is no stickler for his rights in a bad sense: this picks up the popular use of *equitable*; see first note on this chapter.

BOOK V, CHAPTER 11

1138a *is evident from what has been said*: ch. 9, 1136a10–1137b4, argued that a man cannot treat himself unjustly.

what it does not expressly permit it forbids: this is a highly puzzling statement, which some editors have dealt with by emendation of the text. One suggestion is that Aristotle means that the law forbids any *killing* it does not expressly permit or command. He can hardly mean the law forbids *any* action it does not command or expressly permit.

treating the state unjustly: this paragraph is concerned with injustice in the wide sense (see ch. 1) and argues that, in that kind of justice as well, a person cannot treat himself unjustly. The suicide *harms himself*, and (perhaps) treats the state—not himself—unjustly.

he could be voluntarily treated unjustly: this was ruled out in ch. 9.

1138b *Incidentally . . . theory cares nothing for this*: ethical theory holds that doing injustice is worse than suffering it, as medical theory holds that pleurisy is worse than a fall, albeit a fall may happen to leave you much worse off.

BOOK VI

CHAPTER 1

the intermediate is determined by reason, let us discuss this: see II.3 and 6, especially 1107a1, where a key part of the definition of moral virtue refers to it being determined by reason.

what correct reason is and what is the standard that fixes it: these seem to be two questions. To the first—what is correct reason?—the answer will be practical wisdom, *phronēsis*. It is not clear that Aristotle does, or can, give a different answer to the second question, although the analogy with the medical art would lead us to expect a standard, as health is the standard by which the medical art is judged.

1139a *with their objects . . . the knowledge they have*: Aristotle finds it natural to align different subdivisions of the rational part of the soul with different objects of knowledge: the *scientific* part is that which grasps the *invariable*, i.e. necessary truths and objects, and the *calculative* part that which grasps *variable* things. The virtue or excellence of the first will turn out to be wisdom, a combination of scientific knowledge and intuitive reason; that of the second will turn out to be practical wisdom, *phronēsis*.

BOOK VI, CHAPTER 2

no share in action: Aristotle here uses action in a narrow sense, confining it to what is chosen. Perception originates animal movement, but not action. The originator of action in this narrow sense will turn out to be choice, a combination of reason and desire.

truth in agreement with right desire: we might have expected the claim that as truth is what contemplative thought aims at, so the good is what practical thinking aims at. Instead Aristotle makes truth the goal or proper work (*ergon*) of each kind of thinking, adding the qualification 'in agreement with right desire' to practical thinking's goal. Perhaps we should understand as follows: the goal of practical thinking is to reach a true conclusion about what is to be done *and* to have a correct desire, i.e. a desire for the action specified.

its efficient, not its final cause: Aristotle's doctrine of 'four causes' is in *Physics* II.3. The other two are matter and form. Choice is the efficient cause, i.e. the origin of movement. The final cause is the end aimed at.

aims at an end and is practical: in saying 'intellect alone moves nothing' Aristotle may seem to be adopting a Hume-type approach to reason. But the concession that *practical* intellect can move a person immediately mitigates that impression.

1139b *that which is made is not an end in the unqualified sense . . . only that which is done is that*: for the important distinction between making and doing see chs. 4 and 5. *Making* is desired for the end or product, not for itself. *Doing*, in this technical sense, is desired for its own sake.

and desire aims at this: good action, i.e. acting well, is the true and proper end of a person. Aristotle does not mean to deny that we can desire to make something.

that have once been done: Agathon, a tragic poet, features in Plato's *Symposium*, celebrating the victory of one of his plays.

BOOK VI, CHAPTER 3

we may be mistaken: the five truth-attaining states are discussed one by one in chs. 3–7, after which issues concerning practical wisdom dominate the remainder of Book VI.

is of necessity: when he uses the term strictly, Aristotle insists that scientific knowledge, *epistēmē,* is of what cannot be otherwise, i.e. necessary and eternal truths. Aristotle does not explain why 'we all suppose this', as it is not part of everyday thinking about knowledge (the standard meaning of *epistēmē*) that only necessary truths can be known. Probably 'we' are fellow philosophers, especially from the Academy.

in the Analytics also: *Posterior Analytics* I.1.

by induction that they are acquired: since scientific knowledge is knowledge arrived at by syllogism, i.e. by demonstrative reasoning from known premisses, the premisses or starting-points themselves cannot be the objects of such knowledge. In ch. 6 this role—grasp of the starting-points—is ascribed to intuitive reason, *nous*.

which we specify in the Analytics: *Posterior Analytics* I.3: we have scientific knowledge of *p* when we have demonstrated *p*—a necessary truth—from starting-points that are themselves known, and better known, than the conclusions derived from them.

BOOK VI, CHAPTER 4

1140a *capacity to make*: art—i.e. technical expertise—and practical wisdom are both concerned with 'the variable', i.e. things that can be otherwise. This chapter analyses art.

to make, involving true reasoning: architecture (including actual building) is chosen as an example to illustrate the general thesis that equates art with reasoned capacity to make.

chance loves art': on Agathon see note on VI.2, 1139b9. Chance, necessity, nature, and art were listed at III.3 as types of cause, but the point of the quotation is obscure.

BOOK VI, CHAPTER 5

to the good life in general: an important claim, one that counteracts some later descriptions that seem to give a more confined role to practical wisdom. He now contrasts this with having practical wisdom in some particular sphere (e.g. one's business life) as well as with being good at some form of making (an art).

1140b *are different kinds of thing*: as argued in ch. 4.

good or bad for man: i.e. for a human being, as *passim*. 'State of capacity to act' means a disposition manifested in *actions*, in contrast to art, manifested in *making* something. So to be practically wise a person must act, and not merely deliberate.

cause of action: the whole parenthetical section elaborates on Aristotle's improbable etymological derivation of temperance, *sōphrosunē*, as meaning 'saving *phronēsis* (practical wisdom)'. Over time intemperance will destroy judgements about 'what is to be done', i.e. about right and wrong.

in practical wisdom, as in the virtues, he is the reverse: see II.4. Practical wisdom resembles moral virtue in that, with both, we prefer an unintentional mistake to a deliberate one. In art, and in general expertise, the reverse is true: the more skilled practitioner is the one who, for example, plays a wrong note *intentionally*.

practical wisdom cannot: another point in which practical wisdom is closer to the moral virtues (cf. I.10, 1100b15–16) than it is to arts or indeed other kinds of knowledge that one does readily forget.

BOOK VI, CHAPTER 6

scientific knowledge involves demonstration: as shown in ch. 3, scientific knowledge involves demonstration, i.e. proof, from better known starting-points. In this chapter Aristotle assigns to intuitive reason, *nous*, the grasp of these starting-points or first principles. An example of such a starting-point in the natural sciences is the principle that every element has its natural place.

1141a *intuitive reason that grasps the first principles*: in ch. 11 Aristotle will recognize a second kind of intuitive reason connected with practical wisdom, whose object is particulars.

BOOK VI, CHAPTER 7

nor wise in anything else: the quotation (from *Margites*, not in fact by Homer) is here used to underline the point that Aristotle's focus is on an *unqualified* wisdom, and not being wise at, for instance, ploughing.

combined with scientific knowledge: here Aristotle reveals that the last of his five initial states to be discussed, wisdom, is not an independent state but the combination of two already discussed: scientific knowledge (ch. 3) and intuitive reason (ch. 6).

1141b *the bodies of which the heavens are framed*: being *invariable* objects, whose movements, according to Aristotle, are invariable, the heavenly bodies are superior to and *more divine in their nature* than human beings, who are merely the best of animals.

but useless: Anaxagoras (5th cent.) and Thales (6th cent.) were bywords for unworldly philosophers. Plato relates a story of Thales falling into a well while stargazing.

practice is concerned with particulars: doing is always doing some particular action. Reasoning which remains at the level of universals cannot result in action, a further ground for distinguishing practical wisdom from philosophic wisdom. However, in what follows, Aristotle seems to use *particular* to pick out the more specific (e.g. chicken) in contrast to the more general—light meat.

is more likely to produce health: despite not *knowing* in the strict sense (see ch. 3), a person of experience—if they are aware that chicken is wholesome, but not that light meat is—is more likely to end up healthy than one who knows only the latter.

both forms of it, or the latter in preference to the former: this contains the interesting suggestion—perhaps mitigated by the following sentence—that knowledge of *particular truths only* may suffice for practical wisdom, though ideally a practically wise person will know both kinds of truth.

a controlling kind: *sc.* of practical wisdom, as explained in the next chapter. Aristotle returns to emphasizing the importance of an overarching grasp of the good (as well as of particulars).

BOOK VI, CHAPTER 8

legislative wisdom . . . 'do things': both political wisdom and practical wisdom have two aspects, an overarching or controlling one (legislative wisdom, and concern for the general good, respectively), and a narrower one. For political wisdom, the narrower one is politics in the everyday sense: doing things. For practical wisdom, the narrower aspect is concerned with the agent's own good, as the next paragraph explains.

1142a *busybodies; hence the words of Euripides*: see previous note for the misconception that practical wisdom is exclusively concern with one's

own good. In what follows Aristotle counters the view that exercising practical wisdom on a grand scale is being a busybody. The quotation is from the lost *Philoctetes* of Euripides, Odysseus speaking.

weighs heavy: while this amplifies remarks in ch. 7, the precise train of thought is unclear.

opposed, then, to intuitive reason: practical wisdom, being a grasp of 'the ultimate particular fact', lies at the opposite pole from intuitive reason, which grasps very general principles, here called *limiting premisses*: see ch. 6. Particulars are labelled *ultimate* since they come last in a piece of practical reasoning.

peculiar to each sense: practical wisdom involves a kind of perception, here distinguished from (1) the perception exercised by the five senses and (2) the perception that a given figure is a triangle. But it resembles (2) more than (1). For more on practical wisdom as a kind of perception, see ch. 11.

BOOK VI, CHAPTER 9

excellence in deliberation: (*euboulia*); it needs investigating since ch. 7 laid down that it is a mark of the man of practical wisdom to deliberate well.

1142b *an object of opinion is already determined*: opinion, being a kind of inner assertion, cannot be what excellence in deliberation is, since the latter is a kind of inquiry.

to attain what is good: an important clarification. Merely to deliberate successfully and achieve your end does not count as excellence in deliberation, if your end is bad, like that of the incontinent person. See further VII.6, 1149b14 ff.

apprehends truly: the Greek leaves it open whether Aristotle is saying that practical wisdom apprehends truly (*a*) the end or (*b*) what conduces to the end. (*a*) is the more likely construal, though it may seem to conflict with what was said in ch. 5. If that reading is correct, we have the puzzle that different objects ((*a*) and (*b*)) seem to be assigned to practical wisdom, and to excellence in deliberation, and yet the latter was discussed since it is what practical wisdom is, in large part.

BOOK VI, CHAPTER 10

1143a *practical wisdom issues commands . . . but understanding only judges*: having narrowed down practical wisdom to the sphere of the practical—see ch. 8 with which this chapter fits best—Aristotle now contrasts it with understanding. An exercise of understanding might lie in judging a practical proposal—see later in this chapter—while that of practical wisdom involves making a recommendation (to oneself or another).

when it means . . . knowledge: the Greek word *manthanein*, 'to learn', also means 'to understand'. This was a source of eristic puzzles, see Plato's *Euthydemus* 275–8, and Aristotle's *Soph. El.* ch. 4.