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Review Article

The Concept of Justice as a Moral Virtue of Societies in the Discourse of Liberal Democracy

Foroud Shafiei[1], Hamed Ameri Golestani[2*], Mohammad Ali Shahriari[3]

1. Ph.D. student of Political Sciences, Shahreza Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shahreza, Iran.
2. Department of Political Sciences, Ahvaz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Ahvaz, Iran.
3. Department of Political Sciences, Bushehr Branch, Islamic Azad University, Bushehr, Iran.

Corresponding Author: Hamed Ameri Golestani. Department of Political Sciences, Ahvaz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Ahvaz, Iran. E-mail: h.amerigolestani@gmail.com

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Abstract

Introduction: Philosophers consider justice to be the moral virtue of society; That is, just as honesty, truthfulness and trustworthiness can be considered the virtues of individual ethics, justice is also the virtue of a society; Therefore, both morality and justice can be considered as the characteristics of an individual or society, especially justice has a special and distinct social aspect and is considered the society's morality. Justice is one of the concepts about which various theories have been proposed and people have presented various programs to realize it. Liberal democracy, which after the renaissance, religious reformism, and the enlightenment era, gradually opened its foothold in the theories of human sciences and historical developments, is the source of a kind of intellectual tradition known as humanism, and with this approach, it promotes a special discourse of justice. Considering this, the article was formed with the aim of investigating the concept of justice as a moral virtue of societies in the discourse of liberal democracy.

Material & Methods: In this research, data collection was done in document-library form and data analysis was done with the "discourse analysis" method and based on the theoretical framework of " Laclau and Mouffe's discourse analysis".

Conclusion: Theorizing about justice in the discourse of liberal democracy is influenced by the approach that places individual freedom, private property and humanism as the basis. The concept of justice in this discourse is based on ontological and epistemological foundations. Liberal democracy believes in instrumental rationality, absolute profit, individualism, welfare, individual inequality.

Keywords: *Justice, Liberal democracy, Discourse, Equality*

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INTRODUCTION

Justice is a concept that humans have tried to establish since the beginning of their lives, and it is related to concepts such as freedom and humanity, and the opposite word of justice is injustice, inequality, and discrimination [1, 2]. For a better understanding of justice in ideas, other concepts such as freedom and equality must be understood; In fact, the triangle of freedom, equality and justice are the main concepts of political thought.

Man's love for justice and equality, his desire for freedom and independence, his will and tireless effort to achieve human rights on the one hand, and the necessity of social life and following regulations and accepting limitations on the other hand, all create a challenge through history.

Liberal democracy is a combination of two models of politics, the first of which emphasizes freedom and the second emphasizes the sovereignty of the people. The school of liberalism mainly expanded after the development of the bourgeoisie economy and the weakening of the position of feudalism, and it includes various approaches such as agrarian, classical, modern and new liberalism. Liberal democracy consists of

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certain principles, including: the principle of the individual and individualism, the principle of consent and social contract, the principle of people's sovereignty, the principle of law and legalism, the principle of freedom of choice, the principle of tolerance and tolerance, the principle of pluralism, the principle of respect for private property, the principle of elections, the principle of separating religion from politics and the principle of separating private life from public life. Liberalism and rational and scientific knowledge have a close relationship with each other, and both of them attacked irrational and non-scientific ideas, principles and institutions. From this point of view, the world of nature and human society are both law-based and these laws can be understood and discovered through reason. Therefore, in the discourse of liberal democracy, no opinion, principles and traditional authority are immune from scientific and rational evaluation [3]. Based on this, the central signs and signifiers of the liberal democracy discourse are rooted in humanistic epistemology and human rationality. In such a way that man and human wisdom are considered as the criteria for understanding the natural world and the creator of the social artificial world.

In this research, researchers try to analyze the concept of justice as a moral virtue of societies in the discourse of liberal democracy.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In this research, data collection was done in a document-library form and data analysis was done with the "discourse analysis" method and based on the theoretical framework of "Laclau and Mouffe's discourse analysis".

In terms of methodology, discourse analysis has features and characteristics that distinguish this method from other social science methods. In this view, social and political affairs and the reality of the world as a whole can only be understood within discourse constructions, and discourses shape our understanding of the world. One of the assumptions of this theory is that the world is scattered and complex and can only be understood through our discursive categorizations, and there are no objective and necessary laws outside of discourses. Therefore, there is a kind of relativism in this theory and there is nothing fundamental that gives meaning and identity to other phenomena, but the identity of everything is acquired in the network of other identities that are articulated together. Different elements that may be meaningless apart from each other, but when they come together in the form of a discourse, they acquire a new identity. These elements can be connected to each other through articulation [4]. Discourse as a method presents five steps step by step.

1. Identification of the conflict space
2. Determination of time and place
3. Semantic conflicts and social developments
4. Meaning and text in discourse analysis
5. The connection of text and meaning with social actions

DISCUSSION

Justice as a moral virtue

Ethical philosophers consider justice as the moral virtue of society; That is, just as honesty, truthfulness and trustworthiness can be considered the virtues of individual ethics, justice is also the virtue of a society. According to philosophers like Plato, the virtue of justice is the fourth virtue of the soul. To define justice as a virtue, he starts from the discussion of social justice. He considers a desirable and moral society to be a society that has 4 characteristics: wisdom, courage, self-control, and justice [5]. Therefore, both morality and justice can be considered as the characteristics of an individual or society, especially justice has a special and distinct social aspect and is considered the society's morality.

Principles of liberal democracy discourse

In order to better understand the concept of justice in the perspective of liberal democracy, one must first get acquainted with the basic principles in the discourse of liberal democracy.

1. **Individualism:** Among the aforementioned principles, what forms the basis of justice in liberalism is the principle of the individual and individualism and private property. The highest

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goals of a liberal political system, at least theoretically or at least in the world of thought, is to preserve the individual and achieve happiness. Individualism is the metaphysical and ontological core of liberalism. The fact that emphasizes this word is that everyone is who they are and not something or someone else. Therefore, this word emphasizes the wholeness of every human being and the distinction of a person from other persons, not their similarities [6]. Liberal individualism is both ontological and moral. This concept considers the person more "real" or more fundamental and prior to the human society and its institutions and structures. It also places a higher moral value on the individual than the society or any other collective group. "Social interests" is nothing more than "the sum of the interests of its constituents." Finally, his rights and demands are morally placed before the rights and demands of the society [7]. From the liberal point of view, the individual has priority over the society and the individual benefit over the social benefit. The fundamental emphasis of liberalism is to maintain diversity in all areas of life. Therefore, liberalism is against unitarism, centralism, exclusivism and authoritarianism. In liberalism, the individual and his ends are the principle and social institutions, including the government and the means of providing them [8]. According to John Locke, individualism stems from the belief that people have natural rights, simply because they are human, and that these rights are higher than the authority of the state and were politically pre-existing. Based on the principle of individualism, they are rational and their decisions are aimed at maximizing their profits, and any type of decision applied by the government worsens people's conditions [9]. Human talents, such as perception, discernment and judgement, feeling, mental abilities and even moral preference, get the opportunity to practice and act when choosing a path. Someone who does everything out of habit and has no choice. Such a person has no practice in discerning what is best, nor in wanting it. The person who allows the world or the part to which he belongs to choose his life plan for him, does not need any talent other than the talent of monkey-like imitation. Therefore, only what people do is important [10]. From the point of view of liberal democrats, the centrality of individualism comes from the natural rights of people who are created free, and rationality allows people to pursue their interests in the best way. In this framework, any intervention of the government that hinders the freedom of individuals is known as an attack on their natural rights, because people are the center of all affairs and processes and are superior to any institution. An individualistic person in a liberal democracy has reasonable and logical knowledge to pursue his intentions and goals, and this gift, which is natural and God-given, should not be taken away from him. A liberal person defines his values and ideals based on the principle of individualism and acts and reacts in front of others according to his free will, beyond all institutions and structures.

2. **Private ownership:** The legal definition of ownership is the right that every owner has to benefit from his property and can occupy it however he wants, and no one has the right to oppose his usufruct or possessions. Although the right of ownership is the most complete real right and the owner has the right to take any possession of his property, but nevertheless, he is bound to ensure that the possession of the owner does not cause harm to others [11]. Private property in liberalism means that the power of the property owner is recognized by law and imposes obligations on others to refrain from seizing and interfering with this property. According to the principle of private property, others are excluded from access to some benefits or their options are limited. These acts of private power should be legalized from a political point of view, and the concept of property protection has played an important role in the theory of social contract holders and liberals [12]. According to this point of view, the private interests of individuals and governments are a means to protect this natural and fundamental right. The logical argument of the liberal democrats is based on the fact that securing the personal interests of individuals will ultimately lead to the interests of the society as a whole, and the maximization of the benefits of

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individual individuals naturally and invisibly leads to maximum benefits in the society and in this way It guarantees the public interest. Therefore, the private property of individuals and the protection of this right by the government is one of the basic principles in the discourse of liberal democracy. Recognizing inequality, self-interest and self-love, profit maximization, one of the most serious opinions about private property, is proposed in the book Wealth of Nations by Adam Smith, one of the founders of economic liberalism. He considered personal ownership as the driving factor and driving engine of a country's economy, which, if recognized, would be the source of economic prosperity. In fact, personal ownership guarantees the benefit of people from their personal interests, which makes an economic system take steps towards maximizing social benefits. The main idea of personal property in Adam Smith's view is emphasizing the concept of self-interest and self-love, which is a type of personal interest that leads to the achievement of social optimality. In fact, personal property is important in Smith's thought because he gave originality to the individual in an economic system and believes that if everyone works to maximize their personal benefit, the collective benefit will also be maximized. The main characteristic of trying to gain personal benefit in the context of an economic activity and under the title of profit maximization makes sense, and it is natural that a person naturally puts in all his effort when he is sure of the ownership of added value and the product of his work. It is here that the possession and authority of each person to interfere and take possession of his production facilities becomes more and more important [13]. Many other theorists of liberalism, such as John Locke, David Ricardo, von Hayek and von Mises, are staunch defenders of private property and reject the communist idea of sharing wealth and government intervention in the economy, and consider it to be in conflict with justice. In the social contract theory, only a just government is one whose policies and institutions are based on the satisfaction of its citizens. Therefore, social contract theory is not only an explanation of why there is a state at all, but also a test of political legitimacy.

3. **The principle of consent and social contract:** In the theory of social contract, a government is just and legitimate if its policies and institutions are based on the consent and principle of legitimate equality desired by the citizens and subjects of that system. Therefore, the social contract theory is not only a description of why and for what reasons there is a government at all, but it is also a test and measurement for the level of political legitimacy of governments. The principle and tradition of social contract has a prominent position in the history of philosophy and political thought. Classical theorists and thinkers of the social contract tradition, such as John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Emmanuel Kant, used the social contract to create and establish a specific and powerful political authority in order to overcome the problems and challenges of living in a situation and conditions without Law and chaos were considered necessary [14]. In connection with the theory of justice, John Rawls presented a contrasting and alternative approach to the theory of social contract. He assumes those who are the parties to the contract and the determiners of the principles of justice and equality, who are in a neutral situation, taking into account the interests of the general society and independent of personal evidence to determine and distinguish the moral principles. which forms and pays for the political institutions of the society, and therefore considers the principle of social contract and consent as one of the legitimate principles of a just system [15]. In fact, according to its supporters and theorists, such as Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Rawls, the social contract is rooted in the theory of rational choice. This means that people, in a rational choice and with a simple calculation, do not consider the lawless situation to be fair, and they consider the need for justice to be a legitimate and powerful political system that can arbitrate in the event of a conflict between the interests of individuals and Through the adjustment of diverse and varied demands and expectations of the people of the society, he provided the

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possibility of a peaceful life under the umbrella of justice. Based on this, people choose with their consent in a rational game to accept limitations on their freedoms and temporary interests in favor of a higher power, for their long-term interests in a society with origins. be provided differently and sometimes conflictingly [16]. In this way, the institutions and laws that create inequality based on the consent of individuals are not necessarily considered unfair, but in some cases, according to the requirements of the political or social issue, justice is also necessary, in other words, justice in the liberal democratic system is relative in nature. And according to the requirements and the spirit of the times and on the basis of a person's will and discretion, it is possible to act according to a policy that is not fair on the surface, but the citizens do not object to it and do not consider it discriminatory. In this situation, the rational principle is superior to the moral principle. Intellect is an explanation and a guide map for people's personal interests and, accordingly, people's behaviors and actions. For this reason, in capitalist systems which are based on the principles of liberal democracy, according to Karl Marx, the government is considered to be the representative of the upper class, that is, the bourgeois and capitalist class, and takes the suffering of the working class and the weak as hostages.

4. **The principle of people's sovereignty:** People's sovereignty means the right to participate and monitor decisions that directly or indirectly affect their lives. In other words, the sovereignty of the people is the rulership of a nation, which can be realized to some extent today in the form of representation in democratic systems [17]. Therefore, in the system of liberal democracy, it is assumed that a just system can realize the principle of people's sovereignty through political participation in a democratic process in which all people enjoy equal voting rights. Based on this, the principle of sovereignty, as one of the central and main signs of liberal democracy discourse, expresses the fact that the governing institutions in any political system should show flexibility towards people's participation and by creating platforms and Necessary and necessary institutional fields for the realization and growth and continuation of all-round and effective participation of the people. It is in this way that people, through their participation in a political society, put a seal of legitimacy on the fairness of that system and consider the created political institutions to be fair, although it is possible that in a fair process, the share of individuals from benefit and gaining power be different [18]. From this point of view, the assumption of liberal democracy is based on the fact that the fairness or unfairness of any political system, which forms one of the legitimizing components of that system, depends on the fundamental fact that the people's sovereignty through participation To what extent is the political power of individuals realized and to the extent that there are open political institutions for the participation and supervision of individuals in decision-making, people have a greater sense of belonging to that political system and as a result, they feel less discriminated. . In reality, the realization of people's sovereignty in the discourse of liberal democracy is realized on the basis of representative democracy. Although in this type of representation system, people have equal votes, but due to the exclusive access of the capitalist class to the media and the direction of public opinion, as well as their superior economic power, the votes of people are not necessarily equal; This point means that the freedom of individuals to participate and rule over their own destiny may be affected by the economic power of the upper class, and reminds us of the famous saying "money corrupts politics".

5. **Legalism:** The mere existence of law in itself does not indicate the democratic nature of a political system, but rather the laws that are measured by human reason and are used by human will. Based on this, in the discourse of liberal democracy, the laws are not considered eternal and sacred, but people can change, modify and modify the laws over time and according to the requirements of the time according to what reason requires [19]. Based on this, legalism in the liberal democratic system has a material and instrumental aspect,

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and therefore it may become a source of power. Critics of liberal democracy point to the same issue in criticizing instrumental legalism and believe that the law in liberal democratic systems is a tool in the hands of the superiors so that they can impose their demands on the subordinates in the form of laws.

6. **The principle of freedom:** The principle of freedom is considered in two negative (negative) and positive (positive) aspects. The meaning of negative and negative freedom is the freedom and liberation of man from the rule of tyrants and rulers and rejection of their one-sided rule. Positive freedom means the active action of people in determining their destiny. Man can realize his will and develop his talent through freedom. Therefore, in the liberal democracy system, affirmative or positive freedom is mostly considered. Therefore, voluntary competition in gaining power and regardless of the secondary restrictions that deprive people of this right is considered one of the principles of liberal democracy. This issue originates from the modern belief in the rationality of man and the sufficiency of human will in providing a life with happiness and well-being [20]. In fact, people think they are free when they devise methods for their security and property, but they are truly free only when they realize that these measures are the product of reason. Their freedom requires their awareness of necessity [21]. Based on this, in the discourse of liberal democracy, freedom is an inviolable and necessary principle that every political system must prepare for. In fact, the principle of freedom from the epistemological point of view of liberal democracy is based on a humanist attitude and it emphasizes that man is a wise being who has regular, unified and rational behavior and actions; Therefore, in order to realize one's humanity and talent, one needs free will and free choice to the extent that this freedom does not harm the freedom of others.
7. **The principle of separation of religion from politics: the separation of religion and politics is** a description of the political aspect and established objectivism of secularization in the West. Secularism was seriously proposed in the light of the age of enlightenment and rationalism in Europe and the West. In such a way that the emergence and expansion of the liberal idea of democracy in the West was formed through the separation and separation of the two spheres of religion and politics [22]. Based on this, one of the teachings that has become the source of conflict between the two discourses of liberal democracy and Islamic systems is the principle of separation of religion from politics. On this basis, the highest authority in liberal doctrines is the individual and wisdom, and accordingly, relativism in the ideas of Western democracy is one of the important consequences of this fundamental principle. In reality, in the epistemological view of liberal democracy, the value of things is credit, and there is no definite principle.

Formulation of the concept of justice in the discourse of liberal democracy

In liberal democracy, where the practical manifestation of this model has crystallized in Western European democracies, human is the center of all affairs and individuality and humanism form its epistemological foundation. Liberals have avoided the involvement of revealed and monotheistic teachings in governance affairs and the legal system of Western democracies is based on the philosophy of "man is the standard of all affairs". In the discourse of liberal democracy, individual freedoms are emphasized and the only thing that determines individual freedom is harming others. The liberal understanding of the concept of justice is very similar to the sophistic definition of Thrasymachus. Personal benefit is intrinsically related to the thought of freedom, but the originality of benefit is the main motivation in the formation of liberal thought. The idea of freedom is a way to secure personal interests. For this reason, there is a lot of overlap and harmony between liberalism and utilitarianism. As quoted by John Stuart Mill, true freedom means securing our own interests in any way we like. So the foundation of the idea of freedom is based on self-interest. If the government is considered a threat to freedom, because it threatens the individual's personal interests. The authority always expects its citizens to forget their personal interests and act for the benefit of the authorities [23]. Liberal

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democracy advocates minimal government. Some theoreticians in this field, such as Robert Nozick, believe that whatever she/he has acquired through legal means is fair, and any type of government intervention, such as compulsory taxation, to provide the necessary funds and distribute it among others is unfair. This point of view is in direct opposition to the theory of John Rawls, who introduces social justice related to the correct and justified way of distributing the benefits and hardships of social cooperation, and believes that social life is chosen because of its usefulness for humans over individual life. Independent and self-willed people have entered the society by realizing that collective cooperation in the form of society provides better conditions for everyone compared to individual life. In fact, John Rawls emphasizes the supervision of the free market through the imposition of taxes and the transfer of income from the upper classes to the lower classes, but he still believes in maintaining competition in the market and the full use of resources.

In general, justice can be formulated from the point of view of liberal democracy as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Formulation of the concept of justice in the discourse of liberal democracy

CONCLUSION

Liberal democracy is influenced by the views of philosophers such as John Locke, Montesquieu, John Stuart Mill and Tocqueville. The opinions of liberal philosophers about justice are very different, but despite the fundamental differences in the views of liberals about justice, there is a consensus regarding some fundamental concepts such as private property, social contract, individual freedoms, the superiority of the principle of right over good, rationality and utilitarianism. Individualism, private property, and humanistic attitude are the foundations of justice in liberal democracy, and neoliberals emphasize the minimal role of the government and reject the government's involvement in economic affairs. Because they believe that this disrupts the spontaneous order of the market. Because the government has never been a capable player in this field and the experience of socialist systems in the 20th century is a confirmation of the primacy of the minimal government. Liberal democracy systems favor maintaining the status quo in the international system and consider the balance of power to be in line with their interests. Using the concept of human rights, imposing strict sanctions on opposing countries and legitimizing a just war are among the components that are accepted by liberal democracy.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical issues (such as plagiarism, conscious satisfaction, misleading, making and or forging data, publishing or sending to two places, redundancy, etc.) have been fully considered by the writers.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

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