

Aristotle
ΑΡΙΣΤΟΤΕΛΟΥΣ

Protrepticus or Invitation to Philosophy
ΠΡΟΤΡΕΠΤΙΚΟΣ ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΙΑΣ

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Preface

Aristotle's Invitation to Philosophy was among the most famous and influential books of philosophy in the ancient world. For about a millennium, from the middle of the fourth century BCE, when the Cynic philosopher Crates read it to a shoemaker in his workshop in Athens, to the early sixth century CE, when the neo-platonist philosopher and statesman Boethius, languishing under sentence of death in a prison cell in Ravenna, recalled ideas from it to mind and adapted them in his own Consolation of Philosophy, Aristotle's book inspired dozens of generations of readers to appreciate a philosophical approach to life. It appealed to the taste of the Roman politician and philosopher Cicero, who adapted and expanded on Aristotle's arguments in his once famous Hortensius, an 'Invitation to Philosophy' intended to spread the wealth of Greek philosophy among the leading citizens of Rome. In a later century, his Hortensius moved the eighteen-year-old Augustine to "an incredible ardour" for philosophy; and it was probably the Hortensius which Boethius was recalling when he took consolation in the ideas originally formulated in Aristotle's work, written about a millennium earlier.

Short, sweet, seductive, and accessible (though not easy), Aristotle's Invitation to Philosophy stands in striking contrast to the surviving records of his philosophical researches, such as Posterior Analytics and Metaphysics, writings which can only be described as dry, lengthy, rebarbative, and bristling with difficulty. These recondite texts of Aristotle somehow appealed more to the intellectual taste of the philosophy professors of late antiquity, with the result that most of these kept on being copied, and survived into the modern period, whereas the elegant and shapely books that Aristotle had polished and published for his contemporaries have virtually vanished from modern view. Aristotle's Invitation to Philosophy survived only in a few scattered reports and echoes, apparently dead to the world, until largely resurrected in 1869 by the young English scholar Ingram Bywater from suspended animation, stuck in the pages of a textbook by the neo-Pythagorean Iamblichus of Chalcis, who had the good taste to quote extensive selections from it (and from other famous works) in the course of compiling his own textbook, also entitled Invitation to Philosophy.

Witness A
An ancient papyrus fragment of
Aristotle's Invitation to Philosophy

For a period of about 1,350 years, readers and scholars had little access to the contents of Aristotle's lost book Invitation to Philosophy, apart from two paragraphs (quoted as being from Aristotle), collected together by the learned John Stobaeus (John of Stobi) in a large multi-volume bouquet of uplifting blossoms of ancient wisdom, which he arranged for the benefit of his son, now published under the title Anthology, or Florilegia. Since they were not labeled as having come from any particular work of Aristotle's, readers had no way of knowing this, until the hypothesis was advanced, by German scholars in the second half of the 19th century, that this selection (Stobaeus III.iii.25) came from Aristotle's Invitation to Philosophy.

Then in the last decade of the 19th century, a major find of papyrus was made at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt, at the site of what had evidently been a papyrus recycling facility. (Papyrus was relatively more expensive in the ancient world than paper is in the modern world, and re-using and re-cycling were common practice.) Among these book fragments, edited and published by the English scholars Grenfell and Hunt, we find POxy666, a chunk of what had evidently been an expensive book, well crafted when it was first made in the 2nd century AD. This fragment happens to transmit every word that had been transmitted by Stobaeus, as well as several extra at the beginning, at the end, and in the middle. The two overlapping versions of the text are identical, word for word, with a very few exceptions, probably caused by scribal error. Most importantly, the last few words from the papyrus fragment, which had not been transmitted by Stobaeus, read as follows: "hence surely we should philosophize without reservation." This confirms the truth of the scholarly hypothesis, advanced earlier in the century, that these paragraphs were quoted by Stobaeus from the Invitation to Philosophy of Aristotle.

From what sort of a book is POxy666 a fragment? Either the original book was a well-written copy of Aristotle's Invitation, or else it contained that work together with another work or works, or else it was itself an anthology, a treasury of previously assembled selections from the works of earlier authors. The evidence suggests that Stobaeus worked from such intermediate anthologies, not from any knowledge of the original works from which the selections were excerpted. Therefore the otherwise remarkable coincidence that the Stobaeus quotation is a slightly reduced version of the text in the papyrus fragment should perhaps be explained by supposing a common origin in a tradition of anthologies of excerpted nuggets of wisdom.

Four columns are visible in POxy666, but no words are legible in Column IV, and words are legible in Column I only after line 50, as follows: "... since ... dog in the manger ... when ..."

On the next page we translate Columns II and III, on the basis of the recent edition of the papyrus (ed. Fabio Vindruscolo in Corpus dei Papiri Filosofici I.1* pp. 269-279).

This is why those who observe their misfortune should avoid it, and consider success in life as in fact not consisting in the possession of lots of things as much as in the condition of the soul. [15] For one would not say that even a body is happy by being adorned with splendid clothing, but rather by being healthy and in a good condition, even if none of the things just mentioned is present in it; rather, and in the same way, a soul, too, if it has been educated, such a soul and such a man must be hailed as being successful, not if he is splendidly furnished with the externals but is himself worth nothing. [39] For nor is a horse, if it has a golden bit and an expensive harness but is itself bad, the sort of horse that we consider to be worth something; but it's any one that's in a good condition that we praise instead. [51|52] Apart from what's been said, what happens to those who are worth nothing, when they do happen across wealth and the goods that come by fortune, is that their possessions are worth more than they are, which is the most disgraceful thing of all. [III.5|6] For just as anybody who is inferior to his own servants would turn into a laughing-stock, in the same way it turns out that those for whom their possessions are more important than their own nature should be considered pathetic. [II.4-III.17]

And this is truly how it is: for, as the proverb says, 'satisfaction begets insolence, and ignorance with power beget madness,' since for those whose condition is bad in those respects that concern the soul, neither wealth nor strength nor beauty is anything good; but rather, the more these bad conditions obtain to an excessive degree, the more greatly and the more often those things harm the man who possesses them, if he comes by them without wisdom. [41] For the saying 'no knife for a child' means 'don't put power into the hands of the bad.' [46|47] But everyone would agree that wisdom comes from learning or from searching, the capacities for which are comprehended within philosophy. [53] Hence surely we have to do philosophy unreservedly, and ... [III.18-56]

Witness B
Iamblichus' selections from
Aristotle's Invitation to Philosophy

Iamblichus of Chalcis was a philosopher and teacher of the late 2nd and early 3rd century AD. For Iamblichus, the most authoritative tradition of philosophy was the Pythagorean one, which, according to his school, had lent insight and inspiration to Plato as well as to Aristotle and other great ancient philosophers. He completed a large multi-volume compendium of neo-Pythagorean philosophy, called De Secta Pythagorica, of which Iamblichus' book Invitation to Philosophy was the second volume (three other volumes of this compendium survive). In pages 65-90 of this book, Iamblichus cites long passages from Aristotle's own identically-titled book Invitation to Philosophy. But since Iamblichus does not announce where he is quoting from (or even that he is quoting), the identification of these passages as coming from Aristotle's lost work had to wait until 1869, when the English scholar Ingram Bywater advanced this hypothesis. All responsible scholars now agree with Bywater's theory, though room for doubt occasionally remains about where exactly Iamblichus is quoting. In his book, Iamblichus has, in its first 14 pages, summarized various Pythagorean approaches to getting young people committed to a philosophical life, and then turns, in the next 9 pages to paraphrasing several passages from the works of Plato, never naming him, passages from Euthydemus, Alcibiades, Laws, Timaeus, and Republic. His failure to name his sources is inconvenient for posterity, but should not be taken as a sign that Iamblichus meant to commit plagiarism; on the contrary, these works which he is quoting would have been so familiar for his intended audience that he would have found it inconceivable that someone might think he was passing off their words as his own. Likewise for Aristotle's Invitation to Philosophy, which was a bestseller in the ancient world and widely distributed: Iamblichus would have assumed that every educated reader would know where it came from (much as most educated modern readers are able to identify quotations as Shakespeare's), an assumption that became false in the centuries after his death, and is only now becoming true again.

In our presentation of the relevant pages of Iamblichus' book, we mirror the page divisions of the authoritative 1989 edition (and French translation) of his work by Édouard Des Places. Our translation begins with the last two lines of p.64, where Iamblichus is concluding the Plato section before moving on to the Aristotle section of his book.

Note: the words we attribute to Aristotle appear in this font (Garamond);

and the words we attribute to Iamblichus appear in this font (Arial).

... hence, according to this division most of all, those who wish to conduct themselves well should practice philosophy.

And the following approach also leads to the same result.

All of nature, as if possessed of reason, does nothing at random, but everything for the sake of something, and nature pays more attention to banishing chance from what is for the sake of something than the skills -- because the skills are actually imitations of nature, we said.

Since a human being is naturally composed of both soul and body, and the soul is better than the body, and what's inferior always provides service for the sake of what's superior, so also the body exists for the sake of the soul. The soul has a rational and an irrational part, which is also inferior, so that the irrational part is for the sake of the rational part. The intellect is in the rational part: thus the demonstration requires that everything exists for the sake of the intellect.

And again, intellectual processes are activities, being a seeing of intelligible objects, just as the activity of sight is a seeing of visible objects. It is, then, for the sake of the intellect and intellectual activity that everything is valuable for human beings, since other things are valuable for the sake of the soul, and intellect is the best part of the soul, and the other things are sustained for the sake of the best.

Again, those kinds of thinking are autonomous, we said, which are valued for their own sake, but those which lean on other things are like slaves; what is pursued for itself is in all cases superior to that which is not, because what is autonomous is superior to what isn't of that ilk. Now when practical activities are executed by the mind, even if the mind itself suggests what is useful and is in charge of that, yet surely it depends on these things, i.e. surely it's in need of the ministration of the body, and surely it too is infected by the contingency of those things on whose behalf people perform the actions of which intellect is in charge; and most of them are on account of the body.

Hence those kinds of thinking which are valuable just on account of the observation itself are more honorable and superior to those that are useful for other things. The observations are honorable on their own accounts, and the wisdom of these activities of the mind is valuable; but the observations of practical wisdom are valuable on account of the actions.

Thus, there is something good and honorable in the observations of philosophical wisdom, but, again, presumably not in any and every observation, for not every grasp as such is honorable, only a grasp in a ruling element, when it is wise, a grasp of the governing principle in the universe, which is actually cognate with wisdom, and might literally underlie it. Deprived of perception and intellect, a human becomes pretty much like a plant; deprived of intellect alone, a wild animal; deprived of the irrational element, but retaining the intellect, a human bears resemblance to a god.

So the passions of the irrational soul are to be subdued as much as possible, and we should make use of the pure activities of the mind, looking both at itself and at the divine; and we should train ourselves to live by the pathways of the mind, by engaging all of the eye of our attention and our longing towards that end. For surely we shouldn't observe the realm of god and the divinities for the sake of practical activities, for they say it is not righteous to sully our vision of the divine by making it subservient to the necessity of providing what is useful to human beings, nor generally should we be grateful to the mind on account of the needs < ... gap of a line ... > probably with a view to them (though it's the only one of our faculties that is successful at that); on the contrary, both our practical activities and everything else should be arranged with a view to mind and God, and it's from this that we should take the measure of what is reasonable even in our particular duties, for the judgment is both fair and deserving, and is the only one of them all that is capable of providing the genuine kind of success for human beings.

For what distinguishes us from the other animals shines through in this sort of life alone, a life in which there is nothing random or of little value, we said. For animals too have some small glimmers of reason and practical wisdom, but are entirely deprived of the intellectual wisdom of

observation, and this is present among the gods alone, just as a human being actually falls short of many animals in the accuracy and power of its perceptions and impulses.

And this is the only good which truly cannot be taken away, which they agree pertains to the conception of the good when, in virtue of this way of life, a virtuous person is in no way subjected to the vagaries of fortune, and to a degree higher than all others liberates himself from the things that are in the grip of fortune. That is also why it's possible to be confident with all one's mind, up until the end of this life. For what can anyone remove from those who long ago alienated themselves from such goods as can be taken away, who truly possess their own property, and live off their own property, and are nourished by their own property, and by the measureless felicity of a God with whom they are in touch?

Now then, let these sorts of arguments be the Pythagorean invocations to the most perfect wisdom; but since 'our dialogue is with human beings', not with those who easily enjoy the divine lot in life, with these sorts of invocations we should mix in some exhortations to the political and practical life as well. Let's speak in the following terms.

The things that are supports for our way of life, e.g. a body and what's around it, support it in the manner of certain tools, the use of which is dangerous, and rather the contrary is accomplished by those who use them in ways they shouldn't. [7] Well then, one should desire both to acquire this knowledge and to use it appropriately, this knowledge through which we will put all these things to good use. [9] Hence we should do philosophy, if we are going to engage in politics correctly and conduct our own life in a beneficial way. [37.3-11]

Furthermore, there is a difference between the kinds of knowledge that produce each of the things of which we want to have more and more in our way of life, and the kinds of knowledge that make use of these kinds of knowledge, and the ones that give service are different from the others that issue orders; and in these as it were more commanding kinds of knowledge exists what is good in the strict sense. [16] If, then, only that kind of knowledge which does have correctness of judgment, and does use reason, and observes the good as a whole -- that is to say, philosophy -- is naturally capable of using all of them and issuing orders, by all means one ought to do philosophy, since only philosophy includes within itself this correct judgment and this intelligence to issue orders without errors. [37.11-22]

And furthermore, since everyone chooses what is possible and what is beneficial, it must be pointed out that both these features belong to philosophy, and also that the difficulty of acquiring it is more than outweighed by the magnitude of its benefit; for we all work at the easier tasks with greater pleasure. [26] Now then, that we are capable of acquiring the kinds of knowledge about the just and the expedient and also the ones about nature and the rest of truth, it is easy to demonstrate. [38.3] For prior things are always more familiar than posterior things, and what is better in nature than what is worse, for there is more knowledge of what is determinate and orderly than of their opposites, and again of the causes than of the effects. [7] And good things are determinate and organized more than bad things, just as a fair person is <determinate and organized more> than a foul person, for they necessarily have the same mutual difference. [10] And prior things are causes more than posterior things (for if they are eliminated, then the things that have their substance <made> out of them are eliminated: if numbers then lines, if lines then surfaces, and if surfaces then solids), and letters <are causes more> than what are named 'syllables'. [37.22-38.14]

Hence since soul is better than body (being more of a natural ruler), and the kinds of skill and intelligence concerned with the body are medical science and athletic training (for we regard these as being kinds of knowledge and say that some people possess them), clearly for the soul too

and the psychic virtues there is a certain discipline and skill, and we are capable of acquiring it, since surely we are also capable of acquiring knowledge of things of which our ignorance is greater and cognition is harder to come by. [38.14-22]

Similarly too for the natural sciences; for intelligence about the causes and the elements is necessarily about the things that are posterior; for these are not among the highest, nor do the first principles naturally grow from them; rather it's from those that all other things come into being and are evidently constituted. [39.4] For whether it is fire or air or number or any other natures that are the causes and first principles of other things, it would be impossible to be ignorant of these things and to recognize any of the other things; for how could anyone either be familiar with speech who was ignorant of syllables, or have knowledge of these who understands nothing of the letters? [38.22-39.8]

Now then, that there is a kind of knowledge of the truth and of the virtue of the soul, and how we are capable of acquiring them, this is what we have said about those topics; and that it is the greatest of goods and the most beneficial of all will be clear from what follows.

For we all agree that the most worthy and the most excellent by nature should rule, and that only the law should rule and have authority; but the law is a kind of intelligence, i.e. a discourse based on intelligence. [39.9-16]

And again, what norm do we have or what more precise standard of good things, than the wise man? [39.18] For all things that this man will choose, if the choice is based on his knowledge, are good things and their contraries are bad. [39.20] And since everybody chooses most of all what conforms to their own proper dispositions (a just man choosing to live justly, a man with bravery to live bravely, likewise a self-controlled man to live with self-control), it is clear that the intelligent man will choose most of all to be intelligent; for this is the function of that capacity. [39.25] Hence it's clear that, according to the most authoritative judgment, intelligence is supreme among goods. [39.16-40.1]

So one ought not to flee from philosophy, since philosophy is, as we think, both a possession and a use of wisdom, and wisdom is among the greatest goods; nor should one sail to the Pillars of Heracles and run many risks for the sake of property, while for the sake of intelligence devoting neither effort nor expense. [6] It would surely be slave-like to crave living rather than living well, and for him to follow the opinions of the majority rather than evaluating the majority by his own opinions, and to seek out property but for what is noble to take no trouble whatsoever. [40.1-11]

As to the value and the greatness of the practice, I think we have sufficiently proved our case; that the acquisition of wisdom is much easier than that of other goods, one might be convinced by the following arguments.

For, despite no payment coming from the people to those who do philosophy that would make them keen to exert considerable effort in this way, and despite having given to the other skills a big lead, nevertheless the fact that in running a short time they have surpassed them in precision seems to me to be a sign of the easiness of philosophy. [40.20] And again, the fact that everybody feels at home with philosophy and wishes to occupy their leisure with it, renouncing everything else, is no slight evidence that the close attention comes with pleasure; for no one is willing to labor for a long time. [40.24] In addition to these, its practice greatly differs from all others: philosophers need

neither tools nor special places for their job; rather, wherever in the inhabited world the mind runs, it latches onto the truth equally everywhere as if it were present there. [40.15-41.2] Thus it has been proved that philosophy is possible, that is the greatest of goods, and that it is easy to acquire; so that on all counts it is fitting that we should take it to heart.

One might see the same point more clearly from the following argument.

To be intelligent and cognizant is in itself valuable for humans, for it is not possible to live as a human without these; and it is also useful for our way of life, for nothing good comes to us unless it is accomplished after we have reasoned and acted in accordance with intelligence. [11] Moreover, whether living successfully consists in enjoyment or in having virtue or in intelligence, according to all these we should do philosophy, for these things come to us most of all, and in a pure way, through doing philosophy. [15] Furthermore, part of us is soul, part body; and the one rules, the other is ruled, and the one uses the other, which supports it as a tool. [18] Further, it is always with reference to that which is ruling and using that the use of that which is ruled, i.e. the tool, is coordinated. [20] And of the soul one part is reason (which by nature rules and judges our affairs), the other part is a follower and is naturally ruled. [41.7-22].

And everything is well disposed when it is in accordance with its own proper virtue, for to obtain this is good. Moreover, it's when a thing's most authoritative and most honourable parts have their virtue that it is well disposed; therefore the natural virtue of that which is better is naturally better. [27] And that which is by nature more of a ruler and more commanding is better, as a human is over the other animals; thus soul is better than body (for it is more of a ruler), as is the part of the soul which has reason and thought, for this kind of thing is what prescribes and proscribes and says how we ought or ought not to act. [42.1] Whatever, then, is the virtue of this part is necessarily the most valuable virtue of all, both for everything in general and for us; in fact, I think one might actually take this position, that we are this part, either alone or especially. [41.22-42.4]

Furthermore, it's when the natural function of each thing is achieved, not by coincidence but in itself, that it is called finest, and then it should also be called good, and one should take the most authoritative virtue to be the one by which each thing naturally accomplishes this very thing. [9] So that which is composite and divisible into parts has many different activities, but that which is by nature simple and whose being is not relative to anything else necessarily has a single virtue in itself in the strict sense. [42.5-13]

So if a human is some simple animal whose being is ordered according to reason and intellect, there is no other function for it than only the most precise truth, i.e. having the truth about existing things; but if it is naturally composed of several capacities, it is clear that, of the several things it can naturally achieve, the best of them is always their function, e.g. of the doctor health, and of the pilot safety. [20] And we can name no function of thought, or of the thinking part of our soul, which is better than truth. [22] Truth therefore is the most authoritative function of this part of the soul. [42.13-23]

And it performs this simply with knowledge, and it performs this more with more knowledge; and the most authoritative end for this is observation. [25] For when of two things one is valuable because of the other, the one on account of which the other is valuable is better and more valuable; for example, pleasure is better than pleasant things, and health than healthy things, for the latter are said to be productive of the former. [42.29|43.1] Thus nothing is more valuable than intelligence, which we say is a capacity of the most authoritative thing in us, when disposition is judged against disposition; for the cognitive part, both apart and in combination, is better than all the rest of the soul, and its knowledge is a virtue. [42.23-43.5]

Therefore its function is none of what are called ‘parts of virtue’, for it is better than all of them and the end produced is always better than the knowledge that produces it. [8] Nor is every virtue of the soul in that way a function, nor is success; for if it is to be productive, different ones will produce different things, as the skill of building (which is not part of any house) produces a house; [12] however, intelligence is a part of virtue and of success, for we say that success either comes from it or is it. [14] Thus according to this argument too, it is impossible for this to be productive knowledge; for the end must be better than the thing which comes to be, and nothing is better than intelligence, unless it is one of the things that have been mentioned and none of those is a function distinct from it. [18] Therefore a certain observational knowledge is what one should name this kind, since it is surely impossible for production to be its end. [20] Hence being intelligent and observant are a function of the virtue, and this of all things is the most valuable for humans, comparable, I think, to seeing for the eyes, which one would choose to have even if there wasn’t anything different that was going to result from it beyond the vision itself. [43.5-25]

Again, if we cherish sight for its own sake, this gives sufficient witness that everybody ultimately appreciates being intelligent and cognizant. [27] Again, if someone appreciates a particular thing because something else coincides with it, it is clear that he will wish more for that which has more of it: for example, if someone happened to choose walking because it’s healthy, and it occurred to him that running is more healthy for him, and possible, he will choose this even more, as soon as he recognized it. [44.4] Further, if true opinion is similar to intelligence, since having true opinions is valuable in that and insofar as it is similar to intelligence on account of its truth, if this exists more in intelligence, then being intelligent will be more valuable than having true opinions. [43.25-44.9]

But yet, living is distinguished from not living by sense perception, and living is defined by its presence and power, and if this is removed life is not worth living, as though life itself were removed along with sense perception. [13] But among the senses the capacity of sight is distinguished by being the most distinct, and for this reason as well we value it most; but every sense perception is a capacity for becoming familiar with things through a body, just as hearing perceives the sound through the ears. [44.9-17]

Therefore, if living is valuable because of the perception, and the perception is a kind of cognition, and we choose it because the soul is able to have familiarity by means of it; and we’ve been saying for a long time, just as of two things the more valuable one is always the one which has more of that same thing, and of the senses vision is necessarily the most valuable and honourable, and intelligence is more valuable than it and all the others, and more valuable than living, then intelligence is more authoritative than true opinion; hence the main pursuit of all humans is to be intelligent. [26] For because people appreciate living they appreciate being intelligent and recognizing, for they value it for no other reason than for the sake of perception, and above all for the sake of vision; for people seem to love this capacity exceedingly, for it is, compared with the other senses, virtually a kind of knowledge. [44.17-45.3]

It is no bad idea also to comment on the subject on the basis of common presuppositions, as well as on the basis of what appears clearly to everyone.

So then, this, at least, is quite clear to everyone, that nobody would choose a life of possessing of the greatest wealth and power of all people if they were nevertheless deprived of their intelligence and were raving mad, not even if they were going to live enjoying the wildest pleasures, in the way that some people who are out of their minds carry on. [11] Thus everybody, it seems, avoids being unwise most of all. [12] Now intelligence is the opposite of being unintelligent, and of these

opposites the one is to be avoided, the other is valuable. [13|14] So, just as being sick is to be avoided, so is being healthy valuable for us. [45.6-15]

Intelligence, it seems, according to this argument too, is the most desirable of all things, and not for the sake of anything else that results from it, as the common conceptions give witness.

For even if someone had everything, but has some affliction affecting his intelligence, that way of life would not be valuable, for none of his other goods would be of any benefit. [20|21] Hence everybody, insofar as they have some perception of being intelligent and are capable of having a taste of this thing, think the other ones to be nothing; and this is the cause on account of which not a single one of us would put up with being either drunk or infantile up to the ends of our lives. [45.15-25]

So, on account of this, too, though sleep is extremely pleasant, it is not valuable, even if we were to suppose that all of the pleasures were present to the sleeper, because the images during sleep are false, while those of the waking are true. [46.4] For sleep and waking are no different from each other except that the waking soul often has the truth, but when sleeping is always thoroughly deceived; for the phantasm in dreams is actually entirely false. [45.25-46.7]

And the fact that most people avoid death also shows the soul's love of learning; for it avoids what it does not recognize, what is dark and not clear, and naturally seeks what is evident and recognizable. [11] This is why we say we should honour exceedingly those who cause us to see the sun and the light, and revere our fathers and mothers as causes of the greatest goods; and causes they are, it seems, of our having any intelligence and seeing anything. [15] It is for the same reason that we also enjoy what we are acquainted with, both things and people, and call 'friends' those with whom we are familiar. [18] These things, then, might show clearly that what is recognized and evident and plain is appreciated; and if what is recognized and clear is appreciated, it is evident that recognizing is necessary, as is being intelligent, likewise. [46.8-21]

In addition to these, just as with property, it is not the same possession that is for the sake of living, and of living well, for humans; so too, with intelligence: we do not, I think, need the same intelligence for merely living and for living nobly. [26] Now then, much allowance is made for the many who do this (they pray to be successful, but appreciate it if they can just stay alive), but anyone who thinks that there is no need to endure living in every way already thinks it's ridiculous not to bear every burden and exert every effort so as to possess this intelligence that will have a cognition of the truth. [46.22-47.4]

One might recognize the same thing from the following facts too, if one viewed human life in the clear light of day.

For one will discover that all the things that seem great to people are an optical illusion. [8] This makes it also right to say that the human creature is nothing and that nothing is secure in human affairs. [10] For strength, size, and beauty are laughable and of no worth -- and beauty seems to be the sort of thing it is by our seeing nothing accurately. [12] For if someone were able to see as keenly as they say Lynceus did, who saw through walls and trees, how could such a sight seem bearable, seeing what bad things he is composed of? [15|16] And honours and reputations, objects of more striving than the rest, are full of indescribable nonsense; for to those who behold anything eternal it is silly to take those things seriously. [18] What is great or what is long-lasting in human

affairs? [19] No, it is owing to our weakness, I think, and the shortness of our life, that even this appears anything great. [47.6-21]

So who could consider himself successful and happy, looking at these things for which we have been composed by nature right from the beginning, as if for punishment - all of us - as they say the Mysteries relate? [47.24] For the ancients have an inspired saying that says that the soul 'pays penalties', and we live for the atonement of certain great failings. [48.2] For the conjunction of the soul with the body looks very much like a thing of this sort; for as the Tyrrhenians are said to torture their captives often by chaining corpses right onto the living, fitting limb to limb, similarly the soul seems to be extended through and stuck onto all the sensitive members of the body. [47.21-48.9]

So nothing divine or happy belongs to humans apart from just that one thing worth taking seriously, as much insight and intelligence as is in us, for, of what's ours, this alone seems to be immortal, and this alone divine. [13] And by being able to share in such a capacity, our way of life, although naturally miserable and difficult, is yet so cleverly managed that, in comparison with other things, a human seems to be a god. [16] For 'insight is the god in us' - whether it was Hermodotus or Anaxagoras who said so - and 'the mortal phase has a portion of some god.' [18] One ought, therefore, either to do philosophy or say goodbye to life and depart hither, since all of the other things anyway seem to be a lot of nonsense and foolishness. [48.9-21]

In this way one may get an overview of the ways based on common presuppositions by which people are properly exhorted to feel the need to philosophize in a contemplative way, and to live as much as possible the life of science and the intellect. But let's start from a higher perspective and, on the basis of the intention of nature, proceed to the same exhortation, in the following way.

Some of the things that come to be come to be from a certain kind of thought and skill, e.g. a house or a ship (for a certain skill and thought is a cause of both of these), while others come to be not by means of any skill but through nature; for nature is a cause of animals and plants, and all such things come to be by nature. [8] But then some other things come to be by luck as well, for of all the things that come to be neither through skill nor through nature nor by necessity, we say that most of these come into being through luck. [49.3-11]

Now then, of the things that come to be from luck, none comes to be for the sake of anything, nor do they have any end; but the things that come into being by skill have present in them both the end and what they are for the sake of (for the man who has the skill will always provide you with a reason on account of which he wrote, i.e. for the sake of what), and this is something better than what comes to be on account of it. [16 | 17] (I mean all such things as skill is naturally a cause of, in virtue of itself and not coincidentally, for strictly speaking we should assume medicine to be the cause of health rather than of disease, and architecture to be the cause of houses, not of their demolition.) [20] Therefore everything done with skill comes to be for the sake of something, and this its end is the best thing; however that which is by luck does not come to be for the sake of anything, for something good might happen from luck indeed, but yet it is not insofar as it is from luck and in accordance with luck that it is good; and that which comes to be by luck is always indeterminate. [49.11-25]

But yet what is in accordance with nature does come to be for the sake of something, and is always constructed for the sake of something better than what comes to be through skill; for nature does not imitate the skill, but it imitates nature, and it exists to help nature and to fill in what nature leaves out. [50.2] For some things nature itself seems capable of completing by itself without actually needing any help, but others it completes with difficulty or is completely capable. [5] For example, to

begin with, even with reproduction, some seeds presumably germinate without protection, whatever kind of land they may fall onto, but others also need the skill of farming; and, in a similar way, some animals also attain their full nature by themselves, but humans need many skills for their security, both at first in respect of their birth, and again later, in respect of their nurturing. [49.26-50.12]

Further, if skill imitates nature, from this it follows for the skills as well that everything that comes to be comes to be for the sake of something. [14] For we should take the position that everything that comes into being correctly comes into being for the sake of something. [15] And surely if nobly, then correctly; and everything that comes to be (or has come to be) in accordance with nature at any rate comes to be (or has come to be) nobly, since what is unnatural is ugly, and in what is in accordance with nature a coming into being comes to be for the sake of something. [50.12-19]

And someone could see this also from each of our parts; if, for example, you were to inspect the eyelid, you would see that it has come to be not in vain but in order to help the eyes, so as to provide them with rest and prevent things from falling into the eye. [23|24] Thus it is the same thing, both that for the sake of which something has come to be and that for the sake of which it needs to have come to be; for example, if a ship needed to come to be to provide transport by sea, that's why it actually has come to be. [26|27] Moreover the animals are surely things that have come to be by nature, either absolutely all of them or the best and most honourable of them; for it makes no difference if someone thinks that most of them have come into being unnaturally because of some corruption or wickedness. [51.4] But certainly a human is the most honourable of the animals down here; hence it's clear that we have come to be both by nature and according to nature. [50.19-51.6]

This is the thing for the sake of which nature and the god have brought us into being. [7] So what is this thing? [8] When Pythagoras was asked, he said, 'to observe the heavens,' and he used to claim that he himself was an observer of nature, and it was for the sake of this that he had been released into this way of life. [10|11] And they say that when somebody asked Anaxagoras for what reason anyone might choose to come to be and be alive, he replied to the question by saying, 'To observe the heavens and the stars in it, as well as moon and sun,' because everything else at any rate is worth nothing. [51.7-15]

Further, if for everything the end is always better (for everything that comes to be comes to be for the sake of the end, and that for the sake of which is better, indeed the best of all), and an end in accordance with this nature is that which is in the order of generation naturally last when the generation is completed without interruption, surely the first parts of a human being to reach their end are the bodily ones, and later on the parts of the soul, and somehow the end of the better part always comes later than its coming to be. [23|24] Surely the soul is posterior to the body, and intelligence is the final stage of the soul, for we see that it is the last thing to come to be by nature in humans, and that is why old age lays claim to this alone of good things; therefore, some form of intelligence is by nature our end, and being intelligent is the ultimate thing for the sake of which we have come to be. [52.4] Now surely if we have come to be, it's also clear that we exist for the sake of some kind of intelligence and learning. [5|6] Therefore Pythagoras was right, according to this argument anyway, in saying it's for the sake of cognition and observation that every human person has been constructed by the god. [51.16- 52.8]

But whether the object of this cognition is the cosmos or some other nature is a question for us perhaps to consider later; what we have said is enough for us for now as a preliminary. [11] For if intelligence is an end in accordance with nature, then to be intelligent would be best of all. [12] Hence, one should do the other things for the sake of the goods that come about in oneself, and, of these goods, one should have the ones in the body for the sake of those in the soul, and virtue for the sake of intelligence; for this is the highest of all. [52.8-16]

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. [20] For among the things without which living is impossible, the ones which are appreciated on account of something else should be called necessities and joint causes, while all those that are appreciated 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. [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?’ [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. [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 poets who are wise 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. [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. [18|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. [53.15-54.5]

Editor’s note: 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 Tranquility. Other scholars have attributed this allusion in Plutarch to Aristotle’s lost dialogue On Philosophy (fragment 14 in Walzer’s and Ross’s collections of fragments), but on weak grounds; we now re-attribute this passage to Aristotle’s Protrepticus. Evidence: Plutarch, On Tranquillity, chapter 20, 477c-e (tr. from Helmbold’s Loeb edition).

The cosmos is a temple, very holy and very suitable for gods; a human is introduced to it by birth as a spectator not of manufactured or motionless images, but of ideas of those perceptible imitations that the divine mind, as Plato says, has revealed to have an innate source of life and motion: [d] sun and moon and stars, rivers which always discharge water anew, and earth which delivers food to plants as well as animals. [d]

Since life is an utterly perfect festive rite of initiation, it should be full of cheerfulness and jubilation, not like most people, who wait for the festivals of Cronus and of Zeus, and the Panathenaea and other days, in order to enjoy themselves and catch their breath, spending money on mimes and dancers for rented laughter. Whereas we sit there in decorous and reverent silence, for no one wails while being initiated or laments while watching the Pythian games or drinking at the festival of Cronus, [e] they heap disgrace on the festivals which the god supplies for us and calls us

to worship, when they spend their time in criticizing many things, being depressed in spirit, and feeling anxiously burdened with worries. [477c-e]

So then this is the way, by starting out from the intention of nature, we made an exhortation to wisdom as something inherently good and honorable in its own right, even if nothing useful for human life results from it. And yet the fact that contemplative wisdom is also of the greatest usefulness to us for our human life can easily be seen from the skills.

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 be experts in the success and failure of the state, need philosophy much more. [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 carpenter's line, and ruler, and string compass) < ... a line of text is missing ... > 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. [6] But this is not something which can be done by someone who hadn't done philosophy and become familiar with the truth. [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. [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 performs 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. [23|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. [25|26] For he alone lives looking at nature and at the divine, and, just as if he were some good helmsman who hitches the first principles of his life onto things which are eternal and steadfast, gets anchored and lives on his own terms. [55.7-56.2]

Now then, this knowledge is theoretical, 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 theoretical, we do thousands of things in accordance with it nevertheless, accept some things and avoid others, and generally gain through it everything good. [56.2-12]

Well now, the fact that those who have chosen to live according to intellect also enjoy life the most might be clear from the following argument.

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. [22] Further, if we distinguish living from not living by perceiving, and 'perceiving' has two senses, in the strict sense as using the senses, but in the other sense as being able to use them (that's why we say, it seems, even of people who are sleeping that they are perceivers), it's clear it will follow that 'living' also has two senses: 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. [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 for which there is a single 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, to beneficial things as well as to virtue.) [19] Therefore the waking person should be called more 'alive' than the sleeping one, i.e. 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. [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 it is for this use that the other ones have their uses. [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. [3] Now the only function of the soul, too, or else the greatest one of all, is thinking and reasoning. [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. [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. [57.23-58.14]

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. [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. [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. [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. [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. [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. [59.3-17]

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. Hence the enjoyment itself of the true and good pleasures is also a reason that those of us with any sense should take up philosophy. If we have to reach this conclusion, not only on the basis of the ingredients of success but also on the basis of success from above as a whole, let us state explicitly that as philosophizing is related to our success in life so is it related to our condition of being good or bad.

For everything, both those that are for this and those that are on account of this <are valuable ... a line of text is missing ... > to be valuable for everyone, both those things we do as necessary and the pleasant things that make us 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 as 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, responsible for it in their souls. [59.24- 60.10]

Witness C
Collected ancient reports about
Aristotle's Invitation to Philosophy

All the evidence about Aristotle's book from the ancient world, apart from Witnesses A and B, consists of essentially two reports. In the first report, we learn that Aristotle had dedicated his work to a certain rich and famous Themison. In the second report, we learn of a pithy protreptic argument that is not included in [the previous reports]. The argument was variously modified (either abbreviated or augmented) and passed from scholar to scholar in the later ancient tradition of commentary-scholarship.

John Stobaeus (see introduction to Witness A, above) also includes the following report elsewhere in his Anthology, which hangs from an extraordinarily long thread of literary dependency: Stobaeus quotes an otherwise unknown Theodorus, who quotes from selections of a work of the Cynic philosopher Teles, who quotes the Stoic Zeno, mentioning the response of the Cynic Crates to a first reading of Aristotle's *Invitation*. This is a typically Cynic response which contradicts the first idea that Aristotle had mentioned in his work, the idea that wealth and standing are advantages for the study of philosophy, says Aristotle, addressing the rich and famous Themison:

On the other hand, don't you see that, because they have a lot to do, the rich are prevented from enjoying leisure, but the poor, since they don't have anything to do, end up philosophizing? Zeno said that Crates, while sitting in a shoemaker's workshop, read the *Protrepticus* of Aristotle, which he wrote to Themison (a king of Cyprus), saying that no one has more good things going for him to help him do philosophy, since, as he has great wealth, he can spend it on these things, and he has a reputation as well. He said that when Crates was reading, the shoemaker was paying attention while stitching, and Crates said, "I think I should write an invitation to you, Philiscus, for I know you've got more going for you to help you philosophize than the fellow Aristotle wrote to."

The scholar and philosopher Alexander of Aphrodisias (early third century CE), in the course of his Commentary on Aristotle's Topics, explains how positions can often be proved or disproved based on the analysis of equivocal or ambiguous terms. He gives the following example as an illustration.

The position is to be dismantled from these -- grasping all the meanings from out of all of them; for example, if someone should say that one should not do philosophy then, since 'to do philosophy' means both to investigate this same thing, whether one should do philosophy or not (as he <sc. Aristotle> says in the *Protrepticus*), but it also means to speculate about abandoning philosophy, each of these is demonstrated to be proper to humans, entirely refuting the proposal.

The Armenian scholar David ‘the Invincible Philosopher’ (early fifth century CE), in his own Prolegomena to Philosophy, expands the argument, repeatedly, for the benefit of his readers. Evidently he didn’t know Aristotle’s work at first hand, and so must have known of it from other scholars, which may be true of any or all of the above reports as well.

And Aristotle, in a certain written speech in his *Protrepiticus*, in which he exhorts the youth to do philosophy, says this: if you should not do philosophy, then you should do philosophy, and if you should do philosophy, then you should do philosophy. So in any case you should do philosophy. For example, if someone says that you should not be a philosopher, they have used a demonstration, by means of which they refute philosophy. But if they have used a demonstration, then it is clear that they do philosophy. For philosophy is the mother of demonstrations.

And if someone says that you should be a philosopher, again they do philosophy. For they have used a demonstration, by means of which they demonstrate that philosophy truly exists. So in any case one does philosophy, both the one who refutes philosophy and the one who does not. For each of them has used a demonstration, by means of which the arguments are proven. But if one has used demonstrations, then it is clear that one does philosophy. For philosophy is the mother of demonstrations.

The neo-Platonist philosophy professor Elias (sixth century CE) in his introductory lectures Prolegomena to Philosophy, says the following:

Indeed, as Aristotle says in his writing entitled *Protrepiticus*, in which he exhorts the youth to do philosophy -he says this: if you should do philosophy, · you should do philosophy, and if you should not do philosophy, then you should do philosophy. Therefore in every case you should do philosophy. For if philosophy exists, then positively we are obliged to do philosophy, since it truly exists. But if it does not truly exist, even so we are obliged to investigate how it is that philosophy does not truly exist. But by investigating we would be doing philosophy, since to investigate is the cause of philosophy.

The Platonist scholar Olympiodorus (sixth century CE) recounts a version of this argument in his commentary on the Alcibiades, a Platonic dialogue in the protreptic genre, in which Socrates turns Alcibiades on to philosophy.

And Aristotle, in his Invitation, said that if you should philosophize, then you should philosophize. And if you shouldn't philosophize, then you should philosophize. So in any case you should philosophize.

An unknown scholar made the following marginal note on a manuscript of one of Aristotle's logical works, Prior Analytics, a note with the heading 'Concerning all the forms of the syllogism'.

And this form, the paraconditional [i.e. a proposition of the form "Since X, Y"], is also Aristotle's argument in the Invitation: whether you should philosophize or you shouldn't philosophize, you should philosophize. And in fact, either you should philosophize, or you shouldn't philosophize. Therefore, in any case, you should philosophize.