چهارمین همایش بین‌المللی

صلح و حل منازعه

به اهتمام:

دکتر سعیده کوزه‌گری

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**International Conference on
Peace and Conflict Resolution**
المؤتمر الدولی للسلام و حل النزاعات

دانشکده مطالعات جهان دانشگاه تهران

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Chapter One: Theoretical Foundations and Roots of Peace, Conflict and Conflict Resolution

Towards an Ethical Politics and
the Peace of Nations

This article seeks to demonstrate, through a hypothetical dialogue between Hannah Arendt and Emmanuel Levinas, that the essence of politics must be sought beyond ˮreal politicsˮ and its agent, namely, the state. For this reason, politics requires a fundamental, radical and serious rethinking. This rethinking, however, must be carried out by first deconstructing politics to prepare it for emerging new possibilities; second deconstructing ethics and extending it from the individual level to the level of ˮI in the Weˮ; third reinterpreting the relationship between politics and ethics, which are already in the process of constructive judgment and are ready for a relationship that has no master or servant. As a result of such simultaneous reflections, the foundations of what this article views as Ethical politics could probably be clarified in general terms. This essay thus raises three long–standing questions: What is politics? What is ethics? What is ethical politics? The response to the first question is founded on Arendtˈs views. This paper draws attention to concepts such as plurality instead of unity, public realm instead of private realm, and peace instead of war. Relying on Levinasˈs philosophy of ethics, the second question is answered by emphasizing the primacy of understanding over cognition, the other over self, and the person over the land. Last but not least, the third question is addressed by establishing a link connection between the mentioned thinkersˈ views and their shared ideas such as responsibility for the other, the primacy of the interest of humans over national interests and a new concept of state.

Keywords: Plurality, The Public Realm, Difference, The Other, Ethical Politics.

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Towards an Ethical Politics and the Peace of Nations

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Abstract

This article seeks to demonstrate, through a hypothetical dialogue between Hannah Arendt and Emmanuel Levinas, that the essence of politics must be sought beyond "real politics" and its agent, namely, the state. For this reason, politics requires a fundamental, radical and serious rethinking. This rethinking, however, must be carried out by first deconstructing politics to prepare it for emerging new possibilities; second deconstructing Ethics and extending it from the individual level to the level of "I in the We"; third reinterpreting the relationship between politics and ethics, which are already in the process of constructive judgment and are ready for a relationship that has no master or servant. As a result of such simultaneous reflections, the foundations of what this article views as Ethical politics could probably be clarified in general terms. This essay thus raises three long-standing questions: What is politics? What is ethics? What is ethical politics? The response to the first question is founded on Arendt's views. This paper draws attention to concepts such as plurality instead of unity, public realm instead of private realm, and peace instead of war. Relying on Levinas's philosophy of ethics, the second question is answered by emphasizing the primacy of understanding over cognition, the other over self, and the person over the land. Last but not least, the third question is addressed by establishing a link connection between the mentioned thinkers' views and their shared ideas such as responsibility for the other, the primacy of the interest of humans over national interests and a new concept of state.

Key Words: Arendt, Levinas, Plurality, The Public Realm, Difference, The Other, Ethical Politics.

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Introduction

The title of my paper is "Towards an Ethical Politics and the Peace of Nations." In order to explore the ideas suggested by the title, I have structured my paper into two concise sections. I begin with a Deconstructive Encounter with Politics and Ethics, where I discuss the relationship between these two concepts. I then formulate the concept of "ethical politics" as a perspective for peace and elaborate on its key principles. Finally, in the conclusion, I utilize the concept of "ethical politics" to challenge real politics and its consequences for war.

We know that the relationship between politics and ethics has gone through three stages: A- In the Classical and Middle Ages, politics has either been the executor of moral law or the executor of the divine will. Therefore, in this period we have a fusion of politics and ethics. B- In the modern era, politics and ethics become independent of each other, and Machiavelli, according to Strauss, discovers "the new continent" in politics in his two books entitled "Discourses on Livy" and "Prince". As a result of this discovery, politics becomes a science that responds to the question of "how do people act" and ethics becomes a knowledge to answer the question of "how should people act". C- The independence of politics from ethics poses certain threats and compels philosophers to think of a solution. In the first stage, this solution focused on rethinking and deconstructing politics and ethics, and in the second stage, it opened up new ways for establishing a link between the two fields. In other words, without a new and contemporary understanding of politics and ethics, one cannot speak of ethical politics in the sense that this article seeks to formulate.

Deconstructive Encounter with Politics and Ethics

The main outputs of the deconstruction of politics, the founder of which should be considered Hannah Arendt, can be formulated in several ways. First, politics encompasses all public affairs. In other words, everything related to public affairs, from economics to education and from law to social relations can be included in the realm of politics. Only the private sphere, which is limited to household and family, is excluded from politics. However, in another understanding of politics, of which Michel Foucault should be considered the founder, even the private sphere is not excluded from the realm of politics. Power has affected all the pillars of society and all aspects of human life, and as such, even the family is not excluded from power relations. He rejects the idea that power is a massive and terrifying phenomenon, integrated and monopolized by the state or government, and believes that in the contemporary world we are dealing only with "micro-policies of power": the exercise of power in various local and indigenous institutions; prisons, hospitals, asylums, universities, even homes. Second, politics cannot be founded on the general concept of human, but must be based on human diversity. In such an understanding of politics, religions and philosophies could not gain insight into politics as they were concerned with human being, not human beings (Arendt, 2005: 93). According to Arendt, in the history of Western philosophy, human plurality was lost in the single concept of humanity. This is the reason that Western political thought, which began with Plato and ended with Marx, was neither capable to comprehend a reality called human plurality nor able to recognize it. By human plurality, Arendt simply means that human beings are not universally alike. Third, politics takes place not within humans but among

them, and is therefore entirely external: outside of humans (Arendt, 2005: 95). Hence, this belief in the Western philosophical thought that human beings are inherently political and politics exists within human beings must be abandoned. Fourth, contrary to Carl Schmidt, who see a war-free world as a world without politics, war must be seen as fundamentally at odds with politics (Arendt, 2005: 161). In Arendt's view, the city is a place where human relations take place, and is, as such, a political space, a space that is distinct from other similar spaces. The city, as a place where free people willingly gather to converse, has nothing to do with war and conflict.

In a similar way, the deconstruction of ethics entails outcomes that, firstly, distinguish it from the traditional understanding of ethics, a tradition that prevailed in Western ethical philosophy before Levinas, and, secondly, prepare it to stand alongside deconstructed politics. The first conclusion to be drawn from such an encounter is that ethics is by no means a specific type of philosophy of ethics and its resulting rules and regulations. Ethics in this understanding does not present a set of virtues, and should not be expected to offer a predetermined theory and formula to guide the will. The purpose is thus not to establish the science of ethics, but to try to understand its meaning (Levinas,1985:90). Second, this understanding of ethics is completely unrelated to the philosophies of ethics in the Western philosophical tradition; as traditional ethic has been ignorant of the other. Levinas views all ethical theories, including Kant's orthodox theories, Bentham's ethical profiteering, and even all Western ethics, as caught in "self-centeredness" (also in Locke, Hobbes, and Machiavelli). In his most important book, "Totality and Infinity", he formulates a theory in contrast to self-centeredness and based on my responsibility to others. The fact that the other is not reducible to me, my thoughts and my possessions is a call that criticizes my arrogance. This call is an event that Levinas names ethics (Levinas,1969:43). In this ethic: "The only absolute value is the human possibility of giving the other priority over oneself" (Levinas,1998:109). Third, Levinas's ethics is not based on similarity and affinity. Although the face is at the centre of Levinas's ethics, an ethical relationship with another is not of the kind of seeing. For an ethical relationship with another, it is not necessary to see the face, or to present an all-encompassing conception of it. Fourth, we are not dealing with the general concept of "person" or "individual" but with *a* person. Face-to-face communication guarantees the preservation of human uniqueness and does not allow the person to get lost in notions such as citizen or nation. According to Levinas, the uniqueness of no citizen can be reduced to concept or some generality in legislation (Levinas, 1998: 203,205).

Ethical Politics as a perspective for Global Peace

If such ethics is placed alongside such policies, the shortcomings of real politics will appear and the outlines of ethical politics will come to perspective. The first point is that in ethical politics, a person has priority to land, even if that land is sacred. Second, ethical politics is based on responsibility to another. I cannot be indifferent to another. Third, ethical politics is not individualistic or nationalistic, it is humane and the other is fundamental to it. Any social interaction according to this approach does not take place in my domain but in the other's domain. The humanism of ethical politics is a humanism that is centered on the other. Fourth, principles of ethical politics cannot be implemented by the existing government, which is itself the

representative of the politics of hostility, and since this is the case, the emergence of a new concept of government must be expected and put in perspective.

In order to further refine "ethical politics" as a perspective, one needs to emphasize that real politics has created catastrophes that we need to reflect on; we need to find ways out of this crisis. One way that is often recommended is to move towards the expansion of real politics, in the sense that the world of politics is the world of recognizing interests and preferring national interests over human interests. As such, the governments of marginalized, underdeveloped and developing countries should be called upon to accept the universal principles of real politics, urging them to advocate exclusively for the interests of their nation and to build political relations with other countries on such a basis. Such an invitation, might be useful and necessary to counter ideological confrontations with politics, pretending to care for oppressed nations, as well as to sympathize with nations whose current and day-to-day problems are so vast that they have no choice but to think about their own well-being. The problem, however, is that it leaves real politics untouched and accepts it without criticism, and even worse, considers it all-inclusive and reinforces it. In response to this path, another path is to a return to idealistic politics. The problem with idealism in politics, however, is that it is concerned with an understanding of the human in general, not with the common ideal of human beings who change over time, branch out, and yet know that they must dream collectively and move collectively toward realizing their dreams. In other words, both paths require a sort of universality from above. One attempts to realize what has been realized elsewhere, where it has not been realized. The other tries to consider an ideal of politics as the ideal of all human beings and invite them to it. What is possible, however, is to move in the path of "politics to come" through deconstructing politics. The promise of "Politics to come" is bringing all human beings to the forefront and involving them in political and social action. The next step in such an approach is to demand the promise of ethics.

Concluding Thoughts

This article cannot be finalized without emphasizing two considerations: 1- The necessity of presenting the outlines of an ethical politics in spite of all obstacles, 2- Understanding ethical politics as a notion "to come".

The first consideration is that clarifying ethical politics and speaking of a state beyond the state in a society in which the state in its modern sense has not yet been fully formed and its politics is neither political nor ethical, is perhaps a historical satire. A satire which arises from the discrepancy between the historical time and the calendar time, and is as such, not limited to the fields of politics and ethics, and is present in most aspects of life. However, intellectuals, considering the political and social situation of their country and fearing the possible abuse of the power driven, cannot raise theoretical issues halfway and keep themselves and others on the margins of history. Instead, intellectuals must endure a painful struggle. They have to engage the indigenous culture in thinking about contemporary problems and guide the society towards a situation where it can see the problems of society and the world at the same time, so that today's

problem in the West is not our tomorrow's problem. In such a case, intellectuals will not aspire to make this dying modernity universal in order to find a solution to its troublesome issues later.

The second consideration is that ethical politics is a perspective, not a set of specific ideas that can be realized. Such a perspective, as shown in this article, is possible through the deconstruction of politics and ethics and establishing of a relationship between the two. The first step in deconstructing politics is to distinguish between the ontic of politics and its ontology. The first can be called "political matter" and the second "politics to come." In other words, in dealing with different issues, from politics to academia, from life to death, from ourselves to others, etc., we are faced with two approaches: one is that of ideas and ideals and another is that of reality. In the case of politics in particular; we are dealing, on the one hand, with real politics; that is, politics which is represented and implemented by the state, and on the other hand, politics which can be called "politics to come." What we call politics in the contemporary world is one that has manifested itself in real politics or the politics of power.

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