

Pre-Socratic Understanding of Justice **by Željko Kaluđerović**

(Zoran Stojanović Publishing Bookstore, Sremski Karlovci/Novi Sad 2013)

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In the last few decades, philosophical literature features a renewed interest in the concept of justice. Authors reflect upon different understandings of justice, both from a methodological and from a substantial point of view. While some are trying to conceive a distributive theory of justice that will be universally acceptable for all societies, others believe that it is not possible to construct a theory of justice outside the historical and cultural context, i.e. beyond the meaning and significance of social goods to which the principles of justice apply. There is a fraction of thinkers who speak of a universal normative formula for justice, which would be useful for the evaluation of all societies; and a fraction of those who argue that a valid theory of justice is just one elaborate form of an already existing understanding of justice, which is based on social conventions, and therefore varies from one case to another.

In the context of layered and dispersive considerations of justice, most of the philosophers search for the foothold for their points of view in the work of the great thinkers from the recent or the distant past. The introductory parts of many books, as well as the corresponding vocabularies, superficially base the sketching ideas about justice on some of the most important forerunners who dealt with these issues; or they linger on one or many predecessors, chosen by the writer's will. The situation becomes more glaring as it goes deeper into the past, retiring not only temporally but also spiritually from the modern era, and approaching the *arche* of science itself. Such an approach cannot fully meet the basic intentions of a stringing research, because for a fundamental and profound understanding of the idea of justice in its varied manifestations through its 2600 years long history, a systematic approach to the earliest manifestations of this idea is required; only then it can be adequately received in its multiple dimensions.

The book *Pre-Socratic Understanding of Justice* by Željko Kaluđerović is a valuable contribution to the introduction of the ideas of justice developed by ancient Greeks

in Serbia and in the region. The book comes as a result of many years of research of justice, and was initiated in the work on Kaluđerović's doctoral dissertation. It would be difficult to list all the changes, especially those of content and stylistic nature, which the author put in the edited version of the book which is in front of the readers. Changes were made because of occasional digressions and necessary refinement prompted by his subsequent insights; because of the further corrected translation solutions of the essential philosophical terms and concepts available; as well as due to the need for a more synoptic and fluent presentation. Although, in a temporal sense, it comes after the book *Hellenic Conception of Justice* (Zoran Stojanović Publishing Bookstore, Sremski Karlovci/Novi Sad 2010), this work called *Pre-Socratic Understanding of Justice* logically precedes it. Specifically, the contents of the two books complement each other and overlap in their intention. With the appropriate selection of thinkers and the appropriate synthesis of relevant material, taking into account its unique background, they represent a coherent whole in terms of presentation, understanding and perception of justice from Homer to Aristotle.

In his book *Pre-Socratic Understanding of Justice* Željko Kaluđerović opted for an integrated interpretation of the process of establishing the ancient Hellenic notions of justice and for the clarification of the historical flow of thought, in which these notions transformed into a philosophical understanding of justice. Such an integrity of research interest dictated the need, in presenting the complex Hellenic perception of justice, to take into account the nonphilosophical and pre-philosophical Hellenic opinions, as well as the reflected philosophical experience of opinions. While depicting the process of representation of justice, Kaluđerović establishes a relationship between the consideration of the rudimentary meanings of justice and the determination of its existential characteristics, equivalences and correlations. These features included rationing merit and rights that members of the tribal aristocracy were considered to have in the community, with a constant reminder that the „dike“ commonly referred to the two parties that were in dispute. The author found that the early Greek concept of justice, by the range of its distribution, without specific doctrinal difficulties, extends beyond the boundaries of what is now called the practical-political sphere. Justice, besides being a legitimate basis for the entire human *praxis*, was also an overall cosmic principle of metaphysical proportions. In addition, the mention of justice in ancient times had a religious connotation - a context that the first „physicists“ inherited from their own mythopoetic past.

By developing the main thesis of his book, Kaluđerović showed that in the initial modalities of the concept of justice there was a dimension of justice that would allow its use in the relations between polises. Then, the book follows the shaping of the idea of justice in „a poem about justice“, a contribution to its establishing by the Athenian legislators and one of the seven sages, Solon, through the regularity and rhythm of the evolution of justice in the works of the famous tragedians, with a special emphasis on

Ashley's *Oresteia*, from cosmic to legal justice, and until the indication of individual rightness. Then, the first philosophical text in which the notion of justice is used, along with its understanding as *isakis isos* and *antipeponthos*, is analyzed. After seeing justice as an established order of things, the chapter *Dike-Ananke* classifies justice as a universal cosmic force, and justice in terms of adherence to the *ethos* and *nomos*, according to the author, has the center of its reflective abstraction strongly shifted towards the practical sphere. Kaluđerović conducts the key interpretive and researching move in a systematic survey of understanding of the justice in Callicles and Protagoras. Sophistic consciousness, represented primarily in Protagoras, sought a measure of justice in itself, and no longer only in the world's experience. Callicles, praising the intemperance, licentiousness and freedom as virtue and happiness, destroyed the understanding of arithmetic and geometric equality, as well as the foundation on which the presentation and understanding of justice rested - the relation of equivalence. With such attitudes of Callicles, the author concludes, the sophistic view brought about radical consequences, and the understanding of individual justice was taken to the extreme.

Finally, in his book *Pre-Socratic Understanding of Justice*, Željko Kaluđerović, through an enviable research and reflective meticulousness, was able to conduct a comprehensive interpretation of the representation and understanding of justice, and to show at the same time why, with the later conception of justice, it became the very basis of the practical experience of Western civilization with all its subsequent institutional and consciously reflected forms.