

Law

Age group 13-15

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“What does justice mean?”

Justice is the expression of the culture, the ethics and the spiritual and religious sentiment of a population. As different human beings, we all have a personal opinion on what is right and what is wrong, based on specific beliefs. Justice is established by the laws of a country, even though “justice” and “law” mean different things. In fact, by the first one we consider an ideal that stands above the laws given by a state and the second one is a means used to discipline people. Also justice is in contrast with the Greek “ὕβρις” (hybris/hubris), which is the arrogance that pushes the humans to feel almighty.

Based on the country or the historical age we focus on, justice and laws are perceived in different ways. As an example we can talk about the Spartans; they thought that if babies had any type of malformation or were not strong enough to fight it was correct to kill them. Throughout time society has developed different necessities, so what was right in the past can be valued wrong in the present. And with the development of our thought, even laws can then be established, like the “Convention on the Rights of the Child”, which is an agreement that protects the children’s rights.¹ Therefore once what is correct is understood, then laws are written to benefit people.

Justice is a principle that has always been part of ancient societies; for the Greeks the goddess Dike represented the personification of justice and for the Latins there was Iustitia². These divinities gave to all humans, values and the power of choosing what was right, without falling in the trap of the wrongful. Even in Christian history justice represented an important factor for the believers; it is in

¹ Article 19 (protection from violence) of the convention,
<https://www.unicef.org/media/60981/file/convention-rights-child-text-child-friendly-version.pdf>

² The Goddesses of Justice, <https://www.theoi.com/Ouranios/HoraDike.html>

fact one of the Cardinal Virtues and is meant as a moral principle, being the “virtue of religion”³, intended both as the justice towards God, and the justice towards men: it turns out to be respectful of the rights of people, and reliable in establishing human relationships.

Justice is a belief that could change overtime and among different countries, in addition it is a fundamental value of our society that fights for equal rights and evenly distributes opportunities among society. How can there be justice if not everyone is treated fairly? The United Nations is an intergovernmental institution important in the fight for social justice: in fact in the 17 objectives adopted for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, goal 16⁴ is taking care of re-establishing and promoting access to justice for every citizen.

“Justice is the sum of all moral duty”⁵ is a quote by William Godwin, philosopher, and I agree with it. Finally I believe that justice was born the first time there was a relationship between people: in fact every society starting from the past has always planted its roots where there was justice. We cannot get away from justice and it should be an absolute value, even though one of its characteristics is that it is mutable in time, because connected to the changes of the ethics and values of a society. In the end we, as humans with a conscience, should always act spontaneously with justice and as the Greek poet Eschilo⁶ said in so doing, pursue happiness.

³ The Cardinal Virtues, Justice,
http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s1c1a7.htm

⁴ #Envision2030 Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions | United Nations Enable
<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/envision2030-goal16.html>

⁵ “Justice is the sum of all moral duty”, on the book “Enquiry Concerning Political Justice”

⁶ “Eumenidi”, Eschilo

Bibliography:

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