



A Critical Analysis of Aristotelian Concept of Justice

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ABSTRACT: The idea of doing the right thing at the right moment, given the circumstances, is the most fundamental tenet of human society. In the past, justice was thought to be equivalent to virtue. Aristotle states that justice is the ultimate ideal for humans and that it should guide all of their decisions and actions. The terms "justice" and "moral virtue" in Aristotelian Ethics refer to two distinct ideas: moral justice and legal justice. Universal justice refers to the way in which laws carry out legal justice. However, moral justice—also referred to as specific justice—must be considered in terms of equality, impartiality, and fairness. According to Aristotle, the greatest virtue is justice. According to Aristotle, the goal of society is to ensure that every citizen lives in happiness, or that they experience Eudaimonia. The fundamental aspects of Eudaimonia are human goodness and enjoyment. Rationality, on the other hand, is necessary for virtue since it results in a full understanding and the subsequent growth of the individual. This is achieved by the government's provision of laws that citizens must follow and uphold, which gives rise to the justice ethic. The main objective of this paper is to evaluate the dominant moral paradigms, which are primarily patriarchal in nature, and develop a framework that is equitable and beneficial to all of mankind while also discussing the special perspective of women. The concept of justice revolves around the idea of universalizability, which refers to applying comparable moral standards to precisely comparable circumstances, whether they turn into hypothetical or real-world scenarios that make sense.

INDEX TERMS: Virtue, Eudaimonia, Rationality, Citizen, Society, Justice, Patriarchal

I. INTRODUCTION

The justice ethic and its importance in the human moral framework have been discussed by a wide spectrum of thinkers and philosophers since the beginning of organized society and culture, including Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Kohlberg, Kant, and Rawls. In this investigation, the importance of Aristotle's "justice" as a benchmark value in ethics is examined, along with the degree to which traditional moral philosopher need to reform his ways of thinking. Theoretical norms and regulations are offered by ethics, and it is observed that these regulations differ for men and women and that there is a distinct social disparity between them.

II. NEED OF THE STUDY

The study gives particular attention to how a patriarchal model of ethics was developed and established during a period in human history when men dominated public spaces. During that era, women were not allowed to voice their opinions about what should or shouldn't be done or what should be avoided.

III. OBJECTIVE

To examine the idea of justice through the lens of ancient civilization

IV. LITERATURE SURVEY

Aristotelian ethics is a type of philosophy that emphasizes happiness as the central concept. Happiness, in his opinion, is an activity rather than an objective. It goes along with things. We should act in a way that leads to happiness. Respect for the law and justice is fundamental components of effective governance, and Aristotle acknowledged that citizens should be taught in subjects that are beneficial to them. However, the ultimate goal of education is virtue. The study gives particular attention to how a patriarchal model of ethics was developed and established during a period in human history when men dominated public spaces. Many academic articles neglect to address this issue in a way that would allow it to be resolved.

A study conducted by David Ross on 'THE NICOMACHEAN ETHICS' (1925), where he understands that Aristotle's concept of virtue is a character trait that is involved with decision-making. It lies in the mean or the mean as it relates to us, and is established by a rational principle, or the basis that a man of practical wisdom would use to determine it.

Ernest Barker edited and translated the book 'THE POLITICS OF ARISTOTLE', where he recognizes that Aristotle views justice in terms of "virtue as a whole," which encompasses all that is honourable and selfless in the human world.

John M. Alexander mentions in his book 'CAPABILITIES AND SOCIAL JUSTICE' that A life of virtue and true human happiness cannot be attained by slaves, women, or menial labourers such as farmers, craftsmen, and metics (resident foreigners), who are not eligible for full citizenship due to their lack of resources, i.e., physical or mental incapacity.

V. DISCUSSION

In order to trace the sociological changes that humans have undergone from ancient to modern times, the study digs into history and customs. It makes particular reference to ethics and moral decision-making, as well as the choices that people make in life depending on the circumstances and the time of day.

Here I want to highlight on philosophers, i.e., Aristotle's concept of justice in comparison with Plato's sense of justice, while simultaneously drawing attention to some obvious gaps in these beliefs, especially as they relate to women and the underprivileged in society.

The famous book "The Nicomachean Ethics" (NE) by Aristotle contains a classic statement of his philosophy in the first line: "Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim." ¹ Aristotle believed that our true intentions, whether they are artistic or centered around persuasion, always try to uphold happiness in its purest form and accomplish the good. The concept of "Eudaimonia," which refers to happiness or well-being and is the ultimate goal of all humans, was introduced by Aristotle in "Nicomachean Ethics." Aristotle believed that reason is the highest human quality and that happiness is a mental condition that can be attained through it. His concept of eudaimonia is intimately linked to the word happiness. He believes that despite difficulties, all people are searching for the highest good and that having excellent character makes one happy. His conception of happiness has a direct bearing on the soul. The fundamental components of Eudaimonia are human happiness and human virtue. However, virtue requires rationality, which results in an entire, comprehensive, and comprehending comprehension as well as the concurrent development of one's own self, ultimately leading to Eudaimonia, the highest form of soully good. A good soul merely wants its conscience to be at peace, thus outside factors or influences have no bearing. The greatest justice ethic comes from listening to the voice of our soul and doing what is right. Our souls always guide us towards what is right.

The idea that virtue is the fundamental component of eudaimonia was put forth by Aristotle. The translation and interpretation of Aristotle's works and Moral Philosophy is widely credited to David Ross (1877–1971). According to his translation, virtue is defined as a state of character that is concerned with choice and lies in the mean, or the mean as it relates to us, and is decided by a rational principle, or the basis that a man of practical knowledge would use to determine it. This is how Aristotle defined virtue. ² It is acknowledged that a man endowed with virtue is aware of the proper course of action to follow while adhering to reason. Aristotle places great emphasis on the value of reason and believes that it may also bring about good in the tangible world by fostering friendships and producing prosperity. Not only that, but virtue also depends on reason, which gives rise to happy feelings in the person performing the virtue. He said that the soul is

divided into two basic parts: the rational and the irrational. The two components of a rational element are - that which discovers one for itself and that which obeys such a principle.³ Additionally, the irrational element is divided into two following parts, the first is that which acts in accordance with no such principle; this is the means by which plants and animals survive and develop. The other is the one that might adhere to a reasonable standard but might also defy it. The faculty of desire is actually this. Therefore, Aristotle refers to a single capacity as rational at one point and irrational at another.

This prompts Aristotle to distinguish two types of virtue, or excellence: moral excellence, which is the excellence of this semi-rational capacity of desire, and intellectual perfection.⁴

Intellectual and moral virtues are the two categories of virtue that Aristotle distinguished. Theory, knowledge, and other things comprise intellectual goodness. Conversely, the practice of applying intellectual virtue to our deeds helps us to cultivate moral virtue. By acting and thinking morally, we can bring about good in our lives, according to Aristotle. This is known as moral virtue. He claims that the habit of continuously using moral virtue to form intellectual virtue is what gives origin to human character. Thus, an individual has free will to shape his character. There are two main foundations that support moral virtues: temperance and courage. All negativity, vice, and injustice in our actions spring from caving in to our fears, whether they be those of cowardice, self-indulgence, untruthfulness, or dishonesty. Virtuous thought and action begins with courage. The virtue of courage leads to temperance, which is the most significant of Aristotle's values. Aristotle presents his well-known idea of mean in this context, explaining that goodness or virtue avoids the two diametrically opposed flaws of excess and insufficiency. To identify a balanced state, Aristotle employs the concept of "mean." It indicates that an action is correct if there is a moderating or balancing factor between two extreme perspectives. This moderating or balancing factor can be thought of as a notion that exists in the middle and serves as a bridge to justice, progress, and self-development. If ten is many and two is few, six is the intermediate, taken in terms of the object; for it exceeds and is exceeded by an equal amount; this is intermediate according to arithmetical proportion," says Aristotle, elaborating on his example. However, the intermediate is not to be interpreted in this way; for example, if ten pounds is too much and two pounds is too little for a certain person to eat, the trainer does not have to order six pounds because this could also be too much or too little for the person receiving it, or too much for someone who is new to athletic exercises.⁵

Legal justice and moral justice are two distinct ideas of "justice," which is referred to as moral virtue in Aristotelian ethics. Universal justice refers to the way in which laws carry out legal justice. However, moral justice—also referred to as specific justice—must be considered in terms of equality, impartiality, and fairness. Furthermore, distributive justice and rectificatory justice are the two categories into which Aristotle divides particular justice. The distribution of resources, including money and power, is a key component of distributive justice.⁶ In essence; this is civil justice that gives the people in the community more influence over things like public property, which is land that is divided up among the populace, and infrastructure for public support. Corrective justice that promotes equity in interpersonal interactions is known as rectificatory justice.⁷ The goal of this kind of justice is to establish a balance in interpersonal relationships so that bonds, trust, and respect are earned and never misused.

On the other hand, injustice and illegality are considered to be moral vices of injustice. It should be noted that Aristotle's ethics and political philosophy heavily relies on the concepts of justice and eudaimonia. Aristotle himself states that politics is a branch that involves ethics.⁸ According to him, a person devoid of intellectual virtue is unable to comprehend the relationship between ethics and politics since they are unable to rationally defend their acts in the community. Politics and ethics are intertwined because politics regulates human behaviour through constitutional laws and regulations, whereas ethics deals with the morality and impropriety of human behaviour.

Two fundamental claims made by Aristotle best sum up justice:

First, that justice is a moral disposition that empowers people to act morally and to desire what is right for everyone.⁹

Second, justice is the greatest virtue.¹⁰

Together, let's explore the meanings of these two claims. Justice is crucial to every individual, not only in his own context but also in his relationships with others, including his neighbours, as discussed in the first paragraph. For the purpose of making any moral judgement, one must consider society as an equal chance, equal status, and fair vehicle. According to Aristotle, justice is viewed through the lens of "virtue as a whole," which encompasses all that is sincere and altruistic in the human world. Through the principles of equality and equitable fairness, which are free from deceit and self-interest, he claims that the idea of justice is linked to moral goodness. Thus, it is appropriate to think of equality and justice as two sides of the same coin.

Justice according to Aristotle is important for the state as much as the person. The cornerstones of good governance are respect for the law and administrative justice. According to Aristotle, those who qualify for citizenship should be educated and have some material belongings since they are the ones who can uphold moral values and culture and fulfill the obligations of an ethical human being. They also have the ability to select and establish a moral government.

Plato (428–347) and Aristotle (384–322) are two of the greatest thinkers in history, as is well known to all. Despite the fact that Plato was Aristotle's instructor, we discover that Aristotle exposed several flaws in Plato's theory and went on to write a thorough critique of his mentor. However, we see that Aristotle acknowledged Plato's influence in numerous instances. They discuss how justice is the greatest value for humans and that it should guide all of their decisions and actions. Plato discussed the need for justice in order to create the perfect society, while Aristotle's method emphasizes the importance of the justice ethic in business, education, and government. Whereas Aristotle's philosophy emphasizes practicality more, Plato's idea leans more towards a utopian perspective. By balancing the interactions between individual citizens and the state, Aristotle argues that the goal of society is tied to the enjoyment of man. He stresses that the conditions of the government, which establishes the rules for the people to follow and believe in, are what determine a citizen's level of happiness or sense of Eudaimonia and are the source from which the justice ethic emerges. Through hard work and knowledge, it is possible to become a law-abiding, moral citizen.

The Refutation

One issue with Aristotle's idea is that it denies citizenship to women and slaves (the latter because they were without property in those days and the former because they were illiterate) and so renders them irrelevant in the context of justice ethics. Yes, he had committed a very serious injustice. According to Aristotle, the relation of male to female is naturally that of the superior to the inferior, or of the ruled over the ruled. This universal rule must also apply to all people in general [and consequently to the relationship between masters and slaves].¹¹

Aristotle's observation that slaves, women, and menial labourers such as craftsmen, farmers, and metics (resident foreigners) are not eligible for full citizenship either because they are poorly endowed financially, are incapable physically or intellectually, or because harsh and demeaning labour does not make room for the leisure and education that are required for a life of virtue and true human happiness becomes problematic.¹² Aristotle believed that slaves were by nature subservient and that no one is naturally free and contented. It would seem obvious that a person needs to be well-born in order to be happy and moral, to be seen as superior to others, deserving of full citizenship, and capable of ruling and controlling others.

Consequently, Aristotle's notion of the justice ethic is now susceptible to several fundamental queries, the most significant of which is how to improve, grow, and evolve. Given that these three are inherent to human existence; it begs the question of why a learned man such as Aristotle would contemplate a scenario in which the inferior would always remain so. In his philosophy of justice, how does he establish the idea that women cannot be their own masters and those slaves are not allowed to pursue intellectual excellence? Particularly when considering that the services these individuals supply are the only reason Eudaimonia is possible? Aristotle is interpreted by some very strong thinkers as follows: women are infertile males, a defective or deficient male born out of an incomplete reproductive process.¹³ It suggests that women are viewed as little more than biological products and are treated like machines in the home. Naturally, this is an extreme viewpoint, but the point is that Athens and much of the Western world followed this tradition at the time. Women's domain was confined to the home, where women and men were expected to fulfil distinct social duties.

Richard Mulgan claims in his article "Aristotle and the Political Role of Women" that women are more confined to the house and more directly involved in child-rearing. The woman's role is to protect the household's riches, while the man's is to amass it. In farming households, the women tend to the home while the men toil in the fields. Variations in the moral qualities are a reflection of these social position disparities. Though all the qualities are possible for men to possess, men and women exercise them in different ways. As the saying goes, a woman would be thought loquacious if she imposed no more restraint on her conversation than the good man, and a man would be thought a coward if he had no more courage.¹⁴ What makes Aristotle adhere to these widely accepted stereotypes, though? Why does the current system put women in a highly subjugated position, and why doesn't he try to change the so-called conventions?

According to Aristotle, acquiring qualities like courage, temperance, and wisdom—which are the cornerstones of justice—is necessary for someone to become virtuous or ethical. So those who exhibited courage, made an effort to engage in conversation and dialogue, and possessed knowledge and wisdom ought to have made an effort to address this unfair treatment of women? In the realm of astronomy, they

undoubtedly attempted to challenge other widely held notions, as was the case when the renowned scientist Galileo sought to prove that the solar centered galaxy was a universal fact. Galileo was a man of daring, sobriety, and intelligence. He challenged religious superstition and was executed rather than having his work revered, but he did not challenge this fundamental injustice against women, at least not in large part because of his writings.

Therefore, the fundamental flaw in Aristotle's formulation of the justice ethic is that he ignores women and slaves, who make up more than half of humanity. Due to their limited options, slaves who live in the same society as men and women are further divided by this bias. The argument against women's virtue is that they are just as capable of having it as males. Even in such civilizations, women did a lot of work that was mostly underpaid and disregarded by everyone else. As a matter of fact, their provision of family, comfort, and nurturing was crucial in bringing about Eudaimonia. Therefore, by excluding women from making decisions in the sociopolitical sphere, what sort of fairness has he demonstrated for them? Is this Aristotelian perspective not, in its own way, to be criticized for the devastation of human values? In order to ensure equality, impartiality, and fairness for both men and women, his philosophy of justice has failed to acknowledge a good man and a virtuous state. He talks about rationality, which he bestows upon men, but it doesn't seem that the light of reason gives any advantage to some social actions—such as those of women and slaves.

VI. CONCLUSION

In order to construct the justice ethic, more meta-analyses of research on ancient societies are also required. In certain cases, it has been noted that researchers group opinions collectively rather than generating a greater variety of viewpoints, which results in a slightly biased narrative. Numerous works of literature have been produced in an attempt to provide answers; some are legal, some are instructional, but they are all external influences that have no bearing on people's attitudes or characters. Therefore, it is imperative to reconsider how the idea of moral theories has evolved. It is possible to argue that attitudes that are patriarchal, partial, or unfair destroy interpersonal peace. Therefore, reconsidering how the idea of moral theories has evolved is crucial.

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