Aristotle's function argument

Philosophy 25A

1. The (special) function of a thing is what it alone does, or what it characteristically does, or what can best be done by means of it. [This is implicit here; see Republic 352e–353a.]

2. The special function of a human involves reasoning, since this alone is not shared with other living beings. (1098a1-4)

3. There are two ways that human function involves reasoning: one part of the soul listens to or obeys reason; one part has or does reasoning and thinking. (1098a4-5)

4. The function of a thing is, in the fullest sense, an activity (rather than a mere capacity). (1098a5-7)

5. So: the [distinctive] human function is activity of the soul that expresses reason, either by having reason, or by obeying reason. [from 2, 3 and 4] (1098a7)

6. The function of a thing is the same as the function of a good or excellent example of that kind (e.g. harpist). (1098a8)

7. A good or excellent example of something does its function well. (1098a12)

8. So: a good or excellent person is one whose activity expresses reason well. [from 5, 6 and 7] (1098a14-15)

9. Doing something well is doing it in accordance with its specific virtue. (1098a15-16) [See also NE II.6, 1106a17]

10. So: the good of a human is to perform the activity of reason, in a way that expresses virtue. [from 8, 9] (1098a16)

11. (Aristotle adds:) The human good is activity in accordance with the best and most complete virtue, in a complete life. (1098a18-20)