

FRANCISCUS PATRICIUS: *Discussionum peripateticarum tomus tertius*/FRANE PETRIĆ *Peripatetičke rasprave*, svezak treći, preveli Tomislav Čepulić i Mihaela Girardi-Karšulin, uvodna studija i bilješke Mihaela Girardi-Karšulin, filološka redakтура Olga Perić, Institut za filozofiju, Zagreb, 2009, str. 406.

The *Peripathetical Discussions* (Volume three) by Petrić was published in Zagreb in 2009 with the support from the Foundation of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts and the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia. It is a readers' friendly translation from the Latin original and an exceptionally well prepared edition. This bilingual Latin-Croatian edition by the Institute for Philosophy in Zagreb was prepared by the team composed of translators Tomislav Čepulić and Mihaela Girardi-Karšulin, who is also the author of the instructive Introduction, Olga Perić, expert on philology and Erna Banić-Pajnić and Darko Novaković, who reviewed the text prior to print. All the team members are well-known experts in the fields of Croatian renaissance philosophy, translation from Latin into Croatian and classical philology.

In addition to the earlier bilingual edition of his capital work *New Philosophy of the Universes – Nova de universis philosophia* (Zagreb, 1975) and several minor works written in Italian, a Latin-Croatian edition of the *Peripathetical Discussions – Discussiones peripatheticae*, the other major work of Frane Petrić born on the island of Cres, is available. In the Foreword, Mihaela Girardi Karšulin and Olga Perić have announced that the *Peripathetical Discussions*, written in four volumes, will be transcribed, translated and published “volume by volume”, and “only because of the circumstances” – not explained here in detail - it was the third volume to have been published first (Foreword, VIII).

Apparently, the order in which the volumes are published and the fact that they are not published consecutively starting with the first one, is not decisive for understanding the work in total or any of the following volumes separately, as the authors explain in the Foreword. Girardi Karšulin and Perić also wrote that the First volume is interesting mostly because in it, Petrić primarily focused on presenting bio-bibliographical information on the followers of the Peripathetic school and their works. Each volume is a separate unit, the authors point out, and Petrić's “general philosophical attitude” is present in each volume, so the order in which he published the four volumes is not important when publishing this Croatian-Latin edition. In addition, as the editors explain in the Foreword, “the argumentation does not closely follow from one volume to the next.”(Ibid.)

According to the principles of the philological analysis used in this, the third volume of the *Discussions* as written by the authors in the Foreword – and these principles, one should expect, will be used in the preparation and publishing of the other volumes – a reader might conclude that this is not a usual classical critical edition, but a comprehensive and original study of Petrić's text, to be used by future scholars as the standard edition for further study and reliable source for quoting. I emphasize this point so that there is no philological misunderstanding of the character of this edition. Accordingly, I will put forward only the essential comments related to the Greek quotations that Petrić used, as well as his original text written in Latin.

In order to make the Latin text more “user friendly” and also to avoid the “instant comparison” with the Greek original, but still aiming to enable this comparison if reader wanted it, the editors Girardi-Karšulin and Perić decided

to “take away” the numerous quotations in Greek and put them in enumerated reference notes at the bottom of relevant pages. Damir Salopek, expert and scholar in Greek Studies edited Greek quotations by taking Petrić’s original text and “locating” the quotations in various critical editions in Greek. In translations of those quotations Salopek followed translation done by Petrić - even though his was often a “translated interpretation” - because in order to understand this edition of *Peripathetical Discussions* it is essential, as the editors pointed out, “the way in which Petrić had understood the Presocratic philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, and not the way we interpret them today”. (Foreword, IX)

The editors did not change Petrić’s original Latin text and have preserved his orthography “as much as possible”, even in cases when it differs from the contemporary Latin orthography, but corresponds to the Latin writing style of his time; they intervened only when they had to make corrections in places that appeared to contain “a mistake or a printing error”, or sometimes a linguistic form that “was possible” but needed to be replaced in order for translation to make sense. All such corrections are documented in the notes prepared by the editors, who also mention that Petrić himself had included corrections of some mistakes at the end of the volume four of his work. The Latin text, taken from the edition printed in Basel in 1581, has been transcribed into modern Latin text by Tomislav Ćepulić. (Foreword, X)

I hope that the above elaboration of the editing approach to the translation of the Latin text and the Greek quotations used in preparing the third volume of *Peripathetical Discussions* by Petrić is sufficient to justify my statement that this edition is an exemplary well done comprehensive study edition and not a regular critical edition. Reliable and very legible Croatian translation, the very precisely and accurately edited Latin text, located and wherever possible correctly attributed Greek quotations and their translations can guarantee that every researcher of this particular text by Petrić can safely quote from this edition and refer to it in any way necessary.

Mihaela Girardi-Karšulin, our well known expert for Croatian Renaissance philosophy, including, of course, the work of Frane Petrić, presented in the Introduction (XI-XLI) the biography of Frane Petrić, the most important topics of the third volume of his *Peripathetical Discussions* and informed us about reception of this work in Croatia and in the world. In it, Girardi-Karšulin finds it sufficient to put forward basic facts from his biography and their importance for his philosophic and poly-historic work, because the biography of Frane Petrić has often been thoroughly presented in Croatian bilingual editions of his other works, starting with his first major work *New Philosophy of the Universes*, translated by Tomislav Ladan. However, in an expanded note she also listed Croatian and foreign authors who had published Petrić’s biography and also the editions in which they have done so. Finally, she reminded us that on 7 February 2008, on the day of anniversary of his death, The Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts put a memorial plate on the wall of the St. Onofrio’s church in Rome, where Petrić was buried close to his important opponent Torquato Tasso.

Petrić divided his critical analysis of his forerunners in Greek philosophy and science – the major topic of the third volume of the *Peripathetical Discussions* – into eight books, and Girardi-Karšulin presents the thematic context for each of them. In addition to disputing Aristotle’s critique of the earlier philosophers, for example Xenophon, Zeno, Parmenides and Melises in the book one, she also provides a comprehensive analyses of some general ideas advanced by Petrić, for example the one related to the origin of philosophy and its

enigmatic way of expression, on which he “based” his defence of the Presocratic philosophers and Plato, as well as his own criticism of Aristotle’s critique.

Girardi-Karšulin maintains that Petrić agrees with the “generally approved” thesis that, in addition to all the animal species, Noah had also saved philosophy on his Ark, and disagrees with Zoroaster’s thesis that Egyptian philosophy was older than the Greek one, which contradicts Petrić’s opinion that the first philosophers had been Greek philosophers Prometheus and Atlant. From those stories she extracts what is “essential” for philosophy: the very idea that the enigmatic nature of the philosophical discourse prevents philosophy from breaking through to the people and thus keeps it within the narrow circle of those “consecrating and consecrated”, is based on the Neo-platonic non-distinction between the mythological on the one hand - since Prometheus and Atlant are mythological persons – and historical and also philosophical on the other. The reason for the existence of this state of affairs and why it needs to stay so, Girardi-Karšulin explains with the statement used by Petrić and related to Aristotle’s objection to Protagoras, namely that those objections need not become clear to “a plebeian who has slow understanding” and is “evil”. Here she asks an obvious question: “It is not clear why should one additionally aggravate understanding capacity of those whose understanding is slow in the first place? Moreover, it is even less clear why a person slow in understanding is at the same time evil.” She almost tempers Petrić’s attitude, as well as her own sharp question with an interpretative remark: “It seems that here there might be a problem of terminology, and that Petrić takes the idiom “slowly understands” not as an intellectual defect, but as a moral one.”(XV-XVI)

This intriguing topic of “enigmatic” philosophical discourse discussed by Petrić, traces its origin into the ancient past, back to Egyptian sages who had taught their disciples orally, forbidding them to publicly expose the wisdom they had received, and also back to enigmatic nature of Egyptian hieroglyphs, Pythagorean numbers and mythological stories interwoven not only into Plato’s philosophical dialogues but also into those of later Neoplatonic philosophers. Girardi-Karšulin points out that the first philosopher who stopped using “obscure” philosophical discourse was Hipparchus, a Pythagoras’s disciple who was then punished for this. According to Petrić, this practice of obscuring philosophical discourse prevailed as late as Ramon Llull and Theophrastus Paracelsus. Although it is generally accepted that it was Aristotle who decisively and completely abandoned the enigmatic way of expression in philosophy, Petrić holds that Aristotle’s discourse was still “obscure”, and Girardi-Karšulin reminds us that in addition to “exoteric” works he also produced “esoteric” works intended only for a closed circle of readers.

Girardi-Karšulin notes that the second “general” topic that Petrić discusses when analyzing Aristotle’s criticism of Presocratic philosophers and Plato is the history of “criticism” in philosophy. Xenophon and Parmenides were among the first to criticise other philosophers, while Plato criticised the Sophists, Heraclites and Anaxagoras, and Aristotle criticised all philosophers and among the Sophists only Protagoras and Gorgias. It is well known that the Sophists were considered as “immoral philosophers”, and Petrić also agreed with this statement. Girardi-Karšulin also mentions that Petrić stated that Aristotle did not criticize those who were “bad” but those who were “good”, and thus gets to a conclusion of his “bad character”. She also briefly brings up the contents of other books, with particular emphasis on Petrić’s main criticism of Aristotle’s critique, especially and in more detail the criticism that aimed at Plato and his philosophy.

In her interesting, concise and yet detailed review of the reception of *Peripathetical Discussions* in Croatia and in the world (XXX-XLI) Girardi-Karšulin starts with two possible meanings of the word “reception”: “Reception may have a meaning of immediate reception or impact, or later reception, in the sense of history-of-philosophy research”(XXX). The immediate reception implies that “a common problem and a common historical-philosophical horizon” is shared by the recipient and the author whose work is being received in such a manner that the subject-matter of reception is “actual in an unchanged way” for a recipient of that particular philosophic teaching. Reception of thus identified “philosophical issue” can be either positive or negative: “...as agreement with a view or disagreement and critique.” “Negative” or “later” reception aims to assess by interpretation “the place” and “the role” of the received philosopher and his work in the history of “ideas”. The reception of *Peripathetical Discussions* by Petrić is discussed in both ways. (XXX-XXXI)

Elisabeth von Erdmann Pandžić states in her study “*Sources and Contributions to Croatian Cultural History*”, published in 1999, that due to unavailability of *Peripathetical Discussions* in European libraries - unlike the readily available *The New Philosophy of the Universes* - reception of his work has started with intensified research of his philosophy only since 1950’s. Therefore Girardi-Karšulin starts her historical outline of the reception of Petrić’s work with Firp’s study about the disapproval and criticism of Frane Petrić, published in 1950, where this well-known Italian researcher highly praised *Peripathetical Discussions* as “the only achieved victory... of new philosophy against conventional Aristotelianism” in the period of late renaissance in Italy. (XXXI).

With the reprinted Latin edition based on the one published in Basel in 1581, edited by Elisabeth von Erdmann-Pandžić in 1999, the availability of *Peripathetical Discussions* has changed for the better. However, in spite of the availability of the reprinted edition, as pointed out by Girardi-Karšulin in her Introduction, the reception of Petrić’s work has not particularly improved, with the exception of few authors who have worked on *Peripathetical Discussions* even before this reprinted edition appeared. A paper (“not yet published”) by Vladimir Premec is also mentioned in the Introduction as the “first” one to discuss *Peripathetical Discussions*. Premec defended his doctoral thesis *Petrić’s critique of Aristotle* in 1968, but his work was published only in 1996. (XXXII).

Maria Muccillo’s doctoral thesis “History of Presocratic Philosophy in *Peripathetical Discussions* by Frane Petrić from Cres”, published as a book in 1975 in her native Italian, is discussed in detail. There was also a second, revised edition of this book, with new insights and literature added. Girardi-Karšulin in her Introduction analyses and rates very highly this work by the Italian expert in history of philosophy, who most “intensively and extensively” studied *Peripathetical Discussions*, and states that her research is “informed, trustworthy and points to the essence of Petrić philosophy”. Girardi-Karšulin also included in her overview of the earlier works that discussed Petrić’s *Peripathetical Discussions* the unpublished thesis of M.J.Wilmott titled “*Humanistic critique of Aristotle by Frane Petrić from Cres*”, and defended in English at the Warburg Institute of the University of London (XXXIII-XXXIV).

In her Introduction, she also makes notice of her own nine papers on Petrić, some of them published in journal “*Prilozi*” (“*Contributions*”) and some in other journals and books by other authors, and also her book *Philosophical Thought of Frane Petrić* published in 1988. Although in her work on Petrić she “deals with *Peripathetical Discussions* in particular”, as she noted in the

Introduction, let me in particular mention her paper that has *Discussions* by Petrić in the title: “*Discussiones peripateticae* između doxografije i povijesti filozofije kao filozofske discipline” (“*Discussiones peripateticae* between Doxography and the History of Philosophy as a Philosophical Discipline”). In this paper published in “*Prilozi*” in 1995., she brings up an interesting thesis that “the possibility to base the Christian theology on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* was eliminated” by Petrić’s insight in the three-fold subject of Aristotle’s “so called books of *Metaphysics*”, namely theology, science and physics, which “opens a possibility for a platonic philosophy” (XXXV).

I will conclude this brief overview of Girardi-Karšulin’s works that analyzes Petrić’s *Discussions* with her subtle general view of the reception of this particular work. She agrees with a general statement shared by various authors that Petrić’s display of Aristotle’s philosophy in the *Discussions* can be defined as “summarising, sophisticated and doxographic history of philosophy”. However, her specific contribution lies in the fact that she showed that Petrić’s presentation of Aristotle’s philosophy is “nevertheless based on his original philosophical insight in the truth of things, and this very insight makes his critique possible in the first place”. That is the reason why she views *Discussiones peripateticae* as being “between doxography and modern history of philosophy as a philosophical discipline”. (Ibid.)

When writing about every other Croatian or foreign author mentioned later on in the Introduction – either analytically or critically – she shows that after the previously mentioned reprinted edition had become available, this second major work by the philosopher from Cres has been mentioned “in a slightly more comprehensive way” and “in its own right”. Among the ones mentioned in the Introduction who made either explicit or implicit reference to the “importance” of Petrić’s *Discussions*, both in daily papers and in other non-professional journals for general public are Antonio Popio, Cezare Vasoli, Thomas Leinkauf, Ljerka Schifler, Eugen E. Ryan, Michael Stausberg, Erna Banić-Pajnić, Ivica Martinović, Vladimir Vratović, Neven Jovanović as well as Žarko Dadić with his comprehensive monograph on Petrić.

Although at the end of her Introduction Girardi-Karšulin states that in spite of the fact that publishing the earlier reprinted edition did not result with “dazzling increase in number of papers” on Petrić’s *Discussions*, it is still visible that interest for this work has been spreading “outside of the circle of those whose focal point of interest is Petrić.” (XLI) I trust that this tendency will be even more pronounced, at least in Croatia, after the publication of this exemplary well prepared Latin-Croatian comprehensive study edition of the third volume of *Discussions*, that includes Index of Terms, Index of authors with their brief bio-data and bibliography, the list of sources for Greek quotations with quoted fragments with the initials of the authors and their works. Finally, this edition also includes a valuable Bibliographical Addenda compiled by Ivana Skuhala Karasman, associate at the Institute for Philosophy, divided into three categories: Published editions of Petrić’s *Discussions*, Selection of Reference Literature on *Discussions* and Croatian translations of the works by Frane Petrić.

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