

Book I

I 1

[1] /1/ Every craft¹ and every route of inquiry² and likewise [1094^a1] every action³ and deliberate choice⁴ seems to seek some good. That is why⁵ people correctly⁶ assert that the good is “that which all seek.”⁷

/2/ A certain difference, however, appears⁸ to exist among ends.⁹ For some are activities,¹⁰ while others are works¹¹ of some sort beyond the activities themselves. [1094^a5] But

¹ **Craft** (*technē*): Discussed at VI 4.

² **Route of inquiry** (*methodos*): A *methodos* is a *tropos tēs zētēseōs*—a way or mode of inquiry (*APo.* I 31 46^a32^b36). *Hodos* means “route” or “road,” as at I 4 1095^a33.

³ **Action** (*praxis*): The noun *praxis* (verb: *prattein*) is used in a broad sense to refer to any intentional action, including one performed by a child or wild beast (III 1 1111^a25-26, 2 1111^b8-9), and in a narrower one to refer exclusively to what results from deliberation (*bouleusis*) and deliberate choice (*prohairesis*), of which neither wild beasts nor children are capable (I 9 1099^b32-1100^a5, *EE* II 8 1224^a28-29). The narrower sense may be the one intended here.

⁴ **Deliberate choice**: Discussed in III 2.

⁵ **That is why ... all** (*panta*) **seek**: Aristotle apparently commits the logical fallacy of inferring that there is a good that all (that is, all who practice crafts, follow lines in inquiry, do actions, and make deliberate choices) seek from the fact that there is a good that each seeks. This is like inferring that there is a girl all boys love from the fact that each boy loves a girl (but not necessarily the same one). I 2 1104^a18-^b7 suggests a way to defend the inference. Any good or end is sought or desired either because of itself or because of something else. Eventually this chain of “because” must terminate in an end or good X that is desired solely because of itself. If all such chains terminate in the same X, as the existence of an architectonic science with an end or good that circumscribes all the others suggests, then X will be the human good, that is, the one unique good that all human beings, in seeking any good whatsoever, thereby seek.

⁶ **Correctly** (*kalôs*): *Kalôs*, the adverb derived from the adjective *kalos* (“noble”) sometimes means “nobly” and sometimes, as here, something closer to “rightly” or “correctly.” See I 2 1094^b14n.

⁷ **The good is “that which all seek”**: One of the generally accepted accounts of the good canvassed at *Rh.* I 6 1362^a23-29 and treated as uncontroversial at *NE* X 2 1172^b35-1173^a6. It is attributed to Eudoxus at X 2 1172^b9-10, where *panta* clearly means not “all things,” but all animals, whether rational or nonrational.

⁸ **Appears** (*phainetai*): The verb *phainesthai* (“appear”) with (1) a participle is endorsing of what appears to be so and is translated “it is evident,” and the cognate adjective *phaneron* as “evident.” *Phainesthai*

wherever there are ends beyond the actions, in those cases, the works are naturally better than the activities. /3/ But since there are many sorts of actions and of crafts and sciences,¹² their ends

with (2) an infinitive is neither endorsing nor rejecting of what appears to be so and is translated “appears.” When *phainesthai* occurs without a participle or an infinitive, it may be endorsing or rejecting. Appearances (*phainomena*) are things that appear to be so, but that may or may not be so. Things that appear so to everyone or to wise people who have investigated them are *endoxa* or reputable beliefs. The role of both *phainomena* and *endoxa* in ethics are discussed at VII 1 1145^b2-7.

⁹ **End:** “The end (*telos*) is the best and last thing for whose sake all the other things are done” (*EE* II 1 1219^a10-11; *Met.* V 16 1021^b29-30).

¹⁰ **Activities:** The actualization (*entelecheia*) or use (*chrêsis*) of a capacity (*dunamis*, 1094^a1) or state (*hexis*), as when an agent is currently engaging in deliberately chosen action, is an activity (*energeia*), by contrast with a process or movement (*kinêsis*). This contrast is explored in *NE* X 4. When the activity is something’s function (*ergon*)—as deliberately chosen action is (part of) a human being’s function—then “the function is the end (*telos*), and the activity is the function” (*Met.* IX 8 1050^a21-22). A second sort of end is one that is the further end of an activity of this first sort. Thus functions are also of two sorts: “It is clear that the function is better than the state or the disposition (*diathesis*); but ‘function’ is said of things in two ways. In some cases, the function is a different thing beyond the use (*chrêsis*), as a house is the function of building and not the activity of building, and health is the function of medicine and not the activity of producing health or practicing medicine. In other cases, the use is the function, as seeing is the function of sight, and active contemplation (*theôria*) is the function of the scientific knowledge of mathematics. Hence it necessarily follows that, when the use of a thing is its function, the use is better than the state” (*EE* II 1 1219^a11-18). So just as the house is better than the activity of building, so the actualization or use of a state, or of a capacity is better than the state or capacity itself (*NE* I 11094^a16-18). Although one kind of further end is a product or work, such as a house or health, another can be a state. Thus the actualization of practical wisdom, which is a state of the soul, is a valuable end, choiceworthy because of itself, but it is also choiceworthy for the sake of theoretical wisdom and its actualization (*NE* VI 13 1145^a6-11, X 7 1177^b4-26). Correlated with this difference is one in the states themselves. The actualization or use of a *productive* state or capacity, such as building, is an incomplete activity, since it is not itself an end, whereas that of other sorts of states, such as scientific knowledge, is a complete activity, since it is an end (*Met.* IX 6 1048^b18-35). Productive states are discussed in *NE* VI 4 where they are contrasted with practical or action related ones.

¹¹ **Work** (*ergon*): Aristotle uses the noun *ergon* (plural: *erga*) for (1) the function or activity that is the actualization or use of a state, such as the knowledge of the craft of medicine, for (2) works (which may or may not be products in the strict sense of the term) that are the further results of that activity, and sometimes (3) for both simultaneously.

¹² **Sciences** (*epistêmai*: singular, *epistêmê*): Aristotle usually divides sciences into three kinds: theoretical (contemplative), practical (action-determining), and productive (crafts) (*Top.* VI 6 145^a15-16 *Met.* XI 7 1064^a16-19). Sometimes a more fine-grained classification is employed, in which sciences previously classified as theoretical (such as physics, biology, and others dealing with the sublunary world) are reclassified as “natural sciences” and distinguished from theoretical sciences in the strict sense (such as

turn out to be many as well. For health is the end of medicine, a ship of shipbuilding, victory of generalship, and wealth of household management.¹³

/4/ Some of these fall under some one capacity,¹⁴ however, as |1094^a10| bridlemaking falls under horsemanship, along with all the others that produce equipment for horsemanship, and as it and every action in warfare fall under generalship, and, in the same way,¹⁵ others fall under different ones. But¹⁶ in all such cases, the ends of the architectonic ones¹⁷ are more choiceworthy than the ones falling under them, since these are pursued |1094^a15| for the sake also of the former. /5/ It makes no difference, though, whether the ends of the actions are the

astronomy and theology), which deal with the superlunary sphere of eternal things (*Ph.* II 7 198^a21-^b4, *Met.* VI 1 1025^b18-1026^a32). In *NE*, the term *epistêmê* is sometimes reserved for unconditional scientific knowledge provided exclusively by the strictly theoretical sciences (VI 3 1139^b31-34). Here it is used in the looser sense which encompasses the natural, practical, and productive sciences as well.

¹³ **Medicine ... household management:** The names of these crafts or sciences are: *iatrikê* (“medicine”), *naupêgikê* (“shipbuilding”), *stratêgikê* (“generalship”), and *oikonomikê* (“household management”). The ending *-ikê* signifies that either *epistêmê* (“science”) or *technê* (“craft”) should be supplied, so that *iatrikê* is “the science of medicine,” and *naupêgikê* is “the craft of shipbuilding.” Since a craft *is a productive science it usually doesn't matter much which we supply*.

¹⁴ **Capacity (*dunamis*):** The term *dunamis* (plural: *dunameis*) is used by Aristotle to capture two different but related things. (1) as in ordinary Greek, it signifies a power or capacity something has, especially one to cause movement in something else (productive *dunamis*) or to be caused to move by something else (passive *dunamis*). (2) it signifies a way of being F, being capable of being F (or being F in potentiality) as distinguished from being actively F (or F in actuality) (see IX 7 1168^a5-15). Here the use of the term indicates that Aristotle is thinking of the crafts and sciences in his usual way as psychological capacities or states of the soul, not as abstract structures of propositions or sentences of the sort found in textbooks (see VI 3 1139^b15-18, X 9 1181^b2).

¹⁵ **Textual note:** Reading δὲ for OCT δὴ (“in the same way, then”).

¹⁶ **Textual note:** Reading δὲ for OCT δὴ (“in all such cases, then”).

¹⁷ **The architectonic ones (*architektonikos*):** “In each craft, the architectonic craftsmen are more estimable, know more, and are wiser than the handicraftsmen, because they know the explanations of their products” (*Met.* I 1 981^a30-^b1).

activities themselves or some other thing beyond them, just as in the sciences we have mentioned.¹⁸

¹⁸ **The sciences we have mentioned:** Suppose that the end of someone's action is to do well in action (VI 2 1139^b1-4), and that doing well in action consists in actualizing or using his virtuous state of character, then the end of his action will be the activity consisting in the actualization of that state. Because the sciences mentioned have ends beyond their actualization or use, they are not like this.

I 2

/1/ If, then, there is some end of things doable in action¹⁹ that we wish²⁰ for because of itself, and the others because of it, and we do not choose everything because of something else (since if *that* is the case, it will go on without limit |1094^a20| so that the desire will be empty and pointless²¹), it is clear that this will be the good—that is, the best good. /2/ Hence regarding our life²² as well won't knowing²³ the good have

¹⁹ **Doable in action** (*prakton*): Verbals ending in *-ton*—of which *prakton* is an example—sometimes have (a) the meaning of a perfect passive participle (“doable in action”) and sometimes (b) express possibility (“doable in action”). A decree (*psêphisma*) seems to be *prakton* in sense (b), since it is a prescription specific enough to be acted on without further need for deliberation (VI 8 1141^b23-28). What it specifies is thus a possibility (a type of action) that many different particular (token) actions might actualize. Particular objects of perception that are *prakton* (VI 11 1143^a32-33, ^b4-5) seem to be so in sense (a).

²⁰ **Wish** (*boulêsis*): Discussed in III 4.

²¹ **The desire will be empty and pointless**: Like their English counterparts “empty” and “pointless,” *kenos* and *mataios* are somewhat vague. The primary meaning of *kenos* is that of being like an empty cup or vessel. In Plato, as elsewhere, it is thus readily applied to desires: “hunger, thirst, and the like are some sort of emptiness related to the state of the body” (*Rep.* IX 585a-b). Presumably, then, a *kenos* desire is one that, as (always) empty, cannot be satisfied. This does not mean that a desire cannot be *kenos*, but when it is, a question naturally arises about the rationality of acting on it. It is this fact that lays the ground for *mataios*, the primary connotation of which is foolish or without reason—pointless. Thus it is *mataios* for a young person to study a practical science like ethics or politics, since he tends to follow his feelings, not what he will learn by studying it (*NE* I 4 1095^a5).

²² **Our life** (*bios*): Two Greek words correspond to the English word “life,” *bios*, used here, and *zôê*, used extensively in I 7, and translated “living.” *Zôê* refers to the sorts of life processes and activities studied by biologists, zoologists, and so on: such as growth, reproduction, perception, and understanding. *Bios* refers to the sort of life a natural historian or biographer might investigate—the life of the otter, the life of Pericles—and so to a span of time throughout which someone possesses *zôê* at least as a capacity (I 13 1102^b5-7). Hence, in the conclusion of the function argument, we are reminded that a certain *zôê* will not be happiness for a human being unless it occurs “in a complete *bios*” (I 7 1098^a18-20).

²³ **Knowledge** (*gnôsis*; verb, *gignôskein*): Although there may be little difference between *gnôsis* and *epistêmê* (verb, *epistasthai*), *epistêmê* is usually applied only to demonstrative sciences, crafts, or other bodies of systematic knowledge, so that *epistêmê* is specifically *scientific* knowledge. *Gnôsis* is weaker and is used for perceptual knowledge and knowledge by acquaintance—something familiar is *gnôrimos*. If X knows that *p*, it follows that *p* is true and that X is justified in believing it. Similar entailments hold in the cases of *epistasthai* and *eidenai* but may not hold in that of *gignôskein*.

great influence and—like archers with a target²⁴—won't we be better able to hit what we should? /3/ If so, |1094^a25| we should try to grasp in a sketch,²⁵ at least, what the good is²⁶ and to which of the sciences or capacities²⁷ it properly belongs.

/4/ It would seem to be the one with the most control²⁸ and the most architectonic one. /5/ And politics²⁹ seems to be like this, /6/ since it is the one that

²⁴ **Target** (*skopos*): The notion of a *skopos*, which belongs primarily to archery, is used metaphorically to refer to an end, particularly one pursued in deliberate action. (*EE* I 2 1214^b6-9, II 10 1227^a5-7, *Pol.* VII 13 1331^b6-8, *Rh.* I 6 1362^a15-20).

²⁵ **Sketch** (*tupos*): Sometimes, when Aristotle gives a *tupos* (“sketch”), it means that a fuller account may be forthcoming later, so that the sketchiness is merely provisional (II 7 1107^b14-16). When things in a given area hold for the most part, however, it seems that the truth about them *must* be stated sketchily (II 2 1104^a1-5). In this case, sketchiness seems to be a function of the subject matter, so that it is because we are discussing things that hold for the most part in ethics and politics that these sciences are sketchy. This sort of endemic sketchiness, far from being a correctable flaw in a science, seems to be an indication of its intellectual probity.

²⁶ **We should try to grasp ... what the good is:** *EE* I 2 1214^b6-14: “Everyone who can live in accord with his own deliberate choice should adopt some target for the noble life, whether honor, reputation, wealth, or education, which he will look to in all his actions—at any rate, not to have ordered one’s life in relation to some end is the sign of great folly. Most of all, though, and before everything else, he should define for himself in which of our possessions living well consists, and what those things are without which it cannot belong to human beings.”

²⁷ **Sciences or capacities:** Often sciences and capacities are lumped together as things that can be used to achieve opposite effects, as medicine can be used to cure but also to kill (V I 1129^a13-14). Sometimes, though, a body of knowledge (such as rhetoric or dialectic) is classified as a capacity (*dunamis*) rather than a science, because its subject matter lacks the requisite sort of unity: “rhetoric is constituted from the science of the *Analytics* [= logic and scientific explanation] and from the part of politics dealing with character [= ethics], resembling dialectic on the one hand, sophistical arguments on the other. But to the extent that someone tries to set out dialectic and rhetoric not as *dunamis* but as sciences, he unwittingly obscures their nature by the change, setting them down as sciences dealing with specific subject matters, rather than with arguments alone” (*Rh.* I 4 1359^b9-16).

²⁸ **Control** (*kurios*): Control is fundamentally executive power or authority or the power to compel, so that a general is *kurios* over his army (III 8 1116^a29-^b2) and a political ruler is *kurios* over a city and its inhabitants. Since what is *kurios* in a sphere determines or partly determines what happens within it, it is one of the most estimable or important elements in the sphere, so that what is inferior or less important than something cannot control it (VI 12 1143^b33-35, 13 1145^a6-7). When Aristotle contrasts natural virtue of character with the *kurios* variety (VI 13 1144^b1-32), the control exerted by the latter seems to be teleological: the natural variety is a sort of virtue because it is an early stage in the development of mature virtue (compare *Met.* IX 8 1050^a21-23). Hence *kuria aretê* is “full virtue” or virtue in the full

prescribes which of the sciences need to exist in cities and which ones each class in cities³⁰ should learn and up to what point. |1094^b1| Indeed, we see that even the capacities that are generally most honored are under it—for example, generalship, household management, and rhetoric.³¹ /7/ And, since it uses the other practical sciences³² and, furthermore, legislates about what must be done and what avoided, |1094^b5| its end will circumscribe³³ those of the others, so that it will be the human³⁴ good.³⁵

sense of the term. It is in this sense that the life of those who are active and awake is more *kurios* life—life in a fuller sense—than that of the inactive or asleep (*NE* I 7 1098^a5-8).

²⁹ **Politics** (*politikē*): *Politikē* is “the science of politics” discussed at VI 8 1141^b23-28. This is not political science in our sense but the practical science used in ruling a city (I 9 1199^b29-32, 13 1102^a18-25, II 1 1103^b3-6, VI 8 1141^b23-33, VII 11 1152^b1-3, X 9 1180^b23-1181^b23). Someone who knows it is a true *politikos*—a true politician.

³⁰ **City** (*polis*): A *polis* is a unique political organization, something like a city and something like a state. Unlike a typical modern city, a *polis* enjoyed the political sovereignty characteristic of a modern state: it could possess its own army and navy, enter into alliances, make war, and so on. Unlike a typical modern state, however, it was a politically, religiously, and culturally unified community, and quite small-scale. The territory of *polis* included a single (typically) walled town (*astu*), with a citadel and a marketplace, which, as the political and governmental heart of *polis*, is itself often referred to as the *polis*. But a *polis* also included the surrounding agricultural land, and the citizens lived both there and inside the town proper.

³¹ **Rhetoric**: *Rh.* I 2 1355^b25-26: “Let rhetoric be [defined as] the capacity of getting a theoretical grasp on the available means of persuasion in any given case.”

³² **Textual note**: Reading ταῖς λοιπαῖς πρακτικαῖς (“the other practical sciences”). OCT omits πρακτικαῖς (“practical”).

³³ **Circumscribe** (*periechoi*): The primary connotation of *periechein* (here “circumscribe”), which is a compound of the preposition *peri* (“around”) and the verb *echein* (“have,” “possess”), is that of containing by surrounding. So if that were its meaning here, the human good would have to contain all the other goods subordinate to it. Yet generalship’s end—victory—does not seem to contain either trained horses or their bridles any more than health, which is medicine’s end and a certain bodily condition, contains medical instruments, medical treatment, or drugs. Just as “contain” can also mean “circumscribe” or “limit,” however, so too can *periechein*. The idea would then be that the end of politics *limits* or circumscribes the ends of all the relevant sciences, including those of the other practical sciences and actions. By looking to its own end, it sets limits to which sciences should be in cities, to which groups should practice them and to what degree, and to what actions should be done and what avoided. What would remain unclear is why a limiting end of this sort would have to be the best or human good. Other people’s rights, for example, may set absolute limits to our pursuit

/8/ For even if the good is the same for an individual and for a city,³⁶ that of a city is evidently a greater and, at any rate, a more complete³⁷ good to acquire and preserve. For while it should content us to acquire and preserve this for an individual alone, it is nobler and more divine to do so for a nation and city. And so |1094^b10| our route of inquiry seeks the good of these things, since it is a sort of politics.³⁸

of happiness and so be limiting ends. But it is not obvious that respecting their rights is the *best* good. What is required in addition is that whatever it is that imposes the limit should itself be an end that all other ends further, so that it is a better good than they. Its end, in other words, would have to be the common end of all of them—an idea implicit in the use of *periechein* at V I 1129^b10-11.

³⁴ **Human** (*anthrôpinon*): An *anthrôpos* is a human being of either sex; an *anêr* is a male human being—a man. The adjective *anthrôpinos* (“human”) often seems to mean something like “merely human” (for example, X 7 1177^b32). *Anthrôpikos* (also “human”) sometimes has similar connotations (for example, X 8 1178^a10). *Anthrôpos* itself, indeed, is sometimes used to refer to the whole human animal, sometimes to the human element in human beings by contrast with the divine one (their understanding) (X 7 1177^b27-28), and sometimes to that divine element, since it is what makes human beings distinctively human (X 5 1176^a25-29).

³⁵ **It will be the human good:** *Pol.* III 12 1282^b14-18: “Since the end in every science and craft is a good, the greatest and best good is the end of the science or craft that has most control of all of them, and this is the political capacity (*politikê dunamis*). But the political good is justice, and justice is the common advantage.” *MM* I 1 1182^a32-^b4: “First, then, we must see that every science and capacity has some end, and it is a good thing. For no science or capacity exists for the sake of a bad one. So if of every capacity the end is something good, it is clear the end of the best one will be the best good. But the political capacity is the best one, so its end will be the best good. Hence it is about a good, it seems, that we must speak and not an unconditional one but one good for us not good for the gods.” *Met.* I 2 982^b4-7 uses a parallel argument to show that theoretical wisdom (*sophia*) “knows the end for which each thing should be done, and this is the good of each of them, and in general the best good in all of nature.”

³⁶ **If the good is the same for an individual and for a city:** *Pol.* VII 3 1325^b30-32: “It is evident that the same life is necessarily best both for each human being individually and for cities and human beings collectively.”

³⁷ **More complete:** The relative completeness of goods is discussed at I 7 1097^a30-34.

³⁸ **A sort of politics:** Specifically it is “the part of politics dealing with character (*ta ethê*)” (*Rh.* I 4 1359^b10-11), so that *NE*, as a contribution to virtue and to politics (II 4 1105^a11-12), is included in what Aristotle refers to as “those philosophical works of ours in which we draw distinctions concerning matters of character (*tôn êthikôn*)” (*Pol.* III 12 1282^b20) and as “our ethical works (*tous êthikous logous*)” (VII 13 1332^a22).