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Social Justice in Classical and Medieval Western Tradition

Abstrak/Abstract

This article examines Western thought in formatting social order based on rationalism, empiricism, and church. This discussion is significant in tracing the origins on social doctrine in the modern social-ethical system. By bibliographical literature from classical books, this study describes and analyzes what are being formed in Classical and Medieval Western Tradition about social justice. By that tradition, it is clear that West has tradition of individualism as well as communalism. Both of classical sections have been referenced in the world.

Key words: Classical and Western philosophy, rationalism, empiricism, Church, social justice

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A. Introduction

In Western history, the idea of social justice has experienced such a long journey, so that it can be categorized into three levels of development: classical, medieval, and modern. The classical is usually addressed to Greek and Roman cultures, the medieval to the Christian, and the modern to the development after the age of Christian assigned by the emergence of secular nations.¹

In this writing, the ancient Greek thoughts are represented by Plato and Aristotle. The reason why the ancient Greek represents the classical West is to the fact that it was in the ancient Greek

¹ Schmandt, Henry J., *A History of Political Philosophy*, Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1960, 40.

that human thoughts began² and that the idea of democratic government was formed and practiced for the first time, and that the values of human liberty, justice, and individual destiny were admitted, and that the seeds of Western civilization were cultivated and conserved.³

Meanwhile, it is acknowledged that Christian civilization ruled the West in the Middle Ages. Christian doctrines not only endured for a long time, it had also formed the future of Western history.⁴ The whole of modern political and social life in the West is influenced by Christian values and practices.⁵ From such a huge civilization, there are two outstanding figures: St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. It is to these figures the questions of social justice being proposed in this writing.

B. Classical Tradition

1. Plato

In a context of ancient Greek Socrates had begun a discussion on justice by naming himself as the fighter of justice.⁶ Because Socrates did not write anything, and that systematic political thought emerged for the first time in Plato,⁷ here, then, the examination on the classical Western conception of social justice is begun with Plato.

Using Socrates's mouth, Plato refuses existing conceptions of justice at that time: justice in traditional

conception (Cephalus and Polemarchus), authoritarian (Thrasymachus), and pragmatic (Glaucou). definition of justice coming from commercial world as mentioned by Cephalus that justice is honesty, not cheating, and paying all debts either to a god for sacrifice or to a man for money.⁸ For, to him, such actions are not always true. Also, the conception revealed by Polemarchus saying that justice is "to render every man his due,"⁹ is refused by Plato, saying that it cannot be applied to someone who is insane. Afterward, Polemarchus says that justice is rendering services to friends and injuries to enemies. Again, Plato repudiates such definition because between friends and enemies is often vague. In addition, Plato firmly states that hurting enemy means hurting man, and it means injustice.¹⁰

Cephalus's and Polemarchus's failures to give right definition on justice makes Thrasymachus, a Sophist being there during the conversation between Socrates and Cephalus and Polemarchus, who can really not able to restrain himself to talk, immediately brings up his own definition on justice. To Thrasymachus, 'just' or 'right' means nothing but what is 'to the interest of the stronger party.'¹¹

Different from other lines of thinking, Glaucou exposes a principle of pragmatism in his conception of justice. To him, the rules of justice are for the interests of everyone. Hence, it is for the interests of everyone to accept an agreement for establishing the rules of

² Sir Ernest Barker, *Greek Political Theory: Plato and His Predecessors*, Bungay, Suffolk: Methuen & Co. Ltd., (1918), 1964, pp. 136.

³ Irwin, Terence (ed.), *Classical Philosophy*, Oxford: University Press, 1999, pp. 1-5.

⁴ Chroust, Anton-Hermann, "The Function of Law and Justice in the Ancient World and the Middle Ages," in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. VII, No. 3, 1946, pp. 312.

⁵ Erik A. Havelock, *The Liberal Temper in Greek Politics*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, (1957), 1964, pp. 13-15.

⁶ Plato, *Apology*, 31C-32E, in Irwin, *op. cit.*, p. 352.

⁷ Schmandt, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-1.

⁸ *Republic*, I, 331, p. 7. (Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, translated with Introduction and Notes by Francis MacDonald Cornford, London: Oxford University Press, (1941), 1971, Book VII, line 525. Otherwise stated, all quotations of the *Republic* in this thesis are taken from this book.)

⁹ *Republic*, I, 332, p. 9.

¹⁰ *Republic*, I, 333-5, pp. 11-4.

¹¹ *Republic*, I, 336 B-347 E, p. 18.

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justice requiring admiration to other's interests.¹²

Naturally, all definitions of three streams of thought cannot be justified by Plato. Hence, it should be immediately revealed a true definition, the one which will put aside all erroneous definitions. A true definition is only made when someone has got a true understanding of justice itself. To Plato, there is individual justice and justice in a state. To find a true understanding on individual justice, first it should be found the nature of justice in a state, for a state and a man has similar qualities whereas the size of state is bigger than an individual. In a larger scale, everything would be easier to see and understand.¹³

Of course Plato does not intend to identify individual justice with social justice, for it is clear that there is a difference between individual justice and justice of a state. But, "in so far as the quality of justice is concern, there will be no difference between a just man and a just society."¹⁴

In reply to the three streams of thought on justice mentioned above, Plato makes a parallelism between divisions of class in an ideal state with divisions of soul in an individual.¹⁵ Here Plato relates the three parts of the soul (reason, spirit, and appetite) with four cardinal virtues called as soul's morality or excellence.¹⁶ The four cardinal virtues

are wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice. Mind or reason, is related to wisdom; spirit or courage, is related to fortitude; whereas appetite, passion or need, is related to temperance. All three parts are wholly related with justice to conserve harmony and balance between each parts of the soul, which is called a psychological harmony.¹⁷

To find the character and nature of justice in a state, Plato firstly refers to the origin of a state analytically examined by economic, and not historical, reason. Plato begins with human needs which are numerous and various in each daily life. Then, he shows the fact that an individual cannot fulfill his numerous wants and various needs by his own ability and aptitude. For this reason, human beings basically need one another for each own interest. So, they agree to cooperate in accordance with their own talents, abilities and aptitudes in a place lived in common. This division of labor based on natural aptitudes constructs a state.¹⁸

It is clear that a state is born by the existence of various human needs. The first need is food, the second is shelter, and the third is clothes, and then the other needs to follow. To fulfill such needs there should be farmers, builders, weavers, and can be added shoemakers, smiths, and so on.¹⁹

For Plato, division of labor based on talents, specialization, and abilities of the citizens is called justice (*dikaisone*).²⁰ When everyone and every class in a state functions as it should be, human various needs would be fulfilled, so that the state

¹² *Republic*, II, 358 E, p. 44.

¹³ *Republic*, IV, 434, p. 130. See also *Republic*, II, 368, p. 55.

¹⁴ *Republic*, IV, 434, p. 131.

¹⁵ *Republic*, IV, 434, p. 131.

¹⁶ Plato's doctrine on divisions of human soul is known as "Plato's tripartite theory of the soul" saying that human soul is divided into three parts in correspondence with his own natural capacity with which he differentiates with other living creatures. The first of the three is reason or mind (*nous*) which is rational part (*to logistikon*), the second is spirit or courage (*thumos*) which is courage part (*to thymoeides*), and the third is appetite, passion or need (*epithumia*) which is need part (*to epithymetikon*). George Klosko, *The*

Development of Plato's Political Theory, New York and London: Methuen, 1986, p. 68.

¹⁷ *Republic*, IV, 442-3, pp. 141-2.

¹⁸ *Republic*, IV, 427, p. 120 (editor's note).

¹⁹ *Republic*, IV, 427, p. 120 (editor's note). See also *Republic*, II, 369, p. 56.

²⁰ Plato states that "when each order—tradesman, Auxiliary, Guardian—keeps to its own proper business in the commonwealth and does its own work, that is justice and what makes a just society." *Republic*, IV, 434 C-D, p. 129.

would be prosperous and that unity and concord would be well preserved. Here, justice is related to specialization.

Individual justice is only accomplished by temperance. Temperance is only attained when the rational part could control the two other parts, i.e. the spirit or courage and the appetite and passion. In an allegory of a charioteer driving two horses (the good and the bad), it is clear that justice exists when the charioteer can control and command the two horses.²¹ When someone can control himself, he can function naturally in accordance with his calling based on his talent, ability, and aptitude. There is nothing to make someone happy besides getting a job in conformity with his talent, ability and aptitude. By such natural work he can function optimally well, and can perform himself in line with his honorable virtue.

Therefore, it can be considered that, for Plato, individual justice is the function of someone who can control himself in accordance with his calling based on his talent, ability, and aptitude. Social justice, then, is a harmonization of various talents, abilities, and aptitudes in a community.

The diversity of talents and capabilities is naturally written, says Plato.²² Nevertheless, Plato continues, golden parents can have silver children, or silver parents own golden children.²³ Therefore, education and nurture are needed to elevate the quality of self.²⁴

Plato also proposes that harmony should be the ideal order of society. And the differences of classes are natural, so that men can only adjust themselves to their positions.²⁵ Also, harmony needs

cooperation and fair treatment between human beings.²⁶

Furthermore, Plato proposes a thesis of communism, where women, children and properties are belonged together.²⁷ Even the self should be cooperated for the common interests.²⁸ Therefore, there is no chance for the ruling holders to "rend the community asunder by each applying that word 'mine' to different things."²⁹

2. Aristotle

Justice is in accordance with the law, says Aristotle.³⁰ It "implies a relation to persons as well as to things, and a just distribution."³¹ And there are some categories of justice in Aristotle's thought:

1. General Justice (as a complete virtue): justice for the political society. Here

²⁶ *Republic*, I, 351.

²⁷ "You'll find the ideal society and state, and the best code of laws, where the old saying 'friends' property is genuinely shared' is put into practice as widely as possible throughout the entire state. Now I don't know whether in fact this situation—a community of wives, children and all property—exists anywhere today, or will ever exist, but at any rate in such a state the notion of 'private property' will have been by hook or by crook completely eliminated from life." *The Laws*, V, 739. (Plato, *The Laws*, translated with an introduction by Trevor J. Saunders, Hammondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970, Book IX, line 875a. All quotations of the *Laws* in this thesis are taken from this book.)

²⁸ "Everything possible will have been done to throw into a sort of common pool even what is by nature 'my own', like eyes and ears and hands, in the sense that to judge by appearances they all see and hear and act in concert. Everybody feels pleasure and pain at the same things, so that they all praise and blame with complete unanimity." *The Laws*, V, 739.

²⁹ *Republic*, V, 464.

³⁰ *NE*, V, 1. (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by W. D. Ross, in Richard McKeon (ed.), *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, New York: Random House, 1941, Book V, Chapter 1).

³¹ *Politics*, III, 9. (Aristotle, *Politics*, translated by Benjamin Jowett, in Richard McKeon (ed.), *op. cit.*, Book III, Chapter 9).

²¹ Plato, *Phaedrus*, Penguin 60s Classics, translated by Walter Hamilton, London: Penguin Books, 1973, pp. 40-3.

²² *Republic*, III, 415.

²³ *Republic*, III, 415.

²⁴ *Republic*, IV, 423.

²⁵ *Republic*, IX, 590.

justice is anything lawful in our behavior to others.³²

2. Particular justice:
 - a. distributive: "distributions of honor or money or the other things that fall to be divided among those who have share in the constitution."³³
 - b. Retributive: "rectifying part in transactions between man and man."³⁴ Or more exactly is justice in a courtroom (administration of justice).

Theoretically, Plato emphasizes that justice is attained by a harmony of individuals to do each job specialization. Everyone with each own work creates justice. By this Plato wants to prove that just conduct is required by the interest of the agent. In other words, Plato stresses that the cardinal social virtue is in the individual's ethical foundation. That kind of ethics, however, is seemingly not in his pupil's moral philosophy. To Aristotle, justice is a virtue aiming at the good of others. This altruism emerged for the first time in Greek classical philosophy, that is, a conduct without any support of seeking happiness of the agent.³⁵

Aristotle says that we can see how love of self necessitates concern for the good of others when we understand what is meant by talking of self-love and self-interest. What we think in our self-interest depends on what we think the self is, and on what kinds of wants to be satisfied in order to reach its interest. Aristotle mentions that a human self is basically social, so that something is missing from our good if all our attention is purely self-regarding.³⁶

What Aristotle means for the virtuous person is 'another self'. If we

are virtuous, we care about the friend in the way we care about ourselves; we can therefore take an interest that we would not otherwise take in what the friend does. Concern for others does not interfere with our interests, but expands them.³⁷ Aristotle describes this attitude to virtuous actions by saying that virtuous people choose them "because they are fine (kalon)", or "for the sake of the fine."³⁸

Like Plato, Aristotle says that the social nature of human beings is also the basis of justice. To Aristotle, however, the aim of state is not merely life as such or to the interests of similarities of place, security, and economy; but more to the good and just quality of life.³⁹ Therefore, Aristotle says that we need of law enforcement for preserving justice.⁴⁰

Inequality is always a problem of social justice. Aristotle's solution, however, is not complete. For, persons from a lower class cannot be citizens, "since leisure is necessary both for the development of virtue and the performance of political duties."⁴¹ Consequently, the right of political participation cannot be given to them.⁴²

In examining classes in society, Aristotle says that there are three components in every state "one class is very rich, another very poor, and a third is a mean." To him, the best administered state is the situation "in which the middle class is large, and stronger if possible, than both the other classes, or at any rate than either singly."⁴³

³⁷ NE, IX, 9.

³⁸ Irwin, *op. cit.*, p. 316-8.

³⁹ Sir Ernest Barker, *Greek Political Theory: Plato and His Predecessors*, Bungay, Suffolk: Methuen & Co. Ltd., (1918), 1964, pp. 136-9.

⁴⁰ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a26-38. Aristotle, *The Politics of Aristotle*, translated with notes by Ernest Barker, London: Oxford University Press, (1948), 1960, p. 8.

⁴¹ *Politics*, VII, 9.

⁴² *Politics*, III, 5.

⁴³ *Politics*, IV, 1.

³² NE, V, 1.

³³ NE, V, 2.

³⁴ NE, V, 2.

³⁵ NE, V, 1.

³⁶ Irwin, *op. cit.*, 316-318.

In addition, inequality should be handled by distributive justice. Aristotle's distributive justice is based on the maxim "to each according to his merit." And that the standard of merit, in practice, differs: in a democratic state it is liberty (i.e., everyone who is not a slave has the same rights); in an oligarchy it is wealthy; in an aristocracy it is genealogy; in a true aristocracy, it is virtue.⁴⁴

Therefore, man's political position is regarded according to his involvement in society: the more he contributes, the better his position;⁴⁵ even though only few people are capable.⁴⁶

Besides being solved by legal and managerial ways, social justice finally should be solved by virtue: friendship.⁴⁷ Man is a relational being, so that deviation of relation will hurt the friendship and the common interest.⁴⁸

That is Aristotle. Like his predecessor, Plato, he shows that justice is a part of the happiness, that justice is an attempt to make social harmony, that we have enough reason to do justice, and that a just man should choose a just action only for the sake of justice itself.

C. Medieval Tradition

1. St. Augustine

St. Augustine⁴⁹ lived in the middle of the ruin of Roman Empire and

the growth of the Church as a social force.⁵⁰ Therefore, Augustine's writings were more as systematic formulations on Christian position in the middle of humanity.⁵¹

Plato's idea on justice as harmony between individual specializations⁵² is transformed -by Augustine- into a religious conception. For Augustine, the nature of justice (aequitas) is a proportional and true relation between man and God producing the creation of proportional and true relation between human beings. Therefore, for Augustine, justice is the most natural basis in the life of a state. A state cannot be arranged and managed as it should be if there is no justice, or more exactly true justice. Augustine says that truth is coming from the fountain of justice. So, if the true justice does not exist, the truth is also extinct. For God is the true God, He is also the most Just. God is the True Justice and He is the most appropriate to be called as the fountain of Justice. God is the real source of justice. Hence, only when one has the true relationship with God, he will be overwhelmed by the truth coming from the fountain of justice. The condition is also similar with a state; if a state is commanded by God, the state will be overwhelmed by the fountain of justice.⁵³

Augustine's theory of justice, then, is a theory based on divine revelation, without which human beings will not have any adequate idea on objective and absolute justice. It is based on his thinking that justice in the sense of

(the City of God). He passed away in 430, with the Vandals outside his wall of the city. Bowle, John, *Western Political Thought: An Historical Introduction from the Origins to Rousseau*, London: Methuen, (1947), 1961, pp. 124-5 n. 2.

⁴⁴ NE, V, 3.

⁴⁵ *Politics*, III, 9.

⁴⁶ *Politics*, III, 8.

⁴⁷ Irwin, *op. cit.*, 316-318.

⁴⁸ *Politics*, I, 6.

⁴⁹ St. Augustine (354-430) was born in Thagaste, a town in North Africa with a landowner pagan father, Patricius, and a Christian mother, Monica. In 370 he went to the University of Carthage and joined with the Manicheans. He was a headmaster at Thagaste; a teacher of rhetoric in Carthage (377), and a professor of rhetoric in Milan (384). In 387 he embraced Christian. Went back to Africa in 388, seven years later he became the Bishop of Hippo (now Bona in Algeria). In 400 he wrote *Confessions*, an important document to understand his other works. From 413 to 426, in the middle of administrative business, he wrote *De Civitate Dei*

⁵⁰ Bowle, *ibid.*, p. 133.

⁵¹ Schmandt, *op. cit.*, 115.

⁵² *Republic*, I, 331.

⁵³ *City of God*, XIX, 21. (Augustine, St., *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods, London: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952).

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"giving everyone his due" is giving God His rights, and giving a man his due. Consequently, if each is not in its place means it is not true justice.⁵⁴

By justice based on the revelation it infers that justice voiced by Augustine is cosmological justice where individual and social justice being the parts of it.⁵⁵ This cosmological justice is within the structure of heavenly city. Augustine says that his heavenly city is a spiritual, and not political, society. It is a higher, universal society. Here it is the importance of justice for a state and for an individual.

According to Augustine, justice is the most cardinal virtue. A state or a kingdom which is not based on justice is much more like a group of robbers.⁵⁶ In other words, for Augustine, a state is called a real state if it is based on justice. And because the true justice is God himself, without God, then, a state is only a flock of plunderers.⁵⁷

Therefore, Augustine insists that a true political society, something which is called as a state, should bring justice into reality. But justice cannot be applied in the state which not serves God. Justice cannot be existed in a pagan state. Here, then, the pagan Roman Empire cannot be a real state, for it was not based on the true justice, and, therefore, cannot apply justice.⁵⁸

The City of God is full of the truth and justice, for God Himself is the Commander and the Sovereign. To this, Augustine appraises the Heavenly City and nobles its Ruler (God).⁵⁹

⁵⁴ *City of God*, XIX, 21.

⁵⁵ "Hence, when a man does not serve God, what justice can we ascribe to him, since in this case his soul cannot exercise a just control over the body, nor his reason over his vices? And if there is no justice in such an individual, certainly there can be none in a community composed of such persons." *City of God*, XIX, 21.

⁵⁶ *City of God*, IV, 4.

⁵⁷ *City of God*, XIX, 21.

⁵⁸ *City of God*, XIX, 21-24.

⁵⁹ *City of God*, II, 21.

It can be inferred that Augustine's theory of justice has the following characteristics:

1. Divine justice. Any action contrary to the Law of God cannot be just.⁶⁰
2. Natural justice. Augustine says that justice "proceeds from nature," from the very essence as well as order of all things.⁶¹ This kind of justice is, for instance, the rule that "not to do to others what you do not want others do to you."⁶²
3. Justice is higher than material goods.⁶³
4. Absolute and relative justice. Divine Law, the basic principles of morality and justice, is eternal and unchangeable,⁶⁴ but specific and detail customs and positive laws arranging human relationships can be different according to time and space.⁶⁵

Now we go on discussing the application of Augustine's theory of justice to the problems of social justice. The first problem to be answered by Augustine is the problem of inequality. The followings are Augustine's viewpoint on inequality:

⁶⁰ "But those things which are done against God's law cannot be just." Augustine, St., *Contra Mendacium*, XV, 31 as mentioned by Deane, Herbert A., *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine*, New York & London: Columbia University Press, 1963, p. 286.

⁶¹ Augustine, St., *De Diversis Quaestionibus*, 31 as quoted by Chroust, Anton-Hermann, "The Function of Law and Justice in the Ancient World and the Middle Ages," in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. VII, No. 3, 1946, pp. 312-3. See also *Confessions*, II, 4, 9. (Augustine, St., *The Confessions*, trans. Edward Bouverie Pusey, London: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952).

⁶² *On Christian Doctrine*, III, 14, 22. (Augustine, St., *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. J. F. Shaw, London: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952, book III, chapter 14, note 22.)

⁶³ "What sort of justice is that which is retained for the sake of gold, as if gold were a more precious thing than justice herself, or as if when a man denieth the deposit of another man's goods, ..." Augustine, St., *En. In Ps.*, LXXII, 18 as mentioned by Deane, *op. cit.*, 84.

⁶⁴ *On Christian Doctrine*, III, xiv, 22.

⁶⁵ *Confessions*, III, vii, 13.

1. Natural inequality is God's providence.⁶⁶ One's rise and fall are caused by the Will and Power of God. Here, Augustine's view is rather fatalistic.⁶⁷
2. Social and political inequalities are coming from human laws, and not God's law, for God equalizes all human beings.⁶⁸
3. The origin of attitude to inequality comes from pride.⁶⁹ Hence, social inequality is based on sin. Slavery, for example, is originated from sin, not from nature, for naturally, human beings are equals.⁷⁰ And sin itself is not God's providence, it is human choice.⁷¹
4. Inequality should not bring envy. A true Christian is not envious to the things owned by his brothers who love also God.⁷²
5. Inequality is not aggravated by such violence as plundering,⁷³ but should be solved by brotherhood.⁷⁴

In the matter of social justice, Augustine gives more attention to harmony, and not to equality. Here, he does not allow enmity between human beings merely for the sake of mundane matters. To him, for the sake of harmony, all Christian followers, regardless their classes should follow earthly rules.⁷⁵ Such is because human hope should be directed to the heavenly justice.⁷⁶

⁶⁶ *City of God*, XVIII, 2.

⁶⁷ *City of God*, V, 1.

⁶⁸ Augustine, St., *In Ioann. Evangel.*, VI, 25-26 as quoted by Deane, *op. cit.*, 105.

⁶⁹ "It is thus that pride in its perversity apes God. It abhors equality with other men under Him..." *City of God*, XIX, 12.

⁷⁰ *City of God*, XIX, 15.

⁷¹ *Free Will*, iii, 11. (Augustine, St., *On Grace and Free Will*, trans. A. W. Haddan, rev. W. G. T. Shedd, in Whitney J. Oates (ed.), *Basic Writings of Saint Augustine*, New York: Random House Publishers, 1948, book iii, chapter 11.)

⁷² *En. In Ps.*, XXXIII, 2, 6 as mentioned by Deane, *op. cit.*, 84.

⁷³ Augustine, St., *Ep.*, XII, 50. as quoted by Deane, *op. cit.*, 106.

⁷⁴ *City of God*, XII, 22.

⁷⁵ *City of God*, II, 19.

⁷⁶ *City of God*, XIX, 15.

Therefore, the idea of equality in Augustine is equality of opportunity for worship, and not for mundane matters. Even if one has nothing to charity, the will itself is enough.⁷⁷

Mutualism in social justice is also admitted by Augustine. To him, social justice should be mutual, no double standard or free rider.⁷⁸ Mutual means considering others, as well as himself.⁷⁹ For instance, harmony exists when there is mutual symbiosis between the master and the slave.⁸⁰

Crossing over social justice, Augustine says that the true justice of Christians is not merely equality and fairness but the real love—that is, love of and attention to his neighbors—coming from consciousness.⁸¹

In distributive justice, therefore, thing to be distributed is not goods, but love.⁸² Such is because, money and temporal goods like wives, children, health, or "the world's dignity", cannot be the true goods. Augustine says that anyone—whether he is good or bad person—can have those temporal goods.⁸³ In doing distribution, one who distributes should not pride to himself, says Augustine. Because that gold and silver belong to God, and not belong to human beings, one who gives to the poor is giving what belongs to God and not

⁷⁷ *En. In Ps.*, LXXXV, 3. as quoted by Deane, *op. cit.*, 110.

⁷⁸ "For what thief will tolerate another thief stealing from him? Even a rich thief will not tolerate a poor thief who is driven to theft by want." *Confessions*, II, 4, 9.

⁷⁹ *On Christian Doctrine*, I, 26, 27.

⁸⁰ "Each one of you doth need the other. Therefore neither of you is truly lord and neither of you truly servant." *En. In Ps.*, LXIX, 7. as quoted by Deane, *op. cit.*, 295 n. 160.

⁸¹ *In Ioann. Evangel.*, XXXII, 4, as mentioned by Deane, *op. cit.*, 83.

⁸² Augustine, St., *De Sermone Domini*, I, xix, 59 as quoted by Deane, *op. cit.*, 115.

⁸³ *Sermo LXXXV*, 6-7 as quoted by Deane, *op. cit.*, 112.

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his, and therefore, there is no reason to be pride.⁸⁴

Finally, to do social justice, the principle of friendship,⁸⁵ and not egotism, is needed.⁸⁶ Without friendship, humanity is corrupt. To this, Augustine has this maxim: "there is nothing so social by nature, so unsocial by its corruption, as this race."⁸⁷

2. St. Thomas Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas⁸⁸ is well-known as a dominant thinker of the Middle Ages, one of the great philosophers of the world, or an outstanding defender and a symbol of dignity in Catholic Church.⁸⁹ He developed his moral theory based on theological, psychological, and epistemological inferences.⁹⁰

In theory of justice, Aquinas states that justice is a principle of equality enacted to the outer human action.⁹¹ The scope of justice is "to

regulate men in their relations with others."⁹² So, generally, "justice is a habit whereby a man renders to each one his due by a constant and perpetual will".⁹³

There are some characteristics of justice in Aquinas's thought:

1. Justice comes from moral and spiritual virtue. As a moral virtue, justice is coming from will⁹⁴ which can trace sensitive appetites by rational control and train the passion to the spiritual attitude for human full contentment.⁹⁵
2. Justice is a virtue standing above other virtues, for it emphasizes common good,⁹⁶ and it is directed toward the good of others.⁹⁷
3. To uphold justice needs law.⁹⁸ Here, individual rights should be concerned by law.⁹⁹ To mention holistically, the illumination of justice is coming from eternal law,¹⁰⁰ through natural law¹⁰¹ and divine law.¹⁰² It can be enacted as human law.¹⁰³

In general, Aquinas says, justice is a virtue giving everyone his due and making a balance between rights and duties. Justice diverts into two categories: general justice and particular justice. General or legal justice is addressed to the state to arrange

⁸⁴ *Sermo L, I, 2* as mentioned by Deane, *op. cit.*, 293 n. 122.

⁸⁵ *City of God*, XIX, 12.

⁸⁶ *De Trinitate*, IV, ix, 12. as quoted by Deane, *op. cit.*, 93.

⁸⁷ *City of God*, XII, 28.

⁸⁸ St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) was born in Rocca Sicca in Southern Italy, from an honourable family, a part of which is coming from German and northern Italy. In 1231, he was sent to Benedictine monastery at Monte Cassino. When the monastery was destroyed by the Imperial soldiers in 1239, he moved to Naples. Later, he escaped from his family's castle to be a Dominican at the age of 18. He went to Köln to study theology under Albertus Magnus, then to Paris in 1245. In 1252 he was a sub-regent of Dominican school there. He got the title of Doctor in theology in 1257. In 1263 he was ordered by Pope Urbanus IV to make some commentaries on Aristotle. He died in 1274 in Naples. Among his works are *Summa Theologica*, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, *Commentaries on Aristotle's Ethics and Politics*, and *De Regimine Principum*. Bowle, *op. cit.*, 200-1.

⁸⁹ Schmandt, *op. cit.*, 147.

⁹⁰ Aspell, Patrick J., *Medieval Western Philosophy: The European Emergence*, Washington, D. C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1999, p. 194.

⁹¹ *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 57, 2, c. (Aquinas, St. Thomas, *The Summa Theologica*, trans. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, rev. by Daniel

J. Sullivan, London: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952).

⁹² *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 58, 5, c.

⁹³ *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 58, 1.

⁹⁴ *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 58, 12.

⁹⁵ *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 58, 4.

⁹⁶ *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 58, 12.

⁹⁷ *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 58, 12.

⁹⁸ *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 57-81 and q. 17, a. 4.

⁹⁹ *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 96, 1.

¹⁰⁰ Eternal Law is Divine reason ordering and arranging all creation. This law is called eternal since "the divine reason's conception of things is not subject to time." *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 96, 3.

¹⁰¹ Natural Law is part of eternal law which can be understood by human reason. *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 94, 2.

¹⁰² Divine Law is part of eternal law revealed by God for human beings through the Old and New Testament. *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 91, 4.

¹⁰³ *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 91, 3; I-II, 95, 2; I-II, 95, 3.

common good¹⁰⁴ of the community as a whole and particular justice is addressed to the individual to protect individual or association of individuals' rights.¹⁰⁵

Particular justice is divided into two: commutative and distributive justice. Commutative justice (*justitia commutativa*) is an exchange of giving and receiving in a fair situation between persons. Distributive justice (*justitia distributiva*) is a fair division on what can be divided of the community's property. Both kinds of justice serve individuals' interests and get from individuals' intention.¹⁰⁶

The following is the difference between commutative and distributive justice in Aquinas's thought:

Table 1.1. Commutative and Distributive Justice According to Aquinas

No	Subject	Commutative Justice	Distributive Justice
1.	Relationship	Egalitarian	Aristocratic
2.	Standard	Legal	Merit
3.	Nature	Fixed	Flexible

Now, let us see Aquinas's opinion on social justice. In addition to general justice, i.e., in the form of general welfare, social justice can also be got from particular justice, i.e., distributive justice. In the latter, it is addressed to persons, as private citizens in managing their group, or as public servants of the state in dividing the benefits coming from the community. The subject of social justice is personal will; the object is personal right, and not the welfare of the

whole community, which is the object of general justice.¹⁰⁷

Social justice is the virtue addressed especially to handle inequality. To Aquinas, in the beginning we should believe in God's providence that natural inequality such as differences in body structure, beauty, and fate always exists.¹⁰⁸ Even for something acquired by human efforts like spiritual capacity for justice, knowledge, actions and intentions there are also differentiation.¹⁰⁹

Inequality in property, on the other hand, originates from human agreement, and not from natural law. For the reason that material goods are created for human needs, inequality should be solved by charity from the rich to the poor, for the rich is owed to the poor for their sustenance.¹¹⁰ And if it is not distributed, the destitute people can

accept for their subsistence without considered to be a sinner.¹¹¹ Also, the principle is that one's nobility depends on his benefit to others.¹¹²

Besides charity, the thing to be done by the society in the matter of distribution is the need of the ruler to distribute divine economics. Here, says Aquinas, there should be a divine delegation, that is, a command to which the rulers apply the necessary functions to place the individual members in the appropriate positions in the divine economics.¹¹³ Worldly kings, according to Aquinas, are instituted by God, not for their benefits, but in order to serve the

¹⁰⁷ *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 58, 7.

¹⁰⁸ *Summa Contra Gentiles*, III, 93. (Aquinas, St. Thomas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, in Anton C. Pegis (ed.), *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, New York: Random House, 1945).

¹⁰⁹ *Summa Theologica*, I, 96, 3.

¹¹⁰ *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 66, 2, 1 and 7, c.

¹¹¹ *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 66, 7.

¹¹² *Summa Theologica*, I, 96, 4.

¹¹³ *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 93, 3.

¹⁰⁴ "Common good" is different in kind, not only in the amount and level, from totality of individual good. *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 58, 7, ad. 2.

¹⁰⁵ *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 58, 5, 6; I-II, 55, 4, ad 4.

¹⁰⁶ *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 61, 1.

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common good.¹¹⁴ Here, then, Aquinas called the king as "the guardian of what is just" (*custos justus*) or "the personification of what is just" (*justum animatum*).¹¹⁵

Aquinas was not really burdened by the problem of social class. Social class, to him, is based on natural talent. It is the fact that some people are born with a capability of leadership and some others have only capacity to follow them.¹¹⁶

Differences of levels, to Aquinas, are reflections of the perfect of nature.¹¹⁷ Here, then, justice demands the inferiors obey the superiors, for the reason of stability.¹¹⁸ In other words, various classes or capabilities should be directed towards the good of society.¹¹⁹

D. Conclusion

It is slightly difficult to identify Western school of thought as one single school, for there was a Middle Age school which was religious, i.e., an age where Christian thought was dominant. Therefore, Western conception on social justice is variable.

The concept of social justice in the West was understood as a harmony of various talents and abilities in a community (Plato); as a virtue based on altruism (Aristotle); and as a conformity with the ontological order (St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas).

In the aspect of methodology of understanding social justice, Western thought can be divided into three schools: rationalism represented by

Plato, divine knowledge represented by the Church, and empiricism represented by Aristotle. From contemporary perspective, it seems that rationalism still works in the West, by the emergence of a theory of substantive justice by John Rawls. Religious justice, however, begins to extinct in the West. It is outside the mainstream of Western thought. Empiricism is actually the most influential stream in the West today. It is practiced by the most Western politician and also backed by such outstanding theoreticians as Hayek, Nozick, Kenneth Arrow, Amartya Sen, etc.

In the problems of social justice Western civilization admits that those problems are around the questions of inequality, distribution, capability, and stability.

Even to those problems, the West has various answers. Nevertheless, almost all thinkers being examined here acknowledge that there are natural inequalities which cannot be equalized by human beings. But there are also inequalities which could be changed by human beings such as social, economic, and political inequalities.

According to Plato, all inequalities are natural, so that human beings can only adjust to them. Nevertheless, Plato has an idea to make an outstanding society: communism. Here, the state organizes talents by obliterating individualism and constructing society—including wives and children—as belong together. Those children, then, are educated and organized to become technocratic and military talents being useful for the state.

To Aristotle, societies can be different in perceiving inequalities, based on their societal leanings, whether the slant is democratic, oligarchic, or monarchy. Every society, then, has its own recipe to eliminate such inequalities. Therefore, natural talents are left to grow themselves. All should be adjusted to the condition. This is a realist conception.

¹¹⁴ Aquinas, St. Thomas, *On Princely Government*, (Book One), in D'Entrèves, A. P. (ed.), *Aquinas: Selected Political Writings*, trans. J. G. Dawson, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974, I, 1-3.

¹¹⁵ *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 58, 1.

¹¹⁶ *Contra Gentiles*, III, 81.

¹¹⁷ *I Sentences*, 44.1.2.6. as quoted by Bigongiari, Dino (ed.), *The Political Ideas of St. Thomas Aquinas: Representative Selections*, New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1953, p. xi.

¹¹⁸ *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 104, 6.

¹¹⁹ *On Princely Government*, I, 15.

Nevertheless, Aristotle believes that the principle of virtue will make human beings worthy and love each other. To this, Aristotle leans to democracy, for it treats human beings equally and also has an element of brotherhood.

To the group of Church, inequality is God's providence and those social and political inequalities are caused by human sins. For St. Augustine and Aquinas, the pride of the most fortunate and the plundering from the least advantaged are sins. The solution is human goodness: love and brotherhood. Here, harmony, and not equality, is the key word. Equality they are talking about is only equality of opportunity to worship God.

Distribution in Plato, basically, is based on voluntary relationship: everyone does his own talents and duties. By distribution, state can mobilize the wealth and talents of the society. The idea of distributive justice is also accentuated by Aristotle, yet by an emphasis on the duty to fulfill common good for the state and the duty to other's good for the individual endeavor.

This Aristotelian idea of distribution was later on embraced by the Church group and Adam Smith. To Augustine and Aquinas distribution depends upon the voluntary virtue, based on love and organized by the Church. The state, then, is functioned more as the protector of the society and the maker of infrastructures. The relationship in the society is merely based on personal will, such as charity.

To the problem of capability, both Western and Islamic discourses talk about individual capability. In the West, however, the meaning is various. Even in the non-Church doctrines, it is variable. To the idea that individuals can change themselves, classical views are some pessimists. Also, the Church doctrines are pessimistic, for the more important to

the Church is the deed of human beings, and not outward capabilities.

To the problem of stability, Western discourses based it on the obedience to the law. Non-Church sides say that law should be based on the needs of the society. Changes in law, then, should be based merely on human needs. Thus, law is positive. It is dictated by human reason (Plato) and adjusted with condition (Aristotle).

The Church side, however, stresses more to the need of divine guidance in the making of law, even though, at the same time, should always obey to the kings of the world. Hence, positive law is the convergence of human needs and divine guidance. Christians, then, are obliged to obey mundane as well as religious laws. The laws are separate things, but done at the same time.

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