

Ahlak ile Ekonomik Kalkınma-Güç Arasındaki Uçurumu İş Etiği ve Siyaset Etiği Kapatabilir mi?

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Öz

İnsanların yaşamları boyunca ekonomik ve siyasi güç peşinde koşmasının getirdiği sorunları, ekonomi ve siyaset alanındaki problemleri iş etiği ve siyaset etiği çözebilir mi? Bu soru etrafında kurguladığımız bu makale temel olarak insanın iki önemli tecrübe alanı olan ekonomi ve siyasette karşılaşılan etik ihlaller ve sorunlar ile bunları önlemeye yönelik geliştirilen etik vurguların bir tahlilini sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Ekonomide çalışma, iş yapma, ticaret ve salt kâr peşinde koşma ve bunların kendi başına amaç olarak benimsenmesi toplumda ve iş hayatında çok çeşitli etik sorunlar ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Bu sorunların çözümüne yönelik iş etiğinin bazı tavsiyeleri söz konusu olmuştur. Diğer yandan siyasette de genel ahlakın göz ardı edilebileceği; gerektiğinde yalan söylenebileceği; siyasi hedeflere götüren her yolun meşru sayılabileceği gibi anlayışların yol açtığı sorunlar da karşımızda durmaktadır. Bu makale ekonomi ve siyaset alanındaki ahlaki ihlallerin ve problemlerin iş etiği ve siyaset etiği ile tam olarak çözülmesinin mümkün olmayacağını savunmaktadır. Çünkü bu sorunların temelinde yatan ahlak anlayışı / etik teori ve insan anlayışı sorunludur. 17. Yüzyıldan itibaren geliştirilen, İngilizce konuşan ülkelerin ahlak felsefesi olan, Bentham ve Mill tarafından formüle edilen ve haz temelinde toplumun genel yararını dikkate alan Utilitarianizm toplumsal çıkarı ve hazzı esas kabul etmesi nedeniyle ahlakın belkemiği olan erdemleri asıl görmeyen bir anlayıştır. Yine insanı hırs ve egoizm temelli bir varlık olarak gören, insanı insanın kurdu olarak telakki eden, büyük balığın küçük balığı yuttuğu mottosuna dayanan insan anlayışı ahlakın karakteristiğini oluşturan altruismi dışlayan bir insan anlayışıdır. Ekonomi ve siyaset alanındaki etik sorunları esastan çözmek istiyorsak erdemleri ve altruismi asıl gören bir yaklaşıma ihtiyacımız var demektir. Makalede Aristoteles ve İslam filozoflarının erdem anlayışının, ekonomi ve siyaset alanındaki problemlerin çözümünde esas alınması gerektiği vurgusu ortaya konulmuştur. Ekonomi ve siyaset alanında da söz konusu olan mal-mülk, servet ve makam-mevki gibi unsurların amaç değil araç değere sahip olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Makalemiz sorun odaklı olup, yer yer sistematik analiz içeren, derleme bir makaledir. Çalışmamız, ekonomik ve siyasal hayatın erdem etiği perspektifinden şekillendirilmesi düşüncesi üzerine tasarlanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Ahlak Felsefesi; İş Etiği; Ekonomi; Siyasi Güç/İktidar; Siyaset Etiği; Utilitarianizm

Öne Çıkanlar

- İş etiği ve Siyaset etiği toplumda karşılaşılan iş ve siyasetle ilgili sorunları çözmeye kendi başlarına yeterli olamamaktadır.
- İş etiği ve Siyaset etiği ekonomi ve siyasette karşılaşılan etik sorunları çözmeye yönelik etik ilkeler önermektedir.
- Bunların temelinde yatan ahlak anlayışı ve insan tasavvuru düzeltilmeden sorunların kalıcı çözümlerine ulaşılamayacaktır.
- Toplumsal çıkarı ve hazzı temel alan Utilitarian ahlak anlayışı erdemi asıl görmemesi açısından, hırsı, bencilliği ve açgözlülüğü esas alan insan anlayışı ise altruismi dışlaması nedeniyle etik açıdan sorunludur.
- Makalede siyaset ve ekonomi alanıyla ve bunların temeli olan ahlak ve insan anlayışı konusunda toplumsal çıkar ve haz temelli değil de erdemi ve altruismi esas alan bir yaklaşım önerilmektedir.

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Can Business Ethics and Political Ethics Close/Narrow the Gap Between Morality and Economic Development-Power?

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Abstract

Can business ethics and political ethics solve the problems in business and politics caused by people's lifelong pursuit of economic and political power throughout their lives? This study, which we have built around this question, basically aims to present an analysis of the ethical violations and problems encountered in business and politics, two important areas of human experience, and the ethical emphasis developed to prevent them. In business; working, doing business, trading and pursuing pure profit and taking these as ends in themselves raise a wide variety of ethical problems in society and business life. There have been some recommendations of business ethics to solve these problems. In politics, on the other hand, we also face problems caused by the notion that public morality can be ignored, lies can be told when necessary, and any path that leads to political goals can be considered legitimate. This article argues that it is not possible to fully solve moral violations and problems in the fields of economy and politics with business ethics and political ethics. This is because the understanding of morality / ethics and human understanding underlies these problems is problematic. Utilitarianism, which was developed in the 17th century and is the moral philosophy of the English-speaking world, was formulated by Bentham and Mill and takes into account the general benefit of society on the basis of pleasure. It is an approach that does not see virtues, which are the backbone of morality, as essential because it accepts social interest and pleasure as the basis. Again, an understanding of humanity that sees people as beings with pure ambition and egoism, such idea that regards man is a wolf to man, and that is based on the motto that big fish eats the little, is an understanding of humanity that excludes the altruism, which is characteristic of morality. If we want to fundamentally solve ethical problems in the fields of economics and politics, we need an approach that considers virtues and altruism as essential. This study emphasizes that the understanding of virtue of Aristotle and Islamic philosophers should be taken as a basis in solving problems in the field of economics and politics. It concludes that elements such as property, wealth and position, which are also at stake in the fields of economy and politics, have instrumental rather than values. Our article is a problem-oriented, partly systematic analysis, compilation article. Our study is based on the idea of shaping economic and political life from the perspective of virtue ethics.

Keywords

Moral Philosophy; Business Ethics; Economy; Political Power/Ruler; Political Ethics, Utilitarianism

Highlights

- Business ethics and political ethics alone are not sufficient to solve the economic and political problems that arise in society.
- Business ethics and political ethics propose ethical principles to solve ethical problems encountered in economy and politics.
- Lasting solutions to these problems will not be achieved unless the underlying moral understanding and human misconceptions are corrected.
- Utilitarian morality, which is based on social interest and pleasure, is ethically problematic because it does not see virtue as essential, and the human understanding, which is based on ambition, selfishness and greed, is ethically problematic because it excludes altruism.
- The article proposes an approach based on virtue and altruism, rather than social interest and pleasure, regarding to the fields of politics and economics and the morality and human understanding that underpin them.

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Introduction

Today's people seem to lead their lives by standing on their own feet and gaining independence, on the one hand, and by pursuing a certain power and influence not just economically but also in many of the experience areas of daily life on the other. In this turmoil, he spends his days in struggles to come to the point of doing a certain job competently and professionally, and to earn an income above the level of his own. The individual embarking on this path of life, since the family home, just like other members of the society; he calls and label a profession with plenty of money and social security "a good job", the school that will bring it "a good school" or "a good university", and the education that prepares it "good education". In this process, he gains the experience (practice) of being met or not met with good people; he expresses his satisfaction with good people, and his dissatisfaction and his complaints with those who are not. However, the term "good" used on the way to plenty of money and social security in his life adventure, and the "good" character in the word "good person" does not have the same content and meaning. In the first mentioned, the content of the qualification of leads us to the elements such as money, property, comfort, and prestige, while in the qualification of a good person, it rises to values and virtues such as honesty, fairness, justice, truthfulness, keeping promises, establishing friendships without taking advantage of profit. In the current situation, the individual sees it as good to do the necessary things for the welfare of his life but expects from others the attitudes implied by the content of the qualification of a good person. This is common with its mostly negative version. In other words, while everyone follows the first type in their own life, they expect the characteristics of good human content from the other person and complain about the deficiency of it in this regard. While the content of the characterization of the good person is mainly related to the field of moral values and virtues, the other things as being material elements are morally instrumental. As such, moral values and virtues are not included in the flow of life since they are not followed as a process of being a good person, even if it is expected from others. However, everyone complains about the negativities caused by their absence. In this way, morality is ignored in the life adventure of man. At this point, business ethics and morality develop some understandings that guide the individual's attitude towards work environment and aim to correct the negativities in this regard.

Now our question is: Can these negativities be corrected by simply introducing certain principles such as honesty, justice, respect, responsibility, compliance with the rules into the business life of a person who has created his lifestyle by aiming at metarial elements? Keeping this question in mind, we first need to outline the understandings that dominate the business attitude and look at the solutions brought to them from the perspective of business ethics. For this purpose, we will examine whether the relationship between morality and economics can be resolved with approaches to business ethics and political theories developed based on various philosophical understandings.

When we look at the business world, we are faced with the question of which moral and political theories should be applied to the problems that arise. Answers to this problem have been given through business ethics and political theories on the one hand, and virtue ethics on the other. In business ethics and political ethics, it is argued that the institutional

arrangements existing in society determine the fairness and honesty of the individual. In virtue ethics, on the other hand, the focus is on the responsibilities of individuals as employees or employers towards the community they live in. The main purpose of our article is to show that virtue ethics offers a more appropriate moral perspective for economic activities.

How is the relationship between moral theory and economic problems established? In this discussion, the nature of ethical understandings in business ethics and political ethics will be closely examined. The relationship between virtues and political views will be pointed out at a conceptual level.¹

Another important point is that it is clear that the generally valid ethical principles determined especially in business ethics can be interpreted differently and cause different decisions in economic activities if individuals working in the sector adopt one of the Utilitarian or Kantian moral understandings. These theories therefore encourage a kind of relativism in the field of economics. In business ethics and political ethics, what is important is not the characters of people, but the regulations related to the free market and competitive conditions. These regulations may be morally acceptable and may even target some basic activities for the benefit of the individual and society. However, it is still not very important for employees in large companies to have personal integrity, virtuous character and good judgment within the framework of these principles.

For this very reason, virtue ethicists are not satisfied with applied ethical models such as business ethics and political ethics in solving moral problems. According to the applied ethics model, moral problems are solved at the level of moral theory. Moral principles derived from these moral theories are presented as a specific moral rule used to justify a judgment in a particular situation. Virtue ethicists state that this means trying to adapt the principles to current practice. Still, these principles become useless in the face of the complexity and difficulty of a particular situation. According to Aristotle and Islamic philosophers, since humans are essentially political beings, business ethics is very closely related to politics. Politics embodies goodness. The state is responsible for ensuring that citizens live a happy and good life. Similarly, a manager or boss of a company, as a person who has practical wisdom and makes decisions about other people, must ensure that his company, employees and stakeholders live a good and happy life. From this perspective, a company is also a political unit. Therefore, there is a very close relationship between the community and virtuous life. A virtuous action cannot be defined independently of the situation in which the virtue is realized.

Virtuous ethics requires both knowledge of the good and practical reasoning. According to this perspective, moral judgment does not depend primarily on the knowledge of a moral principle and then on the application of this knowledge. On the contrary, understanding and moral judgment only emerge together with the situation and principle in which the action will be applied. It may not be possible to establish a very clear and definite law on the issues to be thought about and decided. In this respect, it can be said that practical wisdom is superior and more valuable than the law. Nevertheless, this does not mean ignoring state

¹ To compare the relationship between virtue ethics and business ethics look: Robert C.Solomon, *Ethics and Excellence: Cooperation and Integrity in Business*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

laws and not complying with them. Yet, a rule cannot tell what a citizen should decide to be a just or courageous person. In fact, rules can be used to aid thinking by providing a fixed and clear framework for the process of observation and judgment. Virtue ethics attempts to base ethics on character rather than rules.

To sum up, rules can be used as a tool when time is short or when a person does not trust his own judgment. Conversely, rules alone are not sufficient for thinking and practical wisdom. For example, if we define justice as equal treatment of individuals and make it a principle, we cannot draw satisfactory conclusions from this principle. Because this principle does not seem to work in special cases. When we consider that people with physical disabilities should benefit more from social resources, this principle of justice does not work. Therefore, there must be a compromise and harmony between virtues and economics and politics in the understanding of happiness. Advocates of virtue ethics generally consider the personal character perspective to be more fundamental than action-oriented theories. According to them, a virtuous person can successfully apply a principle-based ethics.

This article aims to emphasize the close and tight relationship that Aristotle established between ethics and politics and its relevance to economic activities. It is assumed that in a modern society, the ethical and political situation of a corporate executive and his employees can be considered along the same lines as the situation of citizens living in a state. Human life requires making decisions and applying practical wisdom in matters concerning the well-being of other people.²

While presenting the perspective of virtue ethics, Aristotle's "Nicomachean Ethics", which is accepted as the first ethical analysis book, was taken as a basis. In addition, the works of Second Teacher Al-Farabi, "Selected Aphorisms" (Fusulül Medeni) and "Attainment of Happiness" or "Tahsil" (Mutluluğun Kazanılması), were used. In the discussion of utilitarian moral theory, especially Bentham's "An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislations" and Mill's "Utilitarianism" were taken into consideration. In showing the problems of the criticized human understanding, works such as Hobbes' "Leviathan" and Machiavelli's "Prince" are among our sources. In the discussion of the problems mentioned above, relevant articles were used. In the practical examination of the problems, works of thinkers such as Sartre, R. C. Solomon and P. Singer were used.

Our study, which examines ethical problems in economic and political areas with the perspective of virtue and includes systematic analyses, is a compilation article.

1. Developments in Business Ethics and Transformations in Attitudes towards Business

It seems that in the last couple of centuries, economy and trade have started to be seen as a value on their own, work and production have been exalted and the economy has become the central institution of the society. In this regard, besides the Protestant

² Stephen Maguire, "Business Ethics: A Compromise Between Politics and Virtue", *Journal of Business Ethics* 16 (1997), 1411-1418.; David Keyt, "Distributive Justice in Aristotle's Ethics and Politics", *Topoi*. 4 (1985), 23-45.; J. Thomas Whetstone, "How Virtue Fits Within Business Ethics", *Journal of Business Ethics* 33 (2001), 101-114.; Richard Kraut, "Nature in Aristotle's Ethics And Politics", *Social Philosophy and Policy* 24/2 (July 2007), 199-219.; Nachoem M. Wijnberg, "Normative Stakeholder Theory and Aristotle: The Link Between Ethics and Politics", *Journal of Business Ethics* 25 (2000), 329-342.; Alexander Bertland, "Virtue Ethics in Business and the Capabilities Approach". *Journal of Business Ethics* 84 (2009), 25-32.

understanding that glorifies the work,³ Adam Smith's masterpiece called *The Wealth of Nations*, and his views seem to have had a great influence.⁴ The ideas that Adam Smith put forward in this work and his other works regarding the relationship between politics, economy and morality, have been studied and discussed by both capitalist and liberal economists and Marxist economists in the 19th and 20th centuries. Today, studies and research on Adam Smith continue.

Pursuing pure profit has become the sole objective of business and commercial activity.⁵ Even W. Vanderbilt could boldly say, "To hell with the public, I only think about my shareholders",⁶ and Milton Friedman, who defended the view that "the social responsibility of business life is only to increase its profits", was awarded the Nobel Prize in economics.⁷ In the process that developed in this environment, the working individuals was seen as a disposable piece, labour was evaluated as an additional good depending on the supply-demand balance - which could be easily abandoned when necessary-, and *atomistic individualism*, which states that there is no regulations or rules (ethical, social, etc.) in the basis of a commercial activity, has taken place.⁸

Within the framework of these understandings, in practice - until the date of the legal regulations - only money and investors were put in the main position in the commercial activity, every way was considered 'permissible' to make a profit, the quality of the produced goods and after-sales services were not given importance, and the society in which they lived was never taken into account as a value itself except being only materials for advertisement. There were long and tiring working hours for the employee and payments did not comply with human living standards, and gender discrimination against women was manifested.

For the last two or three decades, in parallel with the improvement efforts in terms of business ethics, some adjustments have been made in the general attitude towards trade and economy, at least at the principal level.

The profit motive has ceased to be the sole objective of the business world, besides, it is to serve the public purpose, not to pollute the environment, to make quality production, to provide after-sale service, to sustain customer satisfaction, not to produce products that will harm the consumers, to take the society in which they live into account as value, and at the final level, purposes such as taking into account all people and humanity began to take place.⁹

The understanding of social responsibility has come out of its narrow scope of *just making a profit* and has turned into a form that includes the other objectives mentioned above. This has two aspects. The first is that it includes the people affected by the company and its production. This includes workers, consumers, employees in the production process,

³ Max Weber, *Protestan Ahlâkı ve Kapitalizmin Ruhı*, trans. Zeynep Gürata (Ankara: Ayraç Yayınları, 1999), 135.

⁴ Mehmet Türkeri, *Etik Bilinç* (İstanbul: Lotus, 2014), 88.

⁵ Robert C. Solomon, "Business Ethics", *A Companion to Ethics*, ed. Peter Singer (Oxford/Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 1997), 354-364.

⁶ Solomon, "Business Ethics", 354.

⁷ Milton Friedman, "The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits", *The New York Times* (13 September 1970), 17.

⁸ Türkeri, *Etik Bilinç*, 93; Mehmet Türkeri, *Etik Değer* (İstanbul: Lotus, 2017), 150-151.

⁹ Türkeri, *Etik Bilinç*, 89.

suppliers, and the community. The second is the execution of social responsibility projects for people within this scope.¹⁰

When this happened, instead of the understanding that only those who put the money were the essentials, there has been a wider spectrum that includes the classes mentioned above. To put it in technical terms, the concept of 'stockholder', in which only those who put capital are essentials, has passed to the understanding of 'stakeholder', which refers to all the segments mentioned above. Employees and producers have become a stakeholder of the company, which is no longer a waste that could be discarded when necessary.¹¹

The idea of *atomic individualism*, that is, the understanding that does not recognize any institutional regulations or rule that can be the principle of business contract, word, deal and trade *has been abandoned*.¹² Therefore, the understanding that values such as honesty and integrity should form the basis of ordinary business behaviours has been adopted. Because business performance is a social practice that emerges in a wide range within certain countries. One of the most important indicators of this is company culture.

Company culture requires seeing the employee as a stakeholder of the company, with their rights, responsibilities, and values. On the other hand, the employee also expresses that he does not see the company as a temporary source that provides resources for his living, but as an institution where he does his best.¹³

It is a separate problem and handicap that all these corrections for business and working life manifest themselves completely in practice and in daily life. So even if they are accepted as true, implementing them also requires effort, consistency, and firm attitude. Implementation issues aside, there has at least been acknowledgment that some things are wrong, at least in theory and in principle, and there have been valuable efforts to fix them. Could the same be said for the general attitude towards politics and the pursuit of power? Now let's see it in outline.

2. Developments in Political Ethics and Transformations in Attitudes towards Politics

The idea that morality can be ignored in politics, that political obligations may require violating moral rules from time to time, or that morality can be seen as completely irrelevant is known as the "dirty hands"¹⁴ problem in politics.¹⁵ In politics, this problem arises when one believes that there are stronger reasons to outweigh the moral ones, or when one sees morality as irrelevant.¹⁶ Some reasons and real situations, such as; the fact that the actors of the political sphere must be subject to a different moral judgment on the grounds because of that they are people's representatives rather than individuals, the need to succeed in an environment of many unwell people, the fact that there is a world with many evildoers, and the political sphere has more options and more serious consequences

¹⁰ Türkeri, *Etik Bilinç*, 89.

¹¹ Türkeri, *Etik Bilinç*, 89-90.

¹² Türkeri, *Etik Bilinç*, 93.

¹³ Türkeri, *Etik Bilinç*, 92.

¹⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Kirli Eller*, trans. Samih Tiryakioğlu (İstanbul: Varlık Yayınları, 1965); Ahmet Cevizci, *Uygulamalı Etik* (İstanbul: Say Yayınları, 2013), 186.

¹⁵ Türkeri, *Etik Değer*, 110 etc.

¹⁶ C.A.J. Coody, "Politics and the Problem of Dirty Hands", *A Companion to Ethics*, ed. Peter Singer (Oxford/Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 1997), 373.

than private life; seem to have revealed morally negative situations such as abuses in politics, personal interests, lies and failure to keep promises. The proverbial expression of this is "the fish stinks from the head" in Turkish. The phrase "power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely" seems to have structured this negative situation. On the other hand, since politics is the basic and highest institution of the society, the expectation of honesty, integrity, reliability, merit, responsibility, justice, and fairness in society is a fact and this is not considered wrong. They are even emphasized to come to power politically. Now, you will both do business in the political arena by arguing that values will have no place in politics, and you will demand that those values be put into practice. This signifies a great rift. This split stems from the human and moral understanding. Before dwelling on this problem, let us consider the evaluation of arguments that exclude morality from the point of view of politics or see the opposite as "correct" in the context of corrections in political ethics.

The demand for different moral judgments based on the idea that *the actors of the political field should be subjected to a different moral judgment* on the grounds that they are their representatives, not individuals, brought along understandings such as fragmented morality compatible with politics or morality according to the situation.¹⁷ This situation, in fact, manifests itself as "forced immorality" on the humanitarian level.

Demanding good morals and trying to be virtuous in a world where there are many evildoers is stupidity. In this case, it is needed not to learn how to be a good person, but to learn how not to be a good person. This view is known as the Machiavellian understanding.¹⁸ After all, Machiavelli also argued that *the need for dirty hands is sometimes humanitarian, not political*.¹⁹ This is a view that destroys good morals not only in politics but also in all other fields of human experience.

The notion of transitioning to the idea of morality depending on the situation, just because of that the field of politics *contains more options and more severe consequences than private life*, is also problematic.²⁰ Because this is based on the distinction between the political-social and the private-personal; and by this distinction some opinions are put forward as in the first one, there is a case of violating morality due to its special and severe conditions, and in the second, only the sharp/ordinary moral life will be peculiar to private life. This claim is strongly voiced, but it is invalid. Because first of all, this distinction is not clear. Moreover, human life is a whole in considering all the aspects of human experience, and this whole and its parts are interactive. Let's think about it. In politics, which is an area of experience, you will accept that some morally negative attitudes and behaviours are correct because there are some certain obligations there, and this situation will not reflect on other areas of experience, such as trade, art, economy, and private life. How possible is such a thing from experience? Conversely, you would accept that morally positive attitudes and behaviours in the private realm (and other areas of experience) are the exact opposite of politics. The name of such a situation is "hypocrisy" and this is something that destroys (good) morality. To give an example, you would expect a person known for his honesty and

¹⁷ Türkeri, *Etik Değer*, 110

¹⁸ Niccolo Machiavelli, *Prens*, trans. Murat Satıcı (İzmir: İlya Yayınevi, 1965), 96, 100, 101, 108.

¹⁹ Türkeri, *Etik Değer*, 111, 114.

²⁰ Türkeri, *Etik Değer*, 112-113.

truthfulness to lie, when necessary, in other areas of experience, including politics. How easy is this? If we take it the other way around, a situation emerges in which some personality types who can lie and do not fulfil their promises by putting forward some reasons will be able to work more comfortably in politics. We also observe that these people exhibit these attitudes and behaviours in other areas of experience. Now, which of these two typologies do we, as human beings, find true? We consider the first typology to be morally correct, including by politicians.

The thought that leads to the *argument of compulsory immorality* in the field of politics is the Machiavellian conviction that trying to live virtuously and demanding good morals in a world where bad people are abundant is stupid. The advice of Machiavelli in his book *The Prince* is actually aimed at the Prince, that is, the highest ruler of the State. However, his understanding has become widespread as “the ends legitimize the means”. According to Machiavelli, “... A prudent prince should not keep his word if he knows that he will be harmed if he keeps it...”.²¹ According to him, “those whom the prince needs to rely on for their help to stay in place, whether they are commoners, soldiers, or nobles, must need to adapt himself to their wishes, even if they are corrupted. Therefore, virtuous action will only harm you.”²² This understanding is flawed in several ways.²³ First, morality is a matter of quality, not quantity. The value of an individual's moral behaviour does not require majority approval. Because the majority can do neither the greatest evil nor the greatest good. Majority cannot make a person virtuous.²⁴ It is not right to respond to evil, which is the morality of the majority, with evil.²⁵ Even if a person is alone, it is a requirement of being a human being to realize moral values and virtues. Morality refers to the structure of revealing good behaviours that a person does intentionally, willingly, and consciously.²⁶ To put it more clearly, the only thing that one has in his hands is to do demonstrate good morals.

Secondly, the idea that virtuous behaviour will not bring success in a life where there are many immoral people is an understanding that annihilates morality. Because here, success and morality are positioned as opposites and the latter seem to be excluded. Since good morals are excluded, we are left with immoral acts, that is, morally negative behaviour. Another exorbitant mistake in this idea is that success is determined as something that excludes good morals. In other words, success has excluded the good and morality, and therefore has turned into something that includes the material one. However, material achievements, no matter how important, are ultimately unacceptable as the purpose of life in terms of morality.

Thirdly, it can be seen as a degradation in the sense of value and social status.²⁷ Because the understanding of value has been excluded, suspended, and acting accordingly the opposite of it with different excuses has been seen as legitimate. Elements such as; not seeing morality as a special area of value that cannot be sacrificed in life, seeing it only as a

²¹ Machiavelli, *Prens*, 100.

²² Machiavelli, *Prens*, 108.

²³ Türkeri, *Etik Değer*, 114 etc.

²⁴ Plato, “Kriton”, *Toplu Diyaloglar-I*, trans. Neslihan Evrim Emir (Ankara: Eos Yayınevi, 2007), 44d.

²⁵ Plato, “Kriton”, 49c.

²⁶ Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics”, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard Mckeon (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 1105a.

²⁷ Coady, “Problem of Dirty Hands”, 379.

result, suspending moral values and virtues in situations where we think it is necessary to do the opposite them and advocating of this in some way, not considering the scope of morality to cover all areas of experience of daily life, considering it not as an area of value but as an area of sanction only and when we find a justification reducing the morality as a tool level, in fact all of these elements seem to destroy virtuous morality and replace them with bad morality which we all complain about, including politicians. This shows that we do not take morality seriously as a value field, but on the contrary, we do not take it seriously. In practice, it is bad morality that has emerged.

Morality has no excuse. Values and virtues deserve to be applied just because they are so, and as something worthy of being human, and they encompass every value field. They cannot be neglected or cancelled for one reason or another.²⁸ To express this better, let's take a look at the structure of the value. *Value* is a connected-relational thing that arises from the relationship between the subject and the subject or between the subject and the object, arising from the connection of the subjective and objective sides.²⁹ From this relationship, either positive values or negative values come out. When we suspend and exclude positive ones for various reasons, the behavioural relationship in that subject or area of experience will emerge based on negative values. Let's explain with an example. If we say that politics is a unique field and see the lies as legitimate there, that is, if we put honesty on the shelf and continue this understanding in terms of daily experience, say that trade has its own rules and exclude truthfulness when necessary, at the end point it will be headed to a situation that honesty and truthfulness are abolished in terms of different fields of experience and lie and deception have settled in their place. In technical terms, it means that we are faced with the fact that negative values were chosen as the basis. However, in such a case, bad morality, not good morality, will emerge with negative values. Not to mention the fact that everyone complains about these negative values.

If we repeat our question; Can political ethics and business ethics be enough to eliminate the negative elements that arise in attitudes towards both politics and power, as well as trade and economy? Can negative factors such as the fact that there is a need for the enactment of a political moral law, which is also expressed by politicians from time to time, and the problems in the field of politics such as incompetence and corruption, the exclusion and suspension of moral values such as honesty, truthfulness, and keeping promises in one way or another, be corrected only with the law of political morality and political ethics? Again, can negativities such as thinking only about profit and not considering any value in the attitude towards economic development and trade, lying, deceiving, persuading by resorting to sensory elements, producing bad and poor-quality products and services, and removing other companies doing the same business from the market, can be removed with business ethics? The negativities that have emerged in relation to these two areas are the elements that affect and are affected by all the experiences of people in daily life and are largely moral. Therefore, it seems that the solution of the above-mentioned problems cannot be completely solved with the ethical understandings of these two fields. Because there are problems in moral understanding and human understanding that cause these problems.

²⁸ Türkeri, *Etik Değer*, 145 etc.

²⁹ Türkeri, *Etik Bilinç*, 34.

3. Morality and Human Understanding as the Root of Problems

The moral theory that has become popular as the moral understanding of capitalism in the modern period is *Utilitarianism*.³⁰ The criterion of this theory that determines what is good is formulated as follows; The thing that brings the greatest benefit (utility) to the greatest number of people is the measure of the good, and this has been adopted as the *principle of utility*. What is meant by utility here is *pleasure*. However, this is not individualistic, but socialist. The claim that pleasures can be measured has led to the development of a measurement (*Hedonic Calculus*) related to it. Therefore, the theory in question also claims to be quantitative and therefore scientific. However, its certainty has turned into a possibility, depending on the benefit to be obtained in the motivation to exhibit the behaviour, namely the pleasure, to be obtained in the short, medium, and long term. Despite the Mill's and his followers' revisions, however, what is meant by utility remains pleasure.³¹ In the first sentence of the first chapter of Bentham's *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislations*, the statement of "nature has given us the service of two masters; one is pleasure and the other is pain"³² seems to make us the slave of pleasure and pain, rather than recommending to avoid pain and turn towards pleasure as a source of motivation. The utilitarian tradition has still been continued today. The world-famous Peter Singer, who is interested in practical ethics, seems to be part of this tradition. Although he put forward an approach called 'preference utilitarianism', he states that he is sometimes connected to hedonistic utilitarianism.³³ Worse still, it is for the biological being to avoid pain and turn to pleasure; it means that it does not constitute the distinctiveness of being human. Also, when mention about morality, it is mentioned about goodness and doing goodness because it is valuable.³⁴ Sometimes we may even feel pain from what we do because it's good; or because we value it and they are in accordance with virtue. This shows that the theory in question is not justified as proven by these of human experiences.

In addition to this understanding of morality, after the formulations of Mandeville and Helvetius in similar line with Hobbes's understanding of '*negative human nature*', an *egoist-hedonistic understanding of man and morality* has also emerged. According to Hobbes, man in his natural state is selfish and aggressive. This was expressed as "man is wolf to man" (*homo hominis lupus*), followed by "the war of all against all" (*there is bellum omnium contra omnes*).³⁵ Hobbes passes from here to the understanding of politics and the state. What interests us here is not his political philosophy, but his understanding of human nature. Because his understanding of human nature did not only affect his political philosophy, but also led to a negative understanding of human-ethics. Mandeville argued that morality should be excluded for the sake of art, science, commerce, industry, and technique etc.. Because he argued that these elements, he mentioned could only develop with elements such as money-goods greed, self-importance, and indulgence in luxury-entertainment. His

³⁰ Stroll, Avrum et al. *Etik Kuramları*. ed. & trans. Mehmet Türkeri (Ankara: Lotus, 2017), 117-123; Cevizci, *Felsefe Tarihi*, 795 etc.

³¹ J. Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Ontario: Batoche Books, 2001), 9 etc.

³² Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislations* (Ontario: Batoche Books, 2000), 14.

³³ Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 3rd edition, 2011), 11, 13, 15.

³⁴ Aristotle. "Nicomachean Ethics", 1120a.

³⁵ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*. trans. Semih Lim (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1992), 92-96, 127.

emphasis on selfishness and ambition was developed by Helvetius, and as a result, an egoistic-hedonistic understanding emerged as both an expression of human nature and a philosophy of life.³⁶

The negative approach to human nature is not correct in several respects. First, from the point of view of the natural law tradition, the use of reason and the arrangements brought about by it are a part of naturalness. Accordingly, it should be seen as natural for a person to make some arrangements in his own life with the power of reason and to become virtuous.³⁷ In addition, taking the negative situation as a basis renders the door to positive value generation secondary, even if it does not close it completely. This negativity will also be reflected in other areas of human experience / practices, including politics. In such an actual situation, even though we have positive expectations from the field of politics, positive moral values will not be produced from here. The problem of 'dirty hands' in politics makes this clear. In politics, it has been argued that there is a need to ignore morality, to see it as irrelevant, and to violate moral reasons when necessary. The need for dirty hands was considered not just political, but sometimes humanitarily necessary.³⁸ Water has found its way. (Nature has taken its course) In other words, the violation of moral principles in politics, beside the fact that it is problematic in terms of political ethics, is not only reflected in the field of politics, but also in the field of humanity, and therefore in other fields of experience. This understanding of negativity will also reduce human nature to an essential egoist-hedonistic structure.

Egoism and hedonism, besides being philosophically untenable in the final analysis, is an understanding that destroys (good) morality.³⁹ Exclusion of positive values does not exclude morality as a field of experience and as a category. Since our relations will continue, negative values will remain as the basis, as we exclude positive values. In addition, there is an altruistic tendency in morality as much as, if not more, the egoistic tendency. In terms of human experience in daily life, when morality is mentioned, the second emphasis, namely altruism, seems to come to the fore. In addition, throughout the history of ethics, these two theories are not accepted as moral understandings of stability periods, on the contrary, they are consolation philosophies of anomie periods.⁴⁰ In periods of stability, moral understandings based on sobriety, which envisage actions in accordance with virtue, became dominant.

Even though if *utilitarianism* does not seem to be an extreme understanding at first, it does not take place within the framework of moral understandings based on moderation, aside from its technical difficulties. Ethics based on moderation are those that motivate action according to virtue, not pleasure or pain. Aristotle's *Eudaemonism* and the basic moral understandings of the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic religions are of this type. *Deontology*, which was adopted in medical ethics in the early periods, is a moral understanding that became famous with Kant. Although this understanding, which bases morality on the cold mind command and envisages reflecting the sense of duty with the categorical imperative,

³⁶ Türkeri, *Etik Bilinç*, 85-87, 101-103.

³⁷ Türkeri, *Etik Değer*, 107.

³⁸ Türkeri, *Etik Değer*, 110-111.

³⁹ Türkeri, *Etik Bilinç*, 103.

⁴⁰ Stroll et al., *Etik Kuramları*, 42.

is perfect in theory, it seems incompatible with the fact that life goes with generalizations and the fact that being virtuous is related to human tendencies.⁴¹

When it comes today, it is possible to see all kinds of moral understanding that we have mentioned above. However, it is observed that the morality of virtue is somewhat forgotten. Now, when we put a negative understanding of human nature and morality on the ground, it will be a makeshift no matter how much legal effort we make to limit or remove negativities. For example, when we see greed and selfishness as essential, altruism, helping others, honesty, etc. values will remain in the air and will eventually be thrown out of life. Again, for example, the *Freudian theory, which explains the human structure only through tanatos and eros*, has been criticized in terms of human philosophy.⁴² When *Darwin's theory of evolution* is reflected in the business world with the understanding that "big fish swallow small fish" and "man will do anything to survive", how will attitudes and behaviours befitting values and virtues emerge from such a business world!

Virtue is the backbone of morality. For this reason, we cannot give up the moral understanding that considers virtues (wisdom, moderation, bravery, justice and other virtues within them) as a source of motivation. The theory that expresses this understanding is Eudaimonism. This theory, which is not based on personal or social interest, pleasure, ambition, or indifference in the motivation source of behaviour, can also be known as virtue ethics. This understanding, which is common in periods of stability and supported by human experience, is also close to the moral understanding of major religions. Therefore, in the social life of the individual, it is necessary to take the virtues as a basis, not only for the solution of problems, but more importantly, for determining how to behave in daily life, and aiming at the empowerment of a structure in this direction.

4. Practical Competence and its Connection with Virtue

First of all, it should not be forgotten that; Excluding (good) morality or finding reasons to go against the values it entails, destroys morality entirely when it becomes a general attitude. In order to transform the above-mentioned understandings, which have come down to the present day as a bundle of problems, into a positive one, we should consider *the frameworks* of Aristotle and Islamic thinkers, especially Farabi, that connect economy, politics and morality with virtuous sensitivity and *give importance*.⁴³ This framework will give us the opportunity to see and implement the common *virtue connection* between the fields of morality, economy, and politics. Because these three are all areas of experience that lead to practical competence and gain practical wisdom when approached with virtue sensitivity.

Although *the practical wisdom that leads to practical competence* is metaphorically called this and it is accepted that the main thing is (theoretical) wisdom⁴⁴ in the classification of 'nafs' made in terms of competence, having theoretical competence without practical

⁴¹ Stroll et al., *Etik Kuramları*, 136.

⁴² Türkeri, *Etik Bilinç*, 86; Doğan Cüceloğlu, *İnsan ve Davranışı: Psikolojinin Temel Kavramları* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1993), 414-415.

⁴³ Muhsin Mehdi, "İbn Haldun I", trans. Mustafa Armağan, *Klasik İslam Filozofları ve Düşünceleri*, ed. M. M. Şerif (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 1997), 393; Ibn Khaldun, *Mukaddime I*, trans. Zakir Kadiri Ugan (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1990), 18, 86.

⁴⁴ Farabi, *Mutluluğun Kazanılması*, trans. Ahmet Arslan (Ankara: Vadi Yayınları, 1999), 43-45, 47-48.

competence is expressed as the greatest misery. The person in this situation is in a morally not virtuous position, even if he is competent in terms of knowledge. The main competence and happiness is to have both theoretical and practical competence.⁴⁵ As a matter of fact, we can easily deduce this from the following quote:

“From the point of view of Kamal, nafs are divided into four groups: a) Perfect and unadulterated souls. They have both theoretical and practical perfection. The real bliss is for them. b) Perfect souls that are not unadulterated. Farabi characterizes them as fâsiq. The greatest chastisement is for these souls. Because they are in moral disgrace even though they are perfect for knowledge. c) Unadulterated souls (in theory) that are not perfect. There is a kind of comfort for them as well, but this is far from es-saadet al-quswa. d) Souls lacking in both aspects.”⁴⁶

The *happiness and competence* mentioned above are achieved through virtues.⁴⁷ What is meant by these virtues are the four main virtues in the history of thought (famed as cardinal virtues in the West, al-fezailu'l-asliyya in the East). These are *prudence* (wisdom), *sobriety* (chastity), *valour* (courage) and *justice*. Wisdom expresses the use of our thinking power in its proper place and requires learning the sciences such as mathematics, physics, metaphysics, and basic points related to theology, while the practical part of it, practical wisdom, is the power and virtue of thinking on the tools that lead to happiness. Practical wisdom is also the ability to rehabilitate our power of desire and anger, enabling the virtues of chastity and valour to emerge from our character. Virtuous reflection on practical fields such as family, commerce, military service, economy, politics, etc. is also related to this type of wisdom. The virtue of moderation (chastity) expresses the middle between not using the power of desire (lust) at all and using the sensual pleasures as a goal. Bravery is the proper use of the power of anger. Justice means the combination of all these virtues, so it is a total virtue. In an individual sense, it is a middle ground between wrongdoing (persecute) and being wronged (inzilam). The virtue of justice brings with it compliance with the law, equality, and fairness.⁴⁸

All other virtues are included in these four basic virtues. In the tradition of Islamic thought, these virtues seem to gain both a *religious identity* and a *religious scope*. For example, the orders and prohibitions of religion regarding good morals are seen within the scope of wisdom, and spending as charity is considered as an important element that brings generosity to life.⁴⁹ In this understanding, in which religion is seen as "divine laws that impose duties and obligations for the good deeds done by will"⁵⁰ faith, knowledge, love, useful works and good morals are intertwined.⁵¹ Elmalılı Muhammed Hamdi Yazır expressed this as follows: “Belief entails two states of spirit, such as ma’rifat and mahabbet. Then, according to the orders and prohibitions inherited by Allah Ta’ala, it required to have morality with urgent initiation of doing good deeds and beautification of virtuousness.”⁵²

⁴⁵ Mehmet S. Aydın, *Din Felsefesi* (İzmir: İzmir İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları, 2018), 266.

⁴⁶ Mehmet S. Aydın, “İslam Felsefesi”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1989), 2/12-13.

⁴⁷ Farabi, *Mutluluğun Kazanılması*, 51.

⁴⁸ Aristotle. “Nicomachean Ethics”, 1129a.

⁴⁹ Mehmet Türkeri, *Elmalılı'nın Ahlak Felsefesi* (İstanbul: Lotus, 2017), 119, 123.

⁵⁰ M. Hamdi Yazır Elmalılı, *Hak Dini Kur'an Dili* (İstanbul: Eser Neşriyat, 1982), 4/vii.

⁵¹ Türkeri, *Elmalılı'nın Ahlak Felsefesi*, 49-50.

⁵² Elmalılı, *Hak Dini Kur'an Dili*, 7/4744.

In the realization of the four basic virtues, in other words, in putting them into practice, the sub-virtues within them are as important as their definitions, implications and what they exclude. These sub-virtues provide a kind of concrete measure in realizing the basic virtues. For example, the development of intelligence, assimilation of the necessary things and remembering what they have learned are among the sub-virtues of the virtue of wisdom. Again, perseverance, being mild-tempered, cold-bloodedness, endurance and humility are among the sub-virtues of bravery. Haya (shame), calmness, patience, contentment, dignity, taqwa and generosity are among the sub-virtues of chastity. Friendship, fidelity, sila-i rahim (visiting close relatives), establishing good relations with people, trust and worship are among the sub-virtues of justice.⁵³ Trying to include these and other sub-virtues in our lives can contribute to the fact that the cardinal virtues come out of being just words and come into our lives.

The moral understanding based on these is called Virtue Ethics and its origin in the history of ethics is Eudaimonism, which goes back to Plato and especially Aristotle.⁵⁴ We will not explain the moral understanding mentioned here, because this is not our subject. What we want to point out here is the understanding that provides the virtue connection in the fields of perfection of this virtue ethics, which we have forgotten in the modern era, and sees this effort as an effort for wisdom, a scientific effort, and a moral effort together. In this sense of morality, our measure, purpose, and motivation for doing a behaviour is not whether that behaviour will benefit us, our society, etc., whether it will give pleasure or not, but rather to question whether the behaviour is in accordance with the four cardinal virtues we have mentioned above and other virtues within them. The characterization of the virtuous person refers to the person who generally fulfils the requirements of these virtues.

The questions of how a person will be good, how a family will be good, and how a society will be good are intrinsically moral and interconnected. The field of experience, which we call the economy, derives from the second-stage field of experience, “tedbirü'l menzil” (the measure of houses). It includes the production, buying and selling of things that are needed, deemed necessary, etc., in places where they live. All these processes are done with the guidance and sensitivity of value and virtue. That's why it's called ‘economicos’, that is, economy. The understanding of doing everything only for profit, without virtue guidance and sensitivity, is not considered economicos in its Aristotelian origin in Ancient Greece, but rather chrematisike.⁵⁵ While the former is morally praised by both Aristotle and Islamic thinkers, the latter is vilified. Aristotle disapproves of commerce in which goods, possessions, wealth, etc., are seen as ends in themselves.⁵⁶ Although Aristotle is shown as the basis of the economy in the modern period, the economy itself seems to be detached from the virtue guidance. Therefore, the name of it was economy, but in practice chrematisike was in question. This is something that Aristotle condemns.

⁵³ Ali Çelebi Kınalızâde, *Ahlâk-ı Alâî*, Simplifier: Murat Demirkol (Ankara: Fecr Yayınevi, 2016), 90 etc.

⁵⁴ Richard D. Parry, “Eudaimonia, Eudaimonism”, *Encyclopedia of Ethics*, ed. Lawrence C. Becker (New York & London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1992), 1/333-335; Terence H. Irwin, “Aristotle”, *Encyclopedia of Ethics*, ed. Lawrence C. Becker (New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1992), 1/54.

⁵⁵ Türkeri, *Etik Bilinç*, 93-94; Türkeri, *Etik Değer*, 158.

⁵⁶ Aristotle, “Politics”, 1257a-b.

Conclusion

It is understood that when we take economic and political activities into consideration, both the search for power and power and the effort for economic development can sometimes cause moral problems that we complain about. As examples of these problems, we can show the desire to obtain pleasure and power, the concentration of economic power in certain hands, the failure of distributing welfare in society, the disregard of competency, the idea that everything can be achieved with monetary power, thinking only of one's own interests and not caring about the situation of others, the abuse of political power in a way that undermines the sense of fairness and justice, etc. It is normal for moral problems to arise as a result of a living and operating experience, just like some other ordinary problems. However, what we mean here is that the attitude towards the search for power and economic development takes on a *character* that does not take into account positive moral values and virtues. Both business ethics and political ethics studies have shown that negative attitudes in the field of politics and economy and in the approaches of individuals towards these fields are not appropriate and should be fixed. In this regard, the suggestions of both fields of ethics, which ought never be considered insignificant and must be carefully observed, are of great value. However, at the same time and deeper, *the understandings human being and morality* lie at the *root of the problems* that arise in this view and attitude towards both economy and power. As long as the structure of these understandings that causes problems continues, solution proposals will remain secondary. At this point, it is of vital importance to recall and remember the view of mostly Islamic thinkers in the field of practical competence and their emphasis on virtues.

In correcting human understanding, the fact that *utilitarianism* has a hedonistic characteristic, even though it claims to be social and universal, is an issue that needs to be considered. It is a clear truth presented by human experience that taking hedon, that is, pleasure, as the basis in moral motivation is itself a problem, and that virtuous sensitivity, doing good and doing this good without expecting anything in return should be essential in morality. In order to strengthen this aspect, virtue ethics should be revived. At least, if we exclude Kant's understandings of ethics, we should see that other ethical understandings with an *egoistic-hedonistic character* are a kind of *extreme understandings*, or more clearer words, they do not actually express what we call morality.

In line with this framework, we can offer *several suggestions*. It will be important to see human nature with the value and distinctiveness of being human and to disseminate this. In this way, it will be possible to see human nature not entirely with negative elements (greed for money, greediness, selfishness, being trying to destroy the other, etc.), but at least with positive elements.

We need to *bring the term "good"* into our lives in the sense of being and behaving virtuously. This meaning of good is that it expresses a field of value shaped by virtues. The content of this is implicit in the characterization of a good person. This situation will allow people to bring basic human values and virtues to all areas of experience, including the profession, by stripping the good of qualifications such as in good doctor, good engineer, good teacher, good lawyer from purely making money and professional technical competence.

As seen in theories such as Utilitarianism, Egoism and Hedonism, the approach of reducing *morality*, which examine people in terms of being human and virtuous, to *psychology and sociology*, that is, *naturalistic determination*, should be abandoned. Because the naturalistic approach reduces moral concepts and terms to natural sciences, especially psychological concepts. As a result of such approach, we do not have morality as a value field, but a disguised psychology. No matter how useful results you may draw from it, psychology is a science related to a factual field, whereas morality is a field of values, and this is how it deals with the phenomenon.

In terms of virtue ethics, elements such as earning money, property, having a position, power, fame and pleasure, which are not the purpose, seem to have become the purpose in Utilitarianism and the understanding of man as a wolf to another. Since this understanding is not based on fairness and justice, it does not allow for the solution of ethical problems related to the economic and political fields. Therefore, the virtuous approach, which is based on virtues and values such as justice, fairness, honesty, generosity and wisdom and shapes man and his behavior with these, should be made dominant in every area of life.

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