

BOOK REVIEWS

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REVIEW OF THE MONOGRAPH: OLEKSANDR MEREZHKO, “L.I. PETRAŽYCKI’S PSYCHOLOGICAL SCHOOL OF LAW: SOURCES, CONTENT, INFLUENCE” (ODESSA: “FENIKS”, 2016, 524 P.).

The recently published book “L.I. Petrażycki’s Psychological School of Law: Sources, Content, Influence” by professor Oleksandr Merezhko presents the most comprehensive analysis of Leon Petrażycki’s legacy in the contemporary literature devoted to Petrażycki and his school. This monograph seems important for many reasons, one of which is related to the fact that in 2017 will be 150-th anniversary of Leon Petrażycki, who is widely regarded to be the founder of the psychological theory of law. On the eve of Petrażycki’s anniversary we can talk about the beginning of the renaissance of the psychological theory of law, as well as constantly growing interest to the works of its founder among contemporary legal scholars. The psychological theory of law can be called one of the most influential and interesting legal philosophies and theories; and yet it is not well known in the contemporary legal thought because the major works by Petrażycki were not yet translated into English, which leaves a substantial gap to be filled in the future.

In his monograph, devoted to the Petrażycki’s school, professor Merezhko not only gives a thorough account of Petrażycki’s teaching, but also makes an intellectual portrait of Petrażycki himself. Of particular interest is the chapter devoted to the years of Petrażycki at the Kyiv university, where the fundamentals of his scientific and legal outlook were formed. Professor Merezhko also tries to portray ethical and political outlook of Petrażycki. He puts Petrażycki in the broad historical and political context in which the Petrażycki’s thought had been developing in the beginning of the XX century.

The author pays attention to Petrażycki’s influence upon his pupils and continuators, among whom we see the distinguished scholars (e.g. Sorokin, Timasheff, Kruglevski, Laserson etc.). The separate chapters are devoted to George Guins, one of Petrażycki’s disciples, and Mikhail Rejsner, who had been trying to develop psychological theory of law in conjunction with Marxism.

One of the features of the monograph is that a great deal of it is devoted to the analysis of Petrażycki’s contribution to development of such spheres of knowledge as psychology, civil law, philosophy, logic, sociology and criminology. This part of the monograph proves that Petrażycki’s intellectual influence was not confined to the field of law and legal theory only, but had and continues to have much broader appeal.

One of the chapters deals with the critique of those critical arguments against Petrażycki’s theory which were raised by different authors in the beginning of the XX century. The thorough analysis of these arguments had allowed the author of the monograph to draw a conclusion that Petrażycki’s psychological theory of law still matters and has tremendous scientific promise and bright future.

The monograph might be of interest not only to those who are interested in the history of legal theory and philosophy, but also to those who are interested in sociology, psychology and history of Russia.