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THE PHENOMENON OF JUSTICE: FROM THEORY TO THE IDEAS OF ALIKHAN BUKEIKHANOV

This article offers a philosophical interpretation of justice as a multidimensional sociocultural, moral-legal, and political phenomenon and identifies the specific features of its interpretation in the intellectual legacy of Alikhan Bukeikhanov. The purpose of the study is to reveal the theoretical foundations of the concept of justice, analyze the main approaches to its understanding in global social-philosophical thought, and determine the relevance of these ideas for contemporary Kazakhstani society. The article examines conceptions of justice presented in the works of J. Rawls, F. von Hayek, M. Sandel, and other researchers. The methodological basis of the study is a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach that combines methods from social philosophy, political theory, ethics, and jurisprudence. Social-philosophical analysis is used as the basic method, allowing justice to be considered as a multidimensional category that includes the normative, axiological, and ontological dimensions of social being. Historical-philosophical and comparative methods are applied to reconstruct and compare different conceptions of justice presented in the works of J. Rawls, F. von Hayek, M. Sandel, L. Kolakowski, and other researchers. The methodological basis of the study consists of social-philosophical, historical-comparative, hermeneutic, and axiological methods, which make it possible to consider justice as a category linking normative, institutional, and value dimensions. The study finds that justice cannot be reduced to legality, formal equality, or individual moral qualities; rather, it expresses a holistic principle for evaluating and organizing social relations. It is shown that in Alikhan Bukeikhanov's views, justice functions as an integrative principle that unites the responsibility of authority, the common good, the ethics of labor, the critique of social injustice, and the idea of national-state self-determination. The article concludes that A. Bukeikhanov's philosophical and socio-political ideas retain methodological and practical significance for understanding the problem of justice in contemporary Kazakhstan.

Keywords: justice, legal system, A. Bukeikhanov, legality, ideal of justice.

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Әділеттілік феномені: теориядан Әлихан Бөкейханов идеяларына дейін

Бұл мақалада әділеттілік көпқырлы әлеуметтік-мәдени, моральдық-құқықтық және саяси феномен ретінде философиялық тұрғыдан пайымдалып, оның Әлихан Бөкейхановтың интеллектуалдық мұрасындағы түсіндірілу ерекшеліктері айқындалады. Зерттеудің мақсаты — әділеттілік ұғымының теориялық негіздерін ашу, әлемдік әлеуметтік-философиялық ойдағы оны түсіндірудің негізгі бағыттарын талдау және бұл идеялардың қазіргі Қазақстан қоғамы үшін өзектілігін көрсету. Мақалада Дж. Ролз, Ф. фон Хайек, М. Сэндел және басқа да зерттеушілердің еңбектеріндегі әділеттілік тұжырымдамалары қарастырылады. Зерттеудің әдіснамалық негізі әлеуметтік философия, саяси теория, этика және юриспруденция әдістерін біріктіретін кешенді пәнаралық тәсіл болып табылады. Әлеуметтік-философиялық талдау негізгі әдіс ретінде қолданылады, бұл әділеттілікті әлеуметтік болмыстың нормативтік, аксиологиялық және онтологиялық өлшемдерін қамтитын көпөлшемді санат ретінде қарастыруға мүмкіндік береді. Дж. Роулс, Ф. фон Хайек, М. Сэндель, Л. Колаковский және басқа зерттеушілердің еңбектерінде ұсынылған әділеттіліктің әртүрлі тұжырымдамаларын қайта құру және салыстыру үшін тарихи-философиялық және салыстырмалы әдістер қолданылады. Зерттеудің әдіснамалық

тарихи-салыстырмалы, герменевтикалық және аксиологиялық тәсілдер құрайды. Бұл тәсілдер әділеттілікті нормативтік, институционалдық және құндылықтық өлшемдерді байланыстыратын категория ретінде қарастыруға мүмкіндік береді. Зерттеу нәтижесінде әділеттілікті тек заңдылыққа, формалды теңдікке немесе жеке моральдық қасиеттерге ғана теңеуге болмайтыны анықталды; керісінше, ол қоғамдық қатынастарды бағалау мен ұйымдастырудың тұтас қағидатын білдіреді. Әлихан Бөкейхановтың көзқарастарында әділеттілік биліктің жауапкершілігін, ортақ игілікті, еңбек этикасын, әлеуметтік әділетсіздікті сынауды және ұлттық-мемлекеттік өзін-өзі айқындау идеясын біріктіретін тұтастырушы қағидат ретінде көрінеді. Мақалада Ә. Бөкейхановтың философиялық және қоғамдық-саяси идеялары қазіргі Қазақстандағы әділеттілік мәселесін түсінуде әдіснамалық әрі практикалық маңызын сақтап отырғаны тұжырымдалады.

Түйін сөздер: әділеттілік, құқықтық жүйе, А. Бөкейханов, заңдылық, әділеттілік мұраты.

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Феномен справедливости: от теории к идеям Алихана Букейханова

Статья посвящена философскому осмыслению справедливости как многомерного социально-культурного, морально-правового и политического феномена, а также выявлению специфики её интерпретации в интеллектуальном наследии Алихана Букейханова. Цель исследования заключается в раскрытии теоретических оснований понятия справедливости, анализе основных подходов к его пониманию в мировой социально-философской мысли и определении актуальности данных идей для современного казахстанского общества. В работе рассматриваются концепции справедливости, представленные в трудах Дж. Ролза, Ф. фон Хайека, М. Сэндела, и других исследователей. Методологической основой исследования является всесторонний междисциплинарный подход, сочетающий методы социальной философии, политической теории, этики и юриспруденции. В качестве базового метода используется социально-философский анализ, позволяющий рассматривать справедливость как многомерную категорию, включающую нормативные, аксиологические и онтологические измерения социального бытия. Историко-философские и сравнительные методы применяются для реконструкции и сравнения различных концепций справедливости, представленных в работах Дж. Ролза, Ф. фон Хайека, М. Сэндела, Л. Колаковского и других исследователей. Методологическую основу исследования составляют социально-философский, историко-сравнительный, герменевтический и аксиологический методы, позволяющие рассмотреть справедливость как категорию, соединяющую нормативное, институциональное и ценностное измерения. В результате установлено, что справедливость не сводится ни к законности, ни к формальному равенству, ни к отдельным моральным качествам, а выражает целостный принцип оценки и организации общественных отношений. Показано, что в воззрениях Алихана Букейханова справедливость выступает как интегративный принцип, объединяющий ответственность власти, общественное благо, трудовую этику, критику социальной несправедливости и идею национально-государственного самоопределения. Делается вывод о том, что философские и общественно-политические идеи А. Букейханова сохраняют методологическую и практическую значимость для осмысления проблемы справедливости в современном Казахстане.

Ключевые слова: справедливость, правовая система, А. Букейханов, законность, идеал справедливости.

Introduction

The problem of justice has remained one of the most fundamental and at the same time most contested issues in the history of philosophical thought. From antiquity to the present day, thinkers have tried to determine what makes a society just, how justice should be related to law and morality, and

whether it can be understood as a universal principle or only within a concrete historical and cultural context. The continuing relevance of this problem is explained by the fact that justice is not limited to theoretical reflection. It directly affects the organization of social life, the legitimacy of political power, the functioning of legal institutions, and the everyday experience of individuals and communities.

In the modern world, the issue of justice has become especially significant in the legal and political spheres. Contemporary societies often rely on formal legal norms, procedures, and institutions as the main instruments for regulating social relations. However, legality itself does not always guarantee justice. A law may be formally valid, but at the same time may fail to protect human dignity, social equality, or the common good. This creates a serious philosophical and practical problem: justice cannot be reduced only to compliance with the law, because the law also requires moral and value-based evaluation. The tendency to identify justice with legality may lead to the paradoxical situation in which unjust laws or unfair institutional practices are considered legitimate simply because they are formally established.

This problem is particularly relevant for contemporary Kazakhstani society. In the context of legal modernization, the development of civil society, and the reassessment of the value foundations of social development, the question of justice acquires not only theoretical but also practical importance. The transformation of social institutions requires more than the improvement of legal mechanisms; it also demands a deeper understanding of the moral, cultural, and social principles that should guide public life. Formally established rights, procedures, and institutions do not always ensure equal access to opportunities, fair distribution of social goods, or public trust in authority. Therefore, justice should be considered as a broader sociocultural and axiological principle that determines the quality of social relations and the direction of social development.

In this regard, it is necessary to turn to the main philosophical conceptions of justice developed within the global intellectual tradition. John Rawls interprets justice primarily as the first virtue of social institutions and connects it with fairness, equal basic liberties, and the distribution of rights and opportunities. Friedrich August von Hayek, in contrast, emphasizes the limits of applying the concept of justice to social outcomes and focuses on individual action, responsibility, and general rules. Michael Sandel criticizes purely procedural and distributive approaches and argues that justice cannot be separated from moral values, virtue, and the common good. Leszek Kolakowski, as well as a number of Russian and Kazakhstani researchers, draws attention to the internal complexity of justice and its connection with moral consciousness, social equality, responsibility, and human dignity. These approaches show that justice is a multidimensional

phenomenon that includes legal, moral, institutional, and cultural aspects.

At the same time, the study of justice cannot be limited only to Western philosophical theories. For a deeper understanding of this category in the Kazakhstani context, it is important to analyze the national intellectual tradition, especially the socio-political and philosophical ideas of Alikhan Bukeikhanov. His intellectual legacy occupies a special place in the history of Kazakh social thought. Bukeikhanov considered social and political problems not in an abstract way, but in close connection with the real historical conditions of Kazakh society, including issues of governance, land, labor, education, autonomy, national self-determination, and the responsibility of authority before the people.

In Bukeikhanov's views, justice appears as an integrative principle that brings together moral, legal, institutional, and national-political dimensions. For him, justice was not merely a theoretical concept or a moral slogan. It was a practical criterion for evaluating the actions of power, the organization of public life, and the legitimacy of political decisions. His criticism of unfair electoral practices, bureaucratic arbitrariness, corruption, social inequality, and the formal use of law demonstrates that justice, in his understanding, was inseparable from the common good and the moral responsibility of those who govern. This makes his ideas especially important for contemporary discussions about the relationship between law, morality, statehood, and social responsibility.

The relevance of this study is determined by the need to connect general philosophical theories of justice with the specific historical and cultural experience of Kazakh society. Although the concept of justice has been widely discussed in world philosophy, its interpretation within the Kazakh intellectual tradition, particularly in the works of Alikhan Bukeikhanov, still requires deeper philosophical analysis. This research seeks to fill this gap by showing that Bukeikhanov's understanding of justice can be viewed not only as part of national political history, but also as a meaningful contribution to broader philosophical discussions on justice, responsibility, and social order.

The purpose of the present study is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the concept of justice in philosophical and socio-political contexts and to identify the specific features of its interpretation in the intellectual legacy of Alikhan Bukeikhanov. To achieve this purpose, the article examines the main theoretical approaches to justice, clarifies its onto-

logical and axiological foundations, and analyzes its role in the formation of social institutions and practices. Special attention is given to the way in which Bukeikhanov's ideas combine universal philosophical principles with the concrete needs of Kazakh society.

Literature review

The problem of justice has occupied a central place in classical and contemporary social philosophy, political theory, ethics, and legal thought. In different intellectual traditions, justice has been interpreted not only as a legal norm or moral requirement, but also as a broader principle that shapes social order, political legitimacy, human dignity, and the distribution of public goods. For this reason, the literature on justice is diverse and includes institutional, liberal, communitarian, ethical, and socio-cultural approaches.

One of the most influential modern interpretations of justice is presented in the works of John Rawls. In *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls develops the concept of "justice as fairness" and argues that justice should be understood primarily as the first virtue of social institutions. His contribution lies in shifting the discussion of justice from individual moral qualities to the structure of society, especially to the ways in which rights, duties, opportunities, and social benefits are distributed. Rawls's theory remains important because it provides a normative model for evaluating whether social institutions are fair and whether they protect equal basic liberties and legitimate expectations (Rawls, 1958; Rawls, 1971).

A different position is developed by Friedrich August von Hayek, who criticizes the idea of applying justice to impersonal social structures or outcomes. For Hayek, justice is meaningful mainly in relation to human action, responsibility, and the rules that guide individual behavior. His contribution is significant because it questions whether society as a whole can be called just or unjust in the same way as a person's action can. This approach helps to reveal an important tension in the theory of justice: whether justice should be understood as a quality of institutions, as Rawls argues, or as a quality of individual actions and responsibility, as Hayek suggests (Hayek, 2006).

Michael Sandel's works offer another important perspective by emphasizing the limits of purely procedural and distributive theories of justice. Sandel argues that justice cannot be reduced only to the correct distribution of rights, resources, or opportuni-

ties. It also requires reflection on virtue, moral values, and the common good. His approach is valuable for this study because it connects justice with ethical life, civic responsibility, and the moral foundations of society. In this sense, Sandel's communitarian interpretation makes it possible to consider justice not only as a formal principle, but also as a value embedded in social practices and collective identity (Sandel, 2009).

The literature also pays attention to the internal complexity and even ambiguity of justice. Leszek Kołakowski shows that the classical definition of justice as "giving everyone their due" raises a difficult question: how should this "due" be determined? His reflections are important because they demonstrate that justice does not always provide a simple or final answer to moral and legal problems. Justice may come into tension with other ethical principles, such as mercy, solidarity, or human compassion. This idea is especially relevant when justice is studied as a multidimensional phenomenon rather than as a narrow legal category (Kołakowski, n.d.).

In Russian and post-Soviet philosophical literature, justice is often discussed as a socio-ethical and axiological category. O.A. Torosyan interprets social justice through the proportional relationship between equality and inequality, emphasizing that justice cannot be fully reduced to freedom, truth, or honesty. G.M. Muntyan develops a multidimensional view of justice, treating it as a feeling, a cognitive capacity, a normative idea, and a practical principle. O. Drobnitsky and F. Selivanov define justice as a moral-legal and socio-political category that evaluates social reality from the standpoint of what ought to be. These studies are important because they allow justice to be understood as a value-based principle that connects morality, law, social relations, and public institutions (Torosyan, 2014; Muntyan, 2009; Drobnitsky & Selivanov, 1970).

The sociological approach of Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thevenot also contributes to the study of justice by showing that people justify their actions and evaluate social situations through different «orders of worth». Their work is useful for understanding how justice operates in real social life, where individuals and groups appeal to different moral arguments, values, and criteria of legitimacy. This perspective broadens the analysis of justice by moving beyond abstract theory and focusing on the practical ways in which people justify social arrangements and criticize injustice (Boltanski & Thevenot, 2013).

A separate but important line of thought concerns the concept of the ideal. E.V. Ilyenkov's in-

terpretation of the ideal as an active form of social consciousness is particularly useful for understanding justice not merely as a theoretical concept, but as a motivating social ideal. From this perspective, justice can be viewed as a value that unites individual aspirations and collective goals, encouraging society to transform existing conditions. This approach is relevant for analyzing justice in connection with national development, political responsibility, and social modernization (Ilyenkov, 2022).

Despite the richness of these theoretical approaches, there remains a research gap in the study of justice within the Kazakh intellectual tradition, especially in relation to the ideas of Alikhan Bukeikhanov. Existing theories explain justice through institutions, individual responsibility, freedom, virtue, equality, or social distribution. However, they do not fully address how the idea of justice was interpreted in the context of national self-determination, colonial administration, social modernization, land issues, political autonomy, and the moral responsibility of authority in Kazakh society. This gap makes it necessary to examine Bukeikhanov's intellectual legacy as a distinctive contribution to the philosophy of justice.

Alikhan Bukeikhanov's works offer a historically grounded and practically oriented understanding of justice. In his writings, justice appears not as an abstract moral slogan, but as a principle connected with responsible governance, protection of public interests, criticism of social injustice, the value of labor, and the right of the nation to political self-determination. His critique of unfair electoral practices, formal bureaucracy, corruption, and the misuse of power demonstrates that justice, for him, was inseparable from the common good and the moral legitimacy of authority. Therefore, the study of Bukeikhanov's ideas allows the problem of justice to be considered through the unity of ethical, legal, institutional, and national-political dimensions.

Methodology

The methodological basis of the study is a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach that combines methods from social philosophy, political theory, ethics, and jurisprudence. Social-philosophical analysis is used as the basic method, allowing justice to be considered as a multidimensional category that includes the normative, axiological, and ontological dimensions of social being. Historical-philosophical and comparative methods are applied to reconstruct and compare different conceptions of justice pre-

sented in the works of John Rawls, Friedrich August von Hayek, Michael Sandel, Leszek Kolakowski, and other researchers. This makes it possible to identify the main directions in the evolution of ideas about justice and to determine their internal contradictions and points of convergence. The hermeneutic method is used in the analysis of texts, enabling an interpretation of Alikhan Bukeikhanov's philosophical and publicistic works with regard to their historical and cultural context. The axiological approach is aimed at revealing the value-based nature of justice and its role in shaping social ideals and normative guidelines.

In addition, the study employs a systems approach, which makes it possible to view justice as an element of an integral social structure connected with the functioning of legal institutions, the distribution of social goods, and mechanisms of social regulation.

The research material consists of philosophical works by classical and contemporary authors, as well as the socio-political and publicistic writings of Alikhan Bukeikhanov, which reflect the specific understanding of justice within the Kazakh intellectual tradition.

Results and discussion

The transformation of the legal system and the gradual development of civil society make the problem of justice especially important for contemporary Kazakhstan. In a formal sense, a legal system may contain established norms, procedures, and institutions; however, their existence alone does not guarantee that they are applied fairly or that they serve the interests of society as a whole. This distinction between legality and justice is crucial. A law may be valid from the standpoint of procedure, but if it ignores human dignity, social equality, public responsibility, or the common good, it cannot be considered fully just. Therefore, the question of justice cannot be reduced to the question of whether a certain rule exists in legal form. It also requires an evaluation of the moral, social, and value-based foundations of that rule.

In this context, justice appears not only as a legal category, but also as a broader sociocultural principle. It is closely connected with public consciousness, social trust, the legitimacy of political authority, and the way in which people experience equality or inequality in everyday life. Issues such as unequal access to resources, the uneven distribution of opportunities, corruption, weak public trust in in-

stitutions, and the formal application of law show that justice is not merely an abstract philosophical idea. It is a real condition for social solidarity and stable development. When citizens perceive social institutions as unjust, even legally established decisions may lose moral legitimacy.

This makes it necessary to analyze justice through several interconnected dimensions: legal, moral, institutional, and cultural. The legal dimension concerns norms, rights, duties, and procedures. The moral dimension concerns human dignity, responsibility, honesty, and respect for others. The institutional dimension relates to the functioning of the state, courts, public administration, and mechanisms of distribution. The cultural dimension reflects the historical experience, value orientations, and intellectual traditions through which society understands what is fair and what is unacceptable. In the Kazakh context, these dimensions are especially important because the idea of justice has always been closely linked with questions of social harmony, responsibility of authority, land, labor, education, and national self-determination.

One of the most influential theories of justice in contemporary Western philosophy was developed by John Rawls. Rawls distinguishes between the general concept of justice and various particular conceptions of justice, emphasizing that different theories may interpret justice in different ways while still addressing a shared normative problem (Rawls, 1971, p. 5). This distinction is important because it shows that justice is not a fixed and simple notion. Rather, it is a concept that receives different meanings depending on the philosophical, political, and social context in which it is discussed.

Rawls develops his theory as an alternative to utilitarianism and proposes the model of «justice as fairness». His approach is based on the idea that principles of justice should be chosen under fair conditions and should regulate the basic structure of society (Rawls, 1971, pp. 16–17). In his earlier article, Rawls (1958) also emphasizes fairness as a fundamental element in the analysis of justice (p. 164). This does not mean that justice and fairness are completely identical. Rather, fairness becomes the main methodological principle through which justice can be understood. In this sense, Rawls shifts the discussion from individual moral qualities to the organization of social institutions.

A key feature of Rawls's theory is that the main subject of justice is not the isolated individual, but the basic structure of society. By this, he means the major social institutions that distribute rights, duties,

opportunities, and social advantages (Rawls, 1971, p. 7). This approach is significant because it allows justice to be understood as a property of institutions. Social institutions shape people's life chances, determine access to education, work, political participation, and social protection, and influence how individuals imagine their future. For Rawls, therefore, justice is the primary virtue of social institutions, just as truth is central to systems of thought (Rawls, 1971, p. 3).

However, Rawls's institutional understanding of justice has also been criticized. Friedrich August von Hayek offers a different interpretation, arguing that justice should primarily be applied to human actions rather than to social outcomes or abstract structures. In his view, responsibility belongs to acting individuals, and therefore justice can be meaningfully discussed where there is a responsible agent behind a particular action or decision (Hayek, 2006, p. 199). This creates an important theoretical tension. In Rawls's approach, justice is connected with institutions and their influence on social life. In Hayek's approach, justice is rooted in individual action, responsibility, and the rules that guide human behavior.

This disagreement reveals a deeper philosophical problem: should justice be understood primarily as an institutional principle or as a moral characteristic of human action? If priority is given to institutions, then injustice is seen mainly in unfair structures, unequal opportunities, and defective systems of distribution. If priority is given to individual action, then injustice is connected with irresponsible behavior, arbitrary decisions, and the violation of general rules. In reality, these two approaches should not be treated as mutually exclusive. Institutions are created and maintained by people, while individual actions take place within institutional frameworks. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of justice must include both institutional conditions and personal responsibility.

Michael Sandel offers another important perspective. He shows that ancient and modern theories of justice are based on different starting points: ancient thought is more closely connected with virtue, while modern theories often begin with freedom and individual choice (Sandel, 2009, pp. 18–19). This distinction is useful because it helps explain why justice has been interpreted differently in different historical periods. In traditional societies, social order was often understood through duty, hierarchy, virtue, and the moral qualities expected from a person. In modern societies, however, the individual

becomes more autonomous, and freedom becomes one of the central values through which justice is evaluated.

This historical shift can also be clarified through the social philosophy of Karl Marx. Marx emphasizes the sociocultural nature of human existence and shows that the human being is formed within the world of social relations (Marx, 1955, p. 414). In pre-modern societies, relations of personal dependence played a major role, and individuals were included in stable communal and hierarchical structures. With the emergence of modern social relations, individuals became increasingly separated from traditional organic bonds and entered into systems of material and economic dependence. Under these conditions, freedom became a central category, because the individual began to define his or her place in society through rights, interests, labor, and social opportunities.

Sandel's contribution lies in his criticism of purely procedural and distributive approaches to justice. He argues that justice cannot be reduced only to the correct distribution of goods, rights, or opportunities. It also involves the question of how society evaluates certain goods, what it considers worthy, and what kind of moral life it encourages (Sandel, 2009, pp. 260–261). This approach is important because it brings the idea of the common good back into the discussion. Justice is not only about «who gets what», but also about what society values, what kind of citizens it forms, and what moral principles guide public life.

The need for a more integrative understanding of justice is also visible in the work of Torosyan. He interprets social justice as a multidimensional category based on the proportional relationship between equality and inequality (Torosyan, 2014, pp. 9–10). This idea is important because it avoids two extremes. On the one hand, justice cannot be reduced to mechanical equality, where all differences among people are ignored. On the other hand, justice cannot justify unlimited inequality, especially when inequality destroys dignity, opportunity, and social solidarity. Justice requires proportion, measure, and moral justification. Not every inequality is unjust, but every inequality must be socially and morally accountable.

Torosyan also emphasizes that justice is a socio-ethical category that expresses the measure of humanity in social relations. It requires equal respect for human dignity while also taking into account real differences among individuals and social groups (Torosyan, 2014, p. 10). This view is especially relevant for societies undergoing transformation, where

formal equality before the law may exist, but real access to opportunities may remain unequal. In such cases, justice requires not only legal recognition but also practical mechanisms that support human development and social inclusion.

The internal complexity of justice is further revealed by Leszek Kolakowski. He draws attention to the traditional definition of justice as giving each person what is due, but notes that the most difficult question is how to determine what exactly is “due” in each case (Kolakowski, n.d., p. 37). This difficulty is visible both in the distribution of social goods and in the assignment of responsibility or punishment. Modern legal consciousness is based on the idea of equality before the law, yet equality does not always mean identical treatment. Different categories of people may require different conditions, but such differences can be justified only when they are based on a consistent and morally defensible principle (Kolakowski, n.d., p. 38).

Kolakowski's argument is important because it shows the limits of justice as a moral principle. Justice is fundamental, but it does not exhaust the whole content of moral life. Human relations also require mercy, solidarity, compassion, and benevolence, which cannot always be derived from strict legal or distributive logic (Kolakowski, n.d., p. 40). Therefore, a just society should not be understood as one that merely applies rules correctly. It must also cultivate moral sensitivity and the ability to recognize the human meaning behind social norms.

The ontological foundations of justice can be understood through the distinction between human nature and human essence. Human nature refers to biological and natural characteristics, while human essence is formed through activity, communication, culture, and social relations. Batishchev argues that in the process of anthropogenesis, the human being loses rigid hereditary behavioral determinants and gains an open capacity for universal activity (Batishchev, 2015, pp. 205–206). This means that human beings are not only natural beings, but also social and cultural beings who create their own world through labor, knowledge, and value-oriented action.

From this perspective, justice arises not simply from biological needs, but from the sociocultural form of human existence. It becomes meaningful where people live together, distribute goods, define duties, establish institutions, and evaluate actions from the standpoint of what ought to be. Drobnitsky define justice as a moral-legal and socio-political category connected with the idea of what is due and with the understanding of human essence and

inalienable rights (Drobnitsky and Selivanov, 1970, p. 119). Unlike the concepts of good or moral goodness, which may concern separate actions or qualities, justice focuses on relations between people and on the distribution of benefits, burdens, rights, and responsibilities.

Muntyan also offers a multidimensional interpretation of justice. He understands justice as a feeling, a cognitive ability, a normative idea, and a practical principle of life (Muntyan, 2009, p. 7). These aspects should not be separated from one another. A person experiences justice emotionally, evaluates it rationally, imagines it as an ideal, and applies it as a guide for action. The common element in all these dimensions is the comparison between what exists and what ought to exist. Muntyan further identifies measure and equality as important ontological foundations of justice (Muntyan, 2009, p. 8). This idea again confirms that justice is connected not only with equal treatment, but also with proportionality, balance, and the meaningful organization of social relations.

A sociological perspective is offered by Boltanski and Thevenot, who distinguish between different modes of justification and different ways of appealing to justice in social life. They show that people do not always rely on a single universal criterion when they judge a situation as fair or unfair. Instead, they appeal to different “orders of worth” and different principles of justification depending on the context (Boltanski & Thevenot, 2013, p. 82). This approach is useful because it shows that justice functions not only in philosophical theory or legal doctrine, but also in everyday disputes, public criticism, institutional conflicts, and social negotiations.

The idea of justice is closely connected with the concept of the ideal. Ilyenkov interprets the ideal as an active form of social consciousness capable of uniting individual wills around historically significant tasks (Ilyenkov, 2022, p. 67). This understanding allows justice to be seen not only as a norm or rule, but also as a social ideal that motivates transformation. A society does not simply describe justice; it strives toward it, criticizes existing injustice, and creates institutions that are meant to bring reality closer to the ideal. In this sense, justice has both critical and constructive functions. It reveals the shortcomings of existing social relations and at the same time offers a direction for their improvement.

Against this theoretical background, the ideas of Alikhan Bökeikhanov acquire particular significance. In Western philosophy, justice is often interpreted either as a property of institutions, as in Rawls, or as a feature of responsible action, as in Hayek.

In Bökeikhanov’s thought, these dimensions are not separated. Justice appears as an integrative principle that connects morality, law, governance, labor, social responsibility, and national development. His understanding of justice was not abstract or purely theoretical. It was formed in response to the concrete historical problems of Kazakh society: colonial administration, unfair elections, land issues, social inequality, the crisis of traditional governance, and the need for political self-determination.

Bökeikhanov’s analysis of volost elections is especially important. In his writings on elections, he criticizes the way in which the struggle for power disrupted the normal economic and social life of the Kazakh people. During election periods, livestock breeding, farming, and preparation for seasonal work were often pushed aside, while many people became involved in conflicts over administrative positions. Bökeikhanov saw that such political practices were not guided by the public interest, but by personal ambition, rivalry, and the desire for material gain (Bökeikhanov, 1994, p. 119). For him, this was not simply a technical failure of governance. It was a sign of deeper injustice, because power was being detached from responsibility and from service to the people.

His criticism of electoral practices also reveals his understanding of legitimate authority. Bökeikhanov believed that a leader should possess not only formal qualifications, but also moral authority, knowledge of social life, respect among the people, and commitment to the common good. He sharply criticized situations in which external or formal criteria, such as knowledge of the Russian language, were used to remove respected traditional leaders from power, even when there were no sufficient legal or moral grounds for doing so (Bökeikhanov, 1994, p. 127). In such cases, the form of legality was used against the substance of justice. This example clearly shows that for Bökeikhanov, justice required more than procedural correctness; it required meaningful legitimacy.

Bökeikhanov’s position is particularly relevant because he understood the danger of replacing real social authority with bureaucratic formality. When law becomes a tool of arbitrary administration rather than a means of protecting the common good, it loses its moral force. This problem remains important for modern societies as well. Legal institutions must not only exist formally; they must be trusted, transparent, responsible, and oriented toward public welfare. Otherwise, they may reproduce inequality and alienation rather than justice.

Another important aspect of Bökeikhanov's thought is his understanding of labor. He considered labor not merely an economic necessity, but a value and a foundation of human dignity. Comparing different economic cultures, he emphasized that social development requires education, practical skills, rational organization, and respect for productive activity. In this sense, labor becomes connected with justice because it allows individuals and communities to develop their capacities and participate fully in social life. A society that does not value labor cannot create stable conditions for justice, because it weakens responsibility, self-reliance, and the material foundations of freedom.

Bökeikhanov also connects justice with education and knowledge. For him, modernization did not mean the mechanical imitation of other societies. It meant the conscious development of the Kazakh people through science, education, economic organization, and political maturity. Justice, therefore, was not only a demand addressed to authority; it was also a demand addressed to society itself. A just society requires educated citizens, responsible leaders, and social practices based on work, knowledge, and moral accountability.

His critique of European civilization further reveals the ethical depth of his understanding of justice. Bökeikhanov did not deny the technical achievements of Europe, but he questioned the moral superiority that European societies often claimed for themselves. He pointed out that societies declaring Christian and humanistic values could still be guided in practice by domination, competition, and violence. In his view, when the weak are deprived of recognition and protection, there can be no genuine justice (Bökeikhanov, 1994, p. 204). This criticism shows that Bökeikhanov's thought was not limited to local issues. He was able to evaluate global political and moral processes from the standpoint of universal ethical principles.

The same ethical criterion appears in his assessment of international conflicts. Bökeikhanov criticized military actions that contradicted declared civilizational and religious values, especially when stronger actors used violence against weakened opponents (Bökeikhanov, 1994, p. 204). In this context, justice becomes a principle for evaluating not only domestic governance but also relations between states and peoples. His position shows that political success cannot be morally justified if it is achieved through oppression, violence, or disregard for human dignity.

The land question occupies a central place in Bökeikhanov's political thought. In his work ex-

plaining why he left the Cadet Party, he criticizes the idea of private ownership of land under the conditions of Kazakh society. He believed that such a policy could lead to the loss of the land fund, because economically vulnerable people might sell land under pressure or short-term need, eventually becoming socially impoverished (Bökeikhanov, 1994, p. 268). This argument demonstrates his ability to connect justice with long-term social consequences. He did not evaluate policy only from the standpoint of formal rights. He asked whether a given policy would protect the future of the people and preserve the material basis of national life.

This position shows that Bökeikhanov's understanding of justice was deeply social and strategic. He saw that formal freedom, such as the freedom to sell land, could become destructive if it operated in conditions of inequality and economic vulnerability. In this respect, his thought has clear conceptual resonance with broader philosophical debates about the relationship between freedom, equality, and responsibility. Freedom without protection of the common good may become a mechanism of dispossession. Equality without consideration of historical and social conditions may remain merely formal. Justice requires the balanced unity of both.

The creation of the Alash movement and the idea of national autonomy can also be interpreted through the lens of justice. For Bökeikhanov and the Kazakh intelligentsia, autonomy was not simply a political demand. It was a way to institutionalize justice in the historical conditions of the Kazakh people. The idea of Alash was connected with the protection of land, education, national dignity, responsible governance, and the creation of institutions capable of defending public interests. Thus, the national project was also a moral and legal project. It aimed to create conditions under which the people could determine their own future and organize public life according to principles of responsibility and fairness.

A comparative analysis of Rawls, Hayek, Sandel, Torosyan, Kolakowski, and Bökeikhanov shows that justice cannot be understood through one dimension only. Rawls helps to reveal the institutional structure of justice. Hayek emphasizes responsibility and the importance of human action. Sandel shows the connection between justice, virtue, and the common good. Torosyan draws attention to proportionality between equality and inequality. Kolakowski reveals the internal tension between justice and other moral values such as mercy and solidarity. Drobnitsky and Selivanov, Muntyan, Boltanski and Thevenot, and Ilyenkov deepen the analysis by

showing the moral-legal, sociological, ontological, and ideal dimensions of justice (Boltanski & Thevenot, 2013; Drobnitsky & Selivanov, 1970; Ilyenkov, 2022; Muntyan, 2009).

Bökeikhanov's contribution lies in the fact that he brings these dimensions together within a concrete historical and national context. His ideas show that justice must be connected with institutions, but it cannot be reduced to them. It must be supported by law, but it cannot be identified with formal legality. It must protect freedom, but it must also prevent social vulnerability and the loss of collective foundations. It must respect tradition, but it must also encourage modernization, education, and social development. In this sense, Bökeikhanov's thought offers a practical and culturally grounded model of justice.

The relevance of these ideas for contemporary Kazakhstan is evident. The development of a just society requires not only legal reforms, but also a value-based culture of responsibility. Institutions must be evaluated not only by their formal existence, but by their ability to protect dignity, ensure equal opportunities, prevent arbitrariness, and serve the common good. Public authority must be understood as responsibility before society rather than as a privilege or instrument of personal benefit. Law must function not only as a system of rules, but also as a mechanism for protecting fairness and social trust.

Conclusion

The conducted study makes it possible to conclude that the phenomenon of justice is a complex and multidimensional category that unites the normative, value-based, institutional, and cultural-ontological dimensions of public life. Contemporary philosophical conceptions developed by J. Rawls, F.A. von Hayek, M. Sandel, and other thinkers demonstrate a diversity of approaches to its understanding, ranging from institutional and procedural interpretations to ethical-communitarian and axiological perspectives. These theories reveal both the universal foundations of justice, such as equality, freedom, measure, and responsibility, and the internal contradictions associated with its interpretation and practical implementation.

Against this background, Alikhan Bukeikhanov's ideas about justice, rooted in moral principles, developed in conceptual resonance with global philosophical traditions, while at the same time being distinguished by a clearly expressed practical orientation. His approach integrates the moral content of

justice with the requirements of social and political organization, emphasizing the responsibility of authority, orientation toward the common good, and the inadmissibility of a merely formal approach to law. For Bukeikhanov, justice was not limited to abstract reasoning or legal declarations; it was directly connected with the real conditions of public life, the protection of national interests, and the moral legitimacy of political power.

In the context of the Kazakh intellectual tradition, justice appears not only as a theoretical category but also as a practical ideal guiding processes of social transformation. Bukeikhanov's reflections on fair governance, social responsibility, labor, land, autonomy, and national self-determination show that the idea of justice was closely linked to the broader task of modernizing Kazakh society. In this regard, his intellectual legacy demonstrates that justice becomes meaningful only when it is embodied in concrete social institutions, responsible political decisions, and respect for human dignity.

A comparative analysis of classical and contemporary conceptions of justice together with Bukeikhanov's ideas makes it possible to assert that its genuine realization is possible only through the unity of legal norms, moral foundations, and socially oriented state policy. Law, when separated from moral responsibility and the common good, risks becoming a formal mechanism that does not always guarantee fairness. Therefore, the problem of justice requires not only the improvement of legal institutions, but also the development of a value-based public culture in which responsibility, solidarity, and respect for the interests of society occupy a central place.

Thus, the philosophical and socio-political ideas of Alikhan Bukeikhanov retain their relevance for contemporary Kazakhstan. They allow justice to be understood as a principle that connects law, morality, statehood, and national development. In the conditions of ongoing social transformation, the appeal to Bukeikhanov's legacy is especially important, since it shows that a just society cannot be built only through formal reforms; it also requires moral renewal, civic responsibility, and a consistent orientation toward the common good. This gives the problem under consideration enduring theoretical and practical significance in the context of Kazakhstan's contemporary development.

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