

The Path to *Eudaimonia*: A Critical Analysis of The Relationship Between Morality and Politics in Aristotle

Eudaimonia'ya Giden Yol: Aristoteles'te Ahlak ve Siyaset İlişkisinin Eleştirel Bir Analizi

ABSTRACT

This article aims to reveal the strong interaction between ethics and politics by examining Aristotle's understanding of ethics and politics through the concept of *eudaimonia*. According to Aristotle, *eudaimonia* is the ultimate goal of human beings. The most effective means of achieving this goal is through the field of politics. In this respect, Aristotle argues that a social order should be ensured and a virtuous life should be encouraged for the happiness of the individual. Aristotle's practical philosophy, taking into account the fact that the individual is a social being, exhibits an approach that evaluates morality and politics in an integrity. The fact that David Ross's particular examination of Aristotle's ethics with its social dimensions and his politics with its moral dimensions points to the importance of this idea. In our study, the critical roles of Aristotle's concepts of *phronesis* (practical wisdom) and *mesos* (middle way) in the relationship between ethics and politics are elaborated. In particular, works such as *Ethics of Nicomacheus*, *Ethics of Eudemos* and *Magna Moralia* reveal how these concepts are handled. In this context, especially through these works, Aristotle, on the one hand, reveals the importance of practical wisdom and moderation, which are essential for a virtuous life, and on the other hand, he argues that individuals should contribute to the happiness of others not only for their own happiness, but also by fulfilling the duties of being a *zoon politicon* being. This view is previously encountered in Plato's *State* by emphasising the relationship between the ideal social order, politics and virtue, and in this framework, the idea that moral virtues form the basis of political structures is put forward. Taking this context into consideration, the article analyses how Aristotle's understanding of *eudaimonia* shapes both individual and social happiness within the relationship between morality and politics.

Keywords: Ethics, Politics, Aristotle, Plato, *Eudaimonia*, *Phronesis*, *Mesos*

ÖZET

Bu makale, Aristoteles'in etik ve siyaset anlayışını *eudaimonia* kavramı üzerinden ele alarak, ahlak ve siyaset arasındaki güçlü etkileşimi ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Aristoteles'e göre *eudaimonia*, insanın nihai amacıdır. Bu amaca ulaşmanın en etkili aracı da siyaset alanından geçer. Bu minvalde de özellikle Aristoteles tarafından bireyin mutluluğu için toplumsal bir düzenin sağlanması ve erdemli bir yaşamın teşvik edilmesi gerektiği savunulur. Aristoteles'in pratik felsefesi, bireyin toplumsal varlık olmasını da dikkate alarak ahlak ve siyaseti bir bütünlük içinde değerlendiren bir yaklaşım sergiler. David Ross'un bilhassa Aristoteles'in etiğini toplumsal, politikasını da ahlaki boyutlarıyla ele alması, bu düşüncenin önemine işaret etmektedir. Çalışmamızda Aristoteles'in *phronesis* (pratik bilgelik) ve *mesos* (orta yol) kavramlarının, ahlak-siyaset ilişkisi içerisindeki kritik rolleri detaylandırılmıştır. Özellikle *Nikomakhos'a Etik*, *Eudemos'a Etik* ve *Magna Moralia* gibi eserler bu kavramların nasıl ele alındığını ortaya koyar. Bu bağlamda bilhassa söz konusu eserler aracılığıyla Aristoteles, bir yandan erdemli bir yaşam için elzem olan pratik bilgelik ve ölçülülüğün önemini ortaya koyarken, diğer yandan bireylerin sadece kendi mutlulukları için değil, aynı zamanda *zoon politicon* bir varlık olmanın vazifelerini yerine getirerek diğerlerinin de mutluluğuna katkıda bulunmaları gerektiğini savunur. Bu görüş daha önce Platon'un *Devlet*'inde ideal toplum düzeni ile siyaset ve erdem arasındaki ilişkinin vurgulanmasıyla karşımıza çıkar ve bu çerçevede ahlaki erdemlerin siyasal yapıların temelini oluşturduğu düşüncesinin öne sürüldüğü görülür. Bu bağlamın da göz önüne alındığı makalede, Aristoteles'in *eudaimonia* anlayışının hem bireysel hem de toplumsal mutluluğu nasıl şekillendirdiği meselesi ahlak ve siyaset ilişkisi dahilinde analiz edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ahlak, Siyaset, Aristoteles, Platon, *Eudaimonia*, *Phronesis*, *Mesos*

INTRODUCTION

Aristotle's approach to the relationship between morality and politics is important for understanding how these two concepts, which have been at the center of philosophical debates since the Ancient Age, form a unity. The concepts of morality and politics, which have been discussed since Herodotus, were discussed together, especially in Ancient Greece, and the idea that morality should be regulated by politics came to the fore. In this context, Aristotle thought like the Greek moralists who saw happiness as the ultimate goal and considered the science of politics as a means of achieving this goal. (Gökberk, 2007: 79) In his *Ethics of Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle mentions three basic activities of human beings: knowing, acting and doing. In this context, he distinguishes what he calls the major forms of life, namely ethical and political life, from *theoria* and includes them in the class of *praxis* (Aristotle, 1956:1095b). Thus, Aristotle positions man at an ontological node of ethical and political life within the practical sphere. Therefore, in the words of David Ross, 'Aristotle's ethics is undoubtedly social (*zoon politikon*) and his politics is moral. His thought argues that ethics and politics should be seen as disciplines that regulate human social and individual actions. (Ross, 1995: 197). This assessment emphasizes that Aristotle's political theory is based on the

Kemal Bozkaya¹ 

How to Cite This Article

Bozkaya, K. (2024). "The Path to *Eudaimonia*: A Critical Analysis of The Relationship Between Morality and Politics in Aristotle", *International Academic Social Resources Journal*, (e-ISSN: 2636-7637), Vol:9, Issue:5; pp:430-438. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13995413>

Arrival: 14 September 2024
Published: 26 October 2024

Academic Social Resources Journal is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

¹ Dr., Istanbul University, Institute of Social Sciences, Philosophy and R.S. / Ph.D., Istanbul, Türkiye.

society of human beings, which he defines as the political animal, and aims to ensure the general good and happiness of society, not individuals. In order to achieve this goal, politics determines social order and ethical norms through laws, and in this context, it plays a decisive role in the field of ethics. On the other hand, according to Jesuit René Rapin, a professor of humanities;

Aristotle's ethics, as opposed to Plato's nobler and higher ethics, is too human and too closed within the limits of this life; moreover, it proposes no other happiness for man than that of civilized life. Nevertheless, according to Rapin, Plato's ethics lacks real philosophical rigor and is based on supposition without proof. Aristotle, on the other hand, approves of nothing without a rational basis, and in this respect, according to Anton Felice Marsili, Aristotle is considered to be a master of common sense, in contrast to the thinkers of antiquity who discarded experience in favor of contemplation (Piaia, Santinello, 1979: 29-42, 231).

Therefore, "whereas Plato thinks of speaking well by emphasizing rhetoric, Aristotle thinks of thinking well." In this context, Aristotle's network of good concepts, especially in the field of ethics, is a clear indication that he is a representative of the written but mostly oral tradition. Therefore, we can say that according to Aristotle, both the disciplines of morality and politics aim to achieve the highest good, and these two fields determine how human beings should act according to changing conditions. In this context, a similar idea is given in Plato's 'State', emphasising the fundamental importance of politics and morality for a society to be virtuous and happy, and seeing these two areas as the centre of the ideal social order.

ON CONCEPTS OF MORALITY AND POLITICS

The concepts of ethics and morality have a deep history both linguistically and culturally. Ethics derives from the Greek word "ethos", while morality comes from the Latin word "mos". Both words carry meanings such as custom, tradition, habit, character. Likewise, the concept of morality derives from the Arabic root "hulk" and has similar meanings. These etymological parallels show that the words ethics, morality and ethics have essentially similar meanings. However, when the philosophical meanings of these words are considered, the nuances between them come to the fore. In philosophy, ethics is considered as a theoretical field of study of morality, which is a practical field. The task of ethics is not to create a new morality or to encourage the observance of a certain morality, but to examine morality itself from a philosophical perspective. In other words, ethics is positioned as a discipline for understanding the nature, origin and function of morality (Özlem, 2004: 23). Morality, on the other hand, is a practical guide that enables individuals and societies to comply with certain norms of behavior. In this context, the relationship between ethics and morality should be considered as a unity in which the theoretical and the practical complement each other.

On the other hand, morality is the totality of the rules of behavior adopted in a period and the field of knowledge that examines these rules. It also refers to a normative field that sets general rules for our actions. Morality comes into play at the point where people want to give social validity to their behavior and in this context, it is considered as a set of rules that should be universally valid. Moral philosophy, as a branch of philosophy, comes to the forefront in times of social crisis; philosophers such as the Seven Sages and later Socrates placed morality at the center of their philosophy during the difficult times of Greece (Timuçin, 2004: 10).

The term "politics" is a complex concept with different layers of meaning in terms of its origin and historical development. In terms of word origin, politics, which derives from the Arabic word "grooming" meaning "horse management", is related to the concepts of administration and governance. However, in Western thought, politics originates from Ancient Greece, where the word "politics" derives from the word "polis", which literally means "city-state". Ancient Greek societies were divided into independent city-states (polis), each with its own system of government, the most influential and largest of which was Athens, often considered the cradle of democratic government. Against this historical background, politics was originally used to mean "the affairs of the polis" or "that which pertains to the polis". In the modern period, it has been expanded to mean "that which is related to the state". Today, politics is defined as the activities that take place within the state - that is, within a system of social organization centralized on the administrative apparatus. In its most general sense, politics refers to the activities of making, protecting and changing the general rules by which people live their lives. This definition points to both the perception of politics in everyday use and the conceptual framework that underpins academic political science (Heywood, 2018: 25-27; Taşkın, 2014: 26)).

This discussion on the origins and meanings of the concepts of morality and politics is important for understanding the historical and philosophical foundations of the two disciplines. Both concepts function in normative spheres that determine human relations and social order; however, how these functions are defined and how they interact with each other have been handled differently by different philosophers and schools of thought. In this context, morality is defined as the set of values, norms and virtues that guide the actions of individuals, while politics is concerned with the governance and regulation processes of the societies in which these individuals live. At this point, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and Politics have a central place in understanding how morality and politics are interconnected. According to Aristotle, the individual who pursues a good life is also obliged to be a good citizen. Therefore,

morality and politics should be considered as two fields that feed each other. The influence of morality on politics provides a basis for the ruler or rulers to establish a just, honest and virtuous social order. (Aristotle, 1885, 1277a-b, 1288b, 1293b; Aristotle, 1956:1099b, 1130b)

However, this connection between morality and politics has not only remained at the theoretical level, but has also been shaped by concrete social and political transformations throughout history. For example, Plato's idea of the "philosopher king" in the dialogue of the State argues that an ideal state can only approach perfection when it is ruled by morally superior individuals, that is, through enlightened despotism, the rule of philosopher kings (Heywood, 2014: 26-27). Here, the decisive role of morality on political structures and power processes is clearly visible. Similarly, in the modern period, Kant's concept of "moral law" emphasizes the freedom and autonomy of individuals and argues that moral principles should coincide with political laws. These ideas reveal how morality is positioned as a cornerstone in the foundations of politics. However, the relationship between morality and politics has not always been smooth and complementary. Historically, there have been cases where these two concepts have been positioned in opposition to each other, or even in conflict. For example, Machiavelli's understanding of realism and power politics in *The Prince* treats politics as a field independent of morality and advocates a political philosophy based on the principle that "the ends justify the means". Such approaches push the normative limits of morality by arguing that politics can be completely detached from morality and treated as a science in its own right. As a result, ethics and politics appear as two disciplines that both complement and sometimes conflict with each other. In this context, a political understanding shaped by ethical principles can play a decisive role in ensuring social order and justice; on the contrary, politics can also become an instrument of oppression and interest when it moves away from moral values. Therefore, how to balance these two concepts in modern societies is not only a philosophical issue, but also a practical and contemporary problem. This dynamic interaction between morality and politics plays a critical role in determining the future of both individuals and societies, and in this context, practical applications as well as philosophical inquiries should be meticulously evaluated.

ARISTOTLE'S DISCOURSES ON ETHICS AND POLITICS

According to him, it is politics that determines the purpose of the sciences. Politics is the most comprehensive of all sciences. It is politics that knows how to use the others. Politics aims at the happiness of the general, so much so that only politics can fulfill the definition of happiness as the common good of all. Because the ultimate goal is happiness, this goal can only be realized if politics and morality are intertwined according to Aristotle. Ultimately, man analyzes this world in which he lives on a political plane and seeks happiness on this plane. We call this politics. In other words, Aristotle puts politics in front of us as the science that determines which sciences are necessary in the country and who should learn what and how much. On the other hand, politics prepares laws about what should be done and what should be avoided, from this point of view, we can say that politics includes all other good things and tries to find what is good for people (Aristotle, 1956: 1099b). In addition, the fact that Aristotle holds politics superior to other sciences and gives it the authority to determine and determine perfect moral values is an important issue that has been discussed until today. Aristotle also makes some statements about politics and politicians, and explains that the purpose of politics is the best and that through it he tries to bring out better people and make people behave better. He states that "We see that politicians are generally interested in the subject of happiness, because the aim of politicians is to ensure that citizens are law-abiding and good people" (Aristotle, 1956: 1099b, 1102a). Thus, Aristotle includes different explanations by establishing the relationship between politics and morality on social foundations. So much so that society and politics are not only a means for man to survive, but also the basic condition for him to lead a good and happy life and to realise himself.

Aristotle presents us with narratives that should be taken very seriously within the framework of his words: "Man is a social being, and this being must be educated by law and its excesses and deficiencies must be eliminated as much as possible." Man realizes his own self and virtues only within a society. In this context, according to Aristotle, all relationships are parts of social relations. (Aristotle, 1956: 1160a). Accordingly, the political community in question prepares the necessary environment for the realization of virtues and, ultimately, happiness. The self-actualization section at the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs points precisely to this. Moreover, it explains that virtues and happiness can be realized at this top level. Aristotle already saw this thousands of years ago and therefore considered human beings as *zoon politicon*. What should be understood by the political animal is that it is a species that participates in the social and political life of the state. The naming of the human being with this name, which is the common intersection point of morality and politics, not only informs us that he deals with this world as a social being, but also that these two fields are united around the goal of happiness. Ultimate happiness can only be achieved through the "harmony of morality and politics".² This is precisely called *eudaimonia*.

² Aristotle's thought has been an important source of inspiration for subsequent philosophers and ruling figures, especially the so-called "philosopher rulers". We can also observe this influence in the thoughts of Marcus Aurelius, the Roman Emperor and a philosopher; Aurelius emphasized that the spheres of morality and politics should be in harmony with each other and in a relationship of mutual support. He also advises people to evaluate each of their actions by subjecting them to an accounting of conscience within the framework of the principle of "think of the last hour you will live". See: Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, trans. Jeremy Collier, London, Walter Scott Publishing, 1887, p. 111, 125

Aristotle's analysis of this deep connection between morality and politics is based on the foundations of his understanding of human and society. According to him, man's inherent state of being a “zoon politikon”, that is, a “political animal”, is directly related to his capacity for self-realization in a social and political context. Man is a social being by nature, and this social nature can only express itself through morality and politics. In this respect, Aristotle's relationship between politics and morality is inseparable because politics provides the environment necessary for humans to lead a virtuous life, while morality provides a normative guide on how to behave in this environment. In this context, Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia* provides a framework in which politics and morality work together. Politics organizes the order of society and human relations in a rational and just manner, while morality ensures that individuals act virtuously in accordance with this order. According to Aristotle, the ultimate goal of politics is to ensure the common happiness of society, and this happiness is possible in an environment where individuals exhibit virtuous behavior. Therefore, the development and practice of virtues becomes possible only through the order and norms provided by politics. Aristotle's views reveal that morality and politics are complementary and mutually necessary; one is incomplete without the other, and this incompleteness threatens the integrity of society and the happiness of individuals.

Aristotle's system of thought is also an important reference point for today's social and political theories. Modern political systems, where morality and politics are separated, tend to treat these two concepts as independent of each other. Aristotle's philosophy emphasises the importance of considering moral virtues together with social order; this idea can be considered as a valid principle for modern societies. This is especially true in light of today's increasing ethical and political crises. The observance of universal values such as justice, equality and freedom by political systems reveals once again how important the relationship Aristotle establishes between politics and morality is. A sound and sustainable political order is possible not only through power and authority, but also through a just and virtuous understanding of governance. Therefore, Aristotle's view that morality and politics should be in harmony is not only an element of ancient philosophy, but also a guiding principle for contemporary societies. If politics and morality are not handled together, the injustice and chaos that will arise in society will make it impossible to achieve true happiness, i.e. *eudaimonia*, at both the individual and social levels. Therefore, as Aristotle suggests, it should be one of the most important tasks of modern democracies and societies to see politics as an extension of morality and to consider these two fields together. This approach will ensure not only social order but also the self-realization of individuals and a virtuous life. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that Aristotle's understanding of politics and morality suggests that the moral development of the individual should be shaped by the influence of social and political structures. This perspective leads to the criticism that the individual's autonomous moral development may be limited and social norms may ignore individual differences. In this context, Aristotle's aim of creating a virtuous society is open to debate in terms of individual freedom and moral autonomy. This issue raises the problematic of whether individuals are given enough space for personal development processes.

ON THE CONCEPT OF EUDAIMONIA

The concept of *eudaimonia* first appears in Plato and Plato defines *eudaimonia* as the ultimate goal of all actions. In Aristotle, *eudaimonia*, which emerges as a result of the effective use of our faculties in accordance with virtue, is especially related to the perfection of life as “an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue”. (Aristotle, 1956:1100b, 1102a; Aristotle, 1915a:1219a). Moreover, according to Aristotle, *eudaimonia* is defined as happiness as something ultimate and self-sufficient, the end to which all actions aim. (Aristotle, 1956:1097b,1099a) Aristotle's problem is what is the happy, perfect or good life, which is the ultimate goal of human life. On the basis of this idea, it is stated that the perfect life is a life that includes all virtues. In this context, *eudaimonia* is the most desirable type of life. It is, in essence, the ultimate goal and regular principle of the good life, moreover, a life that includes all worthwhile activities. When *eudaimonia* is the ultimate goal of all the actions, projects and decisions that make up human life, it offers a valuable life without the need for anything else. In this context, Aristotle tries to develop a solid definition of happiness based on this concept as the basis of his ethical theory. Aristotle's conception of happiness is based on a comprehensive conception of the good that goes beyond individual pleasures and external achievements to include the orientation of moral actions and decisions towards a harmonious and ultimate goal. This perspective emphasises that the good life in the Aristotelian sense is the ultimate goal of practical reasoning in human life and argues that a happy life exhibits a self-sufficient structure. Thus, Aristotle's ethical theory believes that understanding the nature of happiness should guide our own endeavours in practical life; therefore, Aristotle's ethics treats *eudaimonia* as a combination of both moral and intellectual virtues and presents this combination as a guide to achieving the highest good of man (Lear, 2004: 8, 41, 48, 68, Bozkaya, 2024: Quoted from pages 56-57). Aristotle's in-depth analysis of the concept of *eudaimonia* forms the cornerstone of a philosophical debate questioning the meaning and purpose of human life. *Eudaimonia* is seen not only as an individual goal, but also as the guiding principle of social and political order. According to Aristotle, a person's attainment of *eudaimonia* is not only related to individual endeavours and virtues, but also to the opportunities provided by social structures and political environments. This underlines that happiness is not only an inner experience of the individual, but also a collective phenomenon.

Aristotle's definition of *eudaimonia* as a combination of moral and intellectual virtues shows that in order for man to be fully human, both reason and emotion, theory and practice must be balanced. This balance is the basic principle that enables human beings to develop and realise themselves in accordance with their nature. So much so that *eudaimonia* is not an end goal, but a continuous process required to sustain and develop one's life. In this process, intellectual virtues - wisdom, understanding, practical reasoning - are as important as moral virtues - courage, justice, temperance. Each of these virtues plays a critical role for human beings to live a life in accordance with their own nature. *Eudaimonia* suggests that the individual should be in harmony with himself and that this harmony should also be achieved in the social and political context. For example, if the political order of a society is organised in a way that prevents its citizens from achieving *eudaimonia*, it becomes impossible to achieve individual happiness and perfection in this society (Cevizci, 2009:113, 132). At this point, Aristotle's connection between morality and politics in the *Nicomachean Ethics* comes into play: A good politics should provide an order that allows its citizens to lead a virtuous life. This means that political leaders and laws should guide the realisation of *eudaimonia* (Aristotle, 1956:1177b). Otherwise, individuals will not be able to realise their moral and intellectual potential. Aristotle's identification of *eudaimonia* as the highest human goal offers a meaningful perspective in the modern world. Today, the idea that individuals should not only pursue individual happiness but also live a life by taking into account social and environmental responsibilities constitutes a way of thinking parallel to Aristotle's understanding of *eudaimonia* (Cevizci, 2009:133). According to this perspective, one should endeavour to create a world in which not only oneself but also others can live a happy and virtuous life.

AT THE CROSSROADS OF ETHICS AND POLITICS: ARISTOTLE'S HOLISTIC APPROACHES IN "POLITICS"

The *Politics*, which contains extremely important and interesting thoughts on the nature of the Greek city-state and different types of governance, and which occupies an important place in political theory, also appears as a provision of what Aristotle says in his works on the relationship between Morality and Politics. We can say that this work is the continuation of the part of Aristotle's *Ethics of Nicomachean Ethics* in which he writes: 'Next, in the examination of the types of state administration'. Of course, Aristotle continues the *Politics* in a way to include the issue of morality that he dealt with in the *Ethics of Nicomachean Ethics*. The work also consists of notes taken by Aristotle's students.

In this work of Aristotle, it is assumed that everyone has a share of virtue to the extent necessary. Therefore, the ruler must also possess perfect moral virtue. This duty of the ruler is like the duty of a master, and the master here is reason. Others must also possess virtues appropriate to themselves. On the other hand, the governed should possess virtue only to the extent that it suits them. It can be seen, then, that moral virtue applies to everyone (Aristotle, 1885: 1260a). We have already stated that politics is held superior in determining the field of morality in relation to the relationship between morality and politics in Aristotle. However, in the *Politics*, Aristotle states that the institution of politics is more insecure than the field of morality and that the error part is more in the rulers with the following sentences: 'Again, the laws of custom/morality (*nomos ethos*) have a greater weight than written laws and relate to more important matters; a man can be a more reliable ruler than the written law, but not more reliable than the customary law' (Aristotle, 1885: 1287b). With these statements, Aristotle makes a statement that is the opposite of what he had previously said in the *Ethics of Nicomacheus*. Is this a contradiction? No, this shows that Aristotle also matured his ideas and did not leave the field of morality entirely in the hands of the political institution. Aristotle also touches upon the issue of public officials and morality within the framework of the political arena. So much so that for this purpose in *Politics*;

The eighth class is the class of magistrates and officials, since the state cannot exist without rulers for its survival; therefore, some of them must be able to serve the state either permanently or alternately. There remains only the class of counsellors and judges of disputes, whom we have just distinguished. If a just and balanced organisation of these elements is necessary for states, then there must also be men who are capable of statesmanship (Aristotle, 1885: 1291a).

If we say why justice is so important, we can say that it lies in Aristotle's definition of justice as something that gathers all virtues in itself and should be in a higher position. In other words, in the hierarchy of virtues, justice is at the top and among the essentials. *Politics*, on the other hand, is the institution that will ensure justice at the top and encompassing all virtues in Aristotle. In particular, he explains the relationship between politics and virtue as follows: 'For, as correctly stated in the *Ethics*, a happy life is a life in accordance with unhindered virtue, and virtue is a middle way. Therefore, a life in the middle that is accessible to everyone should be the best life' (Aristotle, 1885: 1295a). While saying this, Aristotle undoubtedly refers to the importance of the virtuous ruler. Because the key to a happy life will be realised in the creation of a virtuous society by a virtuous ruler, and ultimately with the mutual support of the field of morality to politics and the field of politics to morality. Here, the existence of a virtuous society will be in question. In this case, the continued success of the state depends not only on a virtuous leader, but also on how the leader moulds social bonds. The legislators also emphasise that the survival of a state depends more on friendship than on justice. The fact is that when individuals - here we mean statesmen - are in agreement, this

agreement is one of the friendly relations that strengthen social cohesion. Friendships keep enemies at bay and, moreover, can further consolidate the political structure of a virtuous leader. Thus, through friendships between the ruler and those who show him the respect he deserves, society becomes virtuous and has the opportunity to be truly happy. (Aristotle, 1956:1155a) On the other hand, Aristotle says that “justice is an element of the state, because the judicial procedure, which means deciding what is just, is the regulation of the political partnership” (Aristotle, 1885:1253a). As can be seen, Aristotle's understanding of justice is central not only to the integrity of the individual but also to the integrity of the state and society. The definition of justice as a higher virtue that encompasses all virtues is not only an element that ensures social balance, but also the fundamental basis of political order. Here politics comes into play as a tool that ensures the correct functioning of virtues. In particular, Aristotle's ideas developed through the concepts of ‘virtuous life’ and ‘happy life’ show that justice should be organised in a healthy way in political life.

Therefore, the unsustainability of the ‘form in which everyone shares equally’, which Aristotle defines as the last form of democracy, indicates that this order can only be functional when it is balanced with laws and customs. As can be seen, Aristotle's political theory is not only about the shaping of forms of government, but also about how morality and politics are intertwined and how a virtuous ruler and justice should ensure this relationship. In this context, a political structure without justice cannot create a virtuous society in the long run, and the existence of such a society cannot be sustainable. Aristotle repeats what he has already said in the *Ethics of Nicomacheus* in the *Politics* with the following statements:

As we said in the *Ethics*, if the arguments presented there are of any value, we said that happiness is the realisation and perfect practice of virtue; and this is not conditional, but absolute. I use the term ‘conditional’ to denote what is necessary, and ‘absolute’ to denote what is good in itself. Take the example of just actions; just punishments and penalties follow from a good principle, but they are good only because we cannot do without them - it would be better if neither individuals nor states needed them - but actions aimed at honour and advantage are best in an absolute sense (Aristotle, 1885: 1332a).

Aristotle associates the concept of happiness with the highest realisation and perfect practice of virtue. According to him, happiness is the result of virtuous actions and this is an absolute value rather than a mere situational necessity. In this context, Aristotle makes an important distinction between the concepts of ‘conditional’ and ‘absolute’. While the conditional refers to what must be done in cases of necessity, the absolute represents what is good in itself. It seems to us that how the relationship between virtue and happiness is established becomes more understandable with this distinction. On the other hand, Aristotle accepts that just punishments are necessarily good, but he argues that a society in which such punishments are not needed would be superior. In this sense, just punishments are only a necessity to ensure the order of society, whereas actions aimed at honour and advantage are the best in absolute terms. This is because such actions do not arise from any necessity, but appear as a spontaneous expression of virtue. This assessment of Aristotle shows how he grounds the relationship between virtuous life and happiness. According to him, happiness is a state that can be achieved not only through good actions that are obligatory, but also through actions that are good in themselves. In this context, true virtue and happiness are possible through the individual's intrinsically virtuous behaviour beyond the obligations. Therefore, Aristotle argues that virtuous life at both individual and social level is possible by realising the absolute good.

PHRONESIS AND POLITICS: ARISTOTELIAN FOUNDATIONS OF ETHICAL POLITICS

The notion of *phronesis* in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is referred to as reasonableness, prudence, practical wisdom, common sense, perception and judgement. *Phronesis* ‘refers to the practical wisdom gained through experience and learning from our life, which enables human beings to control their desires and act rationally.’ (Cevizci, 2000: 746). With the sentence is positioned by Aristotle as one of the intellectual/thought virtues.³ In addition, since *phronesis* is defined as a person who can think properly about living well, it is also considered an ethical virtue. In this context, according to Aristotle, *phronesis* is regarded as a correct and practical temperament that is related to human good, guided by reason (Aristotle, 1956: 1103a, 1140a, 1140b, Bozkaya, 2024: Quoted from page 59). Therefore, *Phrónêsis* is a virtue belonging to the field of praxis (action), which is related to human moral actions. That is, *phrónêsis* refers to acting in a correct and virtuous way and is defined as a concept compatible with such moral actions (Eikeland, 2006: 23). Aristotle responds to the concept of prudence in *Magna Moralia* with the concept of *σύνεσις/sunesis*, which means perception, understanding, intelligence, will, prudence, prudence, common sense, stating that prudence, just like common sense, is a fundamental element that enables making the right decisions in life. In this context, he makes the following explanations:

What is cognition and what is it about? The domain of perception is the same as the domain of wisdom; both are related to matters of action. For a man of perception is so called, no doubt, because of his ability of judgement, and this means that he judges and sees something correctly. However, his judgement is about small things and small

³ When viewed from the perspective of Plato, it is evident that *phronesis* is indeed one of the elements of true arete. See: Francis E. Peter, *Antik Yunan Felsefesi Terimleri Sözlüğü*, Çev. Hakkı Ünler, Paradigma Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 2004, s. 296; Plato, *Phaedo*, trans. David Gallop, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2002, 69 a-b

situations. Therefore, cognition and the man of cognition are part of wisdom and the wise man, and they cannot be separated from each other, for you cannot separate cognition from knowledge (Aristotle, 1915: 1197b).

The concepts of prudence, prudence, prudence, moderation and other concepts under the concept of *phronesis* are intertwined in Aristotle, and it does not seem possible to understand one without understanding the other. In addition, Aristotle's concept of *phronesis* offers a deep metaphysical and epistemological framework for understanding human moral and political existence, and in this context, it penetrates the ontological layers of human nature by bridging ethics and politics. *Phronesis* functions not only as a theoretical virtue but also as a guide that directs the functioning of practical reason and the processes of action. In this context, following Gadamer, *phronesis* is everyone's rational reflection on what is useful for him or herself, what serves his or her life, and what contributes to eu zen (living well). Especially in the political context, *phronesis* refers to practical knowledge, which is the main characteristic of the politician, because it is a way of knowing that is able to perceive its own purpose correctly and to organise its actions towards this purpose (Dottori, 2009: 305-306). According to Aristotle, this guidance of *phronesis* redefines knowledge not as a mere theoretical accumulation, but as a faculty that shapes and guides human decisions in social and political life. In this way, *phronesis* comes to the fore as the practical wisdom behind the individual's actions, emphasising the inseparable relationship between ethics and politics, and thus becomes a fundamental element that determines the applicability of moral virtues in the political sphere.

BALANCE IN ETHICS AND POLITICS: ARISTOTLE'S *MESOS* PRINCIPLE

Mesos/Middle is the means to happiness, which is the ultimate goal of human life. This golden middle can only be achieved through common sense. Common sense is defined as *Orthos logos* / correct reasoning in Greek. When we say the golden middle/ *Mesos*, we understand Aristotle's understanding of virtue. In the *Ethics of Nicomachean Ethics*, he writes: 'Virtue is of two kinds, intellectual and moral. Intellectual virtue is often both produced and increased by education and therefore requires experience and time. Whereas moral or ethical virtue is the product of habit (ethos). It is clear that none of the moral virtues that are formed are formed in us by nature, because no natural trait can be changed by habit. Therefore, virtues are not created in us by nature, nor by the violation of nature; nature gives us the capacity to receive them, and this capacity matures through habit.' (Aristotle, 1956: 1103a). In this context, while explaining character virtues, Aristotle acts on the principle of 'the knowing man seeks the middle'. According to him, virtue is a *hexis* (habit) or character trait defined according to the principle of *mesotes* (middle way) and based on preferences. This habit is the finding of a middle way between two extreme vices such as excess and deficiency. However, Aristotle states that not all actions and emotions have a middle; for example, actions such as envy, impudence, and jealousy are inherently excessive and therefore have no middle. This principle must be applied concretely in each individual case.

Aristotle's understanding of virtue is not only limited to the inner balance of the individual, but also includes the basic principles of social and political order. Aristotle discusses the nature of virtues and the connection between virtues and *mesotes* in his *Ethics of Nicomacheus* in the context of the relationship between morality and politics. According to him, virtues constitute the foundation of morality, and understanding this foundation reinforces the idea that morality and politics are inseparable. Thus, Aristotle clearly demonstrates the role of virtues in the integrity of moral and political life (Aristotle, 1956: 1096a,1107a). In this respect, Aristotle places the concept of *mesos* at the center of his moral and political thought, arguing that virtue is possible by maintaining a balanced life by avoiding extremes. *Mesos* represents a middle way between the two extremes of excess and deficiency in human behavior, which enables us to do the right thing. This concept is not only the regulator of individual virtues in Aristotle's moral philosophy, but also plays a decisive role in social and political life. For according to him, politics is an activity aimed at ensuring that individuals live a good life, and this is only possible through the realization of virtue on the social plane. Morality and politics are not independent fields in Aristotle's thought, but rather two fundamental fields that are intertwined with each other. While moral virtues are related to the ability of individuals to govern themselves, political virtues are the organizing principles that enable these individuals to live together in harmony. The principle of *mesotes* is indispensable for keeping both individual morality and social order in balance. Aristotle argues that correct political decisions are based on individuals being morally virtuous. In this context, politics brings moral moderation, or *mesos*, to the social level in order to ensure the common good of individuals. The ability of political leaders to make the right decisions depends on their adoption of a virtuous understanding of governance that will protect society from excesses. Thus, the concept of *mesos* becomes the fundamental principle of moral rectitude and political justice in both the individual and public spheres.

Aristotle's *Magna Moralia* (The Great Ethics), which is especially important for us besides his *Eudemian Ethics* and which is almost a broad summary of his *Eudemian Ethics*, helps to better perceive and comprehend the unity between morality and politics by dealing with the subject of virtues. In this context, at the very beginning of *Magna Moralia*, Aristotle states that since the subject of ethics is 'the good' and politics is the best type of knowledge, the politics in which ethics is included should also be about 'the best good' (Aristotle,1915:1182a). As Aristotle claims in his moral philosophy, human beings are essentially good. Like all Greek thinkers, Aristotle believes that the good

life, which is the goal of morality, can only be realised in a well-ordered society. In this respect, the following statements in his *Politics* are particularly noteworthy:

We have said that man is by nature a political animal; and for this reason people are no less willing to live together, even when they do not need each other's help. At the same time, common interests bring them together insofar as each of them has a share in the good life. The good life, then, is the chief end of society, both collectively for all its members and individually.

On the other hand, according to Aristotle, who is seen to establish similarities between the state and human beings, can only be happy when a state does good things (Aristotle, 1915:1194b; Aristotle, 1885:1253a,1259b, 1278b). Like the individual who lives a virtuous life, the state with certain measures can also achieve happiness, which is the essence of life. The happiness of the individual and the state become the same in Aristotle's world of thought. Here again, we see Aristotle's view that human beings are social beings and the highest good can only be achieved by the state intervening in the field of morality through laws.

Another issue with the concept of *mesos* in Aristotle concerns pleasures and pains. In this context, Aristotle states in both the *Eudemius Ethics* and the *Nicomachean Ethics* and in *Magna Moralia* that every study on virtue and politics is related to pleasure or pain. (Aristotle, 1956:1105a; Aristotle, 1915:1185b; Aristotle, 1915a:1221b,1222a,1227b). In Aristotle, pleasure and pain are actually directly related to the field of ethics-politics. He states that those who apply pleasure and pain in their lives in accordance with the middle way will be good, and those who do not apply them in accordance with the middle way will be bad. When we look at Aristotle's statements, the fact that we do not see any deficiency in the stones laid in achieving happiness, which is the ultimate goal, stems from his placing the concepts in their proper places in every issue. It is Aristotle who brings pleasure and pain to both the middle way and the highest good, and shows us how realistic it is for philosophy to be based on the Greeks in our minds.

Besides all this, Aristotle states that moderation is a middle way in terms of pleasures. Aristotle continues and says: 'Generosity is being moderate in property. Extravagance and stinginess are excess and deficiency in property. These are much lower people. Things that are used can be used in both good and bad ways. The one who has virtue in all things will use it in the best way. The one who is worthy of small things and considers himself so is a moderate person. (Aristotle, 1956:1120a). Because magnanimity is found in greatness. He is at the extreme in terms of greatness and in the middle in terms of what is required. (Aristotle, 1956: 1123b). Then he makes statements about the virtue of justice as 'Justice is something that is in the middle, as in the judge' (Aristotle, 1956: 1132a). All of what he says also shows how the sphere of politics and the sphere of morality are inseparable from each other. Because the end of this issue of being in the middle is ultimately based on the ruler. At this point, Aristotle's sometimes seemingly contradictory ideas become clear; moral codes become a deeper and more reliable guide than written laws. But if the ruler is moderate in virtues, the political institution will make the laws that will lead to the ultimate goal of happiness, the highest good, with the task of regulating the field of morality, and the perfect harmony of the field of politics and morality will once again be revealed. Ultimately, the apparatus called 'the state' is a structure that raises its citizens as moral and well-equipped individuals and establishes happiness based on virtuous life.

CONCLUSION

Aristotle's approach to the relationship between morality and politics treats these two disciplines as an inseparable whole. In this study, we examine in detail the close connection Aristotle establishes between these two fields. Aristotle emphasises that human beings are social beings by nature and argues that morality and politics cannot be separated from each other in order for the individual to lead a virtuous life. According to him, politics aims to ensure the general good and happiness of the society, while morality provides guidance on how the individual should behave in this social structure. Therefore, in Aristotle's thought, the individual gains meaning only as a social being and a virtuous life can only be possible in this social order. Aristotle's famous concept of *zoon politikon* (political animal) expresses the necessity for human beings to be intertwined with politics by nature. Human beings cannot exist only through their individual actions; they must also exist in a social context and aim for a virtuous life. While politics creates the necessary ground for individuals to lead a virtuous life, morality determines the rules on how to act on this ground. According to Aristotle, politics and morality should cooperate to realise happiness (*eudaimonia*), which is the ultimate goal of the individual and society. In Aristotle's thought, happiness is seen as the result of a virtuous life, and the existence of a political order is essential for this life to be sustained. However, it is important to emphasise that happiness is not only an individual concept, but must be achieved in a social structure. While politics ensures the general order and well-being of society, it also contributes to the development of virtuous behaviour and the attainment of happiness by individuals. Therefore, the relationship between morality and politics is of great importance for both the individual and society to realise the highest good, which is a common goal.

A closer examination of our study reveals that Aristotle's approach to the relationship between morality and politics provides a strong theoretical framework for maintaining social order and ensuring individual happiness. In this respect, politics creates the social conditions necessary for individuals to lead a virtuous life. So much so that the

individual's leading a virtuous life becomes possible only within society by acting in accordance with the norms determined by morality. Therefore, in Aristotle's philosophy, politics and morality function as two fields that interact with each other and, moreover, complement each other. According to Aristotle, man is by nature a "zoon politikon", a political animal, which implies that he is a social and political being. However, the idea that the individual must be guided by these social structures in order to be virtuous may limit the individual's autonomous moral development process. The idea that morality should be subject to politics also indicates that the individual's moral development is influenced by the social and political order rather than an individual process. In this context, Aristotle's understanding of politics and morality can be criticized in terms of individual freedom and autonomy. This is because the space for individuals to develop their own moral values is limited by social norms and the standards set for a virtuous life. This creates a structure that can ignore the differences and originality of the individual. Although Aristotle's theory aims to create a virtuous society, it may not leave enough free space for individuals' personal development processes. However, Aristotle argues that these two areas must be in harmony for the existence of a virtuous society and the individual, and he thinks that the social good has a value beyond individual freedom. While trying to strike a balance between individual freedoms and the social good, he gives weight to the good of the social order. For this reason, Aristotle's system emphasizes the aim of achieving the common good, not individual freedom.

REFERENCES

- Aristotle. (1885). *Politics*, trans. B. Jowett, Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Aristotle. (1915). *Magna Moralia*, St. George Stock, Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Aristotle. (1915a). *Eudemian Ethics*, Trans. W.D.Ross, J.A.Smith, Works of Aristotle, Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Aristotle. (1956). *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Harris Rackham, Harvard University Press- London.
- Aurelius, M. (1887). *Meditations*, trans. Jeremy Collier, London, Walter Scott Publishing.
- Bozkaya, K. (2024). *Michel Foucault'da Hakikati Söylemek: Parrhesia Kavramının Eleştirisi*, İstanbul Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yayımlanmamış Doktora Tezi, 2024.
- Cevizci, A. (2000). *Felsefe Sözlüğü*, Paradigma Yayınları, İstanbul.
- Cevizci, A. (2009). *Felsefe Tarihi*, Say Yayınları, İstanbul.
- Dottori, R. (2009). "The Concept of *Phronesis* by Aristotle and the Beginning of Hermeneutic Philosophy, *Etica & Politica / Ethics & Politics*, XI.
- Eikeland, O. (2006). "Phronêsis, Aristotle, and Action Research", *SSOAR-International Journal of Action Research*, 2(1).
- Gökberk, M. (2007). *Felsefe Tarihi*, Remzi Kitabevi.
- Heywood, A. (2014). *Siyaset Teorisine Giriş*, Çev. Hızır Murat Köse, Küre Yayınları.
- Heywood, A. (2018). *Siyaset*, Çev. Fahri Bakırcı, Ankara, BB101 Yayınları.
- Jimenez, M. (2020). *Aristotle on Shame and Learning to Be Good*, Oxford University Press.
- Lear, G. R. (2004). *Happy Lives and the Highest Good (An Essay on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics)*, Princeton University.
- Marcus, A. (2012). *Düşünceler*, çev. Şadan Karadeniz, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, İstanbul.
- Özlem, D. (2004). *Etik-Ahlak Felsefesi*, İnkılap Yayınevi, İstanbul.
- Peter F. E. (2004). *Antik Yunan Felsefesi Terimleri Sözlüğü*, Çev. Hakkı Ünler, Paradigma Yayıncılık, İstanbul.
- Piaia, G., Giovanni S. (edit). (1979). *Models of the History of Philosophy*, vol. II: From the Cartesian Age to Brucker, La Scuola, Brescia, Springer.
- Plato. (2002). *Phaedo*, trans. David Gallop, Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Ross, Sir D. (1995). *Aristotle*, London and New York, Routledge- Taylor & Francis Group.
- Taşkın, Y. (2014). "Siyaset Nedir?", *Siyaset (Kavramlar, Kurumlar, Süreçler)*, Edit. Yüksel Taşkın, İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları.
- Timuçin, A. (2004). *Felsefe Sözlüğü*, İstanbul, Bulut Yayınları.