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## View on the separation of ethics and politics

The principal claim of this view is that one should believe in the difference between ethical rules and political exigencies, and that one should take political measures on the basis of reality and by keeping in mind the interests and benefits. Anchored to this approach, which is also called political realism, is the consideration of ethics in politics ending in failure in this sphere.

It is because the pivot of ethics is truth and right while the motive of politics is interests and benefits. Ethics demands that we tell the truth even though it is against us, not to do injustice, not to take people as our instruments, to be advocates of justice all the time, not to lie, to abstain from deception, not to conceal the truths, etc. This is while politics necessitates the abandonment of some principles of ethics. Basically any step in politics begins with hostility against ethics and trampling upon moralities. Any political activity is impossible without ‘the dirty hands’.

Politics is nothing but an arena for the obtainment, expansion and preservation of power, which cannot be realized without sacrificing the principles of ethics. After every political step, the abundance of crushed moral virtues is conspicuous. Therefore, one must choose either ethics or politics, purity or defilement while discarding the other since combining the two is absurd. As a result, “All the interests of man who wants his soul to remain pure through piety lie in not doing anything.”[337]

According to a political realist adhering to ethics in the political sphere is not only unbeneficial but also means total loss since he knows that in this world, “In spite of the moral tales which are for children, virtue remains unrewarding. The real sovereign is power... and moral temptations are signs of weakness of designs.”[338]

Apparently, the first thinker who dwelt on this issue and elucidated it was Thucydides,[339] a Greek political thinker and historian. He precisely sketched out this viewpoint two thousand and four hundred years ago and decided to delineate the exact boundary between ethics and politics and to separate these two realms from one another. In the belief that politics is tied to interests while ethics is to truth, he narrates the dialogue between the representatives of Athens, which was then in a position of strength,

and the representatives of the city of Melos, a former ally of Athens that was in a position of weakness. The dialogue strikingly shows the essence of this view.[340]

After the city of Melos fell under siege, the representatives of Athens went there to conduct a dialogue and talked with the elders of the city. An excerpt of the dialogue is as follows:

“What we want is to make it clear to you that we have come here for the expansion of our empire and are conducting this dialogue so as to maintain the safety of your city. To prevail over you is not difficult for us, but at the same time, we want your safety since this affair is beneficial to both of us.” [341]

The representatives of Melos replied, “How could it be just as good for us to be the slaves as for you to be the masters?”[342]

Representatives of Athens: “You, by giving in, would save yourselves from disaster; we by not destroying you, would be able to profit from you.”[343]

Representatives of Melos: “Hence, according to the people of your city, just behaviour lies in not differentiating between the cities that have nothing to do with you (neutral) and those that are either your puppets or have revolted against you, and you have gained control over them?”[344]

Representatives of Athens: “From the viewpoint of right and wrong, our people do not make any difference between them and they believe that the cities are still independent as they are strong, and the reason why we do not attack them is that we are afraid of them. So, by conquering you we shall increase not only the size but the security of our empire as well. We have mastery over the seas and you are a small and weak island. As such, it is only natural that you should surrender to us.”[345]

Therefore, since the people of Athens are more powerful than the people of the island of Melos, the power itself gives them the right to occupy the island and make its inhabitants their slaves. The view of the separation of ethics from politics is more explicitly associated with Machiavelli, the Italian thinker. He not only insists on this dichotomy but also recommends, in his concise and famous thesis named, *The Prince*, to the ruler or prince to trample upon every ethical consideration so as to fortify his power.

Although Machiavelli thinks of ethics as essential for the life of the individual and indispensable for the continuity of society and social life, he regards attachment to it as dangerous for the prince and he cautions him (the prince or monarch) against the danger of piety and says:

Anyone who wants in all conditions to be virtuous, in the midst of all this wickedness, has no destiny except disappointment. Thus, a prince who would not like to relinquish his crown should learn wicked methods and utilize them wherever needed.[346]

Even though in the view of Machiavelli the possession of virtues is good for the prince, it is so as long as it does not amount to the collapse of his rule.

Thus, since we think optimistically, we see it as an attribute which is regarded as a virtue. But its implementation will lead to annihilation [of the government]. This is while there is also another attribute which is viewed as callousness although it engenders security and success.[347]

Though the popularity of the prince is desirable, in case he cannot avoid either the people adoring or fearing him. It is then better if they fear him because in this way they could be controlled and guided better.[348]

No matter how desirable the faithfulness and fidelity of the prince are, it is regrettable that circumstances are not always compatible with the observance of *pacta sunt servanda*. [349]

Life experiences have taught us that the monarchs who have performed onerous tasks are those that have not given any consideration to doing good deeds and have manipulated the people through trickery. Finally, they have prevailed over those who have observed righteousness.[350]

Thus, one must always move in tune with reality, know the value of power and authority, and bear in mind that even among the prophets, those armed had been victorious and “all the prophets who were fighters triumphed and those who were armless remained unsuccessful.”[351]

There are two ways to gain victory: law and force. Law is peculiar to the human being. Force belongs to the animals, and since the first alternative is not always responsive, the monarch should also learn the second option. It is in this sense that the monarch ought to know how he could acquire the two temperaments as he will not remain faithful to one of them. So, if the monarch is supposed to learn the style of the wild beast and apply it, he ought to learn also the style (cunning) of the fox as well as that (brawn) of the lion as the lion cannot escape from traps (deception) and the fox from the clutches of the wolf (power)...

Therefore, the shrewd ruler is not supposed to be faithful to his promise when it is to his disadvantage and detriment, and there is no more reason to commit to it.. From these circumstances, there are numerous instances that can be brought out and be shown that so many promises and commitments which have been violated through the infidelity of the princes as well as for without any basis. Those who have imitated the fox have come out more successful than the rest. But it should be known how to embellish the outward appearance and to cunningly perform deception and trickery. The people are so naïve and credulous such that a deceiver can always find those who are willing to be deceived.”[352]

The book is replete with such recommendations. Considering the psychological makeup of the masses, he regards them as inherently filthy and wicked, and believes that “anyone who leans on the people [actually] leans on water.”[353] His main proposal is that “the people should either be flattered or knocked down.”[354]

There is no middle way; it is either the stick or carrot. Reliance on Machiavelli and quotation of his statements are due to his importance in the history of political thought. There have been innumerable discussions on Machiavelli and his thesis which he dedicated to Lorenzo de Medici (1449–92), the ruler of Florence (in Italy). A group believes that Machiavelli expressed his beliefs in that book and that he believed in whatever he said; thus, he deserves curse and damnation.

But keeping in view his other book entitled, *Discourses*, another group believes that Machiavelli was actually describing the rulers of his time and not prescribing a particular method. At any rate, this discussion is still alive and the first view prevails over the second. Similarly, ‘Machiavellian’ is an attribute that signifies jugglery and cheating in the sphere of politics. In spite of this, he has been described as “the first modern political philosopher”[355] and nobody doubts the influence of his thinking and ideas.

So, it is fitting to claim that in the sphere of political thought, Machiavelli can be accepted; he can be denied as well. But, he cannot be overlooked. Machiavelli’s ‘crime’ was that he would expose whatever the princes were doing, and made clear the essence and consequences of such thinking. From then onward, this approach not only remained undiminished in matters of politics but also the rulers who were Machiavellian supporters commenced their rule by vilifying Machiavelli while observing all his recommendations. Even those who opposed Machiavelli’s thought would tread the same path once they obtained power, applying the same recommendations to such an extent that Frederick, the Great, the King of Prussia, at a young age while still a crown prince and enjoying the companionship of the French philosopher, Voltaire, wrote a book on the latter’s encouragement entitled, *Anti-Machiavelli*.

In it he criticized one by one the ideas of Machiavelli as being contrary to moral laws. But no sooner than succeeding to the throne that he found himself besieged by his rivals who, from all quarters, had cast covetous eyes on his country. Whereupon he followed to the letter the political principles enunciated by Machiavelli, particularly in *The Prince*. It is notable that there has been no political figure who observed so precisely and strictly the law of *raison d’état*[356] as he did. Finally, in his political will and testament, he acknowledged that Machiavelli was right; adding that among all those with boundless ambitions, anyone observing ethics would not survive.[357]

The perfect epitome of a person possessing such a mental frame, who instinctively applied all the above recommendations, was Mu‘wiyah ibn Abū Sufyān. In a bid to obtain the caliphate and preserve it, he did many unofficial things and trampled on all moral virtues. After concluding a peace treaty with Imam Hasan al-Mujtabā (‘a), he trampled on the conditions that were not to his satisfaction.[358] He officially announced that his objective in waging war and concluding the peace treaty was nothing but obtainment of power and dominance over others, and that there being no further impediment in his way, he saw no reason to fulfill his promises and commitments. He performed congregational prayer in Nukhaylah and in his sermon he declared to the signatories:

By God, I did not wage war against you in order to let you say your prayers, observe fasting, perform

*hajj*, or give *zakāt* [alms–tax], [It makes no difference for me] whether you perform these acts or not. I fought against you only for the sake of making myself your ruler and God granted my wish even though it is unpleasant for you.[359]

Prior to the birth of Machiavelli, Mu‘awiyah applied his prescriptions on the temperamental duality of the prince and the lion–fox nature of the ruler. In his letter to Ziyād ibn Ubayyah, the then governor of Basrah and Kūfah, he wrote:

It is not fitting for you and me to guide the people uniformly through a policy of leniency as to make them experience inebriation, or to exert extreme pressure on them as to put them in a quandary. Instead, you have to adopt a policy of violence and rudeness while I will employ a policy of clemency and compassion.[360]

The adventurousness of Mu‘awiyah, the war he imposed on Imām ‘Alī (‘a), the elected caliph of the people, and his Machiavellian ways are well–known to all and sundry. Some of the people at that time were so influenced by such an approach as to accuse Imām ‘Alī (‘a) of lack of political acumen, with which we will deal later. Relying on political realism, this group of people believed that Mu‘awiyah should be dealt with in a Mu‘awiyah–like fashion—something which Imām ‘Alī (‘a) was not at all prepared to do.

Consequently, Mu‘awiyah emerged triumphant. As such, their view, as they thought it, was proved that the path of politics is separate from that of ethics. The main critique of Imām ‘Alī’s (‘a) critics who have always believed in the great value of his ethical personality, pertains to the Imām’s (‘a) moral approach in politics. One of them is Shafiq Jibrī, an Egyptian contemporary, who regards the Imām’s (‘a) ethical approach as the reason behind his failure in the Battle of Siffin.[361] He says:

The Imām (‘a) did not know that the main apprehension of the people concerned the vanities of the world. It was difficult for him to believe that the people were in pursuit of their own interests and benefits. So, he did not behave with them as a professional politician would; rather, he dealt with them as a professional man of ethics.[362]

Sayyid Qutb, himself a Sunnī thinker, does not approve this assessment. He believes that the Imām (‘a) was familiar with the way to victories and defeats, and the methods thereof. But he was not willing to make use of any method at any cost. Instead, he was strictly committed to ethics. This is while

Mu‘awiyah and his alter ego ‘Amr [ibn al-‘ās], owing to being more acquainted with the psychological motivations of individuals as well as with useful attitudes in suitable conditions, turned victorious against ‘Alī. Nay, they became victorious since they regarded themselves free to employ any weapon; whereas he [Imām ‘Alī (‘a)] abided by his ethical principles in employing war weapons. Besides, Mu‘awiyah and

his alter ego used to resort to lies, deception, trickery, bribery, and buying commitments and loyalty. Therefore, it is not surprising that the two would triumph and he be defeated; a defeat that was nobler than any triumph.[363]

Such an approach to politics has led many religious individuals to turn their backs on it; the reason being that the notion that politics, in essence, necessitates separation from ethics has taken root. Expressions such as ‘to rule is mule-like’ [*al-mulk ‘aqim*], ‘politics has no father and mother’ ‘politics is chicanery’ [*siyāsāt pedar s̄khteh-b̄z̄*], and the like, are the products of such a notion. Even one of the contemporary jurists [*fuqah*] who used to assail politics pessimistically and dissuade the Muslims from engaging in it, would say, “Politics is on one side while religion is on the other.”

In the words of Imām Khomein, the matter went to such an extent that most of the scholars [*ahl-e ‘ilm*] and holy men [*muqaddasīn*] had accepted the notion that “religion has its own boundary and so with politics”[364] and even if they wanted to backbite somebody, they would dub him as ‘political or politicized’ [*siyāsī*].[365] He himself narrates that P̄krav̄n, the then chief of the State Organization for Security and Information (SAVAK)[366] approached him and said, “Sir, politics consists of telling lies, cheating, trickery, jugglery and, in short, chicanery of the highest order [*pedar-s̄khtehḡ*]; leave all this to us.” Since the occasion was not appropriate, I decided not to argue with him and said, “From the very beginning we have not been engaged in the kind of politics that you mention.”[367]

In reality, this tenet has two premises. One is that ethics and politics belong to two distinct realms while the other is that political values are different from those of ethics. Proponents of this view propound that the realm of ethics is that of individual realm and his private affairs, while the realm of politics concerns the assurance of wholesome social life and regulation of social relations of individuals with one another, as well as with the government. In addition, moral value is a function of truth, whereas in politics the criterion of value judgment is interests and benefits.

A certain political act is good provided that it is beneficial and brings about a positive outcome, this not being so with ethics. Basically, ethics manifests itself when man is free of the shackles of his personal interests and considerations and moves beyond himself. This point indicates that the precept of separation of ethics from politics does not necessarily mean conflict between them. That is to say, it is not that political acts and movements of politicians are unquestionably repulsive to moral values.

Thus, this tenet is sometimes called the tenet of ‘amorality of politics’. It means that in politics we are up against different kinds of values and standards of measurement, and that politics should not be assessed on the basis of moral values or be judged within the framework of ethics. So, politics in this sense is neutral; it is not against ethics. However, since in practice, this tenet is not bent on either ensuring or negating ethics, and is only in pursuit of obtaining benefits; it does not refrain from trampling on all the principles and rules of ethics whenever necessary. Hence, this theory throughout history has been tantamount to the negation of ethics and etiquettes.

## Criticism of the view

The conclusion of the claimants of this is that the principles of ethics should not be allowed to interfere in politics. The story of the followers of this tenet is that of the person who was cutting the root while unwary of the fact that he was approaching death by his own hands. The problem is that if the people realize that their leaders are not behaving morally, they will also wash their hands of ethics, just as Sa'd<sup>ؓ</sup> says:

اگر زیباغ رعیت ملک خورده سیبی  
بر آوردند غلامان او درخت از بیخ

*If the monarch were to eat a single apple from the garden of a peasant,  
The servants would pull up the tree by the roots.* [368]

A government which permits itself to commit injustice and deceive the people cannot expect justice and truthfulness from them. A citizen, who realizes that his sovereign government tells a lie, prefers, for instance, to fill his tax declaration form with lies, too, and give wrong information. From the perspective, 'The people are sovereign over the judgment' [*An-nās 'alā dīn mulūkahum*], such a citizen considers himself licensed to perpetrate all sorts of fraud and answers a lie with another lie.

The point is also certain that no government is needless of ethics. The government regards it necessary for its own citizens as they cannot always be asked to obey through force and violence. Instead, the social and government laws should be internalized; with ethics assuming the responsibility for this task. So, any government or ruler is in need of ethics. Even Mu'awiyah considered ethics as being necessary for the people and would feign to be a moral person abiding by ethical principles.

A government has hitherto not appeared in history which has permitted its citizens to behave immorally and claim that ethics is worthless. Even if there is a person who has, in practice, trampled on ethics, at least he has pretended to preserve it. Hitler, too, considered himself as a moral person, and Stalin, who set up those ceremonial and sham courts, did so as well and regarded for his people morals as being necessary.

Therefore, if ethics is needed for the people, it can only be kept when the people feel that the government is also faithful and committed to the principles of ethics. Otherwise, there will be no

guarantee for the survival of ethics in society, and in turn, survival of the government.

That is why even Machiavelli stresses on the need for the government to behave morally. He views as oppressive the application of whatever he explains in *The Prince*, saying, “Of course, all these instruments are oppressive and destructive to civil life.”[369] He also states, “Just as good law is needed for the preservation of good morality, good morality is also necessary for the observance of law.”

In a nutshell, no government, no matter how powerful and versatile it may be, can exact obedience from the people only through police methods and by strengthening its own security system. It has no alternative but to benefit from ethics and its promotion. Instead of intimidation, it should persuade them and even pretend itself to be committed to morality. The importance of pretending to be moral is so great that all governments—even the immoral ones—try to make use of this cover-up to achieve their objectives.

Given all the evidence that is sometimes put forth to support this tenet, the reality cannot be denied that if one day the people realize the untruthfulness and immorality of the government and government policy, they will no longer follow them and will retaliate. The truth of the matter is that the moral man is the very same social and political man.

The exact demarcation between the public and private domain of individuals cannot be specified, and ethics cannot be assigned exclusively to a certain realm and politics to another. In practice, the life of every individual has acquired social forms, and every social dimension has individual manifestations. On the other hand, the influence of the government over the private sphere of the individuals is increasing daily. Actually, governments are also gradually taking up the supervision of the private realm and are implementing policies for it.

Thus, it is naïve to think that politics can be regarded as separate from ethics, and accordingly, expect people to behave morally in their relations with others and with the government. In his book entitled, *Trust*, the Japanese–American thinker, Francis Fukuyama, points to the issue on the legitimacy crisis of the American system and regards it as caused by the negligence of the society’s leaders of the principles of ethics, and their fraudulent conduct in political affairs. Deceitful conduct, moral disgrace and scandals such as ‘Watergate’[370] have provided the grounds for the mistrust of the people as regards the moral conduct of the leaders. The people have steadily lost their confidence and now the American society is facing a legitimacy crisis caused by the decrease of confidence. According to Fukuyama,

The organizational potentiality of economic establishments relies not only on the institutions such as trade law, contract, etc. Instead, it necessitates the aggregate of unwritten moral laws and principles which establishes the foundation of social confidence.[371]

Fukuyama believes that apart from enhancement of economic assets, the government should always endeavor to enhance and increase social assets (such as confidence).[372] In his opinion, confidence

and moral commitments are society's engine of stimulation.[373]

For that reason, nowadays almost everybody outspokenly advocates this tenet and tries to mitigate its extremism, modify it[374] and acknowledge, to some extent, politics as being ethical.

## **View on the subservience of ethics to politics**

This tenet stems from the Marxist–Leninist theory on society, politics and ethics. According to the Marxist viewpoint, history is nothing but the arena of struggle among classes—classes that emerge out of the new mode of production, and after sometime, nurture their enemy (anti–thesis) in their midst and then wither away, relinquishing their position to the dominant class, which in turn nurtures its own anti–thesis. In this way, any class that moves in harmony with history is revolutionary while a class that stands in the way of progress of the forces of production is anti–revolutionary. Every class generates its own associations, which is the infrastructure of the society and manifestation of the condition of economic production. From this perspective, nothing is absolute and everything is class–based such as moral concepts, arts and even science.

The final stage of history is the period of capitalism in which the mode of production is collective while the ownership of the means of production is private. This contradiction leads to the emergence of a new class termed, 'proletariat' or working class, which is the agent of production but not owner of the means of production. So, through revolutionary means this class will take the reign of power and lead the society toward socialism—which is a passing stage—and finally, communism. At this juncture, class struggle comes to an end as the society is no more divided into two classes, and both the mode of production and ownership of the means of production are collective.

Marxism–Leninism considered struggle for the triumph of the proletariat as inevitable and revolution as certain, and reckoned any sort of reform movement to improve the living conditions of the workers as wrong. This viewpoint brought into being a particular sociology, which increased its 'scientific' attribute and claimed that it has proved three things:

(1) The absolute withering away of the present society is the only way of executing fundamental social reform;

(2) There is nothing needed or to be considered more than this violent action; so, any planning endeavor for the new society is impractical and unfeasible;

(3) In order to acquire the reign of power through a revolution, observance of any kind of conditions or limitations is uncalled for; so,

(a) Historically, this trend is certain and irreversible, and as such, beyond the control of man;  
(b) Ethics, truth and the like are merely derived phenomena from the class interests, and thus, the only scientific meaning of ethics, truth, justice, and others, is the advancement of some class interests, which science has proved to be at the threshold of ascension and dominance.  
The violent act of revolution involves any sort of ethics, sincerity, genuineness, and justice on the oneness of established scientific meaning.[375]

On the basis of this tenet, ethics and other social manifestations are unconditionally and categorically subservient to politics and revolutionary action; they derive their worth from them and are justified by them; while revolutionary action and politics themselves do not need the justification of ethics.

When discussing ethics, Lenin himself says, “Our morality is acquired from the benefits of the class struggle of the proletariat;”[376] “For us, ethics that stems from outside the society does not exist and such ethics is nothing else but pretence;”[377] and “when the people ask us about ethics, we say that for a communist, the totality of ethics finds meaning in relation to the iron order and discipline as well as in the conscious resistance against imperialism.”[378]

The tenet of the separation of ethics and politics regarded both ethics and politics as true and authentic, and reckoned both as acceptable and necessary for the society. But it emphasized that these two branches belong to two distinct and independent realms and the criteria of this branch should not be adapted to that realm, or that branch to this realm.

Thus, Machiavelli, who used to maintain so vehemently that brutal methods and fox-like cunning were essential for the ruler, would nonetheless lay stress on the necessity of adhering to ethics and believed that the ruler, as far as possible, should not trample upon ethical principles unless forced to do so. But this tenet basically reckons ethics, politics and the whole of culture as the superstructure of the society. It espouses that no clout of authenticity should be given to ethics and that the ‘moralness’ of behaviour of a certain class depends on its historical circumstances.

So, a practice can be an ethical one from the viewpoint of a certain class while the same is unethical and antirevolutionary according to another class. To cite an example, the crackdown on the peaceful demonstration rally of the Russian people perpetrated by Czar Nicholas II in 1905 was an antirevolutionary act. But the crackdown on the strikers and workers of factories perpetrated by Lenin, after the establishment of socialism, was considered a revolutionary act.

Hence, an act is ethical when it is revolutionary and progressive with historical trends determining the criteria of progress, and the Communist Party recognizes them. Therefore, this tenet does not regard any antirevolutionary act as contrary to ethics; it rather propounds that whatever the Communist Party, which is the representative of the proletariat, does is basically that which is morality and virtue. And it means fighting against morality and flaying ethics. Lenin himself announced the form of rule of the Communist Party in this manner:

‘Dictatorship of the proletariat’ is a scientific expression—denoting the class under discussion and the peculiar form of government authority that is deemed ‘dictatorship’—that connotes an authority which is not founded on law or election, but directly on the armed forces of a section of the masses.[379]

## Criticism of the view

Based on this finding, the dictatorial government of the proletariat replaced the Czarist government of Russia, and under the name of revolution and interests of the masses, it committed crimes that surpassed those of the Mongols and the Czarists. The acme of these atrocities took place during the period of the bloody purges. Aimed at eliminating his rivals and anyone who possessed some intelligence, Stalin conducted a wide liquidation campaign from 1936 to 1938, setup numerous ceremonial courts, and obtained false ‘confessions’ from his opponents that they were agents of imperialism, foreign spies, reactionaries, and anti-people, and that they had no thought other than overthrowing the socialist system.

All these immoralities were reckoned as moral, because the interests of the [Communist] Party demanded so and these lies were considered true from the political standpoint. From this perspective, the difference between the atrocities committed by Stalin and Hitler was that since the conduct of Stalin was aimed at vouchsafing the interests of the emerging class of the proletariat, it was good and ethical. But since what Hitler does was aimed at serving the interests of the bourgeoisie, it was bad and immoral. Micklaus James, one of the Hungarian intellectuals, who found out the process of the reversal of this truth and lost his head in the bargain, states:

Slowly, slowly, at least at the greater and dominant part of its conception, we arrived at the conclusion that there are two kinds of truth. The truth of the party could be different from the truth of the people and can even be more important than the exact truth. Truth, in fact, is that very political expediency. This thought is awful. But one should openly confront its meaning. If there really exists a truth loftier than the exact truth and if political expediency is the barometer in gauging the truth, then even a lie can be true. For, even a lie can possibly be with what is expedient temporarily.

Even a sham political trial, in this sense, can have ‘truth’. For, even in such a trial, crucial political advantages can be obtained. In this manner, we arrive at a viewpoint that not only defiled individuals to design the sham political trials but also, in most cases, it even was effective among the victims. It is a viewpoint that poisoned our entire thinking, blackened our view, dilapidated our critical power, and finally, took from us the intuition to discern the truth as well as the potential to understand it.

The situation was like this. To deny it is pointless.[380] According to one of the political analysts,

“Perhaps, the corruption and self-centeredness prevalent in the Czarist courts could not match the one thousandth of what we witnessed during the succeeding periods of communist governments”.[381]

Such a tenet gained an unprecedented historical opportunity to test and prove itself lacking legitimacy and truthfulness in a vast geographical expanse, that is, Eastern Europe, for a long period of time, that is, two generations. The application of such a tenet led to the cracking of its own pillars and foundations, and the malady of immorality rotted its roots.

The social systems of the East disintegrated one by one over a short period of time and the people, in fascination, turned toward the West against which they fought for more than seven decades. This collapse could no longer be attributed to the foreigners and imperialists. Economic depression was also not the root of the problems. No, the correct reply should be found.

These systems had everything for ruling—ideology, military power, ruling party, strong allies, military pact, tribunal court, powerful defense system, complex security and intelligence apparatus, etc. Yet, they were lacking in one thing: legitimacy. These systems gradually lost their moral legitimacy, and the people, who realized that the ruling party was telling lies to, and deceiving, them, paid no allegiance anymore to the ruling authority and released themselves from the state of being under the yoke of the government, which made ethics as its plaything.

In an article, “What transpired in Eastern Europe in 1989,” Daniel Shiro gives a detailed report, interesting and shocking, on the disintegration of socialist systems. He regards the root of the collapse to lie in “the total moral and spiritual decay”[382] of these governments and concludes that what can cause revolutions and instabilities nowadays is the ethical-spiritual factor, and that this element should be seriously taken into account.[383]

In short, any system that renders ethics at the service of, and subservient to, politics will face a legitimacy crisis in the long run due to its anti-ethics approach, and the people severely condemn these lies of such a system. No matter how powerful this system may be, it is only for a short period of time that it can beguile the people and not all the time.

The only justification these systems had was that sometimes it is expedient to accept a bit of evil in order to obtain abundant good and for which they would cite the example of a gangrenous foot, claiming that at times the physician has no option in preserving the life of the patient but to cut his decaying and impaired foot, which is considered a danger for the entire organism. Accordingly, the same act can, and should, be done at the societal level, and in order to ensure the public welfare and justice, cruelty should be done to some individuals.

In other words, the objective is so ‘sacred’ that it justifies and sanctifies such abominable acts. Yet, in practice, such means became the aim. They did not even achieve any noble aims and the little justice

that the previous regimes provided was obliterated from the scene under the pretext of justice for all. “Under the name of justice, the communist regimes of Russia and China have slaughtered people. But up to now its outcome is more killing and less justice.”[384]

## **View on the duality of ethics and politics**

This tenet, which is also called dualist or doubly-inclined ethics, endeavors to preserve moral values and some of the principles of ethics in politics. On the basis of this tenet, ethics must be studied on two planes: individual and social. Although these two levels have some commonalities, whatever is moral on the individual plane cannot necessarily be deemed as moral, too, on the social one. For instance, self-sacrifice of an individual is viewed as an ideal and moral act. This is while self-sacrifice of a state to the advantage of another state is not that moral since it is contrary to the national interests. An individual can endow his possession to others but the state cannot bestow its national income to another state.

From this perspective, individual morality can be gauged on the basis of absolute moral criteria while social morality is subservient to the national welfare and interests. In emphasizing this tenet, they have said that the scope of individual morality is morality of love and affection, but the scope of social morality is the objective- and result-oriented morality.

The consequence of such an understanding is the acknowledgment of two distinct moral systems. As an individual, man is subjected to a certain system of morality whereas society has another ethical system. The principles of these levels of morality can also be contradictory to one another. For example, Plato does not consider telling lies as permissible for an individual, and regards a liar as one worthy of punishment, while believing that the ruler of the society has the right to tell lies. He says,

If telling a lie for someone is permissible, it is only for the rulers of the city, because whenever the good of the city warrants he can deceive the people, whether enemy or city-dweller. Yet, this conduct is not permissible for anybody else, and if an individual from among the city dwellers tells a lie to the governors, his crime is equal to or even severer than the crime of a patient who deceives his own doctor.[385]

Bertrand Russell[386] also believes in such a duality in ethics, regarding the religious beliefs as the source of individual or private ethics and politics as the origin of other categories of ethics. He states,

Without civil ethics the society is incapable of sustaining its life; without the individual ethics, his survival is of no value. Therefore, in order for the world to be good and desirable, the existence of both the civil and individual ethics is necessary.[387]

Of course, what Russell is referring to as 'social ethics' and the existence of which is deemed indispensable for the survival of the society, is more indicative of the rules and regulations, which are mostly enacted for the proper administration of the society and not ethics in the sense of the totality of behavioural rules based on values. He has considered Martin Luther (founder of Protestantism), Paul Tillich, Reinhold Niebuhr,[388] Max Weber, and Hans Morgenthau as advocates of this tenet.

Max Weber, the 20th century German sociologist and thinker and one of those having a far-reaching influence on contemporary thought, attempts in the course of a famous lecture entitled, "Politics as a Profession,"[389] to expound the nature of the political profession and endeavors to clarify the relationship between ethics and politics.

Initially, he poses the question, "Are the moralities that are valid for every action also valid for political interactions or not?"[390] In answering this question, firstly Weber acknowledges the need for politics to be moral and points out that politics cannot perform anything outside the domain of ethics: "Is it not so that the Bolshevik and Spartacus theoreticians, because of their having resorted to violence, reached the very same conclusion as every other military dictator had?"[391] "Moralities are not a carriage that, according to your wish and depending on the circumstances, can be stopped for mounting and dismounting."

So, politics must, in a way, be ethical; but it is here that Weber establishes the difference between public morality and political morality and makes the two separate from one another. In his opinion, we are faced with two classes of ethics: One is ideological ethics while the other is responsibility ethics. Ideological ethics derives from absolutist moral teachings, Christianity in particular.

Such a morality urges us to perform whatever is decreed by ethics without paying heed to the consequence of our conduct and with the least attention to the outer conditions.

For instance, Immanuel Kant[392] urges us not to tell a lie at all whether to friends or foes. He similarly stresses that if a killer is in pursuit of an innocent person in order to kill him unjustly, and the innocent one hides in a certain place which is known to us, and the killer asks us whether we know where a certain person has hidden, we are duty-bound to tell him the truth and to refrain from lying. That which would possibly happen to the innocent person is not important. That the killer is in pursuit of realizing his wicked aim is not important.

What is important is that we have done our duty and abided by the decree of truthfulness, absolutely and unconditionally. Kant explicitly states, "Truthfulness in statements that cannot be evaded is an apparent duty of man toward everybody, no matter what dire consequences it would entail for him or for others."[393]

He passionately stresses the principle of absoluteness of honesty and truthfulness, saying: "Every human being has not only the right, but is strongly obliged to be honest and truthful in the statements

that he cannot evade, whether these statements are to his detriment or to that of others.”[394] Another example of the moral teachings of Christianity is abstention from violence such that, according to the Book of Matthew, the Holy Messiah (‘a) recommends to his disciples, thus:

You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.[395]

Weber labels this kind of ethics as ‘ideological ethics’, that is, ethics that urges us to perform our duty and not to mind its consequences. Well, imagine that a politician wants, for example, to implement these two tenets in the political arena; if he does so, catastrophe will begin, because at the time of negotiation with other governments, sometimes with the hostile ones, he has no option but to answer honestly whatever question, however evil and internal in nature it is, and to reveal his secrets.

Similarly, violence should not be answered with violence, and if an enemy attacks his country, he should not show a negative reaction; rather, it is better to relinquish another part of the country to the enemy. So, ideological ethics cannot, and should not, be employed in politics. Weber talks about the other ethics, which according to him, is ‘responsible ethics’. That is, it is here a tenet that is heedful of the particular results. The politician responsibly performs whatever is proper and fitting on the basis of circumstances and expediencies, always acts in pursuit of his country and society’s welfare, and never applies any absolutist tenet.

Weber thus concludes, “Conciliation between ideological ethics and responsible ethics is impossible.”[396] It is because “political activities necessarily resort to violent means and seek assistance from the principle of responsible ethics.”[397]

Therefore, he recommends that in the political arena absolute ideals of ethics should be abandoned while the appropriate ethics of politics should be applied realistically and responsibly. Hence, ethics is valuable and worthy. Yet, not every kind of ethics is appropriate for politics. These two should be studied on two planes and each of them put in its proper place.

If someone is totally committed to the ideological ethics, it is better for him to withdraw from politics and not to put his spiritual salvation in jeopardy, because politics involves defilement. However, it should not be concluded from this topic that politics means to behave immorally and to apply the dry logic of cost and benefit. “It is true that they engage in politics by means of the brain (reason and intellect); however, it is also correct that it is not only with the brain. In this case, right is totally on the side of the ideological ethics.”[398]

## Criticism of the view

If the ideological ethics really compels us to blindly comply with its dictates without paying heed to the negative repercussions that they may possibly entail, then Weber is right and it is better to abandon the ideological ethics in the political arena and apply the 'responsible ethics'. But do the ideological ethics really mean this and do the absolutist moral systems not pay any attention to the outcomes of the behaviour of the individual?

This claim cannot easily be accepted. Of course, morality emerges at the time when we are freed from the daily and petty shackles of cost and benefit and widen the horizon of our view. Morality urges us not to be self-centered human beings and to move beyond our self. In this sense, ethics is different from the law of give and take, or the belief, "Die for someone so that 'he would have fever for you'."

Morality enjoins us to give preference to truth over our interests. It encourages self-sacrifice and devotion. It views bravery, and in times of need, embracing death as a value and considers egotism and self-love as an anti-value. But none of these mean inattention to our aims and the consequences of our actions. No moral system allows its principles to be applied in such a way as to destroy its foundation. Even Kant himself who so passionately defended absolute honesty and truthfulness would not think 'Kantianly'. In one of his classroom lectures he had said:

If a robber holds me up and, putting me under pressure, says, "Where is your money?" I can lie to him; for, he wants to take advantage of truth. This kind of lying cannot be deemed treachery and trickery as the robber knows that I will conceal from him what I am thinking, and he, on his part, has no right to expect me to tell him the absolute truth.[399]

The assertion of Kant is based on a principle that is open to debate and has been debated many times by his contemporaries as well as by present-day thinkers. Basically, the inclination of Kant to defend absolute truthfulness and honesty is not to let even a small leak to be made in this structure and even a single exception to be brought up that would weaken the essence of the rule.

So, by virtue of a general and absolute rule, which is among the most ancient of moral tenets and is known as the golden rule, it offers us this absolute rule and bids us to make it the general guide of our conduct. "Act in such a way that the rule of your conduct and your will become one of the general laws of nature." [400]

The meaning of this statement is that whenever I tell a lie, I have, in effect, accepted that in similar circumstances, they tell me lies as well; however, as I do not like a lie to be told to me, I myself must refrain from lying. So, for it to become a moral rule, it must be general and beyond transient circumstances. At any rate, we do not intend to criticize this Kantian view at this juncture. This task has

been dealt with in detail elsewhere.[401]

It is worth saying that even on the basis of Kantian sources responsible ethics can be acquired and this is the task that Christine Korsgaard has dealt with in his famous book entitled, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*. Thus, ideological ethics is also not totally free from responsibility and the consequences of behaviour.

Similarly, the statement that has been attributed to the Holy Messiah ('a) should be understood in its broad context. At the time when the laws and ordinances of the Torah were laying emphasis on retaliation and revenge, and summoning all to take an eye for an eye, Jesus ('a) propagated the tenet that washing blood with blood is absurd and whoever lives with the sword will die by the sword. The statements of Jesus ('a) are contrary to the logic that viewed vengeance, not forgiveness, as a value. The aim of Jesus ('a) was that instead of obscurantist legalism and externalism, the spirit of faith should sprout in the heart of men.

His utterance is that the Divine Will cannot be confined to the law of indemnity. The commands of God are much higher than what this law stipulates. God wants to give his servants whatever they want—and even more—from Him, even if their wishes are unjustified.[402]

Hence, the issue is basically not that of abandoning one's right, relinquishing power to the wicked, and heedlessness of the repercussions of one's actions. Similarly, it is not so that Jesus ('a) has decreed that we should absolutely desist from violence and to offer no resistance to aggressors; rather, he only wants to free us from superficiality.

We should not imagine that Jesus was saying that waging war is a sin. Essentially, he has no intention of presenting the criterion for all actions; he does not even (apparently) mean a specific thing. He stresses on the fact that God does not want mere observance of the law. Rather, He wants much more than this.[403]

Hence, as reported in the New Testament, we see the same Jesus ('a) saying, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword." [404] And when Jesus ('a) saw that the temple, that is, the House of God in Jerusalem, had been transformed into a place of trading and commerce, and this holy sanctuary desecrated, he dauntlessly entered it and threw out the goods and furniture of the merchants,

Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money-changers and the benches of those selling doves. 'It is written,' he said to them, 'My house will be called a house of prayer' but you are making it a 'den of robbers'. [405]

So, the line of absolute demarcation between ideological ethics and responsible ethics cannot be drawn,

nor these two juxtaposed against one another. Even Weber clearly states that the religion of Islam has a specific law for self-defense and resistance against invaders, and in such cases he declares war as permissible, saying: “Religious wars have been the life-giving element of Islam from the very beginning.”[406] And he again states, “All the religions have more or less successfully studied this issue.”[407] In such a case, how can Weber prove his claim?

Granting that the demarcation line between ideological ethics and responsible ethics does not exist and we, in effect, have acknowledged that ideological ethics is also result-seeking concerned with the outcome and deals responsibly with issues, then one cannot talk about the necessity of a particular kind of ethics for politics. Or, it should be stated that in politics ethics is necessary or it should be negated; not that we claim that the duality of ethics exists and that individual ethics is the ideological one while political ethics is the ‘responsible’ one. This distinction has no scientific and historical precedence, and in effect, concerns the negation of ethics and stripping politics of it; that is, the same thing that Machiavelli was after and Muḥwiyah used to put into practice.

Concerning the example of sacrifice, which is good from the viewpoint of individual ethics but wrong in the political arena, the issue can also be viewed in a more profound manner and the conclusion reached that sacrifice in both cases is moral and correct. Assuming that the representatives of the people, with their justification, decide to allocate a percentage of the national income of their country to a certain famine-stricken country, it will certainly be a moral act and will not be viewed as being against the national interests.

Thus, sacrifice is ethical on the individual level as well as on the social and political one. Only in the case of the liberality of the state will it be contrary to interests, and as such, anti-ethical if done directly and without the people’s coordination and consent. The reason is, the state is the representative of the people and cannot act without the opinion of its clients. Juliano Puntara cites the same example and advances this point,

‘That realm of ethics which urges the individual to sacrifice his interests for others—in other words, all the things that are under the concept of magnanimity—has no functional capability in the political and social conduct.’ That is, one has no right to risk the interests of the people.[408]

Then, he himself criticizes this issue and cites the crime of Bentham,[409] the real founder of the utilitarian ethics, who used to ask: “Can a politician sacrifice the interests of his own people in favour of others?’ And he himself [Bentham] had replied, ‘Why not? It is only on the condition that the nation itself wants such actions and act of sacrifice.’”[410] This distinction, that individual conduct is based on the ethics of generosity and humanitarianism while political conduct is subjected to the national interests, is still debatable. Both the two features can openly be placed on both the two levels; there are so many instances wherein individual conduct is anchored to self-interest and welfare-oriented ethics while a political act is influenced by humanitarian motives. “As, such a contradiction, even in the sphere of

individual ethics, is understandable and inferable.”[411]

Lastly, the citizen or subject cannot be urged to follow two different and distinct systems of ethics and be expected to profess honesty while accepting the dishonesty of the government and not mentioning it, and in the words of Plato, regard deception on the government’s part to be permissible. Apart from these mentioned problems, this tenet as what Puntara says is ambiguous and its limits and boundaries are not specified.[412] It seems that finally it should be delivered to one of the aforementioned two tenets, it having no validity and soundness itself.[413]

## **View on the oneness of ethics and politics**

On the basis of this tenet, ethics and politics are both in quest of ensuring the prosperity of human beings and they cannot be at cross-purposes with one another. Among the duties of politics are spiritual nourishment of the citizens, making them sociable, teaching them to love others and observance of the rights of others, all of these being nothing but moral rules. An individual in private life is the same as in his social life.

Although the principles that are dominant in the collectivity and rules of collective life can be mentioned, it is not that these principles are contrary to the principles that are dominant in the individual’s life. To cite an example, a free person is always responsible of his conduct. This sense of responsibility also exists in the collective sense, though it could possibly be weaker, and no one can claim to have no responsibility in the collective state and not assume the consequences of his own conduct.

This tenet regards only one moral system as valid in the two spheres of individual and social life. It considers whatever is ethical on the individual level as ethical too on the social and political level as well as for the politicians; whatever is immoral for each of the citizens is also reckoned as immoral for the government. Therefore, it is bad for an individual to lie, it is so for the government as well, and if the citizens are supposed to observe honesty, so too is the government.

Thus, no government can view itself as authorized to perpetrate immoral acts and claim that such an act is a political necessity and has been part of the requisites of political moves. This rule knows no exception. From this perspective, ethics is considered as the rudiment of politics and its prelude whereas politics is the means for the realization and implementation of moral virtues. The view of Plato and Aristotle on the two realms of ethics and politics has been so, for they believed,

There is no difference between the government and the society, economics and politics, ethics and politics, religion and politics, or culture and politics. Human being means the citizen. Every activity of the society or the citizens of the society has a political implication. The citizen can only realize his

potentialities through the path of political activity, and it is only with the blessing of politics that he can achieve the stage of humanity.[414]

In our philosophical tradition, the same relationship between ethics and politics has been observed to such an extent that Khwājah Nasrūddīn at-Tūsī views politics as a technique that “has been undertaken for the realization of moral life.”[415]

So, ethics is the foundation while politics is its instrument and method for the emergence and deepening of moral principles.

To defend this tenet in the theoretical sphere is very easy. It justifies itself, and contrary to the mentioned tenets, it cannot be criticized. Because, no sort of internal contradiction can be noticed in it and it is also safe from the legitimacy crisis caused by the previous tenets.

The only critique that can be put forth against this tenet is this: In practice, will the politics based on ethics also succeed? Or, will political realism make the omission of some ideals and the overlooking of some moral principles inevitable? It is this point that we will deal with.

The most famous and greatest proponent of this tenet, both in theory and practice as well as in words and deeds, was Imām ‘Alī (‘a)[416] who did not neglect to explain it for a moment and lost his life for its sake. With the firm belief that politics ought to be ethical and that he should acquire his own legitimacy from the principles of ethics, Imām ‘Alī (‘a) never encroached on the ambit of ethics and suffered an apparent defeat but he did not allow himself to be overcome from the viewpoint of ethics.

The entire life of dignity and manliness of this great man is more widely acclaimed than that in which we would like to show the identicalness of ethics and politics. Nevertheless, we will briefly mention some cases, which are all understandable and defensible only on the basis of the theory of oneness of ethics and politics and, from the perspective of duality of ethics and politics fragments from which can be gleaned and taken:

1. The Imām, after the demise of the Messenger of God (s), and contrary to the expectation of many, was removed as caliph and in the course of the event that is proverbial for all; another person became the ruler of the Muslims. Abū Sufyān, who was among the defenders of the immorality of politics, suggested to the Imām (‘a) not to abandon fighting for the nascent caliphate and he himself committed to place the combatants at his (‘a) disposal. But the Imām (‘a) was not the kind of person who wanted to obtain power through immoral ways and the unwillingness of the people. So, he (‘a) rejected his suggestion and invited the people to sobriety and amity.[417]

2. After the assassination of ‘Umar ibn al-Khattāb,[418] as the six-man council for selecting the next caliph suggested to the Imām (‘a) to accept the caliphate on the condition that he (‘a) follow the tradition of the two Shaykhs [*shaykhayn*] (Abūbakr and ‘Umar), he (‘a) declined the offer as he was not willing to tell a circumstantial lie and obtain power in an unethical manner. On the contrary, he (‘a) explicitly set the style and method of his policy in obtaining power on the basis of the Book of God and the Sunnah of

the Prophet (s), saying: “The Book of God and the Sunnah of His Prophet (s) do not need the addition of style and tradition of others.”[419]

3. In the course of the insurgency against ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān[420] and the siege of his house, it was expected of the Imām (‘a) to take full advantage of the emergent opportunity and take the reins of the caliphate. But, contrary to expectation, he (‘a) did not welcome the situation that had arisen and tried to intercede. He invited the people to sobriety and ‘Uthmān to adopt a correct policy. To this end, he (‘a) made such headway and so defended ‘Uthmān that he told ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās: “By Allah, I continued protecting him till I feared lest I become a sinner.”[421]

4. Since the people unanimously paid allegiance to him in assuming the office of the caliphate, the Imām (‘a) did not delay a single moment in removing the officials of the previous caliph whom he viewed as impious and unjust. He did not accept the recommendations of Ibn ‘Abbās and Mughayrah ibn Shu‘bah[422] on retaining them temporarily and then gradually removing them after consolidating his position (‘a).[423]

5. Again, when it was suggested to him (‘a) to let Talhā and Zubayr[424] share in power and win their support by allocating Kūfah and Basrah to them, he did not accede to this inappropriate demand.[425]

6. Since Talhā and Zubayr were among the first and pioneering Muslims in Islam, they took issue with him (‘a) as to why their share from the public treasury is equal to that of the others and not more, and they implicitly asked him for advantages and privileges for themselves. The Imām (‘a) said that equality was part of the Sunnah of the Messenger of God (s) and that they were not different from the others in this regard.[426]

7. As Talhā and Zubayr intended to fight the Imām (‘a) and prepare for war that later became known as the Battle of Jamal, they asked the Imām (‘a) for permission to leave Medina on the pretext of performing *‘umrah* [unseasonal optional pilgrimage]. The Imām (‘a), who was aware of their intention, did not take security measures nor did he bar their exit. Instead, he (‘a) granted them permission to go and said to them, “By Allah! I swear that you are not after *‘umrah*; rather, you are in pursuit of deception and are heading toward Basrah.”[427]

8. Since the Imām (‘a) triumphed over the insurgents in the Battle of Jamal, he forgave everybody. He (‘a) even excused Marwān ibn al-Hakam who was the root of all the seditions, the factor in the killing of ‘Uthmān, and one of the architects of the Battle of Jamal. When they told him (‘a) that Marwān was ready to pay allegiance anew, he (‘a) did not even accept his oath of allegiance and set him free;[428] although he (‘a) could have taken action against him, and by means of punishment and legal penalties, prevented his future activities.

9. When the Imām (‘a) saw his soldiers using foul language against those of Mu‘āwiyah in the Battle of Siffān, he dissuaded them from such an unethical act—even though it was against an enemy and at the time of war—telling them: “Instead of abusing them you should say, ‘O’ Allah! Save our blood and their

blood, bring about reconciliation between us, and lead them, who have strayed, to the right path.”[429]

10. When Mu‘awiyah shut off water to the Im‘am (‘a) [and his army], the Im‘am (‘a) regained control of the water. But he (‘a) did not retaliate in kind; he (‘a) did not hinder Mu‘awiyah’s troops from using the water.

11. Under the pressure of the Kharijites [*khawarij*],[430] the Im‘am (‘a) submitted to arbitration, but when they found out the ruse of ‘Amr ibn al-‘as, they demanded that the Im‘am (‘a) annul his pact with Mu‘awiyah and fight him [again]. But the Im‘am (‘a) did not agree to violate the pact, even though it was to his advantage, and summoned the Kharijites to accept it.[431]

12. In the face of the troublesome and vexing movements of the Kharijites in K‘fah, the Im‘am (‘a) never resorted to any form of violence. He generally forgave them, their aspersions and abuse.[432] And, finally when he (‘a), on the deathbed of his martyrdom, asked his relatives not to let his killing pave the way for a widespread bloodbath.

“O’ sons of ‘Abd al-Muttalib, certainly I do not wish to see you plunging harshly into the blood of Muslims, shouting ‘*Am‘r al-Mu‘min‘n* [Commander of the Faithful] has been killed.’ Beware, do not kill on account of me except my killer.”[433]

Such cases are so many that enumerating them is beyond the scope of this book. Any political realist and believer in the tenet of the separation of ethics and politics, or political authoritarianism will subject the validity of the above mentioned decisions to criticism and will view them as being against the spirit of politics and interest-seeking.

This judgment also took place during the time of Im‘am ‘Al‘ (‘a) himself, and those who used to stress on the courage of the Im‘am (‘a) regarded him as being devoid of knowledge on warfare. Mu‘awiyah was deemed smarter and more knowledgeable on the principles of politics than the Im‘am (‘a). The Im‘am had no option but to maintain his principles as well as to refute such imaginations. In his agonized and fault-finding remarks, he (‘s) said, “The people of Quraysh to the extent say, ‘The son of Ab‘ T‘lib is valiant but ignorant of the knowledge of warfare.” In dealing with the notion that Mu‘awiyah was more cunning than him, he also said:

By Allah, Mu‘awiyah is not more cunning than I am, but he deceives and commits evil deeds. Had I not loathed deceit I would have been the most cunning of all men. But (the fact is that) every deceit is a sin and every sin is disobedience (of Allah), and every deceitful person will have a banner by which he will be recognized on the Day of Judgment.”[434]

The difficulty of the Im‘am’s task was that he (‘a) wanted to be ethical at all times and the political modus operandi to be based on ethics, and not acquisition of power at whatever cost. He too describes his

internal impediment, thus:

“O’ people! Surely fulfillment of pledge is the twin of truth. I do not know a better shield (against the assaults of sin) than it. One who realizes the reality of return (to the next world) never betrays. We are in a period when most of the people regard betrayal as wisdom. In these days the ignorant call it excellence of cunning. What is the matter with them? Allah may destroy them. One who has been through thick and thin of life finds the excuses to be preventing him from orders and prohibitions of Allah but he disregards them despite capability (to succumb to them and follows the commands of Allah), while one who has no restraints of religion seizes the opportunity (and accepts the excuses for not following the commands of Allah).”[435]

The Imam (‘a) was so committed to ethics and observed its principles that he was not prepared to ignore them for the entire world, for even a minute, nor violate them on any occasion; he was not prepared to sacrifice truth for the sake of any expediency. He, therefore, states: “By God! If they give me the seven realms with whatever there is under the sky to make me disobey God or unfairly take the husk of barley from an ant, I would not do it.”

And so the government of the Imam (‘a) that could have lasted for years had it been somewhat expediency-minded and lenient with regard to ethical principles, did not endure for more than five years, thereby substantiating the opinion of the political realists. Yet, this government sowed the seed of its moral thought in the people’s minds, with the result that in the course of history, hundreds of movements based on it have taken shape, and so it is considered up to the present times as the standard for measuring and assessing the moral principles of governments. In this lies the true victory of this tenet whose validity becomes more vivid with the passage of time.

Undoubtedly, the implementation of this tenet is difficult but not impossible. It is possible that nowadays some would think of such a moral understanding of politics as quixotic, idealist and unrealistic, and while having conviction in the principles of ethics, believe that ethics cannot be applied in politics claiming that the complexities of politics and the difficulties of the governments of today have closed the path to ethics. In reality, there are thinkers nowadays who are moving forward to realize this ideal and for the sake of which they suffer but become successful.

During the twentieth century, at least four persons from the different parts of the world convinced that politics is rooted in ethics, endeavored to act on the basis of their views and succeeded, too. These four persons were Vacláv Havel,[436] Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, and Imam Khomein. Vacláv Havel, the Czechoslovakian thinker, intellectual and combatant, who became president of his country after the collapse of the communist system, regards moralization of politics as the most urgent concern of today’s world. He writes, “My experience and observations affirm the fact that in politics, ethical practices are possible although I do not deny that treading this path is not always easy, and I have never claimed it to have been so.”[437]

After having obtained power he says,

One thing that seems certain to me is that my responsibility is to emphasize as much as possible on the moral source of all kinds of decent politics, and reliance on the importance of moral values and standards in all aspects of social life.[438]

Standing on the conviction that cheating never pays[439] and that “Truth cannot be attained through lying,”[440] he stresses that there is only one way to success and that is honesty[441] and “Ethics, in fact, is latent within everything and this matter is true; because, every time I face a problem and try to reach its depth, I always find a sort of moral aspect in it.”[442]

Havel stresses,

The point that the politicians should tell a lie has no validity whatsoever... The necessity of telling lies and intriguing on the part of the politician is a completely baseless statement which is propounded and propagated by those who want, for whatever reason, to discourage others from having concern and interest in social affairs.[443]

This utterance does not mean that the politician should divulge every political issue to anybody. Instead, it means that he should not tell a lie; that is all. Besides regarding commitment to ethics as a political necessity, he considers it as the foundation of success in this regard and lays emphasis on it.

The second personality, who entered the political arena with this viewpoint and was also killed for its sake but never trampled on his principles, was Mahatma Gandhi whose struggles led to the independence and sovereignty of today's India.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948), who belonged to the Brahman caste and was educated in England, relied only on truthfulness and the principle of non-violence in fighting against colonialism. It was by means of this weapon that he succeeded in obtaining the independence of India. Owing to his long-term political resistance and reliance on the principle of *Ahimsa* (non-violence), he was called, *Mahatma* (Great Soul) by the people of India. He never abandoned the principles of ethics nor assailed ethical rules with those in vogue in politics, even in the face of the aggressor—England, the old colonialist.

He commenced his struggle against racial discrimination in South Africa and continued it in India. He even consented to the division of India and the formation of the state of Pakistan but never allowed himself to trample on the principles of ethics. He did not at all regard the ends as justifying the means, and believed that every means should justify itself, saying: “In my philosophy on life, means and ends are things that can be interchanged.”[444] To those who would consider means as means and nothing else, he used to say:

I say that means are, ultimately, everything and your ends will be just like your means, whatever they are. There is no wall to separate the means from the ends. It is obvious that the Creator has endowed us with the capability of putting the means under our control (and, that too, to a limited extent, of course). But to have control of the goals is not possible. The (extent of) realization of the goals will be proportionate to the means that are employed in attaining them. This case knows no exception.[445]

In his commitment to principles, Gandhi had gone so far as to stand fearlessly against the Hindu fanatics who were criticizing him for his supportive position with respect to the Muslims. It was for the sake of this that he was killed by one of the Hindu fanatics.

Nelson Mandela is also one of these figures. Since he launched his struggle against the ruling government's policy of racial discrimination, he was deprived of his social rights. As he did not compromise, he spent almost thirty years in prison. His commitment as well as that of his comrades bore fruit; finally racial discrimination withered away in that country. When he became the president of the country, he announced that the crimes committed against the Blacks could not be forgotten, but they could be forgiven. During the course of his tenure, Mandela was committed to his principles of ethics. After the end of the normal tenure of his presidency, he resigned peacefully from politics and continued his social activities with dignity. A survey of Imam Khomein's views in this regard is the subject of the next chapter.

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