JUSTICE IN PERSONHOOD: THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACTION

by

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ABSTRACT

This master’s thesis is philosophically-oriented educational scholarship that proposes a theory of justice as personal responsibility for action. It belongs to the tradition of humanities-based research that uses pre-qualitative methods to develop concepts and ideas into philosophical arguments and theories. Remaining loyal to the style and methods of philosophy, this study provides definitions, offers distinctions and anticipates objections to the claim as a whole and its main premises individually which are “personhood” (in Chapter 3), “responsibility” (in Chapter 4), and “action” (in Chapter 5).

This philosophical study has essentially evolved out of a preceding empirical research project on the perceived and experienced differences in relations to native and non-native English teachers in Turkey, from which “justice” appeared as a preliminary concept of conflict. This journey from an empirical to philosophical research is detailed in the introduction (Chapter 1). By taking a particular historical approach to the development of the concept of justice from Greece in antiquity to medieval Turkey (particularly in Chapter 2) to the present day, this thesis seeks to explore the barriers to and enablers of justice in the plurality of persons in the modern era. The claim that justice is a personal responsibility for action provides a conception of justice as a common language of relationality among human persons in a common world, acting on their ability to respond to other persons. The cultivation of this ability to respond to others gives education a binding role in this claim by providing the necessary conditions for persons to develop an understanding of living in a common world shared with others in the final chapter (Chapter 6). It also serves as a reflection on the problems that anticipated objections to the claim revealed, which are addressed from a pedagogical lens, thereby providing parents and teachers some common guides to promote justice through education.
LAY SUMMARY

This study contributes to the broader philosophical and educational studies around the nature and pursuit of justice. By promoting justice as a personal responsibility for action, it seeks to place justice within the human person by making human universals its starting point. Rather than exploring external factors that are required to achieve justice, this particular conception of justice, offers a lens to internal factors that are within the reach of each and every person. This study doesn’t reinvent the wheel. It doesn’t promise novel concepts to rethink justice. What it does is make what is already there and familiar slightly strange to stretch the limits of human thought to make space for concepts such as love, imagination and personhood to reclaim their fundamental place in the common world. Thus, this study offers justice as a way of thinking that makes living with others in a shared world possible.
PREFACE

The following thesis, by Ebru Ozturk, is comprised of original and independent work that has not been previously published. The empirical study mentioned in the thesis has been approved by the University of British Columbia Office of Research Services Behavioural Research Ethics Board with the Certificate Number: H18-01064.
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This master’s thesis carries in itself not only an intellectual content, but a soul and a spirit that has been nourished by many people and places. I would like to start by expressing my deepest love and gratitude to my mom and my sister, to whom this thesis is dedicated, for holding my hand in my many falls throughout this journey. Being a continent away from you was difficult on my soul, but I felt your presence in spirit every day. I thank all my friends who became my family in Canada specifically, Maria Angelica Guerrero and Johanna Trapier. I have bounced many of the ideas of this thesis with you and received so much insight, care and love from you. Being on the magical Musqueam land has been a constant reminder to practice caring, sharing, compassion and truth in my studies, I am grateful. Thank you, Mona Gleason, for responding to my silent calls by reading my emotions when I needed help and wasn’t articulating it well. I have learned so much from you both within and beyond classes. Dr. Andre Mazawi, thank you for serving on my committee and for all your insights. Finally, my supervisor and greatest teacher, Sam Rocha. I surely haven’t been the easiest student to supervise with my constant panic attacks. Thank you for your patience with me and teaching me something nobody has ever taught me, to believe against all odds and to value my own thinking. Being in your presence has inspired and changed me. Thank you.
To my beautiful sister, Cansu.
PROLOGUE

The following master’s thesis is a product of my study journey that involves valuable experiences and ways of engaging with knowledge with the brilliant people that I met through my degree. This sense of knowledge engagement has not been a mere passing of information like filling an empty buckle with new things and more things but rather one that is more qualitative in nature. Here in UBC, in the unceded ancestral territories of the Musqueam people, who have aptly called this place “a place of learning”, I have learned not just how to access knowledge, but also how to engage with knowledge through love, compassion, truth, and careful articulation. As I acknowledge this land I am on as a place of learning and forming relations, I also would like to extend my gratitude to all the people in my degree program for their ongoing commitment to make UBC more than a place of mind, but a place of mind, heart and spirit.

In this prologue, I aim to provide a review of my master’s thesis through my reflections on my work as a whole and on the processes that made it possible. My goal is to give a bird’s eye view of my study involving the critical turning points that has shaped it into what it is today, offer a brief review of my arguments and main conclusions, and present some of my main takeaways from the work that I have done and some speculations on where it might lead to moving forward.

As a conceptual study of justice, the phases involved in the process of this study has been rather atypical. To be clear, what makes this study “atypical” is not the fact that it has taken a non-social scientific path, as humanities-based research has been done by historians and philosophers even before the establishment of education as an academic field of study. It is rather the turn that I am referring to as unusual, from a method-first, BREB-approved, mixed-methods
empirical work to a concept-first study of justice. Typically, these initial, somewhat standard steps of choosing a method, designing a study, and seeking ethical approval point to a social scientific research path, yet my work ended up in another, arguably less commonly taken path. Just a caution, this is not to assert that this way of doing research, which is choosing to study a concept, in this case emerging from empirical work, has done something better or worse. At best, it may serve as another way of looking at educational problems by making use of the methods of philosophy. Although this type of work isn’t new in any ways, it is not controversial to say that it doesn’t hold the same self-legitimizing space as more conventional social scientific research in education, at least not yet.

Perhaps this study can exemplify how putting practice into theory or practicing theory can also help illuminate educational problems. What I mean by practicing theory is the process of imagination, thinking, and theorizing to promote new ideas or alternative ways of thinking rather than applying an already existing theory into practice. One may react to this word play “putting practice into theory” by arguing that theory is already embedded in practice, as theories stem from observations and empirical problems that require an explanation, and this is true. What I am suggesting then is to also think about research by using practice as a tool for theorizing educational problems. This can not only provide new ways of looking at existing or potential educational problems, but it can also inform our educational practices as teachers, students and researchers. Taking this approach to research has helped me ask better questions to the problem I had in hand and allowed me to make sense of the nuances and contradictions embedded in the complexity of reality.

As I demonstrate in this thesis, my earlier empirical work on teacher perceptions regarding common institutional practices such as providing native English teachers priority in
employment, higher salary, and institutional benefits in Turkey, revealed an interesting complication. Both teacher groups who benefit and suffer from the discriminatory practices referred to ideals of justice either to justify or denounce these practices. From these different conceptualizations, justice appeared to me as a relativistic and subjective concept. It implied that everyone had a different rationale for what justice or just practice was based on their self-interest, so the status quo remained intact.

The possibility of pursuing justice, when there is a lack of consensus on its merits in the plurality, diversity and mobility of people in contemporary societies became a point of curiosity for me. After immersing myself in books, ideas, internal debates and intuitions, I began to ask myself, acknowledging the diversity of opinions on the particulars of justice, is it all too impossible to then think of some universal principles for justice? This has become the guiding question that I have taken to re-gear my study direction. If I could develop a more expansive way to think about justice, rather than zooming into particulars, there could be a chance of defining ways to achieve justice without getting stuck on the barrier of self-interest.

As I set out to develop an expansive theory of justice, it became almost impossible to not take a historical approach to the birth and evolution of the concept of justice. Questions of what justice is, how we perceive it, how it has changed over time are both philosophical and historical questions. In my thesis, rather than taking a more conventional genealogical path of tracing concepts across ancient-medieval-modern timeline as a straight arrow starting from Ancient Greece and pointing Western Europe, I made another turn, this time towards the East of the Mediterranean to include a Turkish concept of justice in my analysis. In a way, I challenged the linear transmission of ideas from ancient Greece to Western Europe, to make some space for coeval histories and civilizations.
This journey of making sense of complications around justice by taking a historical approach to philosophy helped me think of justice first and foremost as a way of living in a common world with others in relationality. The concept of circle of justice, has influenced the formation of my claim as I demonstrate in the second chapter of my thesis “A Turkish Concept of Justice”. Circle of justice is a notion of justice that has been articulated in written form by Kinalizade Ali Celebi, a 16th century Ottoman jurist, which formed the political structure of the Ottoman Empire. The concept demonstrates the contingency of justice with governance in the 8-line verse form written in an actual circle in which governance begins and ends with justice. As the beginning and end, the reason for and the result of human organization, this concept of justice became the primer for my theory by establishing that justice is a concept of pluralism and cannot and should not be thought in singularity and temporality. It is required for any human organization and requires an understanding of being a part of a bigger whole such as a society, a community, a group of workers, or broadly a common world. Without having a conception of this relationality, justice is reduced to subjective, unachievable and relativist concept that exists subjectively for everyone. This is my starting claim, that justice is a relational term and concern of the human person as a relational being, not the individual who stands outside of these relational circles.

As I establish personhood as a starting point to think about justice, I discuss two other concepts in relation to justice in my thesis and these are responsibility and action. Following relationality, another conclusion I reached is that justice needs to be seen not as a one-time event that just happens as an outcome of laws. I argue that this rights-based approach treats justice as a temporal and stable event, rather than an active process always demanding a response. Thus, it doesn’t fully capture the relationality of persons and the cause and effect nexus on which all
human actions, past and present, stand. Rather, I suggest we think of justice as a living and alive process that is always there and happening, deserving attention and participation from persons as active subjects. This helped shaped my thinking that justice is a relational responsibility of the persons who are both parts and wholes, at the same time. Being a part entails how we relate to this world through our many relationships from which responsibility, our ability to respond to these relationships arise. By responding, what I mean is responding to the demand of others we stand in relation in common spaces to not be reduced to anything less than a person through objectification. This requires seeing the other as a person in relation to self rather than in opposition to it. The negative identity of non-native English teachers that is defined in opposition to native English teachers can be seen as an empirical example to clarify what I mean here.

This relational responsibility, or the personal responsibility as I call it, comes with being a part of bigger circles. Yet, it’s not all there is to personhood. As I claim, personhood also entails being a unique whole simultaneously. This uniqueness entails action, or as Hannah Arendt defines it, the capacity to begin. This is the final concept that I considered integral to justice. Action ensures the sustainability of justice through human capacity to start something new by being born into a common world that pre-exists and outlives us. This universal capacity to start something new by imagining the possibility that the present reality can be otherwise allows each one of us to create choice and refuse to take part in unjust practices for the absence of a better choice. The addition of action to this claim is a way to pronounce human agency especially during times when non-human forces such as the market economy becomes disengaging by providing economic rationales for making moral exemptions.

Putting it all together, the main claim I make in this thesis is that justice is the personal responsibility for action. Now that I have travelled quite a distance from where I have started it
one might wonder how this conception of justice and theorization provides a light for educational problems, or may ask what is educational about justice in this particular way? This question is one that I had no answer for as I moved along this work till the end. This can also be seen in the sequencing in which this thesis is presented. The question of education has become rather an answer to a lot of the potential objections that I anticipated for the claims I make throughout my thesis. I realized that this notion of justice as a personal responsibility for action requires a particular education that enables the transition of persons into a common world as human persons with the critical awareness of a relational existence in a shared world. An education that aims one to be more rather than to have more is one that can switch the reduction of persons to individuals who stand outside relational circles. Thus, while responding to the objections I anticipated, education became an integral part of the theory I proposed. However, as content naturally linked to education, more clear connections of my work with education became available to me through the atypical paths this study has taken. In a way, the unpredictable and unstructured nature of theorizing as a somewhat mysterious journey became the most educational aspect of my work on a more personal level.

To give you an understanding of what I learned from this study, let me elaborate this mysterious and rigorous process of theorizing. Trying to build these arguments that I presented in this thesis wasn’t as smooth and linear of a process. In fact, the frustrations of constantly negating my own work through new insights, better arguments and objections often made this process of theorizing very intimidating. The style and methods of philosophy such as providing definitions, offering distinctions and anticipating objections pushed me to challenge my thinking and as a result, undo a lot of my own work. I have lost count of the times I had to start over and over again. At several points during the process, I lost hope that I would be able to do this work
or finish my degree on time. It seemed all too impossible to make one big claim about justice and hold it together till the end without collapsing. I wasn’t able to see the bigger picture or envision the end result as I could in my more structured empirical research. This inability to know where this journey of making claims, refuting them and starting over would lead to, or if it would lead anywhere, was an uncomfortable feeling that I had no other option but to dwell in. Yet, from this process of frustration, intimidation and at times hopelessness came two very important realizations. Firstly, this study has taught me that knowledge cannot be rushed. Sometimes no amount of reading, thinking and dwelling on the same concept was enough to give me any answers. Answers came to me when it was the right time.

In a symposium I attended in March 2019, here in UBC, on Indigenous well-being and existential wealth, Dr. Shawn Wilson used the metaphor of ripe raspberries to talk about knowledge. I will try to paraphrase what he said. If you try to pick raspberries before they ripen, you will end up destroying the entire bush as they will stick very strongly to their roots, but once they ripen, they will fall right into your hands without the need to be picked. The metaphor accurately describes the process of knowledge engagement for me. It requires time and effort but most importantly patience. This is the beauty and risk of knowledge engagement and perhaps what Gert Biesta is referring to in his book titled The Beautiful Risk of Education. Secondly, this study has taught me that knowledge can’t only be sought through intellect, it also requires senses, intuitions and most importantly belief. Being unable to see the end result often made me question if I was on the right path as I couldn’t believe it without seeing it. Yet, my supervisor Sam, offered me another way to think about this. If I didn’t believe it, I could not see it. Thus, as difficult of a journey as it was, the mysterious and unpredictable nature of knowledge production ultimately became a transformative experience. My study has changed me, to say the least.
How I see this work moving forward is that firstly it can provide a methodological alternative to the somewhat standardized research approaches by demonstrating the ways in which practicing theory can contribute to knowledge production in educational research. It can hopefully provide an example for how complications of reality in research can be approached both empirically and philosophically. Secondly, the theory of justice as a personal responsibility for action can provide a useful critique for the formal study of justice through its many collocations such as social justice education or social justice institutes, departments, degrees and so on. I believe, this particular conception of justice I propose goes very much against the idea that justice can be taught or studied as an explicit content in formal education contexts. Considering it to be external to the person, I argue, objectifies justice. What I suggest instead is to not think of justice in temporality as an outcome of some action, policy or law but as the necessary pre-condition that circulates human life. Therefore, if we were to think about social justice in education, we should reconfigure not only what we teach but rather how we teach and to what end. Thus, my argument stands, without developing an understanding of personhood as a critical concept that contains a public nature, relationality, history and a soul, we can’t begin to even think about justice.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction to the Chapter

The following thesis is a philosophically-oriented educational study in partial fulfillment of a Master of Arts degree in Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. The main undertaking of this thesis is to explore the philosophical questions around the pursuit of justice, which arose from a preceding empirical study on the perceived and experienced differences in relation to native and non-native English teachers in Turkey. This introductory chapter does two things. First, it introduces the reader to the content, style and structure of this thesis. Second, it takes the reader on a journey to witness the critical decision-making processes involved in the shift of this study from an empirical to a philosophical one. Had I chosen to leave out these processes of change guided by my dispositional transformations, readers would have been left with only a partial understanding of this master’s study.

This introductory chapter aims to achieve these two things. In the following section titled “Methodological Grounding,” I position my research as a philosophically-oriented educational research that asserts a particular conception of justice. My goals are to clarify the particulars of philosophical research, explain how it interacts with the study of education and argue for a need for philosophical research in the field of education. Once I establish my main claim for the significance and necessities of philosophical research, I invite the reader on the journey that I claim this research to be. The titles of the sections that follow mimic the stages of a journey in a particular order. In the “Starting Point” section, I provide a context for the beginnings of this journey as an English teacher from Turkey whose experiences, intuitions and frustrations provided the motivation for this study. As the name suggests, the next section “Metamorphosis and Departure” demonstrates the complications of my research experience, which ultimately led
it to morph from an empirical study of teacher perceptions to a philosophical study of justice. The critical decisions involved in making a total departure from the empirical study as well as feelings of confusion and disorientation I experienced during my research will be confessed and detailed in this section. The final section “Arrival: Justice” reveals my destination, explaining the reasons why justice as a concept of philosophical significance takes precedence and guides this study as well as providing a summary for the following chapters of the thesis.

1.2. Methodological Grounding

The reader should be cautioned that, the empirical study mentioned above is merely a spring board to the insights for this philosophical study. Thus, starting from this early stage it must be established that this thesis is primarily a conceptual rather than an empirical form of research. What that means is that ideas about justice that are developed into claims make up the core of this study. In this study, I make the philosophical claim that justice is a personal responsibility for action. The way that I develop my main claim and its premises follow the style and methods of philosophy by providing definitions, offering distinctions and anticipating objections. While doing so, I bring in ideas, theories and claims of prominent thinkers from varied disciplines such as history, literature, politics, education, psychology and philosophy to inform, enhance or challenge my own views. Thus, in this research, concepts take the foreground with the goal of promoting this particular conception of justice. More importantly, the validity of my claims rests not on their relation to particular empirical data, as is the case in qualitative and quantitative educational research, but rather on the integrity, logic, and unity of my concepts vis-à-vis my main claim, sub-claims or premises, and existing theories relevant to this study.
Methodologically, I claim this research to be “pre-qualitative.”¹ As the prefix suggests, this study uses methods that precede qualitative research such as ideas and concepts that are developed into philosophical arguments and theories. In the majority of educational research, conceptual work is borrowed by qualitative studies in the form of conceptual or theoretical frameworks and applied to an empirical study. In this research, rather than applying existing theories of justice to my empirical research, I develop a conception of justice informed by certain complications that my empirical study revealed. Therefore, I engage in the practice rather than application of theory. The major difference between the two is that the practice of theory requires active engagement in imagination, thinking, and theorizing to promote new ideas or alternative ways of thinking, making concepts its primary concern.² Whereas, the application of theory borrows already existing theories to apply them into matter. Thus, by engaging with concepts, rather than percepts, this study is situated in the “pre-qualitative” realm.

The interdisciplinary nature of this pre-qualitative research allows for a certain variety and flexibility in the methodological canons of humanities-based research. In particular, taking a historical approach to philosophical research is a well-established practice that can be found in the works of prominent philosophers and political thinkers. The genealogical approach of Nietzsche and Foucault and the historiography of Hannah Arendt are some examples. Similar to Arendt, my research will blend philosophy with historiography to add depth to my philosophical

¹ Pre-qualitative research is the reclamation of philosophy and the philosophical method as preceding social scientific methodologies of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods. The case for re-naming what is established as ‘post-qualitative research’ following the work of Elizabeth St. Pierre by changing the prefix to be more accurate about the position of philosophy in educational research is made by Samuel D. Rocha in his chapter: Samuel D Rocha, “History and Philosophy of Education as “Pre-Qualitative” Educational Research,” in Philosophy and History of Education: Diverse Perspectives on Their Value and Relationship, ed. Antoinette Errante (Lanham : Rowman & Littlefield, 2017): 123-136.

claim that justice is a personal responsibility for action and contextualize present day complexities around justice. Unlike Arendt, my historiography will include Turkish\(^3\) accounts of justice, in an attempt to challenge the linear transmission of ideas, values and scholarship as they appear be moving from Athens to Rome, forever leaving their birth place.\(^4\) This adjustment in historiography, specifically in the medieval period will situate post-Hellenic Mesopotamia, involving present-day Turkey, as an “intermediate civilization,” an enabler and contributor of the European Renaissance, upon which modernity, in the strictly liberal sense, is constructed.\(^5\) Yet, it should be noted that this historical approach that I am taking is a contribution to the style and methods of philosophy, rather than a replacement of them.

The position of a pre-qualitative researcher is a stance I take with the claim that thinking in a systematic and philosophical way is an academic and scholarly endeavor that is underrated and overlooked in institutional contexts, particularly in the field of educational research. My first view is that in an era of post and anti-humanistic approaches to humanistic inquiry, education as a field that deals with humans at its core, can benefit greatly from humanities-based research. Additionally, the over-scientification of educational research by an overreliance on empirical data as the necessary and sufficient condition of tackling educational issues has created a reduced notion of education, one that deals strictly with empirical results. The standardization of teaching and learning, increasing surveillance of teachers and learners, and an overreliance on school

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rankings have come under scrutiny as some of the new educational problems that this strictly empiricist approach to education has created.\textsuperscript{6} This is not to suggest that empiricism is inherently damaging to educational research but rather to seek an expansion of ‘educational research’ that doesn’t endorse empiricism at the expanse of conceptual work. After all, as Golding states “many educational issues are equally philosophical and empirical.”\textsuperscript{7} Thus, it is my view that education today is in more need of moral, aesthetic, and intellectual meaning than ever before. It is with this goal that in this study, I take on a philosophical challenge to develop a conception of justice that aims to overcome the tensions between individual and communal, moral and rational, medieval and modern, private and public by using analytic, interpretive, and aesthetic tools that humanities-based research allows for.

Locating this philosophical study on justice within the realm of scholarly work in education can be supported on two interrelated grounds. Firstly, the philosophical questions around justice that form this study emerged from various educational sites in Turkey. As I explain in the following section titled “the Starting Point,” my initial study direction was an empirical research project aiming to explore teacher perceptions about the common institutional practice of categorizing English teachers as native or non-native English speakers based on their first language and nationality. My main argument was that this reduction of teachers to their first language and place of birth, regardless of their pedagogical skills or competency in the target

\textsuperscript{6} One recent example that demonstrates the impacts of such materialistic educational policies and practices on teachers and, by and large, on education is Doris A. Santoro’s study that explores the phenomena of teacher turnover. The study shows how experienced teachers in the USA, by engaging in miseducative practices that conflict with their moral values become demoralized and ultimately leave their jobs. The study, which came out as a book, is a good resource that sheds light into the current educational problems arising from practices that reduce the teacher and the student to mere data. See: Doris A. Santoro, \textit{Demoralized: Why Teachers Leave the Profession they Love and how they can Stay}, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Education Press, 2018.

language or overall knowledge and abilities objectifies the teacher, commodifies the practice of teaching, and results in feelings of injustice among teachers. In this sense, it contributes to the broader reductionist approaches to education addressed earlier. When the lack of consensus on the basic premises of justice among English teachers appeared as a complication in my empirical data, justice became a topic of interest to me, reorienting me to a conceptual inquiry into the nature and pursuit of justice.

The particular conception of justice that I propose as a personal responsibility for action intersects with education on practical terms as well, which brings me to my second point. The lack of common ground among teachers about what justice is, triggered me to envision a new way of thinking about justice that reclaimed it from the nihilistic path of relativism. I place education at this critical junction to reorient justice in a new path, the path of possibility. In the Book III of the Republic, Plato talks about education in this sense of guidance that orients one to the right direction. For Plato, education is “a new way of making the organ see, which already has a vision but it is not properly oriented or looking where it should.”8 Similarly, for this thesis, education plays an instrumental role in cultivating what I propose to be the pre-requisites of justice, that are “personhood,” “responsibility,” and “action” which appear as major concepts in this thesis in that respective order. This role that education plays will be saved for the conclusion chapter to provide specifically educational resolutions for some of the anticipated objections to my claim.

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8 Plato, Republic, 121.
1.3. The Starting Point

As stated in the very beginning, this study is a journey that is triggered by my experiences as a learner and teacher of English born and raised in Turkey. Throughout my schooling, I have studied English extensively through an English immersion K-12 education and a subsequent bachelor’s degree in literature, completed fully in the medium of English. Most students who study English to this capacity in Turkey, form an instrumental relationship to the language, as a means to secure better job opportunities. For me, the undeniable instrumentality of English to enhance my job prospects was rather incidental to the intense relationship I had formed with learning a second language, one that I considered to be self-transforming. I loved the possibilities that English gave me by making a whole world of literature accessible to me, introducing to me a wide array of feminist literature from Fatima Mernissi, bell hooks, Gloria Steinem, Maya Angelou to Leila Ahmad. All these brilliant women fighting oppression in different cultural and historical contexts with a unified goal of overcoming the barriers standing before the personhood of women gave me the imaginative tools and interpretive skills to understand and reflect on the systems of oppression in my own cultural context. This worldview that became available to me as an undergraduate led to my decision to become an English teacher.

Shortly after becoming a teacher, I began to experience a gradual loss of the love and passion I had for teaching as the spaces I occupied as a teacher were becoming less and less educational in many respects. I found myself chasing endless certificates, workshops and trainings under the premise of “professional development” seeking to adapt myself to the demands of the 21st century English teacher, whose role is defined in direct opposition to the ways I was taught English. As a learner of English, I remember feeling inspired by listening,
soaking in the great English I heard from my bilingual teachers. The skills they had, the content they brought into class not only made a difference in my English learning but also peaked my interest and helped me define my own goals for the serious study of language. I wanted to inspire the next generation of language learners the same way I was inspired. Yet, as a teacher, the learners I had to adapt my teaching to, were often considered a new species born into the age of technology, having a fraction of the attention span of the preceding generation. This meant I had to plan every bit of my lesson with varied activities that would keep students with fragile attention spans engaged and appeal to their multiple intelligences. I had to make lesson plans with clearly laid out objectives that were scalable, achievable, and provable by the end of the lesson. Inspiring the students was not concrete enough to count as a lesson objective. Standing in contrast to the extensive work I had to do at the backstage to carefully plan out my lesson, in the classroom I was expected to be a mere facilitator, a subtle tool that students could turn to if they needed to, as opposed to the teachers I had whose strong presence could be described in many words, but never subtle.

Added to all these expectations from the 21st century English teacher was the 21st century non-native English teacher for whom the endless certifications meant proof of her worth and language skills which were always pitched against those of native English teachers. The common perception is that native English speakers, by virtue of acquiring rather than learning English, are more authentic, and thus more meritorious English teachers. This notion of hierarchy creates a relational existence for the non-native English teachers who are categorized in negative terms, by what they are not, and more importantly, for what they can never be. This artificially constructed institutional divide would often show itself in subtle ways such as different teaching expectations
and workload.\textsuperscript{9} Yet, in certain instances, such as hiring, employment conditions and work benefits, the divide would become more pronounced.\textsuperscript{10} Besides reducing the teacher to her birthplace, this artificial divide underscores the fact that English teachers, much like the school and the students, have become commodities with a market value. It soon became clear to me that all these certificates and training had a purpose beyond that of equipping teachers with new skills: they were steps for non-native English teachers to complete in order to compensate for what they are not, so that they could become more marketable. These reductionist approaches to teaching that marginalize particularly the non-native English teacher has caused me to experience a strong sense of injustice towards my vocation and has become a topic of interest to further explore in my master’s thesis. Initially, injustice was a feeling that triggered my motivations for designing a study, yet later on it became the study in itself. This turn in the place of justice in my research from a mere motivator to a core concept that substantiates and leads the study will be explained in the section to follow.

\textbf{1.4. Metamorphosis and Departure}

I suffered from the unfair glorification of skills over content and dispositions in educational realms not only as a teacher but also as a graduate student. Prior to starting my master’s program, I read about what would be taught in my program, what educational research means and constitutes as well as what job prospects would be available to me after graduation. I

\textsuperscript{9} There is a PhD thesis published in 2014 about the perceptions and experiences of native and non-native English teachers in Turkey showcasing the privileged position of native English speakers in perceived teacher credibility and workload assignment in certain institutions. See: Olga Skliar, “Native and Nonnative English-speaking Teachers in Turkey: Teacher Perceptions and Student Attitudes.” (PhD diss., Middle East Technical University, 2014).

\textsuperscript{10} For a study that mentions more explicit privileges such as higher salary and fringe benefits that are exclusive to native English teachers, see: Senem Yildiz and Sibel Tatar, “Empowering Nonnative-English Speaking Teachers in the Classroom,” in \textit{The NNEST Lens: Non Native English Speakers in TESOL}, ed. Ahmar Mahboob (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010): 114-128.
realized that I had to endow myself with the skills required of an educational researcher, which meant that I had to excel in one or, even better, both of the two dominant paradigms of educational research: qualitative and quantitative research. This led me to make the decision that I would ground myself on a typical social-scientific research path and design a mixed-methods study so that I get a sense of both methodologies. Clearly, I was under “the tyranny of practice.”¹¹ My concern for theories was limited to their applicability to the empirical data.

Immediately after my first research methodologies course, I designed a mixed-methods survey study to explore perceptions of English teachers around native and non-native English teachers and the widespread practice of providing different employment conditions for these two teacher groups in Turkey.¹² As the experts in what they do, and the subjects of differential policies that are implemented with regards to them, I invited English teachers working in Turkey to contribute to my study through the mailing list of a third party recruiter, International Training Institute, with which most English teachers are certified. I used a single-stage sampling procedure to access the participants who filled out an anonymous online survey consisting of Likert-scale type questions that allowed for both close-ended standard responses and spaces for written comments and explanations. Through the survey, I explored both the experiential meanings (the ideas teachers construct based on their lived experience) and aspirational


¹² One may question the scope of this study as I intentionally refrained from specifying the target teacher group in particular educational contexts. The study was open for all English teachers who were certified through ITI, which is an institution that trains English teachers globally for Cambridge English Certificates such as ICELT, CELTA or DELTA. Those certifications are often required for teachers working in universities. Thus, although institutional context is insignificant for the aims of this study, it is likely that most of the participants were teachers that work in English language schools of universities in big cities across Turkey.
meanings (the notions around what should be rather than what currently is) attached to being a native or non-native English teacher in Turkey.

I initially approached this research from a purely social-scientific perspective, by looking into the structural factors such as essentialized notions around nativeness and non-nativeness within the profession to challenge the institutional hierarchies among English teachers. My goal was to see how teachers become both the subjects and objects of this established knowledge and practices that assume native English speakers to be better English teachers through a Foucauldian analysis of power. However, once the responses started coming in, I grew dissatisfied with my approach as I realized that the way I shaped this research was founded on the assumption that the structural issues would provide me “one coherent level of explanation.”¹³ Instead, what I had gave me more questions than answers.

Although my research question, theoretical framework, and methodological decisions were shaped primarily by my interaction with the relevant literature and my personal experiences as a former English teacher, and despite the fact that I had carried out a pilot study prior to initiating the actual survey, what I got out of my data by the end of data collection in no ways answered my preconceived research question or fit into the theoretical framework I had planned. I knew that this wasn’t a rare problem, or one that necessarily stemmed from clumsy research, but rather a common occurrence in empirical social science research that has been critiqued by many scholars.¹⁴ What I could have done after this initial failed attempt would be to make

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¹⁴ There are two streams of criticisms I am familiar with: Those who critique the problems related to the empiricism of social science include scholars like Sam Rocha, Elizabeth St. Pierre, Patti Lather, and John Law; those that critique its exclusion and marginalization of Indigenous ways of knowledge include Michael Marker, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, and Shawn Wilson. These are the critiques I am familiar with, yet I do not claim this list to be extensive or inclusive of all critiques of social scientific educational research.
adjustments to my research question so as to fit it to my empirical data and find another theory that I could apply to my revised research. I didn’t take that route. Instead, I wanted to understand why my preconceived tools and methods failed.

To diagnose the problem, I treated the qualitative portion of my data as a narrative that I read exegetically—that is, looking at it without a particular lens, or question in mind and tried to see the nature of the problem. Doing this exercise helped me realize that the problem didn’t inherently lie in the data, the research methods or my novice research skills. As I came to realize, the most obvious problem was with my research question. The question I set out to explore for this research aimed to understand how English teachers in Turkey resist and reinforce the native speaker fallacy\(^\text{15}\), a term that refers to the idealization of the native English speaker in English teaching. Using this term, which I though brilliantly explained the policies, practices and perceptions that lead to differential treatment of English teachers as native and non-native, failed to explain more complicated issues that surfaced in my survey study. The notion that nativeness is the benchmark for better teaching of the target language was one explanation for the privileges that native English speakers tend to enjoy, but it was not the only one.

When asked about their perception of additional benefits such as longer vacations, private insurance, paid airfare and higher salary for native English teachers, participants went above and beyond the quantitative multiple-choice responses. Having elicited the highest number of qualitative responses, teacher responses to these two questions became a point of interest to me. As I tried grouping the responses, I noticed a certain pattern. There were four types of responses that either justified (mostly from native English speakers) or denounced (mostly from non-native

\(^{15}\) This is a term coined by Robert Phillipson in Robert Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism*, 1992.
English speakers) these privileges. One type was supportive of the native speaker fallacy, the notion that native English teachers are more meritorious teachers and by virtue of their acquired linguistic skills, are deserving of such benefits and a higher share when it comes to salaries. Thus, for this first group the underlying principle of the practice was fairness, the proportion of one’s merit to one’s share. The excerpts below from the qualitative responses are samples for this first type of responses:

NS: “we have made sacrifices to be here. My asset is my accent and my experience. That should be compensated and paid at a premium rate”

NS: “being a native speaker is a huge advantage and should be reflected in payment”

Another group justified the practice on the premise of equity, considering the relocation of native English teachers as foreigners to a new country a costly effort that requires compensation through such incentives. Here are some examples of responses from this group:

NS: “one can’t expect to get paid ¼ of a salary in their home country” [referring to exchange rate]

NS: “but I do have obligations eg. Family in England which necessitate more air travel and longer time off”

NS: “Exchange rate, foreign debt, travel obligations, visa costs, translation, language courses and other things make a higher salary necessary for foreigners. I do believe that Turkish teachers are underpaid, but this is more a question of economy (many people are underpaid). I don’t feel qualified to address this accurately.”

A third group seemed reluctant to pick a side in their quantitative responses yet, justified the practice on the premise of law-abidingness in their qualitative responses. For this group, the justification of a higher share was the economic principle of supply and demand. Thus, they didn’t consider this practice unjust as it was in compliance with the broader institutional, national
and global regulations shaped by the market forces, it was how things worked in our current economic structure. Below samples demonstrate this point:

NS: “if you want to hire native speakers, one sometimes has pay more to entice them to relocate and continue to be able to pay their debts in their own country. The only problem we have is the dollar/euro rates becoming outrageous, so the salaries need to be higher”
NS: “it is a very sensitive question. Ideally, payment should be based on competencies rather than other parameters. But in practice, the question of payment is also based on regulations. That is why inconsistencies happen.”
NS: “again, it’s a market thing- do you want them, and do you want the good ones? If yes, offer benefits.”

The final group denounced the practice as a violation of equality and fairness. For this group, the majority of whom are non-native English teachers, such practices that privilege native English teachers are wrong on the premise of equality and fairness. Below excerpts provide some examples:

NS: “That would be unfair towards non-natives and create an unhealthy work atmosphere”
NNS: “we do the same work”
NNS: “payment must be in accordance with your qualifications and not your passport!!”
NNS: “paid airfare is the only benefit they should be able to get if they are away from home, otherwise, equal efforts require equal pay in every sense”
NNS: “although this is done to appease and lure native-speaking teachers to the workplace, I believe in a long run, such discrimination solely based on being a native speaker breeds resentment and unproductivity between native speakers and nonnative speakers”

What seemed to unite these four different types of responses was that they were all built on ideals of justice. Thus, the less obvious, yet I claim, the more important problem appeared to me as the lack of clarity over a preliminary concept that is fundamental to understand power, hierarchy, privilege or oppression in any context. There was a lack of consensus among teachers over the ideals of justice. As stood out to me in the qualitative data, both the teachers who benefit and suffer from the differential recruitment policies referred to justice as the underlying principle
of the practice in question. There seemed to be a dilemma between teachers who believe that ideals of justice require the maintenance of differential recruitment policies and those who believe that the very ideals require eliminating them. Thus, the disagreements among teachers stem not only from the native vs non-native, foreign vs local separation, as I had initially presupposed, but also from differing conceptions of justice among teachers. These disagreements on what just practice means and in what ways justice can be pursued seemed to me as a dilemma that needed to be sorted out, before I could pose any further questions to my empirical data.

1.5. The Arrival: Justice

The different interpretations and understandings of justice, and an inability to reach a collective understanding of justice, pointed me to an interesting conclusion; that justice is a subjective and relativistic concept. Rather than bringing an explanation and a sense of closure, as a conclusion in the conclusive sense may imply, my personal dissatisfaction with this explanation caused a total departure from my initial direction of study. The option to place justice in the realm of relativism and suggest that teachers are free to agree and disagree would allow me to get back into my empirical data to dig more themes out, yet my intellectual curiosity regarding the implications of such an option pointed me in a different direction, to a philosophical study of justice.

One may disagree with the significance I place on the implication of this conclusive remark that suggests justice is relativistic. After all, relativism may be sympathetic to those who consider the middle ground to be a place where conflicts are settled. Yet, in the case of this study, the relativistic approach towards justice that teachers seem to present, rather than resolving the conflict, leads to a level of self-interest that fails to respond to the radical demands inherent to the concept of justice. Self-interest, by favoring the status quo, stands in opposition to
the transformative nature of justice. Thus, placing justice in this self-interested, subjective, and relativistic realm would attribute it a notion of unworldliness and suggest that justice is something we can only aspire to but can never truly achieve. Accepting this notion of a relativist conception of justice would either lead to a nihilistic path that denies justice a worldly space by suggesting that justice is simply too subjective or to much a journey of hope to find an intersection where the subjective and objective are not mutually exclusive. In this study, I take on this hopeful journey to offer a conception of justice that aims to overcome the problem of relativism.

The philosophical challenge arising from the pursuit of justice, in the absence of a collective understanding of its merits, led me into this endeavor to think about the possibility of justice in the plurality, diversity and mobility of people in contemporary societies. Regardless of the degree and pace of the social, political, and economic changes that the world has been going through, a level of commonality remains timeless and unchanging and that is the common world that we inhabit with others. This alone, makes it possible to think of justice on universal terms, on the simple premise that we all aspire to justice, regardless of who we are and what our conception of justice is. This creates a unique dilemma in that the commonality of the aspiration and the particularity of its core components often fall far from each other, failing to meet at some point. Thus, accepting the fact that there will always be disagreements and diversity of opinions on the particulars of justice, is it all too impossible to then think of some universal principles for justice? This is the primary question that this thesis takes on.

One may disagree with the claim that suggests justice is something we all aspire to, by simply pointing to those holding some sort of power (i.e. capital, status, privilege etc.) for whom justice may conflict with their benefits. Thus, this group would not desire justice, as opposed to
my claim. This objection requires a distinction between justice for the self and justice for others. Some people, especially those holding power may be reluctant to serve justice claims of others, yet they wouldn’t wish injustice towards themselves. Thus, what my claim suggests essentially is that everyone desires justice for themselves, yet desiring justice for others isn’t as ubiquitous. I claim that this individual conception of justice in which the person is at the receiving end of justice only, as opposed to being both the receiver and contributor, is what I will be claiming to be the ultimate barrier to justice.

In this thesis, I envision justice to be a language of personhood, one that creates an understanding of firstly what a person is and secondly how a person should live with other persons in a common world. One might think that this implies crafting a set of guidelines that establish certain rules to ensure commonly occupied spaces remain common rather than becoming someone’s private property. Yet, I assert that justice is a less prescriptive concept than a guideline is, as it essentially deals with the complex and unfixed nature of personhood among other persons. This is what makes it a difficult concept to define. Thus, rather than providing a clear definition for justice, in this thesis, I invite the reader to conceptualize justice as a meta-verbal common language that allows one to respond to others in a shared world. Unlike the complexity of human languages for communication, justice should be thought as a language that communicates a single message, which is personhood and one that has one single rule, to not reduce other persons to anything less.

This understanding of justice as a common language, not to communicate anything but to essentially enable living together, requires one to attain certain knowledge, skills, values and dispositions to be able to understand what it means to be a person in spaces where there are persons other than the self, commonly referred to as ‘others’. Thus, in this thesis, I particularize
justice to be an introduction of the person into a world, in which there will be a plurality of persons that require a response to their demand to be fully human. This demand requires that if personhood is at risk of being objectified, or has already been objectified, there is always a possibility of change, that something can be done or undone. This is what the living nature of the world and the possibility of its renewal through human action allows for. In other words, justice communicates persons that we are responsible subjects rather than helpless objects and there is always an option, a hope to renew the world through human action so that we can all be persons sharing one big living space.

To guide the reader in this particular way of thinking about justice as a common language, I propose a conception of justice based on certain human universals such as personhood, responsibility, and action. What makes these concepts human universals, elements common to all humans across cultures, continents, and different time periods, and how they become enablers of justice is the main undertaking of this thesis.\(^\text{16}\) I claim that justice, as much as it is an ideal, one that resides in our conception, is also a reality, one that we can create with what we already have, despite our differences. It is my claim that justice is a much closer reality than we imagine, as its core components are all in our possession.

Throughout this thesis, I argue for my claim that justice is essentially a personal responsibility for action. Thus, I set personhood, responsibility, and action as concepts that make a collective understanding of justice possible. My claim follows that these enablers of justice that are universal to all humans are disproportionally curbed by disablers of justice such as

\(^{16}\) I am sympathetic to an immediate objection that those concepts I claim to be universals, particularly responsibility and action, may not exactly be common for all humans either due to developmental or natural reasons. This is an objection that I address in the coming chapters, so my request from the reader is to hold this objection till the relevant chapters.
individualism, fear, greed, and a departure from imagination. These human-made barriers before justice are universal human issues that become shackles preventing access to a full picture of reality, and a unified conception of justice. Education in this particular sense, one that cultivates personhood, the ability to respond and act will be offered in the conclusion chapter as a binding element that holds the individual concepts of my claim together.

Grounding this study on my conception of justice as a personal responsibility for action, I isolate my concepts to make those familiar words slightly strange in this thesis. This isolation aims to clarify my premises and break down my claim into smaller chunks to be built back at the end of each chapter. Thus, each chapter, more or less, follows a similar progression: a definition of the concept, how it differs from seemingly similar concepts and how it ties to justice. The second chapter provides an introduction to a Turkish concept of justice. As a part of the historical approach I claim to take in this study, the particular resources and concepts that are indigenous to the context of this research will be introduced here and the unorthodox approach that I take towards the progression of ideas and concepts across the ancient, medieval, modern trio will be defended. In the third chapter, titled “Personal vs Individual,” I will make an argument for a distinction between the two terms; personal and individual which are often used interchangeably in daily language. This distinction will be crucial as it will position personhood at the center of justice, in direct opposition to individuality. In the fourth chapter titled “Responsibility,” I offer a particular conception of this word as an ability to respond to others and argue that this universal ability is in potential danger of extinction under increasing fear and greed that has begun to replace the virtue of justice in modern societies. In the fifth chapter titled “Action,” I will use Arendt’s conception of action as an ability to start something new and promote ways to combine action in theory with action in praxis as a potential challenge standing
before acting justly. Finally, in the sixth and the concluding chapter, I will explore how education can offer a re-orientation for our present vision of justice that has been blurred by individuality, an inability to respond to others and inaction. This chapter will offer the explicitly educational solutions to the problems that arose from some of the objections to my main claim will be discussed.
CHAPTER 2. A TURKISH CONCEPT OF JUSTICE

2.1. Justice as a Circle

In this short chapter, I will introduce the two major Turkish sources that are used as reference throughout this thesis. The first one is a book called Kutadgu Bilig. It is the earliest body of Islamic Turkish literature written in the 11th century in Karakhanid, or Middle Turkish, a language that is quite foreign to modern Turkish. In the form of a didactic poem mixed with allegorical stories, the author/poet Yusuf Khass Hajib, meditates on the meaning of the human life with regards to the bigger circles, in which it exists such as the community, the state and the broader universe, during a time of unrest in Central Asia amongst Mongolian and Turkic tribes.17 The concept of justice as a circle, which has been a major influence in Turkish moral and political philosophy has its grounds rooted in Hajib’s Kutadgu Bilig.18

The second resource that would be considered an early modern work is from the Ottoman jurist Kinalizade Ali Celebi and his book titled Ahlak-i Alai. The book is the first work of moral philosophy written in Ottoman Turkish, as opposed to many earlier works produced in Persian (i.e. Tusi’s Ahlaq-i Nasiri or Nasirean Ethics) and Arabic (i.e. Al-Ghazali’s Revival of the Religious Sciences), a lack perceived to be important by Kinalizade who was fluent in all three.19

17 Resit Rahmetli Arat, Kutadgu Bilig, Vol. I. (Ankara: T.D.K., 1947), xxv. I would like to note that Resit Rahmeti Arat, the founder of Turkish Studies as an academic and scholarly area of research, is the first translator of Kutadgu Bilig into modern Turkish. I have used his translation in tandem with the English translation by Robert Dankoff. For practicality, the Dankoff’s English translation is used for direct quotations throughout the thesis. The full title of Dankoff’s translated book is Wisdom of Royal Glory (Kutadgu Bilig): A Turco-Islamic Mirror for Princes, yet, I will be using the shorthand and the original form Kutadgu Bilig when making references to the book.


Contrary to *Kutadgu Bilig*, an English translation for *Ahlak-i Alai* is presently not available to my knowledge. Therefore, the references made to this book will be a translation of mine. What sets Kinalizade’s work apart from the preceding works of ethics besides the language is his use of the concept of justice as a circle for the first time.\(^{20}\) That’s why an understanding of this conception of justice that is essential to Middle Eastern political thought will be useful in the introduction to establish the basis for the later references made to the concept and the sources from which the concept emerged. This section will give a broad understanding of the earliest conceptions of justice in the region as well as establishing a foundation for the formation of my claim that forms the backbone of this study. My goal in this chapter is to provide a basic understanding of the concept of justice as a circle, while introducing my resources that are indigenous to Turkey.\(^{21}\) More specific connections of these Turkish sources to my claim will be made in each chapter that follows.

There are two reasons why bringing a Turkish account of justice is necessary. The first and likely the most obvious one is the fact that the questions that shaped this study appeared at an educational site in Turkey. Yet, besides the geographical sensitivities and contextual concerns there is a second equally important reason to include a regional account of justice, which is to


\(^{21}\) One may question what is meant by the phrase “indigenous to Turkey,” given the fact that the first resource *Kutadgu Bilig* was written by Yusuf Khas Hajib, who composed this work in Kasghar, in Central Asia prior to the invasion of Karakhanids, a Turkic tribe, by Mongolia. Thus, what makes this book Turkish is much less defined by a shared geography but more so by a shared language family and to some extent culture. As the translator of the book Dankoff suggests, the medieval Turkish that the *Kutadgu Bilig* was written in is the same language with the origins of the present-day Turkish language which is traced back to the inscriptions on the monoliths in Orkhon Valley in present-day Mongolia. Within the book, there are several references to Turkish mythology through mythic characters and to Turkish proverbs. For more information see: Yūsuf, khāṣṣ-hājib, *Wisdom of Royal Glory (Kutadgu Bilig): A Turko-Islamic Mirror for Princes*, trans. Robert Dankoff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983): 1.
offer an alternative to the Eurocentric conception of historiography that assumes a linear transmission of ideas from ancient Greece, Rome to Western Europe. In this introductory section, I will claim that the ancient Greek wisdom had as much effect on the eastern political thought, as it did in the West by underscoring the Greek elements in the Turkish conception of justice, drawing parallels with Plato and Aristotle when necessary.

Before I begin, I would like to offer a window to an often-neglected fact that contributes to the assumption of a westward moving Greek influence. The Roman Empire, as the successor of ancient Greek wisdom, wasn’t a unified Westward moving entity. Although a strictly Eurocentric periodization marks the beginning of Middle Ages with the “fall of the Roman Empire” in 476 B.C., the phrase “fall of Rome”, in and of itself, is an inaccurate one as it presumes a single unified Roman Empire, dismissing its split into two as Eastern and Western Rome in the 3rd century. As a matter of fact, the Eastern Roman Empire, also known as the Byzantine, hadn’t fallen by that time. Technically, the Roman Empire continued to rule until 1453, until losing its capitol, Constantinople, to the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, a non-Western European account of the Medieval Ages, if it were to be marked by ‘fall of Rome’, would be 15th century as opposed to 5th century and its successor would be the Ottoman Empire, present-day Turkey.

What I am suggesting by the brief historical overview above is that it was not only the Western, Hellenized countries that carried and continued the ancient Greek wisdom. As one of the most prominent medieval Islamic and Jewish historians Shelomo Goitein reminds us, with the spread of Islam in the present-day Middle East, the philosophical remnants of Greeks were studied, translated, elaborated and further systematized by Islamic scholars such as Averroes,
Avicenna, Alpharabius and many more. The two Turkish sources that I will introduce in this section, and will reference throughout this thesis, demonstrate the presence of Greek influence in the region, by offering a middle ground to the conflicts between the Aristotelean and Platonic accounts of justice by carrying aspects of both to create a uniquely Turkish perception of justice.

2.2. Kutadgu Bilig

The first of these works is *Kutadgu Bilig*, written in 1069 by Yusuf Khas Hajib in Karakhanid Turkish. The title of the book can be literally translated into English as ‘Wisdom of Happiness’ and it consists of advice for the rulers and the ruled to achieve happiness in both worlds through four symbolic characters: the king Rising Sun representing justice, his vizier Full Moon representing the state, the vizier’s son Highly Praised representing wisdom and Wide Awake, a relative of the vizier representing destiny, in the form of didactic poem and allegorical dialogue. The significance of the book is that it is the first written text composed in Turkish following the adoption of Islam among the nomadic Turkic tribes and is considered the foundation of the Turkish moral and political philosophy.

As suggested by the hierarchy of the four characters depicted in the book, the king represents the highest virtue that is essential to the state, which is justice. In the Turkish political tradition, justice is always directly related to governance, which can be traced back to *Kutadgu Bilig*. Hajib establishes strong links between justice and governance and describes them as contingent, thereby making the earliest theorization of justice as a circle. Justice, according to

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Hajib, is both the pre-requisite and the outcome of governance and its maintenance. Just like a circle, governance has a beginning and an end that eventually merge in the same point: justice.

The way Hajib writes about the conception of justice is as follows:

"Troops are needed to maintain the state, and wealth is needed to pay the troops; a prosperous people is needed to attain this wealth; and for the people to be prosperous, you must make just rules. If any one of these is lacking, all four are left behind; and when this occurs, princely rule disintegrates."

According to this view, an ideal state is composed of three elements: the troops (the soldiers), economic prosperity (the people), and justice (the ruler). Each of these groups need to do what is required of their duty in this political and social order for the smooth running of the state. In this sense, the circular justice model is similar to the Platonic state in which everyone does what they are best at, without meddling with others’ business. The cooperation of the persons and their acknowledgement of their part in a bigger whole is the point that connects the ideal state of Plato to that of Hajib’s. Yet, unlike the philosopher kings of Plato, who are envisioned to be one big family, the ruler in Hajib’s account is one person who is expected to make and apply just laws to govern the cooperation of troops and the people. This is the point where an argument for Aristotelean influence can be made. Aristotle’s conception of justice as law-abidingness serves to match one’s merit to her share in a certain proportion. Hajib seems to offer a middle ground for these two ancient accounts. For Hajib, justice is not a result of social

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25 In Book III, in dialogue with Socrates, one of the characters, Adeimantus says: “For this reason then, only in such a state as this shall we find that a shoemaker is a shoemaker and not a ship’s captain in addition to his shoemaking; and that a farmer is a farmer and not a juryman in addition to his farming; and again that a trained soldier is engaged in warfare and not in commerce in addition to his fighting; and the same sort of thing applies to everyone else, doesn’t it?” Plato, *Republic*, 267.

26 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 257. To clarify, this is the definition he offers for a particular way of justice he calls distributive justice.
order, but it is the raison d’etre of political organization. Similar to Plato, a social cooperation model is necessary yet, not enough. There is still a need for just laws to ensure that the stratified model does not lead to the oppression of one group. Thus, laws become an essential aspect of promoting justice by serving to bring limits to the ruler’s authority and protect the people and the troops from injustice.

2.3. Ahlak-i Alai

The second Turkish source to analyze the concept of justice is the 16th century Ottoman jurist Kinalizade Ali Celebi’s Ahlak-i Alai. What makes this book quite significant for the later Ottoman and, by and large Middle Eastern political philosophy, is its completion of the concept of justice as a circle by adding onto its initial conception by Hajib in Kutadgu Bilig. As a matter of fact, Kinalizade is considered to be the first one to use the term “circle” to describe the concept of justice, which he happened to have written in an actual circle.27 The concept became widely accepted in Middle Eastern political culture and has been adapted and used both in politics and literature.28 Here is my translation of the eight steps that describe justice as a circle.

Justice is what provides the order, salvation and well-being of the world.
The world is a garden, and its wall is the state.
What brings order to the state is God’s law.
God’s law is administration, governed by the ruler’s authority.
The ruler’s authority can be ensured by the army.
The army are soldiers that require money.
Money is revenue, gathered by the people.
What governs people is the justice of the ruler.29


29 The only translation of Kinalizade’s work I encountered is the translation of these eight lines that describe the circular notion of justice as follows: “There can be no royal authority without the military. There can be no military without wealth. The subjects produce the wealth. Justice preserves the subjects’ loyalty to the sovereign. Justice
As can be seen, Kinalizade further detailed Hajib’s conception of justice by adding God’s law as the common guide for administrative rule, justifying the Islamic notion of governance that the ruler gets his authority directly from God. Apart from this addition, he remained loyal to the basics of Hajib’s just state that requires social cooperation among the people (through revenue), the army (through protection) and the ruler (through justice). The circular notion of governance that begins and ends with justice, also remains intact.

Kinalizade’s account differs from Hajib’s in its systematization. He goes in further detail to explain the instrumental role that people play in the society through their different skills and abilities. In this sense, he gets even closer to the Platonic social order. In line with the Islamic philosopher Alpharabius, Kinalizade bases the ideal state on the ancient belief that the world stands on the ultimate balance of four essential elements: fire (hot and dry), water (cold and wet), air (hot and wet), and earth (cold and dry). Similar to these four elements shaping the existence of the world, people according to Kinalizade, can be categorized into four groups in line with their nature. The first group is what Kinalizade refers as “men of knowledge”. This is the group whose occupation requires a good grasp of arts and sciences and are represented by water. The second group is those who are good at combat, those who can use their sword masterfully, and are represented by fire. The third group is traders and laborers who through buying and selling provide the needs of the society, represented by air. The final group is the farmers who due to their work on the soil to grow things and feed the population are represented by earth.

requires harmony in the world. The world is a garden it’s walls are the state. The Holy Law (shariah) orders the state. There is no support for the shariah, except through the royal authority” in Cornell Fleisher, “Royal Authority”, Journal of Asian and African Studies XVIII 18, no. 3 (1983): 201.

30 Kinalizade, Ahlak-i Alai, 446-447.
31 Ibid., 447.
Reminiscent of Platonic state, in which the harmonious co-existence of distinct groups through social and economic cooperation paves the way for justice, Kinalizade suggests that this interdependence model in which everyone does what they are best able to is the foundation from which justice can spring. Yet, unlike Plato, Kinalizade attributes a pivotal role to the ruler in the actualization of justice. Therefore, for Kinalizade, just like Hajib, having a social order is necessary but not enough to attain justice. The ruler needs to ensure that these four groups are treated justly by making just laws.

What is meant by ‘treated justly’ is ensuring that each group gets their share with regards to the role they fill in the society. Assigning worth or deciding what one deserves is a rather subjective and moral concern. Yet, as this particular source comes from an Islamic scholar, it is fair to say that the criteria used in the determination of what one deserves is based on the concept of what is good and beneficial from an Islamic point of reference. One particular point that Kinalizade highlights is avoiding differential treatment for the people with the same occupation.\textsuperscript{32} Thus, justice across the stratified social groups as well as justice within them seems to be a major concern of the ruler to ensure the maintenance of his authority and governance.

One way that Kinalizade suggests the ruler ensures justice both within and across these groups is to be visible to the people by being attentive to their problems, creating spaces where people can complain if they perceive some type of injustice. Thus, justice becomes a continuous effort that is always sought after, rather than something that can be established once and for all. A circle concept of justice required not only creating the ideal environment for justice to prosper through the social cooperation model, but it also included making just laws and attending to people’s claims of oppression, in other words, responding to people and their call for justice.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 454.
2.4. Influence on the Formation of the Claim

Three principles stand out to me from this Turkish concept of justice that helped shape my claim. The first one is that justice is a concept of plurality, and thus cannot or should not be thought of in singularity. It is required for any human organization and requires an understanding of being a part of a bigger whole, whether that whole be a society, a nation, a community, a group of workers, or broadly a common world. Without having a conception of this relationality, justice is reduced to subjective, unachievable and relativist concept that exists subjectively for everyone. This concept of justice in plurality ties into the first part of my claim that places justice in the person rather than the individual. What it means to seek justice as a person in connection with a common world and how it differs from the modern individualistic notions around justice will be further discussed in the third chapter titled “Personal vs Individual.”

Another point that I reached is that justice is not something that can be established once and for all through an ideal state or just laws. Establishing just laws is surely the foundation of a just society, yet the dynamic element of society and the historical conundrum to which we are born may require further attention to how laws interact with people. This is not to suggest that laws shouldn’t be trusted or discarded all together. On the contrary, laws are absolutely necessary to establish a foundational notion of justice and to avoid chaos, but justice shouldn’t be reduced to outcome of laws only. What I am suggesting is thinking of justice not as an event or an outcome but a continuous process, always there and happening. In light of its continuous nature, treating justice, or its opposite injustice, as singular events that just happen at a particular time and place would be a mistake. One way to look at the formalization of justice through legal documentation or attaching its presence solely to existing laws is similar to the reduction of education to schooling. The former is broad, timeless and all encompassing, while the latter is
bound by time, place, and particular institutional contexts. Thinking of justice as something alive, living, and present requires a level of sensitivity on our side to respond to its claim of existence through others. This helped shaped my thinking of justice as the ability to respond to calls of personhood of those that surround us. This argument for justice as a personal responsibility is explained and further developed in chapter four “Responsibility.”

Finally, in line with responsibility, this active presence of justice as a process rather than an event demands our active involvement in it. Responding to the other’s personhood could make their potential claims for justice and barriers before it visible. Yet, besides demanding our attention, justice also demands an action from us. Through the social relations we form, we begin to shape, rather than merely be shaped by social processes. Then, through the communities we engage with we can all find ways to refuse participating in unjust practices and stand against injustices, even when they are legally justified. However, there are certain restrictions that limit our ability to believe that we do have the power to affect these social processes. This normalization of injustices, the barriers that block our ability to act will be the main topic of the fifth chapter, “Action.”
CHAPTER 3. PERSONAL VS INDIVIDUAL

“Do not feel lonely, the entire universe is inside you.”
- Rumi

3.1. I am both the Puzzle and the Puzzle Piece

I am more than me, part of a bigger whole, part and a bigger whole. I tend to introduce myself the same way anybody is expected to introduce herself these days: by my given name, where I am from and what my occupation is, usually in this respective order. All these seemingly superficial aspects of myself that I show to others are in fact very personal details about how I relate to this world. My given name tells a story about my family, who made an active choice of giving me the name I claim today causing a vehement argument among my extended family, every single one of whom had a different name in mind for me. It also, as all Turkish names do, tells a story to the curious mind about my county and its artistic imagination.33 I see the happiness mixed with awe typical of people from my country encountering one another abroad in the faces of other Turkish students when I say that I am from Turkey. Others may not think of it as a detail worthy of attention. My occupation as a student, with this intellectual pursuit of a master’s degree, a continent away from my home, is a journey that I made the decision to set out on, knowing that this decision would spark new entanglements, new relations and new communities that I will become part of and will become part of me.

33 Ebru is a traditional Turkish art form done by painting on water. The paints float on water instead of dissolving due to the added ox gall, which allows an increase in the viscosity of the water used as surface. Sharp brushes are used to shape the circular floating paints and transferred to paper for durability. The art form quite imaginatively plays with the contradictions of ephemerality and permanence through water, an element usually used for washing away paint rather than holding it in. The image created on water becomes irreversible once it is transferred on paper and left to dry. Each design is unique even though the same technique or pattern is used, it can never be reproduced.
This is what personhood is to me, a dialectical assembly, one that resembles a multi-dimensional jigsaw puzzle containing, and contained by, many pieces. The image I have in mind is a puzzle that is shaped as a puzzle piece, so it is both the part and the whole, at the same time. So is a person. Containing both a part and a whole, a person forms a dialectical relationship between the two. As human persons, we both contain and are contained by other puzzle pieces that have the same shape, yet different forms. What we have in common with the other puzzle pieces is that they each contain in themselves their own pieces, just like we do, but also that when we come together we use the distinctness of our forms to co-create a common, unified image that can be perceived only when we interlock. Thus, when we start building these relations with other pieces, the random motifs, patterns, and shapes that are inscribed on us, as puzzle pieces, begin to make sense and an image of commonality appears. We begin to understand how our similar shapes and unique forms come together. Our existence extends us, and it makes the synchronous co-existence of the part and the whole possible.

3.2. Public Person

Let me now bring my attention back to the puzzle piece. The piece that contains and contained by other pieces requires an understanding of containment. As human persons, we contain in ourselves other people, places, experiences and ancestry. We carry these in different shapes and forms, some are contained in our genetic make-up, others in varying depths of our memory, some in our personality, ways of expressing being such as thinking, acting and speaking. When born into this world, all these previous entanglements carry forward and are added on as we move through life. Thus, we, as human persons, are formed through a process of

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34 The shape of a puzzle piece refers to the uniform image of a rectangular piece with round tabs and gaps on its sides. The form of a puzzle piece, on the other hand, refers to the unique location and orientation of the gaps and tabs, as well as the colors and images that make each piece differ from the other.
addition, not subtraction. Despite the inescapable change and movement that allows the world to renew itself, nothing gets subtracted from the person. The space and degree of containment may vary yet once we contain, it is once and for all.

One might rightfully counteract this lack of subtraction that I claim on the personhood by suggesting the human capacity to forget. This counter argument would force me to clarify what I mean by containment. I use this word ‘to contain’ not in a strictly material or physical sense in which a person, event or experience exists by taking up space in the material world. Rather, it refers to a containment in the metaphysical sense, one that extends beyond concrete material presence. Although the person, the event, or experience may cease to exist either physically in the world or subjectively in the memory of the person in-relation by forgetting, this ceasing to exist doesn’t mean ceasing to be contained. This is the immortality I attribute to the human person through its capacity to contain. Containment is eternal as the interpretive relations we form with these persons, experiences, events do become a part of us which is irrelevant to our forgetting or remembering them.

What I am suggesting is that the people, places, and experiences are ephemeral in their worldliness in contrast to the immortality of the personhood, which through its containment brings durability to the world. All these aspects of our personhood that shaped us are simultaneously shaping our present and future interrelations within the world. The German social psychologist Erich Fromm points to this dialectical process in the following lines:

But man (sic) is not only made by history--history is made by man (sic). The solution of this seeming contradiction constitutes the field of social psychology. Its task is to show not only how passions, desires, anxieties change and develop as a result of the social process,
but also how man’s (sic) energies thus shaped into specific forms in their turn become productive forces, moulding the social process.\textsuperscript{35}

Thus, our distinctness as human persons stem from the various interrelations that we contain and are contained by. It is rooted in this intersubjective relationship, bearing resemblance, in this manner, to ebru art. Every work of ebru contains the same materials such as water, ox gall, paints, paper, and brushes yet, they are all distinct in the various ways paints interact with each other, or the way the brush hits the paint differently. However, distinctness of each ebru work of art is rooted, in a way, in its commonality with other ebru works in that they use common materials, patterns, and motifs. Yet, this commonality always results in distinctness in a very particular way. As a part containing the whole, each ebru art contains in itself, the common colors, patterns, and motifs, elements that make the wholeness of ebru art, which are still visible in the finished work that is unique, irreversible and inimitable. Its distinctness come from the distinct relationships formed between the brush and the paint, the hand and the brush, paint and paint, paint and water, water and paper. The intersubjective relations of these commonalities define the uniqueness of each piece. The co-existence of commonality (what contains me) and uniqueness (what I contain) is vividly present in the human person. This quality to contain and be contained that is unique to the person through its multi-layered connections to the world, past and present, is what makes the person a public being.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{35} Fromm, \textit{Fear of Freedom}, 10. I would like to note that some of my resources including this one, do not present a gender inclusive language. I remained loyal to the original wording but marked it with ‘(sic)’ when such language appeared throughout the thesis.

\textsuperscript{36} Rocha talks about publicness of the person in the \textit{Folk Phenomenology}. He suggests: “Indeed, without a public conception of the human person there is no sense to imagining politics or anything public at all.” Samuel D. Rocha, \textit{Folk Phenomenology}, 92.
The notion of publicness of the person has its roots in the philosophical traditions of phenomenology and personalism. Phenomenology, in its most basic description, refers to the study of appearances and to define personalism in the same brevity, I will use Rocha’s words: “the sacredness and dignity of the person and the need to protect it from being depersonalized through objectification.” Thus, personalism can be thought as a reaction against the reductionist and dehumanizing conceptions of the human person such as individualism or totalitarianism. These two reductionist approaches to personhood seek to conceive of person only as a complete whole or only as a part of something bigger, failing to see that being a part and a whole is not mutually exclusive to the human person. Hannah Arendt, a prominent political thinker that claims neither of these titles of a phenomenologist or personalist, nor that of a philosopher, combines the aspects of these two traditions in a masterful way through the concept of natality. Natality, a term coined from its Latin origin, nātālis, means being born in the literal sense. In a descriptive sense, it refers to making an appearance in a common world as a subject that is central to it, rather than an object that is secondary in its relations to it. According to Arendt, persons by being born into a world that pre-exists them (and will outlive them) become public beings.

The common world is what we enter when we are born and what we leave behind when we die. It transcends our life-span into past and future alike; it was there before we came and will outlast our brief sojourn in it. It is what we have in common not only with those

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37 The idea that personalism is a philosophical movement or tradition is not one that is embraced by all philosophers who seem to work within that field. For a reference to different approaches to its categorization within the philosophical canon across Mournier, Lacroix and Maritain, See: Juan Manuel Burgos’s book An Introduction to Personalism.


who live with us, but also with those who were there before and with those who will come after us.\textsuperscript{40}

By being born into a world that already exists and is happening makes the person a part of a wider circle, the co-habitants of this shared world. The extent of this sharing extends a person’s physical appearance in the present. The historical conundrum to which one joins at one point creates the possibility to construct a different future. This only makes the human person the center, the whole that is capable of impact. One that is not only shaped by the worldly relations but an active agent in shaping them. Without these interrelated connections and commonalities, it is not possible to think of personhood and it is certainly not possible to have a conception of public without a notion of a common world.

3.3. Non-public Person: The Individual

In opposition to the public person, stands the non-public person, an oxymoron, the individual. Individuality is the product of the modern attempt to privatize the person by its separation from the public, in other words, it is the loss of the person. Essential to the understanding of this departure from personhood to individuality is a limited understanding of freedom that emerged in the modern capitalist society, in which individualism is pitched against all state interference as a self-sufficient and self-dependent, particularly in the ascendency of late capitalism. One of the strongest critiques of this type of freedom comes from Erich Fromm and his analysis of the dual nature of freedom as both positive and negative, as opposed to inherently and unquestionably positive.\textsuperscript{41} Fromm claims that people’s search for \textit{freedom from} the “traditional bonds of medieval society” as authorities that govern their relations to external

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 55.

\textsuperscript{41} Fromm, \textit{Fear of Freedom}, 221.
world, ultimately led to a loss of a particular type of freedom—one that allows them to actualize themselves. In an attempt to escape the authorities that mediate their relations, persons of modernity sought the *freedom to* face the world alone, without any intermediary power, meanwhile creating new authorities to which they would submit, believing that this new self-made authority would be more liberating than those of the previous era. This type of freedom in this negative sense, has led to two interrelated levels of alienation. The first one is the most implicit one, in which people become alienated to their own ‘selves’. Becoming a competitor in a race to increase capital, in which their personal desires, wishes and purpose of life has to be adjusted with regards to those of the capitalist economy, an individual exists only as a consumer or producer, simply anything “but the concrete human being with all his (sic) emotional, intellectual, and sensuous potentialities.” This has led to a difficulty of separation of one’s own desires, purposes and wishes from those of the market economy. Being molded into this system of production and consumption, people lost the means to stop and remember that this process has once been shaped by their very own selves.

The second more explicit type of alienation that this negative freedom created is the individual’s alienation from a common world and a subsequent move from a collective vision to an individual one. This notion of an individual as a rootless, thus free entity, reduced down to a collector and protector of goods, is initially what led to the transformation of the public realm. Once being a space where a person appears as a political being of choice, public realm has

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42 Although Fromm in *Fear of Freedom*, 89, clearly refers to the feudal state and the church as the traditional bonds of medieval society, the Islamic correspondence of this would be the state and the Imam (Sunni Islamic use of the word differs from the Shia use, latter referring specifically to the descendants of the prophet while former refers to any ruler holding the religious community together), caliph, or sultan as the pastoral ruler, one that guides not only political affairs but moral and religious ones as well.

43 Ibid., 94.
evolved into a space where individuals have to pass through to accumulate their goods, without much choice to do otherwise. In the Athenian polis, as a place of politics, public nature of the city signified a place of connection or political organization that grants one the right to speech, to \textit{be more}, to make a choice or have a say in a common vision for the future. Today, public has become rather a space that only regulates the right to \textit{have more} for the individual.

This sole purpose of \textit{having more} arising from an individualistic, rather than a collective pursuit of freedom, blocks the peripheral vision of people to see those whom they share this common world with. This is the very process of a person being separated from personhood through dehumanization. The most obvious historical processes that demonstrate the extent to which this dehumanization can go are some of the most inhumane practices of the near past, namely slavery and colonialization. Both these practices emerged from the search of an individualistic vision of freedom to \textit{have more}, reducing the other, anything that is beyond the peripheral vision of the self, to less than human. Today, even the societies that take pride in their advanced democracies operate within this very system of historical exploitation. Although many people today wouldn’t hesitate to reject any moral or ethical affiliation with them, very few indeed would make the connection with this very system to be the same one that has been built on these most profound injustices. Thus, they would eagerly carry on serving every single day with the same mentality-\textit{to have more}. Can we truly be safe today from such seemingly distant histories that were once brutal realities for those whom we share this world while remaining loyal to its foundation of \textit{having more}? More importantly, can the rugged individualist who is deeply ahistorical, disconnected from herself and the communal world with no peripheral vision beyond her material self even be expected to conceive of the word “justice,” let alone pursue it?
The following section will explore the implications of this loss of personhood with the rise of individuality from a justice perspective.

3.4. Personal Justice

The move from the interconnectedness of personhood to the individual in its singularity has also changed the concept of justice, making it the pursuit of an individual who is unrooted, singular and has the right to be free from all the restraints on the actualization of her desires. The rise of the individual in the modern society created a singular sense of justice that is understood as the protection of the individual rights from any outside restraints to seek one’s own interests.44 In contemporary societies, those that have functional legislative systems, justice is believed to be rooted in legislation and, guaranteed through legal agreements. Yet, this idea of law-abidingness as a pre-requisite for a just society, one in which every individual is subject to the same laws defined by their countries is not a modern invention. It is rooted in the Aristotelian notion of distributive justice in which unlawfulness is equated to injustice in a particular sense. He defines what he calls this particular justice as matching individuals with a share, proportional to what they deserve.45 Thus, being granted what one deserves to have, not more or less, became the definition of justice that is widely embraced by contemporary modern societies.

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44 This is a view that has been endorsed through the works of Ayn Rand as well. The idea that through rational processes, individuals can discover their desires and potentially actualize them objectively, without being shaped by external social processes, is against the complex nature of personhood that is not entirely made up of rationale but also of feelings, intuitions, and experiences. As Charles Taylor suggests the notion that a person is the agent of objective goals of the self is far from reality as he writes: “man (sic) is also a being to whom things happen, to whom things occur, who sees, hears and feels. There is a genus of human activities in which what happens to us, or what we simply observe, is given human meaning for us, not changed for our purposes, but taken in, understood, interpreted.” Charles Taylor, “The Agony of Economic Man” in Essays on the Left, 234.

45 Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 265-257.
Aristotle’s account of justice widely contrasted with the ideas of his predecessor Plato whose work *The Republic* is considered to be one of the most fundamental books written on the idea of justice, yet it is also one that stands in such stark contrast to our contemporary understanding of it. Plato’s imagination of what an ideal state is, in the war-torn Athenian city-state, is widely criticized first and foremost for the hierarchical stratification model he offered in which everyone does what they are best suited to do by nature. Thus, the ideal society in a Platonic sense, is the one in which the shoemakers are occupied with shoe making only, doctors treat illnesses, and philosophers rule. This ‘do what you are best able to’ model may be quite foreign to a modern mind, in which human potential is seemingly restricted by nature. Yet, I believe the modern rejection of Plato’s notion of justice as an outright undemocratic and totalitarian one results in missing the uniquely humanizing ideas that are present in the book. In its essence, Platonic justice exists in a dialectic in which a just state cannot alone secure justice, unless the people living in it are just themselves. This is a point that most of the liberal critiques of Plato overlook: that justice for Plato, is not a consequence of laws designed by a few, as in the case of both Aristotellean and modern domestic laws, but rather one that follows the intentional cooperation of all. Platonic justice gave people a greater space for experiencing justice first-hand by cultivating it internally, rather than expecting it passively to emerge from their law-abidingness. Thus, Plato located justice first in, not outside, the person. This active participation in justice, rather than a passive consumption of it is what I find uniquely brilliant about *The Republic*.

The role of the person in the actualization of justice, goes back to my initial argument that the human person is part and the whole at the same time. The conception of justice at an individual level as ‘getting what one deserves’ is quite narrow because it views the person only
as a whole, a completion in and of itself, overlooking its connection to the world she shares with others. The dismissal of the location of the person in the world as a social being, in relation to other inhabitants, with its past, present and future provides a reduced understanding of a person, and justice. Instead, the notion that a person is both a part and a whole would give a more accurate account of justice as it views human relations in the interrelatedness of the person to the common world as a part of it, not apart from it. In order to demonstrate this conception more clearly, let’s think about interpreting a historical event. In order to make sense of a historical event we need to think of it in relation to its social and historical context. Separating it from those contexts that created it and evaluating it in its singularity would confuse us and provide a very inaccurate understanding of the event. The same reasoning applies to conceptualizing the person. In order to think about justice for the person, we need to think about the person in the context where she exists; that is the common world.

3.5. A Turkish Concept of Personal Justice

Islamic thought that began to dominate the Mediterranean to the south and to the east offered a conception of person as a whole and a part in the common world. In the Islamic thought, a person is born into an existing order to which she contributes through her acts and her speech. In Islamic understanding, justice is placed first and foremost inside the human person. A person is one that is created justly through the justice of god. Once born into this world, it is the person’s responsibility to retain that balance into which she is born. Thus, justice in this sense is retaining one’s internal balance and the balance of the common world, one that only a person in connection to a world can do. If this internal balance goes awry, then vices begin to take place in

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46 Holy Quran 82/7, “Who created you, proportioned you, and balanced you?”

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the common world. Thus, an act of vice, such as stealing, would be considered an injustice not only to the victim from whom a good is stolen, but an injustice that the perpetuator commits towards herself and towards the common world by harming social relations, leading to fear and seclusion.

This notion of a natural world order pre-dates the spread of Islam. In fact, the appearance of Turkey in world history is traced back to Turkic tribes escaping Mongolian invasions. These nomadic groups from central Asia would later make Anatolia their home and Islam their religion during the Abbasid dynasty in mid-8th century BC. Prior to their adaption of Islam, the nomadic tribes had a belief system known as Tengrism, originating from the Mongolian word tengri, which means sky.\textsuperscript{47} Carrying aspects of shamanism, tengrism considered god to be an occupant of the sky, a symbol of eternity. This belief system fits quite well into the nomadic lifestyle which led to a lack in the nomads’ notion of place as a stable and defined entity. Rather, the belief that god resides in the sky, reminiscent of the ancient Greek gods except for the plurality, created a sense of belonging to wherever they went, as the sky would be the only thing that remains present regardless of any change. In Turkish creation mythology, the first things that were created in the world were the sky and the land, followed by the human species and their rulers, known as kagan.\textsuperscript{48} This co-creation accounts for both the human being and its political nature and corresponds to the need to be ruled to achieve a sense of order, in the constantly

\textsuperscript{47} This early religion of Sky-God is expressed in the earliest Turkish transcriptions known as Orkhun Inscriptions in the form of two square monoliths in present day Mongolia. The translation of these inscriptions into English were made by the Danish linguist and Turkologist Vilhelm Thomsen in 1896. For the mention of Sky-God religion in this translation see: E. Denison Ross and Vilhelm Thomsen, “The Orkhon Inscriptions: Being a Translation of Professor Vilhelm Thomsen's Final Danish Rendering,” \textit{Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, University of London} 5, no. 4 (1930): 864.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 865.
changing landscapes, climates and territories to which the nomads need to adjust. The infinity of the sky compensates for the lack of a city-state, one that is defined by its borders and sets the belief that the commonality of the sky becomes the tent under which the tribe lives, imagining the world to be one big home, the roof of which is the sky.

The commonality of perception of a higher world order in a moral sense, alongside other factors, made it easier for the Turkish tribes to adopt Islam as their religion. The first major body of work that came out of the Turkish-Islamic symbiosis is Yusuf Has Hajib’s *Kutadgu Bilig*. This belief in a higher moral order to the world becomes evident in the use of fire and water as metaphors to define justice and injustice in the following lines: “A wise man has said that unjust rulers never rule for long. Injustice is a blazing fire which burns whatever it comes near. And justice is water that brings forth blessing wherever it flows.”49 The conception of injustice in the form of fire is a reference to its far-reaching impact. As a blazing fire would spread from one tree to another uncontrollably, similarly injustice is perceived to be an act of destruction of an existing world order that affects not one but many. Meanwhile, justice is conceived as water, as a remedy to the destructive force of injustice with the same capacity of plurality.

Similarly, about five centuries later, Kinalizade’s *Ahlak-i Alai*, dealt with the theme of justice as a concept of harmony and order of not only a particular state, but the common world in which every state, nation, and community lives. In his concept of circular justice, which is explained in detail in the previous chapter, this view of justice as the intersubjective relationship of the person to the common world becomes apparent in the first two principles of circular justice: “Justice is what provides the order, salvation and well-being of the world. The world is a

garden, and its wall is the state.” This imagery of the world as a big garden to which the state is attached as a wall creates and idea of personhood as a part and a whole simultaneously. Thinking of one’s existence as a circle within bigger circles such as community, state, and the world that contain it establishes a direct connection between the existence of the person to that of these bigger circles. This makes injustice a concern of the person standing in relationality and plurality with other persons and places one’s actions on a broader cause and effect nexus that extends the individual self.

The modern conception of person as an individual, is one that declares a freedom from these bigger circles that surround and contain the person. In a way, the individual is the one who stands outside these circles, as a single whole not contained by anything but herself. This notion of freedom from these circles might be appealing to the individual as breaking these ties and entanglements places the focus on the self, thereby removing any responsibility that surpass the individual in her singularity. This removal of responsibility as a burden on the individual is the type of negative freedom that modern conception of individuality glamorizes.

To finish off this chapter, let me restate my claim that justice is a personal matter, one that concerns the human person as a part and a whole at the same time. Building off of Greene and Fromm, I believe the contemporary individualistic notion of personhood provides a negative sense of justice that seeks to escape and release the individual from responsibility through a rejection of relationality. Refusing to exist in relation to another, an individual makes conception of justice, a truly social and relational term a distant utopia that we can hope for but can never achieve. Failing to see these relations among persons and the common world creates the sense

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that as long as one doesn’t recognize the other standing in relation to the self, she can be exempt from responsibility for an injustice outside the self. An individual sense of the self establishes all the other individuals as rivals, those that exist in contrast to the deserving self. A personalist sense of the self, on the other hand, is based on commonality, its existence lies in connection with other persons that demand to be fully human and nothing less. To be able to respond to this demand is the first step of establishing just relations by bringing the other to the same level of personhood. This ability of the person to respond to others will be the main theme of the next chapter.
CHAPTER 4. RESPONSIBILITY

“Our task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it.”

-Rumi

4.1. Meaning

Before making connections between justice and responsibility, I will try to provide a definition for the word ‘responsibility’. Responsibility can be dissected linguistically into two words: response and ability, the ability to respond. Responding is not a one-person act, as it is initiated by the other who demands a response from us. By responding to that demand, we establish a relationality with the other. For Emmanuel Levinas this relationality is formed through encounters. He suggests that the other signifies herself by appearing before the subject and enables the subject to define herself as an “I”.51 Thus, according to Levinas, encounters do two things: they enable subjectivity on the part of the subject and they entail a response, creating a relationship based on responsibility. Levinas uses the face of the other, as the signifier that appears before us and demands a response. He writes: “a face is a trace of itself, given over my responsibility.”52 As the use of the passive voice signifies, responsibility is a demand that is asserted or given to the person through encounters with others, rather than something that is actively taken. This also implies that responsibility is the ability of the subject to respond to what is already given, in other words, being able to take the given. The face metaphor also implies that the face of the subject by being exposed to the other also demands a response and creates a

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51 Levinas states “I am defined as a subjectivity. As a singular person, as an ‘I’ precisely because I am exposed to the other” in Richard Kearney, Dialogues With Contemporary Continental Thinkers, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004): 78.

52 Levinas, Otherwise than Being, 91.
relation of responsibility. So, there is a mutual bond between the people we encounter which Levinas calls responsibility.

This definition of responsibility triggers the question of who the other is. For Levinas, the other is the face we encounter. Yet, he doesn’t limit the notion of responsibility to those we physically encounter. He writes: “the fact that the other, my neighbor, is also a third party with respect to another, who is also a neighbor, is the birth of thought, consciousness, justice and philosophy.”53 This creates an infinity of others and an infinity of responsibility given to the subject. Thus, at this point, the refusal of Levinas to put limitations on who the other is becomes overwhelming, creating unlimited responsibilities. Can one respond to all? This is the question that I seek to clarify so that responsibility, or the ability to respond, connects with the notion of justice on a more concrete ground. Thus, keeping his idea of responsibility as an ability to respond intact, I depart from Levinas’ conception of other, to define my own.

I have started my claim with the concept of personhood, claiming that the person is both the part and the whole at the same time. I asserted that personhood entails uniqueness by the arbitrary combination of commonalities that make a person unique (eg. name, family, physical features, stories, idiosyncrasies, ancestry, culture etc.). I also claimed that personhood entails commonality by the insertion of the person to be parts of other wholes. This definition of personhood is the basis of defining who the other is. The other is, first and foremost, a human person. This is the primary commonality the subject has with the other. Thus, when the subject engages with the other in secondary commonalities, that is the common grounds occupied such as the commonality one forms with colleagues, students, teachers, citizens or visitors of a

53 Ibid., 128.
country, the demand of the other, that is all those that is not “I”, is universal; to not be reduced to anything less than a human person. As I become the parts of others in public, others become parts of me. This is the mutual exchange from which responsibility arises. It is the response to personhood that one owes to those who co-habit spaces of commonality. This space of commonality could be neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, libraries, parks, in short, the public spaces that one occupies. Thus, the task becomes, as a reference to the epigraph of this chapter, to seek and find the barriers one has built internally against others’ claims to personhood. What makes one move from seeing the other from a point of commonality and uniqueness that is ‘like-me’ but different, to a point of separation that is ‘not-me’ and different? This is the response that a person owes to herself and to others.

The more familiar definition of responsibility is usually relating a subject to a particular duty, task or action. This notion of responsibility, I claim, is narrow as it considers the person in isolation, disconnected from a web of entanglements. Connecting responsibility to an individual and her actions creates a major vacuum considering the mortal nature of the individual. What happens, once the individual cease to exist, yet the consequences of her actions linger on? Arendt deals with this tension in her essay Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship by making a distinction between responsibility and guilt as she writes: “There is no such thing as collective guilt or collective innocence; guilt and innocence make sense only if applied to individuals.”

This distinction of guilt as an individual and retrospective feeling marks its difference from responsibility which is tied less to the subject of the action but more to its consequences in

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prospective. This seems to be a more comprehensive notion of responsibility that engages with present reality more proactively.

Thus, responsibility as the ability to respond to others is a task that belongs to the human person. The reflexive nature of the verb ‘respond’ includes the other who demands personhood and the subject who responds to this demand. This showcases how Arendt’s notion of responsibility merges with the one I developed from Levinas. Responsibility as a premise of justice requires this intersubjective understanding of the concept that extends beyond the singularity of the individual. The self-inquiry becomes the task requiring one to ask oneself whether the other is seen in relation or in opposition to the self. In the case of the latter, justice loses its moral significance. When other becomes an opposition to the self, it becomes very easy to deny moral consideration for the other. The distance that isolates the self from the other relinquishes any justice claim the other may have. Prior to an understanding of justice, is the ability to respond to the demands of others for being fully person, nothing more, nothing less.

One may argue that responding to the other’s demand for personhood by refusing to reduce her to anything less than a person (e.g. sex, nationality, race etc.) doesn’t necessarily lead to justice. This is true, yet it makes the human-made inequalities, upon which the notion of justice and injustice is built visible. Thus, I argue, when the other is seen in opposition to the self, or reduced to a category or parameter that has been used to marginalize her, it blurs the clarity of injustices. One may consider adversity as deserved or as the fault of the person, yet if it happened to the self, it would be considered precisely an injustice. Thus, responsibility is the essential element for attaining justice, yet it alone, does not bring justice.

Another objection may be that responding to the other as a person and not reducing her to a category may not necessarily make an injustice visible to the subject. If one knows nothing
about the other, wouldn’t that make removing internal barriers towards the other redundant, as there will be none? For an injustice to be visible, one needs to really get to know the other in person, which is highly unlikely to know every other in every common space occupied. These two interrelated objections are quite compelling. To address them both, I suggest that not knowing anything about the other or not getting the chance to meet the other in person, is an obstacle before justice created by miseducation. This can be exemplified by a personal example. When I first arrived in Canada, as an international student, I didn’t have comprehensive knowledge about the First Nations peoples and their past and present struggles for recognition, land rights and decolonization. Upon my arrival, I began to hear about First Nations in multiple contexts. I heard the term in land acknowledgements, in educational contexts as students and scholars, in news reports and in community circles. This created a curiosity in me to understand what the term means and who the First Nations peoples are. I read the Truth and Reconciliation Report, I have joined talks and conferences given by Indigenous scholars, have learned about the history of residential schools in several courses I took as a part of my masters’ degree, read several Indigenous scholars and their ideas about justice. Thus, although for a very long time I didn’t have a personal encounter with an Indigenous Canadian, inserting myself in a university setting in the traditional, unceded, and colonized territories of Musqueam people, required this kind of education that I both received through my degree and through my personal effort. I could have graduated with no knowledge or encounter with an Indigenous person and may have dismissed the current problems due to my lack of participation in them as the perpetuator. Then, I wouldn’t be able to respond to their demand for personhood. Thus, this knowledge of others of the past and present is one that can be created through education, in the absence of an in-person contact. The essentiality of education in cultivating the premises I claim for achievement of
justice in this particular sense will be further explored in the conclusion chapter that particularizes education.

I have so far established responsibility as an ability to respond to others’ demand for personhood. The primacy of personhood to responsibility makes it a human universal, one that is given to all. Yet, despite this givenness, there are certain barriers before one’s ability to respond to the other. These barriers will be explored in this chapter. Yet, prior to exploring these barriers, it would be helpful to start with the source of responsibility.

4.2. Source of Responsibility: Love

A question that emerges from the definition of responsibility as an ability to respond to others is whether this ability is particular to a select few or inherent to all human beings. Does it require special skills or additional sensitivities that may not be available to all? In this section, I intend to answer these questions by placing love as the force that drives responsibility. Responsibility, both in the sense of accountability and ability to respond to others, has its roots in love. In her beautiful book titled *all about love*, bell hooks takes on the often neglected task of providing a definition for love, by carefully dissociating the word from its many clichés. For hooks, love is a deliberate action, rather than a reckless feeling. She suggests: “To begin by always thinking of love as an action rather than a feeling is one way in which anyone using the word in this manner will automatically assumes accountability and responsibility.”

55 Her definition ties love to agency, choice and will, and declares it to be a conscious act of affection, care, recognition, and commitment towards someone or something. This deliberation that hooks attributes to love is a caution that she takes against the presupposed notions of love as an

impulsive, irrational or excessive feeling that makes one lose control. She distinguishes acts of destruction from genuine caring love which is always and unconditionally free from violence or dominance. For hooks, a love that destroys is no love at all. This is her refusal to reduce love to anything less than a sacred act of care and affection.

Once there is deliberate action to commit to live in a common world that outlives us, despite its many problems, we can begin to love the world and assume responsibility for it. This connection that we have towards the world, as persons that are simultaneously wholes and parts of the world creates the necessary ties that hooks considers to be fundamental for responsibility. There needs to be a “love ethic” as she suggests, that drives our actions and relation to one another so that responsibility becomes a protective auto reflex rather than a burden of liability.56 Acting with love is the assertion of presence in the world of the self and the others. It is a revolutionary act of refusing to seclude from the common world and being unapologetically present. When we act with love as ethic towards one another, we do establish sustained bonds with them, from which responsibility emerges automatically.

Thinking of love as an action brings to mind Arendt’s concept of amor mundi, which requires a careful analysis of her conception of love.57 Although the concept is linked to her name, she has never used this phrase officially in any of her printed works. However, one may find love as a running theme in many of her written works. I would claim that Arendt has a

56 hooks, all about love, 85.

57 In the preface to his volume Amor Mundi: Explorations in the Faith and Thought of Hannah Arendt, James W. Bernauer, SJ mentions Arendt’s letter to Karl Jaspers written on August 6, 1955, in which Arendt declares a newly found love she managed to form towards the world despite its many problems. In the letter she talks about her initial intention to name her book presently published under the name The Human Condition as Amor Mundi. She writes: "Out of gratitude, I want to call my book about political theories Amor Mundi." James W. Bernauer, S.J., Amor Mundi: Explorations in the Faith and Thought of Hannah Arendt, (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987), v.
similar view of love as hooks. This claim may sound difficult to believe initially especially for those who are familiar with her book *the Human Condition* where she openly denies love a worldly space and considers it detrimental to political life. She writes: “Love, by its very nature, is unworldly, and it is for this reason rather than its rarity that it is not only apolitical but antipolitical, perhaps the most powerful of all antipolitical forces.”\(^5\) She goes further to suggest that the only positive thing about love, specifically one between a man and a woman, is the offspring that comes out of it.\(^6\) Yet, I would make a distinction between the type of love she was referring to in those lines and the one that she was planning to dedicate the entire book to, namely amor mundi.

The first type of love Arendt is clearly referring to as a rare and antipolitical sentiment is the same love that hooks warns us against; the romanticized feeling of attraction between two people. This is the type of feeling that is often considered irrational and impulsive drawing two people together physically and emotionally. Yet, as hooks suggests this is very different from love as a deliberate act of recognition, respect, commitment and care, one that creates bonds of responsibility and accountability. I believe, this is exactly what Arendt is referring to with her love of the world, amor mundi. This becomes an action, rather than a feeling that contains the will to be free.

Arendt’s notion of action as a liberating force that can only be performed in public and is inherent to all through natality supports the link she makes with love and action.\(^6\) The reason Arendt places action in the public realm is because she thinks of action as the actualization of our

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\(^6\) Ibid.

\(^6\) Ibid., 175-247.
capacity to start something new, to make a difference, to imagine the potentialities, and to act on them in the plurality of others. In this sense, action is directed from the self towards the others, to the world beyond the individual self which affects all through worldly entanglements. This idea of renewing the world, not one’s private home or property, is what makes action an act of worldly love, much different from the romantic love that is experienced in the privacy of two people. Thus, even if the world, shaped by the consequences of present and past deeds can be a place of injustice at present, there is always a potential for responsibility of each and every human person to act, to start something new by renewing the world, by refusing to seclude from public, to be unapologetically present. This commitment to continue loving the world by acting on it, refusing to seclude oneself from it is the driving force of responsibility. Once we begin to banish fear from the world, from the unknown and unstable, we will be able to love the world and be able to take responsibility to make it a new, better place for all.

Returning back to my original question about who can be responsible in this sense of ability to respond, I do claim that responsibility is a trait of the person who is both a part and a whole in connection with the common world. One that sees her presence in connection with those with whom she shares the world, rather than apart from them. One that forms this connection to others through an ethic of love, rather than fear. Fearing the unknown is an act of self-seclusion for the person, which is against the public nature of personhood. There is nobody incapable of responding to others within the limits of consciousness, yet there are barriers formed against it. These barriers are the same ones that reduce the person to an individual by failing to have a belief in cooperative human bonds besides material advancement. Next section will explore these barriers and offer some resolutions.
4.3. Barriers to Responsibility: Fear and Greed

An antagonism to love as the source of responsibility is fear, one that acts as a barrier before the ability to respond. As love represents collectivity and transcendence by going beyond oneself, it is a life force that is directed outside of the self. Fear, on the other hand, stands in direct opposition to love as it seeks to cut ties with the external world and locate the self comfortably within the self, away from the potential dangers from others. As Fromm suggests, this fear, in this sense, is a relatively modern phenomenon that emerged from the loss of social ties and a sense of belonging to a common world.61 The individual of modernity as opposed to the person of the medieval age whose role in the society was pre-determined, for good or bad, lost this sense of security and belonging to a structuralized whole. Thus, the modern individual breaking free from the predictable “primary ties” as Fromm calls them, ended up in an unpredictable world which she faces alone.62 This search for individual freedom from the primary ties, the authority of institutions, however, led to another type of submission, submitting to the satisfaction of individual desires shaped by the capitalist doctrine of having more. As discussed in the previous chapter, the pressing need to do away with all sorts of intervention on individual freedom, especially in the late capitalism, to have more resulted in a negative freedom that created new bondages of economic kind that isolated people further and further from each other.

One of biggest confusions this so-called freedom created is the equation of greed with self-love. The notion that justifies one’s search for more accumulation of wealth as an individual freedom to follow one’s desires frees her also from the responsibility of what her actions,

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61 Fromm, Fear of Freedom, 28.

62 Ibid.
decisions or desires mean for others. Once greed is justified as a rational way to seek self-interest\(^\text{63}\) in a world run by possession and accumulation, fear becomes an everyday feeling that defines majority of one’s acts or lack thereof. Working in a job just to have more, with the fear of being fired, going to school to attain a diploma that would bring more opportunities of a financial kind, with the fear of not taking the right course or getting the right grade, or going to the right school, are just some examples. These types of fears lead to an isolation from others as potential claimants on the material desires of the individual as well as towards one’s self, as failure to \emph{have more} would frustrate this goal that dominates the life of the modern individual. Thus, this fear of one another, combined with the greed to \emph{have more}, created the perfect ground for oppressive systems such as totalitarianism or dangerous ideologies such as Nazism to prosper as Arendt clearly demonstrates in her work \emph{The Origins of Totalitarianism}.

Having a mass of rootless individuals, rather than a society in which individual uniqueness of its members contribute to a unified aim for its betterment, is almost a prerequisite for dominant regimes or dictators to take power. People who seek some type of security and stability that has been lost in search of negative freedom make up the perfect crowd to be dominated and ruled by someone who promises a sense of guidance, for the good, or for the bad. Thus, the fear that builds blocks among individuals makes having a love bond among people an impossibility. This lack of love and over-presence of fear leads to a level of loneliness through

\(^{63}\) Self-interest must be approached with a grain of salt here as in contemporary societies it is often blurred by the interests of the capitalist system that requires individuals to participate in ‘having more’. The internalization of this external aim is expressed by Erich Fromm as: “We found ourselves confronted with the contradiction that modern man believes himself to be motivated by self-interest and yet that actually his life is devoted to aims which are not his own.” \emph{Fear of Freedom}, 100.
people’s seclusion from the public realm, which as Arendt notes “harbor[s] a principle destructive for all human living together”.  

So far, I have claimed love in a particular way to be the source of personal responsibility and have named two barriers to the actualization of this responsibility: fear and greed. These two forces are the foundations of the modern individual who has to perform in a financial race of wealth accumulation within the capitalist system against others. Ensuring that greed and fear are ever present keeps the individual (singular), or masses (plural) focused on this goal, no matter what it takes. This may often require sacrificing one’s moral conception of what is right to ‘what needs to be done’. Individuals who feel insignificant and powerless in the face of systems, powers (i.e. the invisible hand) or market forces become unable to take responsibility for their actions, let alone for those that aren’t theirs. Thus, this new-found freedom that is experienced in the negative sense did nothing but change the authority from institutions such as religious institutions or the state to nobody in the form of systems. Now the pivotal question arises, how can individuals, unable to take responsibility, unable to respond to one another, achieve justice? This question will be explored through a historical lens to draw connections between responsibility and justice in the section that follows.

4.4. Justice as a Personal Responsibility

The notion that justice starts within the person first is an ancient one. Through Plato and Aristotle, we do acknowledge that by placing justice as a virtue, both philosophers touched on this notion. Plato considered justice to be the harmony of three virtues: wisdom, courage and moderation that begins in the person and extends to the state. Aristotle considered justice to be a

64 Arendt, On the Origins of Totalitarianism, 478.
single virtue in and of itself, one that he called the perfect virtue as it is directed towards others.\textsuperscript{65}

I have already stated that, in its earliest conceptions, justice is thought to be located in the person first and foremost. Although the majority of the philosophical work seem to have concentrated in the mainland Greece, the small island of Samos provides us the earliest notions of ‘justice within’ through the famous mathematician and philosopher Pythagoras, the student of Thales of Miletus. Pythagoras is considered to be the mastermind behind what is today referred to as the Pythagorean cup or the cup of justice. The cup of justice seems like a regular cup at first sight, but it is designed in such a way that when filled up to the rim, it automatically empties the entire liquid through a hole located at the bottom of the cup. What the cup does is to call its holder to moderation by punishing excess in a humorous way. In other words, the cup says ‘do not indulge in greed’.

Although it is difficult to come up with a common conception of justice in ancient Greece\textsuperscript{66}, there is one thing that seems to be ubiquitous among its prominent philosophers: moderation. Despite many disagreements among what it constitutes, ancient Greece seem to offer moderation in the person to be a key to justice.\textsuperscript{67} Moderation for Plato, is “distributed

\textsuperscript{65} Aristotle. \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, 261.

\textsuperscript{66} Aristotle’s conception of justice in \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, Book V, is a direct opposition to his predecessor Plato’s concept of justice as a harmony in a given social order. Aristotle thought about justice in two ways; distributive and corrective justice, both referring to a proportion by desert. It aims to ensure that one gets her fair share of the good or the bad, not more, not less. In opposition, Plato considered justice on a more holistic level, as an ultimate search for the Good in the society in which everyone strives for justice by doing what they are best at, and curbing their temptation by practicing moderation.

\textsuperscript{67} In the Practice of Indigenous and Decolonial Health, Existential Wealth, and Wellbeing symposium, the Native American scholar Dr. Shawn Wilson talked about an indigenous fictional figure driven by its greed called Wendigo, referring to a cannibalistic creature unable to control its temptation to consume to a point of consuming humans. This shows even a wider point of commonality in the perception of different cultures towards greed. Wilson stated that Wendigo was also considered a mental illness in the Cree culture referring to someone who has lost touch with herself and the communal relationality. Shawn Wilson, “Stories of Ceremony, Land, Healing and Research,” (Talk, University of British Columbia, March 1, 2019).
literally across the whole population, mak[ing] the weakest and the strongest and those in between sing together in unison” as opposed to courage and wisdom which he admits are found in varying degrees among different people.\textsuperscript{68} This ubiquitous capacity for moderation of the person would not let personal desires and passions to take over the bad side of her soul, by causing a shortage of good and excess of bad.

Being a master of one’s desires through moderation was a knowledge that was carried over in the medieval age to Islamic thought. The Islamic world thinks of moderation through the concept of “nafs” as it is used in the Quran, or the Turkish counterpart “nefs”, which refers to the self or the soul. The nafs is believed to be where one’s temptations and desires are contained.\textsuperscript{69} Thus, having control over one’s nafs was the only way a person could be free in the real sense. This connection between freedom and rule over the self is also a theme covered in \textit{Kutadgu Bilig}. The vizier to the king Rising Sun, Full Moon writes a testamentary letter at his deathbed. He advises the following: “the man who indulges his appetites is a prisoner of passion. Do not fall captive, but if you do ransom yourself.”\textsuperscript{70} A break from an enslavement to one’s temptations and desires is considered the precondition for one to become her own master.

This capacity for self-control seemed the be the way one could attain the spiritual balance necessary to understand one’s place in the eternity of cosmos. Thus, taming greed was the pre-condition to enter a shared world, a necessary ingredient of empathy, a recognition of one’s own self and other persons in the universe. When considered from this lens, the link between justice

\textsuperscript{68} Plato, \textit{Republic}, 389.

and moderation becomes clearer. One can’t think of justice without recognizing her own self in relation to other selves. Without recognizing the other, it is impossible to respond to the other, or to any demand for justice the other may seek.

In our time, the idea of moderation has been lost as having more rather than being more became the target pursuit. The notion that one has an instrumental function to the harmony of a social order has been ruled out altogether. Instead, these social bonds that connect people are replaced by economic bonds. Thus, the social aspect of the instrumentality of people to each other and to a bigger whole in the antiquity and medieval age has been exchanged for economic instrumentality of people to each other in the modern and contemporary societies. Fromm describes this new relationship as mutual pursuit of economic interests through the relationship between employer and the employee “both are means to an end, both are instrumental to each other.” Justice, as a moral concept that finds its actualization in the social relations of people have been fragmented and reduced down to a concern of the individual for herself. Self-interest seem to have become the core of the contemporary conception of justice. As hooks aptly suggests, this generation “loved material comfort more than justice.” Anything that interrupts one’s self-interests, which often happen to be purely material, led to a very limited understanding of justice by excluding those outside the self from moral consideration. Some of the most inhumane injustices in the history are results of this opposition that the material self creates against others in search of comfort. This includes the justifications of slavery due to the material benefits that slaves brought to slave owners or the displacement of Indigenous peoples from their lands to make room for white settlers to bring “civilization”.

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71 Fromm, Fear of Freedom, 102.

72 hooks, all about love, 121.
In order to think about justice in the positive sense, just like freedom, one needs to first acknowledge the commonalities that thread one person to another on the simple basis of humanity. Refusing to reduce a person to anything less than the sacredness and dignity of personhood is one way to start conceiving of justice as a collective act. Seeing one another as the cohabitant of a common world would create this foundation for a love ethic, in the form of commitment, care, and affection that are necessary to maintain it. Responding to the other is not a task, but an automatic reflex once we stop hierarchizing markers of otherness whether that be race, gender, ethnicity, nationality or any other parameter that has been used to separate people on the basis of otherness to deny them moral consideration for justice throughout history. In his famous lines “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere,” Martin Luther King Jr. brings this much needed global vision to the modern and contemporary conceptions of negative justice, one that doesn’t get past the individual self.\(^7^3\) At some point, it needs to be realized that the human helplessness towards injustices in the world, or the normalization of injustices through mechanisms such as market economy or bureaucracy are not natural but man-made. Similar to the question that Arendt poses to those who fail to take responsibility or agency for their actions under dictatorial order, every person feeling helpless by these human-made Gods of the new age should look into the mirror and ask "Why did you support?" rather than "Why did you obey?".\(^7^4\)


\(^7^4\) Arendt, “Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship”, 48.
CHAPTER 5. ACTION

“Stop acting so small. You are the universe in ecstatic motion.”

— Rumi

5.1. Defining Action

Action, as the final step required in the actualization of justice, is a term whose definition is often taken for granted to be explicit and self-explanatory. Yet, what action is and what it is not requires an understanding of concepts that the word contains, implies, and presumes. If I were to do a quick survey on the definition of the word action, I would likely get similar responses that will more or less equate it with some type of activity. Some might offer a distinction from the art of acting, which is assuming a persona other than one’s own for the sake of artistic expression. Whether it is acting, as in performing arts, or an ordinary activity, the actor becomes a figure central to the actualization of the action, bringing forth the question of intentionality as a possible criterion to include in the definition of action.

It would be inaccurate to suggest that all action is done by conscious and willing subjects as certain acts are beyond one’s control such as coughing in times of sickness or certain disorders such as palsy that may led to uncontrolled body movements. Similarly, acting under conditions where one’s freedom is restrained or abused as in the case of slavery, or being held captive makes it difficult to claim intentionality or choice to all action. In that case, besides natural causes (as in coughing or palsy), one’s action to be intentional seems to be tied directly to one’s freedom from restrictions. Yet, this becomes a major point of conflict considering the abundancy of varying degrees of restrictions on human freedom from past to present. To name a few we can consider political restrictions on freedom such as freedom of speech, social restrictions on
freedom such as freedom of expression, or more dangerous daily restrictions such as bureaucracy. Setting freedom to be a pre-requisite of action might seem like a solution to the obstacles before action yet removing these obstacles doesn’t translate into action.\(^7\) One might argue that it creates a potentiality for action (action in theory), which is true, but has very little to do with the actualization of action (action in praxis). Thus, a liberal argument for freedom as a pre-requisite for action remains short-sighted by overemphasizing action in theory at the expense of action in praxis.

One way to overcome this problem is to reverse the order of relationality between freedom and action. This move is clear in Arendt’s conception of action as a prerequisite for freedom. For Arendt, action means “to take an initiative, to begin.”\(^6\) This capacity that finds its space of actualization in the public world is a result of the distinctness of personhood. Arendt uses the public space as a place of appearance before others, thereby establishing the uniqueness of person as a potentiality to start something new, rather than a reason to seek seclusion. Thus, for Arendt, both the theory (potentiality) and praxis (actualization) of action rest inside, rather than outside the person. The distinctness and commonality that is particular to personhood becomes the center from which action can emerge both at a conceptual and practical level. As opposed to the liberalist notion of action that places action in the theoretical realm dependent on its existence to outside forces, Arendt’s notion of action merges the theory and praxis of action in the human person.

\(^7\) Similarly, presence of these obstacles does not block action. If anything, they pave the way for action in its most aesthetic and creative form, that is arts.

\(^6\) Arendt, The Human Condition, 177.
For Arendt, action is a deeply personal, rather than individual trait, one that can be actualized by making an appearance in the common world. To eliminate the confusions the term ‘making an appearance in the world’ may lead to, she sets this particular intentional appearance as an act apart from birth, an unintentional appearance on the side of the person. She calls action “an insertion” of oneself into the common world, one that is done out of initiative, rather than necessity, as in the case of birth or utility as in the case of work.77 Thus, this particular notion of action as a capacity to start something through a conscious insertion of oneself into the common world, in other words through appearing in public, brings a uniquely humanizing definition to action in which the agent is at the center of action and has the consciousness and will power to claim agency in her actions.

Throughout this chapter, I will offer this particular conception of action that stems from the uniqueness and commonality that personhood offers. So far, I have explored justice to be a personal responsibility, as the person’s ability to respond to others’ demands of personhood. I argued that this conception of personhood and responsibility enable the visibility of an injustice that may otherwise be dismissed. Once an injustice is perceived as such, the next step would be acting on it, which requires an active and conscious break-away from the status quo. This is where action steps in.

In the sections to follow, I will offer an engagement with action in this particular sense as a practice of justice. The possibility of human persons doing just things, acting justly and wishing what is just, as suggested by Aristotle centuries ago, despite all the modern restrictions on action will be an overarching question demanding a response in this chapter. However, before

77 Ibid., 176-177.
I begin to explore the particular ties between justice and action, it would be helpful to see how this inherent capacity to act can be actualized. It can be argued that, despite having this inherent capacity to start something new, many would refrain from doing so either because of a lack of knowledge of this capacity, a lack of faith in it or out of seclusion from the public world. The point where the theory and praxis of action merge to create action and the point where they diverge will be explored in further detail in the following sections.

5.2. Source of Action: Imagination

When one steps out of a movie theater, a very specific type of metamorphosis takes place for a very brief time period that gives the person the internal belief that the world can be a different place. This short-lived persona that many movie goers at one point assume is beautifully depicted in the famous Turkish novelist Yusuf Atilgan’s short novel *Aylak Adam* (The Loiterer). That critical time in between the transition from the suspension to the continuance of disbelief is what Atilgan describes as the moment that brings one closest to action, in this particularly Arendtian sense. Yet, the reason this time period is short-lived is because the person that is fresh out the movie theater, once mixed with the masses in the street, a crowd he describes as disconnected and apathetic, becomes one of them and gets lost in disbelief, again. The lingering effect of an imaginary world offers a very concentrated sense of human distinctness, the belief in one’s distinctness to start something new. The depiction of this

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78 The novel Atilgan wrote in 1959 depicts the main character as a loiterer, someone who wanders the streets of Istanbul, having no other occupation than making impulsive decisions. The character is one that pays too much attention to the little things in life that are taken for granted. One day he decides to go to the movie theater, yet prior to the movie the people that are there ready to surrender themselves to the make-believe appear to him as identical, inattentive and passive, which makes him want to leave immediately. Once he is out the movie theater, he contrasts the passiveness of the people inside with a person who has just step outside the movie theater as someone who has changed in the aftermath of a surrender to disbelief. The character then imagines a world in which everyone will be made to watch a good movie in a gigantic theater and will walk out to fill the streets, all at once. He believes the short-lived impact of suspension of disbelief is one that can change the world. Yusuf Atilgan, *Aylak Adam*, 14.
sensual experience is what makes Arendt’s notion of action very clear to me as an inherent capacity of a beginning that she attributes to every person by virtue of birth. The way to tap into this capacity, to awaken it, requires a longer stay in imagination, in suspension of disbelief.

Imagination is the creative force behind action, one that if practiced enough, can open a whole new world of alternatives rather than a passive submission to existing realities. It is, in a way, a practice of developing a sense of ‘what could be’ besides an acknowledgement of ‘what is’. To be clear, the notion of imagination doesn’t refer to a refusal of reality or worse an inability to understand reality—that would be a very reductionist way to look at it. Rather, a thorough understanding of ‘what is’ creates the foundation for ‘what could be’. In this vein, imagination is going one step deeper into the nature of reality, expanding and stretching its limits to create capacity for choice. Thus, imagination is a two-step higher order thinking skill that requires an understanding of the reality in its crudest form with all its goodness and deficiency as a first step and a subsequent envisioning of how the existing reality could be otherwise. In that sense, imagination precedes action by creating the necessary consciousness for the problems and possibilities that existing realities bear. Without an awareness of these, there is either nothing to act on or no other way to act than predetermined by someone or something else. Reality becomes a rigid force that disables and disheartens people, causing a sense of powerlessness with regards to the processes of life. In order to act, one needs to be able to see a possibility of change and remember the centrality of the person for the action. In the absence of imagination, there is inertia, lack of action, or as Maxine Greene suggests “an incapacity to look at actualities as if they could be otherwise… an unwillingness to try to transcend determinacy or surpass
facticity.” Thus, imagination, by visualizing choices, becomes the enabler of human capacity to start something new, to recreate the common world.

This capacity to recreate the common world, to start something does not have a precondition or requirement besides imagination. One doesn’t need to be free, legally protected, safe or physically powerful to begin. In fact, the lack of these very conditions often forces one to imagine and to act. Thus, being able to not only understand but also visualize reality in its existing and alternative forms is the only prerequisite to action. When Lysistrata, the heroine of the ancient Greek comedy named after her, declared that “the women will deal with the war” during the unrest of the Peloponnesian war, it was a statement beyond imagination considering the secondary place women held in Athens at the time. They had no say in political affairs or any rights for that matter, yet Lysistrata, being sick and tired of the never-ending unrest in the city states, imagines peace as a force women can create with the power of coming together. She decides to gather Athenian, Spartan, Boeotian and Peloponnesian women together and calls them to a sexual boycott when men return from war. Having been organized, women gather together to take over the Acropolis, gaining economic and psychologic control over the men of the city states, and forcing them to make peace. Lysistrata, as a satirical critique of the pointlessness of the civil war in Athens, is a perfect demonstration of action in human distinctness. It shows how a longer stay in suspension of disbelief in conditions that are less than pleasant becomes the sole enabler of action to have it otherwise. The centrality of the person to the action shines through despite all the barriers before freedom with the mere practice of imagination, the bridge that brings action in theory and action in practice together.

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So far, I claimed that justice is a personal responsibility for action. Accordingly, I asserted that once an injustice is perceived as such, the next step would be to act on it, which requires imagination of alternatives and an active and conscious break-away from the status quo. I acknowledge that this is not an easy task. One immediate objection to this claim would be the counterproposal that those who benefit from the status quo and the injustices it contains would not engage in action regardless of how imaginative they are in creating choices. This is, in fact, an objection that Paulo Freire seems to support in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. For Freire, oppression is simply a tool for dehumanization. He suggests that both the oppressed and the oppressor are dehumanized. Yet, the act of transforming an oppressive reality is one that can be done by the oppressed, not the oppressor as Freire positions the latter further away from humanization. Thus, the task of transforming the oppressive reality or as Freire calls it the “ontological and historical vocation to be more fully human” is one that he attributes to the oppressed.

This seems to bolster the above objection, yet I would like to point out that in addition to the oppressed and the oppressor, Freire also talks about two additional groups; a third group which consists of the oppressed who emulate the oppressor, waiting for the opportunity to become the oppressor and a fourth group consisting of the allies who used to belong to the oppressor group but changed sides to help the cause of the oppressed. Although Freire is less sympathetic to the allies whom he blames for “bring[ing] with them the marks of their origin: their prejudices and their deformations, which include a lack of confidence in the people’s ability

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82 Freire mentions this third group as experiencing what he calls “duality of the oppressed” and he further explains this group as: “[those] who are at the same time themselves and the oppressor whose image they have internalized.” Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 61.
to think, to want and to know” he doesn’t ultimately disregard their significance.\textsuperscript{83} I am very sympathetic to Freire’s claim that oppression or injustices can be altered by the actions of the oppressed, yet I would like to expand action to be inclusive of present and potential allies in the search for positive freedom. Especially given their access to power, I believe allies to the oppressed in their struggle against injustices, if anything, can strengthen the actualization of positive freedom through action. After all, by starting something new, the actions of several allies in the abolitionist movement such as William Lloyd Garrison and allies that helped saved lives of the Jews in the second World War such as Irena Sendler or the ally ship of men in the feminist movement are all transformative acts that only contributed to the causes. In that sense, as challenging of an objection as it may be, I do want to expand the definition of action as an actualization of freedom for not only those who do not have it (the oppressed) but also the powerful who consider the lack of freedom of the oppressed as a threat to their existing freedom. Thus, I believe, even those who are presently benefitting from a problematic status quo are able to engage in action by cultivating an understanding of reality as is and reality that can be to create choice and actualize freedom. The cultivation of these two important things require a particular humanizing education which will be proposed in the concluding chapter.

Contrary to Freire, for Arendt the barrier before the oppressors to act is not their dehumanized state of being, but their lack of interpretive and imaginative capacities. Thus, evil for Arendt is not just inhumane, it is banal. After serving as a journalist during Adolf Eichmann’s trial in Jerusalem, Arendt develops her famous theory of evil as a banality. As opposed to the expectations of her Jewish community in New York, and elsewhere, the conclusion she reached for Eichmann as the mastermind behind the mass extermination of Jews during the Second

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 60.
World War was nothing more than “a normal man”, a man of banality.\footnote{Arendt, \textit{Eichmann in Jerusalem}, xv.} She described him as someone incapable of thinking for himself, one that is a mere follower of directions with no capacity to imagine an alternative. In that vein, Eichmann for Arendt is a man of banality who lacks moral and intellectual depth to transcend himself to respond to the other and to imagine reality to be otherwise. Her portrayal of Eichmann as a mere follower of orders, and as a strictly individualistic law-abider, unable to create choice, incapable of starting something new shows the extent of atrocities that inaction resulting from a lack of imagination can cause. Thus, the major barrier to action is an unimaginative submission to existing reality, an incapacity to see the extent of what is and the possibility of what could be. Without the cultivation of this imaginative capacity, thinking becomes uniform, and action, the capacity to start something new, becomes impossible. Having set the enabler of action as developing the imaginary capacity of a world that is possible rather than real, I will now move on to identify the barriers that stand before action.

\section*{5.3. Barriers to Action}

In the previous chapter, I focused on the concept of responsibility to enable an understanding of the concept of action that follows. I treated responsibility as a concept of relations, one that can be actualized in being present before others. In order to respond to someone, the first condition is to be present before that person and the second condition is to recognize the presence of her as a human person, in the common world. An acknowledgement of the other person in human distinctness, one that arises from commonality as opposed to otherness arising from separation, makes the ultimate difference in one’s ability to respond. Thus, the ability to respond to the other as a person, a unique cohabitant of the shared world,
starts within personhood. The same is true for action, which brings me to my second point that a move away from personhood is a move away from action. Arendt makes a distinction between action and work. While action is the act of doing which she equates with freedom, work is an act of making, a fabrication of the common world. As she suggests, what sets action apart from work is its actualization in human plurality. She states: “action, as distinguished from fabrication, is never possible in isolation; to be isolated is to be deprived of the capacity to act.” Thus, action becomes a practice that only the public nature of personhood allows for. If plurality is the precondition for action, its absence, that is isolation, becomes the second barrier before action.

Thinking of isolation as a disabler of action, makes action an act of the human person, the part and the whole, not the individual, the isolated whole in and of itself. This sense of completeness without reliance on others creates a sense of loneliness with regards to the world that stands outside the individual. Due to this feeling of being alone, as Fromm suggests, many people resort to submission to a power outside the self that promises a hint of security. He writes:

> Quite regularly these people show a marked dependence on powers outside themselves, on other people, or institutions, or nature. They tend not to assert themselves, not to do what they want, but to submit to the factual or alleged orders of these outside forces. Often they are quite incapable of experiencing the feeling “I want” or “I am”. Life as a whole, is felt by them as something overwhelmingly powerful, which they cannot master or control.

This sense of powerlessness before powers that rule the world outside the individual becomes a root cause of inaction. Once, losing a sense of agency in the routinized activities of the day, an individual becomes a means to an end defined by processes of material accumulation. Powers such as market forces determine all human activity, denying the person any agency or will power in what they do. Just like the helplessness of Eichmann and his inability to claim any agency to

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85 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 188.

his actions, the isolated individual becomes enslaved by inaction and absence of choice. In a world of passive law-abiders and rule followers, justice becomes a mere theory, a utopia that can only exist in an ideal world. In order to make justice a possibility, one needs to look for ways of thinking of justice in praxis. This requires a departure from the static treatment of justice as an outcome that is external to human action. Instead, a conception of justice as a moving and alive force that is internal to the person through the faculty of action saves justice from a theoretically restrained existence. This notion of justice as an active force that requires an imagination of alternatives to be able to start something new has been key to justice in its earlier conceptions. In the section to follow, I will offer an overview of this expansive vision of justice as a force demanding action and new ways of looking at reality from ancient Greece to Mesopotamia as an alternative to a more restrained view of justice as law-abidingness that seem to prevail in the more modern conceptions of justice.

5.4. Justice as a Personal Responsibility for Action

Justice has surely occupied a great space in the ancient Greek thinking— for good reasons. As the mind behind the earliest works on the concept of justice, Plato had a deep engagement with the concept, which doesn’t come across as accidental. It is likely to have stemmed from a very personal conflict that had deeply impacted his life. Plato’s teacher Socrates was given a death sentence for going against the gods and being impious, an accusation made by the Athenian citizens, a politically and economically privileged group to which Plato’s family also belonged.87 Rather than criticizing the practice as unjust or rejecting piety as a criteria for the common good of the city, Plato opened the norms around the goodness of the city, particularly

87 Sam Rocha, (Class Lecture, EDST 597 - EDUCATIONAL THEORIES Equality, Democracy, and Justice, 1/22/2019, UBC).
piety, to critical thinking through his imagined dialogue between Euthyphro and Socrates. The dialogue that is titled *Euthyphro*, is a satirical inquiry into the conception of justice as unquestioning abidance by the societal, civil, political or legal norms of the time.

Through the dialogue between two characters, Socrates as the defendant and Euthyphro as the pursuer of a case, we get an insight into the conception of ‘justice as piety’ in the ancient Greek city-state. In a way, piety seems to be the unwritten version of contemporary laws. What Socrates and Euthyphro have in common soon becomes clear since the accusations on both sides are grounded on the concept of ‘piety’. Socrates is being charged with impiety, allegedly having contaminated the minds of the Athenian youth by creating new gods, thereby disrespecting the existing ones. Whereas, Euthyphro is seeking to re-establish piety by bringing his own father to a trial due to a murder he committed.

Being the common ground for the two, Socrates seeks to understand the nature of piety to establish a standard for what it is by asking the expert, Euthyphro, who is suggested to bear great knowledge of religion. Through this dialectic inquiry, Euthyphro attempts to define piety three times, revising the definition through Socrates’ guidance each time.\(^8\) This dialectical approach to the concept of ‘justice as piety’ results in a gradual divorce of piety from justice in each refined expression. Piety moves from being the equivalent of justice to being a part of justice, which deals with gods, and finally emerges as a standalone concept that mediates the relations

\(^8\) In his first attempt, Euthyphro defines piety as an equivalent of justice, or doing what is just. He exemplifies this through his own prosecution of a wrongdoer, his father, regardless of the familiar ties between them. In his second attempt, Euthyphro re-constructs the definition of piety as doing what is dear to gods, to which Socrates offers a refutation by pointing to a lack of agreement among gods about matters of justice and injustice. So ‘what is dear to gods’ becomes too much of a generalization, as gods themselves do not seem to have reached a consensus on what is dear to them. Finally, the definition is narrowed down to doing what all gods love. Rather than achieving clarity with this further refinement, the definition of piety is left, as is, at this stage with which Socrates seems rather unsatisfied.
between men and the divine. This refines the conception of piety as a regulator of relations between men and the divine, rather than the relations of men among each other, an idea very foreign to the Athenian city at the time.

What this dialogue achieves is a demonstration of pure law-abidingness as a dangerous comfort zone that may lead to injustices, if left unquestioned. Socrates’ active engagement with Euthyphro enables a new way of thinking about justice through a sense of discomfort, confusion, or in Platonic words, aporia. Although Plato couldn’t reverse the fate of his beloved teacher through this dialogue he wrote prior to his death, he manages to start a new way of looking at justice. By putting his ability to respond to an injustice, Plato, engages actively in justice by putting into practice his teacher Socrates’ method that allows for renewing the existing ideas and realities through constant questioning of taken-for-granted truths.

To engage with justice as an active force that demands a response becomes a theme that is covered in Hajib’s Kutadgu Bilig as well. Despite the superiority of just laws as a foundation for a just society and just state, the ruler Rising Sun, representing the concept of justice, becomes a central figure that has a responsibility to the people by hearing their claims of justice or injustice. ¹⁸⁹ Not leaving justice to the hands of the just laws alone, but treating it as a dynamic entity that requires daily attention and visibility on the side of the ruler becomes apparent in the metaphor of three-legged stool on which the ruler sits. The stool represents balance, an equal distance to those whose complaints the Rising Sun listens, in person. He states: “I cut the case as

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¹⁸⁹ This practice of hearing the complaints of the people became a central aspect of governance in the Seljuk and the later Ottoman Empire. The grand vizier of the Seljuk Empire, Nizam al’Mulk, in his Siyasat-Nama (The book of government), explains in detail the importance of this role of the ruler as the hearer of complaints for the pursuit of justice in the empire in the section titled “On Dealing with Complaints, Giving Answers and Dispensing Justice”, al-Mulk, Nizām and Hubert Darke. The Book of Government, Or, Rules for Kings: The Siyar Al-Muluk, Or, Siyasaat-Nama of Nizam Al-Mulk. (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2002): 240.
if with a knife, and I do not make the plaintiff wait.”\textsuperscript{90} This notion of serving justice immediately by hearing people’s claims and making a judgement is one that settles the injustices that may arise despite the just laws, or their lack thereof. Thus, this attention to the personhood claims of people and acting on the barriers before their personhood was an essential element of justice.

Similarly, the visibility of the emperor to the people to listen to their complaints, being in touch with them and their concerns became central to the actualization of justice in the Ottoman Empire. In line with the circular concept of justice as a balancing element of the power differences in the society, the accessibility of the emperor to the people provided a sense of protection to the less powerful. According to Kinalizade, one of the biggest threats before justice is when the powerless feel isolated from having a safe space to address their issues. Thus, he suggests that the emperor be visible, and accessible to the people, and attend to those who claim to be oppressed on a daily basis by making time and space.\textsuperscript{91} The practice of attending to justice on a regular basis shows that justice went far and beyond equality before the law or ensuring that everyone gets their fair share. Justice meant a responsibility attributed to the most powerful to remove oppression from the less powerful in the society.

In modernity, justice is often seen as an outcome of laws, rules and policies. The superiority of laws and the democratizing element of ‘being equal before law’ became a comfort zone leading to the misconception that justice is something external to the person, an end that is achieved through legal means. The liberal notion that rights and liberties safeguarded by democracy allow those who experience injustice to seek justice through legal means led to an


\textsuperscript{91} Kinalizade, \textit{Ahlak-I Alai}, 456-457.
understanding of justice as a temporal event, one that peaks its head when poked, rather than an active force that demands a response from us on a regular basis through the other. The security that comes with following what one is required to do by law, rather than actively thinking about its moral and social implications, provides the much searched-for stability and guidance in the absence of primary ties, as explained in detail in the first chapter. Following the law becomes comforting, as it takes the responsibility of action away from the individual, turning individual to a follower, rather than an initiator.

From being the foundation of Plato’s ideal state in antiquity to being the source that brings salvation to the world in the medieval times, justice has lost its pivotal role in the society in the modern times. Rather than being seen as a salvation or virtue, justice became secondary and incidental to material comfort. This reduction of justice from an overarching concept that brings order and happiness to the world to one that allows the individual the right to have more is the result of the decline of the person from personhood to individuality, cutting the ties with the other persons and a common vision for a shared world. If we were to consider unquestioned law-abidingness as one end of this spectrum, the other end is a demand for absence of laws, rules and regulations, which seems to be the gravitation of many individualists in the late modernity. Yet, rather than being a demand for personal action, this freedom from any external interference is a demand of the individual to follow her material advancement, a view that sees justice as a mere nuisance to individual interest. Clearly, I do not suggest we adopt pure law-abidingness that restrains personal action by removing responsibilities. Nor do I suggest that we adopt a total absence of laws for the sake of individual self-regulation. The latter in the current power hierarchies that capitalism along with historical injustices such as racism and sexism and other ideologies have created would be the furthest one can get away from justice. What I am
suggesting instead, is a notion of personal rather than individual justice that has the interpretive capacity towards laws and regulations. This requires first and foremost, a notion of the self in relation to a shared world and its cohabitants rather than apart from them which establishes a personal sense of justice critical to its actualization.

One of the most widely accepted theories of justice in the late modernity comes from John Rawls, the American political philosopher in the liberal tradition who theorized about achieving justice in the modern society in two fundamental ways: by ensuring political liberty (i.e. basic rights and liberties) for all and by ensuring fair opportunity for all. To extend the second point a bit further, he adds that if there is going to be inequalities, it must be ensured that the inequality favors “those belonging to the income class with the lowest expectations.”

92 Most readers of Rawls believe that this is the closest a modern notion of justice gets to, in terms of the elimination of injustice from the society. Yet, this notion of justice has the individual, as a complete whole as the starting point, rather than the person, the part and the whole. This creates certain problems, the first of which is a disconnection from historicity. When ripped from the historical forces that shapes personhood through containment, as suggested in the first chapter, the concept of an individual, one that begins life with the equal liberties and rights with everyone else, dismisses the impacts that a lack of these liberties and rights for decades may have had on the present opportunities available to a person. It views justice in a linear progressive conundrum, starting from the present, viewing the common world as always already free and equal.

92 He notes that those with the lowest expectations are only defined by their material expectations in terms of wealth and income. Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, 59.
The theory of equal standing, or as Rawls calls it “the original position”, assumes this equal conundrum as a starting point, with a major disregard to social, historical and cultural aspects that are interrelated in the personhood. One of the major dangers of this approach is the naturalization of certain obstacles that, without the historical context, may seem irrational and unaccounted for. As Maxine Greene suggests, a capacity to see the obstacles, a foundation for the actualization of justice, comes from a historical understanding. Viewing obstacles as natural rather than a consequence of past deeds (i.e. colonization) may be as dangerous as the injustice itself, as it restrains one’s capacity to respond to injustice and eventually lead to a justification of injustices.

Thus, justice needs to be viewed as a personal, rather than individual responsibility for action. Without the personal conception of a human person, attending to injustices becomes impossible, as the veil of ignorance-a concept Rawls uses, becomes a neutralizer of historical roots of certain injustices in the present. This approach also restrains the ability to respond to injustices, by failing to recognize them, making solution seeking redundant. My claim is that in order to be able to understand justice in a plural sense, one doesn’t need to neutralize her identity. This capacity to see oneself and the other in relation to the self as a human person, a cohabitant of the common world with a past, present and future creates a more thorough understanding of justice. Seeing justice as a personal responsibility for action doesn’t require persons to undo themselves by assuming ‘an original position’ but rather to actualize themselves by seeing the parts and wholes that make up their personhood. Along with personhood comes the acknowledgement that being born into a collective world creates certain responsibilities, the first of which is to see the other nothing less than a human person. The second is to pay active attention to injustices and engage in justice rather than simply following what may appear as
external authorities that regulate justice. As Martin Luther King, Jr. asserts, "one has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws." This moral consciousness that is essential to the actualization of justice makes action, as a capacity to initiate, an actualizer of justice by demanding the active engagement of human persons with justice, merging ‘justice in theory’ with ‘justice in praxis’.

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CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

6.1. Restating the Claim

Thus far, I have provided an expansive view of justice by using a combination of historical, literary, and philosophical sources. I have utilized these sources to provide a supporting ground for my claim that positions justice as a personal responsibility for action. In the third chapter “Personal vs Individual,” I have offered personhood as the universal element that all persons have, yet one that is often obstructed by individuality. Thus, the first barrier I claimed to be standing before a unified conception of justice is individuality. I claimed that individuality is the conception of person as a whole, standing as a separate being with regards to the common world and contrasted it with the conception of person as a part and a whole. Therefore, the first premise of justice as a personal responsibility for action is one’s reconciliation with personhood, one that locates itself in an already existing world on a historical conundrum. This view of personhood is contrasted with individuality as an ahistorical and rootless concept.

I have built on this claim in the following chapter “Responsibility,” by claiming that with personhood comes the ability to respond to others and their demand to be nothing less than a human person. Thus, the reconciliation I offered with one’s personhood is extended in that chapter to include the cohabitants of the common world. I have connected the ability to respond to the demands of others for personhood by offering a clarification for what I mean by others. I have suggested that our personhood as a part and a whole requires us to be responsive towards those whom we occupy a space of commonality by being a part of them, by appearing in public. Thus, by inserting oneself to already existing spaces, one assumes the responsibility towards
others and their claims to personhood. This entails a refusal to reduce them to anything less than a person by seeking and finding the barriers one may have built against them. This I claimed, removes the barriers before the visibility of social inequalities and allows justice a worldly space.

In exploring the final part of my claim in the following chapter titled “Action,” I have placed action to be an actualizer of justice. Once the adversities and inequalities become more visible to the person, what is left is to act on them to challenge the status quo. In defining action, I have used Arendt’s conception of action as an actualizer of freedom and human capacity to begin. This helped me identify the barrier before inaction, which is tied back again to reduction of personhood to individuality. I claimed that the isolated individual as a whole that is not a part of anything, becomes submissive to powers that were once created by humankind. This feeling of helplessness that stems from alienation, or facing the world alone, I claim, is a direct result of the reduction of person to an individual. To overcome this barrier, I offered imagination as an enabler of beginning something new. This is to suggest that the first stage of beginning is being able to see beginnings as possible, being able to imagine that the present situation can be otherwise. If one doesn’t imagine a change, or believe in her capabilities for it, action cannot be actualized. Action I claimed, requires imaginative persons.

I acknowledge that the particular conception of justice I have proposed, requires a process of change in the mindset of persons about themselves and the others. After all, the premises of justice as personhood, responsibility and action, as I claimed, are all curbed in the modern societies by individuality, greed and isolation. Therefore, in order to actualize justice in this particular sense, there needs to be a collective form of change that will guide people towards a path of re-personalizing themselves. When imagining how a just society looks like in the Republic, Plato relied on education in cultivating his notion of justice. I take a similar approach
in the conclusion of this thesis by providing particularly educational resolutions to the problems that some of the objections to my argument has revealed. In what follows, I will revisit the two objections that revealed certain problems with my claim and propose educational resolutions to each problem.

6.2. Objections

Throughout this thesis, I anticipated certain objections and responded to them as clearly as possible. These anticipated objections helped me clarify my terms and helped me refine my ideas about this conception of justice as a personal responsibility for action. Some of these objections have also revealed certain problematics with regards to my claim. For instance, in chapter four “Responsibility” the potential objection about how to respond to others’ claims of personhood in the absence of familiarity with their struggles and knowledge of who they really are in the commonly occupied spaces became a particular problem to which I responded by pointing to the necessity of education. Yet, this reply was one that created more questions than answers. Some of these questions include what I mean by education and what type of education I am talking about.

Another objection in chapter five, “Action,” was towards my assumption that those who benefit from the status quo, rather than those who suffer from it, will also join the struggle for justice by recognizing injustices and acting on them. The rational question raised was why would someone give up on their benefits for the sake of justice? To this objection, I responded by claiming that if members of the oppressor group consider the lack of freedom of the oppressed as a potential danger to their freedom, they will be able to change sides and join the oppressed in their struggle for justice as allies. Yet, this response is a speculative one that assumes this positive conception of freedom is one that they want or can cultivate.
Contrary to this speculation, throughout the thesis I portrayed a less optimistic scenario. For instance, I claimed that persons by being occupied with *having more* and building wealth, often give up on freedom or justice in a collective sense. I attributed this disconnect from the common world to the notion of individuality replacing personhood. This contradiction of an optimistic speculation and a pessimistic description is the second problem that an objection revealed about my claim. Yet, rather than giving up on my claim, I would like to remind the reader that I asserted this thesis in the introduction to be “a journey of hope”, one that hopefully tolerates speculative responses as long as they are accompanied by certain descriptive elements that lead the journey. This is where I believe education will once again take the lead. Yet, I need to describe what type of education can address the problems that stand before the conception of justice as a personal responsibility for action. This will be clarified in the following section.

### 6.3. Resolutions

So far in this conclusion chapter, I have restated my claim, and explored the potential areas that require clarification by engaging in dialogue with my potential objections. This dialogue, as portrayed above, revealed certain problems, the solutions of which unified around education. Clearly, education has a major role to play in providing the building ground for the notion of justice as a personal responsibility for action to thrive. Thus, in this section, I propose particularly educational resolutions to the problems I identified with my claim. What I mean by education and the type of education I propose will be the main theme of this section.

#### 6.3.1. What is Education?

The question of what education is or consists of can be a research topic of its own. For the time and space restrictions of a master’s thesis, I will not be providing an in-depth conceptual
analysis of education. Instead, I will provide a brief description and distinction that will help inform the following educational resolutions I propose and provide a rationale for its connection to the particular conception of justice I have developed. Amongst the richness and variety of disciplines, traditions and worldviews of the people in my master’s program in Educational Studies, there has been a commonality on one thing: that is the humble approach that everyone takes towards explaining what education is. This is not simply an avoidance of big concepts for the sake of brevity, as I am doing so in this section, but the impossibility of pre-determining what can be educational in one’s journey through life. Even the seemingly distinct educational activities such as teaching and learning, or sites such as schools and universities may not always be educational. This is what Rocha calls the “mystery of education”94. Thus, in the following sections, my use of the word ‘education’ should be considered in this widest possible sense, with the caution that it is not referring to compulsory schooling, which may or may not be a part of education, yet not its equivalent.

Despite the difficulty of defining education, there is a particular way that I use the word that requires some clarity. As a resolution to the problems I have identified about the concept of justice as a personal responsibility for action, I particularize education to be a way of cultivation of the human person to be introduced into a world, in which there will be a plurality of personhoods that require a response. Education is a responsibility that Arendt places on adults who bring children to this world.95 Similarly, I place education as a role belonging to both parents and teachers by prioritizing two goals: to enable an understanding of personhood as a

94 Samuel D. Rocha, Folk Phenomenology, 44-72.

95 In her essay “The Crisis of Education”, Arendt writes: “Authority has been discarded by the adults, and this can mean only one thing: that the adults refuse to assume responsibility for the world into which they have brought the children”, Arendt, “The Crisis of Education,” in Between Past and Future, 187.
historical being and to cultivate a dispositional change in the child or the student from a central self to transcendence of the self to engage with others. In the following section, I claim these two goals that I attribute to education can overcome the two problems that the objections to my main claim have brought forth.

6.3.2. Education for Being

The first resolution I propose for the problem of lacking knowledge and familiarity with the other is an education that aims to cultivate personhood as belonging to a common world. Thus far, I have established that the other is a person existing in relation to the self. Thus, to know the other requires a knowledge of the self that actualizes itself in a world of relations. What this entails from an educational perspective, is the need to build the knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions necessary to understand the implications of being born into a pre-existing world. Thus, education for being, first and foremost, brings an awareness to personhood, educating children or students for what they are: human persons. Being a human person, as described in the third chapter, requires one to be a part of an existing world through the threads of commonality and relationality with particular traditions, history and land as well as being a unique whole that is distinct and capable of renewing the old world.

Being a part of an existing world points to a need for establishing relations with the person to an already existing world. In her essay titled The Crisis in Education, Arendt suggests that “since the world is old, always older than [people] themselves, learning inevitably turns towards the past.”96 Therefore, an education that is concerned exclusively with the present and the future is one that prevents the development of the self, as a relational being and provides a

96 Ibid., 192.
partial understanding of truth. An education that aims to cultivate personhood, requires this critical understanding of a pre-existing world. This historical and relational understanding of the self and the other is particularly important in making the historical barriers that exist before the personhood of others who have been marginalized, dehumanized or colonized to become visible to the subject appearing in public. This historical understanding is necessary for establishing the sense of being a part of something, being born into a world that isn’t just there but has been made so.

Once this understanding of a world, of which the self is a part, is established, the next step is to address the wholeness inherent to the personhood. As being a part requires a historical understanding of the world that pre-exists, being a unique whole requires the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions necessary to renew the old world. Biesta states “that education is not just about the reproduction of what we already know or of what already exists, but is genuinely interested in the ways in which new beginnings and new beginners can come into the world.”97

Thus, if the previously described goal of education is to show the person who she is in relation to an existing world, education in cultivating the person as a whole aims to bring the person to the world as an active agent capable of acting, affecting its future directions. In other words, education of the person to be a whole enables the person to be an active subject capable of action rather than turning the person to an object that can find itself a place in a structured, pre-determined world. Thus, if the first goal of education is to help a person understand who she is, the second goal is to show her what she can be. The latter is the main theme of the following section.

6.3.3. Education for Being More

The misconception of education aiming for an individual to have more is a major risk standing before the understanding of justice as a personal responsibility for action. Thus, in this section, I propose a solution particularly for the objection that suggests those who benefit from injustices may not join the struggle for the pursuit of justice. This solution that I propose builds on education for being a person and suggests education should also aim for being more. In his prologue to The Beautiful Risk of Education, Gert Biesta argues that the present efforts, in the context of schooling, to take education under total control, to make it standard, concrete, and empirical, by establishing practices that mimic the one-sided input-output relationship is essentially an attempt to reduce the person to an object. His argument is based on the unfixed nature of personhood, which makes its evaluation through empirical ways a denial of this reality. Thus, he asserts that education is risky, but as the title of his book suggests, that is where its beauty lies.

Today the real risk that education faces is rather an ugly one: the obsession to control education by controlling teaching and learning. The necessary and sufficient conditions for control are uniformity, stability and predictability all of which are against the nature of personhood as a unique being and the world we live in with others. It seems that today, the concern of education in schooling contexts is neither the person nor the world the person lives in with others. The fact that the world that is shared with others is precisely what makes it unpredictable. The other, is called so because of its distinctness, which the subject in relation lacks a familiarity with until entering into a dialogical relationship. Biesta places education at the

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98 Ibid., 1-5.
center of this relationship. He writes: “[Educational concern] lies in the transformation of what is 
*de facto* desired into what can *justifiably* be desired—a transformation that can never be driven
from the perspective of the self and its desires, but always requires engagement with what or
who is other.” Thus, education cannot be solely about the self. It requires an acknowledgement
of the relational existence of the self in a world with others. In chapter four, I have claimed that
the other lays the responsibility on the subject to respond to their demand to be fully human, and
not be reduced to an object. Then, education is the means through which the self can transcend
itself to conceive of the other, as a being beyond the self, by entering into a dialogical
relationship with the desire of the other, to be human.

Adding to the first goal of education to be a person, is to transcend oneself to conceive
others in other words, an education to be more. Today, entering into this dialogical relationship
with the other seems to be a goal that education in context of schools has abandoned. Schools
and universities as educational sites today seem to be more occupied with having (having a skill,
a diploma, a certificate etc.) rather than being (dispositional changes, being a person,
transcending oneself). This is the major barrier that breaks the relational bonds that allow subject
and the other to coexist. This, from a justice perspective, is the real risk that education is facing
today. This is a risk that W.E.B. DuBois has warned us against in 1903. He wrote:

> We are training not isolated men (sic) but a living group of men (sic), –nay, a group within
> a group. And the final product of our training must be neither a psychologist nor a
> brickmason, but a man (sic). And to make men (sic), we must have ideals, broad, pure, and
> inspiring ends of living, –not sordid money-getting, not apples of gold. The worker must
> work for the glory of his handiwork, not simply for pay; the thinker must think for truth,
> not for fame. And all this is gained only by human strife and longing. ¹⁰⁰

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⁹⁹ Ibid., 3.

Thus, DuBois called for an education that recognizes the impacts of human activity on a broader cause and effect nexus that transcends the life of an individual in isolation but rather calls for a person in relation to others. DuBois called this mentality of gaining a skill to have a job miseducation, a dangerous risk that the recently emancipated black youth in post-slavery America cannot afford to take. He saw this pre-occupation with having to be a major risk for the oppressed groups, in this case the black folk, as it shifts the focus from thinking to doing. DuBois would most likely consider, the current skills-based educational models that lack critical reflection to be miseducating, especially for the historically oppressed groups, as it can give birth to strict law-abiders, those who can follow orders, carry out duties but lack the reflection that may result in slavery of another kind. Thus, an education of having more, is a potential danger for the oppressed groups furthering their oppression, by not allowing a critical reflection to accompany one’s acts.

This danger that DuBois foresaw for the oppressed is one that Freire built on from the perspective of the oppressor. Freire doesn’t believe that oppressors can join the struggle for justice as they lack the humane means to do so by being dehumanized through their own oppression. The rationale that Freire provides for this idea is as follows: “the oppressors do not perceive their monopoly on having more as a privilege which dehumanizes others and themselves…For them, having more is an inalienable right, a right they acquired through their own ‘effort’, with their courage to take ‘risks’.”

Thus for Freire, what the oppressor lacks and needs is a transformation of their worldview that sees the world from the narrow window of the

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101 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 59. I would like to encourage the reader to read this quote in tandem with the responses of the native speakers I have included in the Introduction chapter, who justify the argument for a higher salary and benefits by characterizing their decision to relocate to Turkey as a sacrifice. For reference, here is one quote: “we have made sacrifices to be here. My asset is my accent and my experience. That should be compensated and paid at a premium rate.”
self. What needs to change is their view of the world as “desired” to “desirable”, which requires a critical understanding of a world shared with others.\(^\text{102}\) Thus, I believe that the transformative power of education is that it can include the oppressed into the struggle for justice as a personal responsibility for action. Before changing our educational goals to being more, perceiving the other and responding to other’s personhood in other words, re-humanizing education, including the oppressor in the struggle will not be possible. Therefore, building on DuBois and Freire, I claim that a revolution in education to re-orient the goals of persons from having more to being more is essential in establishing a collective understanding and vision for justice.

6.4. Conclusion

Bringing this all back to where I have started, I conclude that our commitment to justice in the societies that we live in needs to be more truthful to the nature of the concept, which requires a transcendence from the material self to see the self and others as human persons. In the case of the preceding empirical study, the justification of privileges in the form of material benefits which came mostly from the native English teachers demonstrates that hard work has little to do with gaining an equal access to existing material resources. This is one of the myths of capitalism that often blinds the privileged to the realities of those who stand no chance in the very same system. The economic cooperation and interdependence of people in modernity, as suggested by Charles Taylor, hasn’t clearly translated into solidarity.\(^\text{103}\) The failure of purely

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\(^{103}\) He writes: “But interdependence does not by itself breed solidarity, as it should according to the philosophy of enlightened self-interest…Without a widespread sense of solidarity the whole of our system is in grave danger of breakdown.” Charles Taylor, “The Agony of Economic Man,” 224.
economic systems of organization to promote solidarity among the people is the gap that can be filled with justice, as a concept of relationality.

The conception of justice that I have offered in this study as a personal responsibility for action can bring that much needed solidarity back to the common world in which we all live. Perhaps, rather than a future directed, progressive agenda to handle the problems that economically defined societies have produced, we may take a different route to go back to remembering our relational existence which has been blurred by the premises of capitalism and the self-interested individual. By beginning to embrace justice as a personal responsibility for action, each and every one of us can begin to act and renew the world in unique ways through our relations with our immediate others. As these relational entanglements are weaved with love, instead of greed or fear, the solidary cooperation through justice can make this world a more livable place for all.
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