

CONSTRUCTIVE COMPARISON OF GANDHI AND ARISTOTLE'S ETHICAL THEORY

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1. Introduction:

The very central issue of this philosophical examination is to show the very important concept of ethics which are relevantly available in Gandhi's moral vision. The vital thought as well as his moral life are more thought provoking and inspirable all the time for all mankind in this global phenomenal world. Morality can turn very comfortably articulate itself in religious and spiritual terminology. Gandhi's conception of morality can be articulated in terms of a trio of concepts, namely ahimsa, truth, and God. Which are intermingled with religion and grounded in morality? Aristotle is attempted in order to establish its philosophical availability on happiness. Aristotle ethical theory presents his moral philosophy. A comparison in ethical theory is an attempt to relate Gandhi's moral thinking to Aristotle's ethical theory. In this connection I would like develop my thought in the constructive way to articulate for the good debates.

2. Analyzing Mahatma Gandhi Concept of Ethics:

Philosophical debate leads to understand the detail episteme of Gandhi and Aristotle's notion of ethical theory. Logical analysis depends on the systematic comparison, which I would like to articulate about the concept of truth, non-violence, and God. There is need to analyze in the lucid manner about the interrelationship between these concepts. In the philosophical discourse difficulties and complexities arise in Indian tradition. I don't want to lead my thought into these complexities, but my utmost interest is to show the important significance of ethical theory.

God is the only being who is necessary free from self-deception. The truth of God's being is never hidden from him. God necessarily live in truth and not is self-deception. God and life of truth are one and same. Gandhi's occasional equation of God with truth and vice versa. Human being is endowed with a powerful ego. Man's ego to show him off in the best possible way under all circumstance. One's ego is, as it were, eternally in competition covertly or overtly with other egos. To have one's ego from being crushed, to keep it inflated, is by deliberately distorting the reality of the other person. The ego has a way of finding its way into the most altruistic of our emotions, for examples, kindness, generosity, affection, and so on. The most cooperative and effective ally of the ego is the mechanism of self-deception a privilege possession of man. One's inability to get past one's ego. Distortion in one's perception of the reality of oneself and others, owing to the involvement of the ego. Distorting another person's reality and distorting one's own are really two sides of the same coin. Man's ego is thus the prime generator of illusions both about oneself and about other. The first and major step in the overcoming of the ego is the practice of non-violence in Gandhi's sense of the term. Non-violence is frequently taken to means ahimsa. The practice of non-violence means the non-injury involves abstaining from physical injury as well as injury to the soul, as we might say genuine ahimsa is incompatible with the demands of the ego. How can we count ahimsa and for what so. Practicing ahimsa thus, I am merely using the other person for my ego's gain and to use another person so is to do him moral injury. Such ahimsa is therefore not ahimsa at all. The way of ahimsa is the way of gradual overcoming of the ego and therefore achievement of the truth of being. As Gandhi puts it: "It may entail continuous suffering and cultivation of endless patience. Thus, step by step we learn to make friends with the entire world; we realize the greatness of God, or truth. Our peace of mind increase in spite of suffering. We become

braver and more enterprising, we understand more clearly the difference between what is everlasting and what is not. Our pride melts away, and we become humble. Our worldly attachments diminished and so does the evil within us diminish from day to day".¹ Ahimsa may occasionally flow into love which is the opposite of egoism. Gandhi says that love is the positive mode of ahimsa. To have truly loved someone is also to have conquered one's ego in relation to him or her. At the heart of the idea of love is the idea of total selflessness. Selflessness is but another name for egolessness. All these are connection to morality. Moral life is the life free from selfishness and this is achieved by overcoming the powerful ego centrality of human perception and action. The idea of justice is also central to morality. Justice not only in the sense that my assessment of my fellow human beings must be capable of being justified but also, more importantly my perception and assessment of the other must do justice to him.

The idea of truth and ahimsa are central to an adequate conception of the moral life, or of the phenomenology of morals. God is the perfect embodiment of the moral life in its total selflessness, in its complete self-luminosity, and in its loving justice. God is the beyond the life of morality for an essential aspect of the moral life is the continuous striving towards perfection, and God necessarily there is no such striving. This is true in a way and these examples why it is impossible to find, in real life, a totally indubitable example of the morally perfect person. The idea of God is essential for morality because it ensures that the ideal of perfection which the conception of moral life involves. It finds the most objective embodiment in God.

The moral life must be permeated by a sense of dynamic unity, it is the opposite of the fragmented and the mechanical consider the idea of the virtuous life. The virtuous life is apparently one where the so-called virtues, have won over the vices. But virtues, in isolation an unrelated in a mutually enhancing unity, do not by themselves contribute to the moral life. For example, consider the virtuous of courage, intelligence, and temperance. Both courage and intelligence can be put most effectively to immoral or evil uses courage and intelligence of a God. Love is greatest enemy, both logical and natural, of the ego and illusions generated by the ego are the most powerful hurdles in the way of the knowledge of truth of one's being. God embodies the unity of the moral life in his absolute perfection and thus ensures the reality of this unity. The concept of moral goodness, the idea of transcendence is embodiment of it in place and time. A human being who embodies moral perfection in its absolute totality moral perfectibility is an ideal, and forever remains and ideal for human being as Gandhi used to "one can always be more perfect than one is".²The absurdity and the self-refuting character of the statement. "I have now achieved complete moral perfection".³

3. Understanding Aristotle Concept of Ethics:

The main concern of this writing to show the main aims of Aristotle ethical theory as developed in Nicomachean ethics. Aristotle did not regard ethics and politics as discrete, but rather as two aspects of a single subject of study. The main purpose of this writing is to construct and making of caparison with Gandhi as briefly as possible the main points of Aristotle's argument in Nicomachean Ethics. "Every art and very inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim".⁴ With this above statement the investigation will start between Aristotle inquiry and art of politics and their main concern for the good man as a goal or an end, Aristotle pointed out that both ordinary folk as well as people of cultivation believe that happiness is good. Pleasure, wealth, honor, and health are mentioned as well as Plato's conception that these goods are somehow caused by the idea of the good. His argument leads happiness as complete and final goal to pursue for his on sake not for the sake of anything else. He identifies his pridominary happiness as the ultimate good. "If this is the case, human good turns out to be activity of the soul in accordance with the best and most complete".⁴ But we must add 'in a complete life'. For one swallow does not make a summer, nor does one day, and so too one day, or a short time does not make a man blessed and happy.

As per Aristotle understanding happiness as a feeling, the feeling was deep and permanent and purified of gross bodily pleasures neither did he see it simply as disposition of temperament? Happy was an activity through which a man develops his capacities by living and faring well and reaching his well-being in mind and body. Happiness emerges as an activity, something final “for the sake of which anything else is done”,⁵ self-sufficient. We consider a self-sufficient thing to mean a thing which merely standing by itself alone renders life desirable and lacking in nothing, and finally happiness must be a lasting state which is called final goal. For support of the above concept of happiness, he cited the three-fold classification of good, namely external good, good of soul, and good of the body. Soul is good in the highest sense. Happy man lives well and forces well. Happiness has something to do with virtue or practical wisdom or philosophic wisdom, or pleasure or prosperity; he pauses to focus on virtue. Virtue is compatible with his own account of happiness as the highest good. Happiness entails virtues activity. Aristotle introduces the important conviction, which is so central to his ethical thinking, that activity, action or praxis is of the highest worth, as compared to the state.

The life of happy man would also be pleasant, in this connection Aristotle makes an observation about the nature of pleasure. “Now for most men their pleasures are in conflict with one another because these are not by nature pleasant, but the lovers of what is noble find pleasant the things that are by nature pleasant, and virtuous actions are such, so that these are pleasant for such men as well as in their own nature. Their life, therefore, has no further need of pleasure as a sort of adventitious charm, but has its pleasure in itself”.⁶ Pleasure is regarded as a concomitant and completion of an activity. Happiness then is the best, noblest, and most pleasant thing in the world. Happiness is an activity in accordance with virtue; Aristotle turns to the nature of virtue. Aristotle makes it clear that virtue concerns the soul. Souls are three parts: the vegetative, the appetitive, and the rational. The vegetative is clearly irrational and hence must be regarded in any ethical enquiry. The appetitive, in a sense, is also irrational, but in another sense is rational. Hence ethics must concern itself with the appetitive and rational parts of his soul. The distinctions between the moral and intellectual virtues are related to each other as the appetitive is to the rational part of the soul. Virtue is two kinds: intellectual and moral. Intellectual is on the main indebted to teaching for its production and growth, this is calls for time and experience. Moral goodness is the child of habit, from which it has got its very name.

Politics and ethics are two concepts which are not separate in his thinking. Ethics and politics are practical episteme. In Aristotle sense, episteme means scientific knowledge or theory of knowledge which a demonstrative knowledge is showing the universal and necessary connection between substance and their attributes. Aristotle episteme are two types: Theoretical and practical. For theoretical, metaphysics, mathematic and physics. Practical episteme aims at human action. Practical episteme detecting what is noble and base, right and wrong, good and bad in praxis. Aristotle approaches the morality of praxis from an existential perspective. Episteme seeks to discover reasons, causes or moral principles in order to show the link between the attributes of goodness and badness and corresponding human acts. In Nicomachean ethics and politics, Aristotle carefully outlined the principles of the good human life. The great moral principle such as eudemonism or happiness, intellectualism, virtuous, means choice and its preceding deliberation, moral character and moral habit.

Aristotle did not separate his two practical science, ethics and politics. Ethics studies man’s individual conduct, moral character and happiness. Politics studies the social, economical and political conduct of a citizen. Both aims are at the morally good life of a man and citizen. Both are very close to each other. Ethics and politics are partnership to establish good human life, is the chief end of the society, both collectively for all its members and individual. For Aristotle, politics aims at the highest moral good for the civilized existence of its citizens. It must be in duty to create the best possible opportunity for living the good life and there is no fundamental difference between ethics and politics.

4. Constructive Comparison:

The central purpose of this constructive work is to show the close similar concept of ethics of these two great historical personalities. I would like to discuss Gandhi's central moral insights and then relate Gandhi to Aristotle, who is undoubtedly one of the greatest moral philosophers of all time. Both Gandhi to Aristotle are profoundly opposed to the modern liberal humanist individualist and utilitarian conception of man and life of goodness. My purpose is to show the constructive comparison on these two great personalities' concept of ethics. For Aristotle religion is nothing to do the concept of life of goodness and other hand Gandhi thought of the religious and moral as logically inseparable from each other. The comparison between the Aristotelian and Gandhian, oppositions to modernism interesting and philosophically suggestive. Many Aristotelians insights are reflected in Gandhi's position about the essential pre-conditions of the moral life. This comparison is essential to bring out the philosophical availability of Gandhi's moral thinking.

The ethical position of Aristotle and Gandhi is that both conceive of ethics in practical terms. For Aristotle the concept of ethics as practical episteme ensure this and this is not classed with theoretical episteme but with the practical knowledge where speculation is subordinated to the guidance of human action. Aristotle expressed very clearly that the goal of his ethical discourse is not theoretical but very practical. There is no point in talking about the good life in an ethical enquiry insofar as this life is not practically attainable by human beings. Goodness essentially requires that we should become good men and we must apply our minds to the solution of the problems of conduct. Aristotle ethics is very practical because the human life will be possible choose. Here, possible means capabilities in a strong sense. Human being life is one that means human being can live as the best life for good living. Human life must be within human capabilities, it must be possible for human beings to choose it. For Gandhi, moral problem is not to understand the nature of goodness theoretically but to be a good person or to seek the truth existentially. Gandhi's thinking was pervaded by the desire to actualize the good in practice, to experimentally achieve truth, and to live a good life.⁷

Both Gandhi and Aristotle saw ethics and morality as a crucial domain of right choice, virtue and action- karma for Gandhi and praxis for Aristotle were the central terms in morality. Gandhi's practical conception of ethics need not detract from its philosophical worth. Both have similar insights about ethical vulnerability and indeterminacy. I would like to raise that what political science attempts to answer- admits of so much divergence and variation of opinion that it is widely believed that morality is a convention and not part of the nature of things and similar fluctuation of opinion about the character of the good. Good things have hurtful consequences. We have many examples; human beings are ruined by their money or killed by their courage. Aristotle's practical wisdom must be flexible, prepared for surprise, ready to see, and resourceful at improvisation. Aristotle is unlike Plato, who constructed an ethics with generality and commensurability of values. Values could be subsumed under ideas, ethical particularity was not important. Aristotle's whole conception of ethics is one with a certain amount of impression, and that this comes from a vision where human values which are constitutive of the good life are plural and incommensurable. Ethical particularity has certain important consequences. No clear understanding of the practical sphere and organize it. There is system of practical rules that will prepare us before the fact for the demands of any new situation. This mean the moral agent will not be taken by surprise. The above statements and ethical commensurability was not accepted by Aristotle. Another important consequence of ethical particularity is vulnerability to loss. Ethical rules can only guide us but never prepare us for the unique dynamics of each particular moral situation, therefore, with Aristotle, there is the possibility of making mistakes in the moral life and there is a vulnerability in the moral life and there is good is fragile. As per this above statement Aristotle is different from Plato. Good man has the ability to understand each such situation and respond to it from the depth of his moral way of life with utmost sincerity. There is no universal guidelines by which he can be

cognitively secured and emotionally safe. This is way Aristotle insists on the experience of long years and advice of the man of practical wisdom in moral matter.

Gandhi is also moral thinker and knows about ethical vulnerability which he spoke in general term about the Ahimsa and Truth.⁸ He said by experience that in practice was always to appreciate particular moral situation, he is very keen in particular and interested in the smallest of moral problems of the most insignificant people and give the same moral attention as he did to the issues of nations. Gandhi did not subsume ethical situations under general rules. He tried to meet the new situations from within a moral way of life with sincerity and with the awareness of moral vulnerability. There was no commensurability of all value terms in one safe principle for commensurability of all value terms in one safe principle of Gandhi. Gandhi is again often missed by the Gandhian who feels that following ahimsa is an overriding and universal principle which removes ethical vulnerability in one large sweep. Gandhi himself saw the ethical particularity and its consequences in terms of indeterminacy and the vulnerability of the moral life. Gandhi often recommended ahimsa with the argument that, if one made mistakes in its path, it hurt no one other than the adherent. His usage of the term “experiments” is again very suggestion in his discussion of truth. Gandhi saw the dynamism of the moral law of life. He made moral journeys with the goal of getting closer and closer to the truth of his own being. Ethical particularity and vulnerability was therefore another point of similarity between Aristotle’s ethical theory and Gandhi.⁹

The very concept of Aristotle on means and ends in ethics. This concept is very different with Gandhi. He completely rejects such a distinction in ethics. When we appreciate the fact that both Aristotle and Gandhi opposed the liberal humanist individualistic and utilitarian conceptions of human goodness which is at the heart of modernism. It will become apparent that in their ethics the distinction between means and end cannot really be prominent. As per utilitarian position that means are morally irrelevant if the goal secured is pleasure. Aristotle’s happiness is an activity of soul in accordance with virtue. Therefore virtue is the means to happiness.¹⁰ Teleology is there in the sense of purposiveness and this is the distinction between means and ends in Aristotle. This position is not so different from that of Gandhi. Gandhi’s ethical thinking also has a telos in terms of the pursuance of truth, and rejection of means and ends is the rejection of the instrumentality and moral irrelevance of means.¹¹ A life devoid of virtue cannot be justified for Gandhi in term of the moral uprightness of an end achieved. In Aristotle life devoid of virtue cannot lead to the telos at all. Both have the same position regarding the life of goodness and profoundly opposed to the modernist one.

Aristotle’s aim in science, metaphysic and ethics is to save the appearances and their truth. For Aristotle, the good life is reflected in the right choices and good action. For Gandhi, it is completely so. Of course Aristotle is an intellectual and so the best life for him is one of contemplation. Whereas Gandhi is a man of action and therefore for him the best life is one of action. There is no much difference in terms of ethical theory because the life of contemplation in Aristotle is for very few. For both, virtue and goodness is activity. Aristotle and Gandhi speak of moral training and discipline albeit in different ways. Aristotle speaks of virtue as being inculcated by habit and Gandhi stresses that one should keep trying on the path of virtue and each step brings one nearer the good life. Why should I be moral? Gandhi and Aristotle response, Aristotle reply, happiness is an activity of the soul in accordance with the practice of the virtues. Virtues and happiness are thus internally connected, in the absence of an adequate infrastructure for what Aristotle would regard as a potentially fulfilling human life; the connection may not begin to surface. The internal connection between virtue and happiness may become invisible. Regarding this Gandhi quoted. “It may entail continuous suffering and the cultivation of endless patience. Thus, step by step, we learn to make friends with the entire world; we realize the greatness of God or truth. Our peace of mind increase in spite of suffering, we become braver and more enterprising. Our pride melts away, and we become humble. Our worldly attachments diminish and so does the evil within us diminish from day to day.”¹² The virtue man is happy because he delights in virtues. Gandhi himself was exemplary in the sense of joy which pervaded his life.

There are differences between Gandhi and Aristotle regarding happiness and moral life. On the basis of faith on religious stand point of Gandhi that the good man will not want for anything. Gandhi's belief also includes the factor that when a person is truly virtuous and uses his resources for the benefit of society. Society will always contribute generously to his cause- a life of settlers service is self sustaining. Purity of motive evokes faith in others. For Aristotle perception, Gandhi believed in the internal connection, yet he also sought to restructure society and reform politics. His conceptions of Swaraj and Ram rajya reflect the same Aristotelian concern for a state which provides the conditions for leading a good and virtuous life. Ram rajya refers to a state which internalizes into its laws and institutions for leading a good moral life. The important comparison on politics and ethics by Gandhi and Aristotle. Politics makes for the good life of its citizens by providing moral motivation in the form of connection between happiness and virtue. Aristotle takes about politics and ethics and distinguishes in two senses of politics:

1. Politics is the art of governing and administering the polis-legal, administrative and military endeavors, as also organization of the democratic process.
2. This seems to be the sense in Nicomachean ethics when Aristotle speaks of politics and ethics is that politics is the practical science that sets laws, norms, and rules of human conduct.¹³

Aristotle ethical theory refers as moral politics. Moral politics guides humans to happiness, to the good human life, and therefore it is political ethics. Aristotle distinguishes politics as setting the conditions of the good form of life from politics as the business of government. For Gandhi is distinction between power politics and what he refers to as true politics. Politics pervades all our activities into practice. I know that in this country all constructive activities are part of politics. In my view it is true. Non-violence can have nothing to do with politics of power. There is different between Gandhi and Aristotle view on politics.

1. Aristotle was intellectual and made the conceptual difference from that perspective alone. Gandhi experienced the difference and was alive to the moral vulnerability of the life of governance.
2. Gandhi was living in a troubled political line and actively involved in the political arena. He tried with true politics two senses of politics is conceptual difference. Politics is ethic at work in that it provides conditions of civilized and good living for a mass of people and proper structure of society. Laws and norms are framed with justice as the purpose then there is life-like connection between happiness and good life, and which can provide an answer to the problem of moral motivation. Gandhi and Aristotle are very concern of the mass of the people who were this susceptible to moral despair. For people or mass people the moral form of life and life of viciousness of politics becomes essential to the establishment of the good life.

The second sense of politics, the conceptual distinction between the business of government, democratic process, administration and true or keenly alive to the possibility of corruption and the danger to the moral life or life of virtue. The role of the statement in preventing such degeneration becomes very crucial. This factor is appreciated by both Aristotle and Gandhi. Gandhi speaks of compulsory and voluntary poverty for the statement to maintain the purity of public life. Again Aristotle speaks about the statesman as ethically mature and an example in terms of moral virtues. The conceptual difference are theory good philosophy and enough if ethical theory can do just this much.

5. Conclusion:

As per my argument and presentation what I want to express very instructive and strongly supportive of the idea that Gandhi is relevant to the primary concerns of moral philosophy. There is profound similarity of vision and commitment. Aristotle's conception of the life of goodness while for Gandhi the religious and moral were inseparable

from each other and Gandhi's conception of the religious rested on a moral core. A constructive comparison between the Aristotelian and Gandhian opposition to modernism interesting and philosophically suggestion. This comparison brings out the viability of the philosophical availability of Gandhi's moral thinking.

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