

# Revision: Ethics, Book VI

## Parts i & ii

### A. recognises the circularity problem:

*If you were told to take what medical science prescribes and as a doctor prescribes it, you still would not know what to take.*

*If you were told to aim for the mean as prudence requires and as a prudent person would do, you still would not know how to behave.*

It's not clear, though, whether he gives us enough to break into the circle.

### Contemplative and Calculative Intellect

Aristotle's cosmology leads him to divide what is knowable between:

- necessary, unchanging, eternal truths of the superlunary realm
- contingent, changing situation of the sublunary realm.

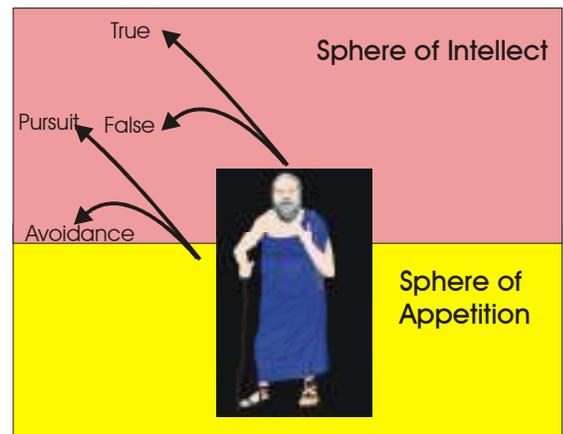


**Contemplative Intellect**  
Theoretical Science  
Mathematics etc.  
Demonstration  
Superlunary

**Calculative Intellect**  
Practical Science  
Art (Poiesis), Praxis etc  
Deliberation  
Sublunary

### A. then makes observations about these two modes of thinking.

- Both the contemplative and calculative intellect aim at truth.
- The contemplative intellect affirms what is true and denies what is false
- The sphere of morality requires the calculative intellect, which must:
  - reason properly about the 'what is to be done'
  - respond to *right* desire (i.e. desire that truly chimes with eudaimonic imperative)
- So a true choice in the case of moral action is one that is both a good judgement call and is response to right desire



*'... since moral virtue is a state involving choice (prohairesis), and choice is deliberate appetite, it follows that if the choice is to be a good one, both the reasoning must be true and the desire right...' (p205)*

*'Hence choice is either appetitive intellect or intellectual appetite.'* (p206)

For example, a soldier defending a group of refugees must, when threatened, be able to assess the threat properly, and also be prompted by a desire to face whatever danger he must for the sake of the refugees.

- Also, A. distinguishes between production (*poiesis*) and action (*praxis*)

## Parts iii & iv

### A. then lays out 'the five ways in which the soul arrives at truth by affirmation or denial'.

- Art (techne)
- Science (episteme)
- Prudence (phronesis)
- Wisdom (sophia)
- Intuition (nous)

## Science

- Not 'science' as we understand it
- Knowledge of unchanging sphere (cf. superlunary), of whys and hows, of necessity (i.e. of 'must be so')
- Teachable & demonstrable
- Not merely knowledge of 'facts', but of the derivation from first principles
- Relies on fundamental principles – which are *not* derivable by science
- Works either 'upward' by induction to first principles, or proceeds 'downwards' by deduction from first principles

## Art or Technical Skill (techne)

- A. starts by saying 'the class of variables includes both products and acts' ...
- This means in the contingent realm (the 'could be otherwise' realm) we can make a difference by making something or behaving in a certain way
- production ≠ action, says A. – decoding this, it means that making things is to be considered separate from behaving in a certain (moral/immoral) way
  - the end (goal) of production can be separated from the producer
  - the end (goal) of virtuous behaviour is not separate from the behaviour
    - e.g. a beautiful vase is proof enough of the skill of a vase maker (you wouldn't go on to ask: in what state of mind was she or he when they made it?)
    - but an outwardly virtuous deed is not proof enough of the virtue of its doer, since one has to go further and ask: was this deed done out of a virtuous mindset?
- A. also points out that the cause (i.e. efficient cause) of products is not in themselves but in the producer
  - unlike natural objects (i.e. living things) which have their 'origin in themselves'
- A. says that just as we can say of a product that it is well-turned, finely sculpted, etc., there is an opposite to art – non-art (atechnia) – which arises out of a 'productive state that is falsely reasoned'

## Parts v to viii

### Prudence or practical wisdom (phronesis)

- Prudence involves the calculative intellect...
- ... deliberating rightly about what is conducive to (i.e. is likely to promote) 'the good life generally' (eudaimonia)
- obviously, it must be concerned with the contingent, rather than necessary, realm
- Phronesis presupposes *deliberation* (e.g. what should I do to bring about such-and-such?) rather than *demonstration* (e.g. if A is greater than B, and B is greater than C, then A is greater than C)
- So phronesis ≠ science
- Also, phronesis ≠ art, for reasons already covered
- Prudent people (e.g. Pericles – an Athenian Statesman) were so-called since they could 'envisage what is good for themselves and for people in general' (cf. ethics as a subdiscipline of politics)
- As often as it is manifest, prudence is self-enhancing
- Finally, whilst there is excellence in art, there is none in prudence – for example, the experimental artist might be commended (even if their experiment is a mistake), whereas a mistake in the area of prudence is never commended
- Hence, prudence is a virtue (an intellectual virtue, as contrasted with a moral virtue)

### Intelligence or intuition (nous)

- The first principles upon which science depends are not graspable by science (or by art or prudence)
- They require that faculty called *nous* – the direct apprehension or intuition of basic principles

### Wisdom (sophia)

- The most complete or 'finished' form of knowledge
- Wisdom is the 'whole package' – both intuition and science
- Rated above prudence, for example, since that is a form of intellectual excellence concerning the good for humans – whereas wisdom seeks higher things still, those entities considered divine in nature