



## Aristotle's Justice Theory

Parisa Ebrahimpour<sup>1</sup>, Alireza Golshani<sup>2</sup>, Hassan Malaekheh<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>PhD Student, Department of Political Science, Shahreza Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shahreza, Iran.  
*P.ebrahimpour@gmail.com*

<sup>2</sup> Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Shahreza Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shahreza, Iran.

*\*Corresponding Author: agolshani41@yahoo.com*

<sup>3</sup>Consultor Department of Political Science, Shahreza Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shahreza, Iran.  
*Hmalaekheh@gmail.com*

**Abstract:** This article is a response to the question that where is the justice position in the Aristotle's political thought? Answering this question is important because justice is the fundamental concept in ethical, social philosophies and old-new political thoughts. Aristotle tends to a way in which the ideas of "equality" and "moderation" are included. Also his deep impact on the Muslim philosopher's political thoughts adds to the importance of the Aristotle's justice theory. The research hypothesis is that Aristotle's justice theory roots from ontology. Aristotle's ethics, Greek custom and in his view, justice are meaningful based on the natural model in his ontology. This article's findings which have been obtained by a descriptive-analytical method show that Aristotle divides justice into two general and strict meanings. Justice in general sense consists of respect laws and citizen's equality which is called virtue set. Justice in strict sense is divided into corrective and distributive types: distributive justice affects the distribution of honor, money and other things among people who have shares in the political system. Corrective justice plays a role in correcting the transactions and communications among people. In Aristotle's view, justice is to follow proportionality and treat equalities equally and inequalities unequally. Endowments and facilities are being distributed proportional to the people's equalities and inequalities.

**Keywords:** Aristotle, ethics, virtue, distributive justice, corrective justice

### INTRODUCTION

Aristotle's justice theory in the frame of his theoretical basis of ontology, anthropology and ethics has not yet found its response by historical, empirical and intellectual methods.

This article aims to find a response to reach a purpose. Aristotle is one of the greatest political scholars who had addressed justice in details and his influence on the political philosophies in the East and West is undeniable. Although he somehow attends in the political philosophy of the philosophers like Tomas Acoins, John Lock, Hegel and Carl Marc, but the necessity of investigating Aristotle's ideas for us is due to his deep influences on Muslim scholar's political thinking. We suppose Aristotle's justice theory is an inevitable consequence of his ontology, anthropology and ethics in the ancient Greek custom. Therefore, in the present study, we focus on this issue just as a key concept in political philosophy and man's virtue factor and government linkages. We seek a basis for Aristotle's justice theory in his ontology, anthropology and ethics. Then we investigate the historical, empirical and intellectual methods used in this writing by stating methodology briefly. At the end, Aristotle's justice theory and his division of justice will be determined.

**Theoretical principles of Aristotle:**

#### A) Antology Principles:

Aristotle invented natural general theory and discovered quadruple causes. The result of this theory is that any entity is a natural whole which is composed of substance and form (potential and action). Form is the ultimate of perfection to which the substance has the capability. And individual from a natural kind explores his form. This Siro has an origin and destination like other movements. Its origin is the subjective cause and its destination is its ultimate cause (Aristotle, 1985).

The primary cause is "ultimate". To evaluate anything, we refer to its ultimate, that is to ask why it has been made? The ultimate of a thing can be determined by empirical observations but this observation shouldn't be limited to a level or step on a point, rather it should be contained in its full period of creation and annihilation. This way of understanding a phenomenon is that what will happen and what's its ultimate (Pooladi, 2003).

The second method to understand an entity is its "nominal" cause. Each entity has a visible structure which shows the class or category to which that entity belongs. When we categorize it based on legislation, people's participation and the way a system is governed (e.g democracy, dictatorship), in fact we are going to recognize that system in terms of the nominal cause. In Aristotle's view, nominal cause characterizes the essence of an entity.

The query of the "cause" of a phenomenon is the query of its "subjective" cause, that is by which process a phenomenon has moved towards a particular ultimate in a special form. Subjective cause preceded nominal and ultimate causes. Finally, to understand an entity, another level of ontology remains. This level relates to this question that "from which" it has been created? This question is related to the "material" cause of phenomenon.

At the same time, the lawful and valuing system of the society also is shaped by classes which constitute that society. In a government, which is mainly formed by workers and poeed or a government under the control of predominates, it is impossible to create a healthy system. To have a healthy system, there should be an equilibrium in the society 's classes.

All phenomena are "beings". Being is the realization of a potential exists in the entities. When we respond four questions including "what" (subjective cause), "why" (ultimate cause), "how " (nominal cause) and "from what" (material cause) of an entity, we can understand that phenomenon accurately. Aristotle believes that human being is a creature whose nature drags him to the social life, that is man wants to be civilized naturally. He also claimed that government is a production of nature and human being is social naturally. Human communities require governments to supply their needs and to reach their objectives. In Aristotle's view, without government, it is impossible to achieve happiness which is the ultimate of its formation (Faster, 1998).

#### **Anthropological principles:**

The natural general model is not only one of the Aristotle's metaphysical principles in the political philosophy, but also in anthropology, it opens the blind spots of Plato's duality. The individual in the Aristotle's theory is the reality within his ego. "Monstrosity" and "form" explain the nature of "kind" and "individual" except God, within each personate, these two principles exist, "form" causes objects classifications and "monstrosity" causes the formation of material objects. In Aristotle's view, truth is the interpretation of potential and background capability. An entity's transformation from an existed state to an actual one is processed by a single movement (Aristotle, 1991).

According to Aristotle, body is a natural object which has talent to live and breathe it likened the form-origin of life. Breath is body's accomplishment and it is inseparable from body. Breath is the static stimulus and ultimate of the body. So, that body is assigned to an indivisible unit ego not to a practical part of it. Yet, the discrepancy in actions taken place by human being, it informs his various forces among them, verbal strength is practically important for Aristotle and it is considered to be a criterion for ego' s divisions.

In Aristotelian anthropology, people under the ruling of a government can't reach perfection equally, it means virtue efforts. In a classified aspect Aristotle considers grandees, professionals, slaves and warriors as the body

of this adult human; he considers powerful troops, daemon leaders and rulers as his soul; politics which commits to the public affair measures and order isn't public's duty, rather a few elites are responsible for it who are called politicians, but ethics and its rules do not belong to a particular group. All the commons and specialties feel moral duty (Anbar & Amin, 2009).

Aristotle believes that the only requirement to which man needs to reach a ruling position is the superiority in terms of virtue. Ethics and politics are based on orders which come from the virtuous man's consciences who have made the intellectual as their guide and leader. As these orders result from logical research, interaction and measurement of the great person's ideas, they vary in different circumstances alternatively. So, the result of action has no absolute or intrinsic value, rather truth is partial. If this order be clear in its position, it gains a new weight and credit scientifically.

### **Ethical principles:**

Aristotle tries to find out an empirical and scientific way to solve ethical problems. According to Aristotle, ethics or individual politics is collective (Aristotle, 1979). Ethics and politics both are from practical wisdom branches and explore man's Happiness. Thus, drawing a firm boundary between ethics and politics is impossible. Each is assigned to a particular scope. Also these two elements can't contradict each other.

Happiness is the central concept in Aristotle's ethics. He seeks a desire in ethics which is desirable inherently, but not being desirable because of any other thing. In other words, Aristotle seeks "supreme good" which is just happiness.

### **Aristotle defines virtue as follow:**

Virtue is a situation and state (good or bad) man chooses against actions and reactions. It means that virtue is a state or monarch which causes man and his actions to be good. This kind of feature occurs when man acts and reacts moderately (Hagani & Zanjani, 2004).

Virtue is in moderation: "moral virtue means that in any action a moderate limit is drawn between two parties. In other words, moderation or depletion and abundance in actions is against wisdom and it is rascality. Thus both courage and cowardice are rascality. At the middle of them is bravery which is virtue. Binding, dictatorship, humor and contention are rascality, our virtue is among them which is agreement and sympathy. Buffoonery and bitterness is going to extremes. The moderate trend is delicacy and cheery" (Forgi, 1938). Each virtue is at the middle of going to extremes and it is rascality in its position.

Aristotle believes that good means Happiness and Happiness is virtuous (Holmz, 2008). Although from Aristotle's point of view, virtue is the average in terms of nature, it is an ultimate in terms of perfection. Also, it is obvious that any interplay doesn't accept the average. Since it turns true in actions like betrayal, indecency, envy, adultery, burglary, and manslaughter. Both achieving an average or acquiring virtue is difficult (Zanjani).

### **Methodology:**

"Method" is a trend or process which deals with techniques and tools applied during research and also to test or evaluate theory (Chilkot, 2014). "Method" doesn't mean applying characterized instructions orderly. "Method" is not a simple set of techniques which should be applied just as they are, "Method" means subjective general insight that in any research, it should be invented again. The term "Method" points to both the "way" and the rules or tools to reach it.

The adopted or applied methods in politics consists of: 1) philosophical, 2) observational ,3) empirical, 4) comparative, 5) historical (Alem, 2014).

Since philosophy is one of the certainty sciences, so a method it uses should also be certain too. The useful "intellectual" method has such a benefit. By intellectual method, we mean using logic; logic is an analogy which has been composed of certain preliminaries and it gives certain result essentially.

In logistics, reasoning is divided into three kinds: allegorical, comparative and inductive (Chalmerz, 1971). The Aristotelian logic classifies induction into two types, perfect and imperfect. In perfect reasoning, all details are examined and in imperfect induction, some details are ignored (Safe, 1980).

"Empirical theory" argues that experience is the primary basis of the recognition, because man without experience has no recognition. He is bare of any perception at his birth. Starting his experiences, his perception and action begins. Accordingly, experimentalists don't adopt the primary intellectual educations and even they don't identify experience as the main criterion in that class of acknowledgments. So they firstly believe that human thinking scope is restricted to the experience boundaries and the study of metaphysics is useless. Second, human thinking path is from part to the whole. Experimentalists rely on the inductive method in their reasoning which is "reaching the whole from the part" and they reject the comparison principle which is the way from the whole to the part.

"Positivism" is a philosophical term which is used at least in two different meanings. One is that historical force will shift human being to a way in which religious and philosophical attitudes have been vanished and the only form of thinking which is remained is belonged to the empirical and positive thinking of the science. They argued that the aim of reference to the human wisdom isn't just to recognize actions but to enhance social life (Passmor, 1972). Indeed "Positivism" is a revolt against philosophy, morality, metaphysics and in better words, it is against moral, philosophical and metaphysical attitudes (Tedbenton).

Policies has an observational capability as an important part of the political studies which is formed by analyzing current political entities and this requires valid observations. By direct observation and interviews with legislatures and politicians, the political events could be studied better. Secondary information may be valid or invalid. But here the correct recognition of the truth and trust are significant. With accurate observations using a measurement view, accurate, real and correct results can be obtained.

In political phenomena, factors like human thoughts, beliefs, motivations and feelings are effective for which the objective investigation isn't easy and sometimes it is possible. But it should be noted that postictal experiences have ever been existed either consciously or unconsciously. As August Kent states that every political transformation is a kind of experience. Every new act which is passed, every new policy which enforces and every changes in the political organization are all empirical, because they mainly are temporary. Their final admission depends on their usefulness. If it turns out that they are not suitable and there is no possibility to reform them, they will be left with a full failure. But even if several political experiences fail, nevertheless they will give us valuable information and help to obtain positive results. So, politics has the power of experimentality utility not in the meaning of experience and laboratory tests, rather in a limited meaning that correct and incorrect data from direct observation obtained from personal experience and contemporary history. Given this meaning, it can be said that history records experiences which has been occurred in a wide range.

"Historiography" is a method to conduct historical research or collect and analyze historical evidence (Lawrence, 2000). In historical research, the researchers investigate events, ideas, measures and meanings in the past systematically. They try to perceive them. Historical research is not just collecting historical facts and statistics. This kind of research is the study of relationships among all factors which have constituted the past and affect present and future trends (Robert, 2000).

It is clear that many present events rooted in the past. Hence, the practical study of political phenomena and entities make historical approach necessary. The value of such an approach involves in the fact that not only it explains the past and enables us to obtain valid results, but also it provides basic principles for the future interpretations. In fact, speaking about politics is somehow speaking about the history. It is worth noting that politics is not certainly within the past; as most of the history is out of the political scope. On the other hand, the entire politics doesn't form the history, but though history and politics are separate they cooperate and complement each other (Fulton, Stewart and Lieden, 1965).

Politics is not a single-method knowledge, rather it is a multi-method one in which different methods can be exploited practically. Given the study of historical, empirical and intellectual methods, it was observed that

each method has its own potential, but it also has its own weaknesses; so, each method covers some parts of the topic in the present research, but none of them can be helpful alone. Since in this research, we focused on a period before the present of juncture, we need historical method; but considering the constraints of the historical method, we should have an intellectual method too. When we speak about justice, we also consider intellectual and philosophical method. So the need to the intellectual method is important along with historical method. Another topic in this writing is experience. The stated issues have an empirical aspect, but it should be noted that we can't overrule intellectual method like experimentalists. In this way, we just have an empirical view so each method gives us some corners.

### **Aristotle's justice theory:**

Justice in Greek thinking had mostly been defined as balance, except that justice in individual means the balance between ego forces and within society, it means balance among society's compartments (Bashrieh, 2003).

Aristotle stated justice in two general and strict meaning. Justice in general sense consists of respect rules and equality of citizens. Justice in strict sense is divided into two corrective and distributive types: Justice in strict sense and fair action conforms to it (distributive justice) influences distribution of honor, money and other things among citizens who have shares in political system of the society. Another type of this justice (corrective justice) plays a correcting role in transactions and relationships among people in the society. This kind of justice is also of two types; as some transactions are voluntarily and some are not (Aristotle, 2007). The relationship between justice and equality is an important debate by Aristotle about distributive justice. All believe that justice in distribution should be based on merit, so justice is to follow proportionality, which treats equalities equally and inequalities unequally and gifts or facilities are distributed proportional to the person's equalities or inequalities. From Aristotle's view also in corrective justice the equality element exists except that in distributive justice geometric fitness arises but in transactions numerical fitness (Aristotle, 1999). For instance, when someone damages the other and according to the corrective justice the judge orders redress, there is no difference what are the features and positions of both parties; here the amount of damage should be redressed exactly. From Aristotle's perspective, as every virtue is in the middle of two rascalities, one is excess and the other is wastage. In all instances of justice (particular), we are facing a phenomenon called average observance. Indeed, a fair person has followed the middle of two rascalities accurately.

Aristotle defines fortune as ego's efforts adjusted to the "virtue" and justice is at the center of the virtues which accomplish human fortune. He writes:

Justice includes all virtues and in the strict sense, it is perfect virtue, because justice requires the application of all virtues. In this regard, Justice is perfect virtue which man can accomplish not only within oneself but also in his communications.

At first he claimed that by justice people mean a queen who causes man acquires talent to realize fair actions and acts justly; Yet justice and injustice have a lot of meanings. Justice in general sense (general justice) against justice in strict sense (particular justice) points to some of these meanings.

Justice in general sense by Aristotle, who interpreted it as the whole virtue, means respect laws and follow them. So all actions adjusted to law are just in general term. Aristotle denotes general virtue of justice a perfect virtue includes all virtues predicted as "mother of virtues". Because justice is to apply all virtues. In addition, a person with this feature both can apply his virtue to himself and also to his relatives, to the extent that every action by that person benefits public directly. Thus, among all virtues, Justice is the only one which isn't good for others, so justice implies social feature in which all virtues are diffused. This occurs when particular justice (Justice in transaction distributions) is just a part of moral virtue and it is merely a particular feature (Aristotle, 1980).

According to Aristotle the ruling laws, magistrates and governors are law's servants. While he criticizes public reign in a particular manner adopts the foundation of sovereignty and preferences in collective judgment over personal one obviously (Aristotle, 1991).

Hence, it can be said that in Aristotle's political thoughts justice in general sense means virtuous treatment of people in society and this treatment is determined by government's law. In Aristotelian desirable reign, this law has been legislated in order to supply supreme good that is the government's happiness has been established by governors who possess practical wisdom virtue. Law is a wisdom free of fantasies to train people in society which requires them to the virtuous behavior and prohibit them from rascality's. In such a reign, a good citizen just possesses that virtues of a good man. He possesses justice virtue and follows impartiality to gain social advantage.

In this general term, Justice is the ultimate of the government and the order of political society and a just citizen possess all virtues out rightly. He can follow virtues not only in his loneliness but also in political community towards others. That is justice is the most perfect virtue because perfect virtue is implemented within it. Of course Aristotle knows that everywhere and in all cases laws have not been regulated to provide people's fortunes and society's Happiness. So it is probable that laws are being legislated to benefit some special groups or royalties. Thus if any negligence has been occurred in regulation, it doesn't yield good results. Instead of the possibility of negligence in legislation, he defines justice in general sense as respecting laws and enforce them. He considers it as the noblest virtue, this indicates the presumption that in regulating laws any negligence has not been occurred and it has been legislated aims at providing fortunes of people and society where all goodness is visible in it; since he doesn't consider justice in this regard as a part of moral virtue rather he called it "all the virtues" (Caplston).

After examination of justice in general sense, Aristotle investigates particular justice. At first, he translates particular justice into "justly" contrasting his description of general justice as "lawful"; he describes justly or fairly "proportionally equal" (World economic journal, 2014).

Justice in general sense that is to obey laws is indivisible; but justice in strict sense that is "pluralistic" with many different displays of justice virtue, is divisible. Particular justice and particular injustice, though they exemplify obeying the law and ignoring law respectively, but they are not just like that and they have a part and the whole relationship. Discrimination and equality negligence are examples of offence and injustice in general sense acknowledges that; but any offence can't be interpreted as the discrimination and equality negligence. So, there are numerous examples of justice and injustice, which shape justice and injustice in particular meaning. Surely all of them are not out of the two terms general justice and general injustice.

Aristotle divides justice in the strict sense into two corrective and distributive types, regulatory or reforming types. Then he divides corrective justice into two.

**kinds and says:**

A type of justice in strict sense and fairly action conforms to it (distributive justice), influences distribution of honor, money and other things among citizens who have shares in political system of the society (because it is possible that someone has an equally or unequal share relative to the others); the other type of justice plays a correcting role in the transactions and communications among people in the society. This type of justice (corrective) is also divided into two types; as some transactions are freely and voluntarily and some are not (Aristotle, 2007).

Distributive justice is related to the distribution of honor, money and other benefits in the society; while penal justice is related to the imposition of punishment on the offenders by judge, in both cases justice means "proportional equality" (Kelson, 1957). Either his innovation in dividing social justice into two penal and distributive types or his figurative definition of justice have been accepted by later philosophers.

The relationship between justice and equality is an important debate by Aristotle about distributive justice. He considers distributive justice conforming to the existing equality among people and objects-objects which should be distributed. In his opinion, fairly action at least requires four elements; as any distribution is done at least between two individuals and each receives a share of what being distributed. Equality and inequalities of every share is a function of the equality and inequality of those two; because the relationship between objects also exist between individuals. If individuals are not equal, they won't be able to obtain equal objects. According to

Aristotle, the origin of all conflicts is noncompliance with this proportionality or that equal persons acquire unequal shares or unequal persons receive equal shares of objects (Catozian, 1998).

Competency as a foundation of social positions and public properties rooted in the man's nature and his inherent talents. He stipulates that from their birth, some people are assigned to compliance and some to ruling (Caplston, 1983). Accordingly, in order to shape desirable political society, he necessitates providing various social needs and the best way to provide these needs is work division. So, he believes that society should be composed of classes like citizens, workers, and farmers. The result is that the essence of distributive justice consists of the distribution of social jobs, public properties and other benefits among people in the society based on their competencies. The government is responsible for the discrimination naturally.

### **Conclusion:**

Aristotle justice theory has fed from different areas of his thoughts. Aristotle natural general theory has impressed his anthropology and these two have formed Aristotelian ethics. Aristotle justice theory is just his Happiness-centered and virtue-based theory which have been implemented in society; Aristotle looks at justice naturalistically and practically. He wants to display the path of Happiness and believes that virtue can be a bridge to reach happiness. From Aristotle's view, moderation is located between going to extremes. He admires justice as the supreme political virtue and this admire denotes the lack of justice in a community implicitly. Consequently, it doesn't have an essential basis for a political system. Thus Aristotle divides justice into two general and strict senses. The general justice consists of what is lawful based on equality and fair and strict sense is divided into two corrective and distributive types itself. In his justice theory, Aristotle seeks to specify happiness and fortunes of perfect man. Balance, moderation, equality and lust are the main concepts of Aristotle justice virtue which are applied as a part of a virtue, that is justice virtue. From Aristotle's view, virtues can be a tool or bridge to reach happiness. Virtues are moderations between going to extremes. Happiness and fortune as the supreme welfare is a starting point for Aristotelian practical philosophy. Aristotle defines prosperity, which is our action ultimate welfare as the ego's effort adjusted to the virtues and he claims that justice is the center of the virtues which accomplishes human's prosperity.

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