

## The Relationship of Hegel's Political Philosophy to Classical and Modern Political Philosophy

Mohsen Bagherzade Meshkibaf<sup>1</sup> 

Received: 2025/02/15 • Revised: 2025/04/29 • Accepted: 2025/06/05 • Available Online: 2025/07/10



### Abstract

In this article, the author aims to demonstrate how Hegel's political philosophy establishes a synthesis between classical political philosophy, particularly that of Aristotle, and modern political philosophy, from Machiavelli to Hobbes and Rousseau. In other words, the author seeks to show how Hegel utilized the strengths of both periods of political thought to construct his modern state. This research, conducted using a descriptive-analytical method, has studied all the primary texts of Western political thought. One of its findings is the influence of classical political philosophy on Hegel in the domain of the state. This is where, echoing Aristotle, Hegel views the state as prior to the individual, and the sphere of the common good as generally taking precedence over the

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Kurdistan, Sanandaj, Iran.  
[m.bagherzade@uok.ac.ir](mailto:m.bagherzade@uok.ac.ir)

\* Bagherzade Meshkibaf, M. (2025). The Relationship of Hegel's Political Philosophy to Classical and Modern Political Philosophy. *Theosophia Islamica*, 5(2), pp. 103-147.

<https://doi.org/10.22081/jti.2025.72340.1102>

**Article Type:** Research; **Publisher:** Islamic Sciences and Culture Academy

© 2025

"authors retain the copyright and full publishing rights"



<http://jti.isca.ac.ir>

individual. Consequently, the state holds a higher position than civil society and the family in Hegel's thought. On the other hand, modern political thought discovers the individual as separate from the whole and from the state. It attempts to recognize this newly discovered individual, with all their desires and inclinations, and to make the state subservient to them. Hegel, by drawing on the achievements of both past traditions, portrays a state that, while it is prior to the individual, is entirely structured from within the individual and is the objectivity of their inner subjectivity.

### Keywords

Classical Politics, Modern Politics, Aristotle, Hegel, Nature, Inner Freedom.

104

Theosophia Islamica

Vol. 5, No. 2, 2025



## Introduction

In this article, we aim to gain an understanding of the difference in the logic of classical and modern political thought. The discussion will primarily focus on the political philosophies of Aristotle and Hegel, or more precisely, it will be a philosophical and historical exposition of Aristotle's *Politics* and Hegel's *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. The author believes that a precise and meticulous explanation of these two books can lead to a comprehensive understanding of the logic of perceiving the political realm in the classical and modern eras.

However, to bridge the more than two-thousand-year gap between Aristotle and Hegel, we must also explain the fundamental ruptures that have occurred in the history of political thought. Without referencing these ruptures, it's impossible to gain a deep understanding of Hegel or to successfully explain the historical transformation of classical political thought and its transition to modern political thought. This is because Hegel builds upon the shoulders of prominent thinkers such as Niccolò Machiavelli, Hobbes, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Kant, and Fichte. Without understanding the changes they brought about in the history of political thought, neither Hegel nor the logic of the rupture between modern and classical political thought can be explained.

Furthermore, some initial explanations regarding the structural method of this article are necessary. First, the article begins with Machiavelli and the other modern philosophers. Within their explanation, it will constantly refer back to the logic of Aristotle's political approach and his perspective on each topic, comparing them simultaneously. This way, when the reader reaches the section on Aristotle, they will already be familiar with all the conflicts. Thus, Aristotle will initially be explained within the context of modern philosophy, and at the end of this section, we will independently

elaborate on the elements of his political philosophy. Second, after explaining Aristotle, we will move to the final section, namely Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, where we will endeavor to explain both logics of these two distinct political perspectives, considering Hegel's view and their place within his system of political thought.

**Research background:** Regarding the topic of this article, no independent research has been conducted so far, and the author has tried to explain Hegel's political thought in the synthesis between classical and modern political thought and to show how Hegel used the tradition of past thought.

## 1. Niccolò Machiavelli and the Foundation of Modern Political Thought

Niccolò Machiavelli, with his concept of "effectual truth," immediately distinguishes himself from political treatise writers, religious law proponents, and the virtue-based philosophy of Greece. He asserts that he's not interested in dictating what people *should* do or how a prince *ought* to behave. Instead, he intends to speak about the "effectual reality"—that which actually happens in practice, not what exists in imaginations. Machiavelli writes:

Since my intention is to write something useful for anyone who understands it, it seems to me more fitting to go directly to the effectual truth of the thing than to the imagination of it. Many have imagined republics and principalities that have never been seen or known to exist in truth; for it is so far from how one lives to how one should live that he who neglects what is done for what should be done learns his ruin rather than his preservation; for a man who wishes to make a profession of good in everything must necessarily come to grief among so many who are not good (Machiavelli, 1998, p. 61).

With this statement, Machiavelli fundamentally challenges all utopian ideals and all ethical books concerning politics. Tabatabai, in his book *Jadal-e Qadim va Jadid* (The Contest of Ancient and Modern), writes:

In the realm of political action, any action and force that has an effectual role in the arrangement and transformation of forces—even mere pretense and the logic of 'appearance,' which can be more effective than reality in political relations—is the reality of the matter (Tabatabai, 2003, pp. 488-489).

In an unprecedented move in *The Prince*, Machiavelli substitutes the logic of appearance for the logic of being, considering it even more significant than what truly is, due to its greater external effect. This marked Machiavelli's first rupture from the tradition of past political thought. Machiavelli's second epistemological rupture from the traditional basis of political thought lies in the concept of fortune (*fortuna*). As Machiavelli writes in *The Prince*:

I do not ignore that many have held, and still hold, the opinion that worldly events are governed by fortune and by God, in such a way that human reason cannot correct them, nor is there any remedy for them. From this, one might conclude that one should not sweat much over things, but let oneself be governed by chance. Nonetheless, so that our free will may not be extinguished, I judge it to be true that fortune is the arbiter of half of our actions, but that she allows us to direct the other half, or close to it (Machiavelli, 1998, p. 98).

He incessantly adds that humans can overcome fortune or exploit it for their benefit through foresight, prudence, and effort. Indeed, the very purpose of writing *The Prince* was to disrupt the fortune that had been ruling Italy, and Machiavelli implores the

contemporary prince to shatter fortune with his own sword. This is because, in Niccolò Machiavelli's view, fortune is a woman, and she yields to masculine virtues.

Leo Strauss, to highlight this revolutionary element of Machiavelli's philosophy in contrast to classical philosophy and its logic, writes: Classical political philosophy was a quest for the best political order or the best government that would foster the most virtue and tell people what they ought to do. However, the establishment of this best political government fundamentally depended on elusive, uncontrollable fortune. According to Plato's *Republic*, Plato believed that the emergence of the best regime essentially depended on an accidental congruence between philosophy and political power. Aristotle, the so-called realist, also agreed with Plato on this matter, believing that the best form of government was one that had the greatest correspondence with virtuous action, and that too depended on chance to occur. But this matter, which for Aristotle was under the dominion of fortune, for Machiavelli was merely a major problem that could be solved by an outstanding and capable man (Strauss, 1953, pp. 84-85).

This innovative approach of Machiavelli stemmed from his conviction that he had discovered the science of politics. For him, or for example, for Hobbes or Locke, politics is an artificial body (not a natural phenomenon as the Greeks thought). Since we ourselves have constructed it, we can reform it by relying on the techniques we have understood in its construction. This means that from this point onward, political discussion is no longer about ethics, fortune, and civic virtue; instead, politics has been reduced to techniques through which solutions to any matter can be found.

Machiavelli's next step was the expulsion of ethics from the realm of politics. This is because Machiavelli believes that, unlike in

the domain of individual ethics, in the realm of politics, a good deed can have very bad consequences. He sees a significant gap between action and effect; that is, a morally good action can have an extraordinarily disastrous result and effect in the political sphere. As he states in chapter thirty-seven of the third book of *Discourses*: in every human action undertaken to achieve a desired result, one can always distinguish between two aspects—good and bad—and there is always the possibility that a good action might lead to a bad effect (Machiavelli, 1998, pp. 294-296). Justice, which was considered an ethical concept, also stands outside Machiavelli's political philosophy. He has no belief in justice as an independent entity that can be defined and explained; rather, he believes in the relationship between political forces. This means that justice is defined by necessity at any given moment. The concepts of justice, good, and bad are defined within the relationship between political forces, and not as something prior to any external event. In this regard, Tabatabai writes:

Every action, under specific conditions and within the relationship of certain forces, creates an effect, and it is this effect that determines the nature of that action. Based on this assessment of the gap between the reality of the relationship of forces and power dynamics and the illusion of an ethical politics, Machiavelli, by breaking from the moral logic of political writing, lays a new foundation for politics, marking the beginning of a new era in the history of political thought (Tabatabai, 2003 b, pp. 493-494).

Another of Niccolò Machiavelli's innovations was the invention of the concept of power in a new sense, which remained permanently in the tradition of Western thought. This is because he considers tension to be inherent in the very concept of power, which is the most fundamental concept of new political thought. As Tabatabai states, Machiavelli does not view power as a monolithic and static

rock; rather, for Machiavelli, power is the outcome of the relationship between forces and a plural reality within unity, and this unity arises solely from the continuous tension of its components (Tabatabai, 2003 b, p. 495) As Machiavelli writes in *The Prince* on this matter:

In every city one finds these two diverse humors, and this arises from the fact that the people desire not to be commanded or oppressed by the great, and the great desire to command and oppress the people. From these two diverse appetites, three effects are produced in cities: principality, liberty, or anarchy (Machiavelli, 1998, p. 39).

## 2. The Far-Reaching Strides of Hobbes's Political Philosophy

Initially, Strauss believed that it was Hobbes who had unilaterally discredited the entire tradition of political philosophy preceding him, deeming their ideas mistaken and inadequate. However, Strauss later writes that Hobbes, in fact, trod the path that Machiavelli had previously opened (Strauss, 1953, pp. 83-84). In another of his books, *Natural Right and History*, Strauss also writes: "Before Christopher Columbus, it was Machiavelli who discovered a continent on which Hobbes built his theory" (Strauss, 1953, p. 176). Therefore, in explaining Hobbes, we will attempt to elucidate him as continuing the path initiated by Machiavelli and in relation to him.

Hobbes's first major undertaking is realized in his return to Machiavelli. As previously mentioned, Machiavelli bids farewell to Greek nature in his political philosophy; in other words, he severed the pre-existing link between the science of politics and natural law, and no longer believed in justice as something independent of human will. Hobbes, by returning to this revolutionary element of Machiavelli's political philosophy, added another step, which Strauss explains thus:

While prior to Hobbes, natural law was explained in light of the hierarchical system of human ends, with self-preservation at its lowest rung, Hobbes understood natural law solely as self-preservation; for this reason, natural law was fundamentally understood as a right to self-preservation, and in distinction from any duty or obligation (Strauss, 1953, p. 88).

This transformation from duty to rights is a revolution that effectively paved the way for the theory of liberalism, as in such a theory, the state's duty is to defend and protect precisely these rights. This is important because in ancient political philosophy, right stemmed from natural law, and the individual possessed rights by virtue of following these natural laws. Thus, the major difference between ancient and modern political philosophy is that ancient political philosophy considered law as the principle, while modern political philosophy was based on rights.

Indeed, it was this complex and novel understanding of nature by Hobbes that constituted a major rupture from the traditional ancient system. And it was this new perspective on nature that was, in effect, put forth in opposition to Aristotle's view of nature, and Hobbes knew precisely what he was aiming at. This is even evident from the significant subtitle of Hobbes's most important book, *Leviathan*. The full title of his important book in English is: *Leviathan or the Matter, Form, and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil*. Tabatabai, in his interpretation, writes:

Hobbes's consideration, in choosing the book's title, was due to the four Aristotelian causes, and by bringing in the material and formal causes, he intended to highlight the correctness of those two causes in understanding the state. However, by completely abandoning the final cause and replacing the Aristotelian efficient cause with power in general, he distances himself from the Aristotelian basis

in understanding and explaining power (Tabatabai, 2014 a, pp. 73-74).

Indeed, as will be explained in detail later, Aristotle brought his particular understanding of nature into the realm of human affairs, stating that the city (*polis*) is a natural phenomenon and not the result of a contract. As Aristotle writes in *Politics*:

From this it is clear that the city is a natural growth, and that man is by nature a political animal, and a man that is by nature and not merely by accident cityless is either a poor sort of being, or else superhuman (Aristotle, 2011 a, p. 6).

However, in the second revolution within Hobbes's political philosophy, the idea emerges that society or the city is not natural at all, but rather the result of a contract.

Hobbes's other revolutionary act was to cast man into the state of nature. In doing so, he suddenly strips man of all affiliations he had acquired throughout his history from theology and nature, leaving him with only his desires and needs in the state of nature. With these meager materials, man gradually constructs his own political system, thereby explaining the state and humanity. Hobbes depicts the state of nature in *Leviathan* as follows:

In this war of every man against every man, this also is consequent: that nothing can be unjust. The notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice have no place. Where there is no common power, there is no law; where no law, no injustice. Force and fraud are in war the two cardinal virtues (Hobbes, 1651, p. 79).

When Hobbes leaves man in such a primitive condition, he not only takes away his moral, virtuous, and religious affiliations, but also, on this basis, he can articulate the science of the state and, in a sense, create the science of politics. This is because from this point

onward, nothing is natural; rather, everything is a human artifact. And because it is a human artifact, created by humans, it can be explained from within and is not explained by nature.

Therefore, from this perspective, one can say that political philosophy, as Aristotle thought, is not about understanding a natural phenomenon, but rather about constructing and creating the state. This is why the state transforms into a science in modern philosophy. And it is under these conditions that one can speak of technique, because its construction is a human endeavor, and humans, not nature, know the techniques for solving its problems. As Strauss also writes: "one of the characteristics of the first wave of modernity was the elimination of the moral-political problem and its replacement by the technical problem" (Strauss, 1953, p. 89). Contrary to Aristotle's view, the state is no longer a natural entity but an artificial animal created by humans, and its sovereignty serves those who formed it. Nature, according to Hobbes, is the art by which God created and governs the world, and human art is to imitate this very nature and create an artificial animal.

### 3. A Glimpse into Rousseau's Influence

With Rousseau's ethical, legal, and political philosophy, numerous ruptures occur from the logic of classical political thought. Leo Strauss understands the second wave of modernity to begin with Rousseau, writing: "The second wave of modernity is ushered in by Rousseau. He changed the moral climate of the West as profoundly as Machiavelli had changed it before him" (Strauss, 1953, p. 89).

Rousseau's first important action in the history of European political thought was the destruction of both the classical concept of nature and the modern concept of nature, replacing both with reason. The classical concept of nature is what the Greeks understood: a divine natural order governing the universe, containing all laws

inherently as fixed principles from eternity. Man had to harmonize himself with this eternal, teleological mechanism of nature and lacked the power to disrupt this existing order. Regarding this, Strauss writes:

It is very different to say, as in Greece, that man is the measure of all things, than to say that man is the maker of everything. In the first case, man has a place within a whole, human power is limited, and man cannot overcome the limits of his nature. Our nature has been enslaved in many ways (Aristotle) or we are playthings of the gods (Plato) (Strauss, 1953, pp. 85-86).

114

Theosophia Islamica

Vol. 5, No. 2, 2025

Strauss says this limitation in Greece manifested itself in the impenetrable power of fortune. In Greece, the good life is a life in accordance with nature, which means being within the limits of nature, and so on (Strauss, 1953, pp. 85-86). Generally, one can say that there was a nature that guided everything toward its ends, and human will was of little importance. But with Rousseau, this view of nature becomes obsolete. With Rousseau, nature no longer holds any authority over man.

The second type of view is the concept of nature that developed in the modern era from Hobbes onward—a nature understood from the core of human existence, which traces back to Christianity and will be explained in the section on Hegel. However, even this modern concept of nature had fixed and unchanging principles. Rousseau's contribution is to place reason in the stead of nature, thereby impregnating the concept of nature with history. That is, nature gives way to historical reason, which is constantly progressing, and its principles are also changing. In fact, in Rousseau's state of nature, man not only lacks society, as Hobbes says, but also lacks rationality and its ever-increasing development. Thus, the past is no longer the guiding light for the future. As Tabatabai writes: In Rousseau's political philosophy, man transitions from a natural being

to a social being, and natural laws give way to laws of reason. Thus, Rousseau denies the *de facto* existence of natural law in the state of nature so that he can introduce it as the law of reason into political society (Tabatabai, 2014 a, pp. 447-448). What is known in Europe as "rationality" reaches its peak in Rousseau. And precisely because human rationality lays down the law, that law is correct, and good and bad are understood in terms of what the general will of society dictates.

The concept of history first appears in European political philosophy in Rousseau's thought; no one before him had incorporated the concept of history into their discussions. One of the applications of this concept in Rousseau's philosophy is that the concept of the ideal (*idea*) for the first time emerges as something concrete and realizable, not merely an horizon, because this concept is intertwined with the historical rational growth of humanity. Rousseau, as Strauss says, removes the gap between "is" and "ought," between the real and the ideal. According to Strauss, Rousseau states that there is a connection between the general will of individuals and the historical progress of man, such that with the movement of these two and the desire of the general will, anything can be realized in history. This actualization of "ought" into "is" occurs through a historical process and does not require human intervention for its actualization. This statement, of course, contains Rousseau's precondition that, in his view, man possesses free will and no one has authority over him, and society and its advancements originate solely from human will.

According to Rousseau, the general will of human beings is distinct from the will of all; that is, it is not merely a combination of the wills of all private individuals. Rather, it is the will of every citizen considered as a member of the sovereign power. In Rousseau's philosophy, sovereignty means the sovereignty of the people, and the

sovereignty of the people is composed of a general will that represents the common good, not our individual interests. And this general will, as the will of the citizen, never errs. Rousseau resolves all complex discussions related to the individual, society, the state, and their unity through the general will, creating a bond between them.

The general will replaces the concept of nature in Rousseau's political philosophy. And because this general will is the will of all individuals of a nation, it never errs. This will lays down its own law and obeys only its own law, as he explicitly states that in the state there is only one contract, and that contract is the social contract of free will, and this contract negates any other contract. Human freedom, self-legislation, the realization of historical reason, and alongside all of these, the replacement of human reason for the law of nature—all these concepts emerge from Rousseau's philosophy onward. Strauss, at the end of his discussion on Rousseau, writes: "Rousseau's thought was the inspiration for Kant and the philosophy of German Idealism, that is, the philosophy of freedom" (Strauss, 1953, p. 92). This statement by Strauss is profoundly true, for no one influenced German Idealism as much as Rousseau.

#### 4. An Exposition of the Key Elements of Aristotle's Political Philosophy

Aristotle's political philosophy stood as the most advanced political theory of its time within the classical world. In political thought, Aristotle was the first to distinguish the term "politics" from concepts like household management, mastery and slavery, and monarchy, defining it instead in terms of the public good and citizenship. Before delving into his political thought, we will first examine the fundamental terms of Greek political thought.

Indeed, the fundamental word and concept of Greek knowledge

in the realm of human action was polis. Farabi interpreted this as *madina*, and Avicenna, in his *Danishnameh-i 'Ala'i*, rendered it as *shahr* (city). For the Greeks, as will be discussed, the highest human bonds and associations were established within the order and organization of the people of a city, which was called *polis* in Greek. This was distinct from the city in its current usage as an administrative unit, which in Greek was called *astu*. Thus, for the Greeks, the paramount bond among human individuals in a city was citizenship, which was organized among free and equal men in independent Greek cities, outside the sphere of the household and family ties. All other ties, such as religious and family bonds, were considered subordinate to it.

The Greek city was the domain of public good and stood outside the relations that constituted the sphere of private interests. "Society" in its current usage is defined in opposition, or at least in contrast, to the state. In contrast, within Greek cities, the public good of citizens was unified with the community of those considered citizens. For the Greeks, every political matter was defined in its opposition to the personal and private, and the political was synonymous with the common and public. The political realm was associated with the Greek city and its free and equal citizens.

In ancient Greek political philosophy, political relations were the only matters considered truly worthy of theoretical discussion. This was where people deliberated on the common good of citizens. Other matters, such as trade, commerce, and wealth creation, held little value and, as will be discussed later, were largely condemned by Aristotle. They didn't even merit theoretical discussion and were simply relegated to the sphere of household management (economics).

Another aspect of little importance in Greek philosophy was individual interest. This did not involve discussions of traits like

greed, ambition, or increasing personal profit. Instead, the focus revolved around virtues, which stands in complete contrast to modern political philosophy. In modern thought, what were considered "bad" human traits are not only not condemned but are even praised. For instance, from Hobbes to Adam Smith, the belief is that if society can make the most use of these "bad" human traits in various areas, it will lead to greater progress, wealth creation, and societal welfare. This implies that these traits should be placed in a dialectical process where they can be harnessed to increase individual personal gain, ultimately leading to the common good and greater social welfare.

To better understand the value of political relations in Greece and to explain a few other terms: The concept of command or *arche* was separated from kingship or *basileia* and applied solely to the realm of political activity. *Arche* was annually delegated to the political ruler through council elections, and this election required preliminary debate and deliberation. Later, it was said that *arche* was at the center, meaning that in the *agora*, discussion and consultation among equals flowed freely in a public space. From then on, the city was not built around a royal palace; instead, at the city's center was the *agora*, or the public space and common ground, where matters concerning the public good were discussed and deliberated. From the moment the city was organized around the public space and the *agora* square, it became a polis.. The importance of discourse on political matters and the public good of the city is understood from this very mise-en-scène that governed Greek cities, as the city's center was no longer the king's palace, but a place where people spoke about the common welfare.

Aristotle writes in the first book of *Politics*:

Every city, as we see, is a kind of community, and every community is established with a view to some good; for mankind

always act in order to obtain that which they think good. But if all communities aim at some good, the state or political community, which is the highest of all, and which embraces all the rest, aims at good in a greater degree than any other, and at the highest good (Aristotle, 2011 b, p. 1).

Aristotle's system of thought is teleological, and in politics, just as in all other sciences he discussed, it is goal-oriented. Its ultimate goal is human happiness, and it is precisely for this reason that Aristotle considers politics the supreme science. In fact, one can say that the natural order, or *phusis* in the Greek sense, is fundamentally teleological, and anyone thinking within this system cannot disregard this fact. This is why Aristotle's works are interconnected by a few general principles, one of which is precisely this notion of good and end. Here, it is better to explain the concept of nature more thoroughly. Aristotle writes in *Politics*:

Hence it is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a political animal. And he who by nature and not by mere accident is without a state, is either a bad man or above humanity; he is like the 'tribeless, lawless, homeless' man of whom Homer speaks, censured as a monster (Aristotle, 2011 a, pp. 5-6).

It is clear that nature in the Greek and Aristotelian philosophical system is a teleological totality, and everything in this cosmic order possesses a nature that clarifies its end, limits of movement, and perfection. The concept of nature and its understanding in Aristotle's thought system can be one of the principles that unifies all his works. It is also one of those principles that is rejected by all philosophers in the modern world, even though the discovery of this concept in Greece was itself initially considered a revolution.

Strauss, in his essay "The Three Waves of Modernity," writes about the Greek concept of nature:

According to this concept of nature, all natural beings move toward an end, a perfection toward which they strive. There is a specific perfection that belongs to each specific nature; there is a specific nature for man that is determined only by man's nature as a social and rational being. Nature provides a standard that is good (Strauss, 1953, p. 85).

Based on this, Aristotle also regards the city (*polis*) as a natural phenomenon and writes:

From this it is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a political animal. And he who by nature and not by mere accident is without a state, is either a bad man or above humanity; he is like the 'tribeless, lawless, homeless' man of whom Homer speaks (Aristotle, 2011 a, p. 6).

The Aristotelian human is social by nature; that is, nature dictates that they live in society. More precisely, the cosmic order governing humans compels them to submit to community. Understanding this is immensely important in the history of political thought because the concept of nature undergoes internal transformation multiple times throughout its historical course. Through this evolution, the very meaning of the approach to politics changes.

Regarding the relationship between ethics and politics, Hamid Enayat, in *The Foundations of Western Political Thought*, writes: "Since the goal of political society is happiness, and happiness, in Aristotle's view, lies in the activity and application of virtue, its institution does not tolerate tyranny and oppression, and its perfection is only possible through moral virtues" (Enayat, 1972, p. 72). In the Greek

intellectual system, autocracy wasn't merely a form of rule but represented an anomalous order that damaged or corrupted the cosmic order founded on justice and the moderation of its parts. Thus, Greek opposition to autocracy was less a political stance and more an aversion to disorder and a desire to avoid disrupting the natural order. This further deepens our understanding of the Greek perspective on the cosmos and nature.

If we look at these aforementioned theories of Aristotle through the lens of a reformer grounded in the principles of modern political thought, one could almost say that all of them are fundamentally flawed in their approach and have no place in the realm of politics. With Machiavelli, as we discussed, the spheres of ethics, virtue, and happiness are entirely separated from politics. He laid out a blueprint for politics that largely persists to this day. Even Kant, Europe's champion of ethics, follows Machiavelli in this regard: if you make decisions in politics with an ethical approach, you're effectively condemning your country to ruin. According to Machiavelli, politics is not about fostering human happiness; it's about maintaining the balance of power in the political world. It's irrelevant to the state whether I wish to be happy or not. This dealt a severe blow to the foundation of Greek ethical politics, as well as to the political and religious treatise writers.

Furthermore, in modern politics, there is no belief in a fixed end or ultimate goal. As Hobbes stated, politics pursues neither the highest good nor the ultimate end. As Strauss writes: "The rejection of the final cause destroyed the theoretical foundation of classical political philosophy" (Strauss, 1953, p. 87). This is because in modern politics, no cosmic order governs; instead, man is the central figure of the world and its creator. Nature becomes subject to human reason and will, and there is no longer a predetermined end in the world.

To deepen our understanding of Aristotle's ethical and virtue-centric approach to political matters, the type of critique he levels against Plato's communal ownership of property can be helpful. Aristotle believes that making property communal leads to the corruption of two virtues: self-control and liberality (Aristotle, 2011 b, p. 67). Aristotle offers an ethical reason to explain why communal property is not correct, which highlights his perspective on political issues. Or, for example, in Book Seven, Aristotle places material pleasures beneath spiritual pleasures, validating material pleasures based on them, and assigns a limit to material pleasures beyond which they become harmful. He writes that material pleasures are only naturally valuable when they contribute to the comfort and joy of the soul and mind (Aristotle, 2011 b, p. 373). Even when Aristotle discusses the best form of government (which is the most political and crucial part of political philosophy), his ethical approach is clearly visible. This is because Aristotle believes that to understand the best form of government, one must first propose the best and most pleasant way of life. The nature of the desirable best government is understood only through this method (Aristotle, 2011 b, p. 371).

Another point that contrasts sharply with the approach of modern political thought is the idea, as seen in *Nicomachean Ethics*, that the duty of educating citizens and determining the necessity of various arts and sciences falls to the government and the legislator. This is detailed in Books Seven and Eight of *Politics*, where Aristotle extensively discusses education. Enayat rightly notes in his works that another commonality between Plato and Aristotle is their belief that since moral qualities are of such critical importance for the existence and permanence of a political community or state, then their cultivation, meaning the work of education, must be the duty of the state (Enayat, 1972, p. 72).

This concept is heavily criticized by modern political philosophy, which asserts that the state has no right to dictate what I should do or what I should learn, as I have no need for a guardian. In a sense, this represents the most significant achievement of modern Western philosophy: the point where man becomes autonomous and self-legislating. This is particularly evident in John Locke's political philosophy of freedom. Due to his conception of the state of nature, Locke can develop the notion of civil society. For Locke, the state of nature is not a lawless condition; on the contrary, it is a state where, in Hobbes's terms, there is no common power to enforce the law (Tabatabai, 2014 a, p. 274). Thus, people in the state of nature have their own laws, and Locke believes that because the order of the state of nature among people can be threatened at any moment by others, only a government is needed to protect our rights and property, not to tell us what to do. Tabatabai writes: "If Locke had not distinguished between society and power relations, the expansion of his liberal state's foundation would not have been possible" (Tabatabai, 2014 a, p. 284). For Locke, civil society arises in the sphere of governmental non-interference and governs itself through the free laws of individuals, with the state merely observing, not dictating. Locke's state is a minimal state.

Tabatabai, continuing on another important point about Aristotle's politics, provides a summary that can serve as the conclusion of our discussion: First, Aristotle introduced a distinction between the city (*polis*) and the household, and between the political sphere of citizen relations—which was thereafter called "political"—and relations among individuals within a family. The subject of Aristotle's political thought was precisely these citizen relations, and although a treatise on household management also survives from him, this discussion held little importance for him. Until the publication of

John Locke's treatises on government, the main subject of political thought was the sphere of power relations. But, as his subsequent explanations in the same book clarify, with John Locke, the primary discussion shifted to civil society (Tabatabai, 2014a, p. 283).

In modern philosophy, especially from John Locke and Rousseau onward, the state is no longer responsible for the happiness of citizens. Instead, it provides the external guarantee for the laws that the people themselves have enacted. Consequently, its power is reduced to the bare minimum because the relations among people shape the state, rather than the state shaping the relations among people.

Another point of difference between modern politics and Aristotle's politics is that the individual's desires are subordinated to the desires and good of the city, and the good of the city precedes the good of the individual. This is because, in Aristotle's politics, the city precedes the individual, and the individual derives their meaning from the city. As Aristotle writes in *Politics*:

Now it is evident that the state is by nature clearly prior to the family and to the individual, since the whole is of necessity prior to the part; for example, if the whole body be destroyed, there will be no foot or hand, except in an equivocal sense, as we might speak of a stone hand; for every hand when destroyed will be no better than stone, so will be the case for any other part, after the whole is corrupted (Aristotle, 2011 a, p. 7).

Aristotle, using his example of the body, makes it perfectly clear what he means by this priority. For Aristotle, an individual outside the city is as worthless as a hand carved from stone. He only discusses the individual theoretically when that individual is a part of the city; otherwise, the individual has no place in Greek political

philosophy. As the American sociologist and Washington University professor, Rodney Stark, rightly writes in this regard: "From this concept of the inner conscience of every Christian believer, the concept of individuality gradually developed, which was inherently linked to the free will and salvation of each individual" (Stark, 2005, p. 2). The explanation of individual individuality, in contrast to the collective, also begins in some ways with Christianity, as Greek and Jewish cultures did not recognize the individual. Stark elaborates on this point:

Plato, when writing his *Republic*, focused all his attention on the community and sacrificed the individual for the community, even rejecting private property. In contrast, the individual became the focus of Christian political thought, and this influenced the political thinking of philosophers like Hobbes and Locke. According to the author, this was a revolutionary tool in the hands of Christianity, because, in his view, individuality was a creation of Christianity (Stark, 2005, p. 11).

The explanation of how Christianity can introduce human individuality, freedom, and autonomy will be addressed in the section on Hegel.

In modern politics, the individual possesses a value greater than the whole, i.e., the city or the state. Indeed, the state is shaped by the individual and their autonomous laws, rather than the state shaping the individual. This is another major distinction between the approaches of new and old political philosophy. The individual truly emerges for the first time with Machiavelli.

Another important point to mention is the concept of nature or "natural" in Greek political philosophy, which clarifies the limits of everything, shapes everything, and guides it toward its end. Anything

that is not natural in Aristotle's philosophy is considered incorrect and flawed; this concept is also integrated into Aristotelian ethics and politics. As we have previously cited parts of Aristotle on this matter, for example, slavery and mastership are natural in Aristotle's philosophy, as he writes:

The first community necessarily arises when there are two, of whom one is by nature a ruler and the other a subject, in order that both may be preserved. For he who can foresee with his mind is by nature a ruler and master, and he who can work with his body is a subject and a slave by nature; hence master and slave have the same interest (Aristotle, 2011 a, p. 3).

Aristotle naturally distinguishes qualitative differences between humans, as he himself stated elsewhere. Thus, it is clear that by the law of nature, some humans possess freedom, while others are by nature slaves, and being a slave is beneficial for them. As Aristotle again wrote in another passage: "Some human beings are marked out from birth, some to be governed and some to govern" (Aristotle, 2011 a, p. 12). This concept of nature also strongly asserts itself in Plato. As Aristotle writes in *Politics*: "It is for this reason that Socrates says that God has mixed gold in the composition of some, silver in others, and in those who are to be artisans and husbandmen, copper and iron" (Aristotle, 2011 b, p. 73). In this very context, Aristotle stated: "Inequality and disparity among people who are similar and equal to each other is contrary to nature, and what is contrary to nature cannot be good and right" (Aristotle, 2011 b, p. 381).

In modern philosophy, such a rigid natural law doesn't exist. All individuals are equally free and need no guardian. As Descartes writes at the dawn of the modern era in his *Discourse on Method*:

...reason or sense, inasmuch as it is alone that which constitutes us men, and distinguishes us from the brutes, I am disposed to believe

that it is complete in each individual, and on this point to follow the common opinion of philosophers, who say that there is more or less of accident in the diversity of mental endowments of different persons, but that, as regards the form or reason, all men possess it equally... (Descartes,2015 , p. 3).

Following this, John Locke and Rousseau firmly establish human freedom in politics.

Here, it's also important to clarify the concept of freedom. Stark, explaining the distinct meaning of this word in relation to other traditions, writes:

Unlike Asian languages, Latin and Greek have words for freedom, and a large number of Greeks and Romans considered themselves free. But the problem is that they explain their freedom in contrast to the mass of slaves, and in reality, freedom was a privilege (Stark, 2005, p. 12).

This is contrary to Christianity, where freedom was not a privilege but an essential part of being human. As Hegel stated, through Christianity, the Western world has recognized the freedom of the individual for a millennium and a half, and it has become a fundamental principle for us (Hegel, 2003, p. 92).

## **5. An Outline of Hegel's Political Thought Based on the *Philosophy of Right***

The explanation of philosophers like Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau before delving into Hegel was important because it allowed us, albeit imperfectly, to bridge the over two-thousand-year gap between Aristotle and Hegel. Another reason is that Hegel extensively utilizes the legacy of political philosophy that preceded him, incorporating all the brilliant insights of modern political thought into

his *Philosophy of Right* and thinking with all of them. The approach of modern political philosophy is, in essence, Hegel's approach. In explaining Hegel's political philosophy, all the intellectual revolutions behind him are significant, and we have, to some extent, depicted them.

The central issue of German Idealism is to demonstrate that man is a unique being who, possessing reason, lays down his own law and can only trust and obey the law of his own reason. This profoundly begins in Europe with Descartes' *Meditations*, as it seems even Descartes' "I think, therefore I am" carries within it the autonomy of man. As Marcelo Araujo writes in his book, Descartes indeed establishes a connection between "I think, therefore I am" and human autonomy, stating: "My greatest attention is given to the fact that Descartes explains the concept of autonomy or self-legislation of reason as the capacity to explain itself through the law it gives to itself" (Araujo, 2003, p. 117). In German Idealism, this continues in its most radical form, beginning with Kant, who forever indebted European modernity to his *Critique of Pure Reason*.

In terms of politics and law, Idealism pays attention only to man's inner freedom. Human right originates from human free will. In this regard, no external authority plays a role. Right is an internal matter and must be explained from within. Hegel attempts to gradually construct his entire political philosophy, building the edifice of his state, using this very minimal "mortar" of freedom, which he borrowed from Christianity, as an inherent and enduring internal principle.

To begin, it is best to start, like Hegel in the *Philosophy of Right*, by explaining Hegel's method. On the second page of his book, Hegel writes that he has already explained his method in his *Science*

*of Logic* and will only provide a general overview here. The key sentence Hegel uses here is: "Since this treatise deals with science, and in science, the content is necessarily inseparable from its form" (Hegel, 2003, p. 10). This sentence is, in a sense, a summary of Hegel's way of thinking, because for Hegel, the logic of thinking is identical to the logic of the movement of the *in-itself* (or the subject matter itself). The explanation of the movement of the *in-itself* is logic. Hegel writes in his *Science of Logic*:

How could I pretend that this method which I follow in this system of logic—or, rather, that this method which the system follows in itself as a movement of its own—could not be capable of higher perfection or further elaboration? While at the same time I know that this method is the only true method. And this is evident from the fact that this method is nothing separate from the *in-itself* and its own content—for it is the *in-itself* in itself—the dialectic which the *in-itself* has within itself as *in-itself*, the dialectic which drives the *in-itself* forward. It is obvious that no investigation can possess scientific validity if it does not move with this method, and does not conform to its rhythms, for it is the very process of reality itself (Hegel, 2010, p. 33).

In simple terms, method in Hegel means a way of moving or proceeding. And what is this way of moving? The method consists of the movement of every entity and every subject, and the explanation of its internal transformation. Method in Hegel is not something that comes from outside or is imposed externally; rather, it is something inherent within the *in-itself*, and these two, as Hegel states in his *Science of Logic* and *Philosophy of Right*, are not separate from each other. In other words, method is simply the transformation of the *in-itself* that occurs from within itself, and the explanation of these events

and transformations that occur within the *in-itself* becomes dialectic in Hegel's view. Hegel writes in his *Science of Logic*:

On this account, logic must be understood as the science of pure reason, as the realm of pure thought. This is the realm of unveiled truth, truth as it is in and for itself... Therefore, one can say that this content is the exposition of God as He is in His eternal essence before the creation of finite nature and spirit (Hegel, 2010, p. 29).

In simpler terms, one can say that logic is the progression of immutable essences in the mind of God before creation, before nature came into being. And subsequently, throughout Hegel's philosophy—whether in nature, where God has alienated himself, or in spirit, which becomes self-aware—this very logic is followed. Hegel's God is the Christian God who has permeated human beings and lives within them. This is where we will see, further on, that he shifts his *Philosophy of Right* from the realm of nature to the realm of spirit, and the implications he draws from this action are infinite.

This is modernity's view of everything. As we previously explained in modern political philosophy, from now on, everything is explained from within, and external factors, whether divine providence or natural law, are not relevant to this explanation and elucidation. Rather, everything is explained based on its own self-founding laws.

However, what primarily causes Hegel to separate the essence of the modern world from that of the Greek world is man's inner freedom, a principle which Hegel himself stated was revealed to us through Christianity. From here, he builds a critique of Plato's political philosophy. Hegel writes about Christianity in his *Philosophy of Right*:

The right of subjective freedom, or inner freedom, is the central point and nucleus of difference between the ancient and modern

worlds. This right, in its unlimited form, first emerged in Christianity and has become the fundamental principle of a new form of world reality (Hegel, 2003, p. 151).

Christianity and the principle of conscience or the realm of inner freedom, which appeared in its most radical form particularly in Luther's theology, hold great value in Hegel's philosophy. So much so that one can boldly say that the entire trajectory of his book is about how inner freedom brings the outer world under its dominion. But before that, we must provide a comprehensive explanation of the Christian perspective and its difference from the Greek one.

oretical foundation and perspective of Christianity on humanity and the world fundamentally differ from the naturalistic Greek view and the legalistic Jewish religion. It neither embraces the concept of nature in the Greek sense nor understands law in the Jewish religious sense; rather, in all discussions, one can say that Jesus adopted a thoroughly complex stance. Émile Bréhier, at the end of the second volume of his *History of Philosophy*, explained two major differences between Christianity and Greek thought.

According to Bréhier, in Greek culture, the subject does not exist as an independent, autonomous entity in relation to its object. However, in Christianity, an independent subject exists, which is, in fact, defined separately from objects. Its entire activity is not merely thinking about the world; rather, it possesses a specific life, which is the inner realm (heart or conscience), not explainable by the world or the conceptions arising from it. This inner realm or conscience is the only thing that cannot be reduced to any object. This inner realm, inaccessible by any external authority, is what constitutes the subject, and it is only in this civilization that idealist thought flourishes and the subject thinks independently. The second difference is the historical

view of existence, which also began concurrently with the advent of Christianity (Bréhier, 2016 a, pp. 294-295).

Regarding the concept of freedom, it must also be stated that it lacks the Greek and Roman historical background in the sense presented by Christianity. That is, the idea of freedom spontaneously and autonomously emerging from within the human being. The concept of freedom holds such a paramount position in the modern European world that understanding this world is impossible without comprehending freedom. Stark, explaining the distinct meaning of this word in relation to other traditions, writes:

Unlike Asian languages, Latin and Greek have words for freedom, and a large number of Greeks and Romans considered themselves free, but the problem is that they explain their freedom in contrast to the mass of slaves, and in reality, freedom was a privilege (Stark, 2005, p. 12).

This is contrary to Christianity, where freedom was not a privilege but an essential part of being human. As Hegel stated, through Christianity, the Western world has recognized individual freedom for a millennium and a half, and it has become a fundamental principle for us (Hegel, 2003, p. 92).

This extensive explanation is not only important for understanding what we previously discussed about classical and modern political philosophy but can also help in comprehending everything that follows in the explanation of Hegel. This is because, for Hegel, it is primarily this inner or moral freedom that constitutes the freedom within Europe. Humanity must understand good and bad through this very inner freedom. Hegel believes that moral and religious determinations should not merely compel individuals to obey them; rather, the foundation, legitimacy, and acceptance of these

commands must reside in the individual's heart and conscience. This aspect of man's free inner self is an end in itself, and nothing can have authority over it. As Hegel writes in Paragraph 106 of *The Philosophy of Right*:

Men expect to be judged according to their autonomy and are free in this respect, regardless of any external authority. Breaking the bounds of this inner freedom is impossible; the sanctity of this boundary is necessary, and therefore the moral will is inaccessible. The worth of man is determined by his inner actions, so the moral viewpoint is the viewpoint of freedom that exists for itself (Hegel, 2003, pp. 135-136).

With these explanations, we can now turn to Hegel's discussion and his critique of Plato's *Republic* at the beginning of *The Philosophy of Right*. Initially, Hegel states one of his core philosophical principles: the task of philosophy is to comprehend what is, because understanding it is reason. As far as the individual is concerned, every individual is a child of their time; thus, philosophy is also the comprehension of its own time (Hegel, 2003, p. 21). With this statement, Hegel removes the boundary between "is" and "ought," a phenomenon which, as we explained earlier, profoundly occurred with Rousseau. This point is also related to the core of Hegel's philosophy: the Idea.

One of the differences between Hegel's and Aristotle's political philosophy also stems from this point. That is, while Aristotle understands that the state should not be a contractual matter—contracts are beneath the dignity of the state—he fails to grasp the importance of the individual. He grants the individual no significance outside the *polis* and considers them unworthy of theoretical discussion outside the city. Aristotle's political philosophy is not based

on the individual; rather, it is based on the community, with the individual subordinate to the community. However, in Hegel's political philosophy, the main importance lies with the individual and their sphere of inner freedom.

Moving from the Preface of the book to the Introduction, the first paragraph begins where Hegel writes this important sentence: "The subject matter of the philosophical science of right is the Idea of right—that is, the rational concept [Begriffe] of right and its actualization" (Hegel, 2003, p. 25).

Hegel quickly distinguishes his understanding of the concept (*Begriff*) or rational form from the previous meaning of "concept," stating that he is not referring to a subjective concept or a form obtained through abstracting from external reality. Hegel regards the concept as a true entity that actualizes itself within the *in-itself* (the subject matter itself) and, in fact, is what, in other words, creates history. Its dialectical form of movement is identical to its very existence; you cannot separate the form from the content. Thus, the rational form is the self-founding essence of being, and its movement is what is called dialectic. Marcuse treats the concept in Hegel's philosophy as a fundamental principle, considering it something that exists within things themselves, enabling them to become what they ought to be. He also states that every particular matter is elevated to a true reality only by actualizing the concept within itself, and the more it actualizes the possibilities of its concept, the closer it gets to reality (in Hegel's sense) (Marcuse, 1955, pp. 121-122).

But what is the Idea in Hegel's philosophy? The concept gradually actualizes itself, and when, in this process of actualization, it manifests itself as it truly is, it transforms into the Idea. In other words, when all reality is embodied in the concept, it elevates to the

Idea. The Idea is not subjective, it is not an illusion. The Idea is the rational form of a thing or a reality and its external actualization, as Hegel himself states in the sentence above. From here, Hegel separates himself both from the Greek horizon and Idea and from the Idea in the Kantian sense. Instead, with this view, as we said earlier, he connects "is" to "ought".

By articulating his particular view and specific meaning of the rational form of right, Hegel distinguishes himself from the meaning of nature and right as presented in Aristotle's philosophy. This is because he seeks to explain right from within and then bring it to external relations, understanding those relations through this right. In contrast, in Greece, nature is an external given, and we understand right from it beforehand; right does not originate from human essence. Where does the foundation of right originate? Hegel writes:

The basis of right is the sphere of spirit in general, and its precise location and point of departure is the free will. Freedom constitutes its substance and essence, and the system of right is the realm of actualized freedom, the world of spirit produced from within itself as a second nature (Hegel, 2003, p. 35).

Here, Hegel considers the free will of the individual as the foundation of right and its source. And it is with this free will that Hegel elevates man beyond his own nature. That is, in a sense, man is part of nature, but because he is in the realm of spirit and thus possesses free will, he can transcend nature and, through his own free will, create a second nature. Here again, Hegel lays a foundation that goes beyond the Greek notion of nature and speaks of spirit, which has a Christian basis. Hegel continues: "Right in general is the existence of free will. Therefore, right in general is freedom as Idea" (Hegel, 2003, p. 58).

The Idea of freedom in Hegel's philosophy of right is initially immediate or potential, which is the person in the formal and abstract stage. Gradually, as it progresses, this freedom becomes increasingly actualized. In another stage, the will has externalized itself, confronted another, returned to itself, and determined itself as an individual with an inner freedom in opposition to a universal, which is, in one sense, internal to it and, in another, external. This second sphere is the sphere of morality (*Moralität*), which is the sphere of inner freedom. The third stage is the unity of these two, the unity of the substantial and the subjective. Hegel refers to anything that does not have an inner dignity as substance, because the substantial is something external to my will. It is in the third stage that the family, civil society, and the state are discussed.

For Hegel, the principle of the modern world is the individual with their inner freedom. Its foundation traces back to the emergence of Christianity. The ancient world did not know this. They did not recognize man as a subject. But in the modern world, an individual has appeared with their inner freedom, and the external world must clarify its relationship to this. This is where a dialectic must be established between the individual and the state.

From what point does man become a subject in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*? Hegel writes in the second part of *The Philosophy of Right*, i.e., Morality:

The moral viewpoint is the viewpoint of the will, in a state where the will is unlimited both in itself and for itself. This return of the will into itself and its identity with itself, in contrast to its existence and immediacy and the limitations that develop within its immediacy, constitutes the person as Subject (Hegel, 2003, p. 135).

Hegel's sphere of morality (*Moralität*) is not merely private ethics, and its validity does not come from outside. It has an internal essence and is self-legislating because the person at this stage becomes the agent. Generally, ethics in Hegel's philosophy is precisely the inner freedom of Europe and the origin of the discourse on freedom. It is the sole authority that judges every other matter and is not itself subject to judgment, because nothing has authority over it.

For Hegel, there are two spheres of ethics. One is *Moralität*, where man becomes a subject or agent. The second is *Sittlichkeit*, or ethical life, which refers to all the customs and morals of a nation, or the collective spirit of a nation. This second ethical sphere emerges from within the first ethical sphere. This is because my inner free will manifests itself somewhere; it's not merely seeing itself in its own mirror, but rather entering into the mirror of relations and objectifying itself there. As Hegel writes: "Ethical life is the Idea of freedom. When free will actualizes itself externally, it is called the Idea, and that is where inner freedom finds external realization" (Hegel, 2003, p. 189). Ethical life is where freedom or the inner will has appeared in its objectivity, in and for itself.

Hegel himself explains the three stages of the third section of his book, namely Ethical Life, in paragraph 157. Initially, the spirit of ethical life is immediate and natural, which is the sphere of the family. This substantial unity gradually disintegrates from within, and civil society is created—meaning the individual as a self-sufficient entity pursuing their personal needs. Then, there is a return from this external state back to the inner, which is the sphere of the state, representing the sphere of the public good.

In Hegel's system, the family, with the introduction of individuality and the breakdown of its general and natural state, gradually transitions into civil society. This is where individuals'

personal interests, their preservation, rights, and so on, gain importance. Civil society is a sphere of multiplicity and difference, existing between the family and the state, both of which are natural and non-contractual entities. In civil society, each individual is an end in themselves, and other things hold no meaning for them. However, individuals cannot achieve their goals without relating to others, thus others become tools for reaching their own ends. Hegel writes about civil society:

The selfish aim, in its actualization and thus conditioned by the universal, establishes a system of reciprocal dependencies, such that the welfare of the individual and their rightful existence are interwoven with the welfare and rights of all, and only in such a space can all of them be actualized and enjoy security. This system can, at first glance, be understood as the external state or the state of necessity and of the understanding (Hegel, 2003, p. 221).

In this paragraph, Hegel articulates several important points that should primarily remind us of Adam Smith's explanation of the market economy. That is, human individuals, with all their self-interests, ambitions, and abilities, enter the arena of civil society and exert their utmost efforts to achieve greater profit and success. However, from a higher perspective, it seems that the more people exert energy and utilize traits previously considered "bad," the more they promote social and universal welfare in line with their personal well-being. This is where Smith's "invisible hand" enters, placing society in a complex interaction where individual self-interests transform into greater social welfare.

Civil society is also a phenomenon later than Greek knowledge. The Greeks understood political community, but because they did not recognize the individual, they could not conceive of civil society and autonomous individuals who enter it to gain more profit and satisfy

their ambitions. That is, a sphere that is not under the supervision of the *polis*, but rather a sphere that must be explained in its independence from the *polis* and has its own internal laws. In the modern era, civil society is distinct from the state, and its explanation is not entirely congruent with that of the state. Instead, it is a place where people govern themselves by their free will. In Greece, the only matters worthy of theoretical discussion were political and civic relations; economic relations held no theoretical value for them.

Hegel sees the logic of the modern era in mediations. Explaining these mediations and the internal logic of how they all relate to one another is what constitutes Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. For this reason, civil society is the most complex part of his *Philosophy of Right*. He identifies three estates in this section: 1. Farmers, who pursue their immediate interests and have not yet entered into mediations, remaining dependent on their immediate connection to the land. 2. Artisans, who perform the intermediate work, divided into three parts: craftsmen, those who work in workshops, and merchants who transport what is produced. 3. Civil servants, who must solely consider the public good and whom the state must provide for. However, because their connection to the state is direct, Hegel again introduces two further "breakwaters": the legal system and the police. Alongside these, he also speaks of unions and guilds. The more this degree of universality and "we-ness" is emphasized, the closer civil society becomes to the state in Hegel's conception.

The increasing complexity and fragmentation of these classes, as well as the creation of various other institutions, is so that the power descending from the state is attenuated enough that, when it reaches the individual through these channels, it does not overpower them. Conversely, when my desires ascend from below, they do not

become a revolution but rather gradually diminish in force within these channels. For this reason, Hegel says that modern politics is an explanation of mediations.

The state has two important roots: the family and the guilds, because it is in these that the cell of that "we-unity" that Hegel envisions for the state is placed. Traces of the Idea of the state are seen whenever the public good is discussed. Hegel writes: "The state is the actuality of the ethical Idea" (Hegel, 2003, p. 257).

Hegel had previously explained that one truth of the modern world is the individual's inner freedom, which was born with Christianity. And up to this point, that is, until the end of civil society, he constructs it with this very inner freedom of the individual. But Hegel also holds a second reality, which he has taken from classical philosophy: a state that is prior to the individual and not the product of a contract. This harkens back to Aristotle. As he refers to this in paragraph 270 of *The Philosophy of Right* and alludes to Aristotle's *Politics*, he writes:

The city is prior to the family and every individual, for the whole has priority over its part. For if you separate the hand or foot from the whole body, it is no longer a hand or foot except in name, just as one might speak of a hand carved from stone (Hegel, 2003, p. 460).

Here, Hegel states the foundation of the ancients and returns to them in his theory of the state. So, on one hand, he takes the individual with their inner freedom from modern political philosophy, but he does not accept the contractual state they propose. On the other hand, he adopts Aristotle's state, which is natural and not subject to contract, and is also prior to all individuals. This is because Hegel believes that the state is logically prior to the family and civil society.

If there were no state, these matters would have no meaning. He even states that the individual does not become a member of the state by their own will; rather, it is necessarily so.

However, the problem with Greece is that it does not recognize the individual as a subject, but only as a citizen. The Hegelian state, of course, differs from the natural Aristotelian state because Hegel introduces the concept of spirit, writing:

The state, in and for itself, is the totality of ethical life, and the realization of freedom, and also the end of reason, which is actual freedom. The state is present in the world as spirit and consciously recognizes itself within it, while nature is the sphere of the alienation of spirit. The state is a state only when it is present in consciousness (Hegel, 2003, pp. 280-281).

However, the Hegelian state, which is prior to the individual and non-contractual, differs from what Aristotle stated. From this point, Hegel articulates something that transcends both modern and classical politics, leading humanity from the realm of nature to the realm of spirit, which is the pinnacle of Hegel's philosophy and also traces back to Christianity. Hegel incorporates the foundations of classical and modern politics like threads into his own thought, creating a new rebirth from them. Hegel writes: "The individual attains their substantial freedom in the state (which is their essence, goal, and the product of their activity)" (Hegel, 2003, p. 275). This means the state is not Aristotle's state, which is based on nature—although in a sense it is natural in that we did not create it, that doesn't mean the state is not the embodiment of our will. The goal of the state is the freedom of the individual, and the state is the result of the individual's will.

The priority of the state in Hegel's view is based on the idea

that the state is the sphere of the public good, and it is where the transcendent manifests itself—where "we" becomes a "We," meaning our common good as a "We" precedes our individual interests. This is the logic of the modern state, and for this reason, it is prior to civil society, because civil society, which is the sphere of the free individual with their needs, can only endure in such a realm that ultimately leads to the public good.

### Conclusion

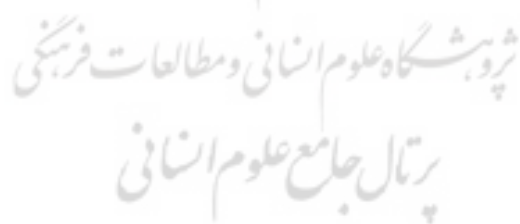
This article aimed to construct a philosophical framework highlighting the differences in the logic of classical and modern political thought. Aristotle's political thought is based on his specific understanding of nature, ethics, virtue, teleology, and the pursuit of happiness. These are all facets of a single reality expressed through different terms. For Aristotle, what is natural is also the ultimate goal, aligns with ethics and virtue, and so on. Any other political matter must be judged by the standard of nature to reveal its goodness or badness. For example, economic activities and wealth accumulation are, in his view, unnatural, meaning they are bad.

On the other hand, Greek political philosophy, in general, does not recognize the individual with their inner freedom and autonomy. Since it doesn't recognize the individual and affords them no theoretical standing in political thought, nothing is explained in relation to them. Instead, everything is explained by the aforementioned principles, and the individual is subservient to nature. In Aristotle's political philosophy, the city is prior to the individual, and an individual without membership in the city has no meaning. Consequently, the Greeks do not recognize civil society, nor do they recognize the spheres of law and economics in relation to the individual.

In contrast to all these points, modern political philosophy emerges, prioritizing human freedom and autonomy above all else. Every matter in the political world must be measured against the standard of man's inner freedom. Modern politics is not ethical, teleological, virtue-oriented, or happiness-seeking. Instead, it pays more attention to human desires—an aspect condemned by classical political philosophy. Most importantly, the concept of nature in modern political thought gives way to the freedom of human will and reason. Luck or chance has no place in modern political philosophy; man subjugates luck to his will. It is from this perspective that the individual explains institutions. The individual no longer has duties; rather, they possess rights. The state is no longer my guardian or responsible for my upbringing; instead, it must only protect what I desire and has no right to interfere, as it is not responsible for my salvation.

Hegel incorporates this entire tradition into his political thought, attempting to think with both classical and modern foundations. In all the aforementioned aspects, Hegel accepts the modern approach, but like Aristotle (albeit with his own unique understanding), he considers the state prior to the individual, unlike modern philosophy. He logically views the individual, family, and civil society as subsequent to the state, because without the state, they hold no meaning, and the state is the ultimate goal of all of them as it is the sphere of the public good. The public good, from the very beginning, plays a role as a goal throughout the stages of family and civil society, and as they progress, they strive to actualize and shape the public good. However, in modern philosophy, the state is a creation of man or the individual, the individual is prior to the state, and the state is formed by a contract among individuals. Hegel takes the individual with their inner freedom from the modern world and the

natural, extra-contractual state from Aristotle. He then attempts to synthesize these two in such a way that neither is reduced to the other. That is, neither does the individual fall under the state, as in Aristotle's politics, nor does the state fall under the individual, as in modern politics. This is because Hegel, like Aristotle, believes that the individual must come under a state. However, ultimately, Hegel considers the state to be the result of the free will of man, but not in the sense understood by modern philosophy. Rather, it means that the state is the complete actualization of man's free will, and for this reason, it logically pre-exists and only needs history to unfold for it to be actualized if it implicitly exists within the individual beforehand. This is because the state represents the interests of all of us, and when it is actualized, it is as if our public interests have been actualized, and it is not separate from our inner freedom but is our very objectivity.



## References

- Araujo, M. (2003). *Scepticism, Freedom and Autonomy*. Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- Aristotle. (2011 a). *Politics* (H. Enayat, Trans., 7th ed.). Tehran: Elmi va Farhangi Publications. [In Persian]
- Aristotle. (2011 b). *Nicomachean Ethics* (M. H. Lotfi, Trans.). Tehran: Tarh-e No Publication. [In Persian]
- Bréhier, É. (2016 a). *History of Philosophy, Greek Period* (A. M. Davoodi, Trans., Vol. 1, 3rd ed.). Tehran: University Publishing Center. [In Persian]
- Descartes, R. (2015). *Ta'ammulât dar falsafi-yi ūlâ* (A. Ahmadi, Trans., 12th ed.). Tehran: SAMT. [In Persian]
- Enayat, H. (1972). *Foundations of Political Thought in the West* (2nd ed.). Tehran: University of Tehran Press. [In Persian]
- Hegel, G. (2003). *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (H. B. Nisbet, Trans., A. W. Wood, Ed., 8th ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hegel, G. (2010). *The Science of Logic* (D. Giovanni, Trans.). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hobbes, T. (1651). *Leviathan or the Matter, Forme, & Power of a Common-wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill*. London: printed for Andrew Crooke, at the Green Dragon in St. Pauls Church-yard.
- Machiavelli, N. (1998). *Discourses on Livy* (H. C. Mansfield, Trans.). Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Machiavelli, N. (1998). *The Prince* (H. C. Mansfield, Trans.). Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Marcuse, H. (1955). *Reason and Revolution*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul LTD.
- Stark, R. (2005). *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success*. New York, NY: Random House Publishing Group.

Strauss, L. (1953). *Natural Right and History*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Tabatabai, J. (2003). *The Old and New Debate*. Tehran: Contemporary Outlook Research Institute. [In Persian]

Tabatabai, J. (2014 a). *New Systems in Political Thought*. Tehran: Minouye Kherad. [In Persian]

Tabatabai, J. (2014 b). *The Struggle of Old and New in Theology and Politics*. Tehran: Minouye Kherad. [In Persian]

