

ARISTOTLE'S HUMANISTIC ETHICS

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to argue that Aristotle has no clear metaphysical basis for his ethical treatise as presented in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. What he claims as the supreme good for man which is happiness in accordance with the highest virtue of the soul has no metaphysical foundation in his metaphysical system. Aristotle thinks of God as the Prime Unmoved Mover who moves his objects by attraction, but the same God, according to his metaphysical view does not know the world, let alone trouble to think about it. The paper therefore argues that man's self realization through contemplation is merely an activity satisfying only man's intellectual well-being, outside this there is nothing guaranteeing that such self realization is possible beyond this life.

INTRODUCTION

The attempt of this paper is to highlight the fact that in Aristotle, there is a loose relationship between his ethical doctrine and his metaphysics. This attempt by no means claims that Aristotle in no way thinks of man as teleologically related to an infinite principle. Indeed, Aristotle claims that man's happiness lies ultimately in contemplation, and this activity is the function of the divine-like principle in man, called the Active intellect. What is to be stressed and defended in this paper is that there is a marked distinction between the sources of this contemplative activity in man as treated in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, and his doctrine of God in his Metaphysics. Indeed, it is the aim of this paper to examine the relation between Aristotle's Psychological theory of human nature and his naturalistic conception of ethical values. Aristotle's Psychology is of significant importance in understanding his ethical treatise, since he consciously tailored his ethical principles to coincide with the demands of human nature. It is the hope of this paper that within the ensuing exposition attempts would be made to demonstrate that his ethical doctrine does not have any clear metaphysical Absolute as the ground for moral principles, as could be found in Plato's moral doctrine, nor is there any

foundation clear enough as the source of our knowledge of the good. Regarding these assertions, our investigation is to reveal and lay bare their naturalistic basis in his conception of human nature.

I. The Supreme Good for Man - Happiness: An Activity of Soul in conformity with Perfect Virtue:

The supreme Good for man, Aristotle claims is the achievement of the goals at which human beings naturally aim, as well as the balanced and rational satisfaction of desires to which he gives the name *eudaimonia*, which is a Greek word usually translated as 'happiness'; properly understood as referring to total well-being of a man. Throughout this paper we stick to the term 'happiness'. According to Aristotle, the study of the good which is happiness for man falls within the province of social science (Aristotle: 1970, 4)¹. Aristotle considers social science to be the supreme practical science of the good to which all other sciences are subordinate and ministerial. Ethics too, falls within its province but concerns itself only with the individual's realization of the good life, and is often contrasted with the other arm of this supreme science, which is politics which concerns the good of the state. It is considered that both the good of the state and that of the

individual are the same, except that the good is found to be greater and much nobler in the state, than in the case of the individual's life.

Aristotle defines happiness as an activity of the soul in conformity with perfect virtue. This virtue, he considers, is human virtue since the good with which he is concerned is human good and the happiness, human happiness (Aristotle: 1970, 25). By asserting that virtue is human virtue, Aristotle by no means implies the excellence of the body but of the soul. In view of this, he claims that the study of social science which gives information on what must be done and what not to do for the human good must be based on a methodical study of the human soul (Ross: 1971, 188)². Aristotle thus, acknowledges and appreciates the relevance of knowledge of human nature to ethics and says that ethics must have a good basis and backing in human psychology. The student of ethics, he asserts, must study the soul in order to determine the nature of the good for man (Aristotle: 1970, 25).

II. The Nature of Human Soul: Its Major Divisions and Activities

In his *Psychology*³, Aristotle sees man as a composite of body and soul. This is true, not only in the case of man but equally of plants and non-human animals, since these too, have souls in the sense of being alive as natural bodies (Aristotle: 1968, II, 1, 412). Aristotle takes the soul to be a kind of genus of which the souls of plants, non-human animals and men are species, and each of these kinds of souls has its own definition (Aristotle: 1968, II, 3, 414b). Indeed, Aristotle defines the soul as the first actuality of a natural body which has life potentially, and asserts that the soul is the source and principle of movements, the form or essence of a living body (Aristotle: 1968, II, 1, 412a, 27). In a man, it is the principle of knowledge and in this respect; it is considered as immortal and can exist separately from the body, although he sometimes speaks of the lower parts of the soul in man as inseparable from the body. The body is the matter for the soul while the soul is its form and vital principle (Aristotle: 1968, I, 1, 402a, 412a, 1b). In this regard, Aristotle considers that soul and body are not substances but inseparable elements in a single substance. Both form an organic unity which while it lasts, is complete and is only distinguishable by the philosophic eye (Ross: 1971, 132).

Aristotle distinguishes different types of soul in which the higher levels presuppose the lower levels which are always limited. The lower

type of soul is the vegetative soul which is found in all living things. The function of the vegetative soul is primarily the preservation and maintenance of the living organisms embodying it. In order that any living organism may continue to exist, it is absolutely necessary that it must exercise the activities of assimilation and replication. This power is given by the vegetative soul, and it is the only level of soul, found in plants.

The second level of soul is the sensitive soul, found only in animals and men. The function of the sensitive soul is not only the activity of sense perception, but also the feeling of pain and pleasure as well as desiring. These faculties found in all animals, include as well two other faculties, namely imagination, of which memory is a part and the faculty of movement (Aristotle: 168,I,4 408,55). According to Aristotle, movement would be useless to most animals unless they could recognize their food when they found it. Added to this faculty is the developed sense of touch and taste, in order that the animal should know by bodily contact what is good or bad for it. All animals share equally in this level of the sensitive part, but it is in man alone that is found the rational faculty.

Only man possesses the rational faculty, and according to Aristotle, there are two rational faculties in man, namely the theoretical and the practical or calculative faculties. In his *Psychology*, he says that the theoretical faculty is the immortal part of the soul; it is the principle of knowledge in man, and has as its object, truth for its own sake. It is the only separable part from the body, hence Aristotle claims that it is pure, impassible and eternal (Aristotle: 1968, 5, 430a, 17). Without the theoretical reason there would be no thought in the mind. The practical or calculative faculty is the power of scientific thought and deliberation (Aristotle: 1970, 123). The practical faculty aims at truth not for its own sake but for moral and practical purposes. Aristotle, however, asserts that it is inseparable from the body and therefore perishable with the body (Aristotle: III, 5,430a, 29).

In his *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle demonstrated that the vegetative faculty has no share in making a man virtuous. It is considered as the lowest and the most irrational part of the soul. Another part that is considered irrational but which sometimes shares in the rational principle of the soul is desire, which is found also in the sensitive faculty which makes it very irrational if not properly controlled by the rational principle. In his *Psychology*, Aristotle claims that desire is of

two kinds, namely rational desire [wish], which desires the good and irrational desires [appetite], which desire the apparent good (Aristotle: 1968, III, 10,433). Rational desire is always connected with practical or calculative faculty that is, the reason for the sake of something; just as desire itself is always for the sake of something. In this kind of rational desires, there is always presupposed an imagined good or pleasure to be attained which is in accord with practical reason (Aristotle: 1968, III, 433a, 25). The continent man, for example, has rational control over his desires. In this case, Aristotle considers that the appetitive and desiring elements of his soul are in obedience to his calculative faculty (Aristotle: 1970, 26).

Irrational desire proceeds from unreasoned action of the appetite, hence, the desire is not adequate and the imagined good is not right. The desire then is not rational or in accordance with the calculative faculty. This is the case with the incontinent man who follows the base and irrational desires of his appetite to attain an imagined good against his calculative faculty. Thus Aristotle arrives at the conclusion that in the soul of man, there are two major divisions, namely the irrational and rational parts (Aristotle: 1970, 27)⁴. Between these, we find the faculty of desire, which shares in both the irrational and rational parts of the soul. The rational part, as we already mentioned, is twofold as well, comprising the theoretical and the practical faculties. On the basis of this distinction, Aristotle proceeds to use it for the classification of human virtues – as ethical and intellectual virtues. The theoretical wisdom [*Sophia*] and practical wisdom [*phronesis*], are the intellectual virtues. Thus, Aristotle demonstrates the relation between ethics and psychology of human nature. We now move to consider the activities of these two rational faculties in man with regard to virtue and the good.

III. Human Virtues and the Role of Reason

According to Aristotle, happiness which is the good for man must correspond to what is the best in man in respect to his function. Man's function, he asserts, resides in an activity of the soul which follows a rational principle. Since he defines happiness as an activity of the soul in accordance with perfect virtue, this virtue must be the virtue of the highest faculty in man (Aristotle: 1970, 12-13). Following the division of the soul in man into irrational and rational faculties we

mentioned that Aristotle classified the virtues of the soul as ethical and intellectual virtues. Intellectual virtues, he claims are praiseworthy states of the soul which has a rational principle in the strict sense and in itself, while ethical virtues are praiseworthy states of the appetitive and desiring elements of the soul (Aristotle: 1970, 27).

In the rational faculty, Aristotle distinguishes two elements having a rational principle, namely one by which we contemplate the kind of things whose principles are invariable and the other by which we contemplate variable things (Aristotle: 1970, 120). Aristotle calls them, the scientific and calculative faculties and proceeds to grasp the best state of each element, that is, the virtue of each. Now, in the soul of man the predominant elements are sensation, reason and desire. Of these three, sensation has no part in determining an action. Only reason and desire do in various ways determine a person's action, because in Aristotle's view, moral virtue is considered as a disposition to choose and choice is regarded as deliberate desire, which involves desire for an end and reason discovering means to that end (Aristotle: 1970, 120-121). Now, the two kinds of rational faculty are alike in the sense that in both, men make truth their aim and objective. The work of both intellectual parts is truth, Aristotle asserts, but the difference between them is that while the contemplative intellect aims directly at truth for its own sake, the practical intellect aims at truth in accordance with right desire. Hence, according to Aristotle, practical reasoning⁵ only shows itself in choices made after deliberation by men of good character. If the choices are to be good and the desire right, desire must pursue what reason decrees. Practical wisdom is the power of good deliberation not about how particular things are to be produced, but about 'things' good for oneself, that is, about how a general state of good life for all is to be brought into being (Aristotle: 1970, 123-124). Aristotle describes the power of deliberation as the ability of finding means to ends. It is a true disposition of a good man towards actions by the aid of a rule with respect to things good and bad. It is therefore; easy to think that a truly wise man should know what things are good for man; in this sense, what a wise man affirms as true about ends and also about means, should really portray the end as a good end. In other words, if the desire of a good man is adequate when he seeks a good end and if what his practical reason asserts is identical with the object of his desire, then truth about the

end must be comprehended in the truth which is the function of the practical reason (Aristotle: 1970, 120-121; Hardie: 1968, 224)⁶.

IV. Intellectual Virtues – Theoretical and Practical Wisdom: Their Roles in Human Happiness

Accordingly, Aristotle maintains that practical wisdom is the virtue of one part of the rational soul, while theoretical wisdom is the virtue of the other. These are the two intellectual virtues. Theoretical wisdom includes intuitive reason which apprehends the first principle, and scientific knowledge which is a disposition to demonstrate (Aristotle: 1970, 124-125), while practical wisdom includes all the various powers and qualities which are manifested in practical thinking (Aristotle: 1970, 129-132).

Aristotle defines theoretical wisdom as "the union of intuitive reason and scientific knowledge of the highest objects which has received as it were its absolute completion" (Aristotle: 1970, 125-126). Scientific knowledge without the first principle would be incomplete and according to Hardie what corresponds in practical thinking as the grasp of the first principle in the theoretical thinking is the thought of ends to be achieved (Hardie: 1968, 227). Aristotle claims that the end is always an object of desire, and it moves us by being the object thought of or imagined (Aristotle: 1968, III, 433b, 1d-12). Thus, if practical wisdom is to be completed, it must include the intuitive thought of the end as well as the intellectual powers required for discovery of the means (Hardie: 1968, 227).

Aristotle shows the superiority of theoretical wisdom over against practical wisdom by stating that practical wisdom does not rule over theoretical wisdom. Practical wisdom can only provide for its coming into being. It gives orders for the sake of theoretical wisdom, but not to theoretical wisdom (Aristotle: 1970, 136). Practical wisdom contributes to man's happiness insofar as all human activity is achieved only by practical wisdom, as well as ethical virtues (Aristotle: 1970, 134). Hence, Aristotle says that virtues cause us to aim at the right mark and practical wisdom leads us to adopt the means. Aiming at an end implies thinking about an end and the disposition to think truly of end is part of practical wisdom. Aristotle considers that life in agreement with ethical virtue is happy in a secondary sense, because the activities bound up with such virtue are only fitting to human condition. So, too with practical wisdom, for he says that:

...Since the principles of practical wisdom are in accordance with the moral virtues and rightness of morals is in accordance with practical wisdom. Being connected with the passions also, the moral virtues must belong to our composite nature. But virtues of the latter are human; so, therefore, are the life and the happiness which correspond to these (Aristotle: 1970, 230).

Now, with regard to life according to theoretical wisdom – Aristotle says that life according to reason is best and most pleasant for man, "since reason more than anything else is man. This life therefore is also the happiest" (Aristotle: 1970, 230). This assertion, of course, rests on his main argument that:

If happiness is activity in accordance with virtue, it may reasonably be taken to be in accordance with the highest virtue; and this activity will be that of the best thing in us. Whether reason or something else is this element which is thought to be our natural ruler and to guide and to take thought of things noble or divine, whether it be itself also divine or only the most nearly divine element in us, its activity in accordance with its proper virtue will be perfect happiness. ...Such activity is contemplation⁷. (Aristotle: 1970, 228)

Moving ahead, Aristotle states that the activity of reason which is contemplative is 'superior in serious worth' and that "even though, it be so to speak, small in bulk, it far surpasses everything else in power and worth. This 'best thing in us', too, would seem to be each man himself, since it is the authoritative and better part of him" (Aristotle: 1970, 229-230).

V. Theoretical Wisdom – the Highest of Human Excellences: Contemplation

Aristotle did not explain the relation between this divine-like element and other elements in the soul, which in his account of the composite nature of man is the form of the body. His precise doctrine on the Active Intellect is no longer available today and has become a matter of interpretation and different interpretations have been put forward since the ancient times. In his *Psychology* he informs us that 'reason' which is the active and imperishable part of the soul is rather the cause of man's contemplative activity than itself contemplative (Aristotle: 1968, III, 5, 430a, 10-18). Some philosophers have tried to identify this god-like element of the human soul with God⁸. Theoretical wisdom is the intellectual virtue, which as Aristotle states in Book VI,

Chapter 7, of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, is the highest of human excellences. He says it would be absurd to think that social science or practical wisdom is the best form of knowledge since man is not the best thing in the world (Aristotle: 1970, 126). Man, he points out, may be the best of the animals but "there are other things far more divine in their nature even than man, e.g. [to take the visible things only] the bodies of which the heavens are composed" (Aristotle: 1970, 126). For Aristotle therefore, man's happiness in the fullest sense implies the life of contemplation. This contemplation belongs exclusively to the highest intellectual virtue, namely the theoretical wisdom. Thus theoretical wisdom in its activity brings happiness to men, since perfect happiness is a contemplative activity. This contemplation is not any kind of activity, but an activity which is closely related to that of the gods. Aristotle admonishes us, "not [to] listen to those who assure us that 'being men we should think on human things' or that 'being mortals we should dwell upon mortal things'. No, so far as possible we must make ourselves immortal, and exert ourselves to live in accordance with what is best in us" (Aristotle: 1970, 229)⁹. Hence, Aristotle concludes, that "the activity of God, which excels all others in blessedness, must be contemplative, and consequently the human activity most akin to His must be most of the nature of happiness" (Aristotle: 1970, 231)¹⁰. It is thus that Aristotle demonstrated that the whole moral life of man is to be oriented towards the life of contemplation as its end. This shows that it is essential to acquire moral virtues if man hopes to be capable of intellectual contemplation. This implies that man must be free of all bad desires, disordering and disturbing vices and imperfections often coming from his lower animal nature, in order to be able to exercise this activity of intellectual contemplation. In addition, this exercise must not be done in a disembodied form since it is clearly implied that the man must remain in his composite nature, living in the society of his fellow citizens and so must continually be in need of the moral virtues for the proper conduct of his life.

VI. CONCLUSION

Finally from what we have said so far, one can easily discern and conclude that Aristotle's view of reality as put forward in his *Metaphysics* has little or no influence on his ethical doctrine as expressed in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Briefly, according to his metaphysical

view, the real reality is primarily 'substance'. Everything, he maintains, is either a substance or an attribute of a substance. Aristotle divides substances into 'changeable' and 'unchangeable' substances, from which he distinguishes three basic kinds of substances, namely: (1) the sensible and perishable, i.e. objects like, vegetables, plants and animals; (2) the sensible and eternal, i.e. the heavenly bodies; (3) the non-sensible and eternal, namely God, as Pure-Act or the First Unmoved Mover and the Highest of Perfection. Moreover, Aristotle understands the word 'substance' in two different senses. In its primary sense, he understands an individual thing composed of 'matter' and 'form', and in the secondary and most strict sense, he understands the formal element of the object itself which he calls the 'essence'. All sensible and perishable objects are composed of matter and form. 'Matter' is the principle of their individuality carrying the qualities of the substance, surviving all, including substantial changes, while the 'form' or 'essence' is that which gives specification to the object, makes it what it is, and instigates it into activity. In this sense, a substance is primarily the 'form' or 'essence' of an object which is knowable through abstraction by the mind. In sensible and perishable objects, it is immaterial but it is always associated with matter to form one substance. Thus in man, the soul and the body form one single substance. The soul is the form of the body which is its matter. Aristotle's conception of the human soul is purely organic except for the provision he made in his division of the rational parts of the soul, of a metaphysical abstraction which he considers the purest immaterial principle, namely the Active intellect and recognizes as the form or the main perfective element of the body. This is the reason why Aristotle considers this part of the human soul as divine-like since God as the Purest of substances is devoid of matter and as such is the Primary Substance.

In his *Psychology* he considers the rest of the human soul, (except for the Active immaterial part) as perishable and therefore inseparable from the body. In man the Active intellect is considered as the source and principle of all intelligible thoughts, including of course moral knowledge and contemplation. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* where Aristotle's main concern is for the good life which is the supreme aim of humanity, that is, happiness, this turns out to be achievable through man's exercise of his natural Active intellect through contemplation. Contemplation is the highest and most perfect

activity of the rational part of the soul, the Active intellect, which plays a metaphysical role in man's realization of happiness. Aristotle regards it as the source of theoretical wisdom, which is an intellectual virtue, but he fails to inform us about the source of this Active intellect itself in man. He claims that it is divine-like in quality as pure substance and that the way it functions is closely related to God's nature. This is not quite convincing as clearly, infinite differences exist between the two¹¹. For instance, God is Pure Act, not in any form associated with matter, and the Active intellect, even though it is immaterial and divine-like is supposed to direct man's wholly well-ordered moral life to contemplation. The contemplator is not even a disembodied intellect, but remains a man, a composite of matter and form living among his fellow men while contemplating, under human conditions in this present life.

In the *Metaphysics* Aristotle considers God as the Highest of perfection. In Plato, the Highest of Perfection is the idea of the Good, namely the Absolute Beauty to which everything is directed. Aristotle's ethics too is teleological just like Plato's, but Aristotle has no idea of God as the ground of his ethics. Man's self realization is through contemplation which is merely an activity of the intellect satisfying only man's intellectual well-being, outside this, there is nothing guaranteeing that such ultimate self realization is possible beyond this worldly life, since for Aristotle man per se, is not immortal, it is only the Active intellect which is immortal and that is only a partial aspect of what is usually considered the whole man. This shows that there is no clear metaphysical Absolute as the ground of his ethical system. His ethical doctrine has a purely naturalistic and humanistic basis. One can therefore conclude that the reason why Aristotle, perhaps, is less concerned and inexplicit in bringing in the idea of God as the ground of his ethical system is because unlike Plato or St. Thomas Aquinas, he does not fully subscribe to the idea of immortality of the soul or the future life after this worldly existence. He felt that he needs no supreme being to guarantee happiness to man, since his metaphysical system only understands God as the Prime Mover who only moves things by attraction and is Himself unaffected by things external to Himself.¹²

It was Christian Aristotelianism particularly that of St. Thomas Aquinas whose, ethical system tried to remedy and reformulate the whole conception of contemplation by seeing it as the supernatural union of the whole soul with

God in the Beatific Vision. Thus he supplied what was lacking in Aristotle's ethical doctrine and indeed transformed and injected new life into the whole system while at the same time keeping intact the essentials of Aristotelian ethical system. Aquinas ethical system is structured in Aristotelian terms, in it he made quite explicit that Perfect Happiness which is the Universal Good every rational will is looking for, cannot be found in this world of created things, but only in God, who is Himself the Supreme and Infinite Good. For Aquinas, it is only rational beings that can attain the vision of God in which alone lies Perfect Happiness. In this worldly existence, Man can know God and analogically attain an imperfect knowledge of God's nature, but it is only in the next life that Man can know and see God as He really is in Himself and this is what can adequately satisfy man.

In this respect, Aristotle's happiness is only an imperfect happiness. His ethics is an ethics of human conduct in this worldly life which could only lead to attainment of imperfect happiness, whereas for Aquinas real and authentic happiness is only attainable in the next life and this consists mainly in the beatific vision of God. This implies that no other good except God is a necessary basis and ground for good moral conduct. Aquinas assuredly employed Aristotle's language, but he brought in the idea of future life and of the beatific vision of God as the metaphysical support of his system and this made a great difference between his thought and that of Aristotle.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

Aristotle., 1970. *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. J. Warrington, [London] Everyman's Library, Dent and Sons Ltd.

David Ross., 1971. *Aristotle*, [London] Methuen and co.,

Aristotle., 1968. *De Anima*, trans. D. W. Hamlyn, [Oxford], Clarendon Press.

Officially, Aristotle has three divisions of the soul comprising the following faculties – Nutrition, Sensation and Thought. Desire as such is regarded as a secondary effect of sensation which together with the nutritive part form the two fold character of the irrational part of the soul. Vide: David Ross (1971), p.146.

Reasoning is here understood as referring to the rational principle or rule arrived at through the deliberation of a man seeking to decide on what he should do. This is also evident in 1139a, 31-33 where Aristotle claims that the efficient cause of an action is choice, while the principle of choice is desire and reasoning or a rule having an end in view.

Hardie, W. F., 1968. Aristotle's Ethical Theory, [Oxford] Clarendon Press.

It should be noted that for Aristotle "contemplation" is not just an activity like meditation is understood these days, nor is it an attempt to empty the mind of its contents, but rather, it is an active exercise of the mind to uncover the wonder and the truth of things. In addition 'contemplation' meant for Aristotle philosophical contemplation, it does not refer to any religious phenomenon such as the ecstasy of Plotinus. This ultimate end of moral activity is to be acquired only in this life, since there is no reference to any vision of God in the next life, nor is there any expression alluding to personal immortality.

For instance, Alexander Aphrodisiensis (A.D 220), according to Frederick Copleston, (1962, 72) and Sir David Ross, (1971, 153), was the first to make this identification. He was followed in this regard by Zabarella in the late 16th and early part of the 17th century. It was Zabarella, who following Aristotle's doctrine of the pure immaterial forms in his *Metaphysics* identifies the Active reason with God as the primary intelligible and the source of intelligibility in all other intelligibles. Zabarella, according to Ross, says that it is God as Active reason that makes the potential object of knowledge an actual object of knowledge and at the same time enables the passive reason which has only the potentiality of knowledge to know actually. Ross is of the view that "a representation of God in the *De Anima* as immanent in the individual would not necessarily be inconsistent with the representation of him in the Metaphysics

as transcendent. But a description of Him ... as having all our knowledge before we have it and imparting it to us, would be inconsistent with the description of Him ... as knowing only Himself" (Ross: 1971, 153). One can conclude here, that Ross does not fully subscribe to the views of Zabarella. But on the whole this eternal and imperishable part of the soul is generally considered as a rather abstract entity which has only a metaphysical role to play as a necessary condition of the functioning of the soul. It is divine in the sense that it is purely actual similar to that of God, and also in a manner like that of God, it is a necessary condition for the actualization of the particular potentialities for which it is concerned, but it may never itself be identified with God. [Vide: Frederick Copleston, (1962), A History of Philosophy, Vol.1, Greece and Rome, Part II, New York, Image Books, Doubleday & Co., Inc.,].

It should be made clear here that Aristotle does not believe in personal immortality. Only the Active intellect is immortal and that is not the whole person as an individual. But Aristotle believes that by identifying ourselves so far as may possibly be with it, we may to a certain extent escape from mortality. This is a Pythagorean and Platonic influence on Aristotle. [Cf. Footnote No. 3, 1970, 229].

We should note that Aristotle here remains a Platonist to hold that our reason is really something divine and is capable of living the divine life and contemplating divine things.

It should be remarked that Man as an ordinary single substance is clearly dipolar, i.e. it is actual and potential; active and passive; mutable and immutable in some respects. But God alone is monopolar, i.e. no being except God is unqualifiedly Actual, Active and Immutable – and this distinguishes Him from the rest of reality. [Cf. Charles Hartshorne & William L. Reese, (1976) Philosophers Speak of God, (U.C.P, Chicago), p. 60].

Aristotle actually believes that his Deity is indifferent to the world and does not even trouble to think about it. But then if really

in Aristotle's system, God does not know anything about the world and is unaffected by the things outside of himself, [Aristotle says He thinks only His own thoughts, as a Self – thinking Thought], this would entail that we His creatures are irrelevant to God, but then in what sense is He relevant to us? Part of the answer which Aristotle will endorse is that we simply admire the richness of His being and the only relevance of this to action [good moral conduct] might be that we aspire to imitate Him. But this would mean that we try to care less and less about our fellow creatures since there is no hope of lasting values accruing from such care. This may not be a quite conclusive answer.