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Human Nature and Virtue in Plato and Aristotle *

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Abstract: In this article, although we will focus on virtue ethics, we will not discuss the derivatives or types of virtue in depth. Here, we will talk about teleological virtue rather than the question of whether epistemological virtues or not. However, it is a fact that in Plato and Aristotle, teleology is closely related to epistemology. This is because knowledge is needed for virtue to be realized, and knowledge is ultimately acquired for a purpose. This shows us that teleology determines the epistemological aspect of this highest peak of Ancient Greek wisdom. When we compare this with the utilitarian understanding of the Sophists, we see that a purpose is needed for the realization of virtue. The Sophists' denial of absolute reality eliminates the purpose of finding virtue or vice.

Keywords: Plato, Aristotle, teleology, human nature, virtue, virtue ethics.

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Introduction

The beginning of systematic movements in the history of thought coincides with the period when research on what it means to be *human* based on the relative logic of sophistic thought began and the phenomenon of raising enlightened individuals came to the fore. Contrary to the purity of the worldviews that developed in the same period, the most prominent feature of the sophistic view is that it emphasizes the human being himself in understanding nature and determining values. In contrast to the belief of the great civilizations that emerged under the influence of ancient religions that values were determined by a power beyond themselves, Greek natural philosophy emerges with an effort to provide an opening to understand existence. Inevitably, this ontological thinking could not purify itself from previous mythological data and could not fully realize what it wanted to put forward, namely an understanding of nature free from mythology. This is because mythology, even though it presented the characteristics of a distorted religion, still represented the dominance of the theology about values.

The main reason why the ideas of *being* and *becoming* in philosophy did not contribute much to values was that they were more concerned with ontology and cosmology than with values. The lack of an effort to think about the human being until the Sophists was because they could not develop an axiology that could be put forward by research on what the human being is. Putting the human being at the center of everything, Protagoras, who placed Protagoras in the triangle of morality, law and politics, naturally had to encounter the field of values, which is a result of human behavior. Because the human being in the triangle of morality, law and politics is a being that has a way of living and realizes this way of living with his beliefs and convictions, it is his inevitable duty to recognize himself and to determine a way of how he should live.

By considering man as the measure of all things, the Sophists concluded that natural thought, that is, human science, is the only

field that can speak about values.[1] For as long as man takes nature as an example, he is forced to accept the results of natural law. The tendency to see the human being as the measure of everything has to say that what is presented as the only reality is in fact perceived differently by each person, and that truth must be more than one since each different perception presents a subjective reality. As a result, the inevitability of saying that there is no truth by its very nature cannot offer us anything other than the denial of universal concepts belonging to the philosophy of values. Since such discourses offer relativistic approaches, they offer nothing concerning both knowledge and purpose.

This is where we get to the heart of the matter. In his subjectivity, man must think clearly about what and how he can carry out his actions. The necessity of facing the problem of what is good for human beings and according to which laws or maxims life is to be organized leads one to formulate politics and adopt rules of law. At the end of all this, it is seen that morality emerges as a result. However, contrary to appearances, morality is a starting point rather than a conclusion. For actions are performed for virtues, and virtues exist for a purpose. The field that determines the purpose will of course be metaphysics. While the attainment of happiness is possible through metaphysical knowledge, metaphysical knowledge is essentially purposive.

Since essence or essence shows how something is determined in principle, it is not difficult to say that the essence of morality is determined by metaphysics. As the fundamental concept of morality, *the good is* the most comprehensive term that explains the raison d'être of existence. Because questioning what the good is allows us to make judgments about what gives meaning to all life,

[1] Protagoras, the greatest of the Sophists, summarizes this issue as follows: "Man is the measure of all things; of the existence of things that are, and of the non-existence of things that are not." Hermann Diels, *Die Fregmente Der Vorsokratiker: Griechisch Und Deutsch*, ed. Walther Kranz, vol. II (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1907), B1, 536. Cf. Plato, *Theaetetus*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, The Dialogues of Plato, IV (London: Oxford University Press, 1892), 152a.

that is, what informs the purpose of all life. Of course, politics as a higher discipline of morality is a product of the reflection of metaphysics in the practical sphere. The moral concept of *justice*, which forms the basis of politics and, in relation to it, law, is a value in deciding what is right for people and what is not. The problem is whether values are transcendental or not, and every moral judgment, whether attributed to a transcendental power or reduced to nature, declares a value. As a result, every value judgment and the behavior performed according to this judgment correspond to a virtue.

1. Socrates as an Inspiration for Plato and Aristotle

When it comes to human nature, empirical observation and logical analysis are insufficient. We cannot investigate human nature in the same way we investigate the nature of physical objects. Physical objects can be described through their objective properties. But human beings can only be described and defined through their consciousness. To understand the human being, it is necessary to actually encounter him or her. Philosophy, which had been understood as an intellectual monologue until Socrates, turned into a dialog in Socrates. Socrates was convinced that knowledge of human nature could only be attained through dialog and dialectical thought.[2] Before moving on to Plato's and Aristotle's conception of virtue, it is worth mentioning Socrates' conception of virtue, which precedes them. According to Socrates, knowledge is virtue,[3] but the fact that knowledge is virtue or virtue is knowledge does not tell us that knowledge is acquired as a result of moral formations. Even if an examination of Socrates' life suggests that he was a moral philosopher as a man who attained the

[2] Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 6.

[3] Aristotle does not find this proposition justified: "Neither was Socrates right in making the virtues sciences. For he used to think that nothing ought to be in vain, but from the virtues being sciences he met with the result that the virtues were in vain." Aristotle, *Magna Moralia*, trans. George Stock, The Works of Aristotle, IX (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1915), 1183b8-11.

motto of a virtuous life, Socrates ultimately devoted himself more to the search for and acquisition of divine knowledge and its transmission to human beings. That is why he used *irony* and *meiotic* methods to convey knowledge to other people.[4]

In Socrates, the soul can decide whether something is good or bad. *Meiosis* also applies to his understanding of morality. Socrates presupposes certain moral virtues from the beginning and gives them the form of knowledge. That is, if we have the source of intrinsically moral elements, we can define them. Indeed, we can define mathematical propositions. Our soul is our only principle-making faculty. When we engage in moral behavior, we get the idea of what is right and what is wrong from our soul. The soul is in reality both the faculty of acquiring true knowledge and the faculty of distinguishing between good and evil. So, when it is said that "knowledge is virtue", what it means is this: When we somewhere manifest a moral virtue, it is recognized in the soul as a rational virtue. In this way, the judgments of good and evil made by human nature are transformed into the form of knowledge, and there is a connection between the theoretical wisdom *sophia* and the practical wisdom *phronesis*.

The virtue of knowledge is primarily related to the acquisition of knowledge, the extraction of divine knowledge from the soul and its transfer to society, and the achievement of a moral order in society. As a result, Plato and Aristotle have reached a similar ethics of virtue under the influence of their teachers. We can say that Aristotle's understanding, including Plato's, is more in line with teleological ethics than epistemological ethics. As a teacher, Socrates is dedicated to the mission of making his friends wiser by making them discover their ignorance. As MacIntyre puts it,

[4] The doctrine of first showing what something does not mean and then determining what is true is Socrates' *dialectical* method. This method is best demonstrated in *the Theaetetus* dialogue. Here, Socratesrefutes the definitions of knowledge of his opponents one by one through negation, that is, through the mocking approach called *irony*, and finally realizes the *meiotic*, that is, the work of giving birth to knowledge about what true knowledge is. See Plato, *Theaetetus*, 149a-e.

"Where X is the name of a moral quality" such as piety and justice, Socrates rarely answers the question "What is X?", so we can determine the whole and only goal of Socratic inquiry as self-knowledge within the framework of the knowledge of his own ignorance. So, virtue is an aim rather than an achievement.[5]

2. Plato and the Ideal Foundations of Human Nature

Plato attempted to extract being, existence, or the human being, nature of existence, from a contradiction between the ideal and the non-ideal. Because he was influenced by Democritus' attempt to reconcile the notion of a fixed world without movement, which was put forward by Parmenides and Zeno of Elea, with the notion that everything is moving and nothing is motionless, which was put forward by Heraclitus, and at the same time he tried to reconcile this with Pythagoras' ideas from the *orphic* tradition.

For Socrates, man is the most important thing in the world. The same is true for Plato, who thinks of him as both an individual and a social being. In the human being, the area that Socrates focused his attention on is the sup*ersensible*, that is, the soul. He acknowledged its existence and left open the question of whether it would live on after the death of the body. The highest and most important duty of man is to take care of the soul and the unshakeable conviction that the body should serve the needs of the soul. Plato, on the other hand, shared Socrates' belief in the supreme importance of the soul, but he sought to prove the truth of this belief. To this end, he gave it a metaphysical foundation, which he took from Orphic-Pythagoric mysticism and combined it with the theory of ideas. It is certainly no coincidence that we find the first traces of this in *Gorgias*. By the time it was written, Plato's abandonment of Socratic views and his adoption of cosmic and anthropological views must have been complete.[6] The new understanding finds its most comprehensive exposition in *Phaedo*. From this

[5] Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics: A History of Moral Philosophy from the Homeric Age to the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 1998), 15.

[6] Plato, *Gorgias*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, The Dialogues of Plato, II (London: Oxford University Press, 1892), 523a ff.

period onwards, Plato adheres not only to the theory of immortality but also to the eternity and eternity of the soul, which is logically true in itself. The soul exists both before and after its existence in this world. Plato adopted the Orphic-Pythagorean doctrine of *soul transmigration* and sought to support it with philosophical arguments such as the soul's simplicity, its indestructibility, and its recollection of the ideas it knew before bodily existence.[7] The strictly defined dualism that distinguishes between two kinds of being is particularly important: on the one hand, the invisible and immortal world to which the soul belongs, and on the other, the visible and temporal world to which the body belongs.[8] Body and soul are therefore united in their temporary status. How often and in what form the soul is reborn depends on its moral state. In the world to come, however, a judgment awaits it, which will decide its future fate according to its state during its life on earth. This is an idea which, as Plato emphasizes, is not itself a mythos but a logos, namely "reasonable truth".[9]

According to Plato, the process of knowing is realized through a special kind of seeing. The sage sees with the eye of the soul, and for this, it is necessary to methodically get rid of the things that can veil and obstruct the soul's eye. To attain the intellectual vision required for this is to open up to another world for the prisoner who has been freed from the cave; this world is certainly not elsewhere, distant and inaccessible, it is within the individual; it becomes clear and conscious only at the end of an effort. The metaphor of the cave describes the different stages of the process of remembering, the effort to remember, where knowledge, being and becoming, action and contemplation meet and intertwine. Plato, especially in the dialogues of the *Republic* and *Meno*, proves that "learning is nothing but remembering" with the help of the

[7] Plato, *Phaedo*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, The Dialogues of Plato, II (London: Oxford University Press, 1892), 70a ff. Cf. Plato, *Meno*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, The Dialogues of Plato, II (London: Oxford University Press, 1892), 81c ff.

[8] Plato, *Phaedo*, 79a ff.

[9] Plato, 81c ff.

educator who leads the soul back to "its own home".[10]

Now Plato has endeavored to think about how we can distinguish the immobile from the mobile in terms of establishing the relationship between this ideal and the non-ideal. Is the nature of being really mobile or not? Of course, the nature of being is mobile. Because we live, first of all, in a physical world. Although the nature of being is indeed mobile, the fact that every movement has the appearance of a multiplicative object, or is a representation of multiplicity, that change is a representation of transformation, and that every change and transformation cannot represent a certain thing, a reality, a truth, as a result, led Plato to accept the existence of something unchanging behind what changes. In other words, Socrates' understanding of substance and Pythagoras' understanding of numbers and spirit led him to the existence of an ideal world beyond the physical world. On the one hand, an ideal world unchanging, ideal, unmoving, and the origin of the spirits or, as he put it, the Gods, who are the source of all things, and on the other hand, the world of possibilities. The world of phenomena, a world of movement, matter, becoming, and perishing. Since possibilities are always changing, it is imperative for Plato that there be an unchanging divine world, a spiritual world.

In Plato's philosophy, we see a clear program based on human nature. Issues related to human nature are dealt with in the process of applying the theory of ideas put forward by Plato to the fields of ethics, education, art, and politics. The right and just behaviors that emerge in practice - for example - are manifestations of the principle (idea) of righteousness and justice. Plato was as meticulous as Socrates was in distinguishing between examples and ideas of moral behavior. While one person may do good for another person, this act may not be good for another. Therefore, although moral behaviors take their share from an absolute idea, they are not themselves absolute.

[10] Jean-Paul Dumont, Anne Baudart, and Pierre Hadot, "Gândirea Fondatoare Greacă," in *Istoria Filosofiei 1: Gândirile Fondatoare*, ed. Jacqueline Russ (Bucaresti: Univers Enciclopedic, 2000), 44.

Although man's nature requires him to be mobile, something of his essence must necessarily have originated from something immobile. For this, man needs to reach the divine world from this world. To do this, he resorted to certain virtues. Plato presented a three-layered, fragmented doctrine of the soul: Intellect, will, and desire. Accordingly, the virtue of each layer of the tripartite soul is different from each other. The virtue of intellect is wisdom, the virtue of the will is courage, and the virtue of desire is temperance. The proper manifestation of each of these virtues in a soul is justice. Since virtue in Plato's thought is knowledge in general, justice is the knowledge of what is best for human nature and functions.

The virtue of reason, or what we call wisdom, is a virtue that only philosophers can realize. Of course, the courage of the soldier class or the chastity of farmers and agricultural people should be added to this. When they fulfill their duties in the best way possible, each class has its own justice. Therefore, for Plato, the most important characteristic of virtue is that it is just. In other words, you should have justice in the things you do in this world as much as your share of the ideal. And justice can be achieved primarily through the power of thinking. The virtue of people who have little thinking power, that is, who are not philosophers, consists of fulfilling their duties. For example, a soldier's courage and heroism are realized through his share of his own idea. Or the fact that a farmer fulfills his own justice by making the best fruit or a baker by making the best bread will carry them to the class of the virtuous in the next world, that is, in heaven.

3. Aristotle and the Individuality of Human Nature and the Human Soul

Aristotle rejected Plato's idea of the ideal world, that is, according to him, there is no ideal world. While Plato represents a return from the holistic ideal, which is the representation of the ideal world, to the individual being, in Aristotle, individuals realize their being.[11] There is no ideal compulsion from above and no

[11] Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, trans. W. David Ross, The Works of Aristotle, VIII

ideal determination. While Plato argues that virtue can be achieved by prioritizing the spiritual pleasures of the soul, Aristotle defends, in the nature of being, that there is an essence within human beings. According to Aristotle, this essence is purely teleological.[12] Among the four causes Aristotle refers to as material cause, formal cause, efficient cause, and efficient cause, the efficient cause is the most important one. This is because the efficient cause is something inherent in the essence of beings. It represents the place where being should go. According to Aristotle, the being will realize its own intellect, that is, when it realizes its essence that exists in its being, when it possesses that virtue, it will have reached its highest goal. Indeed, for Aristotle, all beings carry a certain end in their essence. For example, when you ask why the stone falls when you throw it, or why the smoke rises when you blow out the smoke from a cigarette, you will get the answer that its virtue is the goal, that is, its purpose, which constitutes its essence. Therefore, beings act in accordance with this goal and make breakthroughs according to this goal.[13] Aristotle speaks of a being that has the nature to realize something in its essence. Therefore, we cannot go beyond something that is our nature, and this nature is what exists in our essence. So, we cannot speak of a virtue that is not teleological. For Aristotle, all beings act to this end that encompasses the nature of being. According to Aristotle, "God and Nature do nothing unnecessarily."[14]

But how can we better grasp what Aristotle is saying here? In other words, how do we know that something is moral in terms of

(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), 1039a23 ff. ere, after proving that universals are not substances, Aristotle explains that Platonic ideas are not substances either and that substances are individual things.

12 Aristotle, *De Generatione Animalium*, trans. Arthur Platt, The Works of Aristotle, V (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), 778a16-b19.

13 Aristotle, *Physica*, trans. Russell Kerr Gaye, The Works of Aristotle, II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), 254b33-56a3; Aristotle, *De Caelo*, trans. John L. Stocks, The Works of Aristotle, II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922), 311a1-9; Aristotle, *De Motu Animalium*, trans. A. S. L. Farquharson, The Works of Aristotle, V (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), 700b15-9.

14 Aristotle, *De Caelo*, 271a33.

the moral principle that is in us, which we actually call the universal principle? We can call a behavior or an action moral or virtuous in terms of its universality. Since human virtue is the virtue of the soul and not of the body, and since happiness is an activity of the soul,[15] it can be said that the intelligent animal with a human soul, the human being, is essentially a being that possesses happiness. Therefore, Aristotle believes that this virtue, that is, what applies to all human beings, develops by the teleology, that is, the end, which is inherent in all beings. Therefore, the tripartite state of the soul is ultimately based on teleology in both Plato and Aristotle, and this teleology will lead us to a consciousness of our existence, a consciousness that reminds us why we exist.[16] It is also worth noting this: We do not agree with the discourse and views that Aristotelian virtue ethics never change. Even though Aristotle mentions certain immutabilities regarding the essence of being, by saying that certain things change depending on the conditions and states of will that people are in, he also states that virtues can change over time. But of course, there is an unchanging essence, and this essence is the essence that leads us to our ends.

Plato saw only ideas, the universal that constitutes the content of our concepts, as the first and real. He therefore believed that ideas existed on their own and were independent of particular things. This theory was rejected by Aristotle. In *Metaphysics*, Aristotle devotes very little space to the theory of ideas and its implicit assumptions.[17] Despite some injustices and misunderstandings, his criticism is destructive of the theory. The points he emphasizes the most are that the general is not something of an essential nature, that qualities cannot be outside the things to which they belong, and that ideas cannot be the causes of phenomena because they lack a moving force. He can regard only the particular as real, as substance (*ousia*) in the full sense of the word, since this name

[15] Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, trans. W. David Ross, The Works of Aristotle, IX (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), 1102a16.
[16] David Ross, *Aristotle* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 128–33.
[17] Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, 990a33-92b32.

can be applied to something that is neither the predicate of something else nor an incidental quality of something else.[18] This is true only of the particular. On the other hand, all universal concepts express only the particular qualities of particular things, and general ideas only show the common essence of particular things. It can be said that they are not real, that they are derived entities, but they cannot be seen as something that continues to exist outside of things themselves. Undoubtedly, it is a contradiction to attribute a higher reality to form, which is always universal, in the face of that which is composed of form and matter, and to assert that the universal can be the object of knowledge. The consequences of this contradiction will be observed throughout Aristotle's entire system (Zeller 1948, 173-74).

Although Aristotle disagreed with Plato's views on the independence and transcendence of ideas from things, he adhered to the basic principles of this theory. His definitions of form and matter consisted of bringing these principles or ideas together in a theory more tangible than Plato's. With Plato, he states that only what is necessary and unchanging can be the object of knowledge. Everything subject to sensation is incidental and variable, they may or may not be. However, what is even more important for Aristotle is the following consideration: Every change presupposes a constant, and every becoming presupposes something that is not in becoming; to be more precise, its nature is two-sided: The ground that is a thing and on which change occurs, and the qualities that constitute the basis of this change. Aristotle used the word *hyle*, (matter) to characterize this basis. He called the qualities *eidos* (form), which was also used for Plato's ideas. Since the goal of becoming is achieved when matter acquires form, the form of a thing is its reality, and form is reality or what is real.[19]

Life is based on the ability to move spontaneously. Every

[18] Aristotle, *Categoriae*, trans. Ella Mary Edghill, The Works of Aristotle, I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), 2a11-2.

[19] Eduard Zeller, *Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy*, trans. Wilhelm Nestle and Leonard R. Palmer (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1948), 174.

movement presupposes two things: a form that moves and a matter that moves. This matter is the body and the form is the soul of the living being. Therefore, the soul cannot exist without a body, nor is it a corporeal thing in itself, and it is also immobile. The union of the soul with the body is generally like the union of form with matter. The soul, as the form of the body, is also its ultimate end. The body is the instrument of the soul; its nature is determined by this function. This is what Aristotle means by the term "organic", an idea first expressed by him. The soul is, therefore, the first *entelechy* of an organic being; it is the life principle of the body, the power that moves and constitutes it as an instrument.[20]

It is natural that the purposive activity of nature appears most clearly in living beings, for here everything is designed from the beginning according to the soul and its effects. However, organic life is not uniform in quality, since each purposeful activity can only gradually break the resistance of matter. The life of plants consists of nutrition and reproduction. In animals, we find in addition the faculty of sensory perception, and in the vast majority also the power of locomotion. Finally, humans have the capacity to think in addition to these three faculties. Thus, in partial agreement with Plato, Aristotle recognizes three kinds of soul. When they come together in an individual soul, they constitute the three parts of the soul and are so interdependent that neither the higher can exist without the lower, nor the lower without the higher. These are the nutritional or vegetable soul, the sensory or animal soul, and the intelligent or human soul. Progressive development in vital activities corresponds to a scale of living beings that shows continuous and gradual development from the most imperfect to the highest. The many similarities we find between the different parts of this series show that the same laws govern them all.[21]

What distinguishes the human being from all other living be-

[20] Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans. John Alexander Smith, The Works of Aristotle, III (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931), 412a28.

[21] Zeller, *Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy*, 183–84.

ings is the intellect combined with the animal soul. Aristotle emphasizes that the distinctive quality of human nature is known. According to him, man is not only a being who knows and does science but also a being who acts and acts. Aristotle sees both of these as works and functions originating from the soul. At this point, the relationship between the knowing, thinking aspect, and the acting aspect of the human being gains importance. While Plato implicitly accepted Socrates' imperative relationship between knowledge and action, Aristotle emphasized that reason is not the sole principle of human behavior and that the role of desire and will should also be taken into account in ethical actions.

Aristotle makes a classification of virtues based on the distinction he makes between the parts of the soul that are related to the intellect itself and the parts of the soul that are related to desire and will, which are non-rational, although they share a share from the intellect. According to this, there are two virtues. The first is the virtues that originate from the part of the fully intelligent soul. The second is the virtues that originate from the part of the soul that does not have intellect but has a share of intellect, the faculty of desire and will. He calls the first of these intellectual virtues and the second ethical virtues. According to Aristotle, intellectual virtues can be taught, while ethical virtues are acquired through experience. He sees human emotions and passions, which are the subject of ethical virtues, as normal and natural. In his *Ethics*, he takes being in the middle, the "golden middle", as a basis for both emotions and actions. The golden middle refers to keeping out the two extremes representing evil or vice in emotion or action and keeping the middle point representing virtue in mind.

4. Values and Virtue Ethics in Plato and Aristotle

We have to begin our reflections on values by establishing the nature of moral concepts. Only in this way will it be possible to formulate a political or legal norm. As the fundamental concept of morality, *the good is* the most comprehensive term that explains the raison d'être of existence. Because questioning what the good

is allows us to make judgments about what gives meaning to all life. Since morality as a whole is immanent in this concept, we can associate the basis of inquiries into this concept with divinity, metaphysics, and science. This is because all three of these fields reflect themselves in the field of morality. Beliefs and convictions, that is, all kinds of judgments about existence, conclude in the context of morality. As Descartes also stated, ethics or morals is the highest and most perfect system that requires complete knowledge of other sciences and constitutes the ultimate level of wisdom.[22]

Since *justice is the* moral concept that forms the basis of politics and, concerning it, law, deciding what is right for people and what does not constitute value. The question is whether values are transcendental or not, and every moral judgment, whether attributed to a transcendental power or reduced to nature, declares a value.

The fact that Plato begins his *State* with discussions on the nature of justice shows that politics and law are fields of activity that cannot be separated from morality. The legal interpretations of the Sophists regarding human beings presuppose that the manifestations of natural law are the only data for human beings. However, although it is said that the definition of justice as the domination of the powerful over the powerless reveals the undeniable reality of natural life, the association of the lack of rights of the powerless with his powerlessness should be attributed to the injustice of man, not nature. This is because the laws of nature are passive in themselves, and thus being unjust is an act of man and its consequences bind man. Seeing that only the conceptual definition of justice is not enough, Plato argues that its function should also be taken into account. If justice is not for everyone, it would not be meaningful to call it justice. Here, Plato, through the mouth of Socrates, makes the core definition of justice by talking about

[22] René Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch, The Philosophical Writings of Descartes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), I, 186.

the virtue of a person as well as the virtue of a whole state.[23]

Plato's *theory of ideas* is full of the best examples not only of ontological reasoning but also of teleological judgments. Because this theory shows us what the philosophy of values means in addition to the philosophy of being and knowledge. What we understand from Plato's discourse in the parable, which describes how divinity, and, in a sense, metaphysics are determined, is that the world of reality of all these fields can be grasped through the consciousness of divinity. This doctrine, in which divinity is intertwined with metaphysics, dictates that politics and morality are determined by the decision of a divine power and that the best thing for society is to know this decision. The human being, freed from the dungeon of the cave, reaches the knowledge of the truth and learns that the laws of nature are, in fact, not laws but phenomena. Thus, the *Idea of the Good* or the *Demiurge*, the highest level of divinity, appears as the supreme identity that gathers all spheres in itself.[24] In this case, the uniqueness and absoluteness of reality are emphasized against the relative human understanding of the sophists. Therefore, the fields of divinity and metaphysics, mixed together, determine values and reveal that goodness has pure spirit and evil has corruption.[25]

Plato integrates politics with morality by starting from the assertion that the transcendental being has already predetermined the sphere of values and that the God he mentions in a not-so-obvious way is the determinant of political discourse. According to Plato, who uses the three parts of the soul, namely desire, courage and reason, to determine the people, the soldier and the ruler respectively, it is of course not difficult for him to infer that the person who will use the authority to govern arising from the use of reason is a philosopher. The parallelism between the existence of

[23] Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, The Dialogues of Plato, III (London: Oxford University Press, 1892), 368d.

[24] Plato, 514a-17a.

[25] Plato, *Laws*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, The Dialogues of Plato, V (London: Oxford University Press, 1892), 716a-d.

the sphere of values in the world of ideas and the philosopher being the only person who can reach the ideas is a necessity in terms of resulting in giving the authority to the sage, who possesses reason, in determining the manner of actions, that is, in making laws. The business of doing politics is not only about governing people, but it is also closely related to determining how people are to be governed. The determination of law, in addition to raising an issue that takes place under the sovereignty of reason, expresses the superior ability given to the philosopher in revealing the discourses regarding the source of moral elements. The act of attributing all will reason and all ability to wisdom for the purpose of existence must end with the identification of the sphere of divinity with absolute reason. With the idea of the good, God has transformed the entire universe from chaos to cosmos in the most beautiful way and moralized the laws of nature to function in the best way. The last sentences of Plato's book, that is, the state of peace realized by the immortality of the soul, tell us exactly this.[26]

Aristotle endeavored to express all his discourses on the philosophy of values in relation to existence. Unlike Plato, while denying the reality of ideas, he explains the combination of form and matter as the most fundamental principle of existence, actually calls what Andronicus calls *metaphysics*, when explaining what gives existence its first principles, he calls *theology*.[27] Metaphysics

[26] "Wherefore my counsel is, that we hold fast ever to the heavenly way and follow after justice and virtue always, considering that the soul is immortal and able to endure every sort of good and every sort of evil. Thus, shall we live dear to one another and to the gods, both while remaining here and when, like conquerors in the games who go round to gather gifts, we receive our reward. And it shall be well with us both in this life and in the pilgrimage of a thousand years which we have been describing." Plato, *The Republic*, 621d.

[27] Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, 1026a20-35. Aristotle also states: "And if there is such a kind of thing in the world, here must surely be the divine, and this must be the first and most dominant principle. Evidently, then, there are three kinds of theoretical sciences – physics, mathematics, theology. The class of theoretical sciences is the best, and of these themselves the last named is best; for it deals with the highest of existing things, and each science is called better or worse in virtue of its proper object." Aristotle, 1064a35-b5.

already represented divinity in those times in the sense that it came after physics. The most obvious example of this can be seen in Plotinus' cosmological categorization: The physical realm or *naturalism*, the stellar realm or *cosmology*, and the divine realm or *divinity*.[28] In fact, this distinction is closer to the Platonic worldview. However, Aristotle does not make such a distinction. The distinction he makes is only that of *becoming and perishing*. Even if divinity, the science that gives being its first principles, is also related to God, who gives it its first movement, God appears only as an order-maker in the deist sense, since in Aristotle he is not a determinant of the sphere of values. Nevertheless, the determination of morality, and consequently of law and politics, is shaped by divinity, which reveals the first principles.

Aristotle distinguishes divinity, which he calls the highest science, or metaphysics as some call it, from other sciences in that it gives everything its first principles. In this case, the principles laid down by the field of divinity are above all other kinds of principles in terms of being divine. All values, whether political or moral, have a significance as positioned by theological principles. Aristotle's theology, however, is a theoretical science very different from religious theology as it is understood today. Nevertheless, Aristotelian commentators do not hesitate to call his metaphysics theology, since he speaks of God as the being who gives motion to all things and places first principles in the realm of divinity.

The thinker, who includes his views on politics and laws by the purpose of the first principles, explains the purpose of existence as purposiveness. Therefore, the ultimate end of all actions must be the same. Here, the issue of the field in which this purposiveness is examined will come to the fore, and politics is the field that explains what to do or not to do and therefore investigates

[28] Such a distinction also leads to the categorization of the moral and the political as well as the theoretical.to the humanities. We see a clear example of this in Miskawayh. He divides justice into three parts as natural, conventional and divine. Miskawayh, *Risāla Fī Māhiyyat Al-'Adl*, ed. M. Salim Khan (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1964), 12.

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what is good for human beings.[29] Because politics, by addressing both an ethical and a sociological situation, ensures that not only the gains of the individual but also the values of society are considered holistically. Despite the close relationship between morality, which can be defined as acting according to first principles, and politics, which is defined as spreading the purpose of these first principles to society, the first principles of morality are not something that can be easily deduced like theoretical knowledge. Although the essence of morality is to uncover these principles, this is possible only after very long research. Since ethics itself is not the science that gives first principles, it can also be assumed that it is a tool that leads to them.[30] In a sense, it would not be difficult to say that ethics has a dialectical structure. For dialectics is also used in a sense that leads to first principles.

The most important starting point for a style of politics must be the identification of law with the ideal. For this, it is necessary to determine what is the life that is best suited to be chosen. It would be a very orderly progression, then, to describe the subject with explanations based on moral teachings and, as a result, to put forward the best way of living. The peace and happiness of the individual and society are at the forefront of all these choices. If what is virtuous is what is best for the individual, then what is best for the individual must also be best for the whole society, which reminds us of Plato's doctrine of justice. Although virtuous life is recognized as the best form of life, there may be a problem as to which is better in the sphere of life between politics and ends. The solution to this problem is that both would be the wrong choice. According to Aristotle, the choice between the rights of the individual and the law of the state should always be based on what is just. If the same thing is equally true for every individual, then it is desirable that what is good for the individual should be the same for society and humanity.[31]

[29] Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1094a1-b10.
[30] Aristotle, 1095a1-10.
[31] Aristotle, *Politica*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, The Works of Aristotle, X (Oxford:

Conclusion

Plato is of the view that virtue is a single thing, an idea, and that what appears to be different virtues are appearances of a single virtue in other respects. According to him, virtues are whole; justice and piety, temperance and wisdom, knowledge and courage are essential parts of the same good. For example, temperance is the ability of an individual not to interfere with the fulfillment of other organs and faculties and to know his limits. As for justice, it means that each member of society has his individual rights and does not interfere with the rights and needs of others. So what moderation is to the individual, justice is to society. So, the difference is a difference of perspective, and all these goods or virtues must be understood and evaluated in terms of human nature as a whole. Justice, courage, temperance, and wisdom are not parts or parts of virtue, but different names for the whole, which should be considered as knowledge.[32]

Plato rejects the categorical distinction made by Aristotle after him between *sophia*, which deals with theoretical virtues, and *phronesis*, which deals with practical virtues. By not making such a distinction between *sophia* and *phronesis,* Plato thought that theoretical knowledge of principles was necessary and sufficient for correct practice. Aristotle, on the other hand, made this categorical distinction because of his conviction that theoretical knowledge of the good does not directly make one good. According to him, practical wisdom does not consist of knowing and practicing a set of commandments and prohibitions. Because it is not possible to create a set of rules that can solve all the problems encountered in life. Moral agents must therefore take into account the circumstances of events.[33] Aristotle does not propose a substitute for education in order for children to acquire virtuous habits, but

Clarendon Press, 1921), 1235a20-b35.

[32] Plato, *Protagoras*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, The Dialogues of Plato, I (London: Oxford University Press, 1892), 329b-33d.

[33] Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea,* 1103b26 ff.

his hope, as Plato's did in the *State*, is that his comprehensive account of human virtues will help social theorists and legislators to contribute to the self-realization of human beings and the organization of society.

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