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A Literary/Philosophical Depiction of The Concept of 'Authority'

"Otorite" Kavramının Edebi/Felsefi Bir Tasviri

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Summary

While presenting the ideas of Saramago, which we consider a name deserving a high appreciation by the world of philosophy and literature, it seems that he acknowledges literature as an opportunity to evaluate within the scope of philosophizing. In this context, he is a thinker who expressed his philosophical views in a tangible and intelligible manner. Indeed, Saramago constructed a system of thinking that take into account the practical reflections of the theory rather than an intensive abstract theoretical thought, as he did in his every literary-philosophical work. This study aimed to discuss how a Nobel Prize-winning writer, who has created a name for himself by his philosophical beliefs, explained a fundamental issue in political philosophy. One of our goals in doing so was to demonstrate that the philosophical contents of literary texts might be treated in a way that makes them philosophical subjects, and literature could be a tool in terms of introducing philosophical views. As a result, it was presented that a concept such as authority would be discussed in a clear and comprehensible way in literary works. The second goal of our study was the argument that preconceptions about human nature are fundamental while expressing an opinion on facts, situations, and organizations with relation to people. Saramago also attempts to explain the concept of authority in terms of his human conception. Although it is discussed in political philosophy, Saramago approaches the concept of authority from a view of human conception, as we have seen throughout the history of philosophy. This human conception, in contrast to the acceptance of enlightenment, implies that humans are prone to evil, and Saramago is not alone in this belief. Even if it was exemplified with Ibn Khaldun and Hobbes in our study, the most common human conception until enlightenment was in this structure. If we make a comment on Saramago's human conception, we may emphasize that he was influenced by Camus's work *The Rebel* or that they provided solutions to the issues of that period with the same point of view since they were both contemporary. Although he appears to be influenced by Sartre and Nietzsche, it is difficult to consider him an existentialist or nihilistic thinker. That arises an issue because Saramago, unlike the aforementioned philosophers, does not trust people due to their weaknesses despite his attribution of great significance to people. According to him, a human is a being with several Achilles heels. Fear, sadness, and ignorance turn individuals into toys in the hands of religions, then people become slaves of religions for the sake of adding a meaning to their entities. However, people are obliged to authorities and religions that offer legitimacy and establish social standards. Saramago, whose description of the state of nature is similar to that of Hobbes, claims that the rules in the animal kingdom apply among humans in the absence of authority, and people might cannibalize each other. Therefore, human beings need authority in some form or another. After defining the fact that human being requires an authority, Saramago emphasizes the significance of the authority being just. Nonetheless, he does not have goodwill for the authority. After realizing that authority will attempt to maintain its authority by any means, Saramago is also concerned about democracy at this point. He also claims that people are misled by manipulations by democratic authorities. In the final analysis, Saramago may also be considered a political philosopher through his evaluations since he propounded significant insights on numerous subjects regarding political philosophy, and it shall not escape from our attention that the literary style in his works also made several difficult philosophical issues more understandable.

Keywords: Philosophy of Religion, Political Philosophy, Philosophy-literature relationship, Human being, Jose Saramago

"Otorite" Kavramının Edebi/Felsefi Bir Tasviri

Özet

Felsefe ve edebiyat dünyasının ilgisine mazhar olmayı fazlasıyla hak etmiş bir isim olarak değerlendirdiğimiz Saramago'nun felsefi düşünce kapsamında değerlendirilebilecek fikirlerini ortaya koyarken edebiyatı bir imkân olarak gördüğü anlaşılmaktadır. Bu çerçevede o, felsefi görüşlerini felsefenin soyut ve kuru diline inat, somut ve anlaşılır bir üslupla ortaya koymuş bir düşündürdür. Öyle ki Saramago, her edebi-felsefi eserde olduğu gibi, yoğun soyut teorik düşünceden ziyade, teorinin pratik yansımalarını da hesaba katan bir düşünce sistematığı geliştirmiştir. Çalışmamızda felsefi görüşleriyle öne çıkmış olan Nobel Ödüllü bir edebiyatçının siyaset felsefesi ile ilgili temel bir kavramı nasıl ele aldığını incelemeye çalıştık. Bunu yaparken amaçlarımızdan birisi edebi metinlerin felsefi içeriklerinin felsefeye konu olabileceği şekilde ele alınabileceğini, edebiyatın felsefi görüşleri ortaya koymak için bir yöntem olabileceğini göstermeye çalışmaktır. Çalışmamızın sonucunda otorite gibi bir kavramın edebi

eserlerde anlaşılır bir şekilde tartışıldığını görmekteyiz. Çalışmamızın ikinci iddiası ise insan doğası ile ilgili kabullerin insanları ilgilendiren olgu, durum ve kurumlarla ilgili fikir beyan ederken temel olduğu savıdır. Saramago da sahip olduğu insan anlayışı üzerine otorite kavramına kendince açıklamalar getirmeye çalışmıştır. Saramago siyaset felsefesinde ele alınmakla birlikte tüm felsefe tarihi boyunca tartışıldığına şahit olduğumuz otorite kavramına belli bir insan anlayışından bakmaktadır. Bu insan anlayışı aydınlanmanın kabulünün tersine, insanın kötülüğe meyyal olduğunu kabul eden bir insan anlayışıdır ki, Saramago bu görüşünde yalnız değildir. Çalışmamızda İbn Haldun ve Hobbes'la örneklesek de aydınlanmaya kadar kabul görmüş insan anlayışı bu minvaldedir. Saramago'nun insan anlayışıyla ilgili bir tespit yapmak gerekirse, onun Camus'nun başkaldıran insanından etkilendiği veya onların çağdaş olmaları hasebiyle dönemin sorunlarına aynı bakış açısıyla çözüm ürettikleri söylenebilir. O aynı zamanda Sartre'dan ve Nietzsche'den de etkilenmiş görünmekle beraber, onu varoluşçu veya nihilist bir filozof olarak değerlendirmek zordur. Bu zorluk, Saramago'nun bahsi geçen düşünürlerden farklı olarak, insana önem atfetmesine rağmen, zaafı nedeniyle insana güvenmemesinden kaynaklanmaktadır. Ona göre insan birçok zaafa sahip bir varlıktır. Korku, üzüntü, bilgisizlik insanı dinlerin elinde oyuncak etmekte, varlığına anlam katmak için insan dinlerin esiri olmaktadır. Ancak insanlar bir arada yaşamak için bir otoriteye ve otoriteye meşruiyet sağlayıp normlar oluşturacak dinlere mecburdur. İnsanın kusurlu bir varlık olduğunu ve bizatihi insanlık tarihinin bunun kanıtını olduğunu dile getiren Saramago'ya göre her şeyin iyi gibi görüldüğü zamanlarda insanların arasında bir uyum varmış gibi görünse de, bazı şeyler ters gitmeye başladığında insanlar birbirlerine saldırmaktan çekinmemektedir. İnsanın kendi canı tehlikeye gireceği zaman, kötü yönü ortaya çıkmaktadır. Doğa durumu olarak adlandıracağımız bu durumlarda insan, kendi canını kurtarmak için karşısındakinin de insan olduğunu unutarak, onun başına kötü şeyler geleceğini hiç düşünmeden her şeyi yapabilmektedir. Saramago'ya göre insan, temel ihtiyaçlarını elde etmek için her şeyi göze almaya hazır olan bir varlıktır. Hobbes'un insan doğasına yönelik fikirlerinden izler taşıyan bu görüşler Saramago'nun Aydınlanmanın rasyonel otonom birey anlayışına karşı olduğu izlenimini vermektedir. Aydınlanmanın Descartes'tan mülhem oluşturmuş olduğu bu anlayışta, Rousseau'da da görüldüğü gibi, iyimsen insan doğası kabulü vardır. Saramago'nun insan doğasına yönelik tutumu antik dönemlerden aydınlanmaya kadar geçen süreçte hâkim olan kusurlu/kötülüğe meyyal insan anlayışından etkilenmiş gibi durmaktadır. Doğa durumu tasviri Hobbes'a benzeyen Saramago'ya göre otoritenin olmadığı durumlarda, insanlar arasında, hayvanlar âlemindeki kuralları geçerli olmakta ve insanlar birbirlerini yemektir. Bu nedenle insan otoriteye muhtaçtır. İnsanın otoriteye muhtaç olduğu tespitinden sonra otoritenin insan üzerindeki etkilerine değinen Saramago, otoritenin adaletli olması gerektiğini vurgulamakla beraber otoriteye dair iyi niyet beslememektedir. Otoritenin yetkisini elinden bırakmamak için her yolu deneyebileceği tespitini yapan Saramago, bu noktada demokrasiyle ilgili de endişelidir ve demokratik otoritelerde de manipülasyonlarla insanların yanlış yönlendirildiğini söylemektedir. Son tahlilde çalışmamızın iki temel iddiası yanında şunu da söylememiz gerektiğini düşünüyoruz; yaptığı değerlendirmelerle siyaset felsefesi ile ilgili birçok noktada dikkate değer fikirler serdeden Saramago'nun bir siyaset felsefeci olarak da ele alınabileceği ve eserlerindeki edebi üslubun anlaşılması zor birçok felsefi problemi anlaşılır hale getirdiği dikkatlerden kaçmamalıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Din Felsefesi, Siyaset Felsefesi, Felsefe-edebiyat ilişkisi, İnsan, Jose Saramago

Introduction

Although the literary personality of Saramago, a Nobel Prize-winning literator, has been substantially brought to the fore, it appears that he is a very suitable name for the definition of a philosopher. While presenting the ideas of Saramago, which we consider a name deserving a high appreciation by the world of philosophy and literature, it seems that he acknowledges literature as an opportunity to evaluate within the scope of philosophizing. In this context, he is a thinker who expressed his philosophical views in a tangible and intelligible manner. Indeed, Saramago constructed a system of thinking that take into account the practical reflections of the theory rather than an intensive abstract theoretical thought, as he did in his every literary-philosophical work.

What is generally intended while referring to the relationship between philosophy and literature is to demonstrate a link from philosophy through literature and reveal the background that the literary work, supposedly to be philosophical, wishes to highlight. Besides, it is also meaningful to express philosophical issues in literary style as part of the philosophy-literature relationship. In the history of philosophy, it is also a fact that several philosophers have been considered to write literary works. Some ancient philosophers expressing their views with poetry, the philosophers' works considered as literary such as Plato, St. Augustine, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche, and Nobel Prize winners Russell, Camus, and Sartre for literature can be given as examples.¹ Therefore, beyond the objective of revealing the philosophical thinking in the background of a literary text, it is also aimed to convey philosophical thoughts in the literary style in the relationship between philosophy and literature.

Perhaps the key point to mention here is that which works may be considered philosophical. There are discussions frequently both in philosophy and literature about whether a work is philosophical or literary. However, there shall be some criteria to define whether a work is philosophical or not. If work is reflexive, consists of logical and modest proposals, expresses an attitude towards an entity, is critical, tends towards a conception of knowledge with the highest generality, comes into being around a question regarded as philosophical, is systematic, and is centralized around the concept of being, then it can be considered as a philosophical work.² So, is it possible to have all these characteristics in a literary work? Since it is too difficult to say Yes, it has been acknowledged that novels with the thesis can be deemed as philosophical-literary works.³ It may also be mentioned that the works of literary figures such as Kafka, Camus, Sartre, and Dostoyevsky are novel-type works of the thesis, and philosophical views in these works are approached in a literary style, not with the concepts of philosophy. Thanks to the concretization power of literature, such works have made their theses more lucid by moving them away from the distinctively abstract language of philosophy. Therefore, issues such as human life, the human entity and freedom, which are hard to comprehend with the abstract language of philosophy, have become concrete and perceivable with the power of literature.⁴

The relationship between philosophy and literature began with mythology and tragedy, and it grew in tandem with increasing interest in art after the enlightenment. With conceptualizing mental activities other than objective existence, while philosophy, in which science is uninterested, performs this duty, it seemed not to concern human experiences other than the subject-object relationship. That is just

¹ Ali Osman Gündoğan, "Felsefe İle Edebiyat İlişkisi Üzerine," *Felsefe ve Edebiyat*, ed. Mustafa Günay - Ali Osman Gündoğan (Konya: Çizgi Kitabevi, 2014), 52; Ülker Öktem, "Felsefede Edebiyatın Yeri ve Önemi," *FLSF Felsefe ve Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 12 (2011), 130-134.

² Kenan Gürsoy, "Felsefe ve Edebiyat," *Felsefe ve Edebiyat*, ed. Mustafa Günay - Ali Osman Gündoğan (Konya: Çizgi Kitabevi, 2014), 41; Gündoğan, "Felsefe İle Edebiyat İlişkisi Üzerine," 52; Öktem, "Felsefede Edebiyatın Yeri ve Önemi," 131-132.

³ Gündoğan, "Felsefe İle Edebiyat İlişkisi Üzerine," 53; Öktem, "Felsefede Edebiyatın Yeri ve Önemi," 133.

⁴ Gündoğan, "Felsefe İle Edebiyat İlişkisi Üzerine," 55-56; Öktem, "Felsefede Edebiyatın Yeri ve Önemi," 134.

where literature comes into play to deal with such human experiences that are difficult to examine on an intellectual basis and provide philosophical interpretations to them. Concurrently, literature served philosophy as a means of expression and attempted to make the notional-philosophical concepts and philosophy more comprehensible. With this function on, literature has been used not only for aesthetic purposes but also to convey philosophical thoughts. Ultimately, it can be argued that attempting to philosophize singly makes a philosophical inquiry and philosophical thinking unproductive. To broaden the philosophical era, it should be recognized that philosophy is not only composed of theories but also manifest itself in a literary genre. Hence, literature will shed light on some aspects of human activities that philosophy cannot be explained and will make it easier to comprehend the human being.

As his works will be examined here for a literary/philosophical description of the authority concept, Saramago intensely discusses the meaning of the human entity in his literary works. Meanwhile, the philosopher independently makes the concept of entity a questioning matter. Whith his following sentence '*my wisdom tells me that as if everything seems to exist, but it secretly says that nothing actually exists, and we must be content with that*'⁵, it introduces the concept of the entity of being reminiscent of Gorgias. Yet, in his following line '*perhaps something still has meaning, or it will gain a meaning again after losing all its meaning.*'⁶, he makes references to nihilism. With the following statements he made

*'this event is as absurd as all the others that have happened and seems completely meaningless, it does not make more sense to me, do not worry about the meaninglessness of what is going on, said Pedro Orce; a journey is only meaningful if you complete it, and we are now halfway through it, or maybe we are just at the very beginning, who knows, I cannot tell you what it means until our journey on earth is over.'*⁷,

Saramago, draws attention by emphasizing being on the road.

Our study has two main objectives: to demonstrate through an exemplary literator that literature may be a method of delivering philosophical views, and to show that the determining factor in the ideas of philosophers, who express their thoughts about phenomena and events involving human beings, is their human conception. After debating our opinion that Saramago is a writer who considers philosophical issues and argues that literature can be a method of conveying philosophical thoughts, we will discuss the concept of authority, the major focus of our study. Finally, our study will aim to examine how Saramago understands both authority and human concepts that shape his understandings.

1. Authority at A Glance

The authority, which can be defined as 'an institutionalized and legitimate

⁵ José Saramago, *Yitik Adanın Öyküsü*, trans. Dost Körpe (İstanbul: Kırmızı Kedi Yayınevi, 2013), 129.

⁶ Saramago, *Yitik Adanın Öyküsü*, 142.

⁷ Saramago, *Yitik Adanın Öyküsü*, 149.

force emerging within a social system'⁸, is a concept to be addressed with its political, sociological, and psychological aspects. As a key concept in assessing societies, states, and organizations, authority is studied in many disciplines. The debates on the issues such as the actual nature of authority, what justifies the use of authority, when an authority may use force, and when addressees may question the legitimacy of the authority constitute the basic questions of political philosophy. Sociologists addresses questions such as why individuals and groups obey authority, how other social groups serve legitimate authority, and the influence of how authority is practiced in a society. However, the reasons for individuals to obey authority and the limits of their obedience are addressed by psychology.⁹

Although power and authority are the concepts confused with each other, there is a clear distinction between them. While power is defined as the force to compel other people to obey itself, authority, however, is defined as the right to manage, possess, and be recognized and obeyed by others. While power requires authority, power without authority is tyranny.¹⁰ Accordingly, the right of an authority to use force on individuals is related to its acceptance by whom the force is imposed. Then, raising power to moral and legal states is called authority. This gives the right to use force to a power that individuals seek to protect their rights while socializing, and theories about the state of nature encountered throughout the history of philosophy and as well as about the transition from this state to socialization are the efforts to explain this situation.

Although governments are the organizations most commonly associated with the concept of authority, the term may be applied to a wide range of social interactions, and other social actors may also exert authority. Due to the sense of community, the omnipresence of humans means that authority is everywhere, in other words, in all social spheres. Briefly, authority emerges in all social domains beginning with a family of at least two persons. The conception, for instance, is linked to a variety of social actors, ranging from the father in a family to senior managers in companies. However, only the state, which may be considered the highest authority, will be associated with this concept, and other types of authorities will not be included in our study.

The fact that people are social beings seems to be the primary reason for the emergence of this concept. These aspects of society and human beings are emphasized by Aristotle,¹¹ who stated that human being is a social entity, and Thomas Paine,¹² who indicated that human beings are created to live in a society, respectively. Portraying human beings in such a way might be associated with their imperfections. Those who define human beings as naturally prone to evil but also emphasize that they have good nature seem to agree on the necessity of authority. Ibn Khaldun, who conceded that human beings are prone to evil in their essence, asserts that

⁸ Ahmet Cevizci, *Felsefe Sözlüğü* (İstanbul: Paradigma Yayınları, 1999), "Otorite."

⁹ M. E. Johnson-Crame, "Authority," *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., June 10, 2016).

¹⁰ Jacques Maritain, *Man and The State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 126.

¹¹ Aristoteles, *Politika*, trans. Furkan Akderin (İstanbul: Say Yayınları, 2007), 26.

¹² Thomas Paine, *İnsan Hakları*, trans. M. Osman Dostel (İstanbul: MEB Yayınları, 1964), 195.

human nature, in terms of creational features, is social temperamentally. Since people must live together, their animal characteristics such as hostility and aggression force them to fight against each other like animals. Hence, Ibn Khaldun asserts that there must be a governor/ruler who shall protect the people against their enmity, against each other, and even become a guardian for them. This governing item shall enforce everyone to follow his rules and establish dominance and authority. Thus, the necessity for being (*raison d'être*) of a person who will become the authority or responsibility for the governance of society originates from such an understanding that human beings are hostile and consider each other as enemies.¹³ Similar opinions are also expressed later by Hobbes and Leviathan.¹⁴ Rousseau,¹⁵ who states that human beings are inherently good, also believes the existence of authority is necessary, albeit for different reasons. According to him, a person who cannot exist alone, who is not self-sufficient and need the assistance and collaboration of others to meet the basic needs, has to live socially, in solidarity, and engage with other people. For human beings, socialization is not free will but the result of necessity. The fact that people must live together will inevitably lead to inequality among individuals who have innate differences in terms of specifications such as age, health, physical strength, and intelligence.¹⁶ In terms of these specifications, the existence of such disparities will result in those who are superior putting pressure on those who are less qualified than themselves. At this point, as Hobbes indicates, the necessity for being (*raison d'être*) of authority will become more meaningful when bearing in mind that people may consider it permissible to do anything in their struggle for survival.¹⁷ Not to determine the relations between people by power or other superiorities in their characteristics and to consider social regulations such as ethics and laws is only possible by the presence of an authority.

What briefly stated about the concept of authority demonstrates that authority is a requirement for the human being who must become socialized. However, the opinions put forward about the authority are set by the viewpoint of the people who put forward the ideas. At this point, it would be meaningful to assess the human concept of Saramago, whose ideas we will cover in our study.

2. Saramago's Human Conception

Seeking answers to questions such as 'Where did I come from?', 'Where am I?' or 'Where will I go?' constitutes the main agenda of philosophical thought in a sense. The meaning and value of everything that exists reach significance with human beings. When there is no human being, it is impossible to mention the meaningfulness or meaninglessness of anything. All that remains is the fact that they

¹³ İbn Haldun, *Mukaddime*, trans. Halil Kendir (İstanbul: Yeni Şafak, 2004), 1/79–81.

¹⁴ Ömer Faruk Erdem, "Siyaset Felsefesinde Liderlik", *İslam Düşüncesinde Yönetim ve Liderlik*, ed. Şebnem Aslan, (Konya: Eğitim Yayınevi, 2016), 64,65.

¹⁵ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Yalnız Gezerin Hayalleri*, trans. Reşat Nuri Darago (İstanbul: MİV, 1944), 82.

¹⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *İnsanlar Arasındaki Eşitsizliğin Kaynağı*, trans. Rasih Nuri İleri (İstanbul: Say Yayınları, 2017), 123.

¹⁷ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Crawford Brough Macpherson (London: Penguin Books, 1985), 161,189.

'exist.' From this point of view, the primary philosophical question that matter is 'What is a human being?' The history of philosophy is the history of seeking answers to this question. All philosophical activities aim at the effort of a human being to know himself, to learn his self-consciousness in the universe, and strive to direct meaning towards his life and actions. Accordingly, other questions are derived from the primary question of 'What is a human being?'. Indeed, this is a fundamental question for disciplines of philosophy and today's science branches. Human-related sciences such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, or all social sciences appear to be ground on a determined human concept. Yet, research on the philosophy of ethics, political philosophy, and even epistemology and ontology takes a basis on an assumption about what a human being is. Not only philosophy and science, but also people who are in relation with each other in practical life, consciously or unconsciously, have a tailored concept of the human that they have taken from the society they live in.¹⁸ It can be argued that there are set human concepts in every theoretical and practical field from philosophy to science, and the results are affected by those human concepts. Therefore, it should be acknowledged that Saramago also has a predetermined human conception while commenting on authority.

While manifesting his thoughts, Saramago emphasizes that human being has several weaknesses. He expects a lot from the human being; however, he does not trust either. According to him, a person's attitude to life takes shape by how that person has lived his life and whether he has faced any difficulty or not. In other words, it is the situations that generate thoughts in life.¹⁹ The human being, who might be as cruel and a tyrant as never expected, also embarks on a quest for legitimacy for his evil behaviors. For instance, he might attribute his immoral acts to time and situation. Even when a person does evil things, he is hypocritical enough to say that he did it not of his own will, but as a result of situations.²⁰ According to Saramago, people make their lives dirty as they live, although they start immaculately.²¹ At this point, it seems that Saramago has been influenced by the ideas of Rousseau, who argued that while people are good in their natural state, their bad characteristics begin to emerge with socialization.²²

According to Saramago, who stated that the humans are imperfect being and the history of humanity itself is the proof of it, although there seems to be harmony among people when everything is fine; however, when some things begin to recoil upon, people do not hesitate to show aggression to each other.²³ Whenever their own lives are in danger, the evil sides of the people emerge out. To save their own lives in such situations, which we would consider as the state of nature, people ignore that others are also human beings and do anything without thinking that they also might be imposed to such evil behaviors.²⁴ According to Saramago, a human is

¹⁸ Muttalip Özcan, *İnsan Felsefesi: İnsanın Neliği Üzerine Bir Soruşturma* (Bilgesu Yayıncılık, 2016), 9–10.

¹⁹ José Saramago, *İsa'ya Göre İncil*, trans. E. Efe Çakmak (İstanbul: Kırmızı Kedi Yayınevi, 2012), 196.

²⁰ José Saramago, *Bütün İsimler*, trans. Nesrin Akyüz (İstanbul: Kırmızı Kedi Yayınevi, 2017), 51–52.

²¹ José Saramago, *Ressamın El Kitabı*, trans. Şemsa Yeğin (İstanbul: Can Yayınları, 2001), 222.

²² Rousseau, *İnsanlar Arasındaki Eşitsizliğin Kaynağı*, 59–63.

²³ José Saramago, *Görmek*, trans. Işık Ergüden (İstanbul: Kırmızı Kedi Yayınları, 2019), 96.

²⁴ José Saramago, *Körlük*, trans. Işık Ergüden (İstanbul: Kırmızı Kedi Yayınları, 2017), 35.

a being who is ready to risk everything to secure his basic needs: and the following statements show traces of Hobbes' thoughts about human nature

*'if they started eating among so many hungry people, they would both be selfish and risk their lives; because basic needs obey no law, and as Kain's taught, the most effective justice is that we build by our hands.'*²⁵

gives the impression that Saramago is against the rational autonomous of individualism conception of the Enlightenment. In a concept that was inspired by Descartes by the Enlightenment, as also observed in Rousseau, there is an optimistic postulation about human nature. Saramago's position towards human nature seems to have been influenced by the conception of imperfect/evil-prone humans that prevailed in the period from ancient times to enlightenment.

According to Saramago, who was grounded on the assumption that human nature is prone to evil, the most natural action for the human being is to do evil.²⁶ A human is a being to have won without effort ecstatically.²⁷ According to Saramago, the human being who cares about nothing but himself somehow resembles God with his attitude of considering nature and other living things as at his disposal.²⁸ Again, according to him, human is primarily egoist being and self-oriented.²⁹ However, the human is also a social being, and living in the society humanizes him. Assuming a situation where there is no social life, people do not own anything in such an environment. It will be futile for people to claim to own anything. In an environment where there is no authority and sociality, in other words, in situations describe as a state of nature, people think of no one but themselves.³⁰ In such a case, there is no limit to what people can do to get basic needs and keep themselves alive.³¹ According to Saramago, it is vitally important to satisfy the basic needs of the people. Those whose needs are not satisfied cannot mention ethics, a humane behavior pattern, or a sense of self-sacrifice. A hungry person is in a position to do anything to fill his stomach. Then, he will be in a position to sacrifice publicly even the most precious things in return to end his hunger.³² Hence, it is meaningless for a person to state that he 'never does any evil.' Whether he will commit such an act or not depends on the time and situation. Thus, unexpected people might be the perpetrators of acts that have never been expected.³³ The human is also a being who gets used to everything and establishes his social relations on the basis of interest.³⁴ For instance, a girl loves her father not just because he is her father but also she gets used to him and what her father does for her. She does not even love her father just because he is her father. According to Saramago, a human being qualifies life with benefit, and

²⁵ Saramago, *İsa'ya Göre İncil*, 292.

²⁶ Saramago, *Körlük*, 70.

²⁷ José Saramago, *Mağara*, trans. Sıla Okur (İstanbul: Kırmızı Kedi Yayınevi, 2014), 135.

²⁸ Saramago, *Yitik Adanın Öyküsü*, 174.

²⁹ Saramago, *Körlük*, 134–135.

³⁰ Saramago, *Körlük*, 172.

³¹ Saramago, *Körlük*, 195.

³² Saramago, *Körlük*, 151.

³³ Saramago, *Körlük*, 246.

³⁴ José Saramago, *Çatıdaki Pencere*, trans. Pınar Savaş (İstanbul: Kırmızı Kedi Yayınevi, 2012), 89.

what does not benefit him becomes worthless for him.³⁵

As referring to what Sartre calls Nausea, Saramago contemplates that people in need of sociality also have an issue of entity since they are obliged to social life. With the aim to exist always with their status in social life,³⁶ people make compromises to avoid being ostracized from society and to feel like a member of that community; as a result, they lose their self-identity. Individuals who fail to become themselves as a result of this desire are shaped by their society. Hence, Saramago indicates that socialization leads human beings to degrade. However, the human being must also socialize. This causes the problem of existence and cannot give meaning to the human entity. Then, we have to ask the following question; if the human being who is not aware why he came to this world abandons his selflessness for society but cannot give up society itself, then 'What is the purpose of a human being?' and 'Why does the human being exist?'³⁷ In reality, a human being needs social life to give meaning to life. The vortex into which the person who is not in connection with other people will be pushed by loneliness might have serious consequences.³⁸ In social life, however, people always build walls between themselves due to fear and hubris. Therefore, they are unable to become themselves, and they cannot legitimize anyone in the community since they could not become themselves.³⁹ Despite that fact, people are afraid of being isolated from social life. Since the most valuable asset for a person is himself, that person wants his values to be recognized and appreciated not just by himself but also by everyone:

*'People are not objects, people always want to be in the top rank, the potter thought'.
Yet, being there is not enough, people want it to be valued and others to notice it,' he murmured.*⁴⁰

Recognizing that coexistence is a necessity for himself, the human being realizes that adhering to social rules for a sense of community has both negative and positive consequences. With the statuses he possesses, the human being offers significance to social existence. Because people use their statuses in social life until they die.⁴¹ The statuses have also a significant place when people assess others. People measure the value of other people they assessed by the multiplicity of their statuses.⁴² The sociality of an individual is what distinguishes it as a human being. A social life attributes identities, statuses, behaviors, and limits to an individual. In the absence of such statuses, a human being becomes a creature whose all gains have been deprived of and even devolves into an animal. In a sense, a human being would be able to actualize his entity as part of the sociality. Animals have no such social statuses. Dogs, for instance, have no status, no names they call each other, no predetermined behavior patterns whether they must follow or not. However, a human being

³⁵ Saramago, *Mağara*, 110.

³⁶ José Saramago, *Ölüm Bir Varmış Bir Yokmuş*, trans. Mehmet Necati Kutlu (İstanbul: Kırmızı Kedi Yayınevi, 2015), 185.

³⁷ Saramago, *Ressamın El Kitabı*, 87.

³⁸ Saramago, *Bütün İsimler*, 129.

³⁹ Saramago, *Ressamın El Kitabı*, 204.

⁴⁰ Saramago, *Mağara*, 15.

⁴¹ Saramago, *Mağara*, 96.

⁴² Saramago, *Körlük*, 82.

becomes a person with society. If we imagined an environment where sociality had vanished, there would be no authority to punish and define behavior patterns. In this scenario, however, the debate about how a human being becomes an individual will arise.⁴³ Accordingly, Saramago, unlike Camus, does not advocate rebellion, even if he is dissatisfied with such social norms. Because he believes that a human being will lose his humanity in the state of nature. Although Saramago believes that material and spiritual authority constrain people's social norms, he is wise enough to recognize that people cannot give up their gains. Although Saramago cares much about freedom, he never proposes destroying everything for it like Sartre, Nietzsche, and Camus. According to him, a person, who is a prisoner of social norms created by society determining how he must behave, should occasionally modify his thoughts and strive to gain new perspectives, as well as withdraw from the society for a while to get rid of those impositions and come to know himself.⁴⁴

What Saramago state is that people must eventually organize and enable an authority to govern them to live together in social life.⁴⁵ Otherwise, while basic needs are supplied, the laws of the animal kingdom would reign supreme among people. In structured societies, however, the rules required by a social life manifest themselves.⁴⁶ So, since a human being's sociability requires authority, then how does Saramago define the relation of the human being with authority?

3. Saramago's Concept of Authority

Mutual sacrifices and shared divisions of labor make the coexistence of people possible. While people live together, they require an authority that will regulate their relationship and make decisions. However, it is extremely important for people how this authority is established. In order for an authority to obey what it says, the individuals must first recognize that it is an authority. One cannot be an authority without a ground of legitimacy. In addition, the recognition of a structure as an authority should gain benefit to people, and those people should know why they will obey the rules of that authority.⁴⁷ People seek legitimacy to recognize the existence of authority and follow its rules. They refuse to respect the rules of the authority they do not recognize as legitimate, resulting in social instabilities.⁴⁸ Just as a person cannot function without authority, he does not accept every person or group as a source of authority for no reason. To recognize an authority and regard it as legitimate, people must have good intentions towards the authority and be certain that the authority will be just.⁴⁹ Injustice is the major cause that leads to the demise of authority. However, people get used to the gradual escalating persecution. Because a human is a being that is designed to adopt to the environment in which he lives. Labelling of a tyranny authority as an 'unbearable state' depends on the previous experiences of

⁴³ Saramago, *Körlük*, 48–49.

⁴⁴ José Saramago, *Filin Yolculuğu*, trans. Savaş Pınar (İstanbul: Kırmızı Kedi Yayınevi, 2014), 67.

⁴⁵ Saramago, *Körlük*, 86.

⁴⁶ Saramago, *Körlük*, 93.

⁴⁷ Saramago, *Körlük*, 40.

⁴⁸ Saramago, *Filin Yolculuğu*, 19.

⁴⁹ Saramago, *Körlük*, 72.

that society. In a society, which is accustomed to persecution, the circumstance that can be deemed as an ‘unbearable state’ will differ from the situation in a society that has not encountered much injustice before. However, the destruction of authority, even a cruel one, may not always yield positive results. Along with the authority that is sought to be destroyed, the entire society might also perish.⁵⁰

According to Saramago, lack of authority is the primary factor driving people back to the state of nature. In such instances, if there are no laws created, nature’s law will take precedence among people.⁵¹ People have not learned what it takes to live in society habitually. They get that knowledge through experience and education. Hence, it is essential to have the authority to educate people in social life and enable them to follow the rules.⁵² In truth, the reason why the existence of authority is necessary and laws imposed by the authority to regulate human relations is the silence of people’s consciences more than it should be.⁵³

It can be speculated that Saramago defines the lack of authority as a kind of blindness and considers it as a condition of dehumanizing people and even worse than death itself.⁵⁴ In the absence of authority and rules, a human is just an entity that does not think about anyone but himself and is capable of doing all kinds of evil things to secure himself.⁵⁵ The main condition to prevent people from metaphorically cannibalizing each other is to have the authority to maintain social order.⁵⁶ Saramago’s thoughts on the necessity of authority and human nature are remarkably similar to Thomas Hobbes’ views. He, like Hobbes, also describes a state of nature and considers authority as necessary to prevent such situations.

Saramago also establishes an identicalness between God and authority.⁵⁷ Indeed, God and authority are interchangeable terms for the majority. People believe that both of their actions are wise, and they are necessary for them.⁵⁸ A social structure without authority is unthinkable. Communities consisted of people who have come together voluntarily or involuntarily, necessarily require an authority. If there is no legitimate and society-driven authority, the supreme one in the society will attempt to dominate the others. If there is no authority in an environment where there is tangible value to be shared, some people will feel compelled to take the big share for themselves.⁵⁹

If an authority to control other people for its gain is strong enough to make other people obey its dominance and maintain its legitimacy, those people will become accustomed to the dominance of this authority over time, regardless of how much it establishes authority by force and dominates other people by pressure. Surprisingly, people begin to acquiesce the existence of that authority as natural in time,

⁵⁰ Saramago, *Körlük*, 167.

⁵¹ Saramago, *Körlük*, 197.

⁵² Saramago, *Körlük*, 93.

⁵³ Saramago, *Bütün Isimler*, 72.

⁵⁴ Saramago, *Körlük*, 227–228.

⁵⁵ Saramago, *Körlük*, 107.

⁵⁶ Saramago, *Körlük*, 84.

⁵⁷ Saramago, *Görmek*, 189.

⁵⁸ Saramago, *Mağara*, 250.

⁵⁹ Saramago, *Körlük*, 109.

even claiming that such an authority is beneficial for them. Because time is the only thing people require to become accustomed to something and accept it as natural.⁶⁰ Even if people are ruled by a rigid force, the presence of authority will eventually console them, and the existence of a sharing hand will satisfy them. Again, even if they initially acquiesce the authority by force, they will get used to the presence of authority over time and derive positive results from the presence of an authority. People believe that there is always good in every evil. Because hope is everything, after all. If people cannot see the good in the bad, their life energy will run out.⁶¹

Human being survives by hoping for a better future, and they give the meaning to their lives by thinking future even from today. When a person has no hope for his future, he loses his life energy. The existence of a social order is required to be hopeful for the future. In a situation where there is no authority, which can be defined as the state of nature, to ensure the social order, the basic needs will determine the limits of human beings and what they are capable of doing.⁶²

As previously stated, even if it was imposed by force, people would become accustomed to dominant power after a while and learn to regard it as a legitimate authority. However, as also previously mentioned, maintaining the legitimacy of such authority depends on securing justice but not tyrannizing. The authority whose justice is questioned would lose its ground of legitimacy, and such authority, no matter how powerful it is, would be in danger of being overthrown by communities capable of acting together in difficult times. However, the collective actions of those groupings are also contingent on those individuals' ability to withstand persecution. Some people, especially those with nothing to lose, prefer to confront authority recklessly, while others might choose to stay cautious until push comes to shove. When those people who act boldly and rebel against authority fail, people who will blame them the most and justify the punishment meted out to rebels will be those who are harmed by the authority's tyranny. People do not choose to be on the losing side because they fear losing their gains.⁶³

Injustice inflicted and gradually escalated by authority leads people to get used to the persecution and acquiesce to the situation. In such cases, regardless of how meaningless the authority's demands are, most people believe that their gains will be lost if the authority's demands are not met, and instead of criticizing the authority, they begin to blame those like themselves who do not comply with the demands.⁶⁴ Such authorities have to find excuses for interruptions and persuade them to comply with their demands to manage whom they dominate. Imposing pressure does not always bring a solution, and persuasion is occasionally one of the management tools of authority.⁶⁵

According to Saramago, keeping people together and uniting them around the same ideal makes it simpler for authority to gain control. Therefore, authority

⁶⁰ Saramago, *Körlük*, 117.

⁶¹ Saramago, *Körlük*, 119–120.

⁶² Saramago, *Körlük*, 196–197.

⁶³ Saramago, *Körlük*, 127–129.

⁶⁴ Saramago, *Körlük*, 129–130.

⁶⁵ Saramago, *Körlük*, 150–151.

manufactures myths for this purpose.⁶⁶ God is the best tool used by the authority to sustain its legitimacy. From the earliest times of history until now, the authority has relied on God to maintain its legitimacy in a society where individuals' bodies are demanded for spiritual satisfaction.⁶⁷ Other than the God belief, the most significant myths utilized by the authorities in building the spirit of unity and solidarity are country, nation, and the national flag, which were constructed around national consciousness for the spiritual satisfaction of people.⁶⁸ The national consciousness imparted to the people helps the authority knit them together and makes it easier to dominate them.⁶⁹

When people organize themselves and find a strong leader who can lead them confidently, they cluster around him immediately. Under the direction of such a strong leader, there are no boundaries to what individuals can achieve.⁷⁰ History is full of examples of such incidents. In particular, societies incited by national pride aspiringly sacrifice their lives in wars with such leaders without even knowing why. People can even be persuaded to sacrifice their lives for their spiritual satisfaction, which is the most powerful trump card in the hands of a ruler, a society thoroughly shaped this way.⁷¹

The authority always seeks tranquility and facility from the society it governs. Even in the most extreme situations, this has no change.⁷² The authority does not refrain from destroying thinking and organizing individuals to protect its own existence.⁷³ Even if it is legal, any organized action is not tolerated by the authority. If people refuse to acknowledge the existence of an authority, it means that they will likely appreciate the existence of another authority. Lack of authority is referred to as 'blindness.' However, reacting to wrongdoings what the authority makes on behalf of the nation is a kind of 'seeing.' Therefore, people should not demand a lack of authority, but rather repairment of the wrongdoings of the authority. In other words, what should be done is not to destroy, but to try to repair it.⁷⁴

It is a reality that people like the existence of an authority since they are afraid of anarchy and disorder. If the authority notices people forgot that an authority protects people from these worries, it does not hesitate to take measures to remind anarchy and disorder to the society.⁷⁵ It should not surprise people to see an authority figure who '*... has the Machiavellian mentality in his head, and stands behind the curtain and pulls the strings of the puppets as he pleases...*'⁷⁶ in such scenarios. The worst authority is the one that treats people as objects and tries to dominate by dividing them into groups for administration purposes while ignoring people's demands and

⁶⁶ Saramago, *Filin Yolculuğu*, 25.

⁶⁷ José Saramago, *Ricardo Reis'in Öldüğü Yıl*, trans. Saadet Özen (İstanbul: Can Yayınları, 2013), 311.

⁶⁸ Saramago, *Ricardo Reis'in Öldüğü Yıl*, 330.

⁶⁹ Saramago, *Filin Yolculuğu*, 37.

⁷⁰ Saramago, *İsa'ya Göre İncil*, 109.

⁷¹ Saramago, *Ricardo Reis'in Öldüğü Yıl*, 161.

⁷² Saramago, *Ölüm Bir Varmış Bir Yokmuş*, 16.

⁷³ Saramago, *Görmek*, 110.

⁷⁴ Saramago, *Görmek*, 90.

⁷⁵ Saramago, *Görmek*, 121–122.

⁷⁶ Saramago, *Görmek*, 155.

requests.⁷⁷

According to Saramago, nations get used to everything, just as people do. Furthermore, due to the inherent interlocking that comes with being collective, societies adapt faster than individuals.⁷⁸ Disasters unite people and make people forget the animosities, even if it is temporary.⁷⁹ There are two scenarios that, albeit temporarily, bring the society together and dissolve the problems among people: a major disaster befalling and presence of another hostile entity targeting that society.⁸⁰ A common enemy elicits emotions such as patriotism and nationalism and serves as a unifier in society. This episode is described by Saramago as follows:

*'Only in the face of an outer enemy appeared out nowhere, it was possible for the three prime forces, namely the clergymen, the nobility, and public to come together in the country and unite around a unanimous idea within an hour.'*⁸¹

In systems where the authority changes hands through legitimate means, the candidate groups taking the authority with the popular approval does not become transparent about what they will do after acquiring the authority. Since legitimacy is approved through popular voting, these groups usually hide behind the ideas that might pass through popular approval rather than their original intentions.⁸² Although the authority bases its legitimacy on popular opinion of the people, the authority still wants to set the rules of the game itself and perceives breaking the rules for an issue that requires punishment, even if it is a legal activity. In a country governed by democracy, for instance, while voting without making any choice should be regarded as a valid right of citizens, the authority may perceive this action as an attack on the system.⁸³ Saramago explores such a predicament in his novel *Seeing*, although it refers to the opposite of what he articulated in his novel *Blindness*. Although he describes the human society without authority as a blind community in the novel *Blindness*, he imagined a utopia based on the coexistence of people without authority and any organized activity in the novel *Seeing*. However, this utopia also ascertained Saramago's thoughts, which are totally opposed to the human conception that he put forward in his other works. As Saramago also acknowledged, human is an entity that must engage with social life, and there cannot be a lack of authority in social interactions. Therefore, the novel *Seeing* should be regarded as a critique of democracy rather than a study of the possibilities of a society without authority to ensure consistency in Saramago's thoughts. He emphasizes that democracy, especially representative democracy, is not a real self-governance as it is idealized; instead, public is enforced to choose some designated individuals with their indefinite purposes in these democracies. According to Saramago, in today's societies, the media is the best tool used by the authority to manipulate and govern the public.⁸⁴

⁷⁷ José Saramago, *Ölümlü Nesnelere*, trans. Emrah İmre (İstanbul: Kırmızı Kedi Yayınevi, 2015), 106.

⁷⁸ Saramago, *Yitik Adanın Öyküsü*, 134.

⁷⁹ Saramago, *Yitik Adanın Öyküsü*, 215–216.

⁸⁰ Saramago, *Ölüm Bir Varmış Bir Yokmuş*, 23.

⁸¹ Saramago, *Ölüm Bir Varmış Bir Yokmuş*, 62.

⁸² Saramago, *Görmek*, 25–26.

⁸³ Saramago, *Görmek*, 41.

⁸⁴ Saramago, *Görmek*, 92–93.

Claiming that the mass people groups are easily deceived, Saramago's thoughts on representative democracy are as follows:

*'This has always been the case since the world has been created, this is something we just cannot drum into our heads, let us not forget that the masses are usually deceived; most often this situation is encountered, representatives are elected for parliament with public votes, and as soon as they get a toe in the door, they votes against the opinions of those who sent him there with bribes and threats.'*⁸⁵

Criticizing democracy in this way, Saramago's proposal is as follows:

*'No matter how balanced it may seem in its internal structures and institutional functioning, we learn from life lessons that political democracy can do little for us, if it is not fundamentally built with an effective and concrete economic democracy and no less concrete and effective cultural democracy.'*⁸⁶

One of the main reasons why Saramago does not believe in democracy is probably that; Salazar was democratically elected and ruled Portugal from 1932 to 1974, operating in a dictatorial manner.

Regarding authority, Saramago makes another intriguing point when he discusses the influence of authority on historiography. According to him, the authorities who lived during the period of history are the ones who determine how real the things we call historicity are. Historical records are not kept independently of authorities.⁸⁷

Conclusion

This study aimed to discuss how a Nobel Prize-winning writer, who has made a name for himself by his philosophical beliefs, explained a fundamental issue in political philosophy. One of our goals in doing so was to demonstrate that the philosophical contents of literary texts might be treated in a way that makes them philosophical subjects, and literature could be a tool in terms of introducing philosophical views. As a result, it was presented that a concept such as authority would be discussed in a clear and comprehensible way in literary works.

The second goal of our study was the argument that preconceptions about human nature are fundamental while expressing an opinion on facts, situations, and organizations concerning people. Although it is discussed in political philosophy, Saramago approaches the concept of authority from a view of human conception, as we have seen throughout the history of philosophy. This human conception, in contrast to the acceptance of enlightenment, implies that humans are prone to evil, and Saramago is not alone in this belief. Even if it was exemplified with Ibn Khaldun and Hobbes in our study, the most common human conception until enlightenment was in this structure.

If we are to comment on Saramago's human conception, we may emphasize that he was influenced by Camus's work *The Rebel* or that they provided solutions

⁸⁵ Saramago, *Yitik Adanın Öyküsü*, 269.

⁸⁶ José Saramago, *DeFTERler*, trans. Nesrin Akyüz (İstanbul: Kırmızı Kedi Yayınevi, 2014), 53.

⁸⁷ Saramago, *Ölümlü Nesnelere*, 48.

to the issues of that period with the same point of view since they were both contemporary. Although he appears to be influenced by Sartre and Nietzsche, it is difficult to consider him an existentialist or nihilist. That arises an issue because Saramago, unlike the aforementioned philosophers, does not trust people due to their weaknesses despite his attribution of great significance to people.

Saramago characterized the human being as an entity attempting to bring a meaning to life and stated that the primary target of the human being is to achieve happiness by finding this meaning. According to him, a human is a being with several Achilles heels. He has no idea why he has come to Earth. Fear, sadness, and ignorance turn individuals into toys in the hands of religions, then people become slaves of religions for the sake of adding a meaning to their entities. However, people are obliged to authorities and religions that offer legitimacy and establish social standards. Saramago, whose description of the state of nature is similar to that of Hobbes, claims that the rules in the animal kingdom apply among humans in the absence of authority, and people might cannibalize each other. Therefore, human beings need authority in some form or another.

After defining the fact that human being requires authority, Saramago emphasizes the significance of the authority being just. Nonetheless, he does not have goodwill for the authority. After realizing that authority will attempt to maintain its authority by any means, Saramago is also concerned about democracy at this point. He also claims that people are misled by manipulations by democratic authorities.

In the final analysis, Saramago may also be considered a political philosopher through his evaluations since he propounded significant insights on numerous subjects regarding political philosophy, and it shall not escape from our attention that the literary style in his works also made several difficult philosophical issues more understandable.

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