

An Investigation of the Concept of Justice and Its Evolving Notions

*Mohammad Hosseinkhani**

Faculty of Social science, University Academy of Tajikistan, Dushanbe/Tajikistan.

**Corresponding Author*

Qurban Giyaove

Faculty of Social science, University Academy of Tajikistan, Dushanbe/Tajikistan.

ABSTRACT

Justice is a pivotal element of social life. Currently, the enactment of various social and welfare laws aiming at the observance of the rights of citizens and the elimination of their discrimination has failed to content the people of the world. On the contrary, we witness an ever-increasing surge in justice-oriented objections around the globe. This further demonstrates that the states and statesmen should first ponder over global justice instead of addressing the question of globalization in different contexts. In other words, social justice is a requisite for any kind of development.

This article is an attempt to discuss the status of social justice analytically and comparatively, while expounding on the concept of justice in different eras. As regards the dispersion of existing societies to various institutions and establishments being in direct contact with the members of the society, justice should be initiated, expanded and developed from the very base of society and institutions to gain a relatively favorable social justice. The purpose of the present article is to substantiate the claim that the question of justice and its current types has become an increasingly important and vital issue in society and this is a task entrusted to any researcher. Most thinkers hold justice to be a social virtue, as well as a factor in growth, development, excellence, welfare, and security in society.

The findings of most researchers including the present study demonstrate that, in order to be actualized, social justice must be known in conjunction with its various components including the distributive justice and procedural justice for the betterment of the majority of individuals in a given society.

Keywords: social justice, organizational justice, distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, organization.

Introduction

Justice is a passion concealed in the nature of humanity. Seeking justice is rooted in human nature. Therefore, it has no temporal boundaries and will always be sought by human communities. The literal meaning of justice is being just and enforcing justice [1]. Considering the range of meanings that justice has, this word is sacred and it is a critical factor of the social life. As the knowledge of various fields of study was developed, different types of justice were defined. Nevertheless, the basic definition for justice,

which is related to the humanities discipline, is the distribution of resources and wealth within a structure. The subject of justice includes many social relations. Furthermore, different categories of justice are usually discussed when there is injustice and inequality throughout an individual's life. This study examines the definition of justice in liberal terms that is more distributed in nature. Based on this definition, the government and the social institutions must not discriminate between their citizens and their employees. According to the theories of John Rawls, this view defines the justice in organizations as the organizational justice, which its enforcement realizes the justice in the society, because the society is comprised of large and small organizations as well as social institutions. Therefore, the study of justice and its' nature has a long history, and the realization of justice has been amongst the oldest ideals of mankind throughout history. The written texts show that even before the ancient times and the invention of writing system, humans have studied the concept of justice, [2] so much so that they have represented the concept of justice with ostrich feathers [3]. There are various definitions of justice. The first definitions of justice are outlined by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. According to Socrates, justice precedes everything [4]. After Socrates, his disciple, Plato defined justice in his book "Republic". His view of justice in this book is the first and the oldest elaborative definition in the ancient political philosophy of the world [5]. Based on Plato's viewpoint, when everyone in the government is doing the task they are qualified for, justice is realized. This view is similar to the concept of a fair person: he/she is an individual that his/her characteristics (anger lust and reason) are in accordance with another and united by his/her mind [6].

Aristotle, who was also a disciple of Plato, believed that justice means behaving in an equal manner toward others [7]. In Aristotle's view, the reason for revolutions in nations and societies is that people are treated unjustly [8].

Thomas Aquinas believed that real justice in society is realized when a ruler rewards each person based on their competence [9]. It seems that in Aristotle's and the Aquinas' time, politicians were regarded as the enforcers of justice. The social state of people in those times, the belief in multiple and various gods (which some of them were corporeal) compelled this viewpoint.

Despite the oppression of ideologies by the church, during the Renaissance era the westerners became familiar with Islamic philosophy and Islamic scholars such as Al-farabi and Ibn-Sina, especially during the Crusades. This familiarity led to the emergence of philosophers such as Thomas Aquinas, Roger Bacon and others.

In the Renaissance era, some sought to reform the society and realize justice by presenting an ideal, albeit fanciful concept of society. The book of Utopia by Thomas More and the City of the Sun by Tommas Campanella are examples of this belief. The creation of these books was in response to the injustice in the society of that time.

Thomas Moore has a very extensive definition of justice: "Human equality in affairs, services and generally in life". Hobbes, an English philosopher, was one of the most essential political theorists. He used the social contract theory to define the society, as the basic requirements of humans and achieving the citizens' satisfaction in the society.

Hobbes philosophy relies on the concept of natural law that states: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you [10]". He believed that this law is even recognized by the least reasonable individuals.

In Hobbes' philosophy, justice is viewed as the people's attitudes in contracts, agreements, and keeping their promises. In other words, justice is a result of humans' mutual fulfilment of promises and commitments in the society.

In the book "Leviathan", Hobbes states: "Injustice is nothing but the unfulfilling of an agreement, and whatever that is unjust is just [11]". In Hobbes' viewpoint, justice is not an objective standard in the human society. Justice is a result of agreement between humans. In fact, the most important issue in Hobbes' viewpoint is the security of citizens in a society, and not the realization of justice. In other words, he considers the realization of justice in the society to be equal to the security of citizens.

John Locke, an English philosopher, believed that "all humans are created from a single essence and they have a pure and good nature. Accordingly, everyone is naturally equal, have complete freedom and is governed by the law of nature. Locke believed that this law is no different from the law of reason. And it is the law of reason and God's voice that resides within mankind [12]." Therefore, in Locke's viewpoint,

the government is bound to enforce the natural law and to prevent difficulties that might stem from the sovereignty of state.

John Stuart Mill, in his essay “On Liberty”, paid special attention to liberty in society and believes that: “it is only fitting to call liberty by its’ proper name when everyone in the society pursues their interests without harming everyone else [13].” Mill considers the human mind to be the most important factor of change and evolution in the society. By emphasizing on respecting other individuals’ rights and interests, he implicates the basic principles of justice.

Locke, who is also a political philosopher, defines justice in the context of social contracts. He believes that people are entitled to protest against government when “the political power that is secured by the social contract is abused [14].” Locke supports the idea of social contracts. In his view, the relation between justice and freedom in society is that humans must freely participate in social contracts. Whatever they will achieve in this contract as a part of their free agreement will be just. People will achieve free social and political behavior based on their free agreements. The perfect civil life of humans in a society is created and endures because of this mutual agreement. Locke also refers to people's satisfaction in a society as a principle of that society’s political power.

In Montesquieu’s viewpoint, natural law is regarded as every being’s (including humans) nature, the relationship it has with others, its effects, and consequences [15]. This sets a standard for justice that precedes the positive law [16]. He believes that in a natural state, as compared to a civil state, there have always been justice and fair relations. In Montesquieu's perspective, while justice is not based on agreements and social contracts (according to Hobbes and the Lockes’ theories), it is something that stems from human desires and inclinations. Since humans have various inclinations in different societies, the concept of justice is different in each society. Like Aristotle, Montesquieu believed in moderation for legislation and policymaking [17].

In Hume’s era, the church was not as influential as before. Hume, who was inspired by Locke and had introduced the concept of empiricism, wanted to disentangle philosophy from all manner of spiritual self-reflection. He put the emphasis on the benefit principle, and introduced people's usefulness in society. Therefore, in his mind, “whichever that is beneficial to the society is approved and is the cause for satisfaction [18]”.

Similar to John Locke's viewpoint, Hume believed that the law must be applied equally for everyone. He regards justice and its realization as a means to reach satisfaction and gaining general benefits in a society.

General benefits of a society result from the realization of justice. Reflecting on the beneficial results of justice helps to understand the excellence of this virtue [19].

Hume views of the governments as a man-made system. Therefore, the most important advantage that governments have is that they can enforce justice.

The prevalent thought among many philosophers of justice is that they must regard justice as a virtue, value or a measure that is free of any desires or personal interest of humans. In this view, justice must be done in all aspects of life, whether it is an individual's life or in general contexts, such as society, legislation, government, political decisions, distributing resources and wealth. One must also conform his character and thoughts to the principles of justice and its requirements. Based on this viewpoint, justice is above a person's personal interests, and his duty is bound to do it if he is to have a rational and just life. Of course, our definition of justice, its principles, and realization is different from that of these views’ advocates. Hume considers the validity of justice in its usefulness and providing social interests and satisfaction in a society. He believes that Justice is realized when a society, concerning its interests, functions in a realistic manner.

People believing that their political-social system provides their interests will approve its ethics. Hence, people will obey the system, because it is beneficial and it functions. Moral principles also result from usefulness and are dependent on it. Principles such as justice, morality, freedom, and such are not historical and their validity relies on their usefulness.

Therefore, Hume considers justice and freedom to be equal, because each one benefits the society. Moreover, he regarded security and justice to be the results of freedom.

Regardless of Aristotle's belief of justice as a prominent virtue, in Hume's view, justice is not a virtue in and of itself; it is realizing and doing justice that is considered a virtue.

Rousseau, an English philosopher, pointed out that the nature of things is good and orderly, and it is not reliant on human agreement. All justice comes from God because he is the creator of all. Nevertheless, if we could accept this grand and heavenly view of justice, we would not need any laws or governments. According to Rousseau, there is certainly a comprehensive sense of justice that results from human wisdom. Nevertheless, if such justice is to have any value, it must be mutual. Laws of justice that have no natural consequences are ineffective. "What remains from this inefficiency of justice only benefits the oppressive individuals and only harms the just. Because a just person applies justice for everyone, while an oppressive individual is unjust towards everyone [20]." In this viewpoint, justice is only realized through implementing laws.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau considers the decadence in societies to be a result of inequality and injustice of the enlightened modern societies. The reason for this decline is that modern societies persuade their citizens to oppress their natural desires, and instead encourage them to behave in a false manner. Meanwhile, the modern societies promote radical inequalities among their citizens [21].

Adam Smith, an English philosopher, uses the word sympathy (a word used by Hume) and recasts it as empathy. In his perspective, no characteristics of mind will be accepted as virtue, except for the time when it benefits the self or others.

However, in Smith's view, acceptance comes before usefulness, but acceptance is a result of human customs and habits. Therefore, following laws and norms in a society is a result of its general customs, and customs of people are created for continuing human generations. Doing justice is also reliant on the growth of a society. The society of today has grown during many stages. It was roughly in the second stage that the concept of owning domestic animals emerged and an initial notion of ownership, justice, and government followed as a result.

In the later stages of growth, this notion became more comprehensive and governments were created based on upholding social order and justice. Accordingly, Smith regards the emergence of commercial society to be the highest point in the history of social growth, because justice and moral judgement are respectable values in the commercial society. In general, he believes that justice is a result of economic growth and profitability in the society. As a result, justice in each society follows its rules and customs. This viewpoint is conservative. In Smith's viewpoint, the invisible hand [22] There is a consensus among those who have worked in connection with social justice that injustice and discrimination among the members of society would undermine their lifestyle and thus challenge the family and society, leading them to encounter abnormalities.

Moreover, economic procedures act in a way resulting in realization of the social justice in a society [23].

During the last centuries, societies have grown intellectually and humanity has been centralized in philosophy. This led to the expanding attitudes towards human values. Today, we observe that in the liberal stance, justice means that the government must not discriminate between its citizens, unless there are distinct differences between them regarding a special issue. In three Greek philosophers' definitions of justice (and in Aquinas's definition), justice is a political concept because its enforcer is the government. Similarly, the fair distribution of power in the society is an important subject in the liberal concept of justice.

Marx's famous motto "from each according to his ability to each according to his needs" represent a radical notion of justice. In this motto, the central aspect of justice is the fair distribution of wealth, just as the society is growing and developing industrially [14]. The literal meaning of justice encompasses many things, but the word "justice" with the meanings of equality and fairness is widely used, and it is closer to the subject of this paper. In addition, justice is defined in most social fields, and social institutions justice is one of them. The subject of institutions justice is important, because various institutions have developed in today's societies and they had a major role to play in people's lives. This has caused many scholars, especially sociologists and industrial psychologists, to shift their attention to this matter. One of the basic goals of institutions is to do justice to provide job satisfaction for their employees. Organizational justice, social institutions and alludes to the fair and moral behavior of individuals within a social institutions, and

the manner of relationship that a social institutions has with other institutions. Philosophers (especially John Rawls) who have been concerned with introducing a concept of fairness and fair distribution paid a special attention to this subject. The main subject of John Rawls' theory was social procedures and organizations [24]. The reason for the involvement of researchers in studies dedicated to the role of justice is the significance of this role in the structure of social classes and, furthermore, the fact that these social inequalities have existed since time immemorial spawning from the lack of understanding in doing justice. The study of justice has become more important in the present societies with respect to the advancement of society and the widening gap between classes.

Aside from the above cases, the topic of justice is of such paramount importance that God has pointed in monotheistic religions and especially Islam and Quran to the types of justice in every sense of the word including the institutional justice. Justice is a divine quality and thus a principle of creation. Islam has a special worldview based on justice. "What is meant by justice as a quality of divinity is that justice is a pillar of being and human life. Hence, it should be a pillar of our society." [25]

Likewise, the process of justice is important in institutions inasmuch as humanity has always dealt since its creation with seminal units such as family, the centers of education, congregations, and assemblies for the exchange of thoughts commensurate with social advancement. It is also important due to "its direct relation to significant social and organizational processes such as work ethics, and social institutions organizational commitment, job happiness, job satisfaction, customer satisfaction, and the performance of the staff" [26].

Presently, as the highest social authority, the United Nations has set the 20th of February as the World Day of Social Justice in the world calendar and recognizes the role of organizations in social justice for creating jobs and attention to employment.

On the one hand, today's social institutions are one of the important institutions in society, and they distinctly represent the distribution of resources and the manner of distribution in human societies.

Furthermore, Rawls states that justice is prevalent in most aspects of human life, and that it is one of the foremost social virtues (like honesty) [27].

In addition to previous discussions, the subject of justice is so important that in Quran, God refers to it in many forms, including institutions justice: "that people may maintain (their affairs) in justice." Justice is one of God's attributes and therefore, a principal of creation. Islam has a particular worldview based on justice. "When we say that justice is one of God's attributes, it means that justice is one of the major principles of existence and human life. As a result, justice must be a principle of our society [28]." In this sense, organizational justice is also consequential. Justice in social institutions is important, because it is directly related to important organizational and social processes, such as work ethics, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and customer satisfaction and employee performance [29].

The author of this paper believes that another necessity of studying justice is its impact on people's behavior in a society. Humans are social animals and their main advantage over animals is how they interact with each other. The basis of human interaction is human behavior. Human interactions form the social capital [30] that enables humans. Sympathy, altruism, and respect are all instances of behaviors that are applauded in a society. Not only do they play a major part in society's welfare and satisfaction, but also lack of these traits in today's society (especially in industrial societies) is difficult to comprehend and compromises the integrity of humanity. For instance, Augustus Conte considered altruism to be an original desire within humans. He considered human willingness to form a family to be the first sign of altruism. Families are the core of society and eventually their expansion leads to the creation of governments. Further, Conte believed that justice significantly influences the general behavior of people in a society and their personality by affecting their personal thoughts and morality.

John Rawls believes that social justice is related to the citizens' self-confidence and evolution of personality. For the audience of this paper, the necessity of justice in children's growth in social groups and institutions is an established fact. Studies have shown that the processes of applying justice are very important in organizations. These processes might influence the employees' beliefs and behaviors. The

social institutions' fair treatment of employees by their social institutions generally leads to the employees' increased commitment to their social institutions and better extra-role performances¹.

On the other hand, people who feel that they are treated unjustly are more likely to leave their social institutions or show less commitment, and even might behave abnormally, for example, seeking retaliation [31]. These issues will likely create challenges for social institutions and an organization's survival and development.

The foundation of research methodology

In studies of this caliber, as with most studies demanding the commitment of sociologists and scholars in social sciences, two schools of thought serve as a source of inspiration, namely the schools of structuralism and functionalism. The prime objective of this group was summarized in the understanding and recognition of human communities through the study of their internal structure and the performance of different members in this structure. The present study is no exception from the rule and the principle of structuralism analysis has been employed in this essay.

Furthermore, the methodological foundations of our research are predicated on the manifestation of the philosophical trends affecting the life of society as well as the manifestation of the concept of justice and its evolving notions throughout different eras.

Discussion and Conclusion

The concept of justice has been highlighted by scholars in various forms given the progress in the industry, the awareness of the people and their social demands. Hence, it is observed that, with the advent of a modern society, the necessity of law and law-abidingness becomes vital. Durkheim, the French sociologist, regards the law as a contributing factor in the preservation of society. Durkheim considers the law to have a contributory role in the proper and fair regulation of social relations with the aim of realizing justice and order.

In any society wherein the relationships between individuals are based on known principles and rules, the obedience and pursuance of these rules creates a kind of social bond among the members. Thus, the members engage in collaboration with one another to advance their own interests, goals, and those of the society in which they live. However, despite being formed on the basis of general interests, no society can be found whose members are entirely free of conflict among themselves. This is the case while the collaboration of the members of society enables them to gain some interests, the achievement of which is not viable for any single member. Hence, a set of rules and principles is essential to serve as the basis for selecting one of different social orders that determine how privileges are divided and arrive at an agreement on the proper distribution of the share assigned for each member of society. We give these principles the label of social justice. They single out the method for determining the rights and commitments in the fundamental institutions of society and determining how the interests and costs of social collaboration are judiciously distributed. It can be posited that a certain society enjoys an ideal order only when all of its members have assimilated the definitive principles of justice. In fact, among people with divergent goals and intentions, a common concept of social justice may cause the bonds of friendship to come into existence. If the members of society perceive the distribution of sources and concessions as something parallel, the appreciation of justice would be higher among them and society would enjoy more stability and order.

As a concept, justice has been posed in different forms by scholars with respect to the progress in the industry, the awareness of the people and their social demands. Hence, it is observed that the advent of a modern society has necessitated the law and law-abidingness. Durkheim, the French sociologist, views the law as a contributing factor in the preservation of society by considering it conducive to the proper and fair regulation of social relations with the aim of achieving justice and order.

¹ Certain behaviors of employees which are not part of their formal job requirements as they cannot be prescribed or required in advance for a given job, but they help in the smooth functioning of the organization as a social system

By emphasizing two principles, he is committed to the observance of liberty in administering justice and rights. The first principle is that no state may treat its citizens on unequal terms with references to the law. Secondly, the states cannot disregard values and especially the value known as the parity of citizens for legal considerations.

In explaining the “role of justice”, John Rawls, the American philosopher, has laid particular stress on justice as the primary virtue of social institutions, similar to the role that the truth plays for the intellectual system in humans. While stating the importance of finding a common conception of justice to regulate social relations, Rawls insists that the members of society usually differ in perceiving justice, injustice, and the basic rules of social coexistence. John Rawls is one of those thinkers who believe in the interaction between freedom and justice and attempts to coordinate these two concepts. He believes that freedom also incorporates justice.

Presently, as held by most scholars in the field of sociology and social sciences, the distributive justice plays a significant role in the well-being, dynamicity, and interests of the human community and organization. On another level, in the age of globalization, the process of administrative changes has also come under the influence of the progress made in the area of science and technology, the acceleration of communications and the shifts occurring in the values, cultures, expectations and the political demands of nations. Changing the preferences, desires, and expectations of citizens has caused the organizations and institutions to be accountable to citizens. Accordingly, the states adopt a new perspective to view the members of society as customers in the private sector and try to provide maximum satisfaction for them.

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