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ARISTOTLE'S  
DEFINITION OF THE  
HUMAN GOOD

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NOTE

This short account of the central thesis of Aristotle's *Ethics* is intended as a provisional statement, to serve as a basis for discussion in lectures on that book.

*April, 1919.*

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ARISTOTLE'S DEFINITION OF  
THE HUMAN GOOD.

Lecture I.

§ I. THE END.

*is happiness*  
(1.)

EVERY branch of conduct and every form of skilled activity seems to have a *good* of its own which it tries to secure or achieve. By applying his notion of this good to the particular problem set him, any individual occupied in such conduct or activity is enabled to form a reasonable *purpose*, and to act not at random but with an *end* in view. The general in the field is aiming at victory, the gunsmith is trying to complete a gun, the cobbler to complete a boot, the horseman is learning to master a horse, the rifleman to use a rifle. Each has an aim, by his success in achieving which he is judged by others and by himself to be good or bad at the particular activity to which that aim properly belongs. And in so aiming each may be said to judge something good. In the various instances above given, victory, the completed gun, the completed boot, mastery of a horse, mastery of a rifle, are judged to be good; and unless they were in some sense judged good, a reasonable person would not pursue them. The pursuit of something judged to be good may then be said to be a universal feature of all rational, and therefore of all distinctively human, occupation.

These various 'goods' are not out of relation to one another. There is subordination among them. Thus the work of the gunsmith is controlled by that of the general, and the work of the general by that of the statesman. Horses are ridden in various ways and for various purposes. The military use is controlled again by the art of war, as present in the general. The activities of the cobbler are controlled by the use of boots and shoes for dancing, walking, running in all its varieties. Each activity is thus under external control, and the control is exercised by another activity. Each good on examination refers us to a good beyond itself on which it is dependent. None that has yet been mentioned is final.

But surely the process cannot continue to infinity: there must be some ultimate activity directed to a final good. There must be a good which is self-sufficing, from which all subordinate or departmental goods draw their goodness. In all matters of war the order proceeds in the end from the general, and it is the general whom the execution of the order must satisfy: victory or defeat of the enemy is the prime consideration to which all other considerations are subordinate. We want now to find for the whole range of human life a central authority like that of the general, and a supreme governing consideration like the defeat of the enemy. As the lesser considerations are called goods, so the final consideration may be called *the good* (or more accurately *the human good*; for there are things more precious than man in the universe). To discover the nature of this good is the object of this enquiry.

## § 2. Πολιτική: SOCIOLOGY.

To the enquiry which has for object the discovery of this end or good with a view to its realization, A. gives the name Πολιτική, the Social Art or Science, because man is essentially social by nature and can only realize himself (*i.e.*, satisfy his instincts and desires) in a society fully organized as a political unit. (He also gives another reason. What is good, he says, realized for an individual, must be better realized for a community. But this reason is not easily reconciled with the foregoing). The introduction of this term at the beginning of the Ethics shows that the two works of A. which bear respectively the name Politics and Ethics were both regarded by him as possessing a common aim, that of describing the end to which all human activities are directed, that of analysing the human good and of discussing the means of its realization. The Ethics sets out the form of the good life as it may be realized by the best men in a good state, while the Politics exhibits the constitutive principles of the good state itself. It would seem on the whole as though A. regarded the good of the individual as the ultimate consideration, and the state organization as a means to the realization of that good: but probably the question never put itself to him in that form, and besides it may be a bad question—The name Πολιτική also suggests that the sovereign authority in this sphere will be that of the Πολιτικός or Statesman. (That inference however may be false).

## Lecture II.

§ 3. *Εὐδαιμονία*: PROSPERITY, WELL-BEING,  
HAPPINESS.

What is this end—the human good? Everyone will be able to give it a name, and will agree what name to give, though there is no real agreement as to its nature. That the sovereign consideration is happiness or prosperity is universally agreed; but, judging from men's actions, we may classify men's notions of happiness according as they seek to find it (1) in physical enjoyment, (2) in honour or public distinction (which really means the search after a reputation for ability or virtue), (3) in the life of the mind, in knowledge of philosophy. The happiness of some seems to be in acquiring wealth, A. adds, but this cannot be considered as a normal or natural tendency: it is either a seeking for enjoyment or comfort through money, or it is a disease (as in the miser). In criticising these notions of happiness A. uses certain notions which bring his own answer to the question rather nearer: the good must be distinctively human; it must be complete or whole or final; so far as possible, it must be self-sufficient, *i.e.*, unaffected by accidents outside the individual's control. Physical pleasure is rejected as infra-human, an animal ideal; while public honour is too unsubstantial. Political ambition is particularly subject to undeserved disappointment: no one can control the wind of popular favour. Lastly, the mere possession of virtue does not constitute happiness, since it is compatible with sleep or inactivity and with misfortune.

## § 4. THE NATURE OF MAN. (2)

What is the use of Man? What is his business in the world? In the answer to that question, if it can be found, will be the best chance of an answer to the question, what is the good for Man? For the good of anything is the satisfactory performance of its proper business. The life of Man has three main layers or strata: man has (1) a *vegetable* activity, which is responsible merely for his keeping alive, and is itself entirely outside the control of

will or intelligence. To it belong growth, digestion, the repair of waste tissue, and other self-governing physical processes. Man has (2) an *animal* activity, which gives him appetites to satisfy, senses to help to their satisfaction, and physical pleasures attendant upon their satisfaction. In their origin these appetites are independent of his will, but they can be deliberately exploited, and in that form they are one of the most powerful influences in life. They may be called half-rational. Man has (3) a third activity, peculiarly and distinctively human. Man alone of living things can think and will and give an intelligible account of his proceedings. The distinctively human activity is regarded by A. as belonging to a single principle, τὸ λόγον ἔχον, usually translated 'reason.' From it proceed all the things that man can do and other creatures cannot do. Art, action, knowledge, the planning of cities, the making of laws—all are manifestations of human 'reason.'

A. does not deny the necessity to man of the first and second of these activities; but he claims that it is plain that the peculiar and distinctive business of man in the world cannot lie in the prosecution of either; obviously it must lie rather in the use and development of the principle which is peculiar to man, *i.e.*, of the reason. And if this is man's business, his good and his happiness will lie in the proper performance of it.

To man constituted as he is, however, set down with a variety of appetites and instincts amid the excitements of a changing world, a reasonable activity which has no reference to his animal nature is either altogether impossible or not to be attained except after a long struggle. The life of pure reason is the Divine life, as far above that of man as the purely vegetative life is below him. In some degree, as A. tries to show later, man can attain to it and should strive to attain as far as he is able. But before he can come near the possibility of such a consummation he must first set in order his own human nature and face the problems of human conduct. The first application of reason for man is to the task of enforcing its rule over the appetites and instincts which belong to his animal nature, so that out of random instincts and appetites may be created a will informed by knowledge and systematically pursuing that which is good. There is thus a middle region, intermediate between the Divine and the vegetable, in which the problems of human conduct fall, and which is therefore the field of human goodness. Man emerges out of the

animal; and the distinctively human excellence will be shown in establishing a proper relation between the animal and the super-animal nature. Such a relation is goodness or virtue and the activities of a nature in which this relation has been established will be happiness or prosperity.

### Lecture III.

Thus in answering the question, 'what is human goodness?' A. cannot confine himself to the highest of the three strata which compose man's soul and to *its* perfection. That highest activity is possessed by man alone of all created things, and it may be that in the end man will find his perfection: but the problem of life for man is set by the supervention of this Divine principle upon the animal nature. If man were passion without reason, or if he were reason without passion, in either case equally he would be incapable of 'action (conduct, *πρᾶξις*) and the problem would not arise: but, being both, his first and most pressing business, a pre-condition of any perfection, is to bring the two principles into harmony with one another.

It is thus suggested that there are two human excellences for our investigation: (1) the concord of reason and passion exhibited in good action; (2) the perfection of the principle of reason itself. A. begins with the problem of conduct, subdividing the excellence involved into (a) the proper state of the passions (*ἠθικὴ ἀρετή*, excellence of character), (b) the proper state of the intelligence (*διανοητικὴ ἀρετή*, excellence of intelligence or judgment). A. begins with the virtue of character, and devotes a single book (B. vi.) to the discussion of Judgment, the virtue of intelligence. The two, however, are not really separate, as we shall see; they are complementary, separable only in thought, and here separated for convenience of exposition.

Let us now sum up A.'s view of the human good to the point reached. Whatever it is it may be called happiness: it must be something complete, final, and rendering the individual as far as maybe superior to all vicissitudes of fortune. It must be something in the man himself, not to be taken from him by human power. It must therefore

be a gift or activity of the individual. But a gifted man possesses his gift when asleep or idling: he is at his best, is really 'living well' only when using the gift; happiness then will be in the activity rather than in merely being gifted. What activity, then? Activity of whatever principle is best in man, of that which makes man higher than the animal. This principle is reason. If man can acquire a gift or capacity for such activity, his activity will be not a mere transient moment of perfection, but the putting forth of a power with all the confidence of possession, a power which increases instead of being exhausted with use, and which speaking generally is independent of external influences. To have such a power is to be good at the activity in question: such a power is goodness or excellence. Man's good, then, and his happiness will lie in an activity which proceeds from the excellence or perfection of that which is highest in man. And that means excellence of human reason considered as the natural mistress of animal passion.

§ 5. EXCELLENCE OF CHARACTER (*ἠθικὴ ἀρετή*)  
AN ACQUIRED APTITUDE (*εἴξις*).

A. distinguishes, as already explained, excellence of character from excellence of judgment and treats them separately, though insisting on the fact that they are complementary to one another, making up between them the complete equipment for good action. We consider first, excellence of character.

The gifts and graces with which men are or may be adorned fall into two classes. Some every man, who is not deformed or abnormal, possesses: they are his from birth and he has but to use them. Sight and hearing and the other senses are of this kind. There may be some sort of development of these capacities during infancy: but roughly speaking they may be said not to develop at all. When a human being first sees, he sees (optically speaking) as well as he will ever see, and probably a great deal better than he will see at the end of his life. Anyway no effort on his part is required. He has the gift of sense and cannot help using it; and if the use brings with it in early years development and in later years decay, both equally take place automatically and without his conscious interference. But there are other gifts and capacities to which man's

position is quite different. Skill of all kinds is won only by effort and practice. Natural endowment does of course play a part here also. Some men are better fitted, it seems, at birth for the acquirement of one kind of skill, some for another, and some seem naturally unfitted to acquire any high degree of skill at all. But whatever degree of natural capacity a man may possess for art or science or business or athletics, he has to begin by being a learner; he has to go through a period of apprenticeship before he can make full use of his talents. Out of the natural gift for music by learning and practising the musician is developed. The development perhaps finishes only with death. But at a certain point we can say that maturity (relatively speaking) is attained and apprenticeship over. We can say of a man that he is a musician, or a good musician, meaning that, while all men possess in some degree an aptitude for music, this man has acquired by his efforts and possesses a power which other men lack. Such a power developed on the basis of a natural gift A. calls a *ἔξις*, which we may translate 'acquired aptitude.' The excellence we are trying to analyse, must clearly, since it is not a common property of all men like sight, be a capacity of this second kind. Goodness of character, then, is an acquired aptitude.

The above account of *ἔξις* is based partly on the *Metaphysics* (θ 2 and 5). In the *Ethics*, after several times referring to the excellences of man as *ἔξεις*, A. at length (II. v.) formally justifies the doctrine in the case of excellence of character as follows. He has said that the springs of action are of three kinds: (1) noble and base (right and wrong), (2) profitable and unprofitable, (3) pleasant and painful—the former in each case being a positive, the latter a negative stimulus. Of all three, he says, the good man will be master, and the bad man of none; but the third is all-important. With it our enquiry therefore is chiefly concerned. Ultimately, he seems to suggest, the whole problem can be stated in terms of pleasure and pain, the practical problem of life being to learn to find pleasure in the right, or really pleasant, things. With that point he deals more fully when he comes to treat of pleasure itself. The immediate point is that it is in relation to pleasure and pain that excellence of character will show itself. That being so, there are three, and only three possible alternatives. Goodness might be shown (1) in a certain kind of *emotion* of pleasure, (2) in a certain kind of *susceptibility*

to pleasure, (3) in an acquired aptitude for a certain *attitude* to actual or possible experiences of pleasure. The first two are summarily dismissed. A man is not called good or bad either because he has a given emotion or because he is susceptible to a given emotion. The emotion and the susceptibility are not in themselves morally either good or bad. Badness and goodness of character are shown in the reaction of the whole man to his emotions and susceptibilities, these last being, relatively speaking, outside his control, facts of which his moral consciousness must take account. Excellence of character, then, will lie in an aptitude for a certain kind of attitude to the pleasures and emotions of life.

## Lecture IV.

### § 6. AN APTITUDE FOR DELIBERATE ACTION.

To achieve excellence is to achieve a capacity for a certain attitude to pleasure and pain. The next point is that this attitude expresses itself in deliberate action. A. does not argue this step, he simply takes it. It is generally agreed he says (106 a 3) that virtue or excellence either is, or necessarily involves, deliberate action. He would include under the term all action, however swift or hurried, in which a man seeks what he desires after considering how best his desire may be realized, conforming his procedure to the results of that consideration. It is action which embodies the results of reflection, and is therefore able to justify itself. The justification will always take the form of showing (1) what the end of the view was, (2) why these means to it were adopted rather than any other. This distinction of end and means is a universal feature of all deliberate, *i.e.*, of all truly voluntary or free action. Man is, of course, dependent on circumstance for opportunity, and often what he does deliberately is quite other than what in the abstract he would have liked to do. Sometimes even, he is reduced to a choice between two things which neither he nor anyone else could desire. But even in such cases the act is voluntary, and exhibits the distinction of desired end and chosen means. Deliberate action then is action which embodies a con-



sidered plan, and which, therefore, contains within it the distinction of end and means.

It must be remembered in this connexion that we who come to Aristotle for instruction are like archers in search of a mark, and that he has promised to give us one. He says, it is true, several times that a (study of Ethics will no more make a man good than a study of medicine will make a man healthy): but we are entitled to reverse the comparison and demand that the study of Ethics shall be shown to be as good for human conduct as the study of medicine has been for human health. Unless it were true (1) that in everyone of our everyday considered acts we had an end, and (2) that we had some difficulty in relating to one another and systematizing the various ends (health, money, comfort, pleasure, &c.) which we at different times pursue—unless this was true, the practical necessity for ethical enquiry would not exist. But these things being so we need the philosopher to put us on the straight road, so that our considered actions may be not only individually coherent, but also consistent and consecutive with one another.

It should be noted that deliberate action requires the co-operation of thought and desire. It is thus the single expression of both parts of human excellence, of excellence of intelligence as well as of excellence of character. It can, therefore, not be fully understood until the intellectual excellences have been investigated.

### § 7. SHOWING ITSELF AS PROPORTION OR A CAPACITY FOR MIDDLE (OR MEAN) QUANTITIES.

VIRTUE, it has been shown, is one of those acquired states or capacities which are acquired by repeated activity of the right kind. These states and capacities, A. notes, have this feature in common—that the enemy always is the too-much and the too-little, the excess and the defect; that what is wanted is always the right or adequate amount. ✓ Thus health and strength are maintained by taking the right amount of food and exercise: more or less of either will tend to destroy them. It is so with the excellences of character. By constantly feeling fear and running away a naturally timorous man turns himself into a coward; by constantly shutting his eyes

to danger and rushing into it a man of sanguine temperament becomes foolhardy. Profligacy comes from never denying oneself a prospective pleasure, while utter refusal of all indulgences ends in the complete insensibility to enjoyment which characterizes the puritan. A continual too-much or too-little in the act thus produces always a defect in the character: and the maintenance of a proper standard enables character to develop naturally and harmoniously.) If this standard is carefully and continuously maintained, its maintenance will in time become a delight. The agent will in time cease to feel that to refrain from the too-much or too-little is an act of self-sacrifice in the interest of an ideal, but will rather enjoy his own skill in measuring the quantities and putting them together in due proportion. As soon as he begins to feel this enjoyment in his skill, he may take that as an indication that apprenticeship is over and the capacity fully developed—*i.e.* that he is not merely on the road to goodness, but actually good.

In saying that virtue of character exhibits itself as proportion or moderation A. is quite well aware that he is committing himself to the statement that its manifestations can be estimated in terms of quantity. Any manifestation of this virtue will exhibit a right, or as A. says a middle quantity. But first he tries to remove a misapprehension which the use of the word middle might cause. The middle point or the two equal halves are found by first fixing the extreme points or limits, and to halve a line or other magnitude whose limits are not fixed is as impossible as to find the centre of a circle which has not yet been drawn. His answer in effect is that in this case the middle or right amount is fixed first and the extremes fixed later by reference to it.

## Lecture V.

The right amount is unique, the wrong amounts are infinite in number since any amount greater by however little belongs to the one extreme region, any amount less by however little to the other extreme region. Thus, while in strict mathematics the middle may be thought of as a region but the extreme or limit must be a point or line, in moral mathematics the middle is a point or line and the extremes are regions of indeterminate extent.

There is no reason to suppose that there is any maximum or minimum except so far as individual capacity sets one. A. illustrates the distinction between the *actual* middle or mean quantity and the *personal* middle by the instance of the amount of meat required by an athlete as compared with that required by an ordinary man, the point being that the right amount can only be settled in a particular case by consideration of the precise nature and needs of that case. This shows that the personal mean is not confined to matters of conduct; and it is possible that the notion was borrowed by A. from the physicians.

The next question is—*of what* does the virtue of character secure a right amount? A.'s answer is quite explicit. Of two things: (1) of emotion or feeling. At any given moment a man may show too much or too little of any given emotion. The emotions mentioned are fear, appetite, anger, pity, and all other forms of pleasure and pain; on every occasion the good man will feel these emotions to a proper extent, in the right quantity. (2) Of action. This is not further explained by A., but illustrations are easily supplied. You may run too fast or too slow, you may be too soon or too late, you may hit too hard or too soft, in an interview you may be too direct or too circumlocutory, a speech may be too short or too long. Thus everywhere success stands on a razor's edge between the too much or too little, and may therefore be regarded as moderation, even though as success, as an achievement of what is good, it stands on a pinnacle by itself. Scientifically analysed its essence is seen to consist in securing the middle or moderate amount, while in the category of good it holds the extreme or superlative position.

## Lecture VI.

### § 8. CONTROLLED BY A PLAN WHICH JUDGMENT PROVIDES.

A. has already said that it is axiomatic that good action must 'follow the right plan.'<sup>1</sup> The word is *λόγος*, which is also used in the definition of virtue of character, and often appears<sup>2</sup> as the name for the opponent of appetite

<sup>1</sup> 103 b 32.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., 102 b 15, 147 b 2, 151 a 29 ff.

in the moral struggle ('Reason against Desire'). Further a λόγος περὶ τῶν πρακτῶν, an Ethical Theory which is to be also (it must be remembered), according to A.'s promise, a Plan of Life, is what it is the object of this enquiry to formulate. There are wrong plans as well as right ones, and it makes all the difference to the character and to the action what the determining plan is. So the formula 'a gift of moderating the passions in the interest of a plan' would be insufficient as a definition of the capacity whose exercise is the human good. It is necessary to add some words to differentiate the right plan from the wrong. But rightness of plan is another name for the virtue of Judgment, and Judgment belongs to the intellectual side of goodness. Therefore in defining virtue of character A. does not attempt to give the differentia: he contents himself with adding words which refer us forward for the differentia to the discussion of Judgment. If you ask 'what plan,' he says, the answer is 'that plan by which the man of Judgment would control action.' Observe that he does *not* say 'that which he would approve,' but 'that which he would *use*.' He must therefore mean one of two things. Either (1) that all good action follows one and the same plan, which may be equally realized by different men in different emergencies and by one man equally in each successive action of a long career. If the plan is of this kind it is clear that it can only be stated in very abstract and general terms, and that to particularize would be to falsify. Or (2) we may point to the conditional form and ask what is the suppressed protasis to this apodosis. 'Would use'—if what? Various answers to this conundrum might be suggested, but they seem roughly reducible to two: (a) 'if he could impose his will upon you'; (b) 'if he were in your place.' The former answer has the defect that it suggests that it is possible for one man to estimate another's difficulties and opportunities; and that a man who is able to act wisely himself is competent to control the actions of others, a highly dubious proposition. It thus lends support to the heresy that the man of Judgment is meant to be treated as a consultant physician of conduct, a heresy which A. himself shows plainly that he rejects. We must therefore prefer the second suggestion. The plan is that which the man of Judgment would use if he were in your place. That this is the meaning seems to be the view of Prof. Stewart when he

Plato

R.

says (Vol. I., p. 204) 'Evidently, then, A. will have us look *for ourselves* at the *σπουδαῖος* (good man) in the concrete and watch how he actually tempers his nature'—a standard, he says, of great practical value, though liable to misinterpretation.

There seem, then, to be two possible interpretations of the Plan which is constitutive of goodness of character and proceeds from goodness of intelligence. The first interpretation makes it a plan for all, for every man in every act, the common property of all men of good will, so that it must be general and capable only of formulation in general terms. The second interpretation suggests something thoroughly detailed and particularized, differing according to the powers of the individual and the possibilities of the situation, apprehended and executed by the man of Judgment in the moment of action, but very likely never formulated in word, possibly even not capable of verbal formulation at all. It is a matter of considerable importance to determine which of these interpretations corresponds most nearly to Aristotle's meaning; but the decision of the question requires a thorough examination of A.'s account of the virtue of Judgment and also of his account of the part played by intelligence in determining conduct.

### § 9. WILL AND INTELLIGENCE. KNOWLEDGE OF MEANS.

A deliberate action can always be analysed, as we have seen, into an end which is desired and means chosen after reflection to secure it. A.<sup>3</sup> (following Plato) distinguishes three kinds of desire—appetite, anger, wish—and of these three the last is the only one which *requires* thought as to means. Appetite requires for its operations only sensation, though we often see careful thought employed in its service. Anger is not psychologically analysed in any extant work of A. Perhaps we should do justice to it by saying that sense together with the rather obscure intermediate activity called imagination is sufficient to its needs. Wish, however, or intelligent desire joined with a judgment that the object aimed at is good (*cf.* § 1),

<sup>3</sup> For this account of the *ὀρεκτικὴ ψυχὴ* cf. De Anima Γ 433 a 31—434 a 21, the clearest account in A. works. It rests on the distinction between the *αἰσθητικὴ* and *λογιστικὴ φαντασία* (= *βουλευτικὴ φ.* 434 a 7).

actually requires reflection before it can be operative. This distinction is not difficult to follow, and corresponds roughly to the distinction made by some English philosophers<sup>4</sup> between particular and general desires. While the appetite of hunger is directed from the beginning upon a particular object within the field of perception, confines itself to that object, and is satisfied when that object is secured, the wish for honour marks out a certain object as *in general* good, and therefore in the nature of the case is never done with. Hunger is not a desire for food in general, but a desire at a particular time for a particular food; but ambition is a desire for honour in general and will exhibit itself wherever and whenever a man sees a chance of public distinction.<sup>5</sup>

## Lecture VII.

This characteristic of general desire carries with it the consequence that reflection as to ways and means is an indispensable preliminary to its control of conduct. By reflection a man must see in the given situation a chance of distinction, and by reflection he must find a way to taking the opportunity.

Wish, therefore, is peculiar in two ways among desires, (1) in that it involves a judgment that an object of a certain kind is in general good; (2) in that it necessarily gives occasion to an activity of thought in the calculation of means to the securing of that object in the given situation.

In his analysis of deliberate action A. seems to confine thought to the function of calculating means to a given end. He says more than once that end, not means, is the object of wish, and that it is means, not end, which are sought for in the process of deliberation. The end is already settled when deliberation begins, and is the start-

<sup>4</sup> Particularly Butler, Pref. §§ 30, 31 and Serm. XI. But perhaps self-love is the only 'passion' recognised as 'general' in B.'s sense. Hume makes a parallel distinction between calm and violent passions. *Treatise*, Bk. II, Part III, Sect. III & IV (S.B. 413 ff.).

<sup>5</sup> III. iv. βούλησις is said to aim either at τὸ ἀγαθόν or at τὸ φαίην. ἀγαθόν. It is obvious that before analysis of a given situation the notion of the good must remain general. The ambitious man *always* wants honour, but seeks different honours from time to time.

ing point of the enquiry; and when the enquiry is finished by the discovery of the best means to the end, all obstacles to action are removed, and action follows as soon as the chosen moment comes. Accepting for argument's sake the analysis of all purpose into end and means, we must accept also this account: but a reservation is necessary. The end cannot be supposed to be either utterly fixed, or utterly independent of reflection. Within the limits of a single act of deliberation it is of course fixed: or where would questioning begin and end? But desires of this kind, 'general' desires, are of course continually changing; they are also largely constituted and constantly modified by reflection. Though, therefore, A. need not be criticized for treating the end as outside the scope of intelligence when analysing deliberate action, he ought somewhere to explain what part the intelligence played in its genesis and development. The question is of the highest importance: for it is one of A.'s favourite doctrines that a thing is characterized by its end: by his end therefore it is natural to suppose that we shall know a good man from a bad, and our examination of A.'s account of virtue of character has led us to expect that the ground for such distinctions is to be looked for in the region of Judgment. Let us now look there for knowledge of the end.

#### § 10. JUDGMENT: KNOWLEDGE OF THE END?

In the Sixth Book the two requirements of good action are summed up as (1) a true plan, (2) a right desire (139 a 24). It is natural to suppose that we have dealt under the head of character with right desire and have now to hear of rightness or truth of plan. At the very start A. makes it clear that Judgment is primarily concerned with the process preliminary to action which is called deliberation, and consists in the selection of proper means to a desired end. Its sphere (141 b 8) is human goods so far as these admit of deliberation. Ability in the selection of means is of course characteristic of all skilled activities. The doctor is an expert in the selection of means to the recovery of health, the stockbroker in the selection of means to the increase of wealth by investment or speculation. Each of these experts has the gift of judgment within a special restricted area: but judgment proper knows no such restrictions. It is not a departmental

proficiency, but a competence to deal with good life in general and as a whole. The dialectic of Socrates could probably make hay of this definition as it did of a similar definition of moral wisdom in the mouth of Polemarchus. But its truth, says A., is witnessed by the fact that we do attribute Judgment to a man when he shows this selective ability in matters not covered by any art or profession like those of the doctor or stockbroker. A. presumably means neither to give Judgment a right to interfere everywhere nor to restrict it to a special field, but to give it a general controlling (architectonic) authority over the experts whom it employs.

Now to confine Judgment to deliberation is to confine it to the selection of means: and there seems to be nothing distinctively moral in the ability to select means to an end already settled in some other way. The nerve or essence not merely of morality but of good activity in general would seem to be rather in the end adopted than in the means chosen. But if this is so, we seem to be referred back again for the distinctive note of human goodness to the excellence of character, which according to Book VI. is responsible for deciding the end. Yet the definition of that excellence seemed to refer us forward to Judgment for the answer to our question. Very likely the root of the difficulty will be found in the end to lie in the inadequacy of the notion of end and means. But we must not jump too hastily to the conclusion that A. is confused. We must first examine his account of two capacities, each concerned with the determination of means, which he distinguishes from Judgment, and see whether we find in them any promise of a solution of the difficulty.

## Lecture VIII.

1. The first of these is called 'deliberative ability' (*εὐβουλία*). To it only one short chapter is devoted (VI. ix.). The analysis given is not very satisfactory, and the crucial point how to distinguish such ability from Judgment is not made clear. It is shown that this virtue must belong to reflection and manifest itself as rightness of deliberation; and it is asserted that rightness of deliberation, properly so-called, must involve rightness of



end as well as rightness of means. The only reference to Judgment is contained in the last sentence, the translation of which is unfortunately disputed. A. appears to say that the man of Judgment may be characterized as *having* deliberated rightly, and that consequently deliberative ability may be defined as 'rightness in respect of that which conduces to the end of which judgment is a true conception.'

In this sentence there are two points in particular which attract attention. We wonder how much emphasis is meant to be laid on the tense when A. says that to *have* deliberated rightly is characteristic of the man of Judgment; and we are surprised that without warning or preparation we should be told that Judgment is the true conception of an *end*. The apparent inconsistency of such statements with many others in Book VI., in which rightness in regard to means is represented as the main characteristic of Judgment, is sufficient ground for suspecting mistranslation. Nothing can be done with the perfect infinitive, but an alternative is offered for the end of the sentence. Professor Burnet says that A. does not mean that Judgment is a true conception of the end, but that Judgment is a true conception of *what conduces to that end*, *i.e.* of the means (*i.e.* the antecedent of οὐ is not τὸ τέλος, but τοῦ συμφέροντος πρὸς τὸ τέλος). You may well ask—In that case, how is Judgment distinguished from deliberative ability? Burnet's answer seems to be that to possess Judgment is to possess general rules as to what is fitting, that such general rules alone make possible rightness of deliberation, so that deliberative capacity cannot be possessed without Judgment nor Judgment without it, but yet they are to be distinguished. This view, which is peculiar to Professor Burnet, can hardly be regarded as offering a feasible version of the Greek text. Professor Stewart (Vol. II., p. 83) says there is no difficulty. Judgment, he says, 'is ἀρχιτεκτονική as well as περὶ τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα. We may say that φρόνησις indeed apprehends the end, but could not do so in the way required by morality, *i.e.* with a single eye, unless ἠθικὴ ἀρετὴ invested that end with a moral interest.' Here we may leave deliberative ability for a moment and turn to Cleverness or Ingenuity.

2. The second is 'Ingenuity' (δεινότης). After saying once more that virtue of character makes the 'mark' right, judgment the means to it, and then restating this with the substitution of προαίρεσις for σκόπος, A. goes on

(144a 23) to say that there is a capacity called ingenuity, which is a gift of finding suitable means to any mark that may be offered. It thus may be called good or bad according as the end is good or bad. Hence ingenuity may be attributed to the man of judgment. But it is not to be confused with judgment. It is merely the necessary basis of that virtue, the natural gift on which it is built up. It is the eye of the soul, and virtue of character is the necessary condition of its conversion into judgment. The starting point of the practical syllogism, he explains, is a characterization of the end, and truth in this matter is open only to the good man. Vice destroys the vision, and therefore gives a wrong starting point to the syllogism. Therefore it is impossible that anyone should have judgment but a good man.

Having shown that judgment is impossible without character, A. goes on to show that character is impossible without judgment. As judgment is based on the natural gift of ingenuity, so character has a natural basis which may be called natural virtue—a congenital tendency to justice, bravery, temperance, and the like. These tendencies are present in children and the beasts, and they may be made instruments for harm as well as for good. They are converted into the acquired aptitude of character by the acquisition of reason (*νοῦς*). Thus as virtue of character turns ingenuity into judgment, so judgment turns natural virtue into virtue of character. Hence the plausibility of the view that virtue is judgment (or wisdom). Full virtue must, we now see, not only follow the right plan, but also possess it: the determination by the *λόγος* must be self-determination: and the acquired gift which makes this possible is Judgment. On the single possession of Judgment all the virtues follow. In the end the virtues are inseparable, parts of a whole finding their unity in Judgment, but as natural gifts they are separable: the same man is not equally fitted by nature for all the virtues. A. ends Book VI. with the assertion that the perfection of deliberate action requires both character and judgment—the end (for the third time) being supplied by character and the means by judgment.

Here the following points may be noted:—

1. The ground of distinction between the natural capacity and the virtue is in the *end*. Ingenuity is indifferent in respect of the end and may be employed for good

or bad purposes; judgment is committed to the good and will serve no other master.

2. If this is so, the end cannot be externally related to the faculty of judgment. Otherwise there would be no ground for a distinction. It would be merely a difference in the employment of one and the same faculty. If judgment is of means only, it is not distinct from ingenuity.

3. The difference is explained by the fact that practical reasoning requires a conception of an end for its starting point. The conception of the good is distorted by bad action, clarified by good action. A proper attitude to pleasure and pain is a pre-condition of the knowledge of the good. But though in an intelligent being good conduct produces good judgment, it cannot be supposed that the notion of the good has its seat in the character as distinct from the intelligence. Goodness must be present in the intelligence as well as in the character.

4. The virtue of judgment therefore must include a true conception of the human good or end. This passage therefore corroborates the more natural translation of the disputed sentence in the account of *εὐβουλία*. Judgment is the true conception of the end with the ability to find means to its realization. ✓

## Lecture IX.

### § II. THE RULE OR PLAN.

Take, first, two illustrations which Aristotle uses.

I. That of a *work of art*. It is a commonplace, says A. in connection with the mean, to say of the well executed work of art that nothing could be removed from or added to it without destroying it. The proportion which the artist strove after and achieved would be annulled by more here or less there. A. does not say here that these quantitative relations are determined by a Plan, but he says so elsewhere. The question for us is—what kind of a thing would the Plan be? What determines the proper size and emphasis of the various parts of a picture? It is difficult to give any other answer than the whole design; and to say the whole determines the part is to say what may be true in a sense but is neither very lucid nor very illuminating. We must remember, however, that the educated intelligence, whether in artist or spectator, is not

confined to the particular picture. When it finds beauty in a picture it can give a reason, which must mean that it can see and possibly explain how the form of beauty is realized in this material object, how each step in the making process and every line and colour in the product was dictated by the interests of this form, so that in the end the general form was embodied by the genius of the artist in these particular arrangements of colour and line. To some extent a quasi-mathematical formula could be given for the arrangement, but such a formula would have to be derived from the notion of beauty. For that notion is the only standard, the sole source of authority. Not itself quantity nor capable of quantitative estimate it is yet realized through quantity and exhibits itself as proportion or moderation.

2. The other illustration is that of *bodily health*.

It was a favourite doctrine of *Heraclitus* that opposites are necessary to one another, that a state of being is a continuous war between opposite tendencies, and that effective being depends upon the maintenance of a proper balance or proportion between them. The penalty for the undue encroachment of one opposite on the other (his 'injustice') is inefficiency, and the final triumph of one over the other means death and destruction. The world formula is the 'adjustment of opposite tensions as in the lyre and in the bow' (*παλίντονος ἄρμονία ὡσπερ τόξου τε καὶ λύρης*). Those who have read the *Phaedo* will remember that a pretty and plausible theory of the nature of soul, the principle of life, was suggested by Simmias upon this basis, and rejected by Socrates as inconsistent with the observed fact that soul has some kind of independence and power of rule over the body. It seems likely that Simmias was influenced by vague memories of what he had heard physiologists say about health. Anyhow it is pretty certain that already by the end of the 5th century some such doctrine of health was current in the medical school. The body was held to be composed of opposite tendencies or substances, e.g. moist-dry, warm-cold, and its health and its life depended on the maintenance of a proper balance between them. The body is disordered when inflammation occurs in any part, *i.e.* when the warm 'goes apart by itself'; and equally, when the cold separates itself and there is a chill in any part, disorder results. The application is obvious, and the doctrine is clear, *viz.* that health requires for its realization the maintenance of a

proper proportion or ratio between opposites. 'Requires' this proportion rather than 'is': for health should perhaps be defined as the proper performance of the functions by the organs, and the mathematical formula is a condition of such performance. Thus in the case of health as in the work of art quality is realized through quantity, and the embodiment of form in matter is conditioned by a mathematical ratio.

By putting these two illustrations together we arrive naturally at the Ethical doctrine. The case of the artist is parallel to the case of the agent in that both activities are calculated, deliberate, impositions of form on matter, with foreknowledge of the result; and an analogy from health supplies the missing point, that in the human soul there are opposed and warring tendencies which need to be kept in some kind of harmony or mutual adjustment if spiritual health is to be maintained. Goodness itself is no more a quantity than health or beauty are; it is a form, a quality; but for its realization it requires, as they do, adjustments of certain matter which can be quantitatively estimated and stated in terms of a mathematical formula.

Here however should be noted a peculiarity of the third case, which raises a fundamental problem. In art the matter which is to be moulded or informed is detached from the artist. The form which he has imagined he then executes in stone or marble; and the aesthetic judgment which estimates the degree of his success or failure refers solely to the product of the activity and not at all to the activity itself or to the artist. The good in art, says A., *i.e.*, the end, that of which the achievement is success, lies beyond the activity in its product. But the matter of conduct is the agent's own emotions, his own behaviour. He is house as well as architect. The moral judgment calls *him* good or bad, refers to his character, his will, his action, not to any detached product of the activity. The form is to be realized in himself, and the required ratio is to be imposed by him upon his own soul.

The fact that in the activity of conduct, which is the human good, man is both artist and work of art, both agent and patient, no doubt gives rise to difficulties and makes the foregoing analogies dangerous; but it will be seen that there is no inherent absurdity in the relation supposed if certain things are remembered. Doctoring is one of the 'arts' to which A. is fond of appealing. Its aim is to maintain a certain form called health, which it is

the business of medical knowledge to define and analyse, in the human body. But there is no inherent absurdity in supposing a man to be his own physician. To some extent we are all that. But we are able to cure ourselves only because that which cures, *viz.* the intelligent will, is not that which is diseased and needs treatment. In any case in which it can be truly said that the one man is both agent and patient, it must be also true to say that the agent-self and patient-self are different. Activity of the man upon himself necessarily presupposes a distinction of parts within him.

## Lecture X.

Now the agent-self in all relations and activities is always the same, the intelligent will; and from this it follows immediately that the patient-self is not the will. It is not difficult to see that this principle (which is insisted on by A. himself in the *Metaphysics* and elsewhere), though not actually stated in the *Ethics*, is implicit in A.'s treatment of the matter. We saw that the matter in which the mean was realized was the agent's emotions and behaviour, and this involved the necessary consequence that neither emotion nor behaviour was in itself good or bad. We see the same implication now from a different point of view. The activity of will which proves a man good is the imposition of form or order upon the 'natural man' or animal nature.<sup>6</sup> The self which acts and the self which is acted upon are distinct. Hence the doctrine is consistent and involves A. in no absurdity.

But if the good lies in the activity itself, and the activity in question is the imposition of a certain form upon the lower nature by the will, it seems to follow that the good must reside in the active will and not in the self which is patient to the will's activity. If so, the form which is self-imposed is not the good; for if it were, will would be acting upon itself and man would be in the same respect both agent and patient, which is absurd. Thus the Aristotelian conception of virtue of character as a form imposed on the passions by the will leaves room for, or rather

<sup>6</sup> Burnet, C. R. 1914, p. 7a. 'φρ. is the λ. τῆς ἀρετῆς in exactly the same sense as ἰατρικὴ is the λόγος τῆς ὑγιείας.' It follows that the form apprehended by the φρόνιμος in virtue of his φρόνησις is the form only of virtue of character, and that the goodness which is φρόνησις is (a) beyond his apprehension except as self-conscious, (b) no creation of his will.

requires for its completion, the doctrine that one thing and one only is 'good without qualification,' the good will. A notion of will would be required which, like that of Kant, makes an absolute separation of will from passion and desire, since, by the principle previously applied, will which acts upon desire cannot be identified with any form of desire. We therefore should not be surprised to find the activity of will attributed to reason or intelligence, as Judgment—the active or informing virtue—is in fact by A.: nor should we be any more surprised to find that the place in the scheme to be filled by this virtue is one that cannot be filled by a mere ability to calculate means to an end otherwise settled. Judgment has to fill in A.'s system the place filled in Kant's by the practical Reason, and in so far as in A.'s account it falls short of that office, his system remains incoherent. That is why we are still floundering about in the attempt to complete the account of the moral good: because A., blinded by his own common-sense doctrine of ends and means, hesitated at this point and failed to make the discovery made a little later by the Stoics that the only moral good is a good will.

§ 12. PLAN, END, IDEAL, THEORY, RULE,  
FORM, RATIO, &c.

We have seen that the activity which is the good is the imposition of a pre-conceived form upon its appropriate matter. As the medical activity is an activity controlled by knowledge of a certain form which it seeks to realize, so <sup>moral</sup> action is an activity controlled by a knowledge of a form called goodness of character which it seeks to realize. When A. says that the art *is* the plan of the work of art in separation from the matter (de Part An. 640, a 31)<sup>7</sup> and that Judgment *is* the right plan in its own region (144 b 27), he may be accused of a double inaccuracy:—(1) in identifying that which is known or apprehended with the knowledge or apprehension of it—for the plan is that which is known by the artist or man of Judgment, not his knowing it (*cp.* our use of 'sensation,' 'conception,' &c.), but Judgment or art must be a knowing or an ability to know: (2) in identifying capacity with act or activity; for Judgment or art is properly a capacity to know rather than a

<sup>7</sup> Cf. also *Met. A.*, 1070 a 30, ἡ ἰατρικὴ τέχνη ὁ λόγος τῆς ὑγιείας ἐστίν.

knowing. (Here again in English we are fond of the same usage: we say a man 'knows' so and so without implying that he actually has it in his mind). But these inaccuracies are unimportant: they have only the effect of making the assertions a kind of hyperbole. The doctrine is a familiar one, almost generally accepted until called in question recently by Futurists, Syndicalists, and other anarchic and anti-intellectual philosophers. It has been preached recently from the University pulpit. It was argued that thought is at times creative, and embodies itself in action. 'I suppose,' said the preacher, 'this Church existed in some one's mind before it ever existed in stone.' Reason was given man to direct his path, and by its direction are produced man's greatest works. Like Butler's Conscience—'had it strength, as it has right; had it power, as it has manifest authority; it would absolutely govern the world.'

## Lecture XI.

Such is the general doctrine. What I wish to explain is that the variety of possible translations of the word λόγος is due to the nature of the doctrine, not to confusion or inexactness in A.'s thought. I must first point out that the confusion noticed above between the act of apprehension and the object apprehended will affect any possible version of the word, even Reason itself: for reason was originally the name for a manifestation of the reflective principle and still reverts to its original use. If λόγος means end it will also mean the conception of an end, if means, also the conception of means, and so on. Thus there is a general duplicity about the use of the word which must be recognized if it is not to lead to confusion.

Recognising this first as a possible source of confusion, and putting it aside, we can see that without any confusion it is still possible to give the most various descriptions of the intellectual element. The plan is a *project*, since it is something which is to be realized by human effort: it may therefore be called an end or goal or mark. *ἢ οὐδ' ἔνεκα* or *raison d'être* of the pains taken to realize it. It is also a *form*: to realize it is to make it the form of certain appropriate matter. The plan of the church was mark or goal to the builder, and to us who see the church now is its



form. Again such a form may be regarded as a specification in special circumstances of a general form. The form realized in the activity may therefore mean the general form (architecture), capable of infinite varieties of application, which every architect in every building seeks to realize. Regarded in this last way it is that which the theory of architecture or of conduct seeks to define. The aim of the theory is simply to secure a general view of the same form which the agent in action apprehends with more exactness and detail; and since full precision and detail is possible only in the practical application, the theory can be only a rough outline and must remain incomplete until it finds its fulfilment in practice. The theory is on the same plane as the practice, and is needed, presumably, because in practice the urgency of the demands which have to be met tends to cut short reflection upon the general principles of action.

The general form, again, the knowledge of which is the essential mark of true art and of full virtue, may be regarded as a *standard* constantly referred to and dictating procedure. It may be said therefore to order or command — 94b ἡ αὕτη (πολιτικὴ) διατάσσει, 138b 32 ἡ ἰατρικὴ κελεύει (yet it is the λόγος of health). The law of the state is a command but is also the plan or form (τάξις) of a community. The phrases in which the λόγος or ὀρθὸς λόγος commands present no greater difficulty. It is true that state law employs a force that moral law does not, but it is quite natural to represent the control which the form known exercises over deliberation as a command. Hence the translation *rule*. If this were written with a capital R it would mean the Κάνων or Standard, but written small it is misleading. Rules as to conduct are of no independent authority; they are only vague statements of tendencies (e.g., 'avoid the extreme to which you are the more prone'), and what authority they have is derived from the λόγος. Even if they could be made less vague they would still stand to the λόγος as a law stands to the system of law of which it is a fragment or the principle which it embodies.

The form, finally, whether considered as apprehended by the agent or as embodied in his completed work, may be regarded as a *ratio*. This mathematical use is the same as that in which the λόγος of flesh is said to be the mixture of certain kinds of matter in certain proportions. Similarly we might call H<sub>2</sub>O the λόγος of water, meaning that water consists in a combination of hydrogen and oxygen in the

proportion 2: 1, and we could call a recipe for a pudding a *λόγος* in the same sense. In his edition Burnet advocates this interpretation, and he has stated recently that he has not retracted that opinion. But though it is true that virtue is in a sense a ratio or mathematical formula of mixture, nevertheless as a *version* 'ratio' is inadequate. It lays too much stress upon the quantitative side in the manifestations of virtue, excluding quality. The recipe for making a pudding does not explain (though it conditions) the nature of the pudding when made. Only on the basis of a qualitative knowledge of the materials (if even then) could we forecast the resultant character of the compound. But the form of a thing is shortly stated in the definition which comprehends its essence and should be the explanation of the whole connotation of the term. Therefore though from one side the form may be regarded as a ratio, the translation is open to objection. Many passages it quite fails to suit because it unduly narrows the meaning of the word.

The most generally applicable notion seems to be that of form or plan, and that not only in A. but throughout Greek philosophy from Heraclitus to the Stoics. In the Stoics the word is usually translated 'Reason,' but a single example will suffice to show that it is not as far from the Aristotelian use as this translation would suggest. Cleanthes: Hymn—(Arnim f. 537 ll. 14-17).

But Thou knowest how to make odd things even,  
And to order what is disorderly, and unlovely things  
are lovely to Thee.

For in such wise hast Thou fitted all things together in  
one, good with evil,

That there results one reasonable *design* of the whole.

ἀλλὰ σὺ καὶ τὰ περισσὰ ἐπίστασαι ἄρτια θεῖναι  
καὶ κοσμεῖν τ᾽ἀκοσμητὰ καὶ οὐ φίλα σοὶ φίλα ἐστίν·  
ὧδε γὰρ εἰς ἓν πάντα συνήρμοκας, ἐσθλὰ κακοῖσιν,  
ὥσθ' ἓνα γίγνεσθαι πάντων λόγον αἰὲν ἔοντα.

Form, plan, design is always the primary sense of the word, though as time went on the term tended to be transferred to that in man and in the world which informs, plans, designs. The one *λόγος* of the Hymn is identical in principle with the *λόγος* which according to A. is embodied in

every product of nature — ἀρχὴ δ' ὁ λόγος ὁμοίως ἔν τε τοῖς κατὰ τέχνην καὶ ἐν τοῖς φύσει συνεστήκοσιν (Part An. 639 b 16)—and to assert the universality of design is the point of Aristotle's oft repeated maxim, οὐθέν ματὴν ποιεῖ ὁ θεὸς καὶ ἡ φύσις. All things have their purpose, end, or function.

These last remarks show how closely connected the plan and the end are, and carry us back to a difficulty previously raised. The function of intelligence is to apprehend a λόγος: all things are κατὰ λόγον but only intelligent creatures apprehend the λόγος which they embody. The λόγος is the end.<sup>8</sup> Intelligence therefore apprehends the end. The general doctrine of λόγος implies so much, and the same implication seems to occur in the definition of virtue of character which is said to get its orientation (so to say) from judgment. Elsewhere, we have seen, A. seems to vacillate or even to contradict this conclusion. But this hesitation becomes intelligible, and is seen to be not very damaging, if it is understood that the relation of end and means is in the end to Aristotle a relation of universal and particular. The end is not a result waited and worked for, but a form progressively realized, and, when attained, continuously sustained in every action. The end, the general form, is one pole, the particular act is the other. In general outline the character of the act is fixed beforehand; it is the detail that is new. The function of deliberation is not the positing of an end-to-be-attained and the securing of means to attain it so much as the particularization of a universal form in face of particular needs. The form is never fully particularized except in a particular act; but if that act is to preserve the form it will be because reflection on the circumstances has preceded the action.

The question raised in § 8, whether the plan was general or particular, a plan for all or the special principle or formula of one single act, can now be seen to admit of no simple answer. The relation of plan and act is simply a special case of the relation of form and matter.

<sup>8</sup> Πρώτη—ἦν λέγομεν ἕνεκά τινος· λόγος, γὰρ οὗτος, Part An. l.c.





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