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More than Justice: “Friendship” in Phenomenology and Mysticism (*Erfan*)

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Abstract

In his *Nicomachean ethics*, Aristotle has introduced “Friendship” (*philia*) as a civic virtue which is higher than justice. After Aristotle, Latin and Iranian thinkers articulated the notions “*Amiticia*” and “*Dusti*” as equivalent to Aristotle’s *philia*. In modern, times, however, while justice was regarded as legal system which protects individual rights, “Friendship” was reduced to a personal concern and was confined to private sphere of life. In recent times, once again “Friendship” has entered the intellectual milieu both in Iranian and German culture. In this paper, three models of Friendship, namely *Phronetic*, *Erfanic* (Mystical), and Phenomenological, are analysed. Also, according to what these models pertain to, it is suggested that actually Civic Convergence, which is the precondition for civil life, can be brought about by Friendship more than by Justice.

Keywords: Friendship, Justice, Mysticism, Civic Convergence, Aristotle, Heidegger: Shari’ati, Held.

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Introduction

Political philosophers have always contemplated on political issues when they have observed the existence or the emergence of serious crises in their society. These crises have been usually diagnosed as being rooted in some form of “divergence” in the community. In order to resolve such crises, political philosophers have always tried to find a way for some form of “convergence” to keep their society from falling apart. “Justice” was the first civil virtue by which, it was assumed that convergence can be actualized. By invoking pythagorean notion of “harmony”, Plato formulized his own Sokratic notion of Good for harmonizing the dispersing and diverging *polis* of the 4th century B.C. As such, Justice functioned as a path to bring about social convergence.

After Plato, Aristotle discussed Friendship (*philia*) as a civic virtue (*arête*) higher than justice. He argued that friendship could bring deeper and higher form of ethical convergence as the founding principle for the continuity of the civic/ political life. Similar to Aristotle, in the Islamic world of the 4th A.H / 11th A.D, Iranian Aref (mystical thinkers), *Abu Saeed* invoked the notion of *Dusti* (Friendship) as the path for mystical union and social bond alike.

In the early modern era, Thomas Hobbes too articulated the necessity of social convergence for his war-entangled divergent society. For this purpose, unlike Aristotle, Hobbes formulated the needed convergence in the form of “social contract”, in which, however, there was no place for friendship. As such, in the modern era, friendship was relegated to private sphere and since then, as Fred Dallmayr has put it, “friendship has been under siege”:

Over a period of many centuries, self has been steadily removed or distanced from other selves, with the result that ancient notions like “concord” (homonoia) or communion (consensio) have been increasingly problematized if not entirely eclipsed (Dallmayr, Alternative, 147).

Notwithstanding Dallmayr's succinct observation, certain contemporary, certain contemporary Iranian and European thinkers, namely Ali Shari'ati, Martin Heidegger, and Klaus Held have tried to envision in a new way the possibility of communal convergence based upon new forms of “friendship”. As such, one can speak of three models of “friendship” which do have essential common elements and are more capable of bringing about convergence more than perhaps Justice can.

A- *Phronetic* Friendship

According to Aristotle, although justice as the distinguished virtue is the highest civic virtue, friendship, as the converging components, is a necessity for good common life. Unlike Plato who considered friendship to remain outside the complex of civic virtues, Aristotle considered it to link community (*Koinonia*) and justice (*dikainoia*) together, and as such a virtue preferred to justice (Aristotle, 1156b). For Aristotle

“[i]t will be appropriate to discuss friendship, since friendship is a kind of excellence, or goes along with excellence, and furthermore is very necessary for living” (ibid: 1155a).

Hence, according to Elena Irrera, Aristotle's interest is addressed towards the necessity of friendship in the light of the good life rather than in mere living:

Friendship, being declared as an indispensable ingredient of human happiness,

is not only to be taken as a private and personal bond between two individuals, but also as a relationship involving the whole of the political community. This is confirmed by Aristotle, where he claims that friendship also seems to keep cities together, and lawgivers seem to pay more attention to it than to justice (Irrera, 5).

Therefore, it can be concluded from Aristotle's discussion that:

In order to promote the well-being of the community, justice must be reciprocal and involve all the citizens in a relationship, more or less impersonal, which cannot remain unreturned. Besides this, justice, by reminding the contracting parties of their reciprocal role in the friendship, also promotes awareness of the relationships established, without which individuals could eschew their own contributions and fail to acknowledge the advantages yielded by life in the community (ibid.).

As such,

Concord also appears to be a characteristic of friendship. For this reason, it is not agreement in belief, since this can occur even among people unknown to one another. Things to be done, then, are what concord is concerned with, and of these only those that are important and are such that both parties or, all the citizens can get what they want. A city, for example, is in concord when all the citizens think that public offices ought to be elective.. (Aristotle, 1167a).

As such then convergence of citizens is achieved via *philia* friendship as more than justice.

B- Friendship in *Erfan*¹

Love and friendship are fundamental notions in Iranian *Erfan* (mysticism). According to *Abu Said Abal-khyr*, the Iranian Aref (mystic) of the 11th century AD (357-440 A.H) *Erfan* is a matter of existing and experimenting, and not appositive or describable (Zarrinkoub, 63, 64). Avicenna (359-416) on the other hand considers the subject matter of *Erfan* as happiness, or "good life" (*sa'adat*) actualized in "spiritual pleasure" (Ibn Sina, 424-430). *Erfan* can be visualized and practiced as living preoccupied with reaching authentic existence via *Tahzib* (edification) and spiritual education. As Adonis has put it, "the erfanic conduct (*soluk*) does not mean to transcend our own being, but to reflect more on our being (Adonis: 28). As such, then it seems that, as philosophy is "the love for knowledge", *Erfan* is an existential experience of love as a way of life which avoids dominating and manipulating others, but instead, living with others via the call of Divinity for friendship.

In the 13th century AD, Iranian mystic – philosopher, Nasir al-din Toosi (597-653 A.H) introduced *Mavaddat* (Friendship) as a central notion in his thought. He clearly gives priority to Friendship as compared to other norms like Justice. According to *Toosi*, it is when love is absent that there is need for justice, "whereas, when there is friendship amongst people, there is no need for equity or fairness". (Khaje nasir Toosi, 223-225).

Friendship is conceived in *Erfan* to consist of a dual orientation, one from the top to bottom, or as O' Murchada calls it, "vertical to horizontal", namely, from mystical love to communal friendship. Another one is, from the horizontal to vertical, which means to

¹ *Erfan* is known as "Islamic mysticism"; but due to its peculiarities, here "Erfan" is used.

spiritually commute to mystical love via communal friendship (O'Murchada). Such double orientation can be considered as double convergence, the one from mundane to the sacred life, and the other from mystical love to horizontal comportment of civic friendship.

1. *From Love to Friendship*

The famous Iranian mystic, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (450-505 AH/1058-1111 AD) has articulated on the common ground for simultaneity of love of God and communal friendship. According to him, "whoever is overwhelmed by the friendship of God and reaching Love becomes the friend of all human creatures (Ghazali, 309). Ein al-Ghuzat Hamedani (492-525) too, has exemplified the relation between man and God by love. According to his interpretation of the Quranic verse of "his loving them and they loving him",² "if one admits that s/he loves God, the world, which is the home of the beloved, the world of inhabitants, who are the members of the beloved's home, must be loved, otherwise, the love of God will not be pure." (Ein al Ghuzate Hamedani, Letters 32-33, Mirrarity: 104).

2. *From Friendship to Love*

Abu Said is the main figure amongst the Iranian mystics who envisioned mystical love of divinity via communal –human friendship. He translated this principle by founding "the commune of the youth" - جوانمردی in the eleventh century in eastern Iran. In his *Conven خانقاه* he and his students practiced communal comportment of friendship by hosting the needy and the wonderers. Friendship has also been propagated by Iranian mystics with the tradition of

"conversation" (*Suhbat*) in Sufism according to which: "conversation is of the habits of the believer intimates with people and people intimate with him (Sulami, 113).

Regarding Conversation as companionship, Sulami, another mystic, has related companionship with a vision of equity by considering erfanic conversation as between those without any difference, especially in material possession: Do convers with the one who has no-thing, for, what he has he considers not of his own For violence appears when there comes the talk of "I" and/or "you".

Hence, one can say that *Erfan* is the effort to find ways for a double convergence, the one between man and God, the other, amongst members of each community, and human "community" for that matter.

3. *Civic Convergence via Unity of Freedom-Equality-Erfan*

As a thinker with mystical tendency, Ali Shari'ati (1934-1978), the contemporary Iranian thinker, has argued that the main historical strands of human thought can be categorised as one or other of the three basic currents of Mysticism, Equality, Liberty (*Erfan, Barabari, Azadi*). Each of these currents, Shari'ati argues, has emerged in response to human problems and then has developed historically in ways which revealed the strengths and the weaknesses of each.

According to Shari'ati, Socialism, notwithstanding its preoccupation with Justice, has reduced man to a merely social entity and therefore, has not been able to respond to all human needs. Because, Shari'ati argues, there are needs which deeply trouble man; needs to which socialism and its materialistic view of the world can not respond:

[W]e see that socialism removes from man

² يُحِبُّونَهُمْ وَ يُحِبُّونَهُ (Loves them and love him)

all limbs and branches except one, but it so encourages that one to spread out that it outgrows root and trunk. Thus, it makes man one-dimensional, however lofty and sublime that one dimension may be (ibid).

Historically speaking also, Shari'ati contends, socialism as an ideological movement has betrayed the very goals that it had originally set itself to achieve:

....we have seen how that very socialist system that was to free people, assumed the forms, first, of worshipping personality and party, and then the worship of the state"(ibid: 107).

Existentialism, on the other hand, Shari'ati has argued, has sought human freedom by rejecting all gods - earthly and heavenly alike. The essence of Existentialism is to reject all bases for human choice outside man's own self. Freedom of choice is the founding principle of Existentialism. Religion, argues an atheist existentialist, looks to God for what it seeks, whereas Socialism gives legitimacy to the state (and the collectivity) for determining right and wrong, hence, both negate the authenticity and freedom of man. Existentialism, on the other hand, tells man that:

[c]hoice and freedom are yours unconditionally. All values exist when this freedom exists; should this freedom be taken away from you, these values would cease to be; you would become a slave to other powers: God or the state (ibid: 111).

Therefor, Shari'ati concludes, with its rejection of both Socialism and religion, Existentialism gives man absolute freedom in choosing his own destiny. But, he argues, if both the collective sense of choice and the divine origin of existence are rejected, then what can stop a hedonistic form of self-fulfilment. Such a choice produces, precisely, those social consequences which existentialism was intended to challenge and

provide an answer for. In order to reach its goals, this philosophy would need an ethical ground which would justify altruistic action. Such ground is, according to Shari'ati, provided by *Erfan* and its principles of love and friendship. Whereas, contemporary existentialist schools of thought are, by their nature, unable to provide such an axiology:

Existentialism, however much it may turn on the primacy of man and human freedom, ...it leaves man suspended Existentialism lacks a basis on which to answer my questions. Now I am bent on a course of action where I may either sacrifice myself to the people or sacrifice the people to myself.... (ibid).

Turning his attention to mysticism, Shari'ati then emphasizes that we should distinguish two kinds of mystical tendency and orientation. 'Eastern mysticism', he argues, entered religion and gradually assumed the form of an ecclesiastical establishment which in turn and gave rise to a new class:

As part of the ruling class, it formed social ties with the other elements of that class. The unfortunate consequence was that religion and mysticism were transformed into a superstitious rationale for the exploitation of the people by the ruling class and into an enemy of human growth, the growth of man's primordial nature. Mysticism became a shackle on the foot of the spiritual and material evolution of mankind (ibid: 52).

Unlike such implications for mysticism, Shari'ati has interpreted the true *Erfan* as arising:

....from the essential nature of man. The most general sense of the word "mysticism" is that of the inner sense of apprehension people have while here in the world of nature (ibid: 50).

Accordingly, then Shari'ati would say, the shortcomings of these three currents are both essential and accidental. Essentially, each one

has certain characteristics which frustrate its attempt to deliver to humanity what it has always sought. Accidentaly, however, it has been due to certain developments that the ability of these currents to contribute to human happiness has been mollified. Whereas all these currents have been an expression of dissatisfaction with realities, and have been generated in response to the problems caused by the two great moments of historical transformation, they all have (in one form or another) been turned into a preserving force for the status quo.

As such then, Shari'ati concludes, none of these three currents can singularly provide a tenable solution to human problems. The only way that any one of them can play the role that they each propose, he continues, is by a totality consisting simultaneously of all three of them. Only when an existential self-awareness coupled with a sense of social consciousness can result in an authentic self - realisation. This essential authenticity can lead to practical emancipation when there is an ethical basis for action. Whereas the first two conditions are fulfilled by the two modern schools of existentialism and socialism, the last one can only be satisfied by a mystical sense of self-recognition:

Therefore, the most perfect person or school for the purpose of liberating man would be the person or the school that embraces these three dimensions.... When these three dimensions each separately takes the form of a school, their negative aspects are actualized, whereas if these three dimensions were united, the negative aspects could no longer exist (ibid: 118).

Similar to the third type of Aristotelian *philia*, Shari'ati places Companionship, as the fundamental principle in *Erfan* higher than love:

There is a greater love which unlike other kinds of love is not instrumental, and that is that of human for human, one spirit for another spirit. I preferred not to call it Love ... best word here is /خویشاوندی/ familiarity, Khish /خویش/ (self) and /وند/ "vand" (belonging) ... so I say companionship, by which I mean love between two familiar spirit (Shari'ati, 13/96).

So companionship is higher than love, because, whereas, love can be blind *eros* and union out of blindness, companionship is union based on self-consciousness and insight, clear and bright (ibid: 13/97). Such love is rooted in brightness, it grows and flourishes in light, and that is why emerges after familiarity (ibid: 13 /298).

C- Phenomenology and Friendship

Hermeneutic phenomenology of Martin Heidegger is considered to be a non-metaphysical alternative to Aristotle's *phronesis*.³ If there is a sense of correctness in this resembling as regards to Heidegger's early work, *Being and Time*, in the later part of his life, Heidegger goes beyond that direction by invoking the notion of *Gelassenheit* from Meister Eckhart's mystical thought and then he envisions the notion of *Geviert*, "the Fourfold, namely, the interplay of God, Man, Heaven and Earth as the real scenery of being – in-the-world. In his *phronetic* work of *Being and Time*, Heidegger, contrary to the Hobbsian notion of "war of all against all", has succinctly dealt with the co-existence (*Mitsein*) of human being with solicitude (*Fürsorge*) as the main concern in each human being in its authenticity.

After Heidegger, Klaus Held has, by invoking the Heideggerian notion of "fundamental mood" proposed the notion of

³ Practical/civic wisdom

"reverential awe" (*Scheu* in German) to show a non-subjective notion of respect for the other for the possibility of civil comportments which he has named as "the political world" (*die Politische Welt*).

1. *Being-With, Solitude, and the "Fourfold"*

According to Robert Dostal, although Heidegger had not provided a political philosophy, but a "Heideggerian political Philosophy" could certainly be developed. In fact, as the resemblance of Heidegger's *Being and Time* with Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* indicates, Heidegger has not rejected Ethics, but has argued that Ethics had to be thought in an original way (Dostal, 405). Hence, concepts such as Solitude (*Fürsorge*) and the "Fourfold (*Geviert*) can be explained as elements of Heidegger's phenomenological "Ethics". As, according to Crowell, Heidegger's interpretation of intentionality (ontic transcendence) is grounded in the prior ontological transcendence of *Dasein*. For Heidegger, transcendence precedes all other forms of comportment, while it is significant to notice that phenomenologically speaking, being- in -the- world is not exactly the same as subjectivity, or as such it is a non-subjectivist Friendship:

Heidegger interprets Dasein's transcendence "as the kind of commitment to which Dasein itself submits voluntarily. To be human is to commit oneself to living according to the norms of one's chosen position. Accountability requires already recognizing the normative claim on oneself and responding to it in some way (Moran, 1).

As such, Heidegger phenomenologically observes *Mitsein* and *Fürsorge* as constitutive of each human being (*Dasein*), and "being-with" is considered a fundamental existential (i.e Characteristic of *Dasein*) (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 161):

Dasein is authentically itself only to the extent that, as concerned Being-alongside and solicitous Being-with, it projects itself upon its ownmost potentiality-for-Being rather than upon the possibility of the they-self (ibid: 308).

As such, then, "in no way is the relation to others secondary to our relation to things in the world or to our own self". As Heidegger would say:

Being-with is such that the disclosedness of the Dasein-with of others belongs to it; this means that because Dasein's Being is Being-with, its understanding of Being already implies the understanding of Others. This understanding, like any understanding, is not an acquaintance derived from knowledge about them, but a primordially existential kind of Being, which, more than anything else, makes such knowledge and acquaintance possible. Knowing oneself (Sichkennen) is grounded in Being-with, which understands primordially. Solicitous concern is understood in terms of what we are concerned with, and along with our understanding of it. Thus in concerned solicitude the Other is proximally disclosed." (Ibid: 124).

The notion of being-with was further elaborated and developed later on by Heidegger in the notion of "the fourfold". This notion can be considered as a vision which can prepare the ground for a sense of double convergence, the one vertical and the other horizontal. Although this notion has not received much detailed treatment, Graham Harman believes it has "great value for the near future of philosophy, despite the apparent opacity of its poetic terminology." (Harman: 292.) According to Harman, for Heidegger, the problem with virtually all intellectual orientations besides his own is that

all are duped in the end by some form of presence-at-hand:

[t]he primary duality in Heidegger's world is the axis that divides the shimmering façade of an object's present-at-hand surface from the underground rumble of its enigmatic depth. the quadrants of Heidegger's world. On the side of the veiled occlusion of the being of beings, we have earth and gods. Earth is described as a global unity; in each appearance of this term, Heidegger refers to earth as a unified nourishing or fertilizing force (ibid).

With such conception of the world, Heidegger gives a novel picture of "Reality":
When we say mortals, we are then thinking of the other three along with them by way of the simple oneness of the four. Earth and sky, divinities and mortals—being at one with one another of their own accord—belong together by way of the simpleness of the united fourfold. Each of the four, mirrors in its own way the presence of the others. Each one reflects itself in its own way into its own, within the simpleness of the four. This mirroring does not portray a likeness. The mirroring, lightening each of the four, appropriates their own presenting into simple belonging to one another. Mirroring in this appropriating-lightening way, each of the four plays to each others. The appropriative mirroring sets each of the four free into its own, but it binds these free ones into the simplicity of their essential being toward one another (Heidegger (1971): 178).

Accordingly, one can therefore conclude that Aristotle's notion of *zoon politikon* (civil animal), and Heidegger's phenomenological observation that "*Dasein* 'is' (or one could say, 'exists') for the sake of others", are the same. In other words, it could be argued that human being is a being with *apriori* -

ontologically constituted by friendship – in-being- human.

2. *Phenomenology of Justice with respect to "Political World"*

In recent years, Klaus Held, the renowned German phenomenologist, has developed the notion of "*politische Welt*", by which the polarity of "self" and "the other" can be surpassed by making political convergence possible. As such, this undertaking has high potential to overcome the paradox in modern political theories which, while insisting on the authenticity of nominalist individualism, yet have pursued a form of political, convergence, which they deemed to be a historical necessity. Held begins his undertaking in the first step with the question concerning the subject matter (*die Sache*) of political philosophy:

It is not philosophy as a way of thinking that is here described with the property "political," however. Rather, the attribute is true of the object, the "Sache" or the "subject matter," to which the area of philosophy thus characterized relates (Held, 1).

By referring to the etymology of the word "political", and by invoking both Aristotelian and Husserlian notion of the world ("*die Welt*"), Held proposes the phenomenological notion of "political World" (*die politische Welt*) as the subject matter of political philosophy. In Held's articulation of the notion of "political world", the socio-political divergence is considered to be the root of violence:

Every act of violence is either an open or a hidden start to a life-or-death struggle. For it is a form of compulsion that depends upon threatening others with some danger, and "danger" ultimately means that one's very life is at stake. (ibid: 55).

According to Held, the prevalence of what Husserl has designated as "natural attitude" is the root of this danger which can be taken as an equivalent to the Greek notion of *doxa*. As such, the most distinguishing characteristic of "political world" is lodging in-between the "natural- particular" and the "philosophical-universal" attitudes, as designated by Husserl. So, "political world" is neither particular horizon of *doxa*, nor universal horizon of *episteme*, but a world/horizon that entails the "many", namely the *doxa* which tends from plurality towards unity, towards the "one":

[T]he political world opens itself as an open and public space through the plurality of citizens, who are allowed in the discussion of common issues to bring forth their logos, or their judgments as verbalized opinions, freely, or from their own particular home-world horizons of judgment. (ibid: 56).

Here, however, a question appears regarding the motive which brings *doxa*-holding individuals to move from their particular horizon to that of a shared world of convergence, namely to the political world. This question is answered by Held by proposing the concept of "reverential awe" (*Scheu*). This is, in fact, a pathos which The Greeks designated it with the word "*aidos*":

The fundamental feature of aidos is a holding back with one's own appearing in the world that gives room for the appearing of other human beings. Certain modes of comportment belong to this holding back mode through which others are cared for and with which they are given consideration. In German, the word "Scheu" perhaps best captures the sense of this Greek term, but in English, we can only approach it with such a phrase as "reverential awe (ibid: 55).

So, held would argue, as the pathos of wonder has been the impetus for the inauguration of *episteme*, [I]t was the pathos

of *aidos* or reverential awe that provided the impulse for a living together in the political world. But the significance of *aidos* is not limited to providing this impulse. It is also that upon which the continued existence of the political world depends:

Only insofar as "reverential awe" becomes a "second nature" to them can it motivate them to take an enduring interest in an open and public free-space, which as a protection against the ever-present threat of violence guarantees that everyone at every moment is permitted to state their opinion from their own particular world horizons. In this way, the ethos of the political world depends upon the virtue of reverential awe as a habit. (ibid: 57).

As such, then one can identify the notion of *Sheu* as a non-subjectivist notion resembles the Aristotelian notion of *philia* without resorting to metaphysics to philosophically justifying it.

Conclusion

Bringing about convergence is the central theme of political philosophy. Justice, as the permanent norm in the history of political philosophy, has been envisioned, though differently by various political thinkers, to play the major role for the realization of convergence in order to avoid disintegration of existing communities. But it has not been Justice alone which has been considered as playing such a role in the tradition of political thinking. In fact, friendship between fellow citizens has in various ways been envisioned to contribute to the unity of both state and community by transmitting feelings of intimacy and solidarity. As such, friendship has been conceptualized by thinkers such as Aristotle, Heidegger, Shari'ati, and Held, as having more potential for bringing about even deeper sense of convergence than Justice ca

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بیش از عدالت: پدیدارشناسی دوستی و عرفان

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چکیده

ارسطو در اخلاق نیکوماخوس، دوستی (philia) را به‌عنوان فضیلتی بالاتر از عدالت معرفی و بحث کرده است. بعد از ارسطو، متفکرانی در دنیای لاتین و ایرانی، مفاهیم «آمیسیا» و «دوستی» را معادل فیلیای ارسطو به کار بردند و در مورد آن اندیشه‌ورزی کرده‌اند. در دوران مدرن، درحالی‌که «عدالت» چونان یک نظام حقوقی حامی حقوق فردی شد، دوستی به یک دغدغه و مشغله شخصی تقلیل یافت و به عرصه خصوصی محدود و محصور شد. در دوران متأخر، بار دیگر دوستی وارد فضا و عالم فکری شده است. در این مقاله سه الگوی فکری «دوستی»، یعنی الگوهای فرونتیکی، عرفانی، و پدیدار شناختی تحلیل می‌شوند و براساس آنها گفته می‌شود که «همگرایی مدنی»، که شرط یک «زندگی مدنی» است، با «دوستی بیش از «عدالت» امکان تحقق دارد.

واژه‌های کلیدی: دوستی، عدالت، عرفان، همگرایی مدنی، مارتین هایدگر، علی شریعتی، کلاوس هلد

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