



The Relationship between Moral Justice and Practical Wisdom from the View of Aristotle

Maria Seyed GHOREISHI¹, Ghodratullah REZAI^{2,*}

¹Assistant Professor of Tehran University

²PHD student in Education Teaching of Tehran University

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Abstract. The theory of justice of Aristotle is one of the most important principles of Aristotelian ethics affected on many moral philosophers. But there is an argument. Is the justice the whole virtue or it is the part of the virtues? Is there any other virtue over all virtues comprehensively? Aristotle has differentiated between the concept of “justice as a comprehensive virtue” and the concept of “justice as the part of virtues” relates to the difference between “real mediocrity” and “intermediate of actions” in his opinion. In order to achieve the relationship between the justice and the practical wisdom and the recognition of the theory of Aristotelian virtue and mediocrity, first of all we refer to the position of the practical wisdom in this theory and then separate the concept of justice as “the comprehensive and full virtue” and the concept of justice as “the social action” from the view of Aristotle and finally we pay attention to the true justice and the practical wisdom as the real mediocrity. Since the concept of happiness is directly related to the explanation of the theory, first of all this concept of Aristotle’s view is examined.

Keywords: Justice, practical wisdom, Aristotle, virtue, mediocrity, happiness

1. INTRODUCTION

The justice has the special position among the moral virtues and values. It is one of the most basic concepts in rational and philosophical ethics that many moral schools have tried to address this theoretical and practical concept.

Aristotle, the one of the pioneers and founders of the philosophical and intellectual schools, has stated the deep theories on the justices that its affects are undeniable on the other philosophers. But there is an argument. Is the justice the whole virtue or it is the part of the virtues? Is there any other virtue over all virtues comprehensively?

The concept of the justice has some complexity. So, some moral philosophers and the exegetes of Aristotle’s views have not differentiated between the concepts “real mediocrity” and “mediocrity as a practical rule” and they have considered the concepts “justice as a comprehensive virtue” and “justice as some part of virtues” as the same and there is necessary to give some correct explanation of Aristotle’s theory due to these differences.

In this article, first of all, we reconstruct the theory of virtue and the mediocrity of Aristotle in order to gain the theory of justice of Aristotle and its relation with the practical wisdom. Then we point to the practical wisdom position in this theory by expressing the correct explanation of it and separate the justice as “virtue of soul” and as “social action” due to Aristotle’s view and finally we will talk about the relationship between the practical wisdom and the justice and will say that the virtue of justice is the virtue of the practical wisdom.

Often Aristotle’s opinions have been reported from the book “Nicomachean Ethics”. Hence, we focus on this book to investigate Aristotle’s view about the justice and its relation with the practical wisdom. Since the concept of happiness is directly related to the explanation of this theory, we examine the concept of Aristotle’s view.

* Corresponding author. *Email address:* Ghodratullah REZAI

Happiness

We, in the discussion about the happiness, do not focus on our attitude in the philosophy of the ethic; therefore, whether being Teleologist or Deontologist or other attitude, we have to talk about the happiness. Hence, most theories in ethics are associated, in some way, to the concept of the happiness; although, most attentions to the happiness and its issues are taken by teleological philosophers. This issue has been considered since the ancient Greek where some authors have claimed that the philosophy of Greek ethic is quite happiness- oriented (Larense, 2000, page 43).

In Greek, the term Eudaimona is used for the term “happiness” severing the same purpose that the man can gain. Therefore, Aristotle says: “in every action or a choice, the goodness is its end or goal because the man brings an action to gain the goodness. Therefore, human being acts an action in order to be closer to the goodness not the action is true itself (Aristotle, 2006: 65). However, because of many ends and we want some of them for other ends not for themselves, it is obvious that all goals or ends are not final goals. We consider some goal as the most extreme ends without any intermediary and only for itself. Hence, in the ethics of Aristotle, the goal of everything is call goodness, and among all goals, the one is the supreme goodness or the happiness that we want it for itself and all want everything for it and all things are oriented toward it (Aristotle, 1991: 1098a). Aristotle has divided the goodness in many ways including physical goodness and personal goodness (self goodness) but the noble and true goodness is related to the personal or self goodness because this kind of goodness has been honored and its owner is considered honorable. In addition, this type of charity helps the man to achieve the absolute or extreme goodness. Thus Aristotle has discusses the activity of the self when defining the happiness and introduced it as “the activity of self in accordance with the virtue” (Aristotle, 1991: 1098a).¹

Due to Aristotle’s view, the activity based on the virtue has two characteristics: one is based on the wisdom because the particular virtue of the man compared to other human beings is that he does the soul or self activities in accordance of reason and will be happy if does it. And the other one is that the activities due to the virtue have been continued continually during lifetime (Aristotle, 1991: 1098a).

Therefore, due to Aristotle’s opinion, the happy life has the rational nature and this rational life is active in two practical field (practical reason) and the theoretical field (theoretical reason) represented some kind of happiness with practical wisdom and the moral virtue or other kind of life reflected by philosophical thought and contemplation. This type of happiness can be obtained by using the theoretical activity that is difference between the human and the animal. Hence, the happiness, based on Aristotle’s opinion, has been divided into moral happiness and rational happiness.

The activity based on the virtue is not limited to a period of life and can be continued throughout the life. So we can know someone happy who is benefited by the self activity based on the virtue until the end of his life rather than being happy through one day or more days temporarily. Therefore, the temporary prosperity and happiness is not sufficient and it should be permanent in order to be happy.

With regard to these two properties (based on the reason and permanent activities), Aristotle has stated his most perfect definition about the happiness: “happiness the self or soul activity in

¹ That is why Ibn Maskawaye says: “if there is gathered the virtues related to the self in a man, it is adequate him to gain happiness and there is no need to physical virtues. Because the lack of physical virtues dose not hurt his happiness as if a defective person that his defect does not harm his happiness as well as poverty and other foreign things that do not harm his happiness (Ibn Maskawaye, 1991:86).

accordance with virtue based on the reason or the most perfect virtue with lots of virtues throughout the life not in limited period” (Aristotle, 1991: 1098a).

Virtue

Aristotle has investigated the nature of the virtue after introducing the happiness as “the self activity based on the virtue” and basically the notion of Aristotle on the morality is in terms of the virtue (Crisp, P.622). Aristotle has defined the virtue with his accurate expression: “The virtue is some chosen master in mediocrity based on the reason or in accordance with the opinions of the philosophers” (Aristotle, 1999: 1107a). He has introduced, in this definition, the kind of virtue (indefinite nature) as the master and the type of virtue (obtained nature) as the mediocrity. Hence, we explain the master and the mediocrity.

Aristotle has believed that in every self or soul there has been observed three appearances: reactions or passions (feelings), forces (talents) and masters (actual talents). Reactions or passions (feelings) include lust, anger, fear, courage, envy, hate and other feelings and desires that are conjoined with the pleasure and pain. Forces (talents) include some talents that predispose us to realize those reactions or feelings including the sense of anger, lust and so on. The masters or the actualities are some talents actualized by the good or bad behaviors of the man (Aristotle, 1999: 1105a).

The virtue should be one of three cases inevitably. Aristotle, by delivering evidences, has proved that the virtue and the vice are not possibly grouped in the reactions (feelings) or the forces in terms of their kind (indefinite nature). The virtue is not considered among the reactions or feelings, because:

First, we are not endowed with the virtue or the vice because of having these feelings but in terms of the virtues or the vices we are endowed with the feelings.

Second, due to these feelings, we are not blamed and no one blame because of his fear or anger and we do not blame anyone due to these feelings but the quality of sense of anger and fear would be praised or blamed while the virtues and vices cause us to be blamed or praised.

Third, the feelings and emotions cause us to be in a passive mode while we cannot be passive by the virtues and vices but we are ready to do these feelings.

Fourth, the virtue is always preceded by the voluntary choice and decision process while some feelings such as anger and fear come to us without previous selection (Aristotle, 1999: 1106a).

The virtues are not some kind of talents because we cannot consider anybody good or bad or blame or praise him because of having some special talent. In addition, our talents are natural issues but the virtues and vices not, and the man is not inherently good or bad (Aristotle, 1999: 1103a).

The only thing that remains is the master (or the masters). So we can consider the virtues in terms of kind (indefinite nature) as the kinds of masters. Therefore, the virtues and the vices are the masters and these are the stable and unstable positions of the human soul obtained by doing the accurate and moderate actions. Aristotle has asserted that by doing one virtue nobody is the owner of that virtue. But one is the virtuous person (or the owner of a virtue) who has always acted due to that virtue. To clarify the nature of virtue in terms of its kind, there should be determined that what kind of master is a virtue? According to Aristotle, the virtue in terms of the obtained nature is the mediocrity kind.

McIntyre, one of the western exegetes of Aristotelian ethics, has admitted that the thought of mediocrity is perhaps the only concept of ethical problem (McIntyre, 1988a, P.65).

Aristotle's theory of mediocrity has been enjoyed relatively high popularity among Islamic scholars including Farabi (Farabi, 1992, pages: 60 and 61), Ameri (Ameri, 1987, pages: 10 and 11), Ibn Sina (Ibn Sina, 1940, P. 119), Fakhr Razi (Fakhr Razi, 1966, P. 385), Ghazali (Ghazali, 1987, Pages: 74-81), Sar-ol-Moteallehin (Sar-ol-Moteallehin, 1981, Page: 115), Allame Tabatabaie (Tabatabaie, 2013, pages: 558-559) and so on. They have accepted this theory with differences in interpretation. Therefore, the concept of the mediocrity and its recognition has found the fundamental importance.

There should be observed that what Aristotle's intention is to introduce the virtue as some kind of mediocrity. He has stated two kinds of mediocrity: one as a virtue (real or true mediocrity) and the other is some kind of mediocrity in actions and reactions as a practical rule.

Real or true mediocrity, practical wisdom virtue

Before addressing this issue, it is necessary, firstly, to express the types of virtues due to Aristotle's divisions in terms of human forces or powers. In his view, the virtues are divided into two groups: the intellectual virtues and the moral virtues. Aristotle has stated that there are two forces in the man: rational force and irrational force. The irrational force, also, has two aspects: plant soul (nature) and brutal soul (nature). The brutal soul has desires and passions. It is the force of wrath and strength. The plant soul or nature does not share with the intellectual aspect but the brutal soul or nature is related somehow to the intellectual aspect. It hears and obeys the command of the reason. The virtues attributed to the rational force are called the intellectual virtues such as theoretical philosophy or wisdom and practical wisdom. The virtues attributed to the irrational force are called the moral virtues such as courage, modesty, generosity and so on (Aristotle, 1999: 1103a).

The highest intellectual virtue is the theoretical wisdom related to the reflection life. Other intellectual virtue is the practical wisdom caused to right and accurate decisions in variable and insignificant behaviors. This intellectual virtue is the virtue and the ultimate perfection is the practical wisdom (Aristotle, 1999: 1104b).

According to Aristotle's definition, the virtue is a chosen master from the obvious mediocrity determined by the reason with its wisdom (Aristotle, 1999: 1107a) because this reason (practical reason) has determined the mediocrity and has differentiated between the virtue and the vice. Sometimes the subject or the practical wise man has obligated to determine the mediocrity and sometime other persons (other practical wise men or scholars) lead him in this path. When describing the issue, it should be considered that due to Aristotle's definition, the virtue is the practical wisdom and some kind of the mediocrity based on its nature. It means that Aristotle always shows interest to the moderation and can identify accurately the moderation and the mediocrity ranges for us in the case of partial and variable and select the right and moderate behaviors.

Due to this definition, it is important to get the moderation range and recognize the moderate and right behaviors. There is no different that we have the practical wisdom themselves and acquire such knowledge or emulate from persons qualified to the practical wisdom (practical scholars).

Based on Aristotle's view, the virtue of the practical wisdom is naturally a key virtue causes to unify the moral and intellectual virtues and then the deed of man has not been completed except with the coordination of the practical reason and the moral virtue (Aristotle, 1999: 1144b). Therefore, the moral virtue is not sufficient alone to ensure the human happiness but there

should be increased the practical reason policy in order to recognize the accurate behaviors, in the case of partial and variable, towards the moral virtues.

According to Aristotle, the practical wise man is a moderate person, seemingly, with a single virtue known the practical wisdom but this virtue can encompass all other virtues (Aristotle, 1999: 1145a). Such a person can recognize all courageous, generous and modest behaviors without any hesitation in different conditions. Such a person has all virtues and is a standard one for the determination of the mediocrities.

So it has been obvious that the purpose of the virtue in the sense of the real mediocrity is to reach to the practical wisdom. Such mediocrity has no extremes but occurs in human as the spiritual virtue and perfection in form of second nature and this concept of the mediocrity is an absolute virtue and constant perfection in the human soul. Thus it can be concluded that the virtue of the practical wisdom, based on the obtained nature, is the real mediocrity.

But there is a question: A man who have not treated as the practical wisdom and no fairness in deed, how he can determine his moral behaviors and nature in different conditions in order to achieve the moral virtues and finally the perfect virtue (practical wisdom)?

Aristotle, by delivering an intellectual accurate rule, has tried to represent a method to determine the virtues and vices in actions and passions as an index scale.

The mediocrity in practice (actions), as a practical general rule

Since the moral virtues are related to the actions and passions and they (actions and passions) have three forms including the extreme, the dissipation (the extremes) and the mediocrity; the achievement path of the virtue is the mediocrity and then the extremes are blamed. Aristotle has stated that every value helps the man to achieve the happiness will transfer into the invaluable issue with the extremes and the man will be disappointed to reach the happiness. Then, in order to avoid the degradation of the virtues and values, they should be kept in moderation (Aristotle, 1999: 1106b).

He has emphasized that this mediocrity is not considered objectively but subjectively (it is based on the human). In other words, this mediocrity is some moderation to us (Aristotle, 1999: 1106b). Therefore, the purpose of Aristotle is similar to a proportion not equality. We should not consider the mediocrity as the synonymous with the geometric mean of a line or the arithmetic mean between two numbers. To explain this issue, we say an example: if we consider 10 kilograms food high and 2 kilograms food low, the numeric mean is 6 kilograms; but when we consider this amount towards ourselves, it (the numeric mean) may be 2 kilograms for one person or 6 kilograms for another person. As a result, in both cases, each person should consider the mean between two extremes or between his special extreme and dissipation. Or an athlete should not ask his coach how much food to eat in order to protect his position but every athlete should estimate how much food to eat. It means the mediocrity. Every person should observe himself and there is no rule or criteria for it. The recognition of the extremes in ethics is the duty of the reason and there is no criterion for it. For example, perhaps somebody may speak 10 hours but not considered a talkative person and other person speaks two minutes but considered a talkative person.

In actions and passions, also, such a situation exists. For example, it is said that the bravery or courage is the mediocrity between the fear (the extreme in fear) and the impetuosity (the dissipation in courage). This does not mean that the courage is exactly between the fear and the courage but can be said that it is between them. To achieve this mediocrity, the first step is to avoid the extreme and the dissipation because both of them are vices. So, the vices- whether to be the extreme or the dissipation- destroy certainly the perfection (Aristotle, 1999: 1106b).

Due to Aristotle's view, a brave man is someone who fears where should fear and does not fear where should not fear. This is some mediocrity between two extremes. Therefore, the mediocrity in actions and passions, due to his opinion, is some sense or action obtained through right time, right case, to the right person, with right amount, through right ways with the right means. And the non-compliance of the human behavior on this proportion is the real vice. It means that if we behave some action or have some specific sense at inappropriate situation, we have been involved in the extreme and if we do not behave some action at an appropriate situation, we have been involved in the dissipation (Seyed Ghoreishi, 2011, P. 125).

Justice

As Aristotle has explained the mediocrity in two type (real mediocrity as a virtue and the mediocrity in actions), he has divided his theory of justice into two types: justice as a virtue of the soul and justice as a social action; however, much discussions of Aristotle belong to the second type.

According to Aristotle, the justice has both general and specific meanings. Its specific meaning has the extremes but its general meaning has some mediocrity without any extreme. Here, we explain these types of justice:

Justice as a virtue of the soul

Justice as a virtue of the soul known in general meaning due to Aristotle's words includes all virtues. Aristotle says: "Justice, in more general meaning, is the moral virtue and injustice is the moral vice. In other words, justice in general meaning includes all virtues because everyone who deviate from the mediocrity and commit vices, he has oppresses" (Aristotle, 1999:1129b).

Therefore, it may, here, be expected that Aristotle states same words on the justice that has stated before about other virtues. It means he makes clear two mediocrities the justice has been located between them. But he has not believed in justice as the virtue of the soul but has believed that the justice is a real mediocrity. Such mediocrity has not the extremes but has created as the spiritual virtue and perfection in form of second nature in humans. So, the justice is not like other virtues and the deviation from its mediocrity is the extremes. In this respect, both sides of the justice are oppression but both of other virtues are not vices.

Aristotle has considered an action justly that its goal is to prepare the happiness and because the goal of all virtues (such as courage) is ultimately happiness, so all actions due to these virtues will be justly (Aristotle, 1999:1133a). Then, when there is discussed some virtues such as wisdom, courage and modesty associated with three rational faculties, wrath and anger; there has been emerged fourth virtue from the harmony and moderation between them known the justice (Aristotle, 1999:1145a). Thus, Aristotle has known the general virtue of justice as the full virtue and referred it as the mother of virtues. Aristotle wants to say that the justice in this concept is not the only part of the virtue but it is the whole virtue because the justice requires using all virtues. So, we can conclude that the virtue of the justice is the real mediocrity.

With regard to Aristotle's explanation about the virtue of the justice and because he knows the practical wisdom as the real mediocrity and introduces the virtue of the justice with such a feature and considers it as the real mediocrity and the most complete virtue; it can be said that the man who possesses the practical wisdom is the man who possesses the master of the justice.

Justice as the social action

Special justice (partial justice) compared to the total justice is some part of the virtue not its total. Thus we see that outside of the injustice, as a whole, there is other injustice with partial

concept that Aristotle has divided it in two parts: distributive justice and remedial justice. The distributive justice means to distribute the social businesses, government offices, money and other concessions among people on the basis of their merits and competences (Aristotle, 1999: 1134a).

The eligibility or merit criterion in Aristotelian utopia, due to McIntyre view, is the virtue and in this part we can recognize the relationship between the justice and the virtues (Shahriari, 2006, P.91). Unlike Plato, in his book "The Republic", that has delivered a sense of justice in the soul which is measured by the justice in the society (Plato, P. 300), it can be said, due to the view, there is no issue as the justice in individual field. When the concept of justice connects with the individual, the relationship between it and other persons has been investigated (Raphael, 1971, P117).

Therefore, it can be concluded, due to Aristotle's view, the first principle is not equality. Based on his opinion, no rule tell us that everything should be respected in the same way but in the absence of perception about differences in the effective ways, the persons should be considered equal.

Thus, the activities should be compliance with the wages and the obligations with the rights. As the matter of interest is involved, the oppressor obtains over his requirement and the oppressed gets less than his requirement but when the loss, it is reversed. So this kind of the justice is a mediocrity between committing injustice and tolerating the justice. In other words, the justice is the mediocrity between the oppressive action (oppressor) and the oppressed person (Aristotle, 1999:1138b).

The second part of the partial justice is the remedial justice. It means the equality of the people in the human dignity and entitlements but the eligibility is not involved in this sort of the justice (Aristotle, 1999: 1134b). The difference between these two justices is that the distributive justice appears in the common property and always acts in accordance with the geometric proportion. But the remedial justice appears in the relationships and transaction of the people mostly and acts in accordance with the numerical proportion. When establishing this kind of justice, the parties have been judged in the court equally and the duty is to find the numerical mediocrity between them. This should be calculated that how much wrong action has benefits for the offenders and how much loss has been produced for him.

Thus, when asked to estimate the cruelty endured on someone, there has been used the profits and losses terms. Thus, the mediocrity is between the more and less. But the profit and loss or more and less are antonyms. The profit means the more (further) in good and the less (lesser) in evil. The loss means the more (further) in evil and the less (lesser) in good. Then, the remedial justice is the mediocrity between the profit and loss (Aristotle, 1999: 1134b).

2. CONCLUSION

Due to Aristotle's definition that the virtue is the master choice of the mediocrity and the reason determines this mediocrity based on its wisdom, the mediocrity has been divided into two types: "real mediocrity" and "mediocrity in actions and passions".

The purpose of the virtue, due to the concept of real mediocrity, is to achieve the practical wisdom which has been taken from the practical reason and then the practical wise man is in a moderation position. It means that that the practical wise man always pays attention to the moderation and can identify the mediocrity and the moderation amount to us in variable and partial issues accurately and can select the right behavior. Such mediocrity has no the extremes and considers as a virtue and the spiritual perfection created in the man in form of second nature and it is the inclusive of all virtues.

The concept of the justice based on Aristotle's view can be studied in two areas:

- 1- The justice as the virtue of the soul is the real concept of the mediocrity and is the inclusive of all virtues. The justice has no the extremes. It is considered as a virtue and a mediocrity created in the man in form of second nature and it is the inclusive of all virtues.
- 2- The justice, as a social action, is the only part of the virtue. The justice in this concept has the extremes and these two mediocrities are considered in the oppression and oppressive or in the profit and loss.

Since Aristotle considers the practical wisdom as the mediocrity and introduces the virtue of the justice (in the broad sense) with such feature, so we can say that the man with the practical wisdom is the person who possesses the master of the justice. Such a man can identify the best and the most moderate recognition in the ethical behaviors without any measurement and thought and this is the way to gain the justice statue and exactly the virtual activity and, due to Aristotle's opinion, the ethical happiness depends on this virtual activity. So it can be said that, based on Aristotle's view, the practical wisdom is the justice and both of them are considered as the mediocrity and the virtue of the soul.

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