The Relationship between Ethics and Politics in the View of Islam and Muslim Scholars

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ABSTRACT

For a long time, this question has arisen that: whether the ethics and politics are in agreement or can we do some deeds which are profitable and acceptable at the same time. Some like the Machiavelians believe that to achieve a goal using all the methods and means are liable though they are immoral and unacceptable, because the profitable goal may not be accompanied with moral means. On the other hand, some believe that such goals should be ignored, because the achieve them we may utilize some immoral and illegitimate methods and means, and the human deeds should be moral. Generally, to reach human interest utilizing the moral means not only is possible but also is necessary. In this study, the authors try to find the relationship between ethics and politics and to show its impact on the political destination and prosperity of man in the view of Islamic scholars. The last hypothesis should be proved, because creating and tightening a link between ethics and politics in theory and practice is a vital necessity to save man and human society. The Islamic texts indicate that considering the moral values and ethics by the government may lead to the prosperity and accomplishment of people, otherwise, the society may lead to the downfall and destruction of humanity. Through investing theoretical and practical resources the following results are concluded: the Islamic policy is a special one which is opposite to the world unpopular policies. In political organization of Islam the ethics and politics are in agreement and Islamic policy is based on ethics. In Islam, politics is not a means to acquire power but power is a means to get right and prevail justice in the society to destroy oppression, to serve people and to teach them the human virtue.

Introduction

The relationship between morality and politics is one of the important subjects which have always attracted many thinkers in the world and makes them to allocate most of their works to this subject. This shows the importance of this matter. Politics cannot be separated from ethics. But what are the relationship and the contrast between the two? The political jobs are always filled by a number of intellectuals but on the other hand ethics is what everyone shares it to some extent. Everyone is committed to some sort of morality and those who adhere to the laws of morality do not care much about the personal benefits of committing to it, but rather, they just simply feel like they have to adhere to it. Thus we cannot exempt politicians from adhering to a certain set of ethical issues. Politics root is serving people and today even the roughest regimes have a sort of self-appearance as serving people. Is it not a virtue in itself?

The topic of the article is *"The Relation between Ethics and Politics in the View of Islam and Muslim Scholars"*. The ideas of a number of Islamic intellectuals are discussed and analyzed here. The name suggests, the Islamic view point of morality and politics. Discussion of the two is aimed at defining them in the Islamic text and finding the necessary relationship between the two. Defining the relationship between mo the two. Reality and politic has a significant role in the well-being of the people under the governance. Drawing a line between morality and politics is very disastrous. On the other hand, establishing a link between morality and politics can lead to happiness and satisfaction of the people. It leads to transparency and well-being as its absence will result in corruption and inequality. The aim of this article is to understand the relationship between morality and politics in Islamic ideology and defining the role of morality in the Islamic politics. ***The Main Question of the Article:*** what is the relationship between morality and politics in the view of Islamic scholars and Islamic ideology?

The need to the article for answering the questions mentioned before, we require a great deal of background knowledge before judgment. There have been many publications on the matter and each has covered a certain proportion of the topic. Hence after revising a number of those articles, what I found out is that there is no paper and article on this regard and subject. This is an innovation which is trying to understand the relationship between morality and politics in the Islamic scholars and ideology, although there are some certain publications relating to it.

Definition of key words Research

1) Morality

'Morality' is the techniques discusses the virtuous essence of humanity and differentiate it with the devil side of the human being. Also it makes the human to purify his soul with the virtues and from the devils of its own. This lead to a feeling of being welcomed by the human in the human society and will lead to a deep satisfaction in the soul of humanity.(Tabatabaei, p.558)The word 'morality' therefore, is the combinational expressions for all the morals, by which a human being can ascend to highest spiritual positions(Malouf)

Many thinkers believe that morality is the combination of a certain set of rules, pertaining to how 'moral' somebody behaves or acts (Miskawayh, p.57). On the other hand, many believe that morality is simply the opposite of 'immorality' and thus discuss it under that condition(Frankena, p.18) It is equally sometimes referred to as the very daily rules and regulations of a human society. Thus it can be interpreted in a number of different ways, but the best sort of definition by the Islamic thinkers is that "Morality is a quality of human spirit, showing itself as a result of a person's deeds. Therefore if the spirit is virtuous, the deeds are expected to be good, and vice versa(Mesbah-Yazdi, pp.13-17). So morality is divided into virtues and devil behavior and is considered to be against immorality in this context.

2) Politic

Generally, politics consists of strategies to manage or to progress human issues, whether personal, social and economic-financial. And in broader sense, anything related to managerial skills of government is considered politics. Therefore, by talking about politics, we are in fact dealing with a means of power which is ultimately the government. Politics is equally applied to government management, leadership of the different sectors of the society, power struggles and political part relations. Studying the methods of management and to put them in practice is referred to as the political science. The most important factor which is taken into consideration when dealing with politics is the manner of the ultimate power in the government as Max Webber, German sociologist, defines the factor as the ultimate "limit" on a government, meaning that a government is as far powerful as its power allows it to be.(Ashoori, pp. 212-213)

3) The relationship between politics and morality

Undoubtedly, any field of science which is in relationship with humanity and its products, are somewhat interconnected. Political thinkers believe that political science has a very close proximity to many fields of science like natural and social sciences, history, geography, economy, morality and anthropology (Sharief Al-Gharsi,p.45). Plato considered politics a branch of ethics and Aristotle believed that politics is the Lord of science and the ultimate aim of a government is to supply its citizens with a good wellbeing. During all the middle Ages, religious was overwhelmingly influenced on politics. After this period, idealist thinkers such as Russo, Kant and Hegel considered governance an ethical institution not disconnected from the life of its citizens (Alem, p.74) .This is a compatible ideology with the holy Koran as even God wants virtuous ideology to prominate on politics and politicians as well.

This is why he has considered the government of the rogue regimes as Haram: "My covenant does not include the transgressors."(Quran, 2:124) At the same time He has considered the role of the government a guider of the people and said: "They are those who, if we appointed them as rulers on earth, they would establish the Contact Prayers (Salat) and the obligatory charity(Zakat), and would advocate righteousness and forbid evil. God is the ultimate ruler."(Quran: 22:41) He explains that those who follow the path of the devil will end in corruption and trouble. Also, the Almighty Allah indicates that, the feudists (men or women) are in a same group; they order the evil deeds and prevent the good ones.

4) Government

'Government' in Arabic means 'limitation'.(Manzoor, p.270) In practice it means ruling, therefore in this context a ruler is needed to rule. In politics it has the same meaning, ruling system. In the modern political realm however there is a difference between a government and a ruling system. If the word 'government is used with a certain form of ruling system it shows the general form of the ruling system such as a republic or a dictator government (Ashoori, p.141)

5) Islamic governance

Is a form of governance in which the rules of the government is based upon the rules which God has sent to us via the revelation? Government is solely a right of God and no one has the privilege to govern. Governance in Islam is not allocated to a special group or class of people, but it is an expression of political aims of the fellow religion to organize the intellectual and religious development to reach the final end of people (moving towards Allah). The most important ultimate aims of the Islamic government are: spreading peace and equality, implementing Islamic sharia, self-cleansing of the society.

Morality and politics in Islam

An introduction to any chapter of Islam is monotheism and this is very clear in the Islamic teachings as well. The source of morality in Islam is the religious texts such as Nahj al-Balaqa. In Islam, the motive behind righteousness is the belief in God. The same ideal is applied to Islamic governance as Ayatollah Modarres believed "our politics is as our religion and our religion is as our politics."

The relationship between morality and politics in the Holy Quran and Rewayat (Traditions):

The prophet of Islam believed that he was chosen to finalize the virtues (Mottaghi Hindi,p.16) This is only meaningful in a non-deterministic approach in which human beings choose the way of their lives as they like to. A full human in Koran view is the person who has not limited himself in the worldly joys and superficial features of the material world, thus this person is able to overcome his lust and move in the way of self-cleansing of the material world. Mohamad Taqi Jafari believed that: "the conventional wisdom has its own capacity and therefore is limited, do not push it too much, otherwise it will demolish itself at the first step." (Jafari,p. 129) Also Mohamad Hossein Tabatabaei believed that "faith consists of tightening of belief in heart." (Tabatabaei, p.72) Also, the Alighty Allah introduces belief in revelation, the non-seen world and the hereafter as the keys of salvation. Therefore by belief in the meaning of life, the values and the morality in Islamic ideology become firm and non-relativistic. In this context, the real value is on self-cleansing and not oppression of the human demanding as Motahaari believed: "the job of religion is not to accuse demands, but to control and to manage them. Otherwise it is impossible to oppress the demands in a meaningful way."(Mutahhari, p. 166)

As a result in Islam the government and politics is only defined under the condition of recommendation to virtues and prevention of devils. Power is the means to this end not an end in itself.

Sheikh Kashef Al-Ghita said as a reply to a question: "… if the meaning of politics is to serve the people and to prevent them from sins, and to prevent them from being captured in the hands of corruption, and to prevent the oppression which is around us everywhere… then I swear we are all into it right at them moment, it is the policies of the prophet…. And the Imams." (Mutahhari, pp. 520-521)On the other hand he says "If the meaning of politics is corruption and lie and struggle for power, to satisfy their own lust and to rule and to power, then I seek God's amnesty." (Elhami, pp.17-18)

Morality and politics in the eyes of Islamic thinkers:

Imam Ali Ibn Abi Talib:

He can be comparably the best politician of his time. All the parameters of his political thinking were exactly a copy of those of the prophet's. he had a deep understanding of the Islamic sharia and had a commitment to it. In fact his personality is the reflection of the personality which Islam gave him which made him thinking of nothing but the truth. In his moral values there was no compromise and he was always against those who were immoral.

The measure of morality in government in his view was the amount of equality and respect to the sharia, he believed that ethics is the core value of the moral governance. He tried his best to spread equality and truth among his people. He summarized, the best of morality in politics is equality (Tamiami Amadi,p.370). He believed that the politics which is result of the equality is in three factors: 1-humbleness with people, 2-maximising equality and justice among people, 3-moderation of benefit among the people. (Tamiami Amadi ,p. 54) Therefore in his ideology there is no distinction between personal and political ethics and indeed he emphasized on ethical values in both personal and political realm.

He believed in a collective wellbeing of the society and for this, he had three characters:

1-Commitment to morality in politics which is a non-distinctive part of his political personality,

2-His ultimate aim was set to leading people to a higher spiritual step which is impossible without strict ethical values

He emphasized on toleration in different occasions. In fact he thought it necessary in governance.(Tamiami Amadi,: 423) Moreover, he necessitate obeying the ruler whose policies are praised.

He was one of the biggest and most prominent leaders of the ancient world, but he is not belongs to that era, his manner and thought belong to all the eras even today. His word is with the Islamic nation for a long time to come. He is a good sample to be followed even today after tens of decades since his death.

Abu Nasr Al-Farabi

Farabi was one of those realist thinkers of the Middle Ages and along with Kant and Hegel founded a new moral rather than religious form of governance. He was living in the golden era of the Islamic history and was very much aware of the philosophy of Plato therefore without a deep knowledge of his philosophy it is difficult to understand his stance on morality and ethics. (Farabi, pp.160-161)

He categorized religion into religious and civil, and considering politics and ethics the latter, which includes the discussion of the relationship between people and the governor and what goes on between them. Then we talks about welfare which is an important and prominent part of his philosophy.

He believed studying politics without respecting morality is not possible and considers morality as the complement to the politics. (Farabi, p.107) In addition, he regards politics as a component of civilized science. He defined the civilized science discussed about kinds of conscious conduct and behavior and their root, such as customs, habits and virtues. Also, he divided that into theoretical and practical science. In his drawing of an ideal utopia, there is the first head of state who leads the people to the path of the virtues. He is necessarily equipped with a righteous heart and mind to be able to lead his people to the path. Therefore we can see that in his ideology the government in itself is aimed at leading people to righteousness and prosperity. This leads him to this idea that human can only be directed to righteousness through a society and not without it. There is no distinction therefore between morality and politics in his philosophical system.

Ibn Sina (Avicenna)

He has randomly given his ideas on wellbeing of the society in different occasions and has discussed his worldview of the matter. He emphasizes mostly on personal behavior as a path to welfare and believes that the welfare of a society as a whole depends on the behavior of each and every of its constituents. Since body has many short comings, wisdom needs to be sharp and strong to be able to guide the body to the path of the truth. He believes one of the sects of the society which need a huge self-cleansing is the leaders themselves, as they have been fed with the people who talk good of them in hope of benefits.(Amid Zanjani,p.209)

As mentioned before, rather than emphasizing on the political behavior in a society, Avicenna has emphasized on the personal development and believes that it's the ultimate goal to welfare of the society.(Avicenna, p.646) Anyhow, his writings, lacking a proper cohesion on the matter, are very close to those of Farabi and have nothing much to be added.

Abu Hamid Ghazali

The fourth and fifth century (AH.) are the "Golden era of Islamic civilization" in the words of the writers and scholars. He was born and raised during the golden era of the Islamic times. By the time, Islamic territories stretched from Africa to eastern Asia and there were many hubs of art and science throughout the nation.

He believes that the deeds of the humanity plays a big role on how the fate of the world is unfolding and puts politics as one of the most influential and most important activities of human being. The politics' role is to supervise and to moderate the actions of humanity to reach to ultimate welfare in this world and in what comes after. In his worldview the Islamic government has three distinct principles, first comes the respect to the Islamic society, second is the abstinence from sins and the last is the implementation of the sharia law.(Ghaderi,) Politics has four steps, the first belongs to the Prophets, then the Jurists and the rulers, the scholars, and preachers respectively. The main goal of politics in his view is reformation of the society and people. The Prophets covers all aspects of society and people needs in this regard and their successors follow their policy according to their time and facilities.

In his worldview the role of the leaders in a society is to lead the people to a better path and their main principal in doing so is the order to virtues and preventing people from devils, a highly recommended order in the Islamic ideology. (Ghazali, vol.1,p.333)

Nasir Edin Tusi

He has been always a point of interest for the researchers and educators alike. He was born in Tus and wrote extensively on ethics. His most important book, Naseri Ethics, influenced by Nicomachean Ethics. (Tusi)

He believed that there are two different leaderships in a country, a leadership which aims at the spiritual cleansing of the society and one which aims at welfare state of the society.

What he emphasized most in his writings is the importance of dealing with the lust and moderation and toleration for the Islamic leader. He has divided morality and politics into politics of demand (lust), administration of the country and modern politics. In the second category he has put an emphasizes on the family relationships, finance and women.

He, as Aristotle, believes that the welfare of the individuals is guaranteed only in the realm of society and has limited human wellbeing to being in a human society.

He was living in the last days of the Islamic society and therefore has a higher position and as John Stuart Mill later suggests, "in all ethical issues, being useful is my ultimate roles". (Stewart Mel, p.46) Tusi emphasizes that "Freedom thought and speech is necessary." (Stewart Mel, p.49)

Finally, some features relating to politics and morality in that era are mentioned:

1. Organizing the relationship between morality and politics was regardless to the Almighty Allah and religious boundaries.

2. Anthropocentrism, Relativism and Materialism entered in the political and ethical issues.

3. The relationship between morality and politics were eclipsed by the new concept of interest.

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini

Ayatollah Khomeini was one of the contemporary politicians whose resistance resulted in the demolition of a dictatorship in the modern history. One of his contributions was to give more space to ethics in the everyday use of the religious matters. In fact, the concept of Guardian of Jurist consult (Vilayat al-Faqih), which was introduced by him, makes everyone in this status believe in the Shia principles and protect the holy body of pure Islam. One of the most important obstacles on the way to a just, equal, and moral society is selfishness. He has given this speech regarding the matter and its side effects:

"All the problems of human have arised from this point that man has no limit excepts his own lusts. I want this power for me and you want it for yourself and there's nothing to stop us. This will lead to power struggles and these power struggles will spoil the country. If all the prophets come now, they'd never find themselves in a power struggle, as their way is the same. They have the same directions."(Khomaini: vol.21,p.178)

The other obstacle in his view is "the pride and narcissism":

"Pride knows no one. Neither leader, nor the president, lawyer, militant, non-militant, students and alike, the only way to get out of it, is austerity and purification of self". (Khomaini,vol.21,p.179)

Another topic which he emphasized on is "the way of criticism":

"Proper criticizing is benefitting both parties, this is different from partisan or politically driven criticism which is not of course useful to the society."

"If anyone, heavens forbid, is thinking of eliminating someone else in this country, and should aware that the first thing which is harmed is Islam. This corrupts all the deeds and beliefs of the human."(ibid)

His attitude to the world is that of a very ethical one toward politics and leadership. Politics with all its complications in his view should be ethical. Thus ethics is not personal and optional, but it is the building block of wellbeing in this world and the one to come.

Conclusion:

This article tried to answer to the very fundamental question of the relationship between politics and morality in the eyes of some of the most prominent Islamic thinkers. Upon all the discussions given in the article the assumption of the writer has been as follows: politics in Islam is based on ethical values and all the politically motivated Islamic thinkers have emphasized on the role of morality on the politics. They argue that the building block of the Islamic ideology is based upon the moral and ethical values originating in belief in God and the Holy Text. In fact government and politicians in Islam are the messengers and the facilitators of this aim. In Islam, not only morality is not detached from politics, but as it mentioned before, it is indeed the building block of any government. In Islam politics is not just a means to earn power, but it is rather a means to spread equality and peace and justice and to serve people and

teach them the beauty of virtues. In this regard we can introduce Imam Ali as one of the best politicians of the time, since his methods of ruling was exactly a duplicate of that of the prophet and recommended by the religion.

Recently, Ayatollah Khomeini was one of the very prominent leaders of Islamic movement which resulted in the demolition of one of the roughest dictatorships in the world and replacing it with an ethical one.

He tried very much to implement the different moral issues in the context of governance and put it into practice to better serve the human society and Islamic nation of Iran. As a result, the best governance which may lead to accomplishment and prosperity of people is the Islamic one, which we hope to be led by its real owner and the world savior, Imam Mahdi(may God hasten his reappearance)

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