

# Attitudes and Interpretations of Ancient Greek Philosophers Towards Social Justice

*Teshaboev Mukhiddin Marifovich*<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** In this article, the concept of "social justice" in ancient Greek philosophy is related to the concepts of moral and political values in relation to problems related to social inequalities. Accordingly, it is clarified that no one should be discriminated against on the basis of social, religious and cultural prejudices, and that everyone should have such minimum resources that they can create their own concept of "good life".

**Keywords:** category, truth, idea of justice, model of justice, Adams, Hayek, Rawls, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, classical liberalism, Enlightenment. Studying the intellectual history of the concept of "social justice".

## INTRODUCTION

The ancient Greek philosopher Plato is one of the most influential thinkers in the history of political philosophy. Since Plato was a student of Socrates, his main source of inspiration was Socrates. One of the most important questions that Socrates sought answers to throughout his life was justice. Therefore, after his teacher, Plato tries to find an answer to this question and writes the most famous work "Republic" dedicated to the discussion of justice. Since he was a student of Socrates, the influence of his teacher can be seen in Plato's writings and it is felt that he agrees with Socrates on some points. Plato believed that justice is the true principle of social life. For him, justice requires goodness as well as obedience to the law. According to Plato, justice is one of the highest virtues. This is Plato's brief opinion about the concept of "justice". Of course, he gave long and detailed explanations to arrive at this point.

The political situation in Athens at the time of Plato was not good at all. Greek cities were divided and citizens turned against each other. Reflecting on the Athenian democracy in which he lived and which led to the death of his mentor, Socrates, Plato concluded that the modern politics of Plato's day were dominated by two things: ignorance and political egoism. Plato saw justice as the only solution to these problematic issues.

Since Plato wrote the Republic based on dialogues and spoke from the language of several philosophers, it is not entirely clear which ideas belong to him. Considering the general content of the work and the ideas attributed to Socrates, it can be said that Plato's theory of the concept of "justice" almost coincides with the ideas of his teacher. Since some of Plato's writings have survived, his ideas can be explained more broadly.

According to Plato, justice means placing each individual and each class in their rightful place in private and social life. And each class is placed in the social and moral hierarchy according to the predominance of one of these faculties. According to him, justice is an indispensable quality of spiritual life. This is manifested in the state of the individual and the state, that is, the ideal state in the visible embodiment of justice. The state is the truth, its idea is justice.

## LITERATURE ANALYSIS AND METHODOLOGY

In his theory of justice, Plato said that each individual is a functional unit, with a specific role with clear obligations and privileges, and is expected to fulfill it diligently and carefully. Plato also explains

<sup>1</sup> PhD in philosophy, associate professor, Fergana branch of TUIT, Uzbekistan, Fergana city



his argument about the difference of individual faculties using the theory of three classes and three souls. After this passage, his ideas are almost identical to those of Socrates, but there are some differences.

He emphasized that there are three qualities in the heart of every human being: mind, spirit and appetite. Moreover, he lists justice as the fourth virtue, which balances and harmonizes the other three. Plato says that in each soul one of these characteristics will have a predominance. He connected the class of people in the structure of an ideal republican state with these three characteristics as follows: "Individuals with superior intellectual abilities form the ruling class. Qualities ruled by spirit are warriors. Rulers and soldiers together form the guardian class. People who have an appetite for the soul seek material things. These are artisans, the productive class." Plato understood injustice as interference, that is, one person's interference in another's business. According to him, any work, job change, exchange between three social classes harms the state and is one of the biggest threats to the state and society. On the contrary, such a state would be just if the rulers were warriors and artisans did their duty. Thus, the three classes defined by Plato work in the right relationship and ensure maximum welfare in the entire state. Each member of the community was to be assigned to the class he or she considered most suitable.

Thus, according to Plato, justice is the principle of non-interference, which keeps the different classes of society, the individual members of each class, and the different elements of the individual soul within the appropriate limits. This is the principle of functional specialization that encourages everyone to make a unique contribution to society. According to Plato, specialization leads to efficiency. Each class and each individual does its duty, and no one interferes with the activities of another.

Aristotle is the third most prominent representative of ancient Greek philosophy after Plato. Aristotle is considered one of the greatest thinkers not only in philosophy, but also in several fields of science. He is considered the founder of the science of logic. His works have shaped philosophy for centuries, from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance, and are still studied today with keen and endless interest. The great scholar Aristotle wrote a large collection of up to two hundred treatises, of which thirty-one are extant today.

Aristotle was a student of Plato, so the influence of his teacher can be felt in his thoughts. He had a broad idea of the concept of "justice". Needless to say, Aristotle's explanation of justice is more detailed and complex, despite the influence of earlier philosophers. Briefly explained, justice for Aristotle is to give everyone what they deserve to the extent that they deserve it. According to him, the determination of the amount of payment should be made depending on the nature of the distributed item. That is, what is distributed should be given according to the nature of that thing, not according to criteria such as wealth or nobility. Aristotle sees justice not only as distributive, but mentions two different types of justice, corrective and commutative justice. This study aims to contribute to the solution of today's political problems by exploring the relationship between politics, virtue and justice. Of course, Aristotle also wrote down his thoughts about the concept of "justice" in a broader form. The main source of Aristotle's theory of justice is the next book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which is considered his companion and predecessor of the *Politics*.

While dealing with the topic of justice, Aristotle gives the following definitions, which he officially confirms: Justice is a quality that allows people to do right and just things, to want to be right and just. Injustice is a habit that leads people to want unjust things. Aristotle draws attention to this connection between confusions, arguing that if justice has multiple meanings, then injustice will also have multiple meanings. He then notes that injustice is inherent in both law-abiding, self-interested, and unequal human nature. Therefore, people who obey the law implicitly, maintain equality, and have no personal interest will be just.

According to Aristotle, if what is legally right is called just, it is in some sense just. However, it cannot be overlooked that Aristotle is speaking here with the presumption of good laws. Aristotle understands what good laws aim at the happiness of political society and its elements. In this sense, it would not be



wrong to say that laws are the proper rules for establishing and maintaining a political society, or that the first and general meaning of justice is just in the sense of obeying the law. According to Aristotle, all other virtues, such as modesty, wisdom, and courage, are related to the soul. But justice is complete and self-sufficient because it includes other virtues as well as relationships with others. In fact, this is another expression of the fact that justice is good for society. Aristotle said that justice is the most important element of living in a normal society.

## DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

According to Aristotle, justice corresponds to politics because rulers establish relationships with others and seek happiness in whatever is good in those relationships. If the ruler is just, he will judge justly. Because according to Aristotle, justice is not a part of any element, but a whole. Injustice is the sum total of evil. Aristotle mentions two types of justice that are part of all justice: "destructive" (*iustitia distributiva*) and "corrective" (*iustitia commutativa*) or otherwise known as "equilibrium" justice. For him, destructive justice, the first type of justice, is concerned with the distribution of honor, money, or divisible things among citizens. Acts as a corrective in other types of purchases.

Here Aristotle speaks of two types of exchange. The first is voluntary procurement, which includes selling, buying, lending, etc. The second is involuntary, that is, forced purchases. These are related to temptation, theft and entrapment. Aristotle also uses the middle way he used to explain the types of justice in his moral teachings. Accordingly, the goods to be divided must be divided equally between the parties. But Aristotle does not understand equality as absolute equality or receiving the same share. According to him, what is equal is that the ratio of shares received by these individuals should be equal to each other. That is, shares distributed to individuals differ according to their status. Two people in different positions get different shares, but these shares are distributed equally or fairly, not more or less than what they deserve. Rather, it depends on people's location, economic level, etc. If the conditions are equal, the distribution is equal, otherwise it is unequal. But this value is understood differently in different types of societies. Democracy values freedom, oligarchy values wealth and nobility, and aristocracy values virtue. But such shares shall be distributed equally or equitably, provided they are not more or less than what they deserve.

Another type of justice written by Aristotle is "corrective" ("equilibrium") justice. The main thing here is not that everything corresponds to justice and truth, as in destructive justice, but absolute equality. Aristotle argues that the element that creates justice in this type is equality, and the element that creates injustice is inequality. Here, the assessment of an action against the law, which treats the parties equally, is in question. It's not that a good person or a bad person commits a crime, it's just that murder should be considered just. That is, according to Aristotle, in this type of justice, the mental state of the person who committed the crime, not the reasons for committing the act, and not the circumstances such as the fact that he committed it intentionally or carelessly, but only the mental state of the person who committed the crime, the fact that he committed the crime, the reason for its occurrence reasons are given. It is considered that he has committed a crime. Therefore, regardless of the circumstances in which they were committed, two persons who committed different crimes were recognized as having equal rights. At this point, justice tries to equalize unequal situations. Here Aristotle represents the side on which equality is provided as profit, and the side on which the share is taken as loss. From this point of view, according to him, justice is the middle ground between benefit and harm.

As mentioned above, Aristotle, who accepted moderation in the moral and political sense, emphasizes here that justice is also a type of moderation. The important point here is that the judge should pay attention to who gets what share and who joins, to ensure equality and ultimately justice. What he means by doing this justice is that a just judge brings the parties to a situation where no situations of gain and loss arise. In this context, according to him, justice is the criterion between benefit and harm.

Thus, for Aristotle, politics, or simply governance, has a meaning other than its role as a provider of modern economic equality, utility maximization, or self-interest. Aristotle's views on politics, which may be considered inappropriate for his time, remain relevant in the sense of the object of research in various fields of science. One of the reasons for this is that the nature, function and main purpose of



politics have not yet been discussed. Speaking separately about justice, without a doubt, justice is the most important thing in human spirit and society. For Aristotle, justice is a concept that is not completely clear, changes from situation to situation, and forms the foundation of society.

But what is the more accepted view of the concept of "justice"?

As you can see, there are many opinions on this topic, and the above is only a small part of these theories. Of course, different theories may seem more appropriate and acceptable to different people, but as with everything, there is an upside. The most logical explanation of the concept of justice between people is "everyone gets what he deserves." It includes not only material goods, but also all things that can be used in common, such as freedom and rights. Contrary to what is often done, justice cannot be confused with what is morally good or right.

A person may engage in behavior that may be considered immoral by others but cannot be claimed as unjust. "What everyone deserves" does not only mean the good and the positive, but can also include the negative. That is, for example, if a hardworking person deserves success, a lazy person should see the dire consequences of their actions. Of course, these are only theoretical ideas, events that happen in reality, which according to some are coincidence, and others are fate, luck, are not taken into account here.

Justice is a social concept that determines how resources and opportunities should be distributed in society to ensure equality and justice for all citizens. Justice is one of the main principles of the organization of society and is the main element of the moral standards of society.

The concept of "justice" has various aspects, including economic, political, social and legal justice. Each of these aspects is important in ensuring equal opportunities and fair distribution of resources in society.

Justice is also related to the concept of equality, which is a basic principle of social justice. Equality means that all citizens have equal opportunities and rights in using resources and services in society. However, the concept of "fairness" is not always easily defined and can be interpreted differently in different cultures and societies. For example, in some cultures justice may be associated with the idea of revenge, while in other cultures it may be associated with the idea of forgiveness and mercy.

In general, the concept of "justice" occupies an important place in the social organization of society and is the main element of moral and ethical standards. It also serves as a basis for developing laws and policies aimed at ensuring equal opportunities and fair distribution of resources in society.

## CONCLUSION

First, although the concept of "social justice" is a widely discussed topic, there is still some confusion about the concept. As a concept, social justice implies that all individuals in society have equal rights and duties in all aspects of social life. This means that all basic rights such as health, education, justice, work and cultural expression must be guaranteed for all. This idea is based on the principle that it is not possible to talk about the development of society only in terms of economic growth. In this sense, the concept of social justice is related to the construction of a type of political organization that ensures that the Social Welfare State, that is, the nation state, must provide the means to guarantee social security to all citizens. Access to its wards, i.e. fundamental rights and social security measures, should be extended to all.

Second, from a legal and institutional perspective, justice follows the path of laws because they limit the scope of our actions in civil society. However, we know very well that in the conditions of constant historical changes in every society, the laws that are considered "just" may turn out to be "unjust" in many ways.

Third, social justice is different from the idea of civil justice, that is, from the justice of courts and the image of a blind statue. While civil justice always seeks impartiality in its judgment, starting with the legal apparatus to justify its actions, social justice seeks to eliminate inequalities by examining the particular difficulties of each group and implementing remedial actions.



Fourth, social justice begins with the rule that in order to reach a level where social coexistence becomes "just", it is necessary to set a certain compensation for those who started social life in disadvantageous conditions. Actions such as minimum wages, unemployment insurance, racial quotas, and other welfare measures are based on this principle. Racial quotas, for example, are among the most recent social justice movements. It has been observed that black and brown people make up the vast majority of the stock poor and needy population. In contrast, the top rungs of the socioeconomic hierarchy are predominantly white.

Fifth, actions that help to put the population in a more needy situation or limited access to education are necessary due to educational and economic inequality that sacrifices the subject in his social position, and is a fact that increasingly tightens the social scale. Social inequality is a major problem that social justice movements seek to address.

Sixth, the concept of "social justice" is related to the concepts of moral and political values in relation to problems related to social inequalities.

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