

Ferid Muhić

Sarajevo, 22. 02. 2011

WORD ABOUT COURAGE

Starting with Chapter 6 of Book 3 and until the end of Book 5 of *Nicomachean Ethics*, his main ethics work, Aristotle considers all virtues of the best character. The *virtue* itself is defined by Aristotle as *the most important quality and main characteristic in assessing excellence of something – whether it is things, animals or human beings*. Therefore, the *virtue* of an excellent knife is not its shape or value of the material the knife is made of; virtue of the knife is defined by sharpness of its edge. No matter how nicely shaped it is or how many jewels decorate it, knife is not good if it is not sharp. *Good* knife, first of all – is a sharp knife.

Virtue of an excellent horse is not its beauty or its size; the horse's virtue is defined by its *speed*. Regardless of how nice and big a horse might be, it is not good if it is not fast. *Good* horse is, first of all – fast horse.

Although the excellence of a man is defined by many *virtues*, the first and the main virtue of man, according to Aristotle, is *courage*. Regardless of how good, rich, respected and smart man can be, good man first of all must be *courageous*. *Good* man, first of all is – *courageous* man. Courage sublimates the virtue leading man to accomplishing the highest goal of his life.

The highest goal of human social life is accomplishment of value of freedom. The main obstacle on the road to freedom is fear. The only way of overcoming the obstacle of fear is courage! Where courage starts, fear stops; where fear stops, life begins, where life begins, freedom blossoms.

The correlation of freedom and fear, as a universal correlation, probably presents the most intensive layer of events in human individual and social universe through the whole history and therefore expresses its dynamic substance. In this

context I find very appropriate to mention the famous thought of UN Secretary General, Dag Haamarskjöld: "*Freedom from fear*" could be said to sum up the whole philosophy of human rights! And indeed, this evaluation gives concept to the complete political experience of modern world through a prism of alternating freedom and fear, fear and freedom. All political and social processes are focused on *freeing* an individual as a member of a certain society, that is, the whole societies and peoples, *from each fear imposed by social prejudices, regulations or institutions*. Gradual liberation of people from fear is, undoubtedly, the most remarkable and general way for exercising human and, in general, political emancipation of modern civilization. To be free, first of all, means not to be obsessed with fear, but also the opposite applies: to be defeated by fear definitely means the same as not to be free. And this truth applies to all substantial aspects of human life, individual and social, with no exception!

Each of the laureates of the **Duško Kondor Award for Civil Courage** affirmed this universal truth, epitomized it through his own *hecatomb*, Great Sacrifice, Courage, investing the most valuable – his own life! The gesture of Dr Sekul Stanić from Foča, who in May 1992, after seeing his Bosniac neighbors' houses burning found courage to set fire on his own house and let it burn completely is an unprecedented act – an act of courage which cannot even be found in ancient tragedies! Thanks to his courage, and courage of all laureates of this Award of greatest importance, the limitation of fear lowered one level down, courage was lifted for a great step, and human freedom was affirmed more than all regulations and all institutions together could do without these people and their courage.