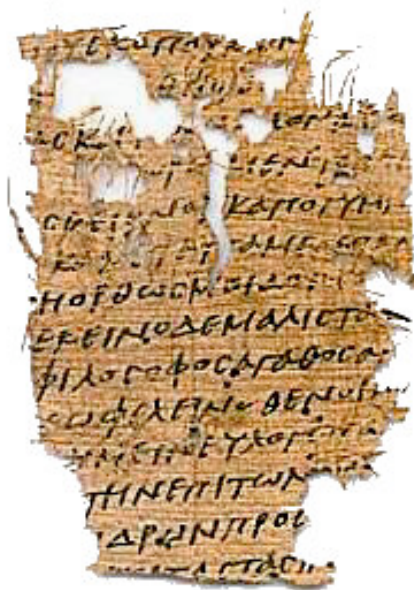


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“Whether living successfully consists in enjoyment, or in having virtue, or in wisdom, we should do philosophy, for these things come to us most of all, and in a pure way, through doing philosophy”



ARISTOTLE’S LOST *PROTREPTICUS*

“If it is in future accorded its proper recognition by Aristotelian scholars, as they have shown it deserves,” says David Sedley of Christ’s College, Cambridge, “it will make a real difference to our understanding of Aristotle’s ethics, his philosophy of nature and his metaphysics.”

Provisional Reconstruction (2009 January)

D. S. Hutchinson and Monte Ransome Johnson

Part 3 of 3

To seek from every kind of knowledge something other than itself and to require that it must be useful is the demand of someone utterly ignorant of how far apart in principle good things are from the necessities; they are totally different [52.20]. For among the things without which living is impossible, the ones which are liked on account of something else should be called necessities and joint causes, while all those that are liked for themselves, even if nothing else results from them, should be called goods in the strict sense; for this is not valuable because of that, and that for the sake of something else, and this goes on proceeding to infinity – rather, this comes to a stop somewhere [52.25]. So it is absolutely ridiculous, then, to seek from everything a benefit beyond from the thing itself, and to ask ‘So, what’s the benefit for us?’ and ‘What’s the use?’ [52.28]. For it’s true what we say: such a fellow doesn’t seem like someone who knows noble goodness, or who distinguishes between a cause and a joint cause [IX 52.16-53.2].

One might see that what we say is all the more true if someone conveyed us in thought, as it were, to the Isles of the Blest, for in that place there would come to be no use for anything, nor would anything benefit anything else, and only thinking and observation remains, which we say even now is an independent way of life [7|8]. If what we say is true, would not any of us be rightly ashamed if when the right was granted us to settle in the Isles of the Blest, we were by our own fault unable to do so? [10]. Thus the payment that knowledge brings is not to be despised by humans, nor is the good that comes from it a slight good [12]. For just as the expert poets say that we reap the rewards of justice in Hades, in the same way, it seems, we reap the rewards of wisdom in the Isles of the Blest [IX 53.2-15].

It is not weird at all, then, if it does not seem to be useful or beneficial; for we don’t claim it is beneficial but that it is itself good, and it makes sense to choose it not for the sake of something else but for itself [53.18 |53.19]. For just as we travel to Olympia for the sake of the spectacle itself, even if nothing more is going to accrue from it (for the observing itself is better than lots of money), and as we observe the Dionysia not in order to take something away from the actors (rather, we actually spend on them), and as there are many other spectacles we would choose instead of lots of money, so the observation of the universe, too, is to be honoured above all things that are thought to be useful [53.26 |54.1]. For surely we should not travel with great effort to see people imitating women and slaves, or fighting and running, and yet not think we should

observe the nature of things, i.e. the truth, without payment [IX 53.15-54.5].

<It seems that Aristotle may have carried on with the festival metaphor at this point in the *Protrepticus*, or in another work, as Plutarch alludes to these ideas at the conclusion of his essay *On Tranquillity*. Other scholars have attributed this allusion in Plutarch to Aristotle's lost dialogue *On Philosophy* (frg. 14 Walzer/Ross), but on weak grounds; we re-attribute to *Protrepticus*.>

<evidence: Plutarch, *On Tranquillity*, chapter 20, 477c-e, tr. Helmbold (Loeb)>

For the cosmos is a most holy temple and most worthy of a god; into it man is introduced through birth as a spectator, not of hand-made or immovable images, but of those sensible representations of knowable things that the divine mind, says Plato, has revealed, representations which have innate within themselves the beginnings of life and motion, sun and moon and stars, rivers which ever discharge fresh water, and earth which sends forth nourishment for plants and animals [c-d]. Since life is a most perfect initiation into these things and a ritual celebration of them, it should be full of tranquility and joy, and not in the manner of the vulgar, who wait for the festivals of Cronus and of Zeus and the Panathenaea and other days of that kind, at which to enjoy and refresh themselves, paying the wages of hired laughter to mimes and dancers [d]. It is true that we sit there on those occasions decorously in reverent silence, for no one wails while he is being initiated or laments as he watches the Pythian games or as he drinks at the festival of Cronus; but by spending the greater part of life in lamentation and heaviness of heart and carking cares, men shame the festivals with which the god supplies us and in which he initiates us [*On Tranquillity*, chapter 20, 477c-e].

<The gap in our evidence of the text at this point is partly filled by a few sentences from an Egyptian papyrus, now conserved in Vienna. It seems that 'Aristotle' is making the point that those who produce their products by imitating those of others (as Isocrates was urging statesmen should do) are limited by the caliber of the examples they choose.>

<evidence: P^{Vindob}G26008, column A lines 5-32>

... he who is most fully capable of rendering it accurately is most fully a good poet, and for this reason Homer is good, and Sophocles - for what kinds of things Andromache would say, and how, when she sees her husband being dragged along, he is capable of discovering, in language, in character, and in thought [18]. There are some who do not imitate that person whom they propose to themselves, but instead someone else, and this one excellently, someone of whom we happen to have

an idea and an example among ourselves [26]. And so Timotheus in the “Lament of Odysseus”, if indeed he does imitate someone and knows what is similar to someone, nevertheless what to Odysseus ... [A.5-32].

<In chapter IX of his *Protrepticus*, Iamblichus had stopped quoting the speech of ‘Aristotle’ at its theatrical anti-Isocratean climax; when he resumes quoting in chapter X, ‘Aristotle’ is arguing that political science cannot be done by mere imitation (as Isocrates said); it actually needs theoretical philosophy.>

<evidence: Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* X 54.12-56.2>

For just as all the sophisticated doctors and most sophisticated athletic trainers pretty much agree that those who are to be good doctors or trainers must be experienced about nature, so good lawmakers too must be experienced about nature - and indeed much more than the former [18]. For some are producers of virtue only in the body, while others, being concerned with the virtues of the soul and pretending to scrutinize the success and failure of the state, need philosophy much more [X 54.12-22].

For just as in the other skills the best of their tools were discovered by their producers from nature (for example, in the builder’s skill, the plumb line, the standard ruler and the compass), for some are grasped with water, others with light and the rays of the sun, and it is by reference to these that we judge what to our senses is sufficiently straight and smooth - in the same way, the statesman must have certain norms taken from nature itself, i. e. from the truth, by reference to which to judge what is just and what is good and what is advantageous [55.3]. For just as in building these tools surpass all, so too the finest law is the one that has been laid down most in accordance with nature [55.6]. But this is not something which can be done by someone who hadn’t done philosophy and become familiar with the truth [X 54.22-55.7].

And in the other skills people do not generally know their tools and their most accurate reasonings by taking them from the primary things; they take them from what is second or third hand or at a distant remove, and get their reasonings from experience, whereas the imitation is of the precise things themselves only for the philosopher, for the philosopher’s vision is of these things themselves, not of imitations [55.14]. So just as no one is a good builder who does not use a ruler or any other such tool, but approximates them to other buildings, so too presumably if someone either lays down laws for cities or per-

forms actions by looking at and imitating other human actions or political systems, whether of Sparta or Crete or of any other such state, he is neither a good lawmaker nor is he an excellent statesman; for an imitation of what is not noble cannot be noble, nor can an imitation of what is not divine and secure in nature be immortal and secure [55.23 |55.24]. But it is clear that the philosopher is the only producer to have both laws that are secure and actions that are right and noble. For he alone lives looking at nature and at the divine, and, just like some good helmsman, ties the first principles of his life onto things which are eternal and steadfast, goes forth and lives as his own master [X 55.7-56.2].

<Iamblichus has finished citing this part of the speech of ‘Aristotle’; then he reports or quotes a new phase of the argument, that theoretical knowledge is useful, like vision>

<evidence: Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* X 56.2-12>

Now then, this knowledge is observational, but it provides us with the ability to produce, in accordance with it, everything [4]. For just as sight is a maker and producer of nothing (for its only function is to judge and to make clear each visible thing), but provides us with the ability to do an action in accordance with it and gives us the greatest help towards our actions (for we should be almost entirely motionless if deprived of it), so it’s clear that, though the knowledge is observational, we do thousands of things in accordance with it nevertheless, accept some things and avoid others, and generally gain through it everything good [X 56.2-12].

<Iamblichus has finished with the argument that philosophy is necessary for political science; after a gap he turns to a new idea, that philosophers enjoy enhanced vitality as humans. The speaker is still ‘Aristotle’.>

<evidence: Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* XI 56.15-58.14>

The word ‘living’ seems to mean two things, one with reference to a capacity and the other with reference to an activity, for we call all those animals ‘seeing’ who have vision and are naturally capable of seeing (even if they happen to have their eyes shut), as well as those who are using the capacity and are applying their vision [19]. And similarly with knowing and having cognition, we mean, in one case, using and observing, and in the other case, having acquired the capacity and having the knowledge [56.22]. Further, if we distinguish living from not living by perceiving, and perceiving means two things - in the strict sense, for the using of the senses, but in the other sense, for the having the capacity to use them (that’s why we say, it

seems, even of people who are sleeping that they are perceivers) - if so, it's clear it will follow that 'living' also means two things: a waking person should be said to live in the true and strict sense, but sleeping people must be said to live because they are capable of making the transition into the process in virtue of which we say of someone that he is both waking and perceiving things [XI 56.15-57.6].

Because of this and with a view to this, when some one word means each of two things, and one of the two is so called either by acting or being acted on, we shall attribute the term as applying more to this one: for example, we attribute 'knowing' to the one who makes use of knowledge more than the one who has it, and 'seeing' to the one who is applying his vision more than the one who has the capacity [12]. (For we use 'more' not only in respect of excess in things which fall under one definition, but also in respect of what is prior and posterior; for example, we say that health is more a good than the things that conduce to health, and that what is valuable by its own nature is more a good than what produces it [16| 17]. And yet we see, surely, that it is not by the definition of 'good' being predicable of both that it applies to each of them, beneficial things as well as virtue) [19]. Therefore the waking person should be called more 'alive' than the sleeping one, and the one who exercises his soul than the one who merely has it; for it is on account of this that we say that he is alive, that he is the sort who is such as to act or be acted upon in this way [XI 57.6-23].

Thus this is what it is to use anything: if the capacity is for a single thing, when someone is doing this very thing; and if the capacity is for a number of things, when he is doing the best of them, for example, with flutes, one uses them either only when playing the flute, or especially then; for presumably this applies to the other cases as well [57.27|58.1]. Thus one should say that someone who uses a thing correctly is using it more, for the natural objective and mode of use belong to someone who uses a thing nobly and accurately [58.3]. Now a function of the soul, either alone or most of all, is thinking and reasoning [58.5]. Therefore it is now simple and easy for anyone to reach the conclusion that he who thinks correctly is more alive, and he who most attains truth lives most, and this is the one who is intelligent and observant according to the most precise knowledge; and it is then and to those that living perfectly, surely, should be attributed, to those who are using their intelligence, i.e. to the intelligent [58.10]. But if what it is to live is the same, for all animals, at least, it is clear that an intelligent person would

surely exist to the highest degree and in the strictest sense, and most of all at that time when he is being active and actually observing the most knowable of existing things [XI 57.23- 58.14].

<Iamblichus continues to cite from the speech of ‘Aristotle’, who proceeds to demonstrate that philosophers enjoy the highest pleasure.>

<evidence: Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* X 58.15-59.18>

And yet, surely the perfect and unobstructed activity has its enjoyment in itself; hence the activity of observation would be the most pleasant of all [58.17]. **Furthermore, there is a difference between enjoying oneself while drinking and enjoying drinking; for nothing prevents someone who is not thirsty, nor has been brought the drink he enjoys, from enjoying himself while drinking, not because he is drinking but because he happens at the same time to be seeing or being seen as he sits there [58.21]. Thus we will say that this fellow enjoys himself, and enjoys himself while drinking, but not because he is drinking, and not because he enjoys drinking [58.23]. Thus in the same way we will also say that walking and sitting and learning and every process is pleasant or painful, not insofar as we happen to feel pain or pleasure in their presence, but insofar as we all feel pain or pleasure by their presence [58.27]. So, similarly, we will also say that they live pleasantly whose presence is pleasant to those who have it, and that not all to whom it happens that they enjoy themselves while living are living pleasantly, only those to whom living itself is pleasant and who enjoy the pleasure that comes from life [XI 58.15-59.3].**

Thus we attribute living more to the one who is awake rather than to the one who is asleep, and to the one who is being intelligent more than to the one who is unintelligent; and we say the pleasure that comes from life is the one that comes from the uses of the soul, for this is being truly alive [7]. Further, even if there are many uses of the soul, still the most authoritative one of all, certainly, is the use of intelligence to the highest degree [9]. Further, it is clear that the pleasure that arises from being intelligent and observant must be the pleasure that comes from living, either alone or most of all [11]. Therefore living pleasantly and feeling true enjoyment belong only to philosophers, or to them most of all [13], for the activity of our truest insights, filled up by the most real of things and preserving steadfastly for ever the perfection vouchsafed to us, that activity, of all of them, is also the one that is most effective for cheerfulness [17]. Hence too on account of the enjoyment itself of the truths and good pleasures those who have any sense should do philosophy [XI 59.3-18].

<Iamblichus continues to quote ‘Aristotle’, who braids together the conclusions of his previous arguments to show that philosophy is the key to success>

<evidence: Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* XII 59.24-60.10>

For everything, both those that are for this and those that are on account of this being to be chosen by everyone, both those enterprises that are necessary and the pleasant things on account of which we feel successful [59.26] Thus we take the position that success is either intelligence and a certain wisdom, or virtue, or great enjoyment, or all these [60.1]. **Thus if it is intelligence, clearly only philosophers will have a successful life; and if it is virtue of the soul or enjoyment, even so it will belong to them either alone or most of all, for a virtue is the most authoritative thing in us, and the most pleasant of all things, on a one to one basis, is intelligence; and similarly, even if someone were to say that all these same things together are success, that is to be defined in terms of being intelligent** [60.7]. Hence everyone who is capable of it should do philosophy, for surely this either is living perfectly well, or is, most of all, anyway, speaking on a one to one basis, a cause for their souls [XII 59.24-60.10].

<Having quoted this conclusion by ‘Aristotle’, Iamblichus quickly sketches a vision of ‘philosophy in paradise’, which may derive from the next part of this speech of ‘Aristotle’. But its attribution is quite uncertain; there may be another speaker at this point (Heraclides?), and Iamblichus may have been working from memory of a different work by Aristotle or another author>

<evidence: Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* XII 60.10-61.1>

But down here, due to our race being unnatural, perhaps, it is difficult to learn anything and investigate, and we hardly perceive, due to lack of natural talent and unnatural living; but if we were ever able **to find salvation again** whence we have been released, it is clear that we would all do so more pleasantly and easily [60.15]. For as it is now, we neglect the good things and carry on doing the necessities, most of all those most regarded as happy by most people; but were we to take **the heavenly road** and isolate that life that is ours upon its companion star, this is when we would be doing philosophy, truly living, and observing spectacles indescribable in beauty, gazing with the soul fixedly at the truth and observing the rule of the gods, cheerfully and with continuous enjoyment from the observing, taking pleasure apart from all pain [XII 60.10 - 61.1].

<The passage from which Iamblichus was working is also referred to by Proclus in his commentary on Plato’s *Republic*. If it was from *Protrepticus*, the report of Proclus overlaps with and adds detail to the paraphrase of Iamblichus.>

<evidence: Proclus, *On Plato's Republic II*, 349.13-26 (Kroll)>

The 'divine' Aristotle also tells the reason why the soul on coming hither from yonder forgets the spectacles it saw there, but on leaving hither remembers yonder the things it suffered here; and we must accept the argument. Indeed, he himself says that traveling the road from health to disease forces some people to forget even the letters they had learned, but when going from disease to health no one ever suffers this. And that the life without the body, being natural to souls, resembles health, and the life in the body, being unnatural, resembles disease. For yonder they live according to nature, but down here contrary to nature. Hence the likely consequence is that souls that go from yonder forget the things there, while those that go yonder from this world carry on having a memory of the things here.


<The passage from which Iamblichus and Proclus were working seems to be a passage to which Philodemus alludes in his *On Rhetoric*, a vicious Epicurean polemic against Aristotle, preserved (with many gaps) in a Herculaneum papyrus, columns 192-203. The above mentioned concept of 'salvation' had drawn an earlier attack from Epicurus.>

<evidence: Philodemus, *On Rhetoric* columns 198-199, in PHerc 832.42.10-19, ed. David L. Blank, in *Cronache Ercolanesi* <citation>>

And in this respect he <sc. Aristotle> was actually much more shameful than the orators, who undertake to train their students in the afternoons on such set topics, not just for the sake of calmness in the soul, but also for the sake of the good temperament of the body for health, if not even more so than those who on the whole declare that their training in rhetoric and <vocabulary> is technical [42.10-14]. And on the whole he turned out, according to Epicurus, to be a more formidable opponent of **the salvation of human life** than those who directly oiled them up for the political fight, since he enchanted them with a hope of the truth [42.14-19].

<A slightly later passage in Philodemus' *On Rhetoric* alludes to a higher zone of peacefulness, to which Iamblichus referred in XII: certain parties (44.10-13) "were a long way off **the upward road up to peace**." Finally, note two terms that Aristotle applied to philosophy: "more peaceful", "more divine".>

<evidence: Philodemus, *On Rhetoric* column 200, in PHerc 1015.LV.8-12>

... to retire to the "**more peaceful**" and "**more divine**" skill of philosophy, as he <Aristotle> called it ... 

**<we have no evidence about the work's conclusion,
which is lost without trace>**

EDITOR'S NOTE:

For more about the history and controversy surrounding this work, do a search on Google.

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We welcome your comments, questions or suggestions.

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