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## **JUSTICE: THE LINKING VIRTUE OF POLITICS AND ECONOMY**

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**ABSTRACT:** In this paper we will refer to justice, which is the cardinal platonic virtue, with reference to economy. It is the most basic problem which runs from the ancient to modern times since the modern societies make an attempt to combine, the economic effects on social justice so long as its aim is the prosperity of citizens. The importance of this goal for society refers to the effect of the conflict of interests between the social classes but the scale of values in every society depends on the philosophical and the political theory of the state.

**KEY WORDS:** justice, eudaimonia, citizen, polis, economy

Plato studies the virtue of justice in close relation to ethics, politics and economy, in his *Republic*. Only in this way the theme will be approached in its entirety<sup>1</sup>. Plato's ideas in the *Republic* constitute the expression of the philosopher's

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<sup>1</sup> The *Republic* seems to be the first written constitution ever.

annoyance for the political and social situation in Athens where individualism and injustice prevails. The philosopher wants to set the standards of the ideal regime. Plato refers to an important issue that is the way of life of man, which will lead to eudaimonia either as a person or a social being<sup>2</sup>.

Mankind decided to live in polis, because they couldn't cover their needs. We understand that the basic reason for man's deciding to live in a community was necessity, that is the man has to meet his needs for food, accommodation etc. However, social harmony could be in danger because of the exploiters (kapiloi), since there are a lot of men who refuse to socialize or live with other people without having a common goal. There's no other solution for the unity of the city but to be ruled by the one who is aware of all its issues as much as possible<sup>3</sup>. Plato separated the citizens in social classes, so that they can undertake different tasks. Every social class performs a specific task, which corresponds to its natural characteristics and this is the meaning of justice in Plato's theory. If there is not distinction among each class's tasks, then the polis will be unfair. This means that every one of each class could be educated in a different way. Plato tried to eliminate the versatility of one class to the other because men often undertake to accomplish a task, but they are not the most able to do it. Versatility causes many problems in the city, since a citizen tends to occupy more than one jobs resulting in becoming a predator and the city gradually disintegrates.

When people hold a lot of public offices and possess political power, they end up not respecting the laws of the city. They embezzle the money of the city and, when they have to decide about the political and social practices, they tend to think only about their interests<sup>4</sup>.

Plato and Aristotle cannot understand how a man could rob his own country out of its wealth, especially the politician, who uses this post for his own profit. Their punishment could be their deprivation of their political power and the constitution of their property<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 352 d.

<sup>3</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 369 b-372 d, 423 d, 434 c.

<sup>4</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 464 c-d.

<sup>5</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 521 a. Aristotle, *Politics*, Γ 6, 1279 a 13-15. Cf. Barker (2007) 323.

These views affect the definition of justice. Plato defines justice as man's ability to function within a certain class by doing a certain task only that is to mind his own business. For example, a politician who should have been a technician, not only is the inappropriate person for the public office but it is also being unfair to possess a political post, since his education and social status do not coincide with his social practice. Socrates' theory has affected many philosophers, like Rawls, who believes that politics is based on ethics and its aim, is to create a just society with ethical laws. His theory is integrated in liberalism. The basic ideas of his theory are freedom and equality thence his theory has a lot of similarities with Plato's political and ethical theory. For Rawls it is clear that private is distinct from public life since the principles that constitute each one of them do not even approach one another; this is of course a major difference between Rawls and Plato. According to Rawls man can live in a society in harmony with all the other people despite their differences in values, perception and the view of life. Rawls doesn't propound a theory which involves universal truths nor is he interested in investigating human soul. He strives to expound institutions which will eventually contribute to people living together, as well as acting towards the common good. This way of life will be real with social justice, freedom and the economical effectiveness.

The citizens who practice justice always tend to act according to their nature. The actions that are not according to their character *are most of the time* since more just people who could contribute to the well-being of the polis are excluded from coming to power. The polis and its constitution are often destroyed by selfishness, unfairness, individualism and the incompetence of its citizens, especially in an oligarchic state, where not only do the rich have the wealth, the political power but they are greedy always asking for more goods<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Rawls (1993) 299-300. Papageorgiou (1994) 149. Hausman- McPherson (1993) 700. Molivas (2010) 222, 231: the core of every society depends on the citizens' participation in the political affairs because the common ideology substitutes the instinct. Inequality in economy effects politics and destabilizes society. A politician ought to create the conditions so that the citizens could have the same opportunities for education, working etc.. It could be real, but it needs the respect of every citizen's value and merit. According to Molivas, if there is equality of opportunities, then we can the political dimension since the ethos of competitive societies is incorporated in that fulfill dimension. MacIntyre (2007) 201: MacIntyre believes that individualism brings about many significant consequences to the contemporary societies. «Without overriding the conception of a *telos* of all human life, conceived as a unity, our conception of certain individual virtues will remain partial and incomplete». MacIntyre thinks man only in the polis could achieve eudaimonia, the sharing of goods and the pursuit of common good which provides with the foundations for any human community. Man cannot live alone but only

The conflict between the rich and the poor divide the city into two distinct parts of the entire community. Each class tries to overpower and rule the other. In democracy the same thing happens, because there is confusion between politics and economy resulting in conflicts and civil war among the citizens<sup>7</sup>. According to Plato, the concept of justice is not consisted of a system of laws only, which is the cornerstone of the polis, but they are of ethical value when accepted by the citizens. The existence of justice or injustice in the city defines its way of functioning<sup>8</sup>. It is imperative that the citizens know themselves, they act according to their nature, they prevail on their passions and they are interested only in promoting the common good. The prevalence of justice can be considered attainable, if the citizen is his own master, which invokes harmony between the classes, orienting thus the citizens to decide for their leader<sup>9</sup>.

Justice, according to Plato, is really significant, being an ethical order to the citizens. That order concerns the citizens' social attitude and ethical behavior which provides the city with his capability of contributing the best he can to the well – being and the eudaemonia of the city. Justice is not considered to be just a simple concept among others but it is of an ethical value, the acknowledgement of which could make the citizens not only well but also moral and will, bring about eudaemonia in the city. Justice in man is the result of the harmony of the three parts in the human soul where each part always carries out its own task without interfering with the other two or even blocking the function of the other two.

Plato considers one being unfair, when a part of the soul rebels against the other especially the desiderative part against the intellect, leading desire to seize power of the soul with all the destructive consequences for man because of desire to govern. The part of the soul is under the illusion that prevails against intellect though in reality it is under the power of the intellect. Thus, justice means that each part of the soul works only in harmony with the others. In this sense, the intellect, when is followed by virtue dissuades man from committing offences. Plato strongly believes that justice and injustice attributed to actions originate in man's soul. Justice is the

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in a community and this practice includes the concept of virtue one of them being justice. Of course, MacIntyre refers to the Aristotelian view of justice, but Aristotle was been affected in this point by Plato's theory.

<sup>7</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 422 e.

<sup>8</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 368 e-369 b.

<sup>9</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 430 e, 432 a.

focal point of *paideia*, on which the ethical development of man depends devided to social or professional ethics, since man is virtuous only when he has acquired and incorporated all the virtues<sup>10</sup>.

Plato tries to show in the *Republic* that men are supposed to be fair in all the particular events of their lives as far; therefore, ethics constitutes a unity and cannot be as their living in a city is concerned. The aim mentioned above could be possible, according to R.G.K. Singpurwalla, if we can spot three major points: 1\ the citizens have to be shown what justice is, so that they could consider it being divine, 2\ they can be shown that justice is beneficial to their souls, 3\ they should acknowledge that justice is of so important internal a value, that all humans ought to revere and follow. R.G.K. Singpurwalla thinks that Plato's perception of justice causes problems because the meanings he gives are not so clear, but somewhat vague.

Consequently men doubt whether justice can bring about prosperity in the city. They consider that the real meaning of justice is to act for the good of other citizens, for example they pay to the expenses of the others. Ultimately, Plato does not succeed in convincing his readers about this dimension of justice, thus ignoring it definitely<sup>11</sup>.

We believe that humans refer to justice when society faces an economical or political crisis, because the government infringe upon their rights. The citizens worry about their future and demand justice, as well as structural changes. We cannot forget about economics being the basic cause of changes in the city's constitution, according to Aristotle and maybe to Plato. So, they suggest that the government make any necessary constitutional changes; otherwise the citizens will rebel against their rulers.

In the *Republic*, Socrates decides for a second time to go out of Athens and leads for Piraeus. The first time was in the *Phedrus*, where he meets Phedrus out of the walls of Athens. It's no wonder about the city, which Socrates chooses to visit, because Piraeus has a port and it's the city of the merchants. What could possibly a philosopher do in the city of merchants and of money? The ultimate aim of commerce is money and not just one's daily survival. Socrates does not accept the competence of the traders because their aim is to acquire wealth, whereas he accepts only agriculture, since farming provides the citizens with necessary goods to live.

<sup>10</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 433 a-b, 540 a, 421 b-c. Vlastos (2000<sup>2</sup>) 179, 187.

<sup>11</sup> Singpurwalla (2008) 263-264.

In Piraeus, Cephalus, who is a rich metoikos, offers hospitality to Socrates. The two men discuss justice. We wonder why Plato has these persons discuss justice namely a rich metoikos and a philosopher. What does Socrates seem to be doing?

Is there a conflict between philosophy and economy, which is the aim of philosophy? It could be that wealth compete philosophy; wealth usually comes from trade and said not from farming, of course<sup>12</sup>.

In this passage, Plato proves once more time that he has an excellent ability to portray the souls of human beings. Firstly, he portrays the characteristics of Cephalus from his words. He is a rich metoikos, who thinks that he could have better luck for his soul if he appeases God's wrath using his money. He is afraid of dying and tries to accept the idea; therefore, he is offering sacrifices. His reactions come from education, he was taught the poetry of Homer, but not philosophy. For a philosopher death is his daily occupation. Cephalus combines money with justice by not being unjust because of his wealth; for this reason he believes that his soul will not be severely punished after his death<sup>13</sup>.

According to Cephalus wealth forms the personality of man, so that man could live happily at an older age<sup>14</sup>. Cephalus is interested in philosophy because he has a lot of time to spare, he is an old man and he can't enjoy all the pleasures of young people<sup>15</sup>. We could figure out the differences between a rich man and the philosopher. Each one is educated in a different way and that affects the way of living and understanding. During the conversation some issues arise regarding God, pleasures, Cephalus' way of living and understanding of justice and education. Cephalus was educated in a wrong way and was not taught of the ideas of philosophy which can affect his spirit, his choices and his character<sup>16</sup>.

The opposition between Socrates and Cephalus seems to exist because of the prevalence of different part of the soul in each interlocutor. In particular, according to Plato's theory of tripartition of the soul, each part corresponds to different pleasures, which define the ethos of men. The philosopher's soul is dominated by logic and its

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<sup>12</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 327 a-328 d. Noutsopoulos (2011) 163-164.

<sup>13</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 330 d-e.

<sup>14</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 329 d-e. Noutsopoulos (2011) 165.

<sup>15</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 330 d, 328 d.

<sup>16</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 330 a. Annas (2006) 31.

pleasure is education. The desiderative part is dominated by avarice, because the possession of wealth overshadows all the other pleasures<sup>17</sup>. The expound of the philosophy of the Republic seems to be an answer of these introductory issues that Plato poses at the beginning of the dialogue.

Justice according to Cephalus is necessary, because it arranges economic transactions. This is the only utility of justice for him<sup>18</sup>. We would prefer to put emphasis on two points. Firstly, Cephalus represents traditional and outdated perceptions about justice; secondly, he represents ideas of his class. We ought to think that Cephalus behaves as a merchant and he is interested in the rules which regulate all the transactions. Socrates isn't satisfied at his answer<sup>19</sup>. According to Polemarchus, justice is useful in case of protection of wealth and it is useless in case of use of wealth<sup>20</sup>. In this way Polemarchus disdains the justice as only being useful to treasure up riches. Socrates does not agree with Polemarchus but the latter accepts Socrates' aspect that justice cannot be identified with<sup>21</sup>. Socrates tries to substantiate his opinion using examples from economic life, because he speaks in the same way as the men who talked firstly. He compares justice to gold, which is superior to justice<sup>22</sup>. In this sense Socrates uses justice in a different way, because he does not approach it an economic way, moreover, starting tract aim of economy is different from justice. Economy aims at wealth and the biggest possible profit; on the contrary; the aim of virtue is the prevalence of justice. We understand that these things belong to two different fields. The view of every person reflects the character (ethos) and his values. For example, the proposals of Thrasymachus don't resound the way the philosophers think but that of a cynic sophist. We cannot forget that he demands money for propounding his views about justice; moreover, he believes that his opinions are the best of all. For the philosopher the reward is the acquiring of knowledge<sup>23</sup>. Socrates in an intelligent way exposes the real intention of Thrasimachus' words and he proves that the teaching of a sophist is not truth but appalling profit. So, Thrasimachus is not a good teacher for the young people and, of course, he is the worst model for them. The

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<sup>17</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 580 d-e.

<sup>18</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 333 b. Noutsopoulos (2011) 170.

<sup>19</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 443 a-b, 361 a-d. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, E 2, 1130 b30-1151 a1. Barker (2007) 329.

<sup>20</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 333 c-d.

<sup>21</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 335 e.

<sup>22</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 336 e.

<sup>23</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 337 d, 338 d.

young people who have been educated in this way, have acquired their ethos accordingly and they will rule the city as their adult models in the worst possible manner, because they haven't acquired the virtues or the values which will help them think the good of all the citizens and not just their profit. The way of their living is defined by the motto of their teachers: «justice is the interest of the stronger<sup>24</sup>». This perception of justice destroys a society and invokes conflicts among the citizens. Socrates' views are different than those of Thrasymachus. The philosopher does not think that the citizens have to submit themselves to the power of their rulers. Also, the rulers, who are interested in the eudemonia of the polis, should not be unfair to the poor citizens. The aim of the authorities isn't to be unjust but to apply justice. The values of society cannot be determined by wealth alone, but by the virtue of the rulers and the citizens of the polis<sup>25</sup>. Socrates' ideas affected Aristotle, as it appears in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where the philosopher distinguishes virtuous life from not virtuous life<sup>26</sup>.

According to Aristotle, justice is a social virtue, which regulates the relationship between the citizens. The basic difference between Plato and Aristotle is that Aristotle does not elevate justice to a metaphysical idea as Plato does. Justice is not only ethos but the perfection by action of citizens; therefore, it is based on social character of ethical virtues<sup>27</sup>.

Unfair man, who breaks the law, violates virtuous life and surrenders himself to thus making himself the worst, the wildest of all the beasts and the most unethical creature «άνοσιώτατον καὶ ἄγριώτατον χείριστον»<sup>28</sup>.

Plato has conceived the problem of human beings in all its depth. The aim of societies is not to change the social and political systems but to change man himself, who dominates them. Hence, Plato supports that the philosopher – king has to rule the state. When there are wise rulers, then the political organism will be proper and the republic will pave the way to justice.

The difficult of every regime is to spread its values to citizens. But this process is necessary because only in this way the regime will be preserved and it will not change to something else.

<sup>24</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 338 c.

<sup>25</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 347 b. Cf. Noutsopoulos (2011) 176.

<sup>26</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I 9, 1170 a 25-29, K 2, 1172 b 9-18, K 3, 1176 a 15-22.

<sup>27</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, E 1, 1129 b 26-1130 a 8.

<sup>28</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, A 3, 1253 a 35-37.



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