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RULES AND PRINCIPLES OF ADMINISTRATION IN CONFUCIUS AND AL-MĀWARDĪ: A COMPARISON

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ABSTRACT

Muslim philosophers dealt with good administration in the field of practical philosophy consisting of ethics, household management, and city management. This classification began with Aristotle and expanded its content, especially by Muslim philosophers. Unlike the classical Aristotelian classification, they considered the close relationship of administration with theoretical philosophy as well. One of them, al-Māwardī wrote several works on state administration, both theoretically and practically. When we look at the Chinese tradition of philosophy, we observe that Confucius is the salient name emphasizes administration, especially administration by virtue. In this paper, I will examine the administration issues in both Islamic and Chinese traditions of philosophy by comparing al-Māwardī and Confucius.

Keywords: Confucius, al-Māwardī, state, administration, administration by virtue

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In the classical Aristotelian classification, philosophy is divided into three: theoretical (theoretikê), practical (praktikê), and poietik (poiêtikê). Practical philosophy also consists of three parts: ethics (êthikos), household management (oikonomikos), and city management (*politikos*).[1] Considering the Qur'an and Sunnah, Muslim philosophers adopted this Aristotelian classification of practical philosophy. They transferred it to Islamic philosophy respectively as تدبير النفس (tadbīr al-nafs), تدبير المنزل (*tadbīr al-manzil*), and تدبير المدن (tadbīr al-mudun). The first deals with the complete transformation of the self; the second thinks about morality within the family; the third deals with the moral and virtuous management of cities.[2]

Apart from Ancient Greek and Islamic civilizations, in Chinese civilization, Confucianism also emphasizes practical philosophy. Classical Confucian teachings center upon ethics, family life, and government because these concerns were inseparable in Confucian thought. Although there is no such classification in Confucianism, we can find developed and systematic theories about individual, family, social relations, and administration in Confucian classics. Mainly, the Confucian interpretation of practical philosophy focuses on "being an ideal person" in Chinese 君子 (junzi). To be a *junzi*, one must fully practice the four basic virtues: xiao 孝 (filial piety), ren 仁 (benevolence), yi 義 (righteousness), and li 禮 (acting according to ritual/propriety). In other words, Confucian practical philosophy focuses on self-cultivation. That is why, according to the Confucian view, self-cultivation accelerates social harmony by supporting social and political attitudes and practices. Therefore, Confucian practical philosophy admits the concept of governing the state to bring harmony.

Considering all, similar to the Islamic one, although there is no apparent classification in Confucian thought, one can clearly see that the personal, social, and political are intertwined in the classical Confucian approach to practical philosophy. So in this paper, my aim is to compare the approaches to the administration of two great philosophical traditions: Chinese and Islamic. Of course, a full comparison in a large period of time is beyond the scope of this paper. For this reason, I will analyze the approach of one prominent name from each tradition. Kongzi 孔子 (Master Kong) known as Confucius (551–479 BCE) who is the founder of Confucianism, and al-Māwardī (975–1058 CE) who is one of the most significant names of especially early Islamic moral and political thought.

Confucius lived in the Spring and Autumn period (770-476 BCE) while the empire was divided into multiple feudal states. When the central authority over the states weakened, the feudal states began to ignore the command and order from the central government and competed with each other for a bigger share of land and property. This led to military conflict between states and power struggles within a state. In this period, moral values were scattered along with cultural values. At this point, he analyzed the conditions of the period he was in and aimed to end the chaotic environment that surrounded the whole country. Like him, many other thinkers also delved into the cause of this chaos and disorder and expanded upon their ways of solving the problems. Thus, in Chinese history, this period is commonly known as the period of the Hundred Schools of Thought (諸子百家). Confucius determined the ideal order he wanted to reach as the order in the Zhou Dynasty (1046-256 BCE). In other words, he wanted to reach the level of civilization reached during the Zhou Dynasty. Because during this period, moral values dominated the country, social and cultural unity was ensured, and the order was built on these foundations. For these reasons, the ideal society and state that Confucius desires to reach and create are the social rules prevailing during the Zhou Dynasty and their adaptations to his own time.

During the lifetime of al-Māwardī, the Islamic world was in a political disintegration. There were social, political, and epistemological crises and sectarian divisions at that time. Although this environment contained several crises, it was also the brightest period of Islamic civilization in terms of intellectual production. During this period, al-Māwardī aimed to reunite the loosened social bonds, the disintegrated political unity, and the shattered ideal of a good life. Also in this period of political crisis, people longed for the period of happiness of al-Khulafāʾ al-Rāshidūn and expected a future savior who would establish justice. For this reason, he tried to protect the unity and permanence of the Islamic state by developing a caliphate theory based on the election methods of the first four caliphs.[3]

Given these backgrounds, in accordance with my aim, first, I will try to analyze what the notion of state and its purpose of existence means in Confucius' thought and al-Māwardī's thought. Then, I will look at their concepts of administration by virtue. In the end, I will give their rules and principles of good administration.

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1   Hümeyra Özturan. "The Practical Philosophy of Al-Farabi and Avicenna: A Comparison". *Nazariyat* 5/1 (2019), 4.

2   Mehmet S. Aydın. "Ahlâk", *DİA*. (This is the abbreviation for the Turkish Encyclopedia of Islam published by the Turkish Religious Foundation. All articles have open excess at: https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/)

3   On this issue, I benefitted from this TRT-TV Program available at:
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I. THE NOTION OF STATE AND ITS PURPOSE OF EXISTENCE

The family, which is the basic structure in Confucian philosophy, forms the basis of the ideology of administration in Confucianism. Confucians see social order as an extension of family life. In other words, the state is a large family where the ruler is the father, and the citizens are his children. The duties and responsibilities of the ruler and the people to each other are the same as the father and his children. For Confucians, the state is a union of well-governed families; and a family is an atomic unit. The state arose due to population growth and the need for economic cooperation and defense.[4] In the Confucian view, the Confucian ideal must be achieved by cultivating man's innate moral quality, and the purpose of government is to teach people how to cultivate their innate morality. In other words, the ultimate aim of the government is to achieve a moral and orderly life, both of which must be based on the ruler's virtue.

Al-Māwardī sees the emergence of the community and the state not only as a natural process guided by the relations of production, but as the will of Allah. He perceives the state as a mechanism that has social and administrative bases and is managed by a leader. He uses the terms imam/caliph/sultan/malik to denote the head of state and defines the state as a union formed by the people[8] living in a region under the obedience of a king/caliph, in which they undertake all public responsibilities (with the imamate/caliphate contract) in order to maintain the social order, and who has the monopoly of using legitimate force.[5] According to him, the state represents the highest power in society and political power is needed to ensure social justice, peace and security. He also refers to the necessity of the presidency in order to carry out the political and administrative affairs of the Islamic society and to meet all kinds of needs and states that the presidency is only a social organization that helps the development of the common life of the people.[6]

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4 Kwong-Huen Choh. *The Notion of the State in Aristotle and Confucius*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, McMaster University, Hamilton, 1972, 38.

5 Ömer Menekşe. "İslam Düşünce Tarihinde Devlet Anlayışı Mâverdi ve Nizâmülmülk Örneği", *Din Bilimleri Akademik Araştırma Dergisi* 5/3 (2005), 201.

6 Ibid, 202.

II. ADMINISTRATION BY VIRTUE

In the *Lunyu* 論語 (Analects), Zigong who was one of Confucius' disciples asked Confucius about governance:

> The Master said, "Provide people with adequate food, provide them with adequate weapons, and induce them to have faith in their ruler." Zigong said, "If you had no choice but to dispense with one of those three things, which would it be?" "Dispense with weapons." "If you had no choice but to dispense with one of those two things, which would it be?" "Dispense with food. From ancient times there has always been death. If the people do not have faith, the state cannot stand." (12.7)[7]

Thus, for Confucius, food (economic sufficiency), weapons (national defense), and a virtuous ruler are essential elements that construct a state, but the virtuous ruler is extremely important. Because when a virtuous person occupies the highest position in the state, his good behavior will have an effect on the people under him, and his virtuous qualities will spread throughout the state. In the *Lun Yu* Confucius also says: "When one rules by means of virtue it is like the North Star – it dwells in its place and the other stars pay reverence to it." (2.1)[8] As it is seen, Confucius puts "virtue" on the basis of administration. In this context, he highlights the concept of a virtuous man (junzi 君子). For him, at home, virtuous people care for parents and siblings; abroad, they are impartial, trustworthy, loyal, respectful, genial, generous, calm, and self-possessed. Each person has enough strength and capacity to become a *junzi*. *Junzi* as a ruler positively guides social life and advances society in this direction. Also, the ruler should put an end to the crisis in the country and ensure social peace and welfare. Thus, Confucius attributed the goal of achieving the ideal society to the ruler, who was the real owner of the administration. For him, persons who will take charge in administrative positions should be chosen from among those who have virtue and knowledge. In other words, the administration should be the responsibility of the *junzi*s.

According to al-Māwardī, the responsibilities of the rulers, who undertake the administration of the state, regarding the moral development of the people, first of all, require

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7 Robert Eno. *The Analects of Confucius: A Teaching Translation*, <https://hdl.handle.net/2022/23420> (accessed 8 May 2022), 60-61.

8 Ibid, 5.

that they should be virtuous. Because in terms of encompassing both religious and worldly interests, the people with the most perfect moral virtues and the most honorable descendants were chosen for the post of prophethood, which is the most honorable of human ranks. It is obligatory for the rulers (imams/amirs) who came after prophets to be shaped with the characteristics of prophethood, and personalities with virtues.[9] In this respect, he stipulated that the administrator should be at the highest level in terms of morality, and he counted having moral equipment among the conditions of being competent in the duty of the head of state. He also states that the most important duty of the ruler is to prevent chaos and bring order, to ensure peace and justice.[10]

III. RULES AND PRINCIPLES OF ADMINISTRATION

I have introduced the representatives of both civilizations and tried to give their approach to social and political organizations. In this section, I shall try to discuss the rules and principles they develop for good governance in their respective societies.

A. PRINCIPLES OF BEING VIRTUOUS ACCORDING TO CONFUCIUS

According to Confucius, to be a *junzi*, one must fully practice the four basic virtues: xiao 孝 (filial piety), ren 仁 (benevolence), yi 義 (righteousness), and li 禮 (rituals). If the rulers adopt and apply these four basic principles, they become virtuous and are adopted and obeyed by the people. As a result, not only will good governance be achieved, but also they will set an example to the public and help individuals become *junzi*. Below, I will try to analyze each of these principles respectively.

1. Xiao 孝 (Filial piety)

The family has always been a very important concept in Chinese society. Since pre-Confucian times, they have shown supreme respect and reverence to their ancestors and families. In Confucius' teaching, *xiao* is the basis of governing a country. *Xiao* is of two types: physical *xiao* and sacred *xiao*.[11] Physical *xiao* means helping parents and sacred *xiao* means

to ensure the material and spiritual comfort and peace of the parents as long as they live. In the *Lunyu*, Confucius views filial piety as a virtue that goes beyond merely feeding parents. It should include showing them respect and keeping their needs and concerns in mind. At the same time, it involves service after death. Confucius mentions that giving parents a proper funeral and offering sacrifices to them are essential elements of filial piety.

2. Ren 仁 (Humaneness, benevolence)

When we look at the writing of *ren* in Chinese characters (仁), it is seen that it consists of two ink ideograms. This means that every human has two internally opposing emotions. Therefore Chinese people believe that everything in nature is in harmony and that if people imitate it, well-being will prevail.[12] *Ren* is also the source of all human actions. According to Confucius, man is inherently good. In addition, in *ren*, one thinks of other people as one thinks of oneself. It is empathy and a sense of consideration for others that is the hallmark of the virtuous person.

3. Yi 義 (Righteousness, appropriateness)

The core of *yi* is the ability to distinguish between right and wrong and a moral inclination for good. In other words, when a person is faced with a situation where he/she has to make a choice, he/she acts in accordance with moral values and good by choosing what is beneficial for the social order, not for his/her own benefit. On the other hand, petty people concerned themselves instead with the pursuit of personal benefits. In brief, when one behaves accordingly to *yi*, the *ren* is consolidated. Thus, it is aimed to achieve social cohesion by becoming a *junzi*. The concept of *yi* occupies such an important place in Confucius' doctrine that the ruler's lack of *yi* can make him lose his legitimacy in the eyes of the people.

4. Li 禮 (Ritual, rites)

The concept of *li* can be translated as rituals, customs, traditions, rites, and ceremonies. In order to create an ideal social order in Confucian thought, all kinds of interpersonal and state-to-person relations are regulated by the *li*. In the Lunyu, Confucius says "When the ruler loves *li*, the people are easy to employ." (14.41)[13] The people obey only when the ruler is

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9   Cengiz Kallek. "Mâverdî", *DİA*.

10 Ömer Menekşe, "Nizâmülmülk Örneği", op. cit., 207.

11 Gökçen Özlü. *Konfüçyüsçü Yönetim Düşüncesi: Joseon Hanedanlığı*, master's thesis, Ankara University, Ankara, 2017, 34. This can be accessed at: https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/tezDetay.

jsp?id=DtgkCxw9UfFa30Wo9ApUyQ&no=J3jnkptbt_Y5MgYNqAFC8w

12 Ibid, 35.

13 Robert Eno, *Analects of Confucius*, op. cit., 80.

virtuous and fulfills the *li*, and thus social harmony occurs. Reaching the *li*, practicing it as it should be, and obeying it are essential to individual and human virtue. Also, in the *Lunyu*, Confucius equated supreme virtue with overcoming self-centeredness to return to ritual: "If a person could conquer himself and return to *li* for a single day, the world would respond to him with *ren*." (12.1)[14]

B. QUALIFICATIONS OF RULERS ACCORDING TO AL-MĀWARDĪ

Al-Māwardī specified the qualifications that a person to be caliph should have in his book *al-Aḥkām as-sulṭāniyyah* as follows:

1. To be a fair person at all points.

2. To have enough knowledge to be able to make ijtihad in all affairs, provisions, and decisions considered among the duties of the caliphate.

3. To have the clarity of mind to use the acquired knowledge in solving problems.

4. To be strong in performing the functions of basic organs such as ears, eyes, and tongue.

5. To be safe from basic disabilities that will prevent movement.

6. To have the knowledge to manage the affairs of the citizens and to carry out the administration of the people.

7. To have the potential, strength, and courage to fight the enemies and protect the citizens under his rule.

8. To be able to show the ability to apply the virtue of courage by internalizing it in his life.

9. To be descended from Quraysh in lineage.[15]

C. SIX CONDITIONS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF WORLD ORDER ACCORDING TO AL-MĀWARDĪ

According to al-Māwardī, the full establishment of world order depends on the presence of six main conditions: respectful religion, strong political authority, comprehensive justice, general security, widespread prosperity, great hope and aspiration.[16]

1. Respectful Religion

While describing the importance of religion, al-Māwardī sees religion as an order that individuals follow in their lives. It is not possible to impose religion on people by force. On the contrary, people must choose and adopt religion voluntarily believing in the necessity and importance of it and obeying it for their salvation and happiness in this world and the hereafter. He says: "Religion prevents the consciences and hearts from desires and lusts, thus it dominates the secrecy, controls the ego in the moment of loneliness, and prevents the conscience from bad things. It advises him about the problems he encounters. Without religion, these issues cannot be reached and people cannot be reformed without them".[17] So religion is a major foundation in the context of politics: "Every country that adheres to it will advance, and every country that adheres to its motto will have a long life."[18] Although religion has an internal authority function in the person and enables the self to be restrained in the state of moral consciousness, not everyone can act according to the standards of reason and religion. Political authority fills this deficiency.

2. Strong Political Authority

Al-Māwardī's notion of "strong authority" is not a force in the sense of tyranny and cruelty, but in the sense of the power that will provide goodness to people in society, it is "powerful (which scares, discourages) and directive against groups tends to commit oppression and crime.

3. Comprehensive Justice

In al-Māwardī's thought, state order is built on justice. It is seen that the virtue of justice comes to the fore at the top of the qualifications that should be found in the caliph, who is at the highest level of the administrators. The virtue of justice, which is the first of the characteristics that should be found in the caliph, is one of the most important elements of governance. To be able to rule people with justice and to realize the administration with justice are indispensable rules of the culture of living together. This feature is also the assurance of the reliable continuation of the administration of the administrator. The existence of a strong sultan devoted to the principles of justice is the greatest guarantee of the virtue of justice becoming a lifestyle among people.

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14 Ibid, 59.

15 Kemal Göz. "Mâverdî'de Siyaset Felsefesi: Ahkamu's-Sultaniyye Örneği". *Pamukkale Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 8/1 (2021), 110.

16 Cengiz Kallek. "Mâverdî", *DİA*.

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17 Mübarek el-Bağdadî. "Mâverdî'nin Siyasî Düşüncesinde İnsan ve Toplum", trans. Mustafa Sarıbıyık, *Dicle Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 5/2 (2003), 85.

18 Ibid, 85.

The comprehensive justice that al-Māwardī means achieves many positive results in society. Justice leads to kindness and obedience, the country is built with it, and goods develop and multiply with it. Generations multiply with him and the sultan finds trust in him. For this reason, justice is a cause upon which many things necessary for the well-being of societies depend.[19]

4. General Security

The peaceful life of people, the efficiency of their efforts, the safety of the innocent, and the comfort of the weak depend on general security. We can say that if there is no security/trust, peace, happiness, unity, success, development, and mutual cooperation are incomplete. Therefore al-Māwardī says that where there is fear, there will be no comfort and peace.

5. Widespread Prosperity

The spread of prosperity facilitates livelihood, reduces jealousy, and strengthens relationships. It is a fact that social problems are less common in areas where wealth is high, widespread, and shared fairly. As a result, peace prevails in geography. In such societies, the love, respect, and commitment between the ruler and the ruled become even stronger. Abundance and a high level of welfare are among the concepts that contribute significantly to the strength of this bond between the ruler and the ruled.

6. Great Hope and Aspiration

Thanks to people's hope and ambition for the future, the world's prosperity and the work of the world's construction are passed on from generation to generation. According to al-Māwardī, broad aspirations stimulate the desire to attempt and lead people to achieve things that will not fit in their life and that cannot be expected to be achieved throughout life. Growth, development, and progress have been achieved thanks to the broad purpose that Allah has given to humanity as a requirement of the mission of the caliphate.

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19 Ibid, 89.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I attempted to compare the conceptions of the administration of two great names: Confucius and al-Māwardī. Due to the different periods of time they lived in, naturally, we saw a more sophisticated approach in al-Māwardī's thought. He dealt with the administration within the framework prescribed by Islam. In his thought, ethics and politics are united in the virtue of justice. On the other hand, Connfucius' thought is simple and unorganized. His ethical and political thoughts both focus on self-cultivation.

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