

of sight when they are looking closely at something; but afterwards our activity is not like this and we lose interest, and for this reason the pleasure is dimmed as well.

Because everyone aims at life, we might think that everyone desires pleasure. Life is a kind of activity, and each person engages in activity in relation to those objects and with those faculties that he likes best; the musician, for example, engages in activity with his hearing in relation to songs, the student with his thought in relation to what he studies, and so on in each case. Pleasure completes the activities, and therefore also life, which they desire. It is reasonable, then, for them to aim at pleasure as well, since for each person it completes life, and life is something worth choosing.

But whether we choose life for the sake of pleasure or pleasure for the sake of life is a question we may dismiss for the present. For they appear to be bound closely together and not to admit of separation, since pleasure does not occur without activity, and it completes every activity as well.

## Chapter 5

For this reason, pleasures also seem to differ in species, because we assume that things of different species are completed by different things. This is apparently what happens with natural and artificial objects, such as animals, trees, a picture, a statue, a house, or a tool. Similarly, we assume that activities that differ in species are also completed by things differing in species. The activities of thought differ in species from those of the senses, and both differ among themselves; so therefore do the pleasures that complete them.

This is evident also from the fact that each of the pleasures is closely related to the activity it completes. For the pleasure proper to an activity enhances it, because those who engage in activity with pleasure show better and more accurate judgement. It is people who enjoy geometry, for example, who become geometers and understand each aspect of it better, and similarly lovers of music, building and so on improve in their own proper sphere by finding enjoyment in it. And the pleasures  
1175b enhance the activities, and what enhances an activity is proper to it; and what are proper to things different in species are themselves different in species.

This is even more evident from the fact that activities are hindered by pleasures arising from different activities. Lovers of the flute are incapable of paying attention to a discussion once they overhear someone playing the flute, since they find more enjoyment in flute-playing than in their present activity; so the pleasure connected with the flute ruins the activity of discussion. This same thing happens in other cases as well, when a person engages in activity in two spheres at the same time; the more pleasant activity pushes aside the other, the more so if the difference in pleasure is a large one, even to the point where the other activity ceases. This is why, when we enjoy something a great deal, we do not really do anything else, and when we are only mildly pleased by something, we do other things; people who eat sweets in the theatre, for example, do it most when the acting is bad.

And since activities are made more rigorous, longer lasting and better by their proper pleasure, and impaired by foreign pleasures, it is clear that the two kinds of pleasure are very different. For foreign pleasures do almost what the pains proper to an activity do; the pains proper to activities ruin them, so that if, for example, someone finds writing or calculating unpleasant and painful, he does not write or calculate, since the activity is painful. So an activity is affected in contrary ways by the pleasures and pains proper to it, those occurring in relation to the activity in itself. And, as we have said, foreign pleasures produce much the same result as pain, since they ruin the activity, though not in the same way.

Since activities differ in their goodness and badness, and some are worthy of choice, some to be avoided, others neither, the same goes for pleasures, each activity's having its own proper pleasure. Thus the pleasure proper to a virtuous activity is good, and that proper to a wicked one bad, because appetites for noble objects are to be praised, those for disgraceful things blamed. And the pleasures in activities are more proper to them than the desires for them, since the desires are distinct both in time and in nature, while the pleasures are closely related to the activities, and are so difficult to distinguish that there is a question whether the activity and the pleasure are the same. Nevertheless, pleasure does not seem to be thought or perception, since that would be odd. But because they are not found separately they appear to some people to be the same.

As activities differ, then, so do pleasures. Sight differs from touch in 1176a

purity, as do hearing and smell from taste, and so their pleasures also differ in the same way. The pleasures of thought differ in turn from these, and within each class some differ from others.

Each animal seems to have its own proper pleasure, as it has its own characteristic activity, since its proper pleasure will be that in line with the activity it engages in. This will be evident if we consider each kind as well. A horse, a dog and a human being have different pleasures; and, as Heraclitus says, a donkey would choose sweepings over gold, since donkeys find food more pleasant than gold.<sup>78</sup> So the pleasures of animals that differ in species themselves differ in species, and it is plausible that those of a single species do not differ.

But, in the case of human beings at any rate, they do vary a great deal, since the same things delight some people and pain others, and while to some they are painful and hateful, to others they are pleasant and worthy of love. This happens too with sweet things. For the same things do not seem sweet to a feverish as to a healthy person, or hot to a sick as to a fit person; and the same thing happens in other cases. But in all such things, it seems that what is so is what appears so to the good person. If this view is right, as it seems to be, and virtue – that is, the good person in so far as he is good – is the measure of each thing, then pleasures will be what appear so to him, and pleasant things will be what he enjoys. And if things that he finds disagreeable appear pleasant to someone, that is not surprising, since there are many ways for people to become ruined and perverted. The things are not pleasant, except to these people, with this disposition.

Clearly, then, we should say that those that everyone agrees to be disgraceful are not pleasures, except to people who have been ruined. But of those that seem good, what kind of pleasure, or what particular pleasure, should we say is the pleasure characteristic of a human being? Or, since the pleasures follow upon the activities, will it not be clear from the activities? So whether the complete and blessed person has one activity or several, the pleasures that complete these will be said to be the pleasures really characteristic of a human being, and the rest will be so in a secondary and less real sense, as are the activities.

<sup>78</sup> Heraclitus 22 B 9 DK.

## Chapter 6

Now that we have discussed the virtues, friendships and pleasures, it remains for us to offer an outline account of happiness, since we assume it to be the end in human affairs. Our argument will be more concise if we first sum up what has been said already.

We said, then, that it is not a state, since if it were it might be possessed by someone asleep all his life, living a vegetable existence, or someone suffering the greatest misfortunes. So if this is implausible, we should put it rather in the class of activities, as we said above. And some activities are necessary, that is, worth choosing for the sake of something else, while others are worthy of choice in themselves; clearly, happiness must be classed as one of those worthy of choice in themselves and not as one of those worth choosing for the sake of something else. For happiness lacks nothing, but is self-sufficient; and an activity is worthy of choice in itself when nothing is sought from it beyond the activity. Actions in accordance with virtue seem like this, since doing noble and good actions is worthy of choice in itself. 1176b

But pleasurable amusements also seem to be in this class; for people do not choose them for the sake of other things, since they are more harmed than benefited by them, through failing to take care of their bodies and their property. And most of those called happy have recourse to pastimes like this, which is why those who are adroit in them are highly esteemed at the courts of tyrants; they offer themselves as pleasant purveyors of what the tyrants are after, and the tyrants want people like this. And so these amusements seem to be connected with happiness, because those in positions of power spend their leisure time on them.

But presumably people like this prove nothing, since virtue and intellect, from which come good activities, do not depend on positions of power. And if these people, never having tasted pure and gracious pleasure, have recourse to bodily pleasures, that is no reason to believe these pleasures to be more worthy of choice, since children also believe that what they give honour to is best. So it is to be expected that, just as different things appear honourable to children and adults, so it will be with good people and bad.

As we have often said, then, what is honourable and pleasant is what is so for the good person. And for each person the activity that accords

with his own proper state is the most worthy of choice, and therefore for the good person it is that which accords with virtue.

Happiness, then, does not consist in amusement, because it would be absurd if our end were amusement, and we laboured and suffered all of our lives for the sake of amusing ourselves. For we choose virtually everything for the sake of something else, except happiness, since it is the end; but serious work and exertion for the sake of amusement is manifestly foolish and extremely childish. Rather, as Anacharsis<sup>79</sup> puts it, what seems correct is amusing ourselves so that we can engage in some serious work, since amusement is like relaxation, and we need  
1177a relaxation because we cannot continuously exert ourselves. Relaxation, then, is not an end, since it occurs for the sake of activity.

And the happy life seems to be one in accordance with virtue, and this implies a level of seriousness, and is not spent in amusement. And we say that serious things are better than funny or amusing ones, and that in every case the activity of the better person, or the better part of a person, is more serious, more virtuous; and the activity of what is better is superior, and for this very reason more conducive to happiness. And absolutely anyone, a slave no less than the best of people, can enjoy the bodily pleasures; but no one attributes a share in happiness to a slave, unless he also attributes to him a share in the life we live. For happiness does not consist in occupations like this, but in activities in accordance with virtue, as we have also said before.

## Chapter 7

If happiness is activity in accordance with virtue, it is reasonable to expect that it is in accordance with the highest virtue, and this will be the virtue of the best element. Whether this best element is intellect or something else we think naturally rules and guides us and has insight into matters noble and divine, and whether it is divine or just the most divine element within us, its activity, in accordance with its own proper virtue, will be complete happiness.

That this activity is that of contemplation we have already said. This would seem to agree both with our earlier discussion and with the truth. For this is the highest activity, intellect being the highest element in us,

<sup>79</sup> Primarily legendary Scythian prince, said to have travelled in Greece in the sixth century and become famous for his wisdom.

and its objects are the highest objects of knowledge. And it is also the most continuous, since we can contemplate more continuously than we can do anything. And we think that happiness must have pleasure mixed in with it; and the most pleasant of activities in accordance with virtue is agreed to be that in accordance with wisdom. At any rate, philosophy seems to involve pleasures remarkable for their purity and stability, and it is reasonable to expect that those who have knowledge will pass their time more pleasantly than those who are still in search of it. And the self-sufficiency that is spoken of will belong to the activity of contemplation most of all. For though a wise person, a just person, and anyone with any other virtue, all require the necessities of life, nevertheless, when they are adequately provided with such things, the just person will need people as associates in and objects of his just actions, and the same is true of the temperate person, the courageous person and each of the others; but the wise person can contemplate even when he is by himself, the more so the wiser he is. Maybe he can do it better with collaborators, but he is nevertheless the most self-sufficient. 1177b

Again, contemplation alone seems to be liked for its own sake, since nothing results from it apart from the fact that one has contemplated, whereas from the practical virtues, to a greater or lesser extent, we gain something beyond the action. Again, happiness seems to depend on leisure, because we work to have leisure, and wage war to live in peace. The activity of the practical virtues occurs in politics or war, and actions in these spheres seem to involve exertion. This seems entirely so as regards those in war, since no one chooses to make war, or even starts a war, for the sake of making war; for if someone turned his friends into enemies to bring about battles and killings he would seem utterly murderous. But the activity of a politician also involves exertion, and, apart from the business of politics itself, it is designed to secure power and honours, or at least happiness for himself and the citizens, which is different from politics and which we clearly pursue as something different.

So, among actions performed in accordance with virtue, those in politics and war are distinguished by their nobility and extent, but they involve exertion, aim at some end, and are not worthy of choice for their own sake. The activity of intellect, on the other hand, in so far as it involves contemplation, seems superior in its seriousness, to aim at no end beyond itself, and to have its own proper pleasure, which augments

the activity; it seems also to possess self-sufficiency, time for leisure, and freedom from fatigue, as far as these are humanly possible. And clearly this activity also involves whatever else is attributed to the blessed person. Thus it will be complete happiness for a human being – if it consumes a complete span of life, because there is nothing incomplete in matters of happiness.

Such a life is superior to one that is simply human, because someone lives thus, not in so far as he is a human being, but in so far as there is some divine element within him. And the activity of this divine element is as much superior to that in accordance with the other kind of virtue as the element is superior to the compound. If the intellect, then, is something divine compared with the human being, the life in accordance with it will also be divine compared with human life. But we ought not to listen to those who exhort us, because we are human, to think of human things, or because we are mortal, think of mortal things. We ought rather to take on immortality as much as possible, and do all that we can to live in accordance with the highest element within us; for  
1178a even if its bulk is small, in its power and value it far exceeds everything.

It would seem, too, to constitute each person, since it is his authoritative and better element; it would be odd, then, if he were to choose not his own life, but something else's.

And what we said above will apply here as well: what is proper to each thing is by nature best and pleasantest for it; for a human being, therefore, the life in accordance with intellect is best and pleasantest, since this, more than anything else, constitutes humanity. So this life will also be the happiest.

## Chapter 8

The life in accordance with the other kind of virtue is happy in a secondary way, since the activities in accordance with it are human. For we do just actions, courageous actions, and the other actions in accordance with the virtues, in relation to each other, observing what is proper to each in contracts, services and actions of all kinds, and in feelings as well; and all of these are manifestly human. Some feelings seem in fact to have their origin in the body, and virtue of character in many ways to be closely bound up with the feelings.

Practical wisdom, too, is tied up with virtue of character, and this with