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Sinem Elkatip HATİPOĞLU

Yrd. Doç. Dr. | Assist. Prof. Dr.

İstanbul Şehir Üniversitesi, İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Fakültesi, Felsefe Bölümü, İstanbul-Türkiye
İstanbul Şehir University, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Philosophy,
İstanbul-Turkey
sinemhatipoglu@sehir.edu.tr

***Prohairesis* in Aristotle and Epictetus: A Comparative Study**

Abstract

The concept of *prohairesis* in Aristotelian ethics, usually translated as deliberate choice or policy decision, is later revived by Epictetus, a major figure among the Stoics. In this paper I critically examine how the concept of *prohairesis* is employed by Aristotle and by Epictetus and the differences involved. Aristotle's concept of *prohairesis* acquires its meaning in a framework according to which we live in a world where at least some things are up to us whereas Epictetus's concept of *prohairesis* acquires its meaning in a framework where nothing is up to us. As such, Aristotle's concept of *prohairesis* is essentially about choice and assumes freedom and thereby more ethical in character, whereas Epictetus's concept of *prohairesis* is used to provide a metaphysical basis for freedom and as such less ethical in character.

Keywords

Prohairesis, Aristotle, Epictetus, Choice, Freedom, Deliberation.

Introduction

In this paper, I wish to look at how the concept of *prohairesis* is used in Aristotle and Epictetus and the differences therein. It is hard to translate *prohairesis* into one English word, not only because of the complexity of the meaning of the word, but also because of the way its meaning has changed from Aristotle to Epictetus. That being the case, different words and phrases have been used to refer to *prohairesis* such as ‘will’, ‘decision’, ‘policy decision’, ‘policy’, ‘purpose’, ‘moral purpose’, ‘choice’, ‘intention’, and even ‘habitus of using foresight’.¹ Regarding Epictetus’s works, Long (2002) uses the word ‘volition’ to refer to *prohairesis*, and W. A. Oldfather (1996-7) translates it as ‘moral purpose’.

According to Bennett (2001), the recent secondary literature on ancient and Hellenistic philosophy has a tendency to translate *prohairesis* as ‘deliberate choice’ in Aristotle and ‘purposive choice’ in Epictetus. Yet, closer examination is required to do justice to understanding the differences between Aristotle’s concept of *prohairesis* and Epictetus’s concept of *prohairesis*. Thus the purpose of this paper is to provide the reader with a better understanding of what both Aristotle and Epictetus meant by *prohairesis*. I will start first with Aristotle’s concept of *prohairesis* and then Epictetus’s. The choice of this order is simply to be faithful to the chronological order of the use of the word.

Prohairesis in Aristotle

In *Nicomachean Ethics* 5.8, there is a distinction made by Aristotle between a just man, and a man who acts justly. When a man acts justly as a result of voluntary action, he is merely acting justly, and it does not necessarily follow that he is a just man. Likewise, when a man has done some injustice, it does not necessarily mean that he is an unjust man (*NE* 5.8, 1135b 23-24). The distinction between a just man and a man who merely acts justly is caused by the presence or lack of deliberation before his action. In Aristotelian ethics, virtue or vice is directly related to the presence and nature of deliberation before an action, and not merely to the voluntary action itself. Voluntary actions extend more widely than actions that follow deliberation. Aristotle says that both animals and children share in voluntary actions where they would not thereby be showing any deliberation (*NE* 3.2, 1111b 6-9). *Prohairesis* is a choice made as a result of deliberation, and it is before the action; hence the prefix *-pro* (*NE* 3.2, 1112a 15-17).

Both reason and desire reside in Aristotle’s *prohairesis*. One has a desire for some end, and with a view to that end, he is using his reason to find the best means to achieve it. Therefore I believe that Sorabji (2005: 314) captures the essence of the concept of *prohairesis* in Aristotle when he says that it is a “policy decision, e.g. for a kind of diet, which is desired because deliberation has shown that it will lead to your goals, in this case health”. The following passage from Aristotle, in relation to *prohairesis*, supports this idea (*NE* 3.3, 1112b 15-18),

¹ For more details on different translations see Dobbin (1991: 113).

Having set the end they consider how and by what means it is to be attained; and if it seems to be produced by several means they consider by which it is most easily and best produced, while if it is achieved by one only they consider how it will be achieved by this and by what means *this* will be achieved...

It is usually taken that *prohairesis* is a decision about a general policy rather than a particular action. (Sorabji 1973-4: 110-11; Dobbin 1991: 115) For example, if one values wealth in life, one's policy decision to get rich could be either by way of theft or hard work. Since deliberation regarding one's *prohairesis* has to do with the means and not the end (*NE* 3.3, 1112b 12, 1112b 33-34), one's valuing wealth is not his *prohairesis*. It is theft or hard work that will be the man's *prohairesis*.

Theft or hard work as a man's *prohairesis* is presumed to be under one's own power. However, one does not deliberate about things that cannot be brought about by his own efforts (*NE* 3.3, 1112a 31). Another feature of deliberation before *prohairesis* is that it involves inquiry. But not all inquiry is deliberation (*NE* 3.3, 1112b 21-22). For instance, it is possible to inquire about mathematics, but one cannot thereby deliberate about mathematical truths. That is, one does not deliberate about necessary things, or about eternal things, or things that happen from fortune, etc. One deliberates only about what is in his power (*NE* 3.3, 1112a 20-30). Yet one should not be deliberating on every single matter, like whether something is a loaf of bread. These are matters of perception or, one would forever be in a state of deliberation (*NE* 3.3, 1113a 1-3).

Prohairesis is not the deliberation itself. Instead it is the choice arrived at through deliberation with a certain view to the good of the end to be achieved. As such, it originates action, because choice is the efficient cause of action (*NE* 6.2, 1139a 32-33). It is directly related to virtue, since virtues are about what promotes an end, and *prohairesis* involves deliberation about the means to an end. Aristotle says "for in choice lies the essential element of excellence and character" (*NE* 8.13, 1163a 22-23), i.e., in one's *prohairesis*. Considering the distinction mentioned above between a just man and a man who merely acts justly, *prohairesis* would be the better criterion when compared to action for judging the individual's motives since it reflects the general policy embraced by the individual and thereby provides a better insight into the individual's motives. It is also the better criterion when determining the character. Imagine two men who both value wealth, but one's policy decision to get rich is by theft and the other's is by hard work. According to Aristotle both the goal and the means reveal character. Now there is definitely a difference between these men's characters, which is not revealed by what they value, but by what each one's *prohairesis* is.

One may object to this point by saying that the action might just as well serve the purpose of revealing one's character. The man, whose *prohairesis* is theft, will steal things, and the man, whose *prohairesis* is hard work, will not. It may seem then, by looking at the particular actions, one can also infer something about each one's character. However, the man, whose *prohairesis* is hard work, may end up stealing things under a particular set of circumstances, not because he has a general policy to steal things, but because he is forced to, due to the nature of the circumstances he is under. On such occasions, it would be misleading to look at this particular action of stealing and infer something about the man's character. That is why *prohairesis* is the

better criterion than action in determining one's character. Aristotle says (*NE* 5.6, 1134a 19-22),

For a man might even lie with a woman knowing who she was, but the origin of this act might be not choice but passion. He acts unjustly, then, but is not unjust; e.g. a man is not a thief, yet he stole, nor an adulterer, yet he committed adultery; and similarly in all other cases.

where 'choice' is a translation for *prohairesis*.

Sorabji (1973-4) however notes that there are some inconsistencies in Aristotle's concept of *prohairesis*. In what follows I try to address them. It has been said that *prohairesis* needs to be in one's power. However, consider a case where a man's *prohairesis* is to defend his country at times of war. Yet, given his age and gender it may be compulsory that he goes to war to defend his country. As a result one might say that one's *prohairesis* is not always in one's power. But this is confusing the man's general choice, which could have been made years before there was any war, with the particular instance of going to war. Whether military service is compulsory or not is really not the issue here, because had it not been compulsory, given his *prohairesis*, the man would have gone to war anyway. *Prohairesis* is about the general choice which remains to be under the man's power.

Another seeming difficulty with the concept of *prohairesis* is that considering some actions, it seems like there is not always time for deliberation. So one might say they lack *prohairesis*. Yet it's been also mentioned that *prohairesis* is the better criterion in determining character when compared to action. There is thus a tension as to what really reveals character; one's immediate response to things of sudden nature – which supposedly lacks deliberation and thereby *prohairesis* –, or as mentioned before, one's *prohairesis*. Aristotle acknowledges this tension when he says

(...) it is thought to be the mark of a braver man to be fearless and undisturbed in sudden alarms than to be so in those that are foreseen; for it must have proceeded more from a state of character, ... for acts that are foreseen may be chosen by calculation and reason, but sudden actions in accordance with one's state of character (*NE* 3.8, 1117a 17-22).

Consider once again the man whose *prohairesis* is to defend his country. In the heat of the battle, when he performs a courageous act to rescue a friend, all may take place in a second where deliberation seems practically impossible. But it is a mistake to try to find the man's *prohairesis* before any *one* of his *particular* actions. As mentioned before, *prohairesis* is about the general choice and not the particular. Therefore lack of deliberation before immediate actions does not thereby show a lack of *prohairesis*. It is most likely that an individual is capable of immediate response under such circumstances as a result of his *prohairesis* since it is his *prohairesis* that puts him in a certain disposition. And without such disposition, it is possible that he acts differently or becomes a helpless bystander under unpredictable and sudden circumstances.

Another seeming difficulty with the concept of *prohairesis* is related to virtues like honesty, when honesty is taken to be an absolute commitment to tell the truth, no

matter what, in which case deliberation would not be needed.² I do not think such a difficulty can be brought up against Aristotle, because it violates his understanding of virtue in the first place. For Aristotle, virtue is about finding the middle way (*NE* 2.6, 1106b 15-18). So the essential element in one's virtuous act is not that one has followed a certain rule, viz., that of telling the truth, but that one has examined the particular circumstances against the background of one's *prohairesis*.

Going against the Aristotelian spirit, even if honesty is taken as an absolute commitment to tell the truth, there would still be no difficulty with the concept *prohairesis*, because there would need to be a deliberation to endorse such a commitment in the first place. For the person to endorse this type of commitment, he must first think about what he values, and whether telling the truth under all circumstances serves that which he values. As such, all the cases where he tells the truth could be said to be inspired by his *prohairesis*. Even if each particular case doesn't seem to involve deliberation anymore, because the person seems to be merely following a rule, one could not thereby say that there is lack of *prohairesis*, since it is his *prohairesis* that puts him in such a disposition, viz., that of telling the truth at all times, in the first place.

Lastly, consider the circumstances under which a person does not act in accordance with his *prohairesis*. Aristotle allows this possibility. He says that we may have a deliberate choice but we may also be tempted by other things and thereby become beside ourselves (*NE* 7.8, 1151a 1-7). Now, this does not mean that the *prohairesis* is weak. No such property as strength or weakness is attributed to *prohairesis*; or *prohairesis* may be seen as something like a will-power and I agree with Sorabji (2000: 326) when he says that the notion of will-power is absent in the concept of *prohairesis*. There is good and bad *prohairesis*, but not a strong and a weak one.

It might be worthwhile to look at the notion of incontinent action in Aristotle, in relation to the type of temptation mentioned above. Aristotle makes the point that although incontinence is a vice in one way, the incontinent man is not thereby vicious (*NE* 7.10, 1152a17). This is once again due to the presence or lack of deliberation. It has already been mentioned that *prohairesis* precedes action.³ The incontinent man then simply conflicts with his *prohairesis* on particular instances, since he is tempted by other things. He does not necessarily deliberate on vice. A man who cannot keep his diet does not *decide* to eat excessively. He is merely tempted by his appetite (*NE* 7.4, 1148a5-10).

This concludes the discussion of the concept of *prohairesis* in Aristotle. In short, I have taken Aristotle's *prohairesis* to be a general choice made about the best means to achieve that which one values, which is assumed to be under one's control. In the following part, I am going to look at Epictetus's concept of *prohairesis* and the particular way he revived this Aristotelian term, attaching it a new meaning.

² This example comes from Dobbin (1991).

³ Although, as mentioned before, not in the sense of a particular action.

Prohairesis in Epictetus

The question now is how and why Epictetus, a major figure among the Stoics, revived the term *prohairesis* in his philosophy. It is generally agreed that Epictetus departs from other Stoics by making *prohairesis* a central term for his philosophy. (Dobbin 1991: 115-116; Sorabji 2006: 191; Long 2002: 211) Dobbin argues that *prohairesis* in Epictetus can best be given an account for against the background of an ongoing debate at the time on fate and free will. He notes that the Stoics were compatibilists and that Chrysippus, a main figure in the systematization of Stoic philosophy, is reported to say “(...) the various categories of things in the world and the beginnings of causes are set in motion by the order, the law, and the necessity of fate.” (*ibid.*, 119) Dobbin (*ibid.*, 118) mentions that Stoics were attacked for not addressing the Aristotelian notion of *prohairesis* within the subject of fate. Even though Chrysippus goes on to say “But the prompting of our decisions and thoughts, and our actions, are controlled by each man’s particular will and disposition,”⁴ it could be argued that, subject to fate, an individual can’t be responsible for the type of person he is and his dispositions. In the light of this background, one could say that one of Epictetus’s motives in reviving the term *prohairesis* was to address the Peripatetic criticism.

However it is also worthwhile to note here that Epictetus was a slave for some time in his life and this probably had an effect on his philosophy and his view of freedom. In the introduction of the *Discourses*, Oldfather (1966: vii-viii) notes how much Epictetus values freedom, “(...) even its negative aspect alone, as almost the highest conceivable good.” On the same note, Dobbin (1991: 121) compares Chrysippus whom he takes to allow “man and other animals only so much autonomy as made their actions and character ‘co-fated’ with the operation of Zeus” to Epictetus who says “not even Zeus has power to overcome my *prohairesis*” (1.1.23).⁵ Hence it could be said that Epictetus wished to secure some form of freedom for mankind within the realm of the necessity of fate and used *prohairesis* to that end.

I say within the realm of the necessity of fate, because Epictetus does not seem to reject the necessity of fate.⁶ As such, the type of freedom to be secured is not freedom to do just what one wishes. Instead, as will become clear below, it is freedom in choosing one’s attitude towards the on-goings of life over which one has no control. This freedom is achieved by first taking *prohairesis* to be the only thing that is not subject to hindrance (1.18.17), and next, by taking the individual to be free to the extent that he takes himself to be his *prohairesis* (1.18.21). Identifying oneself with one’s *prohairesis* requires repetitive training. Consider the following passage where

⁴ As quoted in Dobbin (1991: 119).

⁵ Bobzien (2001) draws a useful distinction between freedom and that which depends on us. In this paper, as will become clear, freedom in the Epictetan sense is mainly freedom from restraint, hindrance, or prevention.

⁶ This is suggested when he says that even though animals lack the capacity to understand governance of God, the rational animal, which is the man, understands it, and can thus see that he is a part of a whole, and that parts should yield to the whole (4.7.8).

prohairesis is translated as ‘moral purpose’, which manifests the type of training Epictetus has in mind:

Go out of the house at early dawn, and no matter whom you see or whom you hear, examine him and then answer as you would to a question. What did you see? A handsome man, or a handsome woman? Apply your rule. Is it outside the province of the moral purpose, or inside? Outside. Away with it. What did you see? A man in grief over the death of his child? Apply your rule. Death lies outside the province of the moral purpose. Out of the way with it. Did a Consul meet you? Apply your rule. What sort of a thing is consulship? Outside the province of the moral purpose or inside? Outside. Away with it, too, it does not meet the test; throw it away, it does not concern you (3.3. 14-17).

For such training to be possible the capacity in humans to critically examine the on-goings of life in the way mentioned above needs to be secured. As such Epictetus takes this capacity in humans to come directly from the gods:

As was fitting, therefore, the gods have put under our control only the most excellent faculty of all and that which dominates the rest, namely, the power to make correct use of external impressions, but all the others they have not put under our control (1.1.7).

In fact it is not only a faculty given by the gods; it is a part of the gods themselves, so each human has within himself a portion of the gods. In the *Discourses*, one sees Zeus saying (1.1.12),

(...) we have given thee a certain portion of ourself, this faculty of choice and refusal, of desire and aversion, or, in a word, the faculty which makes use of external impressions; if thou care for this and place all that thou hast therein, thou shalt never be thwarted, never hampered, shalt not groan, shalt not blame, shalt not flatter any man.

When man uses this capacity wisely, he is expected to acquire the following disposition (1.1.23-24),

I must die: must I, then, die groaning too? I must be fettered: and wailing too? I must go into exile: does anyone, then keep me from going with a smile and cheerful and serene? “Tell your secrets.” I say not a word; for this is under my control. “But I will fetter you.” What is it that you say, man? fetter me? My leg you will fetter, but my moral purpose not even Zeus himself has power to overcome.

It is thus understood that humans are not free to change the course of life and what happens to them but are free to choose how they react to them. Hence like in Aristotle, in Epictetus too *prohairesis* is a kind of choice in its most general sense. However unlike Aristotle, Epictetus’s *prohairesis* is choice of a very particular kind; viz., choice regarding only how one reacts to what happens in life. In other words, what a person can freely choose is limited to only how he responds to what happens in life.

The novelty in Epictetus's attitude, as Bobzien (2001) points out too, is that he treats *no* physical thing as up to us (1.22.10-12).⁷

Under our control are moral purpose and all the acts of moral purpose; but not under our control are the body, the parts of the body, possessions, parents, brothers, children, country – in a word, all that with which we associate.

Long (2002) rightly takes Epictetus's understanding of freedom as not being constrained in one's mind-set by external events. The right mind-set would not be subject to frustration because it wants nothing that it cannot be assured of securing. What it wants is "its own" or "up to itself" anyway. (*ibid.*, 222) And if he wants other things, then he will not be free (1.4. 18-19);

(...) he who craves or shuns the things that are not under his control can be neither faithful nor free, but must himself of necessity be changed and tossed to and fro with them, and must end by subordinating himself to others (...).

It needs to be noted that when the gods give the capacity to "make use of external impressions" (1.1.12), they do not thereby give the capacity to make *correct* use of external impressions. However, this seems to be contradicted by the earlier passage where Epictetus says that "the gods have put under our control only the most excellent faculty of all ... the power to make *correct* use of external impressions" (1.1.7, my italics). Looking at numerous examples where Epictetus mentions how one can go wrong in interpreting external impressions (3.3. 17-19, 4.5.23, 3.8.3, 4.5.12), I believe that Epictetus does not take the god-given capacity to be an ability to make *correct* use of external impressions. It's just the capacity to make use of external impressions, correct or incorrect. Now if it turns out that one can make correct use of external impressions, it will still be as a result of the ability acquired from the gods since the ability to make use of external impressions is a necessary condition for making *correct* use of external impressions. Therefore, I believe that the two passages can in that sense be made compatible. But it should be understood that Epictetus does not take persons to by default be able to make correct use of external impressions. In fact making incorrect use of external impressions gives rise to another type of *prohairesis*, viz., the perverted *prohairesis*. In what follows I discuss what the perverted *prohairesis* is and how *prohairesis* compels *prohairesis*.

Prohairesis compelling Prohairesis

In light of the discussions so far, consider an ideal Epictetan man, who is held captive in a prison waiting for his verdict (1.1. 28-32). As he is waiting, it is getting closer to lunch time. If it turns out that he will be executed, he is ready to die; if not, then he simply goes to lunch, because it is time to eat. In other words, he welcomes both verdicts with the same attitude, since, as he has acknowledged before, the decision is not under his control, but how he reacts to it is.

⁷ She (2001: 332) compares Chrysippus to Epictetus. For the former, if I take a walk, and nothing prevents me from doing so, my taking a walk depends on me. Whereas for Epictetus, my taking a walk still does not depend on me, since something could in theory always stop me from taking a walk.

Consider then a slightly different case where the man is not merely waiting alone in his cell for the verdict, but is being tortured and has the means of committing suicide. The question is would an ideal Epictetan man commit suicide, or not?⁸ Now, according to the Stoics, torture is one of the circumstances under which suicide is allowed; however, suicide is not allowed as a way of avoiding pain but as a way of preventing the revelation of confidential information. (Sorabji 1993: 146-147; 2005: 350) Since Stoics acknowledge human nature, it is understood that the prisoner's strength may break at some point, causing him to reveal secrets. The action that is worth of praise is that the prisoner, knowing his nature, does not allow this and commits suicide before he tells the secrets.⁹

Even though Epictetus too acknowledges human nature¹⁰, an ideal Epictetan man should realize that his body or what happens to it is not something that is under his control and thus should not be influenced by the torture. And if how well one can internalize such a disposition depends on one's character, then one could say that Epictetus, like the other Stoics, would also allow suicide.

There is however an unfortunate consequence of this. Once the character's effect is acknowledged, it does not take long before one repeats the Peripatetic criticism, viz., that if a person's character, along with other things is determined by fate, it is meaningless to talk about his efforts to free himself from externalities.

To address these issues, and resolve the tension, one needs to refer to what Epictetus calls a perverted *prohairesis* and the possibility of *prohairesis* compelling *prohairesis*. Consider the following passage:

"But," says someone, "if a person subjects me to the fear of death, he compels me." "No, it is not what you are subjected to that impels you, but the fact that you decide it is better for you to do something of the sort than to die. Once more, then, it is the decision of your own will which compelled you, that is moral purpose compelled moral purpose. For if God had so constructed that part of His own being which He has taken from Himself and bestowed upon us, that it could be subjected to hindrance or constraint either from Himself or from some other, He were no longer God, nor would He be caring for us as He ought (1.17.25-28).

⁸ There is a passage in the *Discourses* where Epictetus opposes suicide (1.9.11), but in that passage he is addressing those who wish to free themselves of life, because they have realized their true nature and "their kinship to gods" and wish to "throw aside" all those fetters that are necessary for the management of life, and "depart to their kindred" (1.9.11). Hence it is not relevant to the question I raise.

⁹ Suicide may be seen as interfering with fate, within the context of Stoic belief in determinism, but I will not take up that discussion here.

¹⁰ For instance he says (1.2.8-10): "But for determining the rational and the irrational, we employ not only our estimates of the value of external things, but also the criterion of that which is in keeping with one's own character". He also mentions the case of a prize athlete who is in danger of dying unless his private parts are removed but that he doesn't submit, hardens his heart and dies (1.2.25). Epictetus comments that he died "as a man" (1.2.26), and when others tell him that another would have had his neck cut off if he could live without a neck, he responds by saying "This is what we mean by regard for one's proper character" (1.2.27-28).

This passage suggests that the prisoner is free to choose how he responds to torture since his *prohairesis* is the only unhindered thing. If he is scared of the pain, then he tells the secrets. If he is scared of revealing the secrets, then he commits suicide. If he is scared of nothing, he withstands the torture. That there will be a torture or not is not under the man's control but how one reacts to torture is. Hence even if one reveals the secrets as a consequence of torture, it cannot be said that he was forced to do it. Given the character of the person, withstanding the torture, giving in to pain and revealing the secrets, or committing suicide to avoid telling the secrets are all options.

However, the above analysis seems to undermine the effort put into the proper training of acquiring a disposition of indifference to things not under one's control, which Epictetus so explicitly writes about in the *Discourses*. It would not be clear what all that training is for. Hence one needs to address the question of whether there are just different types of *prohairesis*, none of which is particularly the right one, that are capable of compelling one another, or is there one particular type of *prohairesis*, which is the right one. If there is indeed one correct *prohairesis* then another related question is whether a person is free only if identifies herself with the right *prohairesis* or with any *prohairesis*.

I believe that the emphasis Epictetus puts on training, and the numerous examples he gives about how one can go wrong in interpreting external impressions, let alone the explicit distinction he draws between the right and wrong *prohairesis* definitely suggests that there is one correct *prohairesis*. According to Epictetus, the right kind of *prohairesis*, which is *prohairesis* directed at those under our control, and that alone is good, and the wrong kind of *prohairesis*, which is *prohairesis* directed at those that are not under our control, and that alone is bad. (4.5.32). This also relates to why *prohairesis* is taken to be the only virtue and the only vice (2.23.19).

But what about freedom? Since *prohairesis* is taken to be unhindered, I contend that both wrong and correct *prohairesis* would be unhindered. However a person is free only if one identifies oneself with the correct *prohairesis*. This does not mean there is only one kind of *prohairesis*, but it means that there is one *right* one and that is the one capable of freeing the person from hindrance. As long as one can make *correct* use of external impressions, then it will be the right *prohairesis* and to the extent that one identifies oneself with the right *prohairesis*, one will not be subject to hindrance. Then, going back to the example of the prisoner under torture, I believe that the absolutely ideal Epictetan man would not feel the need to commit suicide. But Epictetus, acknowledging the importance of character, does allow it.

Similarities and Differences

Given the discussions above, it is clear that Epictetus, by making *prohairesis* a central term in his philosophy, revived this Aristotelian term, but used it in a very different way. In this last part, I'd like to look at some of these differences, but also at one common point.

Considering the example of the prisoner under torture, if the prisoner does give in and tell the secrets, Aristotle would interpret this as a voluntary action (*NE* 3.1,

1110a15), thereby capable of being blameworthy, but perhaps as pardonable because the torture is more than what the prisoner could withstand (*NE* 3.1, 1110a25). Sorabji (1980: 272-275) mentions that there is a shift in Aristotle's approach, since in the *Eudemian Ethics* 2.8 and *Nicomachean Ethics* 5.8, he treats such actions as involuntary, whereas in the *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.1 as voluntary. He (2006: 189) rightly contrasts this to Epictetus. For Epictetus, there is no ambiguity; they would be voluntary actions. This is suggested by his response to a person feeling compelled when subjected to fear of death by another person (1.17.25-27);

No, it is not what you are subjected to that impels you, but the fact that you decide it is better for you to do something of the sort than to die...it is the decision of your own will which compelled you, that is moral purpose compelled moral purpose.

In Aristotle, whether it be a voluntary action, but pardonable, or an involuntary action there is an appeal to the exact nature of circumstances, e.g., the amount of torture the prisoner is exposed to, the physical strength of the prisoner, etc. As mentioned before, Epictetus too recognizes the effect of one's character. This was the reason why I thought Epictetus would allow suicide for the prisoner. But I also mentioned that the absolutely ideal Epictetan man would not feel the need to commit suicide anyway. For Aristotle on the other hand, there doesn't seem to be such an ideal brought about.

According to Epictetus what is in our power is very much constrained. This marks a distinction between him and Aristotle. Recalling the example of the man who values wealth in life, deliberation about the best means to achieve goods to get rich was, according to Aristotle in one's power. Hence such a man's *prohairesis* could be theft or hard work. Epictetus, on the other hand would have said, 'Riches? Wealth? Do they lie within the province of *prohairesis*? No! Away with it then!'. And whether one is rich or poor, the Epictetan man would say, 'So, I'm poor. Well, must I feel bad about it too?', or 'So, I'm rich. Should I feel happy about it too?' The rich could get poor the next day, or the poor, rich the next day as a result of external factors that are not under one's control. Therefore, there is no point in deliberating on the best means to achieve it or to avoid it.

One similarity between Aristotle's concept of *prohairesis* and Epictetus's is that they are both about a disposition of some sort. The question the Epictetan man should ask in relation to things he encounters in his daily life is whether they fall within the province of *prohairesis*. Epictetus says, "Go out of the house at early dawn, and no matter whom you see or whom you hear, examine him and then answer as you would to a question" (3.3. 14). Exercising this on a regular basis causes the man to gradually obtain a general attitude, viz., a disposition of a certain level of indifference to things that he has learned to recognize as being not under his control. Taken in that sense, the right *prohairesis* can be considered to be a trained policy. I discussed earlier how Sorabji takes *prohairesis* in Aristotle to also be about a policy decision, and how it is about the general, and not the particular. In relation to Aristotle's concept of *prohairesis*, I also discussed how one's immediate response to circumstances of sudden nature is possible due to a general disposition acquired by *prohairesis*.

Even though *prohairesis* is about the general in Aristotle, in Epictetus it seems like it can be both about the general and the particular. Focusing on the training Epictetus has in mind, one starts by examining things he encounters in daily life and answering as one would to a question, where the question is whether or not what he examines falls outside or inside the province of *prohairesis*. The kind of disposition gradually obtained is, like Aristotle, about the general, where the man is capable of making correct use of external impressions. The individual acts of this exercise, on the other hand, seem to be about particular instances. And even when the Epictetan man has a well-established trained policy, every now and then he may fail to make correct use of external impressions. Such acts of *prohairesis* – where it would now be the perverted *prohairesis* – also seem to be about the particular. In fact, those are the cases when perverted *prohairesis* compels the right one.

One very important aspect of Epictetus's *prohairesis* is the way it makes a metaphysics of self possible. When Kahn refers to Epictetus's notion of *prohairesis*, he says,

(...) this notion is presented not only as the decisive factor in practical existence but as the true self, the inner man, the "I" of personal identity. By contrast, for Plato and Aristotle the "I" or true self was nous, the principle of reason most fully expressed in theoretical knowledge. This shift is a momentous one for the evolution of the idea of person and selfhood. ... Platonic-Aristotelian identification of the person with his intellect offers no basis for a metaphysics of the self in any individual sense. Epictetus, on the other hand, identifies himself with something essentially personal and individualized (1988: 253).

Sorabji (2006: 117-118, 197) argues that Aristotle may have decided that practical reason is central for the true self, and did not commit himself to Plato's theoretical reason. He bases his view on Aristotle's acknowledgement of men's need for food, bodily health, and engagement in social life, and thereby their incapability of leading a life of pure intellect (*EE* 10.8, *NE* 10.8, 1178b 33-35). Therefore, perhaps Epictetus's notion of *prohairesis* is not such a momentous shift as Kahn (1988) would have it, but still very important due to the obvious link he draws between self and *prohairesis*. Long says,

Rather than treating the moral point of view as a disposition that is distinct from self-concern, he presents it as all of a piece with the natural or proper understanding of one's human identity. That identity is one's volition or *proairesis*, the only inalienable thing that we have and that we are. It is in virtue of *proairesis* that we are capable of conscience and self-consciousness – knowing ourselves, reflecting on who we are, and reasoning about how we should organize our lives (2002: 227).

Conclusion

Epictetus revived the Aristotelian term *prohairesis* to secure man's freedom. In doing so, he changed the meaning of *prohairesis*. Whereas in Aristotle it is a general choice about the best means to get what one values, in Epictetus, it is a way of not being subject to hindrance. The motives are completely different since in Aristotle it is already

assumed that some things are in one's power, so it makes sense to deliberate on the best means to get them, whereas in Epictetus, almost nothing is in under one's control, except one's *prohairesis*, and one has a chance to be unhindered only to the extent that he can identify himself with the right *prohairesis*. Hence in Epictetus, *prohairesis* is used to ensure freedom for man-kind whereas in Aristotle it is a consequence of the assumption that man-kind is to some extent free. *Prohairesis* serves as the metaphysical basis of freedom in Epictetus so it is less ethical in character when compared to Aristotelian *prohairesis* which can be used as a criterion for judging one's actions and character.¹¹

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Aristoteles ve Epiktetos'da *Prohairesis*: Karşılaştırmalı Bir İnceleme

Özet

Bu makalede, *prohairesis* kavramının Aristoteles ve Epiktetos'ta nasıl ele alındığını ve bu kavrayışlardaki farklılıkları inceleyeceğim. *Prohairesis*'i sadece kelime anlamının karmaşıklığı değil, aynı zamanda bu anlamın Aristoteles'ten Epiktetos'a kadar geçirdiği değişim bakımından da, tek bir kelime ile karşılamak suretiyle çevirmek oldukça zordur.

Bennett'e (2001) göre, antik ve Helenistik felsefe üzerine yazılmış olan ikincil literatürün, *prohairesis*'i Aristoteles için 'iradi tercih', Epiktetos içinse 'amaca yönelik tercih olarak çevirme yönünde bir eğilimi vardır. Yine de Aristoteles ve Epiktetos'un *prohairesis* kavramları arasındaki farkları anlayabilmek için daha derin bir inceleme gereklidir. Bu nedenle, makalenin amacı hem Aristoteles hem de Epiktetos'un *prohairesis* ile neyi kast ettiklerini anlayabilmek açısından daha iyi bir kavrayış sağlamaktır. Kelimenin kronolojik kullanımına sadık kalmak bakımından, önce Aristoteles'in daha sonra da Epiktetos'un *prohairesis* kavramını ele alacağım.

Aristoteles *Nikomakhos'a Etik* 5.8'de, adil insan ve adilane eyleyen insan arasında bir ayrım yapar. Bir insan gönüllü eylem sonucu olarak adilane bir biçimde eylemde bulunursa, buradan onun adil bir insan olduğu sonucu zorunlu olarak çıkar. Benzer şekilde, bir kişi adaletsiz bir şey yapmış ise, bu onun zorunlu olarak adaletsiz bir insan olduğu anlamına gelmez (*NE* 5.8, 1135b 23-24). Adil bir insanla yalnızca adilane eyleyen bir insan arasındaki farkın temel sebebi, onun eyleminden önce, etraflıca düşünmede veya bunun eksikliğinde yatar. *Prohairesis*, etraflıca düşünmenin sonucunda yapılan bir seçimdir ve eylemden önce gelir; *-pro* öneki bundan ötürü bulunur (*NE* 3.2, 1112a 15-17).

Aristoteles'in *prohairesis*'inde hem akıl hem de arzu bulunur. Bir kişinin bir amaç için duyduğu arzu vardır ve o bu amaca ulaşabilme yolunda gereken en iyi aracı elde etmek için aklını kullanır. Örneğin kişinin amacı sağlıklı olmaksız ve bunu arzuluyorsa, bu amaca hizmet edecek bir diyet türünü takip etme kararı olabilir. Bu örnekle Sorabji'nin (2005: 314) Aristoteles'in *prohairesis* kavramı ile ilgili olarak onun bir "tutum kararı" olduğunu söyleyerek kavramın özünü yakaladığını düşünüyorum.

Genellikle *prohairesis*'in özel bir eylemden ziyade genel bir davranış için verilen karar olduğu kabul edilir (Sorabji 1973-4: 110-11; Dobbin 1991: 115). Örneğin, bir kişi hayatta zenginliğe önem veriyorsa, onun zengin olmak için aldığı tutum kararı hırsızlık yapmak veya özveri ile çalışmak biçiminde olabilir. O kişinin *prohairesis*'i olacak olan şey hırsızlık veya özverili çalışmadır; zenginliğe verdiği önem değildir. Bir kişinin *prohairesis*'i olması bakımından hırsızlık veya özverili çalışma, onun kendi elinde olan bir şey olarak kabul edilir.

Prohairesis'in kendisi etraflıca düşünme değildir. Bunun yerine o etraflıca düşünme yoluyla ulaşılmış tercihtir. Bu özelliğe bağlı olarak da o, eylemi meydana getirir (*NE* 6.2, 1139a 32-33). *Prohairesis*, doğrudan erdemle ilintilidir çünkü erdemler bir amacı destekleyen yollarla ilgilidir ve *prohairesis* o amacı destekleyecek yollarla ilgili olarak etraflıca düşünmeyi içerir. Aristoteles şöyle

der: “tercihte, erdem in ve karakterin özsel ögesi bulunur” (NE 8.13, 1163a 22-23), yani bir kişinin *prohairesis*’inde. *Prohairesis*, birey tarafından benimsenmiş olan genel hareket tarzını yansıttığı ve dolayısıyla bireyin hareket ettirici nedenlerini daha iyi kavrama olanağı sağladığı için, eyleme nazaran, bireyin hareket ettirici nedenleri hakkında yargıda bulunma açısından daha iyi bir ölçüt olarak görülebilir. O ayrıca, bir kişinin karakteri hakkında yargı verirken de daha iyi bir ölçüttür. İkisi de zenginliğe değer veren, fakat biri çalarak öteki ise çalışarak zengin olan iki kişi düşünelim. Şurası açık ki, burada iki kişinin karakterleri arasında kesin olarak bir fark vardır. Ancak bu fark onların neye değer verdiklerinden değil, onların *prohairesis*’lerinin ne olduğundan yola çıkılarak anlaşılabilir.

Sorabji (1973-4) Aristoteles’in *prohairesis* kavramında görünen bir takım tutarsızlıkları tartışır. Örneğin, *prohairesis*’in bir kişinin elinde olması gerektiği söylenmiştir. Fakat *prohairesis*’i, savaş zamanında ülkesini savunmak olan bir adamı ele alalım. Nihayet yaşı ve cinsiyeti de bilindiğine göre, ülkesini savunmak için savaşa gitmesi zorunlu görünebilir. Sonuç olarak *prohairesis*’in her zaman kişinin elinde olmadığı ileri sürülebilir. Ancak bu yorum, adamın ortada savaş yokken yıllar önce de alınmış olabilecek kararını, belirli bir savaşa katılma durumundan ayırt edememe sonucunda oluşur. Onun *prohairesis*’i göz önüne alındığında, zorunlu askerlik söz konusu olmasa dahi savaşa katılmayı tercih ederdi. *Prohairesis* genel kararlar ilgilidir ve kişinin kontrolü altındadır.

Prohairesis ile ilgili görünen diğer bir zorluk da, bazı eylemler göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, her zaman etraflıca düşünmek için zaman olmadığıdır. O halde bu gibi eylemlerde *prohairesis* bulunmadığı söylenebilir. *Prohairesis*’i ülkesini savunmak olan adamı tekrar düşünelim. Savaşın sırasında, silah arkadaşını kurtarmak için cesaret dolu bir eylemde bulunduğu, her şey etraflıca düşünmenin pratik olarak imkânsız görüldüğü bir hal içinde meydana gelebilir. Fakat bu adamın *prohairesis*’ini onun belirli eylemleri içinde bulunan herhangi bir eyleminden önce bulmaya çalışmak yanlış olacaktır. Daha önce belirttiği gibi *prohairesis* belirli değil genel tercihle ilgilidir. Benzer şartlar altında, bir bireyin *prohairesis*’i sonucunda anında tepki verme kapasitesine sahip olması yüksek bir ihtimaldir, çünkü ona mevcut karakterini (doğasını) veren yine onun *prohairesis*’idir.

Prohairesis kavramıyla ilgili olarak görünen bir diğer zorluk, etraflıca düşünmenin ihtiyaç duyulmadığı izlenimini veren türde erdemlerle ilgili olabilir. Mesela dürüstlük, hangi koşulda olursa olsun, doğruyu söylemek için mutlak bir taahhüt olarak alındığında etraflıca düşünmek gereksiz gözükabilir (Dobbin: 1991). Böyle bir zorluğun Aristoteles’e karşı ileri sürülebileceğini düşünmüyorum, çünkü bu en başta onun erdem anlayışına uymaz. Aristoteles için erdem orta yolu bulmak, ölçülü olmaktır (NE 2.6, 1106b 15-18). Öyleyse bir kişinin erdemli eylemindeki özsel öge onun boyun eğdiği belirli bir kuralda, yani doğruyu söylemekte değil; onun *prohairesis*’i çerçevesinde içinde bulunduğu koşulları incelemesinde yatar. Ve dürüstlük, doğruyu söyleme yolunda mutlak bir taahhüt olarak alınsa dahi, en başta etraflıca düşünme böyle bir taahhüdü desteklemek için yine de gereklidir.

Son olarak, öyle bir durum varsayalım ki bir kişi mevcut şartlar altında *prohairesis*’i gereğince eylesin. Aristoteles bu olasılığı dikkate alır. O, dikkatlice tasarlanmış bir tercihe sahip olabileceğimizi fakat aynı zamanda başka şeyler tarafından baştan çıkarılıp, böylece kendimizi kaybedebileceğimizi de

söyler (NE 7.8, 1151a 1-7). Ancak bu, *prohairesis*'in zayıf olduğu anlamına gelmez. Güç veya zayıflık gibi bir nitelik *prohairesis*'e atfedilmez; yoksa *prohairesis* irade gücü gibi bir şey olarak görülebilir ve ben bu bağlamda Sorabji'nin (2000: 326) irade gücü kavramının *prohairesis*'te eksik olduğu düşüncesine kayılıyorum. İyi ve kötü *prohairesis* vardır, ancak güçlü ve zayıf olandan söz edilemez.

Kısacası, Aristoteles'in *prohairesis* kavramı, bir kişinin değer verdiği, onun kontrolü altında olduğu farz edilen şeye ulaşma yolundaki en iyi araç ile ilgili yapılmış genel bir tercihi içerir. Sonraki kısımda, Epiktetos'un *prohairesis* kavramını ve onun bu Aristotelesçi kavramı, ona yeni bir anlam yükleyerek canlandırmak suretiyle ele aldığı özel biçimi inceleyeceğim.

Epiktetos'un, *prohairesis*'i felsefesinin merkezinde konumlanan bir kavram olarak ortaya koymasının, onu diğer Stoacı filozoflardan ayıran bir nokta olduğu konusunda genellikle fikir birliği vardır (Dobbin 1991: 115-116; Sorabji 2006: 191; Long 2002: 211). Dobbin, Epiktetos'ta *prohairesis*'i en iyi şekilde açıklamak için o zamanlarda kader ve özgür irade üzerine devam eden bir tartışmayı göz önünde bulundurmanız gerektiğini söyler. Stoacıların bağdaşırcılığı kabul ettiklerini ama Aristotelesçi *prohairesis* kavramını kader dâhilinde ele almadıkları için hücumu uğradıklarını belirtir. Çünkü kadere tabi olması bakımından, bir bireyin, ne tipte bir insan olduğundan ve bunun kendisine verdiği doğadan ötürü sorumlu tutulamayacağı tartışılabilir. Bu arka planın ışığında, Epiktetos'un *prohairesis* kavramını yeniden canlandırmadaki temel gerekçelerinden bir tanesinin bu Peripatetik eleştiriyi ele almak olduğu söylenebilir.

Bununla beraber, Epiktetos'un hayatının belli bir dönemini köle olarak geçirdiğini ve bu durumun onun felsefesi ile özgürlük görüşü üzerinde büyük olasılıkla etkisi olduğunu belirtmek faydalı olacaktır. *Söylevler*'in giriş kısmında, Oldfather (1966: vii-viii) Epiktetos'un özgürlüğe ne kadar değer verdiğine değinir. Aynı nokta ile alakalı olarak, Dobbin (1991: 121) insan ve diğer hayvanların, Zeus'un hükmüyle çelişmeyecek ölçüde otonomi sahibi olmalarına izin verdiğini düşündüğü Hrisippos'u, "Zeus bile benim *prohairesis*'imin üstesinden gelecek güce sahip değildir" (1.1.23) diyen Epiktetos'la karşılaştırır. Böylelikle, Epiktetos'un özgürlüğün bir formunu, kader zorunluluğu olan âlemin içinde yaşayan insanlık için muhafaza ettiği ve bu maksatla *prohairesis*'i kullandığı söylenebilir.

Kader zorunluluğu olan âlemin içinde ifadesini kullandım, çünkü Epiktetos kaderin zorunlu olduğunu reddeder görünmemektedir (4.7.8). Böyle olunca da, muhafaza altına alınacak olan özgürlük, kişinin istediğini yapması özgürlüğü değil, kişinin kontrol sahibi olmadığı hayatın gidişatı doğrultusunda takınacağı tavrı seçmesi anlamındaki özgürlüktür. Bu özgürlük, öncelikle *prohairesis*'i engellenmeye maruz kalmayan tek şey olarak ele almak (1.18.17), ikinci olarak ise, bireyi, kendisini *prohairesis*'i ile bir tuttuğu ölçüde özgür görmek (1.18.21) yoluyla kazanılır. Bir kişinin kendisini *prohairesis*'i ile özdeşleştirmesi yoğun bir eğitim gerektirir (3.3. 14-17).

Böyle bir eğitiminin olanaklı olabilmesi için, insanlarda bulunan, yaşam içinde sürediden şeyleri eleştirel biçimde sorgulama kapasitesinin koruma altına alınması gerekmektedir. Bu sebeple, Epiktetos insanlarda bulunan söz konusu kapasiteyi doğrudan Tanrılardan geliyormuş olarak kabul eder (1.1.7). İnsan kapasitesini bilgece kullandığı zaman, bir kayıtsızlık eğilimi elde etmesi beklenir (1.1.23-24). Böylece, insanların hayatın akışını ve başlarına gelen şeyleri değiştirmekte özgür

olmadıkları ancak başlarına gelen şeylere nasıl tepki gösterecekleri konusunda özgür oldukları anlaşılır. Bundan dolayı Aristoteles'teki gibi, Epiktetos'ta da *prohairesis* en genel anlamıyla bir tercih biçimini ifade eder. Fakat Aristoteles'ten farklı olarak, Epiktetos'un *prohairesis*'i çok belirli bir tercih türüdür; yani, sadece kişinin hayatta olan bitene nasıl tepki verdiğiyle bağlantılı olarak anlaşılan bir tercih.

Long (2002) haklı olarak Epiktetos'un özgürlük anlayışını, kişinin zihniyeti içerisinde dışsal olaylar tarafından kısıtlanmamış olmak anlamında ele alır. Doğru zihin yapısı, hayal kırıklığının mahkûmiyeti altında olmaz, çünkü o kendisinin elde edemeyeceği hiçbir şeyi istemez. Onun istediği zaten "kendisinin" veya "kendisine bağlıdır" (a.g.e. 222). Ve eğer o başka şeyler istiyorsa, o zaman özgür olmayacaktır (1.4. 18-19).

Bir hapishanede mahkûm olarak tutulan ve hükmünü bekleyen ideal bir Epiktetosçu düşünelim (1.1. 28-32). Bekledikçe, zaman öğle yemeği vaktine yaklaşmaktadır. Eğer idam edileceği sonucuna ulaşırsa, ölmeye hazırdır; eğer bu karar çıkmazsa, basit bir şekilde her zamanki gibi öğle yemeğine gidecektir, çünkü yemek vakti gelmiştir. Başka bir ifadeyle, her iki olasılığı da aynı tavırla kucaklar, çünkü daha önce de kabul ettiği üzere, verilecek karar onun kontrolü altında değildir; fakat karar ne olursa olsun vereceği tepki kontrolü altındadır.

Fakat ya bu kişi işkence görüyorsa ve intihar etme imkânına sahipse? Buradaki soru şudur: İdeal bir Epiktetosçu intihar eder mi etmez mi? Stoacılar göre, işkence, intihar etmenin izin verildiği koşullardan birini ifade eder; ne var ki, intihara acıdan kaçmak amacıyla değil, gizli bir bilginin açığa çıkmasını önlemek şartıyla izin verilmiştir (Sorabji, 1993: 146-147; 2005: 350). Stoacılar insan doğasını kabul ettikleri için, mahkûmun dayanma gücünün belli bir seviyede kırılabileceği ve onun bazı sırları açıklamasına neden olabileceği anlaşılır bir durumdur. Takdire şayan olan eylem, mahkûmun kendi doğasının bilincinde olarak bu duruma izin vermemesi ve sırları söylemeden intihar etmesidir.

Epiktetos da (1.2.8-10, 1.2.25-28) insan doğasını ve bireyin karakterinin etkisini kabul eder, dolayısıyla öyle görünür ki diğer Stoacılar gibi o da intiharı hoş görür. Öte yandan bu durumun talihsiz bir sonucu vardır. Bireysel karakterin etkisi bir kere onaylandığında, kişinin kendisini dışsal durumlardan kurtarmak için gösterdiği çabalar ve buna bağlı olarak Epiktetos'un hakkında çok detaylı bir biçimde yazdığı eğitim önemsizleştirilmiş olur.

Bu sorunları ele almak ve gerilimi çözmek için yapılması gereken, Epiktetos'un sapkın *prohairesis* dediği kavrama ve bir *prohairesis*'in başka bir *prohairesis*'i etkileme olasılığı ile ilgili açıklamalarına başvurmaktır. Epiktetos (1.17.25-28) bir mahkûmun, *prohairesis*'i engellenemez olduğu için, işkenceye nasıl karşılık vereceğini seçmekte özgür olduğunu ileri sürer. O halde, işkenceden korksa ve acıya kayıtsız kalamayıp sırları söylese bile, onun bunu yapmaya zorlandığı söylenemez. Peki bu durumda kişinin kendini *prohairesis*'i ile özdeşleştirme ve elinde olmayan şeylere karşı bir kayıtsızlık eğilimi kazanma çabaları boşa mıdır? Bunu anlamak için, hiçbir tanesi özel olarak doğru olmayan fakat birbirini etkileyebilen farklı *prohairesis*'lerin mi yoksa doğru olan tek bir *prohairesis*'in mi olup olmadığı sorusu ele alınmalıdır. Eğer gerçekten de tek bir doğru *prohairesis* mevcut ise, bir başka bağlantılı soru, bir kişinin kendisini sadece doğru olan *prohairesis* ile mi yoksa herhangi bir *prohairesis* ile mi özdeşleştirilmesiyle özgür olacağıdır.

Epiktetos'un eğitime yaptığı vurgu ve dışsal izlenimlerin nasıl yanlış yorumlanabileceğine dair verdiği sayısız örnek, üstüne bir de doğru ve yanlış *prohairesis* arasında yaptığı bariz ayırım, tek bir doğru *prohairesis* olduğunu düşündürür. Epiktetos'a göre, doğru tipteki *prohairesis*, elimizde olan şeylere yöneltilmiş olandır ve o tek başına iyidir. Yanlış tipteki *prohairesis* ise elimizde olmayan şeylere yöneltilmiş olandır ve o tek başına kötüdür (4.5.32). Bu da aynı zamanda *prohairesis*'in neden tek erdem ve tek ahlaksızlık olduğuyla bağlantılıdır (2.23.19).

Fakat ya özgürlük? *Prohairesis* engel tanımaz bir şey olarak ele alındığı için, hem yanlış hem doğru *prohairesis*'in engellenemez olduğunu ileri sürüyorum. Ancak bir kişi kendisini yalnızca doğru *prohairesis* ile özdeşleştirirse özgürdür. Bu, sadece tek bir tip *prohairesis* olduğu anlamına gelmez, fakat sadece bir tane *doğru* tip olduğu ve bu tip *prohairesis*'in kişiyi engellerden kurtarabileceğini ifade eder. O halde işkence altındaki mahkûm örneğine geri dönersek, ben ideal Epiktetosçunun intihar etme ihtiyacı hissedebileceğine inanmıyorum. Ama Epiktetos, karakterin önemini onaylayarak, bunu kabul eder.

Eğer işkence altındaki mahkûm bildiği sırları açıklarsa, Aristoteles bunu, suçlanabilir olma potansiyelini de atfederek gönüllü bir eylem olarak yorumlar (NE 3.1, 1110a15), ancak bağışlanabilir olabileceğini de ekler çünkü mahkûm dayanabileceğinden daha fazla işkenceye maruz kalmış olabilir (NE 3.1, 1110a25). Sorabji (1980: 272-275) Aristoteles'in yaklaşımında ikili bir ifade olduğunu vurgular, çünkü *Eudaimon'a Etik* 2.8 ve *Nikomakhos'a Etik* 5.8'de benzer eylemleri istemsiz olarak ele alırken, *Nikomakhos'a Etik* 3.1.'de gönüllü olarak ele alır. O (2006: 189) bunu haklı olarak Epiktetos'la kıyaslar. Epiktetos'a göre belirsizlik söz konusu değildir; onlar gönüllü eylemler olacaklardır (1.17.25-27).

Epiktetos'a göre bizim elimizde olan şeyler çok sınırlıdır. Bu, onunla Aristoteles arasındaki çok önemli bir farkı ortaya koyar. Fakat Aristoteles'in *prohairesis* kavramı ile Epiktetos'unki arasında bulunan bir benzerlik, her ikisinin de bir çeşit eğilimle alakalı olduğudur. Eğitim yoluyla, Epiktetosçu genel bir tutum bulmaya çalışır, yani elinde olmadığını anlamayı öğrendiği şeylere karşı belli seviyede bir kayıtsızlık. Aristoteles'te de, bireyin belli eylemleri, onun *prohairesis*'i tarafından kazanılmış genel bir tabiatın sonucu olması bakımından mümkündür.

Epiktetos'un *prohairesis*'inin çok önemli bir yönü özbenlik metafiziğini mümkün kılmasıdır. Kahn (1988: 253) Platon ve Aristoteles'te özbenlik kavramı akıl ve anlama yetisine dayanırken, Epiktetos'un *prohairesis* kavramı yardımıyla, özbenliğin daha "kişisel ve bireyselleşmiş" hale geldiğini tartışır. Ve Long (2002: 227) Epiktetos'ta kişinin ahlaki perspektifinin, *prohairesis* kavramı dâhilinde onun kişiliğiyle birlik içinde olduğunu ve böylece insanların "vicdan ve özbilinç sahibi olmaya muktedir" hale geldiklerini söyler.

Sonuç olarak, Epiktetos insanın özgürlüğünü koruma altına almak için Aristoteles'in *prohairesis* kavramını yeniden canlandırmıştır. Bunu yaparken, *prohairesis*'in anlamını değiştirmiştir. Aristoteles'te *prohairesis*, kişinin değer verdiği şeyi elde etme yolunda sahip olduğu en iyi araç ile ilgili genel bir tercihten, Epiktetos'ta engeller etkisi altında kalmamanın bir yolunu ifade eder. Aristoteles'te zaten bazı şeylerin insanın elinde olduğu varsayıldığından onları elde etmek için gereken en iyi araçların üzerine etraflıca düşünmek akla yatkındır. Fakat Epiktetos'ta, kişinin *prohairesis*'i hariç neredeyse hiçbir şey kişinin kontrolünde değildir ve ancak kişi kendisini doğru *prohairesis* ile

özdeşleştirebildiği ölçüde özgürdür. Bundan dolayı Epiktetos'ta, *prohairesis* insanlık için özgürlüğün teminatı olarak kullanılır, Aristoteles'te ise *prohairesis*, insanın belli bir ölçüde özgür olduğu varsayımının bir neticesidir. *Prohairesis*, Epiktetos'ta özgürlüğün metafiziksel temeli olarak iş görür, o halde Aristoteles'in, kişinin eylemlerini ve karakterini yargılamada bir ölçüt olarak kullanılabilen olan *prohairesis*'i ile karşılaştırıldığında daha az ahlaki bir yapıya sahiptir.

Anahtar Terimler

Prohairesis, Aristoteles, Epiktetos, Tercih, Özgürlük, Etraflıca Düşünme.

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