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**Etymology of *Dikaiosune* by  
the Plato's Other: *Cratylus* 412D – 413D\***

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**Abstract**

Here, I will consider the Greek word “Dikaiosune” on the basis of the rather short etymological exploration by one of Plato’s other called Heraclitus. Apart from un-ended discussions and controversies about the nature and quality of etymological surveys of Plato’s other in *Cratylus*, it is worthwhile to figure out and see how a figure such as Heraclitus wants to demonstrate and establish the working and influence of “Dikaiosune” in the macro and micro universes otherwise it is an ordinary and petty notion. Plato’s other mentions (*Cratylus* 412D – 413D) that where everything is in the flux Dikaiosune should function as an uppermost penetrating principle that can penetrate all moving and changing things in order to make a linkage and binding among all of them.

**Keywords:** Plato; Heraclitus; Dikaiosune; Flux; Etymology; Penetration

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## Introduction

The usual and dominant conception of “**dikaiosune**” that is attributed to Plato through a specific *other* or mouthpiece in the specific ancient Greek context is usually based on the *Politeia* that “as a whole devotes itself to completing the definition with meticulous exactitude” (Havelock, 1969: 49, 51). “**Dikaiosune**” is a new abstract coinage that is made during the fifth century by the thinkers which is translated to *justice, righteousness and Gerechtigkeit* in modern languages.

In parallel with this customary account, I am going to introduce another unexamined forgotten account by one of the prominent *others* of Plato (for such an idea I have been inspired by Irwin’s article 1977) in another dialogue which the title gives no clue for such a search and exploration. By this, I mean rather short philological (in its Platonic meaning which is fused with philosophy in *Republic IX.582e*) reflections of Heraclitus as the *other* of Plato in the complicated and multi-level dialogue of *Cratylus* that is the prominent sample of Plato’s reflections on name and its correctness.

Accordingly, we expect that Plato’s *other* consider “**dikaiosune**” as a “name” that signifies something with specific meaning that derived from a specific general complex which contains general core assumptions (Thomas, 2007: 218) of the first “ancient” name-makers as “experts” in distinction of the ordinary people. In other words, any philosopher deals with names as necessary, though not sufficient materials and instruments, in order to think about different subjects. As a result, he or she should analyze the mentioned materials so discovering the general core assumptions that are reflected in the names made by the

ancient expert name-makers. And these assumptions are basically cosmological or ontological (Brumbaugh, 1958: 502, 506) and say something about the cosmos and all the beings within it. And the whole doing is a vast dialectical etymologizing that covers more than half of the dialogue (in distinction of its modern meaning returns to the Greek word etymo + logia that literally denotes “speaking of the true sense/meaning”) and shapes the meaning of the intended word that here means “**dikaiosune**”.

As a result, with regard to the Greek interest in etymology (Lallot, 1991:135- 148; Quincey, 1963: 142), in *Cratylus* too, Plato wants to extract and represent the correct exegetical (not philosophical) coded information of any important name- that is the product of ancient expert name-makers - about its pertinent nominatus. Therefore, narration of Plato’s *other* about “**dikaiosune**” as a name is based on an etymology that is exegetically correct, though, philosophically (Sedley, 1998: 140) it can be the same or different. In any way, such doing is valuable and serious as a necessary instrument for the recovery of the ancient thoughts in order to assess them.

Etymologizing “**Dikaiosune**” is a good place that we can consider the delicate and critical position of the Heraclitus as Plato’s *other*:

‘δικαιοσύνη’ δέ, ὅτι μὲν ἐπὶ τῇ τοῦ δικαίου συνέσει τοῦτο κείται τὸ ὄνομα, ... / It is easy to conjecture that the word δικαιοσύνη’ applies to the understanding/ συνέσει of the just /τοῦ δικαίου; ... (413 b).

Accordingly, the Greek “**δικαιοσύνη**” is a compound (not simple) word and means “**understanding of the just**” in which, we can consider the former word an epistemological one but the latter is not clear

and should be discussed and considered. In the same place and in a few sentences earlier, we saw that within a specific cluster of words, there is an account about the etymology of understanding/ συνέσεις that later on, we conceive that Plato is critical of it. According to the Heraclitan exegetic account, understanding is a kind of going together and accompanying of human soul with and being among the things that are in the process of moving and becoming (412e); because if the soul were at the rest, it would not be able to understand the things that are moving and changing. But as we have said Plato has philosophical reservations about this etymology of the word ‘συνέσεις’ and it is a very critical issue that we should bear in mind in considering the first segment of the compound word ‘δικαιο.σύνη’.

In relation to first part of our intended word ‘δικαιο.σύνη’, Plato’s *other* presents a rather complicated ontological account of “τοῦ δικαίου / the just” that has two features. Initially, if, in an exclusive way, we consider all “being” in journey / πορεία, it means that most of them are actively in move or are passively receiving it / χωρεῖν (two different positions and translations, (Ademollo, 2011: 215). In this initial and basic step, primordial meaning of “dike” has no any roots in jurisprudence, anthropology nor ethics but in a universal quality that covers all existents that in line with this outlook make all of them pragmata/ facta which means acts and deeds.

But it is not sufficient, for as we see though all the phenomena are in journey and move but on the whole, there is an arrangement and order in cosmos and it means that there should be something in order to make interrelations and interconnections among different pragmata:

... ,διὰ δὲ τούτου παντὸς εἶναι τι διεξιόν, ... / ... , but that there is something passing through all this, ... ἐπεὶ δ’ οὐν ἐπιτροπεύει τὰ ἅλλα πάντα διαῖόν, ... / .... And so, since it governs all the other things by going through them, ... (413 c)

According to the state of the beings that are in move and becoming, the thing that wants to make interrelations among these should cause and also have the ability and power of “penetrating and going into / δια.ῖόν” them. For Plato’s *other*, the moving thing that want to do such a function should have two qualities of being swift and subtle (413c)]. Thus δί(κ) α.ῖον come from δια.ῖόν that Greek letter “kappa” has been added for euphony: δια.ῖόν > δί(κ) α.ῖον.

Therefore, within the context of flux conception of beings two principles are manifested, one is the moving and becoming of all entities, and the other is existence of a penetrating and causing move that is fine/small (atom of Democritus? For Plato’s Democritean inspiration see: Charles Kahn, 1973: 156, 157) and swift (in contrast with heavy and slow) in order to go through and administer moving of every being. In other words, the relation between penetration and governing can be described in this way: penetrating move with its own specific identity causes or goes through moving existents and governs over them. It is possible that Heidegger has such a conception of Greek ‘δικαιοσύνη’ in his mind when he separates this word of the usual fields and puts it in the context of being and in contradistinction of modern translations as “justice”, “Gerechtigkeit” and the like words and “translates it instead as Fug or “fugal jointure” – a kind of organizing matrix that brings all beings together contrapunctually with in the fugal

structure of being” (Bambach, 2006: 143). In his own words, “Being as dike is the key to beings in their structure [Gefünge]”, where dike stands for the being of beings as a whole” (Heidegger, 2000: 177).

Thereby, in the broad frame of thinking, in Plato’s *other*, the constitution of each name has relation with its specific reality or being/ontos and wants to signify something about its nominatum. As a result, each name tries to say something explicit or implicit about is pertinent being/ontos and such an endeavor is the work of first pristine wise name-makers who thought about ontos, and according to their (right or wrong) conceptions and perceptions, they made the names that are later tested and judged by the dialecticians as their users.

Accordingly, when we apply the above clue about the word ‘δικαιοσύνη’, we see that the Heraclitan Plato tries to figure out the presumptions embedded in this word and brings them out. And in modern terms, we can say that in his effort he fuses two notions which are the meaning/sense and reference/denotation of this word and such a hybrid shapes its identity (Graeser, 1977: 369). And this means that the word diarefers and denotes to the function of such moving being and at the same time it is the description and meaning of this unique entity.

Thus, the ontology that is embedded within the intended name denotes to this reality and truth that all beings are in flux /becoming/ γένεσις without any exception and among them, there is one moving being that because of the quality of its movement penetrates into the other moving beings and makes an ordered and interrelated whole. Two points are in order, initially, we know that it should not be all of the story but part of it that is applicable for the sensible world

and it necessitates the intervention of the Plato’s *other* who is Parmenides. Besides, such a conception and understanding should make us skeptical and doubtful about the translation of Greek word ‘δικαιοσύνη’ to justice, gerechtigkeit and the like.

After this generic ontological picture about the general flux of all beings, Platonic Socrates is stubborn and is not satisfied and questions more in order to know the concrete manifestations of this penetrating/governing principle (412e-413b). Syntactically, by both using and non-using definite article “τὸ” Plato introduces two different questions that are: *what is δίκαιον* (Τί οὖν ποτ’ ἔστιν ... δίκαιον ... ; and *what the δίκαιοις / τοῦτοεῖναι τὸδίκαιον* (Ademollo, 2011: 219). The first question without the definite article is general and have a general answer too that we have considered it first in the form of δίκαιον <διαῖόν; at the same time, the second question with using the definite article is particular and demands a particular answer too that will come in what follows.

In answering the question of Platonic Socrates about the particular manifestation of the penetrating movement that goes “through” all the other things and “causes” them to move (I gratefully follow Ademollo 2011: 216. n. 70 that in διαῖόν δια- means *both* ‘through’ *and* ‘because of’), we face with these four distinct short reactions as answers: sun; fire; heat; and mind that such a diversity shows disagreement among the supporters of the universal flux. There is no detailed discussion about each one of these answers and they are not connected with specified thinkers, though, some answers may remind us of thinkers such as Heraclitus and Anaxagoras.

By way of conclusion, to get a picture of what Plato might have thought about

**δικαιοσύνη** [justice], we have referred to his critical acceptance of the classical version of etymology in *Cratylus*: speaking of a word in order to find its true origin /meaning. For etymology of any name can give us some true or/and false information about the beings of the world since the core issue is the nature of the knowledge of those who initially made this name. Because they transmit and relay their pertinent conception of entities into the names. According to Plato's *other*, the etymology of compound word **δικαιο.σύνη** (when putting the second component in the parenthesis) leads us to this fact that all beings are in motion and such a reality is reflected in this name made by the first wise name-makers. At the same time, in the vein of such conception, there should be an Ur-movement/ -ίόν that is unique in being fast and fine which can cause move of all beings and goes through δια- all the other beings which are in flux.

This is a general agreed ontological conception of δίκαιον <διαίόν , though,

Platonic Socrates is not satisfied and wants to go further by asking a concrete question about the particular manifestation of this principle. In this regard, we face with four short non-anthropological, non-ethical, and non-jurisprudential answers from different unspecified thinkers who have belief in the motion of all beings/things. At the same time, there is a very crucial moral about the ontology of change which denotes to the flux and changeability of human beings and things and as a result, [justice] should be analogous with entities that are in move and go through them and makes interrelations and interconnections among them in order to shape an ordered whole. The critical acceptance and reservations of platonic Socrates about such an etymology shows that it is part but not the whole story and it should be considered in detail in another place and time by Parmenides as Plato's *other* and after that Plato writes his footnotes to his ideas.

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### چکیده

در این مقاله واژه یونانی Dikaiosune را بر مبنای ریشه‌شناسی به نسبت کوتاه هراکلیتوس به عنوان دیگری افلاطون مورد بررسی قرار می‌دهیم. جدا از مباحثات و مناظرات موجود در باب ماهیت و کیفیت بررسی‌های ریشه‌شناسی که سقراط افلاطونی در دیالوگ کراتیلوس دریافت اینکه چگونه شخصیتی مانند هراکلیتوس می‌خواهد تأثیر و نفوذ Dikaiosune را در دو عالم کوچک و بزرگ نشان دهد بسیار ارزشمند است چراکه در غیر این صورت فکرتی خرد و معمولی خواهد بود. دیگری افلاطون (کراتیلوس ۴۱۲ د-۴۱۳ د) اشاره می‌کند در جایی که همه چیز در سریان است Dikaiosune باید به عنوان اصلی با منتهای نفوذ عمل نماید تا بتواند در تمام چیزهایی که در حرکت و تغییرند ورود پیدا کرده و میان آنها پیوند و ارتباط برقرار سازد.

واژه‌های کلیدی: افلاطون، هراکلیتوس، دیکایوسونی، سیلان، ریشه‌شناسی، نفوذ

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