

The Impact of Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics on the Ethical and Civil Heritage of Muslim Philosophers

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Abstract

There has been a close interaction between post-Islamic Iranian philosophical, ethical, as well as political wisdom and Greek philosophy especially Platonic and Aristotelian trends of thought. Muslim Philosophers such as Farabi and Ibn Rushd have been among the major interpreters and commentators of the works of great Greek philosophers particularly Aristotle's. Hence Aristotle was given the title of "the First Teacher" and Farabi that of "the Second Teacher". A main topic of discussion among Muslim scholars has been the great work of Aristotle, the Nichomachean Ethics, which addressed the author's son. The Arabic version of this book had a great impact on the ethical and civil heritage of Muslim scholars, since there was some closeness between those precepts and the Islamic ones. The present article discusses traces of this impact.

Keywords:

Nichomachean Ethics, Aristotle, Muslim philosophers

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Introduction

The philosophy of ancient Greece with its amazing impact on human civilization is intertwined with the intellectual views and heritage of two outstanding philosophers of human society i.e. Plato and Aristotle.

Plato who had experienced a distinguished tutor i.e. Socrates in his intellectual and ethical education was placed in the position of master and mentor of his famous pupil Aristotle. When Aristotle entered Plato's academy, he was in his early youth and was approximately seventeen years old. In his youth because of the wide difference in age with his master, Aristotle was generally acquiescent and obedient to Plato's opinions. However, gradually with the maturity of fundamentals of wisdom and logic in his soul, he distanced himself from the opinions of his master especially in the field of political philosophy and started to criticize them respectfully. Under the influence of the chaos that arose from the wars and the execution of his master, Socrates came to the conclusion that human society shall not see the light of happiness except with the government of philosophers and the men of wisdom.

In his book "*The Republic*", Plato rose to explain his point of view and considered the Utopia to be tied to their leadership (McClelland, 1977, p.18). The concern of leadership of a philosopher who is a leader (and in case of relegation), a leader who is a philosopher under the influence of Plato is one of the important manifestations of elitism among the Islamic philosophers and thinkers which holds a position of importance. Of course, dealing with this subject itself requires a whole article. Aristotle whose realism on the subjects of society and politics has gained the appreciation of the exponents of his opinions and views, apart from his famous book "politics", has left behind a valuable treatise on ethics. This work has been of great significance in

the ethical and political heritage of the west and likewise of the Muslim World and the Islamic philosophers. With a more in-depth study and research into the works of Islamic philosophers, one can reach the above conclusion. Muslim philosophers such as Farabi¹, Avicenna², Averroes³, Abul Hasan Ameri Neyshaburi⁴ and Khajeh Nasir al- Din Tusi⁵ most probably did not have access to Aristotle's treatise on politics and derived their political philosophy in most part from Plato. However, they were influenced by another important treatise of Aristotle i.e. "the Nichomachean Ethics."

Incidentally, the socio-political topics of that treatise like that of justice and theory of moderation and the question of love and its role in strengthening social life, and above all, the issue of happiness and felicity have attracted their attention. Making reference to the extremely rich sources of Islamic ethics, Muslim philosophers have endeavored to explain and elaborate on the "Nichomachean Ethics" of Aristotle while in certain instances, they have also referred to the distinctive points of their views with Aristotle's. Based on this, some orientalist have stated that the most important Muslim philosophers such as Farabi, Avicenna and Averroes have made efforts to elaborate on the "Politics of Plato and the Ethics of Aristotle" in the political and civil literature of the world of Islam. Similarly, one must take into consideration, as Rosenthal suggests, that Islamic philosophers were firstly Muslims and under the influence of Islamic teachings; and in the second place, they were followers or exponents of the ethical and political philosophy of ancient Greece.

"Farabi, Averroes and Avicenna were the three great and outstanding philosophers of Islam who explained and expanded on the ethics of Aristotle and the politics of Plato."

"I was convinced that in the first place, they were Muslim philosophers and in the second, were disciples of their two masters i.e. Aristotle and Plato."

Of course, one must admit that despite their being influenced by the philosophers of ancient Greece and their big role in the explanation, expansion and enrichment of Greek philosophy, the Muslim philosophers in the first place attempted to conduct their research based on the teachings of the Quran and the traditions of the prophet of Islam.⁶

The Ethical Treatises of Aristotle

On the subject of “ethics” a large number of books and works have been attributed to Aristotle including the following:

1. The book entitled “*The Nicomachean Ethics*”. This book has either been compiled while addressing his son Nicomachean, or his son has published it after his death.⁷ It comprises ten articles. However, some, such as Ibn Nadim in his *al-Fihrist*, have said they amounted to twelve. The last two articles were probably parts of the former articles.

2. The book “*Al-Akhlaq ila Udimus*” that contains five articles and has also been named as “*Odemia*” in Arabic sources. Seemingly, this book was presented by Aristotle to his distinguished protégé “*Odemus*”.

3. The book “*Al-Akhlaq al-Kubra*” that contrary to its title, has a small size.

4. A brief treatise entitled “*on Virtues and Vices*” has also been attributed to Aristotle.

Dealing with some theoretical discussions in the field of ethics and philosophy of ethics, “*The Nicomachean Ethics*” contains practical and pragmatic aspects especially on society, politics and citizenship relationships. This characteristic distinguishes the Nicomachean ethics of Aristotle from other treatises in the ethical literature of the west (Cf. London, 1907).

Ibn Nadim⁸ who has compiled the book “Al-Fihrist” in the latter part of the fourth century, in the section on the works of Aristotle states:

“There are manuscripts from Aristotle written by Yahya ibn Uday including the book “Ethics” of Aristotle. Prophyry has explained and interpreted it in “Twelve Articles” while Ishaq ibn Hunayn has quoted several articles with the interpretation and explanation of Tamestius of that book (Ibn Nadim, p.252).

One must pay due attention to the fact that the first Muslim philosopher and scholar to take note of this book of Aristotle, translate and paraphrase the whole or parts of it was Abu Nasr Farabi – an eminent philosopher, translator and a brilliant and outstanding commentator who has been called “the Greatest of the Muslim Philosophers”⁹.

The earlier commentaries of Aristotle’s book on “Ethics” has been frequently printed in Greek and Latin as well.¹⁰

Aristotle’s book “The Nicomachean Ethics” contains ten chapters and some have also added two other articles to it. However, in fact, these two articles are supplements of previous articles and differ slightly in the manner of structure of the ten articles.¹¹

The first article deals with happiness, good and evil and the gradation of good.

The second article deals with the subject of virtue, conditions of ethical acts, and manner of attaining virtues and shunning vices.

The third is on various kinds of voluntary and involuntary act and discusses some of the ethical obligations.

The fourth article also deals with ethical obligations and praise-worthy ethical qualities as well as some of the undesirable qualities in terms of morality.

The fifth discusses justice and equality, oppression and injustice on which Aristotle has elaborated in detail.

The sixth article has taken into consideration the distinction between theoretical philosophy and practical wisdom. Furthermore, it analyses intellectual virtue.

The seventh article, continuing with the discussion of ethical virtues, deals with the subject of pleasure and its connection with good; and likewise with desirable and undesirable pleasures.

The eighth article deals with the subject of love and affection and their conditions as well as their requirements.

The ninth is on the subject of friendship and honesty and the need for sincere friends or companions at the time of comfort and discomfort alike.

The tenth article is also a complement on the discussion of pleasure and its various forms. It also discusses the question of happiness and felicity.

Abul Hasan Ameri Neishaburi (d. 980 A.D.) in his book entitled “al-Sa‘ada wa ’l Is‘ad fi al-Sira al-Insaniyya” i.e. “Happiness and Felicity in Human Life and Ethics” also refers to the treatise of “the Nicomachean Ethics” and on numerous occasions mentions the opinions of Aristotle. On the subject of happiness, he quotes the statement of Aristotle as follows:, “Happiness lies in the light of the actions of those human beings and those souls of human beings that conform with the complete virtue. In this interpretation ‘complete virtue’ means that all behaviors and actions throughout one’s life and in all conditions and times conform with virtue, not just at a specific time and condition. Such happiness is inherently and in essence praise-worthy and desirable (Al-Ameri, 1958, p.32).

*Ibn Muskuyeh Razi*¹² (d. 940 A.D.) also refers directly to the views of Aristotle in the Nicomachean Ethics saying:

“Aristotle considers the Dinar (wealth and assets) as the strengthening element of politics and administration of the state. In the book “The Nicomachean Ethics” he considers superior politics and

law to have been bestowed by God while the ruler should be a follower of this law. He considers wealth to be the third condition in politics and state administration (Ibn Muskuyeh, 1966, p.116).

*Ibn Baja*¹³ (d. 1138 A.D.) in the treatises “Tadbir al-Mutawahhid” and “Risala al-Wida” has relied most on the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle in comparison with other Islamic philosophers, mentioning Aristotle’s opinions an (Ibn Bajah, 1965, d points of view in this field pp.68 and 73).

Considering that the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle, in addition to ethical discourses includes certain doctrines in the sphere of politics and political or civic philosophy, focus on the aforesaid treatise has also raised discussions in the sphere of political philosophy. These discourses are on topics such as the civil nature of human being, the necessity for existence of society and government as well as the issue of happiness and felicity in the philosophical and ethical literature of Muslim philosophers.(9)

*Imam Muhammad Ghazali*¹⁴, the distinguished Islamic jurisprudent,- despite his serious opposition with philosophers that led to the writing of two books entitled “Maqasid al-Falasifa” i.e. “Objectives of philosophers” and “Tahafut al-Falasifa” i.e. “Baseless and Contradictory Views of Philosophers”¹⁵ in rejecting the opinions of philosophers- has inevitably put Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics into consideration and in certain instances has made references to it. In the treatise “Nasiha al-Muluk” Ghazali has mentioned the name of “Letter of Advice of Aristotle” which applies to the same treatise of Aristotle on the subject of ethics (Ghazali, 1982, p.85)¹⁶.

Averroes (d. 595 A.H, / 1198 A.D.) has also written a brief report of the treatise of ethics of Aristotle. However, the above mentioned work originally in Arabic has been destroyed in the cycle of incidents, but the Latin translation was undertaken by a German translator named Herman in the middle of the thirteenth century A.H. (circa

nineteenth century A.D.). Likewise, the Arabic translation of the brief commentary of Averroes on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is available and has also been translated into French.

Topics of Aristotle's "Nicomachean Ethics" Appealing to and Discussed by Muslim Philosophers

Among the topics that Aristotle has discussed in his *Nicomachean ethics*, some have earned greater acknowledgement and approval of the Islamic philosophers and men of wisdom. One of the reasons for this tendency is the proximity of the viewpoints of Aristotle to religious and Islamic ethics. The other is the connection of the aforesaid topics with the social and civic life that is also related to the field of politics and civics.

One of the important discussions of the book of *Ethics* of Aristotle is the discussion on moral virtue. Moral virtue is ultimately an issue that pertains to society and politics and plays a prominent role in the soundness of social life. Aristotle sought the perfection and happiness in the light of virtue and held that human happiness cannot be achieved without moral virtue. He divided virtue into two types i.e. intellectual and moral. Intellectual virtue is achieved through training and development of idea and thought while moral virtue is attained through habit and being attuned to social habits. It is necessary to reiterate that in ancient Greece, the behavior was considered ethical if it was in harmony and compatible with the prevalent customs and social conduct.¹⁷

According to Aristotle, the duty of the policy-maker and legislator in society is to guide people as far as possible by means of propagation and spreading praise-worthy habits towards moral virtues. From Aristotle's point of view observance of social laws is considered a superior virtue and those laws are in need of an executive power. The administrator of the laws is the government machinery (Aristotle,

1988, Book I and II). Thus Aristotle too, like Plato, generally considers government to be responsible for developing moral virtues in society. Ishaq ibn Hunayn also in the translation and commentary of the Treatise on Ethics of Aristotle refers to the topic of virtue and its role in the happiness of man, stating that happiness of a human being is achieved by acquisition of excellent virtue.

Relying on the point of view of Aristotle, he considers excellent virtue originating from spiritual, sensual and ethical faculties. He also reiterates the point of view of Aristotle concerning the necessity of government's supervision in observance and dissemination of moral virtues in society.

“It is incumbent on the administrator and the head of society (or societies) to take into consideration the ethical (and behavioral) characteristics. Their consideration is necessary from the perspective of development of moral virtues in society (Aristotle, 1979, p.81).

Another argument in the treatise of ethics of Aristotle that has been noted by the exponents and Islamic theologians concerns the point of view of Aristotle about “equilibrium and moderation”. However, theologians and scholars of ethics have generally dwelt on the point of view of Aristotle on equilibrium and moderation in terms of personal behavior and as an outstanding moral and behavioral virtue. They found the viewpoints of Aristotle on this subject to be very close to Islamic teachings and narrations mentioned in this field such as “Observance of moderation and the medium state in all affairs is preferable”. However, one must note that with a more in-depth look at the political philosophy of Aristotle, it becomes apparent that the theory of “moderation and equilibrium” that in principle is an ethical theory has been a source of influence in political philosophy too. It is necessary here to reiterate certain points because of the importance of this issue.

According to Aristotle, the greatest virtue and spiritual faculty that manifests itself in human behavior is moderation and equilibrium. In his opinion, each of the moral qualities and virtues is the midpoint and median of two extreme limits. For instance, courage is the median of fear and audacity or immoderate bravery; and generosity or munificence is the median of extravagance and parsimony while modesty and humility is the median of shamefulness and shamelessness (Aristotle, 1988, pp.28-42).

Here it is necessary to point out that the theory of equilibrium and moderation of Aristotle although being an ethical theory, has also been a source of influence for his political ideas and thoughts. Having inspired with this theory, Aristotle regarded the middle class in society to be the balanced one and to be the most suitable class for being at the top of the pyramid of political power. This is because in his opinion the middle class is closer to moderation -as compared to the extreme states of the rich and poor classes -and therefore, their decisions and measures concerning the issues of statesmanship is closer to the truth. Similarly, Aristotle considered the role of the middle class in social equilibrium to be extremely significant. In his treatise "Politics" while discussing the factors or origins of revolutions and social revolts, Aristotle refers to the strategic role of the middle class. He states that one of the important causes of revolutions and social revolts is the elimination or decline of the middle class (Aristotle, 1988, Book V, chapter 182).

Elimination of the middle class here implies the demotion of this class from its own position and its members being reduced into the poor or needy class due to poverty and economic problems. The important point on this subject is that the role which Aristotle propounded two thousand years ago about the role of the middle class in the equilibrium of society is among the ideas and theories that have

remained valid until today. This theory has a special position in the new sociology especially political sociology.

The ethical theory of Aristotle on the subject of moderation and equilibrium has caused him to adopt a different method from that of his master Plato in describing various types of governments and passing judgment about them. In his treatise "The Republic", Plato has divided the existing governments and political systems into four types namely, 1- timocracy, 2- oligarchy, 3- democracy and 4- tyranny. Enumerating their weaknesses, he finally elaborates on and defends his preferable theory i.e. the government of philosophers and men of wisdom. However, in contrast to his master, Aristotle puts forward the doctrine of defending the middle class in the area of political power vis-à-vis that of the rule of philosophers or the leadership of the men of wisdom. On the other hand, adopting a tolerant and broad view, and under the influence of his theory of moderation and equilibrium in ethics, he gives his own account of different types of political systems. Instead of prescribing a specific form of government, Aristotle focuses on the method of performance of government basing his judgment about good or bad rule on the quality of its performance. Under the influence of his ethical theory on of "moderation and equilibrium", Aristotle does not pay much attention to the form of rule, whether it be a rule of a unique power (monarchy), rule of the wealthy minority (oligarchy) or of the majority (republic or democracy). Rather, in his opinion, whatever be the type of government (unique power, restricted number or collective), it must take into consideration the interests of all groups and strata of society including the wealthy, middle-class and low class. Such an insight considers monarchy (rule of one-man), aristocracy (rule of a select group or the wealthy minority) and democracy (rule of majority or collective rule) to be desirable provided that these systems- apart from the form of their combination- take into account the interests and good of all groups and strata in

practice. Thus based on Aristotle's logic of the classification of governments, if governments deviate from justice i.e. from taking into consideration the interests of the whole people, their rule will become undesirable and unwelcome. In this case, if the government is a one-man rule or monarchy, it shall be transformed into a tyranny (despotic rule); and if it is an aristocracy, it shall be transformed into an oligarchy; whereas if it is collective or republic, it shall be changed into a democracy. The picture that Aristotle has given of the three latter forms of rule is an undesirable one. The reason for giving such an image of the three aforesaid forms of rule is the way of their performance, departure from moderation in statesmanship and preferring individual or group interests to the common good and interests (Aristotle, 1998, Book 1 and 2). Therefore, under the influence of the theory of moderation and equilibrium in ethics, Aristotle has given a realistic explanation of the classification of governments. In other words, he has been influenced by the theory of "moderation and equilibrium" while explaining political issues on the subject of government and state. Thus he rejects the necessity of the rule of philosophers that Plato mentioned in the treatise of 'republic' (Plato, 1977, Book 1 and 2. According to Aristotle, Plato's point of view is a radical one and opposed to moderation and equilibrium in terms of rule and statesmanship. So he adopts a moderate and tolerant point of view in describing various political systems.

Taking into consideration these explanations, one must note that Muslim philosophers in the first Islamic centuries did not have access to the book "politics" of Aristotle for any reason. So they adopted his theory of equilibrium and moderation from his treatise "Ethics", and for the most part they studied and concentrated on it in the sphere of individual ethics.

The Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle and the Concept of Happiness and Felicity

One of the important and classic arguments in the field of philosophy, ethics, religion and political wisdom discussed in the course of the middle ages and debated in religious-academic circles of Europe and similarly in the Muslim World, especially among Islamic and Iranian philosophers and men of wisdom, is the question of “happiness and felicity of human beings”. Apart from the religious origins of this argument, the teachings of Aristotle on the subject of happiness and felicity that have been dealt with in a relatively detailed form in his treatise on “ethics”, have been quite influential in this historical argument.

This thought-provoking and highly controversial argument among the men of wisdom dates back to Aristotle’s Nicomachean ethics. As Rosenthal puts it, this argument was an important and common intellectual asset and substance among the thinkers of various religions in the middle ages. It has still maintained its validity in the philosophical, ethical and religious schools in terms of presentation and criticism (Rosenthal, 1968, p.13).

Islamic philosophers and scholars of ethics have also discussed and debated the category of happiness and felicity as well as the manner of attaining it throughout the history of Islamic civilization. It is interesting that Aristotle has -in his Nicomachean ethics- put forward the question whether the subject of happiness after death can also be studied and investigated. Although Aristotle does not look at this subject from the perspective or discourse of hell and heaven, his explanations are very close to the religious and Islamic teachings. In translation of Aristotle’s treatise, Ishaq ibn Hunayn mentions that “the happy human being reaching salvation (at the time of death) is one

whose deeds in this world have been in conformity with absolute virtue and who has performed good and righteous deeds.”¹⁸

Considering that the mission of the divine prophets and the Last of the Prophets was attainment of happiness and felicity of mankind both in this world and the next, thus the proposal of this issue by Aristotle was accepted by the Muslim thinkers. Thus points of view and perspectives derived from religious texts were also added to the aforesaid discussions. Welcome of the Islamic philosophers and scholars of ethics to the category of happiness and felicity becomes greater considering that Aristotle mentions the issue of happiness after death also in his treatise on “Ethics” and in his ethical teachings. This is because Muslim theosophers were well aware that the ultimate aim of the prophet of Islam (SA) as well as of all divine prophets was to secure happiness and felicity of mankind especially in the life after death. Thus dealing with this topic gained double importance.

Ibn Muskuyeh (d. 1010 A.D.) has written a famous and reliable book on ethics in a philosophical style entitled “*Tahdhib al-Akhlaq wa Tathir al-A‘raq*” that has been highly influenced by Aristotle’s treatise by referring to it. It is necessary to note that the majority of experts on ethics such as Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, Khajeh Nasiroddin Tusi and Jalaluddin al-Dawwani have also -to some extent- been inspired by this book. The material on ethical refinement that Ibn Muskuyeh Razi -a Shiite theosopher-states about good and evil as well as desirable spiritual faculties drawing attention to the necessity for presence of those virtues for consistency of social life of mankind has been influenced by Aristotle’s Nicomachean ethics. Of course, Ibn Muskuyeh himself has mentioned Aristotle’s treatise among his references. Ibn Muskuyeh notes that the tasks and actions that are credited to human beings are divided into two categories: good and evil ones. A person who seeks to perform righteous deeds is termed as charitable or happy person and if obstacles prevent a man from

performing charitable deeds and direct him towards evil, then that person is termed as an evil doer and a wretched one. Since there are many human virtuous deeds and spiritual faculties whose acquisition is regarded virtue, the individual cannot perform and achieve all of them on his own. Thus forming a society towards mutual assistance, exchanging virtues and fulfilling needs seem to be necessary. Perfection of society and mutual assistance are also dependent and conditional on the love of human beings towards one another (a discussion that Aristotle has dwelt on in the eighth and ninth chapters of his treatise on “The Nichomachean Ethics”) such that every individual seeks his excellence and happiness in excellence and happiness of others and cooperation with his fellow men. In other words, each member of society deserves to be like a part of a body whose health and strength is secured with the assistance and cooperation of all parts. They should perform their functions well, should not be negligent in performance of duties and should not interfere in the functions of other parts. Only in case of illness and weakness are they rendered incapable of performing their duties. Adopting such measures is an essential requirement for happiness of human beings in society (Ibn Muskuyeh, 1990, p.37).

Thereafter, Ibn Muskuyeh attempts to explain the viewpoints of Aristotle on the subject of man being a social animal by nature and the need for management and politics in society according to religious teachings. He mentions the fact that despite “man being a social animal by nature”, human beings because of having various inclinations and interests, are greedy and are not content with what they have. So they violate and infringe upon the rights of their fellow species. Thus it is necessary to resort to “politics and planning” in order to abstain from such hegemony and infringement. Here, Ibn Muskuyeh recounts his own religious teachings and remarks that ‘politics’ is achieved in the light of divine religion and Allah’s

commandments on which depend the good and interest of the servants both in this world and in the hereafter (Ibn Muskuyeh, 1990, p.37)¹⁹. Ibn Muskuyeh remarks that Aristotle has termed this fact as “nomos”²⁰ and in his same famous book entitled “Nicomachean”²¹ speaks of the need for ‘Namus’ and Dinar for management of social affairs.

While endorsing the point of view of Aristotle, Ibn Muskuyeh considers “the Greatest Namus” as laws and principles from God to man for the purpose of securing his happiness both in this world and in the hereafter. Divine ‘Namus’ is the religion that is at the top of all ‘Nawamis’ and laws. The divine legislator and the ruler also are followers of the same religious laws. The administration of society takes place in the light of the aforesaid laws on the one side, and based on the material wealth that is the requisite of trading in goods in society on the other side. Ibn Muskuyeh points out that material wealth furnishes the tools for a just transaction in society because it institutionalizes financial equality and justice everywhere and by means of which, transactions are undertaken and social justice is practiced. In the absence of such a situation, social oppression dominates and city-states are ruined (Ibn Muskuyeh, 1990, pp.110-111).

Khajeh Nasir al Din Tusi: A Shiite man of wisdom, philosopher and theologian also in his treatise “Naseri Ethics” in the seventh article, has devoted a long chapter to the issue of happiness and has elucidated the teachings of Aristotle on this subject. Khajeh Nasir recounts the diversity of opinions before Aristotle on the subject of definition of “happiness and felicity” and states that Aristotle’s predecessors such as Pythagoras, Socrates and Plato had mainly discussed “spiritual happiness” not considering any pleasure and delight for the body in their discussion on happiness (Tusi, n.d., p.48). However, when Aristotle noted the diversity of ideas of people and

witnessed their bewilderment in defining happiness, he offered a comprehensive definition of happiness.

Thereafter Khajeh Nasir al Din Tusi elucidates the comprehensive definition of happiness from the point of view of Aristotle.

Khajeh remarks that Aristotle divided happiness into five categories as follows:

First: That which pertains to the health of the body, soundness of senses and balance of temperament.

Second: That which pertains to wealth and companions by resorting to which, the munificence and generosity of the benefactors to those entitled would be manifested and other praise-worthy deeds would be achieved.

Third: that which pertains to speaking the good and mentioning the good among people so that the doer becomes well-known for his favors and is praised for his virtues.

Fourth: That which pertains to attaining the desired objectives and achieving the direct vision (meditation) on an optional basis.

Fifth: That which pertains to having good judgment and soundness of mind and awareness of the truth in just consultation and soundness of belief from wrong in common teachings generally and in affairs of religion particularly. Thus whoever possesses these five attributes is perfectly happy in absolute terms and is imperfect to the extent of his imperfection in certain aspects and certain relationships (Tusi, n.d., p.50).

Khajeh Nasir considers happiness and felicity from the point of view of Aristotle to be in different stages and various degrees. It is attained to the extent of the efforts and attempts of a person. If absolute happiness has been achieved, it is not eliminated with the dissolution of the body and death, so the happy one is also happy and fortunate after death (Tusi, n.d., p.51).

Khajeh considers the point of view of Aristotle in his Nicomachean ethics concerning good and evil as well as happiness to be the preferable and correct one writing: “The philosopher Aristotle has opened the book on ethics with this chapter and definitely, the authentic view in this chapter is the one that he has delivered” (Tusi, n.d. p.51).

It is necessary to point out that before Khajeh Nasir al Din Tusi, the debate on happiness and felicity of mankind in this world and after death especially based on the doctrines of Aristotle had been discussed by Islamic philosophers especially Avicenna. The viewpoints that Avicenna has put forward on the subject of happiness and its varieties and likewise, perfection of mankind in the treatise ‘An-Nijat’ has for the most part been influenced by the doctrines of Aristotle and the great exponent of his works i.e. Farabi. Discussing the various kinds of pleasures, Avicenna divides happiness into two types and considers permanent happiness to be the supreme and intellectual pleasure. He emphasizes that in relation to happiness, people are also of two types. One group like animals seeks the lower and material happiness while another seeks intellectual and supreme happiness. Supreme happiness is achieved in the light of theoretical and practical knowledge and in the soul’s acquisition of various kinds of virtues which manifest in one’s behavior. When human soul attains this stage of happiness, it is also happy after death. This is because after death, happiness and eternal wretchedness in the hereafter and the next world are also measured according to the scale of knowledge and to the extent of success in attainment of supreme ethical and behavioral virtues (Avicenna, 1938, p.498). Similarly, Averroes (d. circa 1200 A.D.), who is considered the second great exponent of the teachings of Aristotle after Farabi, has summarized Aristotle’s book of ethics under the title of “the Ethics of Nicomachean” in 1174 A.D. Averroes has summarized some of Aristotle’s works and written commentaries on

some others. Books and treatises summarized by Averroes are as follows: “Heaven and Universe, Intelligence and Intelligible, Generation and Corruption, Metaphysics, Book of Soul, Book of Rhetoric, Book of Poetry, Book of Demonstration, Book of Physics, Book of logic, and the Ethics of Nicomachean. Works of Aristotle such as Book of Deduction, Book of Demonstration, Book of Soul, and Metaphysics have also been explained and expounded by Averroes.

Averroes has been so profoundly influenced by the works and teachings of Aristotle in the field of philosophy and ethics that in his book “Divine Comedy”, Dante has mentioned Averroes as the commentator. Averroes held that Aristotle was the greatest thinker that had attained the truth – a truth that is free from misgivings. In some instances, Averroes has quoted some parts from the works of Farabi and Avicenna and has criticized them believing that in certain cases they have misunderstood the philosophy of Aristotle (Avicenna, 1938, p.653). Averroes made a lot of efforts to establish a bond and proximity between the wisdom of ancient Greece especially the philosophy and ethics of Aristotle and the religious and Islamic teachings. One must not forget that Averroes was not only a distinguished Islamic philosopher, but also a jurist and judge. Thus in order to proximate between philosophy and Islamic teachings and ethics and to reject the opinions of thinkers such as Ghazali who had written the book “Incoherent Remarks of Philosophers” compiled three important works namely, 1) – “Incoherence in Incoherent Remarks of Philosophers” In rejection of the Ghazali’s Book, 2) – “the Final Word on the Bond between Philosophy and Religion” 3) – “A book on demystifying the obvious pathways of the principles of faith”. In many of his works, Averroes has spoken of happiness and felicity of human beings with the help of acquiring theoretical and practical moral virtues considering the excellence of human being in

the perfection of his intellect more than anything else. Averroes was of the opinion that the function of religions is to familiarize people with the practical virtues while that of philosophy is to promote theoretical virtues (Avicenna, 1938, p.703).

Therefore, the doctrine of Aristotle on “happiness and felicity” which has also been for the most part explained in the treatise “The Nicomachean Ethics” is among the important issues that have been critically evaluated and thoroughly investigated by Muslim philosophers discussing the subject of ethics and philosophy.

Friendship and Affection and their Role in Consistency of Social Life of Mankind

Of the notable issues that Aristotle has discussed in his Nicomachean ethics is love and friendship and their role in consistency of social life of human being.

In the eighth and ninth chapters of his Nicomachean ethics, Aristotle deals with the subject of love in a relatively extensive manner. In the eighth chapter, he enumerates on the various types of love. Aristotle mentions love of fellow humans as a moral virtue and at the same time as a natural and crucial need for the social life of human beings. Aristotle seeks the origin of love and affection in the three factors of pleasure, benefit and good or perfection and thereafter he starts to analyze the point that which one of the various types of love and friendship predominates among each group and stratum of human beings. For instance, love and affection for others based on personal benefit and interest reveals itself more often in aged and elderly individuals, because the question of pleasure-seeking in the garb of friendship is not quite justified in old age. For this reason, love based on utilitarianism towards self-interest is quickly disintegrated after reaching the benefit (Aristotle, 1988, pp.194-195).

Aristotle's point of view about love and friendship and their causes and likewise, the role of love in consistency of creatures in the world of existence in general and in social life of mankind in particular, has drawn the attention of philosophers and men of learning on ethics.

Ibn Muskuyeh Razi in the book "Tahdhib al-Akhlaq" i.e. "Refinement of Ethics" and Khajeh Nasir al Din Tusi in the book "Naseri Ethics" have taken into consideration the doctrines of Aristotle in the field of love and affection toward fellow beings and causes of this love and have in most likelihood, added other topics to them. Ibn Muskuyeh who died in the first half of the fifth century and was a predecessor of Khajeh Nasir, has put forward his points of view on the subject of love based on the eighth and ninth chapters as well as a part of the tenth chapter of the treatise of ethics of Aristotle. However, Ibn Muskuyeh has in some instances added something to the doctrines of Aristotle or has explained his point of view. Ibn Muskuyeh like Aristotle has focused on the factors and causes of love and friendship. He has sought to find the root and cause of love, good fellowship and affection in the three factors of pleasure, interest and good. Like Aristotle, Ibn Muskuyeh believes that love whose cause is seeking of pleasure comes into being easily and quickly while it also ceases to exist easily. The love whose cause is interest comes into being quite late and ceases to be in a short time, because on attainment of interest and benefit, the result is achieved and there is no reason for perpetuation of love. However, the love which is caused by good and well-wishing comes to being late because it is based on willpower and thinking. Ibn Muskuyeh considers some forms of love to be a combination of the various types mentioned above (Ibn Muskuyeh, 1961, pp.125-130). According to him, love and fellowship with various motives is an inherent and essential feature of human being. The human being is so called (*Insan* in Arabic) because of his nature

of sociability (*'uns*). The social life of man and formation of community is also the outcome of this sociability, affinity and love among human beings.

Ibn Muskuyeh reminds that it is the duty of human beings and especially Muslims, to strengthen this affection among them; and that the religious teachings of Islam encourage people to interact and participate in religious and cultural gatherings. In this case interaction and affinity become established more firmly among them (Ibn Muskuyeh, 1961, p.130).

Khajeh Nasir al Din Tusi (d. 1150 A.D.) in "Naseri Ethics" in his discussion on 'politics' investigates the question of love, honesty and the manner of interaction with various strata of people and the role of love and friendship in the consistency of the social life of human being. The third article of the book "Naseri Ethics" has been written relying on the viewpoints of Abu Nasr Farabi on politics and ethics that in turn have emanated from the doctrines of Plato and Aristotle respectively.²²

In a philosophical analysis Khajeh undertakes to explain 'love' and its various forms. On the virtue of love, Khajeh remarks: "Since people are in need of one another and the perfection of each and every person comes about through his closeness to other persons of his own species; and necessity calls for seeking help from other people-because no person can attain excellence on his own-thus the need for a gathering through which all individuals be like members of one body in terms of helping one another becomes urgent. Since human being has been created to seek perfection by nature, thus naturally, he seeks to socialize, and the desire to socialize is love itself. A group of prominent philosophers in acknowledging the status of love have exaggerated greatly and have said that the consistency of all creatures is due to love (Tusi, 1994, p.260).

Khajeh Nasir considers love to be of two types: one is natural love and the other is voluntary. Natural love is like the love of a mother toward her child. According to Farabi “Were it not for this form of natural love of mothers, they would be loath to rear their children and the survival of the species would not be ensured.” Of course, this form of love is visible among all creatures of the world.”

The second type of love is the voluntary one. Here Khajeh by taking into consideration the viewpoints of Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and probably those of Ibn Muskuyeh, has divided voluntary love on the basis of the extent of its duration and perpetuation into four types as follows:

1- The love that is swift in coming into being and swift in dissolution (comes quickly and dissolves quickly);

2- One that is slow to come and slow to dissolve (It takes time to come and takes time to dissolve);

3- The love that is slow to come and swift to dissolve (comes slowly and dissolves quickly);

4- One that is swift to come and slow to dissolve (comes quickly and takes time to dissolve) (Tusi, 1994, p.218).

Based on the point of view of Aristotle in the treatise “*The Nicomachean Ethics*”, Khajeh summarizes the factors and causes of love in pleasure, benefit and good stating that “from the combination of these three types, the fourth form is composed.” Khajeh adds: “Pleasure is the cause of a love that emerges swiftly and dissolves quickly because pleasure is lost after it is attained and as Khajeh says, the perpetuation and decline pass on from cause to effect. However, benefit is the cause of a love that emerges unhurriedly and dissolves quickly. But love with the motive of good and well-wishing emerges swiftly and takes time to dissolve. According to Khajeh, the swift emergence occurs because of the inherent congeniality that exists among benefactors and well-wishers; while taking time to dissolve is

because of the true union that is the essential nature of good and requires rejection of separation. However, the love that is a combination of all three types is one that takes time to emerge and takes time to dissolve, since the combination of both causes- i.e. benefit and good -demands the presence of the two above -mentioned conditions or states (Tusi, 1994, p.219).

Thereafter, Khajeh arrives from the aggregate of Aristotle's sayings and his own comments on "love and friendship" at the political conclusion that the king and the sultan also must establish their relations with people and the subjects firmly on the basis of "love".

Thereafter, like Ibn Muskuyeh, Khajeh Nasir deals with the role of religion in reinforcing affection and love among Muslims stating: "It is possible that Islamic law prefers congregational prayer to solitary one because if people gather at a meeting point five times a day, they will become acquainted with one another; and their joint participation in prayer and other transactions results in the endorsement of this acquaintance so that it may raise it from the level of acquaintance to that of love and affection." (Tusi, 1994, p.222).

Abu Nasr Farabi- the outstanding and senior Muslim philosopher and translator- in the treatise "al-Tanbih 'ala Sabil al-Sa'ada" i.e. "Enlightenment on the Path of Happiness" also has mentioned discourses from Aristotle about good, love, pleasure and happiness and at the same time, mentioned his own viewpoints in this field especially within the scope of religious and ethical teachings of the religion of Islam. Referring to the discussions of Aristotle at the latter part of the book "The Nicomachaen Ethics" on the topic of pleasure and its various types, as well as the diverse and at times conflicting points of view about it, Farabi takes on to discuss the topic of pleasure. Farabi considers intellectual pleasure such as the pleasure of acquiring knowledge and wisdom -which is exclusive to human

beings- to be superior to fleeting sensual pleasures and considers it to be the aspect that distinguishes human beings from animals. To cut a long story short, I should say that the doctrines of Aristotle on this subject have also been criticized by Farabi; and the thinkers after Farabi following in his footsteps have typically engaged in explanation and elaboration of the aforesaid discussions (Al-Isfahani, 1973, p.157).

Conclusion

Muslim philosophers were pioneers and standard-bearers for the transfer of philosophy, logic as well as the intellectual and civic heritage of ancient Greece to their posterity on the one hand and to the western world on the other hand. However, the Islamic philosophers, while engaging in translation and interpretation of the rational and intellectual heritage of ancient Greece especially of Plato and Aristotle, laid the foundations of an independent philosophy and intellectual heritage in the light of monotheism and religious teachings. Naturally, the impact of the intellectual doctrines of ancient Greece on their opinions cannot be denied. However, this influence did not imply the emulation of their views. Rather, the Hakim philosophers with perspicacity and awareness engaged in investigation and analysis of the doctrines of Greek philosophers as well as explanation of their preferable points of view and in some instances, of their innovative and new doctrines.

Of the important intellectual heritage that the Islamic philosophers endeavored to criticize and analyze is Aristotle's treatise "the Nichomachean Ethics." In the ethical, civic and political heritage, this treatise has been a source of influence among Islamic Hakim philosophers. At the beginning of the discussion, it was emphasized that the earlier Muslim philosophers such as Farabi, Avicenna and Abul Hasan Ameri- Neishaburi did not have access to Aristotle's book

“Politics”. Thus in the field of “Politics” they took into consideration the doctrines of Plato. However, they benefited from the book “Aristotle’s Ethics...” in the ethical field and even in the sphere of politics because a section of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* concerns the subject of politics and society. Teachings of the Muslim Hakim philosophers gradually in the medieval era disseminated in Europe and became one of the factors for reviewing their rigid views towards the end of the Middle Ages.

The doctrines of Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* especially on the two important concepts of happiness and justice were welcomed not only by Muslim thinkers, but by philosophers of other monotheistic religions i.e. Judaism and Christianity. This is because all monotheistic and divine religions consider happiness achievable in the light of the relationship of human being with God and in the fine-tuning of this relationship.²³ Among the Islamic philosophers, because of his being predecessor and his mastery of Latin texts, Abu Nasr Farabi was more influential than others in transferring the heritage of Plato and Aristotle to the world of Islam. Of course, Farabi himself had compiled a book on ethics that was destroyed in the cycle of historical events. As mentioned earlier, the most important of his works in this field is the treatise entitled “Al-Tanbih ala Sabil al-Sa‘adah” (in some copies “Subul al-Sa‘adah”). Like Aristotle, Farabi considers a right and righteous deed as one with moderation, because he reckons going to extremes harmful both for the body and the soul. Some prominent commentators of the works of Aristotle such as Averroes, because of lack of mastery of Greek and Latin languages, and despite thorough discussions on the ethical and philosophical views of Aristotle, have inevitably resorted to translations of philosophers such as Farabi. Therefore, the doctrines of Farabi and his translations have also left their influence on later philosophers of the Muslim world. Of course, the comprehensive commentaries of

Averroes on the philosophy of Aristotle have been highly appreciated in Europe and translated into various European languages.

Notes

1. Abu Nasr Farabi is the first encyclopedic Muslim philosopher after the era of translation of Greek works into Arabic. The translators of his works have called him “the Philosopher of Muslims” while Islamic philosophers have given him the title of “the Second Teacher” bestowing the title of “the First Teacher” on Aristotle. Farabi has authored various books in different fields including philosophy, logic, politics, physics or natural philosophy, and theology. His views have had a great impact on outstanding Muslim thinkers and the philosophers of later centuries. He has been a Shiite Muslim.
2. Avicenna or Ibn Sina (D. 1037 A.D) is one of the greatest geniuses of the world and one of the most distinguished thinkers and Muslim philosophers. He has written over 100 works in medicine, philosophy, theology, natural philosophy, and logic during his short lifetime i.e. 58years. His book on medicine (Kanun Or Canon)was considered the most important medical source in Europe until the 18th century. His philosophical works “Shifa” and “Isharat” also have gained universal fame.
3. Averroes or Ibn Rushd (d. 1198 A.D) is one of the outstanding Muslim philosophers in the 12th century A.D. Like Farabi, Ibn Rushd was a great commentator of Aristotle’s views. Ibn Rushd was well known in philosophy, medicine, mathematics, poetry, and literature. His apologies for the relation and compatibility of reason and revelation, and his rejection of the objections of Ghazali against philosophers in this regard are quite popular.
4. Abul Hasan Ameri Neishaburi (d.381A.H) is one of the Muslim thinkers and philosophers in the 4th century A.H. He has authored some books on philosophy, politics, and ethics.
5. Khajeh Nasir al-Din Tusi (d.672A.H) is one of the greatest Shiite philosophers and thinkers in the 7th century.His lifetime was concurrent with the terrible attack of Mongols on Iranian territory. Khajeh Nasir is the author of numerous works on mathematics, astronomy, scholastic theology, divinity, philosophy, logic, geometry, and politics. His book entitled “Naseri Ethics” deals with politics and statesmanship.
6. Dr. Hussein Nasr has lucidly dwelt on this subject in an article entitled “The Quran and Hadith: the Inspirational Sources of Islamic Philosophy”. He states on this subject:
“All Islamic Philosophers from al-Kinidi to those of our own day such as Allamah Tabatabai lived and breathed reality of the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet of Islam.” Seyyid Husein Nasr, History of Islamic Philosophy; chapter 1, p.27

7. Aristotle's son was killed in one of the battles in his youth (Aristotle, 1979).
8. Ibn Nadim is one of the outstanding historians and biographers in the Muslim world in the 4th century A.H. Al-Fihrist, is the name of his book on the biography of great personalities of the Muslim world up to his time.
9. He is the greatest Muslim philosopher and among the Muslim philosophers, no one has attained his philosophical position. Ibn Khallikan, 1977.
10. Of the most important Greek commentaries of Aristotle's "Ethics" that have been mostly printed in London and Berlin, one can point to the following commentaries:
 - * Aspasius: in *Nicomachea quae Supersunt Commentaria*, Ed. G. Heylbut. Berlin, 1889.
 - * The Greek commentaries on the *Nicomachean Ethics* of Aristotle in the Latin translation of R. Grosse test.Likewise, of the most important Latin commentaries we can refer to the following source:
 - * *Commentarium in xlibros Ethica Nicomachea*. Ed. A.M. Pirotta, Torino, 1934.
11. In one of the most important and most precise English translations of Aristotle's treatise on ethics that was carried out by David Ross and was published by the Oxford University Press, the ten articles have also been included as follows:
 - Book 1: The Good for Man
 - Book 2, Book 3, Book 4 and Book 5: Moral Virtue
 - Book 6: Intellectual Virtue
 - Book 7: Continenence and Incontinence Pleasure
 - Book 8 and Book 9: Friendship
 - Book 10: Pleasure, HappinessTranslated by David Ross, Oxford University Press, 1998.
12. Ibn Muskuyeh Razi (d.421A.H) is one of the distinguished Muslim thinkers particularly in history and ethics. He is from Ray-south of Tehran - the ancient capital of Iran. Ibn Muskuyeh is also well known in other fields such as mathematics, medicine, philosophy, and scholastic theology. He is counted among the Shiite thinkers in history of Islam, and history of Iran.
13. Ibn Baja (d.1138) is one of the famous philosophers in Andalusia in the western part of the Muslim territory in the 12th century A.D.
14. Abu Hamid Ghazali (d.1111) is one of the most prominent thinkers and jurists in the Muslim world. He was born in Tus, northeast Iran. Some have regarded him as the most hard-working Muslim thinker. He has authored numerous valuable works explaining the ideas of philosophers and rejecting their views during his short lifetime i.e. 55years. He has also written some books on logic, ethics, politics, jurisprudence, dialectics and Sufism.
15. *Tahafut al-Falasifa* is the title of a book Abu Hamid Ghazali has written to reject the views of philosophers, trying to prove certain views of them contrary to the divine religion. Ibn Rushd has responded to the objections of Ghazali in an elaborate way.

16. It is necessary to recall that Ghazali has compiled two important and everlasting works on practical ethics relying on Islamic sources i.e. the Quran and the tradition of the Prophet of Islam. One is the Revival of Sciences of Religion in several volumes that is a great encyclopedia on Islamic Ethics having been written in Arabic; while the other is the Alchemy of Happiness that has been written in Farsi quite briefly.
17. The relationship between ethics and political power in society and in the arena of political action is one of the most controversial arguments among thinkers and experts. Refer to: O'Kane, 1994.
18. Nothing prevents us from naming a person whose actions are in conformity with absolute virtue as a happy one.
19. Politics is religious or divine laws and just laws that takes into consideration the interests and manner of attainment of happiness of human beings both in this world and in the hereafter
20. 'nomos' in Greek means law. In Arabic it is read as 'namus' and 'nawamis'
21. It means the same treatise on ethics by Aristotle entitled "The Nicomachean Ethics.
22. In the third chapter of his book "Nasari Ethics" Khajeh states that: "The Second Hakim philosopher Abu Nasr Farabi whose quotations and maxims form the major part of this chapter says..." (Tusi, 1994, p.248).
23. Medieval thinkers, Muslim, Jewish and Christian alike conceived of happiness in relation to God. For them its consummation was in the love of God. (Rosenthal, 1968, p.13).

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