

Aristotle's Theological Ethics:
'God's gift' and 'prize of virtue' being mediated by God's blessing

Kei CHIBA

Aristotle investigates what happiness is in the *Nicomachean Ethics* by defining it in Book I and confirming there to be happy persons by introducing God's act of blessing which is accompanied by such passions as pleasure and joy here and now in Book X according to his basic method of complementarity of *logos* (universal account) and *ergon* (being at work here and now). Aristotle once says that 'theories are entrusted in virtue of practices'(1172b6). Aristotle offers his own definition of 'happiness' as 'soul's some kind of activity according to perfect virtue' which is a formally deduced notion by the force of argument concerning the perfect state of soul (1102a5). This is not a product of empiricism; 'if it were so reckoned, we should consider the happiness more desirable when even the smallest of other good things were combined with it'(1097b17). This is a kind of *logikos* (formal) or transcendental argument which involves some non-perceptible state of mind such as 'perfect' being derived from 'how one should speak' on 'happiness' based on the principle of non-contradiction without referring directly to empirical matters.

In this context, a theological notion 'blessedness' is introduced to grasp what happiness is 'more explicit' (1097b24, cf.1178b8). I construe that 'some kind (of activity)' in the definition signifies 'being pleasant' or 'joyous' which is a sign of the state of mind being blessed (1101b23,1170a26–29). As the fact that the occurrences of word 'God(-s, -like)' are enumerated 51 times in this book indicates, the notion of 'happiness' is discussed in the contexts of involving God and God like matters. 'Happiness does not consist in our powers' due to the unpredictability of future (1101b12). Thus, it is required to carry out a *logikos* definition of it in Book I as something which is beyond our powers. On the other hand, God's act of blessing such as 'caring' 'loving' are reported (1179a22–31). God is taking care of the blessed people through natural phenomena such as passions of being pleasant; 'Natural endowment is obviously not under our control; it is bestowed on those who are fortunate, in the true sense, by some divine dispensation'(1179b21–24). This is a sign of a virtuous person being blessed. Therefore, the happiness is the supreme good for which all other things are directed such that the human being is facing the virtuous and perfect entity called 'God' as the matter concerning his/her own nature (cf.1170b30–78a19).