

Book I (Book A)

Wisdom¹

Chapter 1 All human beings by nature stretch themselves out toward knowing. A sign of this is our love of the senses; for even apart from their use, they are loved on their own account, and above all the rest, the one through the eyes. For not only in order that we might act, but even when we are not going to act at all, we prefer seeing, one might say, as against everything else. And the cause is that, among the senses, this one most of all makes us discover things, and makes evident many differences. By nature, then, the animals come into being having sense perception, though in some of them memory does not emerge out of this, while in others it does. And for this reason, these latter are more intelligent and more able to learn than those that are unable to remember, while as many of them as are not able to hear sounds are intelligent without learning (such as a bee, or any other kind of animal that might be of this sort), but as many do learn as have this sense in addition to memory. So the other animals live by images and memories, but have a small share of experience, but the human race lives also by art and reasoning. And for human beings, experience arises from memory, since many memories of the same thing bring to completion a capacity for one experience. 980a 21
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Now experience seems to be almost the same thing as knowledge or art, but for human beings, knowledge and art result from experience, for experience makes art, as Polus says and says rightly, but inexperience makes chance. And art comes into being whenever, out of many conceptions from experience, one universal judgment arises about those that are similar. For to have a judgment that this thing was beneficial to Callias when he was sick with this disease, and to Socrates, and one by one in this way to many people, belongs to experience. But the judgment that it was beneficial to all such people, marked out as being of one kind, when they were sick with this disease, such as to sluggish or irritable people² when they were feverish 981a
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¹ This title for Book I supplied by the translator.

² The Greek words imply the predominance, respectively, of phlegm or yellow bile, two of the four humors whose imbalance was thought to produce many diseases.

with heat, belongs to art. For the purpose of acting, experience doesn't seem to differ from art at all, and we even see people with experience being more successful than those who have a rational account without experience. (The cause of this is that experience is familiarity with things that are particular, but art with those that are universal, while actions and all becoming are concerned with what is particular. For the doctor does not cure a human being, except incidentally, but Callias or Socrates or any of the others called by such a name, who happens to be a human being. So if someone without experience has the reasoned account and is familiar with the universal, but is ignorant of what is particular within it, he will often go astray in his treatment, since what is treated is particular.)

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Nevertheless, we think that knowing and understanding are present in art more than is experience and we take the possessors of arts to be wiser than people with experience, as though in every instance wisdom is more something resulting from and following along with knowing; and this is because the ones know the cause while the others do not. For people with experience know the what, but do not know the why, but the others are acquainted with the why and the cause. For this reason we also think the master craftsmen in each kind of work are more honorable and know more than the manual laborers, and are also wiser, because they know the causes of the things they do,³ as though people are wiser not as a result of being skilled at action, but as a result of themselves having the reasoned account and knowing the causes. And in general, a sign of the one who knows and the one who does not is being able to teach, and for this reason we regard the art, more than the experience, to be knowledge, since the ones can, but the others cannot, teach.

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Further, we consider none of the senses to be wisdom, even though they are the most authoritative ways of knowing particulars; but they do not pick out the why of anything, such as why fire is hot, but only that it is hot. So it is likely that the one who first discovered any art whatever that was beyond the common perceptions was wondered at by people, not only on account of there being something useful in

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³ Some of the manuscripts have the following insertion here: "The others, as do also some of the things without souls, do what they do without knowing, as fire burns, the soulless things doing each of these things by some nature, but the manual laborers by habit."

his discoveries, but as someone wise and distinguished from other people. But once more arts had been discovered, and some of them were directed toward necessities but others toward a way of living, it is likely that such people as were discoverers of the latter kind were always considered wiser, because their knowledge was not directed toward use. Hence when all such arts had been built up, those among the kinds of knowledge directed at neither pleasure nor necessity were discovered, and first in those places where there was leisure. It is for this reason that the mathematical arts were first constructed in the neighborhood of Egypt, for there the tribe of priests was allowed to live in leisure.

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Now it has been said in the writings on ethics what the difference is among art, demonstrative knowledge, and the other things of a similar kind, but the purpose for which we are now making this argument is that all people assume that what is called wisdom is concerned with first causes and origins. Therefore, as was said above, the person with experience seems wiser than those who have any perception whatever, the artisan wiser than those with experience, the master craftsman wiser than the manual laborer, and the contemplative arts more so than the productive ones. It is apparent, then, that wisdom is a knowledge concerned with certain sources and causes.

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Chapter 2 Since we are seeking this knowledge, this should be examined: about what sort of causes and what sort of sources wisdom is the knowledge. Now if one takes the accepted opinions we have about the wise man, perhaps from this it will become more clear. We assume first that the wise man knows all things, in the way that it is possible, though he does not have knowledge of them as particulars. Next, we assume that the one who is able to know things that are difficult, and not easy for a human being to know, is wise; for perceiving is common to everyone, for which reason it is an easy thing and nothing wise. Further, we assume the one who has more precision and is more able to teach the causes is wiser concerning each kind of knowledge. And among the kinds of knowledge, we assume the one that is for its own sake and chosen for the sake of knowing more to be wisdom than the one chosen for the sake of results, and that the more ruling one is wisdom more so than the more subordinate one; for the wise man ought not to be commanded but to give orders, and ought not to obey someone else, but the less wise ought to obey him.

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