

Nostalgia of Justice and the Just City

in Western Political Philosophy & The Christian Discourse

*Farshad Shariat**

Abstract

This article attempts to study the interactions between the two religious and secular domains in three intellectual periods in the history of Western political philosophy before Christ, in the ecclesiastical period and in the modern era, in which the separation of religion and state in Western political thought is a two-tier phenomenon in theory and practice. In other words, the internal layer of the philosophy seeks to reread and mentally separate political from nonpolitical matters so as to prescribe a just or a relatively not unjust criterion for political actors although, in practice, political actors and the others cannot avoid interacting. Again in other words, this article, while researching the just rights of citizens and the need for interaction and a link between political and nonpolitical actors, shows why and how in order for politics and the like to outline a moral theory that would fit a political theory in practice, cannot avoid separating and distinguishing the two in theory.

Keywords

Western political philosophy, religion and politics, political matter, secularism, justice

* Farshad Shariat, Associate Professor of Political Science, Islamic Teachings & Political Science Faculty, Imam Sadiq University Fardhad_shariat@yahoo.com

Introduction

Religion and worldly life, their interrelation and differentiation, the horizontality and verticality of the heavens and the earth, unity or plurality of the Being, one for the other and similar terms are among categories that obsess the philosophical mind and can basically be considered as persistent questions of the philosophical mind. Researching the intellectual currents in Western political thought and the thinkers of rich philosophical systems such as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and Locke, who have been studied in this article, indicate that the intellectual foundation of the West has established a coherent relationship between religion and politics. Therefore, despite religious developments, especially the Renaissance, in the West and the widespread thought of separation of church and state, it can be claimed that this is merely an image in theory.

Having gone through such an introduction, the present article has three hypotheses as its theme. First, Plato and Aristotle, despite Plato's affiliation with Iranian concerns, are considered as being in the religious process. Although his thoughts emerged in about 400 BC prior to the religious culture in the West, for the same reason Aristotle is deemed as part of the same current. The second hypothesis is the Roman civilization, which has been considered outside the philosophical system and, thus, the research, although it is classified under the Stoics and occasionally the Socratics. The third hypothesis is that all such attempts are aimed at seeking and attaining happiness. In fact, politics- here political and nonpolitical matters are distinguished- has been made scientific in the interest of the good and expedience of the public.

In search of political matters and the relation between religion and state, this article opens its discussion with the question, Is there a

theoretically clear distinction between religious and political problems? The main question here is, What are man's conditions in the two domains governing him in the two spheres of religious matters and the worldly matters and with what presuppositions can man live in each of the two positions? Having these in mind, the author has read and analyzed these questions on a limited scale by examining the views of the representatives of four complete philosophical systems, i.e. Plato and Aristotle before Christ, Augustine from the Christian era and Locke in the modern period.

First: The Socratics, War of Gods and Monsters

Plato and Aristotle are truly the first political analysts in the history of Western political thought. As to the war of Gods and monsters that the author just mentioned, it should be said that Plato because of his idealism and Aristotle because of his satisfaction with the moderate path bring politics from the heavens to the earth. In his well-known theory of the 'philosopher king', Plato drew his students' attention to the fact that the eyes in the head are not capable of guiding man and the eyes of insight in man will not be opened other than by struggling in the world and attaining knowledge through philosophy. With such a presumption, he classifies people into three distinct groups, i.e. copper, silver and golden, and goes on to claim that the eyes of insight will be for those who develop their golden talent under special circumstances or if the faculty of reasoning balances the two lustful elements of psyche that draw him towards attractions of the bodily world and the bodily desires, such as gathering wealth or fulfilling the sexual needs, and the element of diligence and will, that lead man towards bravery and nobility. According to Plato, "The lustful element has taken over the biggest element of the psyche and, naturally, is so that it has an

insatiable desire to gather wealth.” (Plato, 1983, 442a, p.219). However, if reason intends to subordinate it, a means to this end would be the presence of diligence and will. In other words, the element of diligence and will in psyche always play an “assisting” role for the reason and observes with the respect that it has for acquiring bravery and nobility, so that the charioteer, despite having a disobedient horse which is the lustful element tied to the chariot, can lead the chariot on the right path” (Plato, 1983, pp.174- 175, 410d- e, 411a).

According to Plato, the perfect form of this intellect is available with the philosopher king, who is elected from among the elite and merited guardians and leads the state. In fact, “the future leaders”, in addition to physical and military training, should spend a considerable part of their lives studying the various branches of knowledge, including calculus and geometry, so that, by developing an analytical mind in themselves, they can well prepare for entering the next phases. Otherwise, the scores to enter the next phase will not be obtained. Philosophy will be taught as the last phase, specifically after succeeding in the previous stages and only after the age of thirty because, prior to this, the youthful liveliness will prevent the application of philosophical teachings. Philosophy will help the chosen leader or leaders to engage in political discussions with a sound mind. This phase will last for five years, after which they will have the final test for a period of fifteen years during which they will develop in the inside and the eyes of insight will open. It is in this period that, with a rational view on absolute light, they will attain the rank of a philosopher. The entirety of this period will be spent in a cave (which is Plato’s analogy for the utopia). In this period, he will live like ordinary people and, it is after this period that he will be qualified to be engaged in the political matters of the utopia and its leadership (Plato, 1983, p.349-354, 537a-

540e). Naturally, on this path, “if there are women who can have the mentioned necessary and natural conditions, they will be equal to men” (Plato, 1983, p.345, 540c).

Plato believes that, “As long as philosophers do not become kings or as long as kings do not become philosophers”, the link between philosophy and kingdom or, in other words, the bond between morality and power will not be established because philosophers are neither cowards nor oppressors. They are, rather, moderate and humble and, instead of loving money and the luxuries of life, they love knowledge. Therefore, when power is put in their hands, they will expend it not for personal interest and gathering wealth but for the expedience of the state (Plato, 1983, p.262, 473d).

Plato’s philosopher king is a wise truth-teller and truth-doer who thinks but of the public good. It goes without saying that such a philosopher, who Plato, having Socrates in mind, depicts in *The Republic* as the best, bravest and wisest of Athenians, cannot be created other than in a free society. Otherwise, any search would end in drinking the hemlock. It needs to be a free society not overshadowed by oppressive thoughts. Therefore, Plato’s myth of the philosopher king flourishes and develops in a society in which such moral virtues have been achieved, and this is but a vicious cycle that makes the republic an impractical discussion limited to the theoretical domain. In other words, according to *The Republic*, Plato’s philosopher king will emerge only in the ideal utopia that Socrates explains and this utopia will not be created other than when the philosopher king is in power. The result is that, according to Plato’s findings in *The Republic*, the philosopher king can achieve the objectives set in guiding the utopia on the path of the four virtues, i.e. wisdom, bravery, moderation and justice. This situation leaves Plato’s

political theory and *The Republic* incomplete in finding the public good, i.e. saving Athens. However, despite this incompleteness, his initiative regarding the public good and distinguishing political from nonpolitical matters is unique. In fact, with this explanation, it becomes clear that the public good and the political matter are tied to each other in Plato's eye. All of Plato's work from where it discusses justice to where the philosopher king is trained contains a prominent point which is attention to politics. To Plato, a philosopher is one who can recognize the public good and avoid what is attractive to the second and third classes. Plato's philosopher king is one who interferes in all political and nonpolitical matters because he has the power to distinguish political and nonpolitical matters and, therefore, despite the common understanding of Plato as a philosopher defending a closed society, the Platonic system is open to the third classes and even women and no one is out of the ruling loop provided that they can recognize the public good.

Similarly to Plato, Aristotle begins the discussion of distinguishing the political and nonpolitical domains by dividing the psyche into two rational and non-rational (not necessarily irrational) elements. The rational structure is of a greater degree of importance and is mainly in charge. The non-rational structure leads man towards his desires and ideals and should be put under control of reason because, otherwise, it will go astray. Therefore, on the social scale, he also believed that the state, as the rational force of the utopia, is bound to educate the citizens properly so as to guide them rationally. Consequently, teaching the civil virtue, i.e. commitment to public expedience and good will be attained when social life and civil activities of citizens are guided on the rational path of life. As a result, in order to solve this problem, he opened a new chapter in *The Nicomachean Ethics* and in *The Politics*, setting out to

analyze Plato's civil society and to provide a realistic utopia (Aristotle, 2000-A, 1140-41).

In *The Republic*, Plato depicted a society in which each social group, i.e. the workers, the guardians and the philosophers would undertake a full-fledged struggle with independent duties. Plato's justice-based society would be formed only with interaction between these forces. Plato did not discuss the nature of the grouping or how people would have certain roles, except that every person would be in a certain role as determined by nature. In fact, by saying this, he left the entire mechanism of action in an unclear position.

Although the mechanism remained unknown to Aristotle as well, by setting forth "the virtue of friendship", he set forth a wise discussion with which Aristotle's utopia would not need any justice. This way, by creating the process of friendship, the work would be justly divided among the citizens. It is clear that, despite friendship in the utopia, everyone will be doing the job that is more compatible with his nature because, although there is fair participation and friendly distribution of work, the idea of utopia would be reached in practice. Consequently, Aristotle considered "the virtue of friendship" in the utopia to have the most important role in the superiority of the power of the utopia as it causes friendship that would remove all fear of the future even in teaching the methods of production to the others without any fear of hunger and would result in people implementing their roles in society in the best form.

In *The Politics*, Aristotle criticizes Plato's analogy and the ways proposed for achieving it. In fact, in order to create unity in the political community, Plato defined "duties" and "the commune life of the guardians" as a paradigm to achieve the ideal civil society, which is impossible and impractical. For example, the problem of private

property and depriving the guardians of the society from what Plato allocated in *The Republic*, although it is by nature effective, it is, according to Aristotle's knowledge of man, not possible, because, in depriving the guardians of private property, Plato believed that it was possible to keep the soul of this class of people from Satan's influence by educating them according to certain teachings and training them with certain painful physical and psychological trainings, which would ultimately result in civil virtues. It is thus clear that "justice-seeking" or the "duty" that would be attained after achieving the three virtues of wisdom, bravery and moderation would not make sense. This means that "justice-seeking" to Plato was considered both the means and the end for the civil society, which is hardly comprehensible with Aristotle's logic and the dualism that he creates in philosophy, since, by creating a mobile world, Aristotle believed that, in order to develop these virtues, all members of the society had to be taught the goals of the utopia and the unity of the political community. This theory basically differed from Plato's approach in achieving the perfect society (Aristotle, 1985, Book 2, Chs. 1-5, pp.40-78).

In Book 2 of *The Politics*, Aristotle views Plato's communal laws as having good appearances and a bad inside, asserting that "He who hears a description of these laws will accept them happily because he will assume that people, by applying these laws, will feel deeply friendly and kind to each other." while failing to note that "communal life will make all property impossible as there will, in the process of development towards unity, be a point on the one hand that if the political community goes beyond it, will lose all what it is (Aristotle, 2000, p.135, II:5:11-14, 1263b) while in communal life basically two civil virtues will be corrupted, i.e. controlling one's passions while facing women, and generosity in the use of what one has (Aristotle,

2000, p.135, II:5:10, 1263b). Therefore, Aristotle is surprised “How a philosopher like Plato, instead of teaching moral virtues and establishing a ideally perfect society by setting appropriate habits, culture and laws, has assumed that the ways that we just described- i.e. communal life- can lead the society towards happiness and salvation (Aristotle, 2000, p.135-136, II:5:15, 1263b).

We should, thus, ask what Aristotle’s criterion was to distinguish political from nonpolitical matters and to define happiness in life? It is clear that, according to Aristotle’s ontological foundations, there will be a definite distinction between Aristotle and his predecessor in understanding the substantial order and the functioning of the artificial, which flows throughout Aristotle’s thoughts. Therefore, according to Aristotle, the more rationally the artificial elements function, the closer they will be to beauty. This degree of rationality neither depends on the world of ideas nor on sophism. It is rather focused on practical efficiency. Aristotle thus brings virtues from the heavens to the earth. The virtue is, therefore, not in playing the harp well. It is rather in that “the harp player should play it well”. It goes without saying that no one will be able to get the sense of how to play it well without being trained for and using the methods of playing it (Aristotle, 2000-A, 1098a, 10-15). Then a good and happy life is in abiding by the virtue-based frames of life that men have set for themselves. Consequently, whenever these virtues are manifested “better” and “more completely”, it will be a happier life (Aristotle, 2000-A, 1098a, 10-15). What is the guarantee, then, that man is by nature “good” and always seeks to increase his happiness by doing the better things? (Aristotle, 2000-A, 1106a, 15-25) This is what Plato has expressed in *The Republic* because Plato also believed that in a justice-based society, each of the three groups, i.e. the guardians, the

workers and the philosophers should for the sake of their happiness and that of the utopia only enter into a job that they are naturally capable of. However, Aristotle revives this idea distinctly from Plato. In fact, Aristotle divides reason into identifying reason and practical reason to open the way for the replacement of “justice-based life” with “friendship among the utopians”. In other words, Aristotle criticizes Plato while believing that Plato’s absolutism for achieving pure justice deprived social man of all pleasures of private life because the theory of communal life loosened man’s individual and social mobility and ultimately resulted in stagnation of rational decision-making. In fact, with social life, love, kindness and doing good, which were the basis of happiness among all walks of life, would lose their meaning. Therefore, by creating a scheme of friendship in the utopia, Aristotle turned Plato’s mute and saddening world into a dynamic inflammable world. As a result, while Plato began the political matter by setting forth a justice-based society and making the society rational, Aristotle sought such distinction by finding a way to a likely rational order to administer the new society.

A city in the golden point

Aristotle’s utopia is a collection of human groups, i.e. families and villages, for establishing a “self-sufficient” and “happy life” (Aristotle, 2000-B, p.122, I:II:8, 1252b). The utopia is a place where human individuals are taught how to control their animal nature and passions and to live a life based on moral teachings and away from lustful passions, in a perfect state of mind and in a social way (Aristotle, 2000-B, p.123, I:II:16, 1253a). Aristotle believed that “If man is perfect, he will be the best animal and he who neither respects laws nor recognizes justice is the worst of people.” (Aristotle, 2000-B, p.123, I:II:15, 1253a)

and “he who cannot live with the others is not a member of the utopia” Therefore, although the utopia is a phenomenon that is the product of its integral components, it has a rank above the individual” (Aristotle, 2000-B, p.122-123, I:II:14, 1253a).

Thus, it can be inferred from Aristotle’s words, that the element governing the utopia is the rational element. Slaves and children are by the law of nature deprived of this element and, therefore, doomed to obey orders. On the same basis, women have to obey orders unless they show that they have a nature like that of men. Therefore, there is a certain distinction between the rulers and the obeying people, the primitive forms of which are formed in the family and as the outcome of the intercourse between women and men. “This intercourse is not intentional or volitional. It is rather motivated by nature as there is an urge in all animals and plants to reproduce themselves... and the purpose of society is for both to be safe.” (Aristotle, 2000- B, p.121, I:II:1-3, 1252a) This is the basis of formation of the first community.

A village is formed by several families coming together and the purpose it serves goes beyond fulfilling the daily needs (Aristotle, 2000-B, p.121, I:II:5, 1252b). These will be needs that a family alone cannot fulfill. It was in such a community that the first forms of exchange of goods for goods took place among villages. As “the goods needed by the people could not be carried in all cases”, money was invented. Invention of money in turn resulted in wealth gathering methods, i.e. the trading industry (Aristotle, 2000-B, p.127, I:IX: 5-9, 1257a-b). It was after this that corruption was formed in human communities because people who had managed to accumulate money in large amounts thought of protecting it. This resulted in the establishment of the primary instruments and organizations of

governments. Aristotle called these organizations the soulless and immobile body of the *republic*.

The ruling organization is one that has several important features of the political society. In the first step, each institute has to have several organized departments, each of which would follow the shared goals and values of the whole collection. The ruling organization is thus a political regime, “an organization consisting of separated and distinct departments that, while being independent, could pursue a regular interaction towards a single end.” (Aristotle, 2000-B, p.145, IV:I:10, 1289a) Such an organization clearly faces a variety of socioeconomic classes within itself, the interaction among which provides the ground for the political community. Whereas the way these groups acted in the political communities differed from each other, different political organizations would come out of different sociopolitical grounds, “the best of which is the state organization that takes the good of the public into consideration.” (Aristotle, 2000-B, p.140, III:VII:3, 1279a).

According to this and also considering the number of the rulers, Aristotle classifies governments into six political systems, each being further sub-classified into two good and bad groups. Therefore, when an individual or a small group or a large group rules with the purpose of serving the interests and expedience of the public, the ruling political system is a good one. When this government serves private interests, it will be a corrupt political system. Therefore, kingdom, aristocracy and polity are good among state organizations while tyranny, oligarchy and democracy are classified as corrupt states. A tyranny is in place when the ruler becomes corrupt. When a small group in an aristocracy deprive the political community of their wealth and put it at their own service, an oligarchy will be in place. Whenever

the poor class of the society, which is large in number, takes control of the political system, there will be democracy (Aristotle, 2000-B, p.140, III:VII:1-3, 1279a-b)

Kingdom is Aristotle's ideal form of government. In such a state, the ruler, having sources of wealth and power in his hands, will be at the service of the political community and protect the lives and property of the people. The most important characteristic of such a government is "the ruler's abidance by the laws of the utopia". Therefore, the aristocracy will stand with the kingdom because, when the king purifies himself and puts himself at the service of the public, a form of government based on aristocracy of "wealth, virtues and the free mass of the people" will be formed, which is the rule of the best of the people (Aristotle, 2000-B, p.150, IV:VIII:7, 1294a) To Aristotle, both these governments are based on justice and are ultimately good. However, they are ideal and far from reality. In fact, the real type is autocracy and oligarchy. The autocrat constantly thinks of fulfilling his own wishes and ignores the interests of the public. As the mass of the people are dissatisfied with him, he has to prepare an army to protect his government. Therefore, although autocracies exist, they are short-lived because they turn into oligarchies within a short period of time. An oligarchy is the opposite of aristocracy, differing from it in that, in the latter, "love of money" is replaced by "love of nobility". An oligarchy is a stable government and, as long as the poor have not risen against it, it will remain in place. After that, it will be the worst form of government, i.e. democracy or a government based on the views of "the meanest of the political community" (Aristotle, 2000-B, p.149, VI:V:1-3, 1292 a-b).

Having all this in mind, it becomes clear that all political systems in the world, with a little difference, are one of the two political

systems of oligarchy or democracy. The first type is the rule of the rich and the second type is the rule of the poor. In the first type, the group who has political power is small in number but wealthy while in the second type, the group is large in number but poor. Aristotle, having put aside the ideal beliefs, while linking aristocracy and democracy, consents to the rule of “the middle class” or “the republic”, names it the “polity”, and call everybody to support it (Aristotle, 2000-B, pp.149-150, IV:VIII:2, 1293b)

True happiness in life is that man should be free of all bondage and live a virtuous life, while virtue consists of moderation. It is thus understood that the best form of life is the one based on moderation and to a limit that everyone can achieve. This criterion should apply to the goodness and badness of a government and its organization because the organization of the government of every country represents its living style (Aristotle, 2000-B, p.151, IV:XI: 3, 1295a)

It thus becomes clear that polity is government organization of the moderate people, who are not greedy of each other’s property and enjoy a moderate life while, at the time of judgment, they are ready to respond to the people’s needs “reasonably and with dignity”, while being away from the violence of the wealthy class and their “crimes” as well as the “meanness and stinginess” of the poor class and many other of their attributes (Aristotle, 2000-B, p.151, IV:XI:5,1295b) The comfortable class is not ready to compel itself to comply with the laws and regulations of the utopia while the poor people, who have been deprived of many civil interests, have developed a complex over such deprivation and always seek to take revenge on the wealthy class. The more this distance is, the greater the hostility between the two classes. Therefore, the only group that can end this conflict is the middle class “because they accumulate so much wealth as to remain amenable to

reason... while being less inclined to seek reputation and ambitions.” “The polity”, having thus consisted of similar individuals, is the best type of government, on the condition that the county has the necessary aptitude to establish such a government (Aristotle, 2000-B, p.151, IV:XI: 4-5, 1295b).

2. Tension between religion and state; descent of man and his inheritors

The story of the Descent and the original sin was formed with the emergence of Christianity and promoting the Neo-Platonism in Western political thought. Perhaps Plotinus can be considered as a pioneer in mixing rationalism with Platonic idealism, yet the one who set it forth to the followers of Christianity in a stable context was Saint Augustine (354-430 AC). Saint Augustine’s *The City of God* is a thesis that draws Augustine’s departure point in drawing Neo-Platonic justice based on Christian thought, which was in opposition to pagans and was written in order to defend the validity of the Christian faith and state. In a defensive act against the pagan opponents in *The City of God*, which attributed the fall of Rome to Christianity, Augustine shows that the fall of the Roman Empire in 410 AC as a result of the attacks by the northern barbarians was not due to expansion of Christianity, but rather because of internal causes and due to misbehavior and weakness on the part of the Roman state, and that Christianity could save the Empire from vanishing. In other words, the Roman Empire had acted negligently in administrative affairs and violated the primary rights of the Roman citizens instead of creating welfare and working for the growth and exaltation of the city, which resulted in poverty, corruption and slavery. Consequently, the Germanic barbarians with no cultural background, “from across the

borders and deep inside the dark forests, came to dominate them” and to make the Roman Civilization all of a sudden vanish from the face of history, in a way that for about a millennium, it could not reproduce anything and Rome, which had turned into an unrivaled great empire after 8 centuries of wars and struggles, finally came to its knees against the friendly attitude of the “lovers of Christ (Ebenstein, 1963, p.169). Although Aristotle had beautifully figured out that, in the presence of friendship, “there will be no need to justice”, in fact in the years after Christ, devout Christians did anything but be patient and stable. However, in this epoch, luck (or ‘fortuna’ in Machiavelli’s words) came along the “art” of the Christians, bringing about a phase of theocracy for the Christian Empire. In fact, Christianity, contrary to the external understanding of the religion, did not replace the empire but rather was the product of an interval of disorder and statelessness in the Roman Empire. In other words, one can say that when the Roman Empire reached the peak of decay, the Christian state was founded based on “friendship”, and it was a state that was in the heavens and could protect the Westerners against foreigners for almost a thousand years until they could reach rational maturity again. This is the unknown gift of Christ to the West.

The City of God was written in between years 413 and 426 in 22 pages. In this book, while providing teachings on civil life and refuting paganism, Augustine shows that the fall of the Roman Empire was due to the decay of civil morals and moral corruption as well as “greed and lust” among the citizens and commanders of the Empire (Augustine, 1972, Bk.II, Ch.2 & Bk.II, ch.3). This moral decay was so that even the greedy Roman gods could not prevent it (Augustine, 1972, Bk.II, ch.4). Therefore, by resorting to the Holy Book, Augustine challenged the enemies of Christ’s religion and “Roman

Gods who called people to luxury and accumulation of wealth” (Augustine, 1972, Bk.II, ch.19), while, in support of Christianity, he asserts that, during the 800 years of domination by the Roman Empire “true justice had never been established in the society” although they were better than the northern barbarians (Augustine, 1972, Bk.II, ch.21). In fact, the strength of the Empire was the Rome’s commonwealth republics and the purposes that were reasonably and “to a certain extent” validly in place in the spirit of the republic (Augustine, 1972, Bk.II, ch.21, & Bk.XIX, ch. 24). It is clear that Augustine never admitted of the presence of justice in the absence of Christianity, always emphasizing that true justice becomes meaningful when it is for all people and that justice will not appear unless Christ emerges again to establish his state (Augustine, 1972, Bk. II, ch.21). Then, what was the key to the survival and endurance of the republic?

As an answer to the question of the effectiveness of the Empire, Augustine says that the Roman governors believed that “The purpose of the state should be based on the wish of the people.”, even if it ultimately does not result in “true faith” or “good conduct”. In fact, the best policy for the Roman governors was formed when it resulted in the unity of the government. Therefore, although Augustine’s heavenly justice was not established on the earth, but the “agreed-upon justice” could result in unity of the government and glory of the Empire (Augustine, 1972, Bk.XIX, ch.24).

Like Plato, Augustine considers the psyche to be a combination of the three forces of reason, lust and anger. He thinks of these as representing the three human types of governor, warrior and producer. Ultimately, however, he provides a definition of justice that can be interpreted within the framework of “connecting man to God” and resulting from the two forces of “good” and “bad”. Then, if the

relations between people are acceptable to God, they have acted according to justice and this can be achieved only if all people have lived in psychologically and physically perfect conditions [1] (Ebenstein, 1963, p.170). Clearly, with such an interpretation, Augustine's justice is defined in mere inequality among people because the basic conflict between good and bad not only exists in the human society but basically in each individual alone as well. It is this greatness of individuals and the human community that seeks a justice-centered interpretation for understanding itself despite the existence of injustice. According to Augustine, justice is the basis of the utopia and "If the governor sets it aside, his government will amount to nothing other than theft and plunder" (Ebenstein, 1963, p.171).

The heavenly city and the earthly city

Augustine's story begins with the descent and exile of Adam from paradise and forming an ignorant and unjust life on earth. When Adam and Eve, the first people created by God, lost control of their reason and disobey God under Satan's temptation, the concept of sin became meaningful for the first time in the Creation and humankind was convicted to spend life in poverty, hardship and defect till the end. In fact, man's awareness of the fact that he can refuse to be God's slave and can disobey His orders made his wisdom be overshadowed by ignorance and darkness in a way that he lost the necessary balance to serve God and stay in paradise. The first outcome of such a defect was that the clever intelligence, which had lost the power to account for true profit and true loss, replaced his reason this put him in eternal loss. Therefore, man, who comprehended all his needs with his spiritual will, had now lost the power to recognize his own profit and loss. Man's

ignorance and darkness after the Descent set the force of lust and war against reason. This conflict was the beginning of man's "struggle" for "jihad" and reconstructing his defect and returning to the paradise.

Adam was thus punished so that he should turn a pure desert into an inhabitable area in order to achieve salvation and to use the countless blessings of the heavens, which were easily accessible to him. God had ordered him to "populate" the earth and Adam did so. He formed a family and decided to plow to get food and to earn food for himself and for his family with hard work. This was the only way towards salvation.

And God blessed them and told them to cultivate the land and to reproduce and to populate it again to gain control of it and to dominate fish in the sea, birds in the sky and all things that move on the earth (*Holy Bible*, Genesis, 28).

God the merciful, who had exiled man from paradise due to his inability, decided to give a share of his endless sea to man so that the doors of the heavens would be opened to him by undergoing some hardship and pain. Therefore, the selected ones will go to the paradise and live a happy life and whomever He wishes, He will select (Augustine, 1972, Bk. III, Ch.3) and the church will be the place for the earthly and sinful selected of God, those sinful people who want to migrate to the "heavenly city" by struggling to purify their soul.

Augustine says that, if man wishes to go back to the heavens and become immortal in the City of God, he has to begin his progress and perfection from a place close to God's kingdom. The closest place for migration and moving towards perfection is where Augustine, in a mysterious way, means it is the "church", a place that can guide man towards perfection. The "church" as the representative and replacement of the heavenly city, calls forth all people to go along the

same axis and in the same direction. This will unite people despite their difference of opinion or personal choices, to come together at the service of God, and to live a peaceful life forever, although the word “church” is never explicitly mentioned (Ebenstein, 1963, p.171).

The heavenly city is where people work only for God’s greatness and that of his kingdom. The earthly city is where man replaces God. “In the heavenly city, everything other than God is inferior and humble and the love of God has made everything serve God. However, in the earthly city, man’s love of himself replaces man’s love of God.” (Augustine, 1972, Bk. XIV, ch.28). Because of this, worldly desires do not subside and, while preserving “love of oneself”, man constantly thinks of gaining superiority over the others. In the city of God, however, all listen to God’s will and command, Who is the source of good and nothing but good originates from Him (Augustine, 1972, Bk. XIV, ch.28). To Augustine, the best achievement of such a situation, i.e. living in God’s city, is the establishment of peace and security and ultimately true justice for the benefit of the citizens of the city where everyone is doing their own job (Augustine, 1972, Bk. XIX, ch.14).

Therefore, if peace throughout the world is the ultimate goal of governments around the world, one should enquire about the functioning and the means needed to expand the common idea. Augustine’s view in this respect is the creation of order and proportion among members. He elaborates on this by an analogy of the relationship between husband and wife, child and parents, slave and master, believing that each of these people should examine the interaction among the members and, on a basis of friendship, rather than crime and punishment, make judgments among them (Augustine, 1972, Bk. XIX. ch.14).

However, as people are not infallible, and for judgments among members of the human community we do not have a criterion other than human observations which are amenable to error, one would then ask how one can make definite judgments to punish people or possibly execute them. Augustine inevitably defines his judicial standard based on “commitment and conscience of the citizens” of the utopia because the citizens are so alert that they will not expose their society to corruption for releasing a wrongdoing individual from punishment because, by violating the conscience, there will no more be room for salvation and, beyond this, if there is no way for the judge to reach the truth other than by beating and even torturing an innocent or a guilty person, he will have no other choice because, otherwise, his deed might result in a greater evil, i.e. “homicide”. Therefore, the judge has to do injustice anyways and, unwillingly, “should torture an innocent person to discover the truth or would put him to death because of lack of knowledge” (Augustine, 1972, Bk. XIX. ch.6).

In order to solve this problem and to avoid greater mistakes, Augustine resorts to the judicial system and, in line with expansion of “friendship”, calls the government representatives to correct the judicial system. It is clear that the ideal form for Augustine is to determine that the government’s expedience would be to adopt Christian methods and the teachings of Christ, and that, if a criminal is to be punished, what would be better than God’s criteria and who can implement the orders of the Divine Legislator better than Christ? In this case, even if there is a mistake, it will be God rather than the judge or the leaders of the earthly city who will be responsible, and He is the one who should award us. This was an ideal inference in order to return order to and to establish security in the Empire, and is the beginning of the religion’s argument to take political power.

The World City

Although Augustine's earthly city has been influenced by Plato, yet the civil virtues in the city do not hold such a status as it is desirable to Plato because, to Plato, civil virtues open the way to reach a higher good and, thus, similarly to laws of the utopia, they are well respected. The balance in mixing these virtues and their interactions in the utopia makes it possible for everyone to carry out the work that is more compatible to his nature. As the spirit of the utopia is in a balanced situation, all affairs function appropriately and in compatibility with the spirit of the utopia and, consequently, the utopia guides its leaders towards a rational order. Although this interaction is likable to Augustine, there is still a long way to serve God and to attain salvation.

According to Augustine, creating a balance in the various components of the psyche cannot necessarily guide man to civil virtues because "practicing justice" differs widely with what he considers to be serving God (Augustine, 1972, Bk.XIX. ch.25). God's servants find peace in humility, modesty and poverty and constantly seek God's forgiveness and blessing. God will forgive if He so chooses and His justice is what He wants. However, in Plato's philosophy, justice is attained by achieving virtues while the resulting pleasure is a virtue in itself. Therefore, there are basically two different approaches in how to welcome the corporeal world that is before us. An aspect relates to ascetic living in the world and suffering poverty and hardship for otherworldly salvation and an aspect is dedicated to a justice-seeking life for development of civil society and moving towards the "archetype" or "the higher good". It is clear that, in the first case, the utopia does not provide an appropriate ground for man's material development.

Sinful man residing in the earthly city, even if he is a true Christian believer, will not see the face of “absolute peace”. He is too weak to comprehend happiness in life. True justice and happiness are hidden in a superior place in the heavenly city, where he has undertaken hardship to comprehend it. Therefore, “ultimate peace” occurs in circumstances “freed from morals” because, in a society where everyone is committed to morals, there is no room for poverty and hardship. Consequently, there should be poverty for asceticism to make sense (Augustine, 1972, Bk. XIX. ch. 27).

Nevertheless, considering poverty and man’s inability to comprehend Platonic truths and the archetypal world, Augustine has ignored the role of rulers in the administration of society because he has cleverly replaced wise people with true Christians. In other words, like Plato, Augustine believes that there is only a certain group of people who can undertake the role of rulers, yet they seriously differ on who this small group might be. To Augustine, the wisest people are the true followers of Christianity, people whose practice defines justice and, in the presence of whom, there is no need to justice. If these do not head the ruling powers, any order will be unjust (Augustine, 1972, Bk. IV, ch.4).

Nevertheless, one cannot hide the fact that the earthly city, despite all its shortcomings, is better than nothing because, without it, there will be constant war between people and chaos will prevail everywhere and such disorder will not be favorable to the promoters of Christianity. According to Augustine, the followers of Christianity are like “immigrants of an alien land” who need peace for establishment of God’s kingdom (Augustine, 1972, Bk. XIX, ch.17). The earthly city, although it is not based on the love of God, it still promises a backing of Christ’s teachings and establishment of a

peaceful life with Christians for creating a stable utopia. In other words, Augustine believes that, in view of the turbulent period of his own life, Christianity can provide the moral foundations of the state for establishing peace and security in the “broken empire” (Augustine, 1972, Bk. XIX, ch.17).

It thus becomes clear that Augustine very cleverly and creatively intends to regularize the bond of religion and state, which had been sanctioned in 310 AD, without creating any sensitivity because, the grandeur and power of the past could be revived only in light of an earthly city on the condition that virtues of Christianity be put in the worn-out body of the earthly city and internal hostilities be replaced by brotherly Christian peace in the “utopia”. Although such peace was far away from true justice, it could still save man from more sins and provide the ground for migrating to the heavenly city. All these developments were manifestations of religion and constitute a legacy that, despite the dark pictures depicted by Enlightenment thinkers, is one of the greatest intellectual and scientific developments in the history of humankind.

3. Dialog of religion and state; earthly legacy

The dialog of religion and state can be considered the great legacy and product of the old challenge of church and kingdom for dividing the two realms of religion and politics in the West. It is beyond this discussion to explain the conflict between the two. However, what happened simply resulted in a constant coalition in the division of the two realms between the two institutions in order to promote the institutionalized power and reproduction of the concept of public expedience. This is reflected in the political thoughts of John Locke, the 17th-century British philosopher and politician.

Locke's discussions in the coalition of the two realms are formed in two well-known books of his, i.e. *Letters Concerning Toleration* and *Two Treatises of Government*. In these two books, Locke criticizes the concept of human slavery, which had been taken for granted in the Ecclesiastical works and calls Christians to establish a constitutional state based on social contract, in which the role of voters overtake the rulers in the two realms of religion and state. In other words, he replaces the "royal stick" with the "shovel" that he gives to Adam's children (Locke, 1997, 44, p.172). In his theoretical discussions, he refers to early Christian tradition to introduce Christ as the king of peace while asserting, on the conflicts between the power-ambitious followers of Christ:

"Whoever is eager for God's kingdom and thinks that he should fight for its expansion should first of all carefully and cautiously consider eliminating his own sins before entering into war with other groups and factions. Therefore, if someone (Christ's followers) seek revenge on their ideological opponents and do injustice to them, he has severely exposed himself to sin and moral corruption; these sins and corruptions will be done in the name of Christianity; even if he has said nonsense in favor of and promoted the church, because he has clearly [and in practice] shown that he has fought for a kingdom other than God's" (Locke, 1968, p.63).

Based on this and according to the results of a religious autopsy and study of "the true religion", Locke opened up a new discussion on political philosophy and separating the role "religious act" from "political act" and on determining the legal frontiers of church as God's house and the legal frontiers of the public, claiming that "As long as the legal status of these borders (God's right and the people's right) is not clarified, politico-religious tensions among those who

fight for the afterlife with one hand and for the world, peace and security with the other hand will not end.” (Locke, 1968, p.65)

In his ontological discussion, Locke, as depicted by Ingrid Creppell, shows that man’s two-dimensional character, i.e. the spiritual and the corporeal, has led him to become a two-dimensional religious and political being. In other words, a reflection on and a precise look at pseudo-paradoxical concepts such as “church and state”, “inside and outside”, “subjective and objective”, “special and general” and the other dichotomies of our social system show that religion and politics act in society like man’s soul and body, being indistinguishable and at the same time having to be distinguished. In other words, in its holistic outlook on the Being, religion claims to be guiding based on human integrity and individuality. However, politics, with its experimental outlook, claims an order that would ultimately be manifested collectively and according to “public agreements”. Therefore, based on Locke’s distinction between the two domains, the society’s developmental motion is nothing but an interaction of the opposites that can be attributed to man’s individualized spirit and his compulsory presence in the utopia [2].

It thus becomes clear that religion’s method differs substantially from that of politics- which has come to existence by creating domination. In other words, religion functions internally and without coercion while politics functions externally and by use of force. Indeed, use of force can be direct or indirect. However, it differs by nature from what religion applies, while the end in politics merely depends on the experimental findings of the natural world and the corporeal affairs (Locke, 1968, pp.91-101). Locke was aware that, compared to politics, religion originates from a more primitive beginning and follows up a more ultimate end; being an organic integrated whole that, damage to

any of its elements, may jeopardize the entire system, while politics is merely an experimental look at the system of the being that has no beginning or end. Consequently, damage to the system is proportionately simpler and easier to be compensated. In addition, the experimental outlook on the being is capable of achieving a minimum ideal, which is also the wish of the church (Locke, 1968, pp.95-99). Therefore, where religion rules, there is no need to politics, yet, as true religion cannot be in place other than with infallible judgments, then it would be better for one to suffice to the experimental rule of politics and the “agreements” that are, in Locke’s words, non-ideological or “non-personal”, so as to end all fallible judgments based on personal values (Locke, 1968, pp.69-75, 95).

With these words, while giving absolute internal power to the church, Locke prevents any form of ecclesiastical domination over the people. The church is entitled to expel from its community any of its members who violates the laws of the religious community, but cannot deprive him of his civil rights and activities (Locke, 1968, p.79). Rather, all the human or living rights and privileges of the individual will still be protected, without any violence or damage to be caused to it by “any person”, be it a Christian or a non-Christian. “As a human being, he will still enjoy all his human and civil rights.” (Locke, 1968, p.79) On the other hand, political authorities should think of the physical aspect of social life without at all interfering with religious affairs or the mutual relations between man and God, leaving all religious affairs to church authorities. Here, Locke has taken one step further and even given the responsibility of policies of toleration to church authorities because the followers of church follow the church. Therefore, in order to avoid violence, it is only the church that can read out to them the teachings of toleration and difference of the

boundaries of church and state (Locke, 1968, pp.85-91). The “agreements” that are acquired for certain unchangeable transcendental aspects of two origins and two ends, with two different methods of religious laws and the ideal philosophy of politics consist of one being for entering the paradise and the other for domination over the earth. Locke has nowhere even mentioned who will be placed where. However, it is quite clear that, besides institutionalizing the politico-religious system, he set out to show that religion as an institution has a function that differs and is independent from politics and that confusing the two and inattention to the dimensions and needs of the two will mislead and destroy people. Accordingly, any one, with whatever knowledge they have, when entering politics, should avoid using their domination to guide people towards the paradise (Locke, 1968, pp.91-101). Clearly Locke here discusses the inferior “fallible” human being who has set aside the holistic outlook of religion and descended to the corporeal atomistic world of politics.

Nevertheless, one can criticize the major claim by Locke that, if religion goes out of the supremacist arena of politics, the same non-ideological group, who had gone beyond religion’s holistic outlook and moved towards the experimental atomistic corporeal world of politics, is likely to gradually expand its domination, as there is no guarantee that, when material power is in possession of a certain group, the same group would not gradually impose its epistemological views and values on other groups. In other words, based on Creppell’s analysis, it is likely at any moment that one of them may disturb the balance between society’s soul and body and dominate the other and threaten its existence. To clarify the discussion, one can get help from another pseudo paradox which Manheim terms ideology and utopia. In his discussion, while classically separating these two concepts,

Manheim has shown that neither ideology nor utopia is ever empty of the other concept [3]. In other words, as concepts always bear a certain value, politics at any level will be accompanied by the epistemological values of its enforcers [4] while in Locke's tolerant system, he meant, firstly, to describe the main duties of church to guide religious ideologists towards sketching the religious ideals and the Garden of Eden. Secondly, he meant to experimentalize the ruling system and eliminate values from the role of politics, setting forth "agreed-upon" and "customary" politics before the adversaries, in order to save Britain from its fall. However, as according to Manheim the non-ideological ideals and the values resulting from ideological views are two sides of the same coin, Locke's separation of religious and political thought is a utopian distinction that is unrealistic and based on his personal values. This is a valid point but, by referring to the epistemological methods of Locke and his approaches in collecting and judging, one would find out that Locke did not consider his position as ultimate either. In fact, he adopted this approach only because of man's inability to know the entire Being and in order to reduce the coefficient of error [5]. Besides, history has shown that, whenever the church was besides the throne rather than being directly in power, both religion as well as politics went the right way (Locke, 1968, pp.97-99).

In order to fix this defect and remove the church's domination by force, Locke sketches the church's legal status and its legal relationship with the political system. Locke's legal discussions in *Letters Concerning Toleration* and *Two Treatises of Government* are more elaborate than any of his other works. Locke sets forth this part of his discussions by providing a more orderly classification, yet it is quite clear that, in practice, he intends to deal with the division of

responsibilities among church authorities and political authorities and outlining the legal status of their interference and describing their practical limitations. He first makes a distinction between rituals and practical judgments (Locke, 1968, pp.101-103) in order to avoid any inconsistent statements, and then sets forth the issue of “common rule” to block and condition much of the practical etiquette of the church (Locke, 1968, pp.111-121). In his view, churches, whether they are national or free, are free and independent communities created for worshipping God and saving man’s soul, and political authorities should tolerate them and avoid any intervention in their rituals and practice by resorting to law, even if their practice seems to be blasphemous (Locke, 1968, pp.103, 109-115) although they should not violate the law (Locke, 1968, p.85). To Locke, everything, even practical issues, are inferior to “civil law” and the resulting “agreed-upon laws” unless they are in the individual realm of man and God, i.e. worshipping, where fulfilling the duties does not violate the rights of other people (Locke, 1968, pp.123-125). He asserts that “Neither individuals, nor churches, nor even the common rule, has the right to violate the civil [and legal] rights [of individuals]” (Locke, 1968, p.85). Here, by quoting the Holy Book, Locke takes a two-edged sword that at the same time criticizes the church as well as the monarchy. He puts the “agreed-upon” and ultimately individualized position on top of politics. Quoting the Holy Book, he asserts, “For where two or three have gathered together in my name, I am there in their midst.” (Holy Bible, Matthew, xviii, 20). It is clear that Locke, by clarifying the whole of religion in the entirety of individuals, puts the individual at the peak of integrity and respects his soul so much that even the church cannot object to it because, firstly, he leaves people free in their practical affairs and, secondly, by denying human

domination, there will remain nobody to be revered other than God (Brandt, 1983, pp.27-33). This is the ultimate compromise between religion and state in order to end tensions and to found a customary government based on the customary religious and political practice within the utopia, which is based on agreements [6].

Conclusion

It seems that, in the interaction of religion and state and defining domains of tension between the two, Western thought is more concerned with political secularism by separating political matters from other domains rather than with religious secularism by desanctifying religion. In other words, a study of the course of political thought in the West and its relationship with religion shows that Western politics, at least since the fall of the Roman Empire, always moved forward with political thought and in a tight relationship with it. It can thus be said that, other than the Renaissance, which is the period that can be mentioned as the period of vacuum of political thought because of transition from tradition to modernity, there has always been a firm logical relationship between religious rationalism and political rationalism.

This article attempted to re-read Plato and Aristotle in order to show that, even before Christ, this interaction was in place by relying on wisdom and philosophy of the gods, which is a necessity that is apparently deemed as an integral part of man's social life, and has at times occurred as mythology or been inspired by philosophical intellect and at other times through divine prophets. Consequently, monarchy and religious morals have been two brothers side by side. It does not matter who the king is. What matters is that monarchy will be inherited by the one who can establish such a relationship between his

affairs and the prophets of religious thought [7]. In fact, what appears here as a modern problem, is the borderline between political thought and religious thought. Therefore, the communication itself is not what matters here. What does matter is determining the borders, in the sense how much we focus political matters on the world and how much we put them at the service of values focused on Platonic intellect or Locke's liberalist Christianity. Locke can be considered as the greater discoverer of this in the modern era. This seems to be an important problem in political philosophy not only in countries known to have religious thought but basically in all countries that claim to have a cosmopolitan outlook. In conclusion, one can state that religion and state have throughout history of humankind accompanied each other inevitably. Yet, philosophizing of thought and pragmatism of politics, which occurred gradually up to this era, further opened the way for political secularism, to the extent that political matter becomes increasing larger. That religious secularism differs from political secularism is an attempt undertaken by this article. However, how this expansion should occur and be monitored is what makes it necessary to have politics as a branch of knowledge and to elaborating on it.

NOTES

1. Also Cf. Enāyat, Hamid. *Western Political Philosophy Foundation, from Heraclitus to Hobbes* (Tehran: Tehran University Press. 1977). p.122.
2. See Creppell, Ingrid. 1996. *Political Theory* journal.
3. See Manheim, Karl. 1961. *Ideology & Utopia*.
4. See Goodin, Robert E. & Andrew Reeve. 1997; also Graumann, Carl, *Social Behavior Theory* journal
5. See Andrew Mason, 198. Locke newsletter.
6. The discussion of utopia and how to monitor the world order is one of the most important problems for Locke in the practice of toleration and justice

in the world, which create many contradictions for his political thought. See Shariat, Farshād. 2001. *John Locke & the Thought of Freedom*.

7. This approach reminds one of the way ancient Iranians thought, as set forth in the following lines of poetry by Ferdowsi, in which religion and politics are called twin brothers:

If the king praises the religion,
Kingdom and religion will become brothers
Neither religion can survive without the throne,
Nor without religion can kingdom be in place.
The two foundations are intertwined,
Brought up and set forth before wisdom.
Religion and kingdom are so to each other,
As if they were in the same tent.
If the king protects the religion,
Then you should just call them brothers.
See Rajāyi, 1993, p.57.

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