

## *Nicomachean Ethics 6.1-6.7*

### 6.1

**READ FIRST SENTENCE:** Careful that the Greek doesn't say 'let us now determine what it says', but, 'let us now determine this' (the former would suggest a level of specificity that we've seen Aristotle isn't willing to give; the latter can read that way, but also allows just what the correct reason is

Analogy: it's true to say that someone should prescribe the medicine that medical science prescribes, but, what is that

- Here might be a place to press the analogy: it would be bizarre to say that correct/healthy medicine is what it is *because* medical science prescribes it

Back to the soul

- Distinction within the rational part of the soul (this is the part that has reason strictly speaking
  - That with which we study things whose first principles cannot be otherwise: the scientific part
  - Things whose principles admit of being otherwise: the rationally calculating part
- **DISCUSS THIS DIFFERENCE: IT'S CLEARLY RELATED TO THEORETICAL VS. PRACTICAL RATIONALITY; HOW IS A DRAWING THE DIFFERENCE?**

So, what's the best state of the scientific part and best state of rationally calculating part; that is the virtue of each

Reiterates that virtue of *X* is relative to proper *ergon* of *X*

### 6.2

Three things in the soul control action and truth

- Sense-perception: not the principle of any action, since beasts have perception but no share in action
  - So, 'action' must be meant in a very restricted manner
  - Note, here, that being 'principle' of action is more than just being involved in action; since perception certainly is necessary for acting

- Desire: assertion and denial: though :: pursuit/avoidance: desire
  - Desire is definitely a principle, because decision is a kind of desire (a deliberative desire); but, truth is the good state of the scientific part
  - Ergon of rationally calculating part is truth agreeing with correct desire
  - Here is a problem: this seems to be a definition of the *good*, not just the *ergon* of this part
- Understanding (*nous*): things get tricky here; this is sometimes used for the intellectual part all together
  - Thought as such isn't a principle; but goal-directed thought
  - Here is an interesting question that re-sparks the Humean issue:
    - \* Thought only motivates us when we use it to achieve some end we *antecedently* desire
    - \* Thought can move us just by being aimed at some end we recognize as worthy of desire
  - If the latter, we don't need to posit a distinct capacity that generates the desire

One question: Does A here suggest that virtue of character is separable from correct reasoning; or, is it compatible with what he says that one must have correct reasoning to have virtue of character?

## READ 1139b11-14

### 6.3

Five states of the soul concerned with truth: Scientific knowledge, craft, prudence, wisdom, understanding

One question: How many VoIs are there? Two? All of these?

Scientific knowledge (episteme)

- Deals with what cannot be otherwise
- Proceeds from necessities
- Spelled out in detail in *Posterior Analytics*
- Demonstrative state
- So, this can't be the virtue of the rationally calculative part, since that deals with things that can be otherwise
- **GO THROUGH A DEMONSTRATION AND SHOW WHY THE CONCLUSION COULDN'T BE  $\Phi$  IS THE MEAN**

## 6.4

Craft (techne)

Two kind of things admit of being otherwise (or, at least, two belong to that group): what is produced, what is achieved in action

So, here we get an indication that there is a serious disanalogy between craft and virtue

**SO, WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRODUCTION AND ACTION SUCH THAT THIS MAKES SENSE?**

We've had three kinds of 'action'

- Voluntary behavior (in this sense, animals and children perform action); **1111a25**
- Rational behavior on a decision (only adult humans); **1139a20**
- Rational behavior on a decision that is its own end; here, distinguished from production
  - So, it's in this last sense that A wants to distinguish action from production
  - This might be an example where A thinks that, in the strict sense, (3) is action, but the others are called 'action' by similarity

The basic idea seems clear and correct: the state of intellect or what's involved in being a good carpenter, is quite different from the state involved in excellence of practical reasoning

## 6.5

Prudence (phronesis)

Who do we call prudent people? Those who can reason well about living well in general; who grasp and can reason about the sorts of things that promote living well (not some specialized area)

Prudence can't be either scientific-knowledge nor craft, since the former deals with what can't be otherwise, and people are prudent insofar as they reason well about what can be otherwise

**READ 1140b5**

**READ 1140b21**

## 6.6

'Understanding' (nous): strikes me as a bad translation, since we can clearly understand things that have explanations

Basic problem is that the principles don't have explanations or proofs; but scientific knowledge involves grasping a proof

So, can't have episteme of the principles; this is a good point, there does seem to be a different

cognitive grasp of principles than derived facts

Well, by elimination, then, can't be episteme, phronesis, or techné

It's also not wisdom, since mark of wisdom is ability to prove

So, only thing left is nous

Important: we've learned that episteme requires grasp of principles, but here we learn that grasp of principles as such isn't (partially) constitutive of episteme

## 6.7

Wisdom (sophia)

Most exact form of scientific knowledge

**READ 1141a18** Wisdom = understanding + scientific knowledge

Here we also seem to get a view on which quality of cognitive state in some sense depends on quality of its object

Seems like it's gonna concern divine beings (1141b1)