but there are two ways in which it can be realized:

  (1) by obeying reason (as the emotions might obey reason);

  (2) by possessing and exercising reason itself.

The last of these is what we mean by the life of reason, and a life proper to human beings is one in which reason is possessed and exercised to the fullest degree. This is the special "work" of a human being, and the excellent exercise of this special power will be happiness for human beings.

In the sixth paragraph he observes that a single exercise of reason is not to be called happiness, but a complete life led in the exercise of reason. This indicates the special temporal character of human excellence.

In the seventh paragraph he makes a few remarks about methodology, repeating some ideas he expressed earlier:

(1) It is enough to give a general outline and leave the details to be worked out later.

(2) We must look for the precision appropriate to the subject matter in question. The contrast between the carpenter and the geometer is interesting: the geometer tries to give as much precision as possible to his study of the right angle (his precision is determined by the object itself, just by itself). But the carpenter studies the right angle insofar as it is useful in making a table; he does not study the right angle in itself, but as adaptable to tables and edges. (Presumably our precision in the study of the human being will be determined by action and the clarification that action requires.)

(3) Finally he makes some excellent observations related to his remarks in Chapter 4, paragraph two. We do not need to look for causes or reason, we do not have to give "whys" in all cases. In some cases, it is enough to ensure "thats." This is the case in ethics; we want to establish certain origins or first principles, and in the case of ethics, the origins or first principles are certain "thats" (for example, that it is good to honor your parents, to be honest, etc.). How do we get to these "thats"?

(a) We come to some "thats" by induction: we gradually realize that drinking milk will help build up our bones.

(b) We come to other "thats" by perception: we know from a single experience that it is better to be free than to be imprisoned, better to be healthy than to be sick.

(c) We come to other "thats" by habituation: these are the insights we have through our proper upbringing, and nothing can replace the habituation we get that way.

--It would be foolish in the extreme to think that we can replace habituation by perception or by induction.

Aristotle closes with a few remarks about the great importance of beginnings.

Chapter 8.

Now Aristotle shows that the description he has given of happiness and of the final end or final good conforms to what people generally say about happiness and human excellence, and with what philosophers have to say about it. He first distinguishes three kinds of goods:

–external goods: (money, possessions, offices)

–internal goods: –of the body (good looks, health)
–of the soul (memory, intelligence, virtue)

Then he proceeds to examine various ideas about human excellence and to show how his account conforms well with what has been said. Note the respect he has for common opinion and tradition.

Note in the second paragraph the emphasis on activity as opposed to mere disposition.

In the third paragraph he observes that the good life is also pleasant, and he makes a few interesting points concerning pleasure:

(1) What you love is pleasant to you, and virtuous actions will be pleasant to the man who loves virtue.

(2) The pleasures of most people conflict with one another, because they do not love what is pleasant in itself, only what is pleasant for them. But the lover of the noble does love what is pleasant in itself, and so there will be a harmony in his pleasure. What is pleasant in itself is also pleasant for him. Therefore pleasure belongs "in itself" to his life; it is not merely added to his life.

(3) If you didn't enjoy (find pleasure in) virtuous actions, you really would not be a virtuous agent.

(4) And virtuous actions are: pleasant in themselves; good; noble: all three. And they come together in themselves; they are not severed, nor are they merely accidentally conjoined.

In the fourth paragraph he recognizes the accessory role of external goods (recall the distinction of three goods made in the first paragraph). They are required as conditions or as resources, and hence some people have thought that happiness is to be found in them.

Chapter 9.

Now Aristotle asks how we get to happiness. Does it come (a) by habituation; (b) as a gift of the gods; (c) or by chance?

(b) If there are gifts from gods to men, then happiness should be one of them; but he avoids talking about this possibility.

(a) Most likely, it seems to come to us through habituation and training: and it is the most godlike thing we have, and it is available to all, since in principle all can acquire it.

(c) To say it comes by chance would be an unworthy way of treating it. It would subject the most important human good to the vagaries of coincidence and chance.

Thus animals do not share in happiness because they do not have reason, nor do very young people, because they are not yet developed. Furthermore, a short period of time is not enough either. A whole life is required. This raises the problem of time and human happiness.

D. Time and human happiness.

Chapter 10.

Human life is subject to many changes and tragedies. Does this mean that we can really say someone is happy only after his life is finished, after the possibility of disaster has ended? Furthermore, the possibility of tragedy can extend into the descendants of a man; does their bad fortune somehow have an impact on the happiness of the man in question?

In the second paragraph, Aristotle says that it would be paradoxical to say that happiness could only be attributed in the past tense, not in the present. And furthermore, if trouble does indeed destroy happiness, we would have to say that the happiness of a man is very changeable.

In the third and fourth paragraphs, he discusses the permanence of virtuous activities and says that virtue is more durable even than our knowledge of the sciences (see VI 5). The virtues are so durable that we cannot forget them. Even if troubles come, they will be borne in the proper way by someone who is virtuous. Virtue is the greatest principle of stability in human life.

In the fifth paragraph he observes that the virtuous man will never do what is wicked, and so he will not become miserable. However, if great disasters befall him, we must say that he will not be “blessed” (*makarios*) even though he can remain “happy”. He will do what can be done in the circumstances in which he is placed.

In the seventh paragraph he reminds us that he is talking about happy *men*, not about the gods. There is danger to human happiness, but virtue is the most stable and permanent and reliable thing there is in human life.

Chapter 11.

Aristotle briefly treats the question whether the dead are affected by what happens to their descendants, and says that their happiness could not be changed by what happens subsequently. They are affected little, if at all.

E. Final remarks.

Chapter 12.

This is a short chapter which makes an interesting point. Aristotle distinguishes between (a) praising something and (b) calling it blessed, prizing it.

(a) In praise, we place the object of our attention within a category, and we related it to something beyond itself as its criterion or measure. In a way, we set ourselves up as judges of the thing we praise. When we bestow praise, we also, to some extent, enhance our own position.

(b) In calling something blessed, we do not set ourselves up as judges, nor do we relate the object of our attention to something outside itself as its criterion or measure. We simply glorify or bless it.

With these definitions in mind, we can say that we praise virtue (as a disposition) because we relate it to the acts that spring from it; the acts are the measure of virtue. But the acts themselves (and, by implication, happiness) are blessed and not just praised.