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ANTE STARČEVIĆ. IDEALI SLOBODE I PRAVA [ANTE STARČEVIĆ. IDEALS OF FREEDOM AND LAW] (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2022, p. 311) by Pavo Barišić

May 2023 brought the 200th anniversary of the birth of Ante Starčević (1823 – 1896), *pater patriae* and one of the most prominent figures in Croatian history. To commemorate this important jubilee, as well as the 125th anniversary of his death, Full Professor Pavo Barišić, Ph.D. presented us with a meticulously researched book titled ‘Ante Starčević. Ideali slobode i prava [Ante Starčević. Ideals of Freedom and Law]’, published by Školska knjiga in Zagreb in 2022. Professor Barišić is a well-established expert in the area of philosophy of law and an authority on the subject of Ante Starčević, having already published the book ‘Filozofija prava Ante Starčevića [Philosophy of Law of Ante Starčević]’ in 1996, the year of the 100th anniversary of Starčević’s death, as well as various other research papers, editions and source materials. Moreover, as a professor at the Faculty of Croatian Studies of the University of Zagreb, Barišić introduced the lectures and courses on the philosophy of law and state of Ante Starčević in 1993, rounding up three decades of continuous research on the subject.

The book ‘Ante Starčević. Ideali slobode i prava’ is lavishly illustrated with an abundance of visual sources, spans over 311 pages, and is divided into eight major sections. ‘A legendary public tribune’, as described in the preface, is approached from various perspectives, where the most profound one could be a lucid fitting of an unwavering political thinker into the broader 19th-century narrative, which was possible only with a combination of extensive historical research and philosophical analysis.

The first section bears the title ‘Ideal vladavine puka [Ideal of Rule of People]’ and starts with the reception of Starčević and his legacy amongst prominent national figures of the 19th and 20th centuries, followed by his curriculum vitae and descriptions of his fundamental idea(l)s: politics, freedom, virtue, law, and state.

By highlighting important moments of his life, from tracing his family origins and rural upbringing in the Military Border to his ascent as a 'living myth' of Croatian political life and thought in the late 19th century, Barišić, through vivid narration, paints a portrait of Starčević as a uniquely talented, well-educated, and unsullied individual and a passionate advocate for Croatian sovereignty, self-determination, freedom and justice. He then proceeds with a detailed elaboration of Starčević's political views and identifies the influence of classics like Aristotle and Socrates and the legacy of more contemporary French political thought and philosophy. Upon these foundations, Starčević builds three pillars of political philosophy that can be summed up as follows: the legacy of Aristotle's practical philosophy in singular unity of ethics and politics, the normative ideal of the state, and the modern idea of the state grounded on human rights and freedom. A certain underlying leitmotif that connects the majority of his work is the idea of freedom, which Barišić defines 'not only as political freedom but as a broadest metaphysical category of freedom as a grounding determinant of human survival in the world' (p. 54) and is reflected in Rousseau's condemnation of the right of the stronger, thus furthermore attributing it as an authentic and universal human trait. His political thought was not merely confined to word on paper but was brought to practice by his three decades of tenure in the Croatian Parliament, where he, through carefully cultivated orations, applied these idea(l)s and rose to the reputation of a 'public tribune'. His daily life further enhanced this, endorsed by classic Socratic virtues entangled with ancient Croatian values.

The following section, 'Alma mater Pestiensis', brings the history of the Royal University of Pest and the development of education in the Habsburg Monarchy from the age of Empress Maria Theresa until the mid-19th century, as well as an analysis of the Croatian students attending courses in theology at the Royal University of Pest in the period 1824 – 1848. The emphasis of the latter is on three distinguished names: Josip Juraj Strossmayer, Eugen Kvaternik, and Ante Starčević. Starčević attended the Royal University of Pest from 1845 until the students of the theological seminar were dismissed in 1848 due to the outbreak of unrest and revolution in Hungary, at which point he immediately went to Zagreb and joined the rising national political movement under Ban (viceroy) Josip Jelačić, thus abandoning the ecclesiastical calling. As Barišić states, Starčević's time in Pest was crucial for the development of his liberal and republican idea(l)s and has formed him as a progressive political thinker.

The third section, 'Pisac *Političkih iskrica* [Author of *Political Sparkles*]', brings a detailed analysis of the question of authorship of 'one of the most brilliant pearls

of philosophical, legal and political writings of the 19th century in the Croatian language' (p. 111), namely a sequence of 24 aphorisms published in 1848/1849 in *Slavenski Jug* under the joint name *Political Sparkles* by an author signed with initials A. Z. For more than a century, *Political Sparkles* were labelled as a product of an anonymous author until 1962, when Josip Horvat attributed the authorship to Ivan Mažuranić, one of the leading intellectuals of 19th-century Croatia and a political opponent of Starčević, due to 'classical style, conciseness, and stillness' and the fact that 'no other contemporary had the skill of such writing.' (p. 111). Other authors soon adopted Horvat's argument. However, Barišić argues that the anonymous author of these writings could rather be Starčević than Mažuranić. To supplement this thesis, Barišić first brings the arguments in favour of Mažuranić's authorship and thereafter those against it, followed by an in-depth argumentation that supports the claim of Starčević's authorship. Barišić concludes that the 'aphorism sequence is filled with syntagms and thought constructs which can be recognised in works of one and the other author, but according to multiple comparisons and insights, they are more often repeated in Starčević's petitions, speeches, missives, and articles' (p. 128). The latter is subsequently analysed under thematic subsections: 'The Purpose of Law and State', 'State of Law', 'Constitutional Governance', 'Human Rights', and 'Democracy'.

The following section, 'Ban Mažuranić i stekliš Starčević [Ban Mažuranić and Hardliner Starčević], is a continuation of the comparison of Mažuranić and Starčević and their relationship using a holistic approach. Barišić labels them both as *homines novi*, i.e. those who were first in their families to rise to prominence, thus highlighting their commoner background, similar education and process of intellectual formation. They were both liberals, progressives, and democrats; both started as a part of fierce political opposition to the regime, and both were inclined to follow classic standards of virtue. Most importantly, they both pursued genuine high public interests of Croatia and were unsullied by petty probations, which Barišić strongly emphasises and thus transcends the traditional comparison based on their often severe political conflicts. The difference was in the fact that Mažuranić was a flexible political pragmatist and a political realist, while Starčević was an uncompromising hardliner and a political idealist. Therefore, the former saw public offices as an opportunity to work for the public interests regardless of his ideological opposition to the current system and was apt enough to manoeuvre complex political situations in the Monarchy, thus achieving several high appointments, out of which the most prominent one was that of a Ban (Viceroy of Croatia) 1873 - 1880. Barišić states that 'in high court positions and state service Mažuranić had a chance to

conduct in reality the demands which he previously addressed towards the king and the government' (p. 157). This pragmatic approach was under hard criticism from Starčević, who reasoned that it manifests a 'servile nature' in service of the Austrian nomenclature, but Barišić finds such claim to be 'unilateral, deficient and unfair' (p. 158), thus displaying the unbiased position. Starčević, on the other hand, did not hold any public position and was only a member of the Parliament through direct elections. This resulted from his hardline approach, described as *stekliš*, or one who 'bites everything that is wrong' and has a 'very bitter tongue' (p. 167). Therefore, Barišić points to the question of the more optimal approach when faced with the overwhelming force: to directly oppose it or try to adapt and influence it in the desired direction. Starčević could be recognised in the first, while Mažuranić in the latter.

The fifth section is titled 'Romantik ili realist? [Romantic or Realist?]' and presents Barišić's attempt to determine if Starčević was either a proponent of romanticism or realism in his literary style. The starting point is the work of Slavko Ježić, a prominent historian of Croatian literature, who classified Starčević as one of the most influential romantic authors during the time of absolutism. Barišić carefully approaches the theses underlined by Ježić and examines their nature, structure, and connections to other perspectives. Ultimately, with detailed narration and elaborations, Barišić agrees with Ježić on the view that Starčević was indeed primarily a romantic author who transitioned from romantic idealism towards romantic realism. However, while Ježić claims that Starčević ended his literary career and replaced it with active politics in the 1860s, Barišić sees this moment as a transition rather than an 'ending'. By entering the political arena, according to Barišić, Starčević did not cease his literary work but rather continued to write literature and philosophy while also implementing his literary style into political writing. It is, therefore, paradoxical that the rise of realism in Croatia is closely linked to Starčević's political followers, who, in many cases, drew direct inspiration from his work. Barišić concludes that 'it is possible to find in his expression elements of romanticism and classicism, as well as realism or naturalism. That's why he is himself and unique' (p. 207).

In the section 'Istina i opsjena [Truth and Deception]', Barišić continues with a literary and philosophical comparison of Starčević's work – this time with his role model, French philosopher Jean-Jasques Rousseau. The influence of Rousseau on Starčević is manifold and can be observed throughout multiple aspects of Starčević's work and idea(l)s. However, Barišić, on this occasion, emphasises the motif of 'exposing the deceptions and denunciation of deceitful, remorseless

critics of artificiality and subtlety of self-proclaimed prophets and glorified idols' (p. 209) in which he recognises their truest attempt in the unwrapping of servitude and unfreedom. The subject is approached through a comparison of their homonymous works: Rousseau's libretto *Le Devin du Village* [The Village Soothsayer] (1752) and Starčević's folk play *Selski prorok* [The Village Prophet] (1852). Through thorough analysis, Barišić depicts the influence of French role models on Starčević and his uncle Šime Starčević and the development of folk plays in Croatia, as well as Rousseau's view on theatre before presenting the plays with their similarities and differences. Examination of characters and aphorisms together with the main motives proceeds, where Barišić concludes that while Rousseau indeed influenced Starčević with the enlightened ideal of unravelling deceptions of frauds and imposters, Starčević's folk play nevertheless remained an original and valuable piece of Croatian heritage.

The seventh section, 'Sloboda i republika [Freedom and Republic]', elaborates Starčević's core political idea(s) – those of republic, freedom, and human rights. By exploring the fundamentals of Starčević's political thoughts, Barišić defines him as a liberal due to his views on political and personal freedom, enlightenment, democracy, legal state, the rule of law, and religious tolerance. Barišić continues that as a 'supporter of ideas of the French Revolution and the right of the nationality... he laid the theoretical foundations in the Croatian Parliament of the modern Croatian nation and the state' (p. 252). In this regard, Starčević approaches 'people' and 'state' from historical rights and the constitution, emphasising their connection in the unity of law as a safeguard of justice. Unlike those of revolution or natural laws, the argument of historical rights was not prohibited and served as an excellent medium to transfer progressive idea(s). The last section of the book titled 'Ljevice ili desnica [Left or Right?]' seeks to answer the question of Starčević's left or right-wing affiliation in the political spectrum. Barišić offers a strong historical perspective with an analysis of the genesis and development of these affiliations, as well as a traditional view of Starčević as a founding right-wing ideologue. Despite the latter being firmly rooted in the Croatian political tradition, Starčević was, as Barušić argues, in truth a political *avant-garde* who always occupied left seats in the Parliament in contrast to the Unionists who were occupying seats on the right side, thus deliberately following the French revolutionary tradition. With everything taken into consideration, Barišić concludes that Starčević, with his idea(s) of freedom, law, justice, and democracy, could only be seen as firmly left-winged in the context of the 19th century. From a contemporary perspective, he transcends these distinctions and affiliations.

With the book 'Ante Starčević. Ideali slobode i prava [Ante Starčević. Ideals of Freedom and Law]' Full Professor Pavo Barišić, Ph.D. not only commemorates the double jubilee of the Croatian *pater patriae* in the most dignified way but also makes significant contributions in the area of the Croatian 19th-century history, philosophy of law, political studies, literary accomplishments and much more.