

Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*

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Introduction to Plato and Aristotle

The context - city states like Athens, plus Sparta

Previous philosophers

The Pre-Socratics
Socrates, 469 - 399 BC, teacher of Plato

Plato, 427 - 347 BC

Shocked at execution of Socrates
Travelled, eg Italy and Sicily in 388 and 387
Founded the Academy in Athens in 386, taught there until 347
Two more visits to Sicily, 367 and 361
We have about 30 works (some of the 35 dialogues and 13 letters are not by Plato)
The *Republic*
About government, justice, mental balance and knowledge

Aristotle, 384 - 322 BC

From Stageira, north-east Greece
Student of Plato from aged 18 to Plato's death
Travelled in Asia Minor
About 342, tutor to Alexander (the Great)
Founded the Lyceum in Athens in 335, taught there until 323
Charged with impiety, retired to the country and died
We have about 20 philosophical and 20 scientific works
The *Ethics* (= the *Nicomachean Ethics*)
About the virtues and the good life

What to read

The books themselves, *Republic* and *Ethics*. Any editions will do, so long as they have the standard numbering (normally in the margin, sometimes at the top or bottom of the page):

Republic, Stephanus numbers, start at 327
Ethics, Bekker numbers, start at 1094

The summaries in this document have been prepared using the following editions:

Republic, Penguin Classics, translated by Desmond Lee, second revised edition, 1987.
Ethics, Penguin Classics, translated by J A K Thomson and revised by Hugh Tredennick, 1976.

There are plenty of books and articles about the *Republic* and the *Ethics*, but it is very important to start by reading the works themselves. If there are passages you do not understand, don't worry. Press on and read the rest, then come back to the troublesome passages and you may find that they make more sense.

Introduction to Plato's Republic

Dialogue

Written about 375

Set in about 420, at the house of Polemarchus

Divided into ten books

Speakers

Socrates, narrator and does most of the talking

Cephalus, a rich old man, father of Polemarchus

Polemarchus, takes over the argument from Cephalus

Thrasymachus, the thug of Book 1

Glaucon and Adeimantus, elder brothers of Plato

Carry on the argument with Socrates in books 2 to 10

Effects of the dialogue form

The basic message: justice pays, in 300 pages

Outline of the *Republic*

Book 1. Thrasymachus argues that justice is the interest of the stronger. Socrates tries to refute him.

Book 2. Glaucon and Adeimantus restate the case for injustice. Socrates tries to define justice. He tries to define it in the state, where it might be easier to see than in the individual.

Books 2 to 4. Details of the ideal state. The three classes - rulers, soldiers, workers. Education for the rulers and soldiers - only the right poetry and music. Justice as each person sticking to their job.

Book 4. The three elements in the soul - reason, spirit, appetite. Justice as harmony between the elements.

Book 5. More on the ideal state. Women, the family, war.

Book 5. Bringing about the ideal state. Ensure that the philosophers are in charge.

Books 5 and 6. A philosopher is one who loves to see the truth. People are prejudiced against philosophers, but philosophers can become rulers.

Books 6 and 7. The ascent from opinion to knowledge and from appearances to reality. The Good as the ultimate object of knowledge. How to educate philosophers.

Books 8 and 9. What can go wrong. Four bad types of state, and the corresponding bad types of individual.

Book 10. Art as mere imitation. Art as a bad influence.

Book 10. Immortality, choosing your next life and the rewards of goodness.

Detailed summary of the Republic

Stephanus numbers for the text are given at the end of each paragraph.

Book 1. Thrasymachus argues that justice is the interest of the stronger. Socrates tries to refute him.

The party assembles at Polemarchus's house in Piraeus. Cephalus says that old age is easiest to bear if you have a good character, but money helps too. It helps you to avoid cheating people, allows you to repay debts and allows you to make sacrifices to the gods. But telling the truth and repaying debts may not be the definition of doing right. Would you return a weapon you had borrowed from someone who had since gone mad? (327-331)

Polemarchus takes over from his father Cephalus and says that doing right is giving every man his due. To deal with the madman problem, this means doing good to friends and harm to enemies. This is most easily done in wartime. But in peacetime, it is not clear what use justice is. If you want a pair of shoes, you want a good shoemaker. If you want music, you want a good musician. Finding someone who is good at justice only seems to be useful when you put your money on deposit, or get someone to store your other property for you. That is, justice only seems to matter when you are not doing anything useful with your assets. Furthermore, just as a doctor has the skill to make you ill as well as better, a just man will have the skill to steal your property as well as the skill to keep it safe. (331-334)

And if you do good to your friends and harm your enemies, you might help bad people and injure good people, because you have not correctly perceived the characters of your friends and of your enemies. So the definition of justice would make it right to help the bad and harm the good. So we had better change the definition of a friend to one who not just seems to be good, but is good, and likewise for enemies. (334-335)

But should we harm our enemies? If you harm a horse you make it worse by the standards of excellence for horses. But justice is human excellence, so if you harm someone you make him more unjust. Musicians do not use their skill to make their students more unmusical, and just men should not use their skill to make people more unjust. So one should not harm anyone, enemy or friend. (335-336)

Thrasymachus joins in. He demands that Socrates give his own definition of justice. Socrates declines. Thrasymachus then defines justice as the interest of the stronger party. Each city has a ruling class, a tyrant, an aristocracy or free citizens as a whole (democracy). That class enacts laws which are in its own interests. (336-339)

There is a problem with this. The right is what is in the interests of the stronger party. But obedience to the ruling power is also right. So if the rulers make mistakes and enact laws which are not in fact in their interests, it will be right to act against the interests of the stronger party. Thrasymachus's way out is that you only count as a ruler when you are not making mistakes, just as you do not call someone a doctor by virtue of his mistakes. (339-341)

So we are to think of ruling as a science, like medicine. But medicine does not look after medicine. It looks after the body. Likewise, horse-training looks after horses. And so on. All sciences study or enforce the interests of the weaker parties who are subjected to them. Rulers, as such, therefore look after the interests of their subjects, not of themselves. (341-342)

Thrasymachus comes back. What about shepherds? They look after the sheep, but not in the interests of the sheep. Moreover, the unjust man does better than the just in business and in getting political office. Tyranny is just robbery on a grand scale, and if you get away with it people call you happy. (343-344)

We now have a new theme. Is it really better to live justly or unjustly? But first, another point against Thrasymachus. Each profession benefits its objects, not its practitioner. Medicine benefits patients. The doctor benefits not from medicine, but from earning money. The ruler benefits not from ruling, but from being paid for his services. But good men will not accept authority for cash or for honours: that would be discreditable. So they must be compelled to accept authority. (344-347)

Back to the new theme: does justice or injustice pay? Thrasymachus says that justice is merely simplicity, and injustice is wisdom. But consider doctors or musicians. They are skilled and wise. But they try to out-do only the unskilled, people not like them. They are content to get the same results as others who have the same skill. The unjust person, on the other hand, tries to out-do both people of the same type and just people. And the just person only tries to do better than unjust people, not other just people. So the just person is more like the person who has wisdom that shows in his skill. So justice is a form of excellence. (347-350)

Thrasymachus also claimed that injustice was a source of strength. But consider a state that wishes to subjugate its neighbour. It will need strength to do so. But injustice will weaken a state because unjust people will hate and quarrel with one another. Likewise between any group of people. Even within one person, injustice generates internal conflicts which will weaken that person. (350-352)

Do the just or the unjust lead better and happier lives? Each thing has a function (a horse, an eye, a pruning knife). Its function is what only it can do, or what it does best. And each thing can only perform its function because it has its specific excellence (eg ability to hear for ears). The mind has its functions (paying attention, controlling, etc) and its own excellence. This excellence is justice. So just people will have better lives than unjust ones. But a good life is one that is prosperous and happy. So you are better off being just. (352-354)

Book 2. Glaucon and Adeimantus restate the case for injustice. Socrates tries to define justice. He tries to define it in the state, where it might be easier to see than in the individual.

Things can be good for their own sakes (harmless pleasures), for their own sakes and for their consequences (eg wisdom), or for their consequences only (eg taking medicine). Socrates would place justice in the second group, but many would place it in the third. (357-358)

Justice originates because while people are happy to get away with inflicting wrongs on others, they dislike suffering wrongs even more. So they make a deal that they will all obey a set of laws. But no-one would make that deal if he could get away with doing wrong. If you could make yourself invisible at will, you would steal, murder and so on. Even the just man would probably succumb to the temptation. Now compare the lives of the unjust and the just. An unjust man who is highly skilled and can maintain a reputation for justice will enjoy riches and honour. A just man who has true simplicity of character may get a reputation for injustice, and be despised and punished. So it is not surprising that people think that the unjust man has a happier life. (358-362)

Justice is commonly recommended for the rewards it brings, both a good reputation on earth and rewards in the afterlife. But people also respect bad people, and call them happy, so long as they are rich and powerful, while they despise good people who are poor and powerless. People also say that the gods will allot hard lives to good people, but that rich, bad people can placate the gods with sacrifices and prayers. (362-366)

So if we are to defend justice, we really need a demonstration of the beneficial effects of justice, rather than the benefits that you can get just by appearing to be just. For that, we need a clear picture of justice. And we can best get that by looking for it on a large scale, in the state. Then we can come back to the individual and see if we can find something similar there. (366-369)

Books 2 to 4. Details of the ideal state. The three classes - rulers, soldiers, workers. Education for the rulers and soldiers - only the right poetry and music. Justice as each person sticking to their job.

Society originates because people are not self-sufficient. We will need farmers to provide food, builders to provide shelter, and weavers and shoemakers to clothe us. Each person should specialise in his trade. So we also need people to make tools for farmers, builders and so on. We will need cowherds and shepherds. There will also be things we need that cannot be provided within the state, so we will need traders to arrange imports and exports, and seafarers. We will also need market traders within the state, to facilitate exchanges of goods. And there will be a place for people who simply have physical strength, and can work as hired labourers. So the minimal society will be pretty big. (369-372)

Even then, life will be pretty basic. People will want household furniture and fancy foods, perfumes and embroidery. The provision of such luxuries will require many more people. Our territory will be too small to support them all, so we shall have to take a slice of our neighbour's territory. They will want to do the same to us. So we shall need an army. And they will need to be skilled specialist soldiers, not a militia raised from the farmers or craftsmen. (372-374)

Soldiers (called guardians for the time being) must be alert, courageous and high-spirited, but gentle to their fellow-citizens. They must be like watch-dogs, able to discriminate between friend and foe. So they must have the right kind of education. We shall start with mental education, then physical. (375-376)

As children, guardians must only hear the right kinds of story. They must not hear about gods or heroes behaving badly. God must be portrayed as perfectly good, and not as the source of any evil. God must not be portrayed as taking on different disguises, because he is already perfect, nor as ever deceiving us. (376-383)

Guardians will not be brave if they fear death. So we must not let the poets give gloomy accounts of the after-life. Lamentations by heroes, and by gods, must also be cut out. We must also not encourage too much laughter, because it invites a violent reaction, so descriptions of gods or heroes overcome by laughter must be cut out. (383-389)

We also need to encourage honesty, self-control and obedience to rulers, and discourage grasping conduct. This means cutting out more inappropriate stories about gods and heroes. (389-392)

We will have to come back to literature that deals with ordinary people once we have defined justice, because we will want stories to have the moral that the just is what benefits you. (392)

The form of poetry is important too. There is narrative, when the poet speaks in his own voice, and representation, as in a play, when the characters speak for themselves. Guardians must only do their own jobs, and must not take on the occupations of others, nor any unsuitable habits. So representation is dangerous. If they put on plays at all, they must not take the parts of anyone who is weak in any way, or who has some other trade. It is therefore safer to concentrate on narrative. And we should exclude from the city talented actors who can portray many different kinds of character. (392-398)

We also need to allow only the right sorts of song and of music. Dirges and laments must be excluded, and the types of music that go with them. Types of music that encourage softness and relaxation must also be excluded. We should allow only music of a stern military kind, and pleasant music suitable to accompany worthwhile peacetime occupations. We will not need many different instruments, and we must also ensure that music has the right rhythms. (398-400)

Beauty and goodness in the arts depend on goodness of character. And goodness of character must be portrayed not just in poetry and music, but in painting and sculpture too. With good examples around them, the guardians will grow up able to distinguish good and bad characteristics, in life and in art. (400-402)

But while a boy who combines beauty of character with physical beauty will be especially attractive to an educated man, excessive pleasure would be incompatible with self-control, so affection should be allowed but not sex. (402-403)

We can now turn to the physical education of guardians. A good mind and character will allow one to make the best of whatever physique one has, so we need only give an outline. The guardians must be alert and ready to cope with changing circumstances. So there must be no drunkenness, and only simple food. Elaborate food produces disease, just as elaborate music produces indiscipline. (403-404)

When indiscipline and disease take hold, you get lots of law-courts and doctors in a society. It is disgraceful both to have to seek justice at the hands of others, and to need doctors for diseases that are brought on by idle and luxurious living. (405)

Old-style medicine was kill-or-cure. Modern methods only cosset disease and draw out the struggle against death. The old attitude was that you should carry on with your ordinary job: there was no point in treating those who would be of no further use to themselves or to society. (405-408)

Our society will need doctors, and they should have experienced diseases in their own bodies. It will also need judges, but they should be of good character themselves and only know about wickedness because they have lived long and have observed it in others. The fundamentally unhealthy must be left to die, and those with incurably bad characters must be put to death. If youths are well-educated mentally and physically, they will not need judicial treatment and will be unlikely to need medical treatment. (408-410)

The main aim of physical education is the same as that of mental education, to train the mind. Physical training develops energy and initiative. This can lead to one's becoming uncivilised, unless it is tempered with literary education. But the latter can make one soft, unless tempered with physical training. The right balance and harmony are needed. (410-412)

Moving on from training, we must decide which guardians are to govern. We must select those who are not only the elder, and the most intelligent, but also those who have the greatest love for the community. And we must make sure that they do not lose that devotion to the community. So in their youth we must expose them to the temptations of pleasure and see whether they resist. Those who become rulers are guardians in the true sense. The rest are auxiliaries. (412-414)

It would be very useful to have a convincing myth so as to make people happy with the social arrangement. Persuade first the guardians and the auxiliaries, and then the rest of the population if possible, that their upbringing and training were a dream, and that they were reared in the depths of the Earth, so that the Earth is their mother and they must defend their state's land as they would defend their mother and think of their fellow-citizens as their brothers, born of the same mother. And when they were fashioned, God put gold in some (guardians), silver in others (auxiliaries) and iron or bronze in the rest (farmers and other workers). Normally the same metal appears in children as in the parents, but sometimes not. Then the child must be promoted or demoted accordingly. (414-415)

The guardians must live in a way that will ensure that they do their job properly and do not obtain personal advantage. They shall have minimal private property, their houses will be open to all to stop them secretly accumulating wealth, their food shall be provided by the other citizens, they shall eat and live together, and they shall not touch silver or gold. (415-419)

It might seem that the guardians would feel hard done by. But in fact they could well be happy. And in any case we are not designing the state for their benefit, but for the benefit of the whole community. And good conduct by the guardians is essential to the community's well-being. (419-421)

The guardians must prevent wealth and poverty arising in the state. A wealthy workman becomes idle and careless. A poor one cannot afford the tools he needs. (421-422)

But how can a state without wealth fight a war? There is no problem here. Our soldiers will be tough. And if two states want to attack together, we can invite one of them to join with us against the other and take all of the other state's gold and silver. Furthermore, a large enemy state will lack unity. We will be able to play off rich against poor. And this sets a limit to the size of our own state. It should grow as far as allows it to stay unified, but no more. (422-423)

We have set the guardians lots of difficult tasks to achieve. But education will be the key. Well-educated guardians will see the sense of our proposals. So we must maintain strict controls over the activities of children, and enforce proper standards of behaviour. But if we get the general formation of character right, we will not need detailed rules. Likewise, we should not need detailed rules for business transactions if people are generally of good character. Those who live by detailed rules, on the other hand, neglect the fundamentals and are for ever going wrong, requiring more and more equally pointless detailed rules. (424-427)

We can now start to look for justice, first in the state and then in the individual. (427)

Our state should have the qualities of wisdom, courage, self-discipline and justice. If we can locate some of these, then what is left will be what we are looking for. (427-428)

The state as a whole is made wise through the knowledge of the guardians, not of farmers or craftsmen. The state as a whole is made brave through the courage of the auxiliaries. They have had the right training safely to retain the knowledge of what is or is not to be feared. Self-discipline is a kind of harmony, involving the control of certain desires and appetites. When you are master of

yourself, your better parts rule your worse parts. And our state has self-discipline because the guardians accept that they should rule and the rest accept their rule. (428-432)

That leaves justice. It is each person sticking to his or her own job, and not interfering in other people's work. This is the thing which makes it possible for the other qualities, wisdom, courage and self-discipline, to come into being and to be preserved. Furthermore, it is justice to ensure that each person can keep his own possessions. And it would ruin the state if workers tried to do the work of auxiliaries, or auxiliaries tried to do the work of guardians. (432-434)

Book 4. The three elements in the soul - reason, spirit, appetite. Justice as harmony between the elements.

Now we can turn to the individual. We must first see whether we can identify three elements in the individual to match those in the state. We should be able to, because the state can only derive its characteristics from corresponding characteristics of individuals. There must be courage and intelligence and the commercial instinct in individuals. But do we perform all of our functions with the same part of ourselves, or with different parts? Only the latter will give us parts that we can match up with the guardians, auxiliaries and workers. (434-436)

Nothing can act or be affected in opposite ways at the same time and in the same part of itself and in relation to the same object. You can stand still and move your hands, but different parts of you are at rest and in motion. We can apply this to the appetite of thirst, which can be simply thirst for drink in general, rather than thirst for a particular kind of drink. If a thirsty man holds back from drinking, it must be something other than thirst that holds him back. This will be reason. There is also spirit, which can be opposed to appetite so must be different from it. (Leontius wanted to see the corpses, but his spirit fought against this desire.) But while spirit generally works with reason, it is a different element because young children have plenty of spirit, but lack reason. (436-441)

Since the parts of the individual can be matched with the parts of the state, the individual will be wise, brave and just in the same way as the state. So justice consists in each element of the individual sticking to its own work. Appropriate mental and physical training will lead to reason ruling over spirit, and the two having charge over appetite. Someone will be brave on account of spirit operating in accordance with reason, wise on account of reason and self-disciplined on account of the three elements working in harmony with reason in charge. And a just person, in whom each element sticks to its own work, will not steal, or break promises, or commit adultery. (441-443)

So the real concern of justice is not external actions, but a person's inward self. With the appropriate internal unity and balance, he will call actions just if they maintain this inward state, and unjust if they do not. Injustice will be a civil war between the elements, or a situation in which the wrong element gets control. There is a parallel with health and sickness. Healthy actions produce health, and unhealthy ones sickness. Likewise, just actions produce justice, and unjust ones produce injustice. Health involves a natural harmony between the parts of the body, and justice a natural harmony between the parts of the mind. So excellence is a kind of mental health. It follows that it pays to act justly. No-one would want to be physically ill, nor mentally ill. (443-445)

Socrates wants to go on to describe the one good and four bad types of political constitution, and the corresponding types of individual. But the others pull him back to say more about the ideal state. (445-449)

Book 5. More on the ideal state. Women, the family, war.

Guardians are supposed to have all things in common, including women and children. How is this supposed to work? (449-451)

Men and women shall both have guardian duties, so women will need the same upbringing as men, including exercising naked with the men and being trained to carry arms and ride. Some people will think this ridiculous, and we must ask whether it is right. One counter-argument is that we have already said that each person should stick to the job for which he or she is best suited. It would seem to follow that men and women should have separate roles, reflecting their different natures. But that is wrong because only relevant differences matter. We would not say that bald people and long-haired people had different natures in a way that should lead us to allocate different jobs to them. What matters is aptitude for the job. And many women are better than many men at many things, even though men are on the whole better than women at most things. So some women should be guardians, and should have the same training and jobs as the male guardians. (451-457)

The guardians will not have separate households. So all of the women will be common to all of the men, and all of the children will be held in common. No child will know his or her parents, nor will any parent know his or her child. (457-458)

Mating cannot go unregulated. We must produce the most beneficial results by selective breeding. There will be special festivals at which couples are paired off by lottery, but the lottery will be secretly rigged so that the best men mate with the best women and the inferior ones do not get to mate, or not often. In addition, distinguished citizens will be rewarded with more opportunities to mate. Children of the better guardians will be taken off to a nursery, while any defective offspring of those guardians, and children of inferior guardians, will be secretly disposed of. Women will breed from ages 20 to 40, men up to age 45. Beyond the age for breeding, men and women can mate freely, but any accidental offspring must be aborted or killed. Mating with ancestors is prevented by calling anyone who mated the right number of months before your birth your father or mother, and not mating with anyone who might be an ancestor using that rule. (458-461)

This is a good plan because cohesion and unity in the state are so important. Cohesion is damaged when people use the words “mine” and “somebody else’s” about different things. In a fully cohesive state all will care about the same things, just as the whole of someone who hurts his finger cares about the pain. Our state has the necessary cohesion. The workers will call the guardians and auxiliaries their protectors rather than their rulers, and the guardians will call the workers their providers rather than their slaves. And the guardians will not fragment into smaller groups, because each one will regard every other one as a member of the same family. They will care about one another’s joys and sufferings. This is a great benefit of the community of women and children. Dissension will be prevented. (461-464)

Furthermore, litigation will be practically eliminated through the absence of private property. And quarrels can be settled on the spot because one man will be allowed to defend himself against another of the same age, while the older shall have authority over the younger. Indeed, respect for parents plus fear of the aid that an older person would get from those who regarded him as a family member should prevent violence against older people. And harmony among the guardians will promote harmony throughout society. (464-465)

There are other benefits. The poor will not have to flatter the rich, and there will be no worries about having to borrow money to provide for a family. The guardians will in fact have very happy lives, because their needs will be provided for and they will be honoured by their fellow-citizens. (465-466)

We now turn to war. Men and women will fight together, and their children will come along too to observe and help out, as part of their training. But there should be precautions to ensure the children's safety. Any soldiers who desert should be relegated to the workers, and any who are captured should be left to their fate. But those who distinguish themselves should be honoured, and those who die bravely shall have special funerals and shall have their tombs revered. (466-469)

Greeks should not sell Greek captives into slavery. Only weapons shall be taken from corpses, because plunder is unseemly and distracts an army from fighting. The lands of Greek enemies shall not be devastated. Instead we shall only carry off this year's harvest, because that is more fitting to what is a form of civil strife (Greek against Greek), and we know that we must bring such strife to an end eventually. And we shall only attack those who are responsible for the quarrel, not the whole population. But barbarians can be attacked more generally and more severely. (469-471)

Book 5. Bringing about the ideal state. Ensure that the philosophers are in charge.

Our pictures of the ideal state and of the ideal man can be useful even if we do not think them achievable. They show us to what we should approximate. So it should do to show how we could achieve something close to the ideal state. What we need to do is make philosophers into kings, or kings into philosophers. Many people will laugh at this, so we need to show why it is necessary. (471-474)

Books 5 and 6. A philosopher is one who loves to see the truth. People are prejudiced against philosophers, but philosophers can become rulers.

Someone who truly loves something loves all of it, whether youth, wine or honour. A philosopher will be passionate for every kind of wisdom. But he will want proper knowledge. Compare those who merely delight in beautiful things. They do not discern the essence of beauty itself. It is as if they are dreaming, while someone who can distinguish beauty itself from beautiful things is fully awake. (474-476)

If something is fully knowable, it must have full being. Knowledge is about what fully is, and ignorance is about what is not. In between knowledge and ignorance, we have opinion. (476-477)

We have faculties, like sight and hearing, but they are only identified by their fields and effects. Knowledge and opinion are different faculties (the power to know and the power to have opinions), so they must have different fields, that which has full being and that which only has partial being. We need to find out what might have only partial being. (477-478)

Consider things that seem beautiful. They can also seem ugly. And righteous acts can also be unrighteous. And what is large can also be small. So they must be placed between full being and not-being, and they are the objects of opinion. The eternal, unchanging things are the objects of knowledge. (479-480)

So philosophers are the ones who can grasp eternal, unchanging things. They are the ones who know reality and have a clear standard of perfection, so they should be the best people to guard the laws and customs of society. They are the best people to be guardians, so long as we can ensure that they have all of the other necessary qualities. (484-485)

We need to start by looking at the natural character of a philosopher. He will be in love with the whole of reality. He will not tolerate falsehood, but will be in love with truth, an essential condition for a love of wisdom. His devotion to the acquisition of knowledge will make him uninterested in physical pleasures. He will be self-controlled, and not mean, petty or grasping. He will have no fear of death. And he will be just and easy to deal with. We will identify the philosophers as people who have, from their early days, been just and civilised, and who have good memories and a sense of proportion. (485-487)

Even so, people who now study philosophy do not appear to be at all fit to rule. We must understand why there is a prejudice against philosophy. (487-488)

Consider a ship in which the crew do not appreciate that navigation is a special skill. They may take over the ship. They are likely to regard the true navigator as a useless star-gazer. Likewise the best philosophers are no use to others, the current politicians, but the blame lies with the others. They do not appreciate how to use the philosophers' skills. (488-489)

Turning to philosophers who are not of the best sort, we must understand why so many are rogues, instead of being devoted to truth and having good character in other respects. The problem is that if you have the right natural attributes, you are easily corrupted by a bad environment. Outstanding young men get carried away by popular praise, and take on popular ideas of what is admirable or disgraceful. They become like someone who can read the moods of a large animal from the noises it makes, but without any understanding of which of the animal's desires are admirable and which disgraceful. The allegedly corrupting sophists just go with the flow, while society as a whole is the real guilty party. (489-493)

Common people will not, for example, accept the distinction between beauty itself and beautiful things. They will not get the point of philosophy. So a prospective philosopher, with his quick-wittedness, good memory and courage, will get used by others for their own purposes. They will use flattery and his ambition will build up. If he inclines towards real philosophy, they will steer him away from it. And his great talents will mean that he is able to do great damage to a community, although he may do great good. Furthermore, with most of the best people diverted from true philosophy, others without the requisite talent will rush in to proclaim themselves philosophers. There will only be a few true philosophers, and they will stay out of public life and live quietly. (493-497)

We need to go back to our ideal state and see how it can give the proper role to philosophy. People should only have a little philosophy when young, then more as their minds mature, and should only be given a free rein when they are too old for political or military service. But we will also have to wait until by chance the uncorrupted philosophers are compelled to get involved in politics, or until some current rulers are inspired by a genuine love of philosophy. It is possible for people to come to accept the worth of true philosophy, if we approach them in the right way. Only a few will stubbornly resist. (497-500)

We must show how a state must be drawn using a divine pattern. We must first wipe the slate of human society clean, then draw a new social system, with frequent reference to justice, beauty, self-discipline and so on, and to the copies of them we are trying to make in human beings. People generally may then come to accept that philosophers should rule. (500-502)

Books 6 and 7. The ascent from opinion to knowledge and from appearances to reality. The Good as the ultimate object of knowledge. How to educate philosophers.

Our guardians in the full sense, the rulers, must be philosophers. There will not be many people who have the right combination of mental talents, enterprise and a willingness to live a quiet, orderly life. We must test candidates thoroughly, not only with temptations as already described, but also to see whether they have the endurance to pursue the highest forms of knowledge. They will also have to go the long way round, through arduous physical and intellectual training, before aiming at the highest form of knowledge. This is even higher than justice. It is knowledge of the form of the Good. Things that are just and so on derive their value from this. And we need this knowledge, otherwise the rest of our knowledge will be useless. (502-505)

Most people think that pleasure is the Good, but there are bad pleasures. Those who say that knowledge is the Good, if you ask them which knowledge, say “knowledge of the Good”, which is unhelpful. But whatever it is, when we say that we want the Good, we want that which is really good, not which just appears to be good. So the rulers must know what the Good is. Unfortunately Socrates cannot tell us what the Good is, but he can talk about something that resembles it, the Sun. (505-507)

There are beautiful things and good things, but there are also beauty itself and goodness itself. We perceive particular things by sight, but the forms of beauty and goodness by the intellect. Eyes cannot see without light, and we see most perfectly by the light that comes from the Sun. So the Sun is the cause of sight and of the clear visibility of objects. Likewise, the Good allows the intellect to perceive the objects of real knowledge, and gives them their reality. Just as objects are indistinct in poor light, the mind can only form shifting opinions when it is fixed on the twilight world of change and decay. And just as the Sun nourishes and causes growth, the Good is the source of the reality of the objects of thought. (507-509)

We now have the similes of the line and of the cave, which can be summarised in the following diagram (not given by Plato himself):

The line

The cave

The intelligible realm of forms

- A: Knowledge (dialectic)
- B: Knowledge (mathematics)

- Looking at the Sun
- Looking at things above ground

The visible realm of physical things

- C: Opinion: belief
- D: Opinion: illusion

- Looking at the objects carried
- Looking at the shadows on the wall

On the line, we have four sections in two pairs: A and B, then C and D. D corresponds to images of physical objects such as shadows and reflections, and C corresponds to physical objects. In B we use physical things as images of intelligible things, for example when we use diagrams of triangles to do geometry. We make assumptions and then reason to conclusions. In A, we have direct contact with a first principle. We use dialectic - philosophical argument - to work up from our assumptions to the first principle. Once we reach it, we grasp it without help from assumptions. They then fall away. So at A we have intelligence, at B reason, at C opinion and at D illusion. As we go up from D to A, both clarity and the degree of truth possessed by the subject matter increase. (509-511)

Now imagine a cave, with people chained up in it and only able to see one wall of the cave. Behind them, there is a screen. Behind that, people carry objects and figures of people and of animals which they hold aloft, above the screen. Behind them there is a fire, so that the shadows of the objects and figures fall on the wall of the cave that the prisoners can see. The prisoners would assume that the shadows were real things. If one prisoner was unchained and turned around, he would be dazzled by the fire. He would also not be able to accept that the objects being carried along were real, and that the shadows were only illusions. If he were then taken outside, he would at first be dazzled. But he would eventually be able to look at shadows and reflections, then objects, then the moon and stars, and finally the Sun. Having got this new grasp of reality, he would be very pleased, and would pity the other prisoners. But if he went back down, it would be too dark for him and he would not be able to distinguish the shadows, so the other prisoners would think him a fool. (511-517)

We can now match up portions of the line with stages in the analogy of the cave, as in the table above. Those who get out of the cave and see the Good will be reluctant to go back down and involve themselves in human affairs. And if they do they may blunder around and seem foolish. (517-518)

This way of looking at knowledge suggests that there is an innate capacity to perceive with the mind and that the mind as a whole must be turned away from the world of change, just as our eyes have an innate capacity to see and the body must turn from darkness to light. So knowledge is not to be put in from outside by educators. We can only free people from the restraints of earthly desires so that they can turn toward the truth. (518-519)

In designing our state, we must ensure that the right people are led up to knowledge of the Good, but we must then insist that they take turns in descending to run the state. They might prefer to spend all of their time on intellectual activities, but the aim of our work is to benefit the state as a whole, not just one part of it. And in any case, we have bred them deliberately as philosophers to fulfil this role. They have not become philosophers by accident, as in other states. It is also good to give power to people who already have something better in their lives. Those who seek power to supply their own needs will cause strife. (519-521)

We must identify the right subjects for our trainee philosophers to study. We have already covered physical training, literature and music. Now we want something that will draw minds from the world of change to reality, and that will also be useful in war, since our rulers will be trained for war when they are young. Calculation is worth looking at. It is essential in war and in other aspects of practical life. It also draws the mind to thought, because mere perception is not sufficient. If someone holds up three fingers, you can see immediately that there are three of them. Thought is not needed. But if we are asked whether they are large or small, thought is needed too. We can perceive the same thing as large or as small. We need to understand what large is. Then reason is involved. (521-524)

Start with arithmetic. We can perceive a unit both as one thing and as a plurality, so arithmetic will draw the mind to thought, because perception will not be enough. So arithmetic must be studied. But we want our guardians to understand, by pure thought, the nature of numbers. If you look at a collection of physical objects, you can see that the objects could be divided, increasing their number. But numbers in themselves are not like that. A unit really does have its unity. Numbers in themselves can only be grasped by pure reason, which is what we want to encourage. (524-526)

Next comes plane geometry. Again this is useful in war. But its objects are also eternal and unchanging, so it will draw the mind to the truth. Then comes solid geometry, solid bodies in themselves, then astronomy, solid bodies in motion. But if we study the stars that appear in the sky, we study visible objects. We need to study the true velocities and orbits of the heavenly bodies in

mathematical form, using our reason rather than our eyes. The same goes for harmonics, where we must not concentrate on how notes sound to our ears but must seek the mathematical laws of harmony. (526-531)

Finally comes dialectic, pure philosophical argument that does not rely in any way on the senses and that will enable us to dispense with assumptions. We use it to get at what each thing is in itself. Geometry, for example, cannot do this because it relies on assumptions that are just accepted without being known, so that its results are also not fully knowledge. Dialectic can get us beyond assumptions because it involves grasping the essential nature of each thing. (531-534)

In selecting the people to follow this curriculum, we should not just look for moral integrity and toughness. We should also look for good memory, eagerness and willingness to work hard. We should also reject people who are content to go along with conventional misrepresentations, even if they are strongly against deliberate lying. We must also start all of the studies that come before dialectic in childhood, when serious effort is easiest. Then at age 20, selected students can make a more comprehensive study of these subjects. (535-537)

At age 30 there can be a further selection of the best students, who can then study dialectic. But we must be careful, because that study can lead to indiscipline. It is easy to be argued out of traditional views on what is honourable, and if the student does not grasp the truth at the same time, he is left exposed to the risk of taking on new values which happen to suit his desires. We must also avoid introducing people to dialectic when they are too young, because young people just take pleasure in refuting everything, and end up thinking that all of their previous knowledge was false. (537-539)

Five years of intensive philosophical study should be about right. Then the new philosophers can go back into the cave and hold any military or other office suitable for the young. They must be tested again to see whether they give way to temptations. At the age of 50, those who have passed all tests with distinction can come back up and see the Good itself. Then they can spend most time on philosophy, but take their turns as rulers. (539-540)

The society can first be established by taking away into the country all children over the age of ten, removing the influence of their parents' current way of life, and bringing them up as described here. (540-541)

Books 8 and 9. What can go wrong. Four bad types of state, and the corresponding bad types of individual.

The four bad types of state are timarchy (a ruling class focused on military honour, like Sparta), oligarchy (a wealthy ruling class), democracy and tyranny. There must be a type of man corresponding to each type of state. The truly good and just man will correspond to the ideal state that we have described, and there will be four inferior types of man. We shall go through each type of state, and the corresponding type of man, in turn. (543-545)

Our ideal state may start to deteriorate into timarchy when guardians get careless about the proper times for breeding. (Plato inserts a bit of number-mysticism here.) Then the offspring will not be as gifted as they should be, and when they come to be guardians they will not be able to tell in which citizens there is pure gold or silver, and in which ones gold is mixed with bronze or silver with iron, producing an uneven material. Then internal strife will start. The bronze or iron in the rulers will incline them to private property and profit. So they will take private property, and reduce the workers to serfs. The workers will still respect the soldiers and authority, and the soldiers will still abstain from other work, but they will be suspicious of intelligent types because intelligence will no

longer be combined with simplicity and sincerity. There will also be a secret desire for money, to be spent on pleasure within the new private houses. But ambition and the competitive spirit will still be strong. (545-548)

The timarchic individual will be ambitious, obedient to authority, polite to freemen but harsh to slaves. He will have had an imperfect education, although he will take some interest in the arts. He will despise money at first, but then get more avaricious as he gets older. He can be produced when his father, living in a badly-run state, stays out of politics and his mother complains about the consequent lack of public honour and of defence of legal rights. The son, reacting against this, will become arrogant and ambitious, although tempered by his father's influence. (548-550)

Next comes the oligarchic society, where it is wealth that counts and the poor have no political power. Timarchy deteriorates into oligarchy as people find ways to be extravagant, and start to value wealth more than honour. Then a law is passed requiring a minimum amount of property before one can hold political office. A major fault with oligarchy is that rulers are chosen on the basis of wealth, not on the basis of their talents. Another fault is that society is split into two factions, the rich and the poor. And an oligarchy cannot wage war effectively, because it can only get a big enough army by arming the people, which the ruling class fear to do. Worst of all, you get a lot of useless people, both the poor who sell all they have and live on idly, and the rich who are merely consumers. You also get a lot of beggars and criminals. (550-553)

The oligarchic individual will arise as the son of the timarchic individual. The father will be ambitious, then suddenly meet some political disaster, for example being outlawed with the loss of all his property. The son will discard courage and ambition, and work his way back up from poverty to amass a fortune. Then he will come to be ruled by desire and profit-seeking. He will only be interested in money-making, and will suppress desires that he sees as pointless. He will restrain dishonesty only so as to keep a good reputation in business, and will be dishonest when it is safe to be so. He will not pursue honours in public life, because that would require spending money. (553-555)

Next comes the democratic society. Oligarchs cannot restrain themselves. They want to get richer and richer, so they lend money to others who then squander it and get into debt. The lenders can take their property if they do not repay. There is then a resentful indebted class, and a rich class who get lazy and unhealthy. Fights between the two classes will break out at the slightest provocation. Democracy will arise when the poor, being fitter, win and hand out equal civil rights. There will be freedom of speech and of lifestyle, creating an attractively diverse society. There will be no compulsion either to exercise or to obey authority. The politicians need not have any special talents. And different democratic societies will have lots of different forms of constitution. (555-558)

The democratic individual will be the son of an oligarchic individual. He will be mean like his father, and will suppress his desire for unnecessary pleasures such as a luxurious diet. But when he gets into bad company where all sorts of pleasure are on offer, the suppressed desires will start to assert themselves. The kindred desires outside him will help the desires within him. Likewise the oligarchic element within him will be re-inforced by the criticisms of his father. The battle may go back and forth, but the desires for all sorts of pleasure may eventually win, because the young man's mind is devoid of sound knowledge and practices. If anyone argues that some desires are good and others not, he will respond that all desires are equal and should have equal rights. He will do lots of different things from day to day. (558-562)

The tyrannical society arises out of democracy. Democracy is undermined by its excessive desire for liberty at the expense of everything else. Authorities who are not very mild will be rejected. Obedience to authority will be regarded as servile. Parents and teachers will have no authority. In

the end all laws will be ignored. There will be a large group of thriftless idlers, which will supply most of the leaders and their core following. There will also be some successful businessmen, to whom the idlers will look for money. And there will be the majority, the workers who take little interest in politics but who can be mobilised by the first class robbing the second, keeping what they can for themselves and distributing the rest to the majority. The rich businessmen will speak up against this and will be accused of plotting against the people. There will be court actions between the first two classes. The people will then tend to identify and promote a single leader. With the power of the mob behind him, he will start to bring unjust charges against people and murder them. Soon he will have to become a complete tyrant, or be murdered himself. He will need a bodyguard. He will also need to provoke war continually, so that his leadership is needed. He can use wartime levels of taxation to reduce people to poverty, so that they have to concentrate on earning a living and not on plotting against him. He will also have to do away with anyone of courage or vision or intelligence or wealth, for his own safety. His bodyguard will be made up of freed slaves, who will be grateful to him. He will pay them using temple treasures and wealth taken from his victims, then using his parents' estate. In the end he may murder his father. (562-569)

The tyrannical individual will be the son of a democratic individual. Note first that some bestial desires can have free rein when we sleep, in our dreams. The father will try to ensure a balance of desires in the son. But the son's tempters will promote a master desire within him. The other bad desires will encourage it, and in the end it will throw out all of the better desires. The tyrannical character will combine characteristics of drunkenness, lust and madness. His ruling passion and the other desires that take hold alongside it will need financing. He will spend all of his income, then his capital, and then he will rob people. He will also take his parents' estate, by fraud or violence if need be. His passion will drive him to do anything, and his former ideas of honour and dishonour will be no restraint. If there are many people like this in a society, it will turn into a tyranny, as the criminals pick a leader and the people in their folly submit to him. The tyrannical character will be the perfect specimen of injustice. (571-576)

The tyrant will be the unhappiest man. And the tyrannical state will be the worst, and the ideal state the best, type of state. The tyrannical state should be the unhappiest and the ideal state the happiest. But we should investigate this, and the happiness of individuals, carefully. In particular we should look beneath the surface appearance of the tyrant's life, with its pomp. (576-577)

A tyrannical state is in complete slavery, but with some free individuals. Likewise the tyrannical individual will not be able to do what his mind as a whole wants, because it will be in thrall to one desire. And a tyrannical state will be poor, unsatisfied and full of complaints and pain, as will be the individual. The state will be the unhappiest of all. The tyrannical man will be pretty unhappy, but most of all if he is not a private citizen but the tyrant of a state. A slave-owner is safe from his slaves because of the support of society, but a tyrant will not have that support. He will live in fear and will not be free to travel abroad or attend festivals like others. And his power will make him ever more unjust and friendless. (577-580)

So the five characters stand in order of excellence and of happiness in their order of appearance: philosopher king (over himself if not over a state), timarchic, oligarchic, democratic and tyrannical. And this is so even if only the gods know one's true character. (580)

There is another proof of this conclusion. The three elements in the soul have their own objectives: knowledge for reason, success for spirit and gain for appetite. The lover of any one objective will say that it is the best one. But only the philosopher has experience of the pleasures of all three, so he is in the best position to judge. Moreover, we must decide by reason, and rational argument is the philosopher's special tool. So the most pleasant pleasure is that of knowledge, and the most pleasant life will be led by the man in whom reason is in control. And the pleasures of success will come

next. The philosopher will judge that they are nearer to his own pleasure than the pleasures of gain. (580-583)

There is a third proof. The pleasures of knowledge are pure, whereas the other pleasures are mixed with pain. People who are in pain esteem relief from it as the highest pleasure. Correspondingly, when pleasure ceases, rest from it will be painful. But the mere absence of pleasure cannot itself be painful, nor the absence of pain pleasurable. The cessation of pain only seems to be a positive pleasure by contrast with pain, and vice versa. Those who ascend from the lowest state, pain, to a middle state think they have reached pleasure because they have not tasted true pleasure. (583-585)

Now consider that hunger and thirst reflect shortages that should be made good with food and drink, and that ignorance and empty-headedness are states of mental depletion that should be made good with knowledge. Knowledge is of the unchanging, so it is more real and more true than food and drink. So the replenishment from knowledge is more real too. And hence the pleasure is more real and more reliable. (585)

Those who do not know the pleasures of wisdom and goodness, and just have a good time, move between the lowest and the middle states. Their pleasures are mixed with pain, and lead to mad desires that lead to conflict. The same is true of one who merely seeks honour or success. The search leads to violence and discontent. (586)

But the one who is guided by reason, and who only seeks gain and success under its direction, will achieve the truest pleasure. Each element in the soul will then fulfil its proper role and enjoy its own pleasures. If an element other than reason gets control, it will not achieve its own pleasure and will also force the other elements to pursue pleasures that are not their own. These bad effects will be produced most markedly by the elements that are furthest from reason, and hence furthest from law and order. Thus the tyrant is furthest from man's true pleasure, and the philosopher king nearest it. (586-587)

Plato then gives a "proof" that the tyrant lives 729 times more painfully than the philosopher king. (587-588)

Now go back to the argument that the happiest man was one who combined complete injustice with a reputation for justice. He would be like a man who contained a man (reason), a lion (spirit) and a many-headed beast (appetite), and who gave the beast free rein while making the man within him weak. In the end the beast and the lion would devour each other. But in the just man, the man within would be strong and would manage the beast like a farmer, while making an ally of the lion. Conventional notions of fair and foul are about keeping the man within in control. Indulgence is censured for giving in to the beast, and obstinacy for giving the lion too much strength. When someone does not have inner control, it is better for him to be subject to outward control, through the law. And if someone who is unjust gets away with it, that is bad for him because it will make him worse. If he is caught, the punishment will tame the beast. (588-591)

So the intelligent man will be devoted to studies that improve the mind and character. Strength and health and good looks will matter to him only to the extent that they conduce to self-control. He will seek harmony and order, not only within himself but in spending and in the acceptance of honours. And he will only enter politics in the ideal society. (591-592)

Book 10. Art as mere imitation. Art as a bad influence.

We can now see how important it was to exclude dramatic representation in poetry. There are forms of objects, such as beds (one per type of object). Then there are particular examples, beds made by carpenters who imitate the form. Then there are paintings of particular beds. The carpenter does not make what a bed really is, but only something that resembles that. And a painting is yet further from reality. And the same goes for a poem that includes dramatic representation, or any other form of representative art. (595-597)

Furthermore, a painting will represent even a physical example of an object only from one angle, not as it is, and a poet writes about things of which he does not have any specialist knowledge. We can tell this because if the poets really knew about the things that they wrote about, for example military strategy or political administration, they would prefer to do those things, rather than writing about them, because that would involve them in producing things with more reality. Moreover, the fact that Homer and Hesiod continued as wandering minstrels and did not accrue disciples who would make them settle down shows that they were not themselves able to improve people. (597-601)

There is something else to consider. A painter paints a bridle and bit. A harness-maker makes them. But only a rider knows what they should be like. The quality of anything is determined by reference to its use. The user knows its qualities, and the maker, if he asks the user, gets correct belief about its qualities. The artist does not even have that much. Likewise the poet will write about things without knowing whether they are good or bad. (601-602)

On what part of a person does art exercise its power? Things may appear large or small, and there are optical illusions, but we use measurement and calculation to avoid mistakes. These are functions of reason. Since art deals in appearances, which can contradict calculation, it cannot work through reason. (If it did, then the same part of us - reason - would hold different opinions about the same thing at the same time, which is impossible.) This is not just true of painting. Drama represents people in action, and then they experience inner conflicts. Consider someone who has suffered a great misfortune. His reason will tell him to behave well in public, but his grief will encourage him to give way to sorrow in private. The dramatist will concentrate on irrational impulses, because they are easier to represent and have more dramatic appeal. So the poet, like the painter, deals with an element of the mind that is lower than reason. (601-605)

Poetry is also a very corrupting influence. We get carried away by representations of heroes expressing their grief. This starts to infect our attitudes in our own lives. In comedies we laugh at jokes that we ought to regard as vulgar, and that leads us to become buffoons at home. The same goes for other things expressed on stage. We do not keep our responses under the firm control of reason. (605-606)

So the only poems we should allow in the ideal state are hymns to the gods and poems that praise good men. We should however give poets and the lovers of poetry a chance to defend poetry. But if the case is not adequately made, we must banish poetry even though we enjoy it. (606-608)

Book 10. Immortality, choosing your next life and the rewards of goodness.

Anything that harms or destroys a thing is its specific evil. Thus the body is subject to disease and iron to rust. Only a thing's specific evil can destroy it. But while a soul is damaged by injustice, indiscipline, cowardice and so on, none of them destroys the soul. And we should not look for indirect agents of destruction that are not the specific evils of the thing destroyed, because they

must work through the specific evil. For example, the body is not destroyed directly by bad food, but by disease that the bad food causes. So a bodily evil cannot directly destroy the soul, nor can the destruction of the body destroy the soul. Since wickedness does not destroy the soul either, it must be immortal. (608-611)

Then the number of souls must be constant. It cannot decrease because souls do not die. It cannot increase because immortality can only increase at the expense of the mortal, and eventually everything would be immortal. (611)

But then we cannot believe that the soul is essentially made up of conflicting parts, because then it would not be immortal. We must try to see the soul not as it is when deformed by its association with the body and other evils, but in its pure state. We must look to the soul's love of wisdom. (611-612)

The gods can see who is really just and who is really unjust. If a just man appears to be suffering, we must assume that it is for his own good in this life or the next. Furthermore, even in this life, the clever rogue may do well at first, but will then falter. The just man is usually recognised and honoured in the end. (612-613)

When Er died in battle, he was shown what happens after death. Judges send good souls up to the sky to enjoy the delights of heaven, and bad ones down into the earth to suffer. After a thousand years, souls re-emerge. (Plato inserts a description of the structure of the universe.) They get to choose their next lives. There is a huge variety to choose from. This is why it is so important to be able to tell a good life from a bad one, and not to be swayed by wealth or other temptations. The one whom Er saw choosing first chose the life of a dreadful tyrant without considering his choice carefully. He was a good soul who had spent time in heaven, but his previous goodness sprang from habit and custom, not from philosophy. Many others who came from heaven made foolish choices, but those who had spent 1,000 years in the earth had learnt about suffering and were more careful. Finally, all had to drink from a river that made them forget everything, before they were born into their new lives. (613-621)

Introduction to Aristotle's Ethics

This work puts forward a virtue ethic. This is an ethic which emphasises what sort of people we should be, rather than giving us a list of commandments. It was not just a work of academic philosophy. Aristotle offered his students self-improvement as well as theoretical knowledge.

The important thing for Aristotle is to act in accordance with the excellence or virtue of our souls, not to feel good. But if we are virtuous people, we will feel good about doing so anyway.

Some of the virtues may not look like virtues to some of us. For example, Aristotle thinks that the great man should be well aware of his greatness. Humility is not a virtue for Aristotle.

The date of the *Ethics* is unknown. The work was edited from Aristotle's lecture notes by his son Nicomachus (hence the full title, the *Nicomachean Ethics*. There is another work by Aristotle, the *Eudemian Ethics*.) Its style is very different from the style of the *Republic*. Translations can differ quite a lot, because they do different amounts of filling-in to make Aristotle's notes easier to follow.

The work is divided into ten books, and then into several sections within each book.

Outline of the *Ethics*

Book 1. Every rational activity aims at some end or good. The supreme good is eudaimonia. This is a virtuous activity of the soul. We need to study the soul to understand what moral goodness is.

Book 2. Moral virtues are acquired by practice. Pleasure and pain are important in this. A virtue is a disposition. The virtuous person aims at the mean, avoiding excess and deficit.

Book 3. Voluntary action and choice are defined. We can only be blamed for things we chose. Courage and self-mastery (temperance) are analysed.

Book 4. More moral virtues are analysed: liberality, magnificence, magnanimity, the right attitude to anger, friendliness, sincerity and wit.

Book 5. Justice is the lawful or the fair. It may be concerned with distribution or with rectifying wrongs. You cannot suffer injustice willingly. Equity is analysed as a refinement of justice.

Book 6. Intellectual virtues are analysed. We must consider prudence and wisdom. There are also resourcefulness, understanding and judgement.

Book 7. This covers how we may do the wrong thing, even though we may know what the right thing is. The process of getting from our knowledge to our action may break down in several ways. Different types of wrongdoing are analysed.

Book 8. The types of friendship are analysed.

Book 9. The grounds of friendship and difficulties in friendships are analysed.

Book 10. Pleasure is not the supreme good. Eudaimonia is an activity. The best life is the life of contemplation. Virtuous activity generally is the second best.

Detailed summary of the Ethics

The part of the text that corresponds to each paragraph is identified by the book and section number, and by the Bekker number for the start of the text.

Book 1. Every rational activity aims at some end or good. The supreme good is eudaimonia. This is a virtuous activity of the soul. We need to study the soul to understand what moral goodness is.

All arts aim at some good. The good may be subordinate and desired for the sake of something else. But if there is an ultimate result that we want for its own sake, and for the sake of which we want all of the other results, that must be the supreme good. (1.1 and 1.2, 1094a1)

The science that studies the supreme good for man is politics, because it lays down what else should be studied, and how. Moreover, the good of a community is something finer than the good of an individual. (1.2, 1094a26)

We must be content with what is true on the whole, and not expect too much precision, because there is such variety in morally fine conduct. Politics should only be studied by those who have experience of life and a good general education. They need to have learnt to regulate their impulses and to act on principle. (1.3, 1094b11)

So what does politics aim at? What is the highest practical good? It is agreed to be eudaimonia, but what is that? Some say wealth, others health. We must start from what is known to us. (1.4, 1095a14)

Most people identify eudaimonia with pleasure. Some identify it with honour, but honour depends on others, and we feel that the supreme good should belong to its possessor and not be easily taken away. Even goodness cannot be the goal of public life, because one could be good when asleep or when suffering great misfortune, and such a life would lack eudaimonia. Wealth cannot be the supreme good, because it is only a means to other ends. (1.5, 1095b14)

What about Plato's single form of the Good? That cannot be right, because things are good in different ways (what they are in themselves, having good qualities, being in the right quantities, being useful, being at the right time and place). There cannot be a single universal to cover all of these. And if there was a single idea of the Good, there would be only one science of all good things, but there is not. Even if we confine ourselves to things that are good in themselves, we still find that they are too diverse for there to be a single characteristic that would make them all good. We cannot even say that we should obtain knowledge of the Good in order to help us to identify good things in practical life, because we see that craftsmen and doctors get on perfectly well without that knowledge, and cannot see how it would help them. (1.6, 1096a10)

If there is a goal of all practical actions, that will be the good for man. There are lots of goals, but many of them are means to other things. We want to find something that is an end in itself, and preferably one that is only an end in itself, not partly that and partly a means to some other end. Eudaimonia fits the bill. Other things, such as pleasure and intelligence, are chosen partly for themselves and also for the sake of eudaimonia, but eudaimonia is never chosen for the sake of anything else. Moreover, the perfect good is self-sufficient, in that it makes life desirable and in no way deficient, and eudaimonia fits the bill. (1.7, 1097a15)

We need to know what eudaimonia is. The goodness of, for example, a flautist or a sculptor, consists in his performing his function. But does man have a function? We want something that is special to man, so not life (which even plants have), or even sentient life (which animals have). It looks like activity of the soul in accordance with a rational principle. So the good for man will be activity of the soul in accordance with virtue. We can fill this out as we go along. But we must not expect too much precision, nor must we expect to find out about all cases in the same way. (1.7, 1097b22)

We should test our view of eudaimonia against what is commonly said. People seem to agree that we should identify a good of the soul, rather than an external good or a good of the body. And our conclusion agrees with the view that eudaimonia is virtue, or a particular virtue. But it must be the exercise of virtue, not merely its passive possession. And a virtuous life is pleasant in itself, because virtuous conduct gives pleasure to a virtuous person. But some external goods are still needed for eudaimonia. Some fine acts require friends, or wealth. And a lack of good ancestry, good children or personal beauty can mar our eudaimonia. (1.8, 1098b9)

So is eudaimonia learnt, or otherwise cultivated, or is it a gift from the gods or something that comes by chance? It might be a gift from the gods. It should not come by chance, because it would be unharmonious for something so important to come by chance. If it can be learnt or otherwise cultivated, it should be widespread. We can also note that if eudaimonia is a virtuous activity of the soul, animals cannot have it, nor can children. And it can only be attributed over a complete life. (1.9, 1099b9)

But it would be going too far to say that we can only attribute eudaimonia to the dead. And even they are not necessarily immune to misfortune, as they may lose honour or their children may suffer. But any such post-mortem effect would only be limited. And we should be able to attribute eudaimonia to someone who is alive, even though he may suffer future misfortune. This is especially so because what matters is a virtuous activity of the soul, with external changes in fortune being incidental. The man with eudaimonia will spend most of his time in virtuous activity and in contemplation, and will bear his changes of fortune in a good spirit. Even if he suffers great misfortune he will make the best of a bad job, and will not become entirely miserable. He cannot however be supremely blessed if he suffers very great misfortune. We can conclude that someone has eudaimonia if he is active in accordance with complete virtue, and has enough external goods throughout his life, and is destined both to live in this way and to die accordingly. (1.10, 1100a10)

It is widely accepted that the dead are affected by the fortunes of their descendants and of those they loved. But the conclusion from what we have said must be that any such influence will be very slight, and not enough to take away eudaimonia. (1.11, 1101a22)

Eudaimonia is not to be praised in the way that useful qualities such as justice or strength are to be praised, as things that lead to good results. Instead it should be valued as an end in itself. It should be called blessed. The status of eudaimonia as something precious and perfect is confirmed by the fact that everything else that we do, we do for its sake. (1.12, 1101b10)

We need to know what virtue is. We want to discover the good for man, and this will be goodness of the soul rather than of the body. So the statesman must study psychology in order to understand the soul. The soul has rational and non-rational parts. The non-rational includes the part that causes nutrition and growth, but that is common to all creatures and operates even when we are asleep, so it has no part in human goodness. There seems to be another non-rational part which can be subjected to reason. This is the impulse to act in order to satisfy appetites. Virtues can be classified according to the analysis of the soul. Some virtues are intellectual, like wisdom, understanding and prudence, whereas others are moral, like liberality and temperance. (1.13, 1102a5)

Book 2. Moral virtues are acquired by practice. Pleasure and pain are important in this. A virtue is a disposition. The virtuous person aims at the mean, avoiding excess and deficit.

Intellectual virtue comes from instruction, and moral goodness from habit. So the moral virtues cannot be engendered by nature. Our nature only makes us able to receive them. We acquire the virtues by using them, like practical skills, and legislators make their citizens good by habituation. We can also become bad by acting badly. (2.1, 1103a14)

We want to know how to become good men, not to discover what goodness is. The latter would be useless. It is common ground that we should act according to right principle. We can only expect to get an outline account, because circumstances differ so much from case to case and you have to work out each time what the best thing to do might be. But we can lay down the rule that moral qualities are destroyed both by deficiency and by excess, and are preserved by the mean. Thus courage is destroyed by being a coward or by being foolhardy. Temperance is destroyed by indulging every pleasure and by refusing every pleasure. Note also that by refraining from pleasures we become temperate, and we then find it easier to refrain from pleasures. Likewise if we face alarming situations we become brave, and then we find it easier to face alarming situations. (2.2, 1103b26)

What pleasures or pains someone feels in connection with their actions can indicate their qualities. Someone who is happy to forgo bodily pleasures is temperate, but someone who finds that irksome is licentious. Pleasure can induce us to behave badly, and pain to avoid fine actions. So it is important to train people, even when young, to feel joy and grief at the right things. And we can note that punishment, used as a remedy, relies on pain or on the withdrawal of pleasures. Since it is so important to feel pleasure and pain at the right things, we must be most concerned with these sensations. It can be hard to fight against pleasure, but the harder course is the concern of art and of virtue. (2.3, 1104b3)

How can someone perform just acts in order to become just? It would seem that if he performs just acts, he is already just. But he might act justly by accident. A virtuous act is not done in a just or temperate way merely because of its own qualities. The agent must know what he is doing, must choose the action for its own sake and must do it from a fixed disposition. The act can have its qualities without these conditions being fulfilled, but the agent cannot. (2.4, 1105a17)

The soul may have feelings (desire, anger, fear, etc), faculties (eg capable of anger or sorrow or pity) and dispositions (eg a bad disposition towards anger if we get angry too easily or never get angry, a good disposition if our tendency is moderate). Virtues and vices are not feelings, because we are praised or blamed for them but not for our feelings. And our feelings move us, but our virtues and vices merely dispose us to act in certain ways. Virtues and vices cannot be faculties either, because we are not praised or blamed just for being capable of being good or bad. So virtues must be dispositions. (2.5, 1105b19)

But what kind of disposition? Any kind of excellence makes its object good. So human excellence will be what makes someone good and able to perform his function well. This is confirmed by the importance of the mean. The mean to seek is the mean for us, that which is good for us. All arts aim at the mean, in that if a work is well-executed, nothing should be added to it or taken away from it. And since moral virtue is more exact than any art, it too aims to hit the mean. It aims at disposing us to feel fear, confidence, anger and so on to the right extent, neither too much nor too little. It is easy to go wrong, because there are so many ways to do so, but it is hard to succeed because there is only one way to do so. (2.6, 1106a14)

So virtue is a purposive disposition to act in accordance with the mean relative to us, determined in accordance with a rational principle as a prudent man would determine it. But some feelings and actions are evil in themselves, and have no mean. Examples of feelings are malice and shamelessness. Examples of actions are murder and adultery. Actions like these are always wrong. There is no mean to be found here. (2.6, 1106b36)

We should apply the doctrine of the mean to particular virtues. Courage lies between rashness and cowardice, and temperance between licentiousness and insensibility. In giving and receiving money, liberality lies between prodigality and illiberality. In large-scale expenditure, magnificence lies between vulgarity and pettiness. In great public honours, magnanimity lies between vanity and pusillanimity. In small honours, the nameless mean lies between ambition and lack of ambition. With anger, patience lies between irascibility and lack of spirit. In conversation, truthfulness lies between boastfulness and irony. Wit lies between buffoonery and boorishness. Friendliness lies between obsequiousness and cantankerousness. (2.7, 1107a28)

There are also means in feelings and emotions. Modesty lies between shamelessness and shyness. In the sphere of pain or pleasure at the experiences of others, righteous indignation (at undeserved fortune) lies between envy (at any good fortune) and spite (rejoicing in bad fortune). (2.7, 1108a30)

From one extreme, the mean looks like an example of the other extreme. But the greatest gap is between the two extremes. The mean may however be closer to one extreme and further away from the other. For example, cowardice rather than rashness is the direct opposite of courage, so courage is further away from cowardice. And licentiousness rather than insensibility is the direct opposite of temperance. There are two reasons for this sort of thing. One lies in the things themselves: rashness resembles courage more than cowardice does. The other lies in us. The thing to which we are most strongly inclined seems to be further from the mean. Thus we are naturally inclined to licentiousness. (2.8, 1108b11)

It is hard to be good, but there are rules that can help. We should keep away from the extreme which is more contrary to the mean. We should notice our errors and drag ourselves in the contrary direction. And we should guard against pleasure, because we are not impartial judges of pleasure. It is still not easy to hit the mean, but if we deviate from it only a little, we shall not be censured. (2.9, 1109a20)

Book 3. Voluntary action and choice are defined. We can only be blamed for things we chose. Courage and self-mastery (temperance) are analysed.

We praise and blame voluntary actions, not involuntary ones. So we need to know what is voluntary. Actions that are performed under compulsion, as when the wind blows your ship off course, are involuntary. It is debatable whether actions performed under grave threat are voluntary. They are chosen at the time, so they are voluntary at the given time and cost. But no-one would choose them in themselves, so they are involuntary in themselves. They may be pardoned, if not commended. But there are some things you should not do even under the most extreme threat. (3.1, 1109b30)

If pleasurable and admirable things had a compulsive effect, all actions would be compulsory because we always act for the sake of such objects. So we cannot blame external factors if we fall easy prey to such attractions. (3.1, 1110b9)

All acts done through ignorance are non-voluntary, but they are only involuntary if they subsequently cause the agent pain and repentance. Someone who is drunk acts in ignorance, but not through ignorance. Acting through ignorance comes through ignorance of the particular circumstances, not of the choice (a source of wickedness) or of the moral principle (for which people are blamed). Ignorance of the particular circumstances may be of what you are doing, or of to whom you are doing it, or of the tool you are using, or of how to achieve your goal, or of the manner of acting. (3.1, 1110b18)

So voluntary acts are those that originate in the agent, who is aware of the particular circumstances. But actions due to temper or desire should be regarded as voluntary, otherwise other animals, and even children, would not act voluntarily. Furthermore, some good acts are done through appropriate temper or desire. (3.1, 1111a22)

Choice has a narrower meaning than “voluntary”. Both children and animals can act voluntarily, but not by choice. And choice should not be identified with desire, temper, wish or opinion. A choice can be opposed to a desire, but not one desire to another [at the same time in the same person]. Actions that result from temper are least likely to be thought of as chosen. One cannot choose the impossible, or things one cannot bring about oneself, but one can wish for such things. And we wish for ends, but choose means. Opinion covers everything, including things outside our power, and opinions are true or false, whereas choices are good or bad. And we choose to take or avoid something, whereas we form opinions about things in themselves. And the people who are best at choosing the best actions are not always the people who are best at forming correct opinions. But if choice is none of these things, what is it? It implies a rational principle, and thought. So perhaps it is the result of deliberation. (3.2, 1111b4)

We do not deliberate about eternal truths, or about the effects of natural forces. We deliberate about practical measures that lie within our power. In particular, we deliberate when the outcome of our actions is not predictable so that the right thing to do is not clearly defined. We deliberate about means, not ends: a doctor deliberates about how to cure a patient, not whether to cure him. We seek the best means. If there is only one, then we work backwards from the end to find the thing that we can do directly. (3.3, 1112a18)

If what a person wishes for is the good, then if he wishes wrongly, what he wishes for is not an object of wish. But if it is the apparent good, nothing is by nature wishable. We should say that absolutely the object of wish is the good, but that for the individual it is what seems good to him. If he is of good character it will be the true good. (3.4, 1113a15)

Virtue and vice lie in our power, since the exercise of moral virtues is related to means, about which we deliberate and which we choose. We can do or refrain from actions, so we can do right or wrong, so we can be decent or worthless. This is reflected in practices of reward and punishment in order to encourage good actions and deter bad ones. There would be no point in encouraging or deterring non-voluntary actions. (3.5, 1113b3)

Ignorance is punished, if the offender is responsible for it, for example by getting drunk. Ignorance of points of law that are not difficult to ascertain are also punished. Some people just do not take care, but they are responsible for getting like that, for example by spending their time drinking. Similarly, someone who acts unjustly or licentiously can be acting voluntarily, even though he may no longer be able to correct his behaviour, because he set himself on the course to that way of life. Even physical defects can be culpable, if voluntarily incurred, eg through lack of exercise or heavy drinking. (3.5, 1113b30)

An objection is that everyone aims at what he thinks is good, but that the power to see what is good may be something we have, or do not have, from birth. But even if this is so, virtuous and vicious actions will still be equally voluntary. Virtues are voluntary because we are at least partly responsible for our dispositions, so vices will be voluntary too. Note however that actions are voluntary in a strong sense because they are under our control from beginning to end, but we only control the beginnings of our dispositions. (3.5, 1114a31)

Now we can discuss courage in detail. It is a mean state in relation to fear and confidence. But not all feared things are the concern of courage. It is right to fear disgrace. It may be wrong to fear poverty or disease, but not fearing them is not a matter of courage. Courage is concerned with the greatest terrors, in particular death, and in its noblest form, in battle. So the courageous man is one who is fearless in the face of an honourable death. He will also be fearless in other circumstances, such as a storm at sea, but not in the same way. (3.6, 1115a6)

Different things differ in the level of fear that they inspire. The courageous man will fear what it is natural to fear, but he will face the objects of fear in the right way and as principle directs. Someone who feared nothing would be a maniac or insensate. The rash man makes a show of confidence in advance of danger, but may turn out to be a coward. Someone who fears too much is a coward, and lacks confidence. And it is cowardly, not courageous, to kill oneself to escape poverty or unrequited love, because it is weak to run away from hardships. (3.7, 1115b7)

There are five dispositions that resemble courage. First comes civic courage, which is closest to courage because it springs from a proper sense of shame and a desire for honour. Second comes experience of risk, which makes mercenary soldiers seem braver than ordinary citizens because they know when they have the advantage. But if they do not have the advantage, they run away while ordinary citizens die at their posts. Third comes spirit, as shown by wild beasts as well as by human beings. But the courageous man acts from a fine motive, and spirit is an accessory for them. Wild beasts, on the other hand, act out of pain and anger. Fourth comes sanguineness. The sanguine man is confident because he thinks he cannot lose, so he runs away if things do not turn out as expected. The courageous man shows his courage in the face of sudden alarms, when he has not been able to calculate but acts because of his character. Fifth comes ignorance, which may lead someone to stand firm but only until he discovers his mistake. Then he will not even have confidence, like the sanguine man has. (3.8, 1116a15)

Courage is particularly concerned with confidence in fearful circumstances. It implies the presence of pain, even though the ultimate goal may be pleasant. Death and wounds are painful, and the courageous man will not endure them willingly, but he will still endure them. The more a man possesses virtue, the more distressing the thought of death will be, because life is supremely worth living. But he will be even braver for giving up all that and choosing a gallant death in war. (3.9, 1117a29)

Temperance is a mean state with regard to pleasures. Pleasures may be of the soul, such as love of civic distinction and love of learning. The mind is affected rather than the body, and being concerned with pleasures of the soul is neither temperate nor licentious. The same goes for some pleasures of the body, such as the enjoyment of paintings or of music. Even the enjoyment of scents is not licentious, except by association, for example with food. (Similarly animals only experience pleasure through their senses by association, for example when they perceive signs of something that they could eat.) The main pleasures in relation to which one can be licentious are those of touch, whether in relation to food, drink or sex. With food and drink, taste is used merely to discriminate flavours, and it is the contact with the throat that actually gives the licentious person pleasure. The sense of touch is the one that is most widely shared among animals, so to take pleasure in touch is brutish. (We should except the more refined pleasures of touch, such as those

given at the gym through heat and massage.) (3.10, 1117b23)

Some desires are natural and common to all, whereas some are particular, specific to a group of people. We all desire food, but only some people desire particular types of food. With natural desires, people go wrong in only one way, to excess, for example eating too much. But with particular desires people go wrong in many ways. They may enjoy the wrong objects, or they may enjoy with abnormal intensity or in the wrong way. Excess in pleasure is licentiousness, but with pains we are not temperate for enduring them and licentious for not doing so. Rather, the licentious man is unduly distressed at the absence of pleasure, and the temperate man is not. (It is very rare to enjoy pleasures less than one should.) The temperate man does not enjoy wrongful pleasures, nor does he enjoy any pleasure violently. He seeks to enjoy the right pleasures, in the right way and in moderation. (3.11, 1118b8)

Licentiousness is more voluntary than cowardice, because pain, which causes cowardice, distracts the sufferer and impairs his natural state, but pleasure, which causes licentiousness, does not. So licentiousness is more reprehensible than cowardice. Children can be like licentious people, impelled by desire. Their appetite must be subdued. Just as children should be directed by their tutors, our appetites should be controlled by our reason. (3.12, 1119a21)

Book 4. More moral virtues are analysed: liberality, magnificence, magnanimity, the right attitude to anger, friendliness, sincerity and wit.

Liberality is the mean in relation to the giving of money and anything with monetary value, in between prodigality and illiberality. Liberality involves using wealth well, giving it with a fine end in view, to the right people, in the right amounts and at the right times. The liberal man will not accept money from a wrong source, because that would be inconsistent with indifference to money. But he will look after his own property, and accept money from the right sources, and will not give to everybody, so that he has enough to give to the right people. Liberality depends on means. Someone who gives less than another can be more liberal, if his means are less. (4.1, 1119b22)

Prodigality goes too far in giving and falls short in receiving, and illiberality the reverse. The two faults of prodigality are not often found together, because if they are, the man's resources are soon exhausted. The prodigal man is better than the illiberal man. He can attain the mean, because he gives without receiving, although not in the right manner. He also benefits people, unlike the illiberal man. But prodigal men, because they run out of resources, will take money from the wrong sources, and that makes them illiberal. They can also give to the wrong people, such as flatterers. And they are mostly licentious, spending on self-indulgence. (4.1, 1121a8)

Illiberality is both incurable and widespread. Some people only fall short in giving, and are stingy. Others go to excess in receiving, for example moneylenders who charge excessive rates of interest and petty thieves. But those who plunder on a large scale, such as despots, are not illiberal but wicked. (4.1, 1121b12)

Magnificence is the virtue of spending appropriately on a large scale, for example on a religious festival. It is the mean between pettiness and vulgarity. It is a sort of artistry, spending large sums with good taste. The magnificent man will be happy to spend, and will not seek the cheapest way of achieving the result. The expenditure must be appropriate to the agent. So a poor man cannot be magnificent. Magnificent expenditure befits the wealthy and those of noble birth. It may be on all sorts of public occasion, for example a wedding or the visit of a foreign guest. The vulgar man spends a lot on trivial occasions, in order to show off his wealth. The petty man will spend a large amount, then spoil the effect by being stingy over trifling details. (4.2, 1122a18)

A magnanimous man is one who thinks that he is worthy of great things, so long as he really is worthy of them. Someone who correctly thinks that he is worthy of little consideration is temperate, but not magnanimous. Someone who mistakenly thinks that he is worthy of great things is conceited. Someone who has too low an opinion of himself is pusillanimous. The magnanimous man's great claims, which he deservedly makes, must have a special object in view. The greatest external good is honour, because this is what we render to the gods. And honour is what the magnanimous man claims, and deserves. Since he has the greatest deserts, he must be the best man of all. So he will have greatness in every virtue, and would not behave disgracefully. So it is hard to be truly magnanimous. Someone who is magnanimous will accept great honours bestowed by responsible persons, while not feeling excessive pleasure because they are no more than his due, and indeed less than his due, for perfect excellence. But he will despise honours conferred by ordinary people for trivial reasons. (4.3, 1123a34)

He will also not be overjoyed at good fortune nor over-distressed at bad fortune, because power and wealth are desirable for the honour that they bring, and he will think little even of honour. Those of high birth or great wealth or power are thought to deserve honour. We should really only honour the good man, but having both goodness and advantages is felt to deserve additional honour. Someone who has the advantages but not goodness has no just claim to great honour, and cannot really be magnanimous because that demands complete virtue. Such people can only imitate the magnanimous man, and only in some respects: they cannot perform virtuous acts. (4.3, 1124a12)

The magnanimous man takes only great risks, not petty ones. He confers benefits, but is ashamed to accept them. He is haughty to the influential and successful, but moderate to those with an intermediate social status because it is easier to be superior to the latter. He stays out of popular contests, and only engages in a few tasks, but they will be grand and celebrated ones. He does not wish to be dependent on someone else, except a friend, he does not often express admiration or pay compliments, nor does he like to be complimented. He does not harbour grudges or speak ill of people. And he is not excitable or highly strung. (4.3, 1124b6)

Pusillanimous and conceited people are not considered to be bad, because they are harmless. They are just mistaken. Pusillanimous people do not claim what they deserve, but hold back from fine actions and pursuits, as well as from external goods. Conceited people try honourable undertakings that are beyond them. They also talk about their successes because they want them to be noticed. (4.3, 1125a16)

There are a mean, an excess and a deficiency in desire for honour on a small scale as well as on a large scale. The mean is nameless, and the extremes are ambition and lack of ambition. We blame the ambitious man because he seeks honour too much or from the wrong source, and the unambitious man for not choosing honour even for fine actions. But sometimes love of honour is praised as noble, and indifference to honour is sometimes praised as moderate and temperate. Even so, there must be a mean between the two extremes. The fact that it is nameless means that the extremes fight over the vacant territory. (4.4, 1125b1)

Patience is the mean between irascibility and lack of spirit. The patient person will get angry with the right things in the right way. He is more inclined to forgive than to seek revenge. Those who do not get angry are considered to be foolish, incapable of defending themselves and, if they put up with insults, servile. Irascible people get angry inappropriately, but they also stop quickly. They let their anger out. But bitter people remain angry for a long time, until they get their revenge. It is not easy to give a rule for when, with whom, to what extent and for how long one should be angry. But the mean is still to be praised and the extremes censured. (4.5, 1125b26)

Friendliness lies between obsequiousness and cantankerousness. But this quality is not tied to an actual friendship. Someone with the quality will display it to a stranger as well as to a friend. He will modify his behaviour depending on whether the other person is eminent or ordinary, or is someone he knows well or not, so as to bring pleasure. But he will object to pleasures that harm or discredit the agent. Someone who is excessively nice will be obsequious if there is no ulterior motive, or a flatterer if there is an ulterior motive. (4.6, 1126b11)

Falsehood is in itself bad, while the truth is a fine thing. The sincere man lies between the boaster and the ironical man. The latter disclaims qualities that he in fact possesses. The sincere man is good because he speaks the truth even when there is no context such as making an agreement, or considerations of justice or injustice. The boaster may seek fame or honour, in which case we should not censure him too much. Or he may seek gain, for example by claiming to have prophetic powers. The latter sort of boaster is more reprehensible. Ironical people may appear to be attractive, because they do not seek to make a profit but to avoid ostentation. But irony can look like a form of boasting if it involves disclaiming everyday qualities. (4.7, 1127a13)

Wit lies between buffoonery and boorishness. Buffoons go too far in trying to be funny. Boors refuse to say anything funny themselves and take exception to the jokes of others. The witty man uses humour with good taste. He also has the quality of tact, and confines himself to saying and listening to things that are suitable for honourable and liberal men. The sign of the right use of ridicule is that it does not annoy the person being spoken about. (4.8, 1127b33)

Modesty is not a virtue because it is a feeling rather than a state. It is a fear of disrepute, and it makes people blush. Only youths should be modest, and that because they need the restraint of modesty while they are living under the sway of their feelings. An older man ought not to do anything he would be ashamed of, so only bad men should feel shame. The fact that shamelessness is bad does not mean that feeling ashamed at bad actions is good. (4.9, 1128b10)

Book 5. Justice is the lawful or the fair. It may be concerned with distribution or with rectifying wrongs. You cannot suffer injustice willingly. Equity is analysed as a refinement of justice.

Justice is the state that disposes people to perform just acts, to behave justly and to want justice. Injustice is the state that has the opposite effects. The words “justice” and “injustice” are ambiguous, but we do not often notice because the different senses are close to each other. Injustice covers both breaking the law and acting unfairly in taking advantage of someone else. So “just” means both lawful and fair. The unjust man will take more than his share, not of all goods but of those that are good in themselves (although they may not be good for the individual). He will try to get a smaller share of things that are bad in themselves, but that is still in a sense trying to get too much. (5.1, 1129a3)

All lawful things are in some sense just. The laws regulate life, aiming at the common advantage of everyone or of some select class. So we tend to call something just if it promotes the eudaimonia of a community. The law also enjoins bravery (eg not running away in battle), temperance (eg not to commit adultery) and patience (eg refraining from abuse). The law may require behaviour rightly if it is rightly enacted, or not so well if it is improvised. (5.1, 1129b11)

Justice thus appears to be complete virtue in relation to others, and may be seen as the sovereign virtue. It is complete because it requires the active exercise of virtue, and because it can only be exercised in relation to others. The best person is one who exercises virtue towards others, not just towards himself. Virtue and justice are the same, except for one essential point. If something is

considered in relation to another, it is justice, but if it is considered simply as a moral state, it is virtue. (5.1, 1129b25)

But there is a sense of justice in which it is only a part of virtue. This is the sense of not taking more than one's fair share, or breaking the law. And wicked acts can be classified as unjust if the agent profits by them (such as committing adultery and gaining money thereby) but under some other vice if he does not profit (adultery for no gain comes under licentiousness). We shall investigate this particular justice which is only a part of virtue. We can distinguish distributive justice, to do with the distribution of honour, money or any other asset that is to be shared, and rectificatory justice, rectifying the terms of a transaction. The transactions may be voluntary, as in business deals, or involuntary, as in theft, adultery, murder or public insult. (5.2, 1130a14)

Distributive justice is a sort of equality, and a mean. But it must be relative to the persons. So there will be at least four terms: two persons between whom the result must be just, and two shares which exemplify justice. The shares must be in proportion to the persons. [If X is twice as deserving as Y, X should get twice as much as Y.] But how we measure merit is another question. The democratic view is that the criterion is free birth; the oligarchic that it is wealth or good family; the aristocratic that it is excellence. (5.3, 1131a10)

Rectificatory justice is not like that. Instead, the wrongdoer must pay to make good the loss or injury, considered in itself, regardless of who is good and who is bad. Justice in involuntary transactions is to have as much after the transaction as you had before. The judge should take from the wrongdoer what he has gained from the victim and give it back to the victim. (5.4, 1131b25)

Justice is not simple reciprocity. If an official strikes someone, it is not just to strike him in return. And if someone strikes an official, he should both be struck in return and be punished too. We also need to take account of whether the act was voluntary or involuntary [on the part of the injured party]. But proportional requital is essential to hold a society together. We can see this in commerce. The producers of different things, such as houses and shoes, exchange their products in some proportion. This requires a measure of relative value, so money has come into being. The standard by which all commodities are measured is in fact demand, but money represents it. Exchange can take place when both parties want it, that is, when each demands the other's goods. Money also acts as a guarantee of exchange in the future: you can save it up and spend it later. Association requires exchange, which requires equality, which requires commensurability. Widely differing goods are not really commensurable, but the measure of demand allows enough accuracy, and money supplies the necessary single standard. (5.5, 1132b21)

Just behaviour is intermediate between doing injustice and suffering it, because the former is to have more than one's share, and the latter, less. And the just man can choose to do just acts, and to share property appropriately, whether or not he is to get one of the shares. Note also that an act may be unjust even though the agent is not an unjust man, as when someone does not act from deliberate choice but under the influence of passion. (5.5 and 5.6, 1133b29)

Political justice arises when the free members of a community share resources in proportion to their value as citizens (which may mean equally). This requires rule by the principle of law, rather than by [the whim of] men, because a man will rule for his own advantage. But the ruler who does act justly should be honoured. In a household justice is similar, but not the same. A slave or a young child is property, so a part of oneself, and no-one chooses to injure himself. There is however domestic justice between husband and wife. (5.6, 1134a23)

Natural political justice is the same everywhere, but legal political justice can vary from place to place. It is not true that all justice is legal, and none natural. Everywhere there is one natural form of government, namely that which is the best. Note also a point of terminology. If something is unjust, it is so by nature or by law. But it is not an unjust act until it is actually done. (5.7, 1134b18)

Something can be unjust, but not be an unjust act. Someone who does something unjust only commits an unjust act if he acts voluntarily. Acts are only voluntary if they are done without ignorance of the person affected, the instrument used or the result, and with nothing being due to accident or compulsion. Similarly for just acts. If someone repays a loan unwillingly and through fear, he does not perform a just act, although the act in itself is just. We can distinguish grades of misconduct. If something goes wrong in a way the agent could not reasonably have expected, that is misadventure. When he could reasonably have expected it, but had no malicious intent, there is a mistake. If the agent acts knowingly but without premeditation, there is an injury. An example is action in a temper. In all these cases, the agent does wrong, but that does not make him an unjust man. Those who act on purpose are unjust and wicked. Similarly a man is just when he acts justly from choice. But if he only acts voluntarily, without choice, he merely acts justly. And mistakes that are made as a result of ignorance are pardonable, but those that are made in ignorance but are not due to that, but to sub-human reactions, are unpardonable. (5.8, 1135a15)

Can anyone suffer injustice voluntarily? It looks as though one can be treated justly either voluntarily or involuntarily. People can be justly treated [for example, punished] against their will. If acting unjustly is simply harming someone voluntarily, and if the weak-willed man voluntarily harms himself, then he will be unjustly treated voluntarily. But we should probably add to the definition of unjust action, "against the patient's will". Then no-one can be treated unjustly voluntarily. (5.9, 1136a10)

If a distribution is unfair, who acts unjustly, the distributor or the one who receives too large a share? The distributor, because he intentionally produces the unjust result. And if he gives himself too small a share, he is not treating himself unjustly because he acts in accordance with his own will. If the distributor knowingly acts unjustly, then he takes more than his share of favour or revenge, so in that sense he will have more than his share. (5.9, 1136b15)

It is easy to perform just acts, but it is not easy to be just because that requires you to act out of a certain character. Likewise it is easy to know the law, but hard to know in what way to act in order to be just. Thus it is not true that a just man could equally well act unjustly, because to act unjustly is not merely to do certain acts, but to do them out of a certain character. Finally, just acts take place between people who share in things that are generally good, and of which they could have too much or too little. (5.9, 1137a4)

Equity is similar to justice, but not quite the same. Equity is a form of justice, but it is superior to legal justice. The law lays down general principles, and when an exceptional case arises it is right to apply the rule that the legislator would have made if he had thought about that type of case. The equitable man does not insist too much on his rights, even when he has the law on his side. This is a kind of justice, not a distinct characteristic. (5.10, 1137a31)

We can now return to whether a man can treat himself unjustly. The law forbids suicide. So someone who voluntarily kills himself acts illegally, and so unjustly. But he does not act unjustly towards himself. Instead, he acts unjustly towards the state. Therefore he is dishonoured by the state. Furthermore, someone who is only unjust, not totally bad, cannot act unjustly towards himself because injustice requires taking something from one person and adding it to another, which is impossible unless at least two people are involved. (5.11, 1138a4)

It is worse to commit injustice than to suffer it, because the former involves vice. This is so even though suffering injustice might be the greater misfortune. (5.11, 1138a28)

Injustice towards oneself is possible in one sense. The rational and the non-rational parts of the soul may thwart each other. So there is scope for a sort of justice between them that would be like the justice between ruler and subject. (5.11, 1138b5)

Book 6. Intellectual virtues are analysed. We must consider prudence and wisdom. There are also resourcefulness, understanding and judgement.

The mean is what the right principle dictates, but we need to know what this is. We turn now to the intellectual virtues. We shall assume that within the rational part of the soul, there is a part that contemplates things with invariable principles and a part that contemplates variable things. Call the first part scientific, and the other calculative. We want to find the best state of each part, which will be its virtue. (6.1, 1138b18)

Three things control action and the attainment of truth: sensation, intellect and appetition. Sensation is not the origin of action, because even animals have it but do not act. Moral virtue involves choice, and choice is deliberate appetition, so if a choice is to be good, the reasoning must be correct and the desire right, and the desire must be for what the reasoning identifies as good. Choice involves intellect, thought and also a certain moral state. The thought must be purposive and practical if anything is to happen, so choice is either appetitive intellect or intellectual appetition. And the state that will allow the attainment of truth is the virtue of both the calculative and the scientific parts of the soul. (6.2, 1139a17)

The soul can arrive at truth by affirmation or denial in five ways, science, art, prudence, intuition and wisdom. To start with science, what we know cannot be otherwise than it is, so the object of scientific knowledge must be the necessary, which is the eternal. Scientific knowledge can be demonstrated, starting from known first principles. (6.3, 1139b14)

Things which could be otherwise than they are include both products and acts, which are different kinds of thing. But arts are productive states that are truly reasoned, such as the art of building. Their sphere is production and not action. (6.4, 1140a1)

Prudent people can deliberate rightly about what is conducive to the good life. Prudence cannot be a science, because we do not deliberate about the invariable. And it cannot be an art, because action and production are different. Those who understand the management of households or of states are prudent, because they can see what is good for themselves and for others. Temperance preserves prudence because it preserves one's vision of the goal to aim at. Prudence is a virtue rather than an art. In an art, a deliberate mistake can be praised, but not in prudence. It is a virtue of the calculative part. (6.5, 1140a24)

The first principles of scientific knowledge cannot be demonstrated, so they must be grasped by intuition. (6.6, 1140b31)

Wisdom is the most finished form of knowledge. Someone who is wise not only knows what follows from first principles, but also has a true understanding of those principles. So wisdom is a combination of intuition and scientific knowledge. Wisdom cannot be identified with prudence, because prudence is concerned with what is good for each creature, so it varies between creatures, but wisdom is always the same thing. It must be scientific and intuitive knowledge of what is by nature most precious. It may be useless in practical life, and someone who lacks theoretical

knowledge but who has a better grasp of the everyday may be more effective in action. (6.7, 1141a9)

Prudence in running the state has two parts. The first is legislation, and the second is dealing with particular circumstances. This last gets called political science, and can be divided into deliberative and juridical science. It is contrasted with knowledge of one's own interests, which gets called prudence. But in fact we cannot secure our own good independently of domestic and political science. Note also that the young may be good at mathematics, but they cannot be prudent because they lack experience. Prudence is opposite to intuition because intuition apprehends the first principles, while prudence apprehends the ultimate particulars, which cannot be apprehended scientifically, but only perceived. (6.8, 1141b23)

Resourcefulness is another intellectual quality. It is a kind of deliberation. Someone who deliberates well does so correctly, so resourcefulness is a species of correctness, but not of knowledge, nor of opinion, since all knowledge is correct and correctness of opinion is simply truth. Resourcefulness is a correctness of thinking, and specifically of deliberation. Thinking is progress towards assertion, whereas opinion is already assertion. Not just any type of correctness will do. It has to be a correctness that will lead to a good outcome, not cleverness that a wicked person can display in order to achieve a bad result. And getting to the right result by mistaken reasoning is not what we want either. Nor is resourcefulness speed in deliberation. Good deliberation is that which correctly identifies the means to achieve the goal. (6.9, 1142a31)

There is also understanding. It is neither scientific knowledge nor opinion. Understanding is concerned with things that may cause perplexity, requiring deliberation. But it is not the same as prudence, because prudence yields imperatives, whereas understanding only involves grasping the facts. Judgement is the faculty of judging correctly what is equitable. (6.10 and 6.11, 1142b34)

The different states of mind tend to get run together, because we attribute to the same person judgement, understanding, prudence and intelligence. They are all to do with particular acts. Intuition is concerned with ultimates in both ways, both the ultimate first principles in scientific knowledge and the perception of ultimate particulars in practical reasoning. All of these states are thought to be natural gifts, unlike wisdom. These natural gifts are thought to develop with age, and we should pay attention to the unproven assertions and opinions of older people. (6.11, 1143a25)

What good are the intellectual virtues? Wisdom does not study the things that produce eudaimonia. Prudence does, but knowledge of which acts are good does not make us more capable of performing them, if virtues are states of character. And prudence will be of no use to people who are already good, nor to people who are not good. It is just as good to take the advice of other people as to be prudent yourself. But wisdom and prudence are virtues of the two parts of the rational soul, so they are desirable even if they do not produce results. And they do produce results. Wisdom produces eudaimonia through the possession and exercise of wisdom. And the full performance of man's function depends on having both moral virtue, to identify the correct goal, and prudence, to identify the correct means. (6.12, 1143b18)

We should also note that merely performing just acts does not make someone good. They need to be done from choice and for the sake of the acts. Virtue makes the choice correct, but carrying out the stages in order to achieve the goal requires a different faculty. Cleverness allows us to carry out the stages. If the goal is noble, then the cleverness is praiseworthy. Prudence is not the same as cleverness, but prudence implies cleverness. And only good people can discern the good, so you cannot be prudent without being good. (6.12, 1144a11)

We can compare the relationship between cleverness and prudence with the relationship between natural virtue and true virtue. We may be born with dispositions towards courage, temperance and so on. But we expect that true virtue will be different, because children and animals have natural dispositions, but they can be harmful without intelligence. But add intelligence and someone can become outstanding in conduct and acquire true virtue. True virtue implies prudence. Socrates was wrong to think that all virtues are forms of prudence, but right to think that they all imply prudence. Virtue implies the right principle. In moral conduct this is prudence. And while the natural virtues can exist independently of one another, the virtues that allow someone to be called good without qualification are not like that, because having the one virtue of prudence will imply having them all. So prudence is required. But it does not have authority over wisdom or over the higher part of the soul. It does not use wisdom, but provides for its realisation. (6.13, 1144b1)

Book 7. This covers how we may do the wrong thing, even though we may know what the right thing is. The process of getting from our knowledge to our action may break down in several ways. Different types of wrongdoing are analysed.

Vice is opposed to virtue, incontinence to continence and brutishness to superhuman virtue. We must now discuss incontinence and continence, and also softness and endurance. People think that continence and endurance are good qualities, and their opposites bad. They think that the continent abide by their own calculations, and that the incontinent do not. They think that the incontinent man does wrong because he feels like it, knowing that it is wrong. Some say that prudent people cannot be incontinent, and others that they can. (7.1, 1145a15)

Socrates thought that you could not consciously act contrary to what you knew to be best. But this clashes with the observed facts. Some say that you may have only opinion about what is best, and you can act against that. It is also not clear how good a thing continence is. If it makes you stick to bad desires, it can be bad. In that circumstance, incontinence would be good. But someone who pursues pleasure from conviction and through choice might be better than one who does the same from incontinence, because the former is more likely to be cured. (7.2, 1145b21)

We need to ask whether incontinent people act knowingly or unknowingly, whether incontinence consists in external circumstances, an attitude, or both, and whether continence and incontinence are shown in relation to everything or a limited range of things. It is not helpful to say that people act against true opinion rather than knowledge, because people have opinions and think that they have knowledge. But we may have knowledge without reflecting on it. We may make mistakes in reasoning. Mental disturbance may prevent the normal use of knowledge. And desire may influence us to act on some reasoning and not on other reasoning. (7.3, 1146b8)

People are continent and enduring, or incontinent and soft, in the sphere of pleasures and pains. Someone who indulges the pleasures of food and sex to excess, and avoids all discomfort, against his reason, is called incontinent without qualification. This is a vice. It differs from licentiousness, because the licentious man pursues these pleasures out of choice, but the incontinent under the influence of a strong desire. Excessive desire for pleasures that are not necessary, but still desirable, such as honour and wealth, is called incontinence in relation to the particular pleasure. People are not blamed for liking them to such an extent that they cannot resist them, but only for liking them to excess. (7.4, 1147b20)

Some pleasures are perverse. They may result from brutish nature, from disease or from habit. Then we do not have incontinence, but something outside the bounds of vice. And all cases of excessive folly, cowardice, licentiousness and irritability are either brutish or morbid. So continence and incontinence should only be discussed as virtues and vices within a limited field. (7.5, 1148b15)

Incontinence of temper is less disgraceful than incontinence of desire. With temper, we jump ahead of reason to seek revenge. With desire, we set off to enjoy whatever the senses tell us is pleasant. So temper is amenable to reason up to a point, unlike desire. And it is more pardonable to be guided by natural appetites, and temper and resentment are more natural than desires for excessive pleasures. And the man of temper is not crafty, but desire is crafty. And action in anger is from a sense of grievance, which may be justified. (7.6, 1149a24)

Note again that only natural human desires are the subject of temperance and licentiousness. Others are brutish. Brutishness is not as bad as vice, but it may be more alarming because it involves a lack of reason rather than a corruption of reason. But a bad man can do far more harm than a brute. (7.6, 1149b26)

We can be continent or incontinent in respect of pleasures, and enduring or soft in respect of pains. Most people incline towards the incontinent and the soft. Someone who pursues excessive pleasures, or necessary pleasures to excess, and who does so deliberately and for their own sake, is licentious. He must be unrepentant, and therefore incurable. The same goes for someone who avoids pains by choice, and not because he cannot bear them. This state is worse than that of incontinence, when one is carried along by desire rather than choosing. And note that endurance is resisting desires, but continence is conquering them, two different things. Someone who cannot withstand pains that most people can withstand is soft, and someone who gives in easily to pleasures that most can resist is incontinent. Incontinence may take the form of impetuosity or the form of weakness. (7.7, 1150a9)

The licentious, vicious man is unrepentant, but the incontinent man repents of his choices. Vice is a chronic disease, but incontinence is intermittent. Among the incontinent, the impetuous are better than the weak, because the latter have a moral principle and do not abide by it. Incontinence is not a vice, because it is contrary to the agent's choice, but incontinent men still do wicked things. The incontinent man can be persuaded to change, but the licentious man is convinced that he is right so he cannot be persuaded. (7.8, 1150b29)

Someone is continent essentially by abiding by the true principle, although he may incidentally be continent by abiding by any principle. Some people go beyond continence and are obstinate. The continent man only refuses to be swayed by emotion or desire, but the obstinate man simply refuses to change under any circumstances. Obstinate people may be opinionated, ignorant or boorish. Both the continent man and the temperate man do not act against principle. But the former has bad desires and the latter does not. (7.9, 1151a29)

One cannot be both prudent and incontinent, because the prudent man is morally good. But a clever man can be incontinent. An incontinent man is only half wicked, because his choice is morally sound. It is just that he does not follow his choice. The majority of people fall in between continence and incontinence. The incontinence of excitable people is easier to cure than that of those who deliberate but do not abide by their decisions. And those whose incontinence results from habit are easier to cure than those whose incontinence is natural. (7.10, 1152a6)

The political philosopher, who decides the standard by which we decide what is good, must study pleasure and pain. And moral virtues and vices are connected with pleasures and pains. Also, most people think that eudaimonia involves pleasure. Some people think that no pleasure is a good. They argue that pleasure is a process, which is not an end. They also argue that the temperate man shuns pleasures, that the prudent man only seeks freedom from pain, that pleasures hinder thinking, that there is no art that produces pleasure, and that children and brutes pursue pleasures. Others argue that not all pleasures are good, because some are disgraceful and some are harmful. Others argue

that pleasure is not the supreme good, because it is a process and not the end. (7.11, 1152b1)

But these arguments are not good enough. Things can be absolutely good or good for somebody, and people's natures and states are also called good equivocally, and so are processes. So processes can be good. Some pleasures are absolutely pleasant, such as the pleasure of contemplation, whereas others are only pleasant when they make good deficiencies. And we cannot argue that there must be something better than pleasures on the ground that the end is better than the process, because pleasures are activities [that is, they accompany and perfect activities], and activities are ends, rather than being processes. The fact that some pleasures harm our health does not show that pleasures are bad in themselves. And it is natural that there is no art that produces pleasure, because it is an activity and arts only produce faculties. The points about the temperate, the prudent, children and brutes are all dealt with by noting that some pleasures are good without qualification and others not, and that different types of person pursue different pleasures. (7.12, 1152b25)

Pain is an evil, but the opposite of evil is good, so it seems that pleasure is a good. And even if some pleasures are bad, some other kind might still be the supreme good. And if the supreme good is the unimpeded exercise of the faculties, this will be a kind of pleasure. This explains why a eudaimonic life is assumed to be pleasant, and why eudaimonia requires external goods so that activities are not impeded. But this does not mean that eudaimonia is good fortune, because good fortune can be an impediment. Pleasure also has a claim to be the supreme good because all humans and animals pursue it. (7.13, 1153b1)

Some say that the noble pleasures are desirable but not the bodily pleasures. But the pains that are contrary to the bodily pleasures are bad, and normally the contrary of a bad thing is a good thing. Bodily pleasures are probably good up to a point, but not in excess. We can explain why bodily pleasures seem to be especially desirable. One reason is that pleasure drives out pain. Another is that because bodily pleasures are intense, people who cannot enjoy other kinds of pleasure pursue them. There are pleasures that are unaccompanied by pain, and do not admit of excess. These are pleasures that stimulate the activity of a natural disposition. But we cannot just enjoy the same pleasure all of the time, because we have a complex nature, composed of body and soul. God, on the other hand, enjoys one simple pleasure for ever. (7.14, 1154a8)

Book 8. The types of friendship are analysed.

Friendship is a necessity, for all types of people. Even lawgivers attach more importance to it than to justice, because they promote concord, which is a kind of friendship. Justice is not needed between friends. And friendship is one of the fine things of life. Some say that friendship is a matter of similarity, others that opposites attract. We shall ask whether friendship can exist between all types of person, and whether there is only one kind of friendship. (8.1, 1155a3)

People love things because they are good, or pleasant, or useful. And they love what appears to be good for themselves. Friendship only arises when one wishes the well-being of another human being for his own sake, and this feeling is reciprocated and is recognised by both parties. (8.2, 1155b17)

There are three types of friendship. Some wish others well because they are useful, or because they are pleasant. But such friendships are motivated by one's own good or pleasure, and they are easily dissolved if the friend loses the relevant qualities. Friendship based on utility seems to occur most often among the elderly, and elderly friends may not spend much time together. Friendship between the young is thought to be grounded on pleasure, and while friendships can start and end quickly, the young do spend a lot of time together. Only the friendship of those who are good, and similar in

their goodness, is perfect. Someone like that desires the good of his friend for the friend's own sake, because of what he is. The friendship will last so long as the friend remains good. It is stable because the qualities that ground it are in the friends themselves. Such friendships are rare, because good men are rare. They also need time and intimacy. (8.3, 1156a6)

Friendships based on pleasure and on utility last longest when each friend receives the same benefit, for example pleasure, and from the same source, for example two witty men rather than the relationship between lover and beloved. Friendships based on pleasure and on utility can involve bad people, unlike friendships based on goodness. And only friendships based on goodness are proof against slander. Only such friendships should be called friendships in the full sense. It is persons of low character who are friends on the basis of pleasure or utility. (8.4, 1156b33)

Friendship remains as a disposition even when friends are apart, but long absence can cause a friendship to fade. Old and sour-tempered people do not make friends easily because there is not much pleasures in their company. Those who approve of each other but do not spend time together are well-disposed rather than friends, because the mark of friendship is spending time together. Affection is different from friendship because it resembles a feeling, while friendship is a state. Mutual affection involves choice, which proceeds from a moral state. And when someone wishes another well for the other's sake, that is not from feeling but in accordance with a moral state. (8.5, 1157b5)

It is not possible to have many friends in the true sense (friendship between good men). It is not easy for many people to be attractive at the same time to the same person or to be men of good character. And you have to get to know a friend thoroughly. But it is possible to have many friendships that are based on utility or on pleasure. Of these two, friendships based on pleasure are nearer to true friendship, and the friendships of the young are like this. Even the most blessed people will need agreeable friends, although not useful friends. People in high office have friends of different types, some useful and some agreeable. A good man is both useful and agreeable, but he does not become the friend of someone superior in rank unless the latter is also superior in goodness, so that the inferior can make a proportionately equal return. And in general, the friendships discussed so far are based on equality, with each friend receiving the same benefits and wishing the other the same good, or else exchanging one benefit for another. (8.6, 1158a1)

Now consider friendship between unequals, such as parent and child, or husband and wife. The parties do not receive the same benefits from each other. But when each renders what is appropriate, the friendship will be enduring. The better person must be loved more than he loves, to give a sort of equality, with affection proportionate to merit. But equality in friendship is primarily quantitative equality, rather than equality in proportion to merit as it is with just actions. If a wide gap develops, for example in virtue or affluence, a friendship ends. So we do not wish our friends the very greatest of goods, to be gods, because then we would lose them as friends. (8.7, 1158b11)

Most people seem to want to be loved rather than to love, partly because they crave esteem but also because they enjoy being loved for its own sake. But friendship seems to consist more in giving affection than in receiving it. Loving is the distinctive virtue of friends, and when love is given in accordance with merit, a friendship endures. Giving love in that way also allows friendships between unequals, because inequality can be compensated. Friendship is based on equality and similarity. Good people, being steadfast in themselves, can also be steadfast to one another. Bad people do not even remain self-consistent, and can only form temporary friendships. Friendship based on utility seems to occur chiefly between opposite types, because each can give what the other lacks. (8.8, 1159a12)

Friends tends to hold things in common, and the more so the closer the friendship. And the claims of justice increase with the intensity of a friendship. All communities are like parts of the political community. Political associations seem to have been created for advantage, and other associations for particular advantages, such as commerce or pleasure. (8.9, 1159b25)

The three types of political constitution, from best to worst, are monarchy, aristocracy and polity (rule by those who meet a property qualification). The perversion of monarchy is tyranny, in which the ruler seeks his own benefit instead of that of the subjects, and this is the worst perversion. Monarchy can pass into tyranny, but aristocracy into polity, and polity into democracy. There are analogies in the household, with a father as monarch to his sons and (rightly) as tyrant to his slaves. Between husband and wife there is aristocracy, with the wife being assigned suitable tasks, but if the husband asserts control over everything there is oligarchy. There is polity between brothers, because they are equals except in age. Democracy exists in households where no-one is in control. (8.10, 1160a31)

In each type of constitution there is a kind of friendship, to the extent that there is justice. The friendship of a monarch for his subjects consists in his beneficence. The same can be said of father and child. Between husband and wife there is the same friendship as in an aristocracy, the husband receiving the greater good. Friendship between brothers is like that in a polity. But in a tyranny there is little or no friendship or justice, whereas in a democracy there may be quite a lot of both. (8.11, 1161a10)

Friendships between relations, or between members of a social club, differ from those between fellow-citizens or fellow-voyagers. The latter types seem to be based on a compact. Friendships between relations are also of different kinds. Parents love their children as parts of themselves, and from birth, whereas children love their parents as authors of their being. Brothers love each other as having the same origin, and their common upbringing makes their affection like that of members of the same club. The love between husband and wife is natural, in that man is by nature a pairing creature, not just for procreation but to supply the necessities of life. (8.12, 1161b11)

Any of the three kinds of friendship can be between equals, who should then contribute equally, or between unequals, in which case one should contribute in proportion to the superiority of the other. Complaints mostly arise in utilitarian friendships, where each party is always seeking the better of the bargain. Sometimes there is a legal agreement. But in other cases there is merely a moral obligation. Then the recipient of a benefit ought to repay it, so as not to make the giver a friend (as opposed to a trading partner) against his will. In valuing a service one could have regard to the benefit to the recipient or to the generosity of the donor. In utilitarian friendship we should probably take the benefit to the recipient. (8.13, 1162a34)

Quarrels can arise where there is inequality. The better man, or the more useful one, expects to get more, but the other one thinks that a good friend should help one who is in need. Both are right. The superior one should get more honour, and the needy one more gain. This also happens in public life, where those who benefit the community are honoured. And friendship only demands what is practical, not what is strictly in accordance with merit. One could never give the gods or one's parents as much as they really deserved. So a son should not disown his father, although a father may disown his son, just as a creditor can remit a debt. (8.14, 1163a24)

Book 9. The grounds of friendship and difficulties in friendships are analysed.

Friendships without equality require proportion. If friendships are not based on character, but on pleasure or utility, they break up when the relevant attributes are no longer there. Quarrels arise when the outcome of a friendship is not what the parties want. The recipient of a service has the better right than the one who proffers it to assess its value. But where there is no contract, and service is offered for the friend's sake, the return should be in proportion to the intention of the benefactor. If the gift was not made for the friend's sake, it is better to make a return that seems fair to both parties. But failing that, the beneficiary should assess the value. He should however value it at what would have seemed fair to him before he got it, since all persons think that what they own is of great value. (9.1, 1163b32)

There is scope for conflict. Should you always defer to your father, or elect leaders with experience [instead of your father's friends]? Should you help a friend rather than someone of high character? Should you spend money on repaying a benefactor or on a close friends? There are no hard and fast rules, but while in general one should repay benefits, there are exceptional cases when this is not so, for example when you have to choose between repaying someone who has ransomed you and ransoming your own father, or when you have received a loan from someone else and then he asks you for a loan, but you know he will probably not repay you. Not even a father deserves everything, but each person should be honoured as is appropriate. (9.2, 1164b22)

Friendships can reasonably end when they are based on pleasure or utility and these attributes are no longer there. But someone who had thought he was loved not for these reasons but for his character could complain, and justly if his friend had led him to think that. If someone befriends someone else thinking that he is good, but he turns out to be bad, then the friendship should be broken off at once if the friend is incurable, but the friend deserves support if he might become good. If two friends start off the same but one then becomes far superior in virtue, the friendship will have to end. (9.3, 1165a36)

Feelings towards friends reflect feelings that people have towards themselves, so far as they are or think themselves good. We wish the good of our friends and of ourselves, and we wish our own and our friends' preservation. We spend time with our friends, choose the same things as our friends and share our friends' joys and sorrows, and the good man will enjoy his own company, be consistent in his choices and be fully conscious of his own joys and sorrows. The good man will extend his feelings towards himself to his friend, who is another self. Bad people may not have the qualities of good people, but they may act in the same way to the extent that they are self-satisfied. They may act in contrary ways, as when they are weak-willed and indulge pleasures that they know will harm them, or shirk what they know would be best for them, or even, if very wicked, commit suicide. And bad people seek company and avoid being alone, because when alone they recall disagreeable experiences. They also feel no affection for themselves, and lack sympathetic consciousness of their own joys and sorrows. (9.4, 1166a1)

Goodwill differs from friendship, because it can be felt towards people you do not know, and from affection, because it is without intensity or desire, and because it can spring up suddenly. But goodwill is the beginning of friendship, and it is normally aroused by some merit or goodness. (9.5, 1166b30)

Concord is a friendly feeling. It arises in a state when the citizens agree about their interests, adopt the same policy. and put it into effect. We find such concord among good men, because they have broadly the same outlook, and their wishes are stable. But bad men cannot be in concord because they are all out for their own advantage. (9.6, 1167a22)

Benefactors are thought to love their beneficiaries more than beneficiaries love their benefactors. Most think that this is because the benefactor is owed, and the beneficiary owes, and a creditor cares for his debtor's well-being while the debtor would rather see the creditor out of the way. But this is not a good analogy, because the benefactor feels love, not practical concern for his own benefit. The beneficiary is loved as if he were the benefactor's own handiwork, just as a craftsman loves one of his works, and the work would not love back as much if it came to life. There is also something fine in the benefactor's action, so he takes pleasure in its object, whereas the beneficiary feels nothing fine in his relationship to the benefactor. Another point is that loving is active and being loved passive, so love is an attribute of the person who takes the leading part in an action. And people feel more affection for things that have cost them some effort. (9.7, 1167b17)

Should one love oneself or someone else most of all? Self-love is often thought to be bad, but a man should love his best friend most, and that is the one who wishes him well for his own sake. He himself is like that, and all friendly feelings for others are extensions of feelings for oneself. Those who think that self-love is bad think of it in terms of assigning oneself a larger share of money, public honours and bodily pleasures. Self-love like that is rightly reproached. But one who strives to act virtuously better deserves to be regarded as self-loving. The highest part of a man is his rational part, and he is a true self-lover if he loves this part. The good man is right to love himself in this sense. And he will sacrifice wealth, honours and even his life for others. (9.8, 1168a28)

It might seem that the wholly blessed man would have no need of friends because he would already have all good things. But it would be odd not to assign the eudaimonic man friends, which are the greatest of external goods. And since it is good to confer a benefit, especially on friends, the good man will need friends to receive his benefits. Furthermore man is a social creature, and it is a good to spend time with friends. Those who think that friends would not be needed are probably thinking of friendships based on utility or on pleasure. Furthermore, eudaimonia is an activity. A good man will take pleasure in contemplating the honourable actions of his friends. And it is easier to keep up good activity continuously in the company of friends than by oneself. It also seems that a good friend is by nature desirable for a good man. Life is good and pleasant, and to be conscious of being alive is good. And the good man thinks of his friend as a second self, so his friend's existence will be almost as desirable to him as his own. (9.9, 1169b3)

One should not have too many utilitarian friends, because it would be arduous to repay the services of all. And a few friends for amusement should be enough. As for friends of good character, they should be limited to the number with whom one can be on intimate terms. And they too must be friends with one another if they are to live as a group, which also limits the number. And it would be impossible to have great affection for many. (9.10, 1170b20)

Friendship is more needed in one's own adversity, when useful friends are wanted, but it is more honourable in prosperity, and the prosperous seek virtuous friends with whom they can share their fortune. The mere presence of friends is pleasant in prosperity and in adversity, and a tactful friend can comfort one in adversity, but it can be painful to see one's friend distressed at one's own adversity. In prosperity we should invite our friends wholeheartedly to share in our good fortune, but we should hesitate to trouble friends with our misfortunes. But we should visit friends in misfortune readily, while not being too eager to visit friends in good times merely for our own advantage. (9.11, 1171a21)

There is nothing more desirable for friends than sharing their lives, and spending time together in whatever pursuits most attract them. Worthless people prefer worthless pursuits and their friendship is bad. But the friendship of the good is good, and good friends can improve each other. (9.12, 1171b29)

Book 10. Pleasure is not the supreme good. Eudaimonia is an activity. The best life is the life of contemplation. Virtuous activity generally is the second best.

Pleasure and pain are most important. They are used in training, and a virtuous person will like and dislike the right things. Some say that pleasure is the Good, others that it is wholly bad, and others say that we should represent it as bad even if it is not, because people are inclined to it. But this last view is wrong because people will hold it in contempt when they observe that those who denounce pleasure are still drawn towards it. We must stick to true theories, because their agreement with the facts will mean that they carry conviction. (10.1, 1172a19)

All creatures are attracted to pleasure, suggesting that it is the Good. And all creatures avoid pain, the opposite of pleasure. And pleasure is chosen for itself, not for the sake of anything else. And adding pleasure to any good thing makes it more desirable, but what is good is only made better by the addition of something good. But this last argument only shows that pleasure is a good, not the Good. Furthermore, the argument can be reversed: the life of pleasure can be enhanced by intelligence. We want to find something that cannot be made better by adding another good. But at least those who deny that what all creatures seek is a good are mistaken. And the argument that the fact that pain is an evil does not prove that pleasure is a good, because it could be another evil, does not work because evils would be objects of aversion and pleasure is not. (10.2, 1172b9)

Some say that the Good is determinate but that pleasure is indeterminate, because it comes in degrees. If they mean that people are more or less pleased, the same would apply to the virtues, which people exemplify more or less. But if they are ranking the pleasures themselves in order, the argument does not work because pleasures can be pure or mixed. And anyway pleasure can be determinate, even if it has degrees, just as health is determinate but has degrees. (10.3, 1173a13)

Those who argue in this way assume that the Good is something perfect, but that movements and processes are incomplete, and then argue that pleasure is a movement or process. But it is not a movement because it does not have its own quickness and slowness, nor is it a process of becoming. Nor can pleasure be a process of replenishment, because that would be bodily and it is not the body that feels pleasure. And not all pleasures can be replenishments of deficiencies, because some are not preceded by pains. (10.3, 1173a23)

Some cite disreputable pleasures, but one may argue that they are not really pleasant. They may please those of an unhealthy disposition, just as unwholesome food may appear wholesome to sick people. Or some pleasures may be desirable in themselves, but not when achieved in certain ways. Or pleasures may differ in kind, and those that come from noble acts differ from those that come from base acts, and only just men can enjoy the pleasures of the just. So not every pleasure is desirable. And pleasure is not the Good, because no-one would choose to live with the mentality of a child, even if he took the greatest pleasure in childish things. And no-one would choose to find pleasure in doing disgraceful things, even if there were no prospect of painful consequences. And sight, memory and knowledge are things we would choose to have even if they brought no pleasure. (10.3, 1173b20)

Pleasure is not a process, because every process needs to last until its completion whereas pleasure does not need to be prolonged in order to perfect its quality. Nor is it a movement. Movements and processes consist of parts, whereas pleasure is a whole, complete at any moment. But there is a connection with activity. The activity of any sense is perfect when the organ of sense is in the best condition and is directed towards the best of the objects proper to that sense. The activity will then be as pleasurable as it can be. And the pleasure will perfect the activity, as a supervening perfection like the bloom of youth. The same holds for thought and its objects. But continuous pleasure is not

possible because of fatigue. We may also note that life is a form of activity, and each individual directs his activity to those objects, and to the use of the faculties, that he likes best. The pleasure perfects the activities, and therefore perfects life. So it is reasonable that all should be drawn to pleasure. (10.4, 1174a13)

The activities of the intellect differ from those of the senses, and activities within each group differ among themselves, so the pleasures that perfect them are different. The pleasures intensify and improve the particular activities, and one activity may be hindered by the distraction of the pleasure of another. So the pleasures of the different activities must be different. Since activities differ in goodness and badness, so do their pleasures. And pleasures are inseparable from their activities, unlike the impulses that give rise to the activities. What gives pleasure varies from one human being to another. But the true pleasures are those that the good man regards as pleasures. But which among these should be regarded as the proper pleasure of man? (10.5, 1175a21)

We must now give an account of eudaimonia, which is an activity that is chosen for itself. That is, nothing beyond the activity is required. Pleasant amusements are thought to be like this, but they are harmful because they make people neglect their bodies and their property. The fact that people in power choose them is not evidence that they are good, because virtue and intelligence do not depend on power. And to toil for the sake of amusement would seem silly. Relaxation has its place, but as a means to allow us to exert ourselves, not as an end. Moreover, serious things are better than the merely amusing. And anyone can enjoy bodily pleasures. (10.6, 1176a30)

Eudaimonia is an activity in accordance with the highest virtue, and this will be the virtue of the best part of us. So it is a contemplative activity, because this is an activity of the intellect, the highest part of us, and because this is the most continuous activity, since we can contemplate continuously more easily than we can carry on any practical activity continuously. It is also the most pleasant of the virtuous activities. It is also the most self-sufficient, because you can practise it alone (unlike justice or bravery, which need other people). And it is appreciated for its own sake, because nothing is gained from it except the act of contemplation. Furthermore, eudaimonia is thought to require leisure, which is not available in the fields in which the practical virtues are exercised, war and politics. But a life of pure contemplation would be too high for humans, even though we should not be deterred from developing the intellect, which is the divine part of us, as far as we can. (10.7, 1177a12)

Life in accordance with other virtues will be eudaimonic in a secondary degree. Virtues such as justice and bravery arise in specifically human activities, and moral goodness is closely linked with feelings and with prudence. But the practice of these virtues requires more in the way of external goods than the practice of contemplation. The liberal man will need money, the brave man strength and the temperate man opportunity. We can also show the superiority of the contemplative life by considering what sort of activity should be attributed to the gods. They can hardly engage in just, brave, liberal or temperate acts. That leaves contemplation. And the lower animals, being incapable of contemplation, have no eudaimonia. The contemplator will need external goods, but only to a modest extent. One can be virtuous without great resources. And the contemplator is most likely to find favour with the gods. (10.8, 1178a9)

We must now work out how to put virtue into practice. Most people live under the sway of their feelings, and will not be reformed by discourses. And discussion and instruction will not work unless the natural character of the person to be instructed is receptive to argument, that is, already has some affinity to virtue. Both the education of the young and the conduct of adults need to be regulated by law, with punishments, because the bad man will not listen to reason. Moreover, law can have effective force. The pronouncements of an individual may be resented and may lack the power of compulsion, but the law is not so resented. But only in a few states does the law prescribe upbringing and daily life. (10.9, 1179a33)

While public supervision of upbringing would be best, one could also leave it up to the father, but then he should ideally assume the role of legislator. He will have the advantage of being able to tailor his treatment to the characteristics of his own children. But as well as his particular knowledge, he should also ideally have universal knowledge of the type that we associate with the sciences. (10.9, 1180a29)

So we need to know where one can acquire a grasp of legislation. In other arts, like medicine, the same people teach and practise the art. But the sophists who profess to teach political science do not practise it, and the politicians who practise it do not teach it. The signs are that one needs practical experience in order to acquire a knowledge of politics. And the sophists are in fact ignorant of politics. They do not appreciate that in order to select the best laws from a collection of possible laws, you need understanding, just as you need experience in order to make proper use of a textbook of medicine. We should therefore make a systematic study of politics. (10.9, 1180b28)