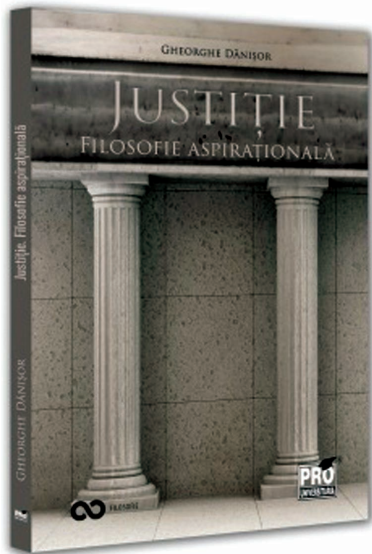


BOOK REVIEWS



Gheorghe Dănișor, *Justiție. Filosofie aspirațională* [Justice. Aspirational Philosophy], Bucharest, Pro Universitaria, 2024, 197 pp.

The work begins with a truly emblematic motto from the ancient author Lao Tse: “When mankind lost knowledge, it had nothing but virtue; losing his virtue, his kindness remained; losing kindness, he found justice; losing justice, established the ceremonies. But they are but the shadow of virtue and the source of disorder.” Considering this first clue, the title of the work *Justice. Aspirational philosophy* indicates an “aspirational” metaphysical incursion to the first principles, values and virtues gathered integratively, but also comprehensively in a philosophy of ethics, justice and the reorganized rebirth of the social and political structure from a symmetrical substratum of the social logos, in which self-care is a facet of the care for the other. In the context of the contemporary world, ceremonies away from knowledge, goodness and justice only maintain a wrong direction of development. The author’s previous works – *The Metaphysics of Becoming*, *The Metaphysics of Presence* and *The Metaphysics of Freedom* collected later in the volume *Beyond Logos*, prepared a metaphysical foundation for the work translated in French and published at L’Harmattan Press in 2023, with the title *Solitude-isolement du monde. Une philosophie sur l’histoire échouée de l’humanité* [Estrangement. A philosophy about the failed history of humanity], which was the outpost of the work *Justice. Aspirational Philosophy*, profiled as a work of practical philosophy in the Kantian sense. This book is also already translated in French, issued in September 2024, as *Justice. Philosophie aspirationnelle*, by the same publishing house.

Pol. Sc. Int. Rel., XXII, 1, pp. 184–188, Bucharest, 2025.

The core argument is that the relationship with the other is co-substantial to the human being. Although “aspirational” is not present in Romanian language it is used to suggest this opening of the *zoon politikon* interpreted in transcending toward the Other (conceived in all possible hypostases: human being, society, nature, divinity) in order to find again the original long-lost plenitude of the human being integrated in an entirety that the human being is paradoxically able to comprehend and to comprise. The paradox is expressed by the author via the following maxim: “*I am comprehended by the Logos while I am comprehending it, thus, I understand; hence, The Good exists*”. All the concepts contained in this maxim are sending to the concept of the whole, by the means of the relation” (p. 10).

Announced as aspirational philosophy, the thought architecture of the book explains the importance to aspire to the symmetry between the care for the individual self and the care for the other (in any of the hypostases mentioned above), beyond Cartesianism. The relation with the other is explained conceptually via the two components of Logos: first *lego*, the link, not far from rapport or *intelego*, understanding. The Good is *agathon* another kind of *logos*, *lego* and *intelego*, vital for the strength of the social fabric. In our view, we have a perspective defining man in terms to nearing the definition of man proposed by Lucian Blaga (“Man is a cultural ontological mutation, singular in the Universe, situated for and toward mystery and revelation”), although the honouring similarity is neither expressed nor intended. Gheorghe Dănişor says: “The human being is an aspirational being in her desire to rise toward the transcendent and to interiorize it in a continuous drive to find herself” (p. 11). In Gheorghe Dănişor’s aspirational philosophy, mystery is not a category of major interest, as the divine Other is rather not situated than situated within mystery.

As stated, the philosophical incursion follows a practical philosophy of Kantian type, namely a unified philosophy of the social plane deduced from an “original plane” of love, relationships, of being – together-with-the others, understood as a root-meaning of justice, with three facets: *philia*, *agape* and *eros*.

Aspirational philosophy deduces the key concepts of the social organisation from the conceptualization of *logos*; first, as *ratio* and *sermo*, then as *agathon*, *lego* and *intelego*. From *ratio*, with the symmetry imperative (the same – the other), are yielded concepts such as responsibility, solidarity and care toward the other. Any imbalances of this symmetry lead either to the dissolution of the social fabric, or to the Great Other in the ominous poses of Oppressor, Imperator, Dictator. From the *sermo* component of the *logos* derive concepts associated with Cartesian individualism: freedom, independence and self-care. An original interpretation of Cartesianism through the Kantian moral horizon, leads the author to develop a philosophy of understanding, in which knowledge comes closer to understanding and the epistemological dimension is subordinated to the ethical dimension.

The unified philosophy of the social field describes the counterweight of the failed history of humanity, recovered this time both by understanding and by caring for others aspects that give together the full measure of the forms of social love as justice, as just living-with-others, thus remaking human integrity, both on an individual, personal level, and on a social level, through the integrity of the social *logos* (p. 23).

The author proposes his integrative vision of the field and the social *logos*. The integrity of the social *logos* is restored through the symmetrical encounter or by interweaving care for oneself with care for the other in “justice” (re)conceptualized in a special way as “being-together-with-others”, therefore, as an ethical state and situation and as a socio-political *hexis*. This “justice” completes a constitutive cycle in which the

individualistic centrifugal concepts that resulted from *sermo* are balanced with the solidary and responsible ones that flowed from *ratio*, the other component of *logos*. Justice, thus interpreted, gives rise to the ontological good, *agathon*, a facet of *logos* that has a regulative function. The concretization of the concept of justice, thus interpreted, brings balance to society.

An application of the theory leads to a discussion of Marxism and liberalism, the former interpreted as a form of exaggerated reporting to *ratio*, while the latter represents an exaggeration on the scale of *sermo*. The socio-political dynamics brings us numerous theoretical and practical examples in which political distortion imposes itself as a model and as a solution, the author shows, in a process by which the part substitutes the whole, either as a part of *ratio*, or as a part of *sermo*. In theory, often, even in the major philosophical constructions of Plato, Kant, Marx, Rawls, “the separation between logical-discursive or justificatory and spontaneity is linked to intellectual intuition”, *i.e.* “the separation between rational and unconscious” will lead with necessity to the destruction of the whole, Gh. Dănișor shows, because only in this way can the Good regulatory act. “For the good will to appear, it needs to have an ante-deliberative existential basis [...] understanding in the form of being-with-others. [...] we are talking about wisdom that pre-deliberately produces the integration of man within the great whole. In the case of Kant, [...] man knows but does not understand [...]” (p. 33) The trend, which has worsened in contemporaneity, has led to a shrunken, isolated contemporary man, “lost in a senseless atomization.” The whole that is “found in parts, in each of the parts without division”, as in the religious or eco-Spinozian sense of being becomes quasi-inaccessible. To be inscribed into the immanent transcendence of *logos* represent a major stake for the universality of self-consciousness.

The justificative aspect of the logical discourse meets the demonstrative aspect of the rational discourse oriented by the tendency of being inscribed into the universal and this is the *aspirational direction*, consisting in aspiring to be part of the whole composed out of relationships, or, to be comprised and comprising of the entirety of *logos*. In this sense, man is conscious of the regulative Good of the universe and he witnesses the Good in action.

The author analyses the thread of the history of political philosophy starting from an Aristotelian foundation, the choice is well-justified. Only Aristotle posits clearly that “freedom is inscribed into the sphere of justice”, Dănișor suggests, as *eleutheria* (freedom) has as root and foundation *eleutheros*, which brings freedom and generosity together. The freedom in its entirety is the freedom to do good and, thus, to be responsible, because good cannot be accomplished otherwise. “Justice and good are the two faces of the same reality” is a central idea of the book. “This manner of thinking takes man out of the spatio-temporality of the (relative) interests and places man beyond any *intentionality* dominated by *partisan* goals. As a consequence, man firmly situates himself in the transcendence of eternity” (p. 39). The argument approaches critically the unbalance generated by the accumulation of rights and the tendency to elude responsibilities. The accent is thus placed on the duty toward the other, an individual act of justice, central in the architecture of “aspirational philosophy”.

The work conceptualizes justice as an ethical perspective, as an ethical manner to relate to the world. It is associated to the relation of symmetry between self and otherness and to a moral self-consciousness that freely adopts the care for the other as manner of living, as life style. Freedom is accompanied by responsibility and pairs independence with solidarity and an active consciousness orienting the temporal individual and communal route. This is giving way to a “gravitational-spiritual” force of the multidimensional

justice, which is a form of good, love and *kairos* (the opportune moment of balance between care for oneself and care for the other). The man who lives aspiring to good, love, justice in this special sense explained above is a thinking being who places existence under the sign of exiting scepticism, towards faith, in a thorough Hegelian interpretation, with Christian valences, precisely through the concern for a spiritual symmetry it manifests more and more pronounced, between care for oneself and care for the other. From here a series of religious speculations and modelling of existence in the form of the cross, with the vertical dimension characterized by ratio, of reason, on which lies the universal consciousness, the pure intelligible and the intellectual-noetic consciousness at the top, the unconscious at the bottom. In the horizontal plane is the dimension of speech, of communication and relationship, of human self-awareness, tensioned between care for oneself and care for the other. The shape described by the two dimensions is that of the cross.

At the intersection of these dimensions, in that area of perfect balance between all the mentioned elements, the concept of justice is located in the deeply philosophical and aspirational meaning that Gheorghe Dănişor envisions. The author shows: “Kant reaches the thing in itself, the intelligible, not through speculative knowledge, but through a kind of purification of the soul [...] man must be considered as an end in himself and never as a means (p. 79) [...] “beautiful moral action conquers men” (p. 126) and “[m]orally beautiful will eventually touch all men.” (*Ibid.*) Michael J. Sandel, communitarian philosopher who capitalizes on the ethical arguments of Aristotle and Kant, among others, and Gh. Dănişor highlights, starting from Sandel’s ideas, the complementary, teleological and honouring (virtuous) facets of justice, which highlight the determination and the freedom of man in helping others, as a cohesive factor of the community, but also as a manifestation of responsible freedom and the fullness of the individual as a spiritual human being. The community of care towards the other is a signal of the spiritualization of man and his life. This spiritualization of the ontological and the social field gives another measure of meaning to the Hegelian maxim “what is rational is real and what is real is rational”.

With a vision with pronounced Aristotelian, Lockean, Kantian and Hegelian accents, the work describes man as an individuality that tends towards the community and lives both in temporality, in the everyday, and in timelessness, as a being of the absolute. Everyday life and individuality are in tension with the community vocation and the absolute. (p. 57) In developing the argument for an aspirational philosophy, Aristotelian construction and interpretation and Hegelian interpretation and conceptual system meet to form a perfect primer for Levinas’s phenomenology. He specifies the individuality-totality relationship as follows: individuality refers to the “totality represented by thought”, not as an “ambience”, but as a “face”, or perhaps, a posture of the self, for “the human only offers himself to a relationship that it is not a power”. The total man thinks with the capacity of empathy, loyalty, compassion, love; all these being expressions of positive freedom. In an interpretive perspective of the Hegelian dialectic, one finds oneself in another in order to be oneself.

As in Aristotle, the author interprets God as the Universal Good and as “the form of thought that thinks itself.” As Gheorghe Dănişor points out, voluntary self-giving “closes the community” and opens “access to the divine” (pp. 58-59). Or, as Constantin Noica said “as much being, as much love”.

The author approaches Cartesianism, phenomenology, and nihilism in a critique of individualism that leads to selfishness, unfulfillment, loneliness, and anguish. Phenomenology in fact supports the author’s architecture of ideas. Phenomenology is

intertwined with the author's classic philosophical contemplative-speculative approach. Gh. Dănișor also uses phenomenology, ever since the analyses and interpretations of Hegelianism, very well conducted and integrated based on his own conception. From Hegel (p. 137), who through his philosophical system pursues a phenomenology of the manifestation of the absolute in the world and of the world's progress towards the spiritual absolute, an absolutely necessary philosophical foundation for the conceptualization of justice as a "gravitational-spiritual" factor and result of human coexistence. For aspirational philosophy is a type of phenomenology of spirit that is called to manifest itself fully in self-consciousness at the opportune moment (*kairos*) of balancing care for self with care for the other. With reference to Husserl, Gh. Dănișor considers that we are dealing with neo-Cartesianism influenced to a certain extent by Heidegger. He is not alone in framing the matter in these terms, which we consider to be wrong. In our view, Husserl's phenomenology is very different from Heidegger's, and Cartesianism is criticized by Husserl and eliminated by Heidegger. To consider Husserl's criticism of Descartes a continuation of Descartes's philosophy, simply because Husserl considers him an important philosopher, is too much. Husserl in fact criticises Cartesianism and then constructs a phenomenology in which the central concept of doubt is totally eliminated. At the centre of Husserlian phenomenology is another concept which, with a certain courage, we can name the concept of "evidence", of the evidence of things for a human self, leading to *eidetics* and a totally non-Cartesian foundation of phenomenology and knowledge. Heidegger actually replaces the self-defined by "I think therefore I exist" with *Dasein*, or, being-in-the-world. This is the non-Cartesian starting point of Heideggerian phenomenology. Levinas's phenomenology, subtle and relational, plays even a more important role in the author's argument.

In this metaphysical construction of deep generosity and aspiration towards full humanity, we identify a strong relational phenomenological vein within which the fullness of subjectivity is constituted and reconstituted through the relationship with the Other (man, society, nature, divine). The other is described as "familiar", we understand, in communion, felt as "ours", internalized affectively, necessary to be-together-with-the-others" justly. Human freedom is an ethical freedom infused with love (*agathon*) to balance care for oneself and care for the Other in any of the listed poses. (p. 155) In the author's terms, the metaphysical construction of justice as love describes a new concept, "aspirationalism", and a new direction in philosophy, which is associated with justice as love: "Aspirationalism is what characterizes the deep fibre of the human being and a it opens to the metaphysical dimension of love" (p. 192).

The work does not only open a new philosophical branch, "aspirational philosophy", as a new philosophical current, with particularly interesting perspectives and with broad social and individual horizons, but it also indicates the potential of understanding logos comprehensively, approached at the same time as good, justice and love.

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