

A STUDY ON DIKAIOSUNE AND EUDAIMONIA IN PLATO'S REPUBLIC

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
OF  
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

EYLÜL ŞENTUNA

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR  
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE  
IN THE DEPARTMENT  
PHILOSOPHY

FEBRUARY 2012

Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

---

Prof. Dr. Meliha Altunışık

Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science of Philosophy.

---

Prof. Dr. Ahmet İnam

Head of Department

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science of Philosophy.

---

Prof. Dr. Ahmet İnam

Supervisor

**Examining Committee Members**

Assoc. Prof. Ertuğrul R. TURAN (AU,PHIL)

Prof. Dr. Ahmet İNAM (METU,PHIL)

Assist. Prof. Elif ÇIRAKMAN (METU,PHIL)

**I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.**

Name, Last name : Eylül Şentuna

Signature :

## ABSTRACT

### A STUDY ON DIKAOSUNE AND EUDAIMONIA IN PLATO'S REPUBLIC

Şentuna, Eylül

M.S., Department of Philosophy

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Ahmet İnam

February 2012, 74 pages

The aim of this study is to analyze the concept of *dikaïosunê* in Plato's *Republic* with its main aspects. *Republic* as an overarching philosophical work will be viewed as a whole and the overall scheme will be taken into account. There will be an emphasis on the ethical point of view rather than a political standpoint. The main interest of the thesis is what *dikaïosunê* is and its relationship with goodness and eudaimonia which are terms sometimes used interchangeably. Still, the intervowen concepts of virtue, happiness, fulfillment, desire and unity will be taken into consideration, as also for Plato these are perpetually connected. Various commentators of the *Republic*, their views and arguments will also be examined and analyzed within this study.

Keywords: Dikaïosunê, Eudaiomia, Harmony, Soul, City

## ÖZ

### PLATON'UN DEVLET'İNDE ADALET VE MUTLULUK KAVRAMLARI ÜZERİNE BİR ÇALIŞMA

Şentuna, Eylül

Yüksek Lisans, Felsefe Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Prof.Dr. Ahmet İnam

Şubat 2012, 74 sayfa

Bu tezde, Platon'un Devlet kitabında yer alan adalet kavramı temel özellikleri ile incelenmektedir. Devlet kitabının pek çok konuya değinen kapsayıcı bir felsefe metni olması nedeniyle, eserin genel çerçevesi dikkate alınmaktadır. Politik bakış açısından ziyade etik bakış açısına öncelik verilmektedir. Bu tezin temel amacı dilimize sadece 'adalet' olarak çevrilebilen kavramın ve adalet ile iyilik, iyi yaşam ile mutluluk kavramları arasındaki ilişkilerin incelenmesidir. Bahse konu kavramların Platon'un düşünce sisteminde dönüşümlü olarak kullanılabildikleri görülmektedir. Bu tezde, Devlet üzerinde yapılmış farklı yorumlar ve çalışmalar da incelenip analiz edilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Adalet, Mutluluk, Armoni, Ruh, Şehir devlet

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Dr. Ahmet İnam from whom I received the most help, not only on this study but throughout my education in philosophy; for his priceless guidance, advice, criticism, encouragement and insight throughout the various stages of this study.

I would also like to thank to Assoc. Prof. Ertuğrul R. Turan for his encouragement and precious suggestions.

I owe my thanks to Assist. Prof. Elif Çırakman for her valuable guidance and kind support.

To them I am profoundly grateful.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAGIARISM.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
ÖZ.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vii

### CHAPTERS

I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II.HISTORY,ROOTS,BACKGROUND.....	4
III. DEFENSE OF JUSTICE.....	15
III.I Connexions, Reciprocity and the Unity of Virutes .....	15
III.II Understanding the Good.....	27
III.III Harmony and Happiness Vs. Injustice.....	50
III.IV Why Be Just.....	57
IV.CONCLUDING REMARKS .....	68
V. BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	73
VI.APPENDIX.....	75

## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

“Homer’s World Not Ours”

W.H. Auden

Concerning justice and rationality, Alasdair MacIntyre has written:

We inherit from the conflicts of the social and cultural order of the Athenian polis a number of mutually incompatible and antagonistic traditions. But none of them can be safely abstracted for expository purposes from the overall context of debate which each defined itself in opposition to the whole set of others.<sup>1</sup>

*The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* stand at the center of the body of oral and written material used to educate the Athenians and they are also the written material which supply the terms of the debate. Shared understandings, disagreements and conflicts became possible with those. Hence, as MacIntyre has suggested: ‘From Homer therefore Athenians had to begin. And we who find one of the two most important of our own beginnings with respect to justice and rationality in the conflicts of the Athenians have therefore no alternative but to begin with Homer too.’<sup>2</sup>

This attitude seems to be the outcome of an understanding that moral concepts cannot be examined and apprehended apart from their history. Correlatively, In *A Short History of Ethics* MacIntyre says:

---

<sup>1</sup> MacIntyre, Alasdair, *Whose Justice Which Rationality* (p.13)

<sup>2</sup> MacIntyre, Alasdair, *Whose Justice Which Rationality* (p.13)



Moral concepts are embodied in and are partially constitutive forms of social life. One key way in which we may identify one form of social life as distinct from another is by identifying differences in moral concepts. So it is an elementary commonplace to point out that there is no precise English equivalent for the Greek word *dikaiosunê*, usually translated as justice. And this is not a mere linguistic defect, so that what the Greek achieves by a single word English needs a periphrasis to achieve. It is rather that the occurrence of certain concepts in ancient Greek discourse and of others in modern English marks a difference between two forms of social life. To understand a concept, to grasp the meaning of the words which express it, is always at least to learn what the rules are which govern the use of such words and so to grasp the role of the concept in language and social life. This in itself would suggest strongly that different forms of social life will provide different roles for concepts to play. Or at least for some concepts this seems likely to be the case.<sup>3</sup>

Accordingly, sketching the historical and philosophical context in which this study belongs to could be helpful in terms of examining *dikaiosunê* in the *Republic*. For this aim, initially, the author will elaborate on the main concepts of the subject period that define the aforementioned context, and while drawing the conceptual framework, will try to make visible the bond between the said concepts and justice to pursue a better understanding of the term.

---

<sup>3</sup> MacIntyre, Alasdair, *A Short History of Ethics* (p.2)

Under the light of the elements explained above, the thesis will be focusing on Plato's concept of *dikaiosunê* which for him was one of the four cardinal virtues -besides wisdom, courage and discipline- that should be possessed in the ideal state described by him in the *Republic*. The basic reference will be the *Republic* and various secondary literature will be used together with the main reference, with a view to maintaining the comparative approach in structuring the work. Throughout the study, rather than particular details, the *Republic* will be viewed as a whole and the overall scheme will be taken into account. There will be an emphasis on the ethical point of view rather than a political standpoint. The main interest of the thesis is what *dikaiosunê* is and its relationship with goodness and eudaimonia which are terms sometimes used interchangeably. Still, the intertwined concepts of virtue, goodness, harmony, happiness, fulfillment and desire will be taken into consideration, as also for Plato, these are perpetually connected. Throughout the thesis, Plato's theory of the good, the question of why be just, and their connection are also examined in the light of Socrates' arguments. Also, opposing views of certain contemporary philosophers that underline the inconsistencies and gaps in Plato's theories will be examined. The method used in interpreting concepts, regarding both Plato's audience and the readers of this study has been taken into consideration. Thus, as a result of this study, in the concluding part the author suggests a holistic perspective for interpreting Plato's discussions and arguments in the *Republic* as the ideal method to be adopted. It is also acknowledged by the author that, although Plato is claimed to be the archetypal philosopher of otherworldly ideals, a utopian in politics and ethics- it is also possible to interpret his stance as quite close to the world of daily experience as he delivers a most inspiring work which becomes an attempt to characterize one of the essential ingredients of both particular human lives as well as the entire humanity, justice, at an awe-inspiring level of complication.

## CHAPTER II HISTORY, ROOTS AND BACKGROUND

Concerning the Homeric society, M.I. Finley has written: 'The basic value of society were given, predetermined and so were a man's place in the society and the privileges and duties that followed from his status.'<sup>4</sup> The Homeric society holds a well defined and settled system within which every individual has a given role and status. By knowing these roles and statuses everyone knows who he is, what he owes to the others and what is owed to himself. In the Homeric society a man is what he does. Every man knows what actions are required from him. A man and his actions are identical and there is no secret or covered aspects. Therefore to judge a man is to judge his actions. The universe has a single fundamental order *-dikē-* which structures both the nature and the society. Such a framework of thinking does not suggest any distinction or contrast between the natural and the social. To be *dikaios* is to conduct one's actions and affairs in line with *dikē*. *Themis* is the act of ordering of things and people. For the Homeric man to know what is required by him is to know what his place within that order is. This enables him not to violate *dikē* and to do what his role requires and withhold from what is due to some other who is holding his own role.

*Agathos* is doing one's role and doing it well by deploying all the skills required from someone in that role. *Agathos* comes to be translated as 'good' and especially signifies to be good at what is required by one's role. A corresponding word *aretē*, which later is translated as 'courage', in the Homeric context, is used for excellence of any kind. It is usually translated as 'virtue' but actually has a much broader meaning than that narrow, strictly moral word.

---

<sup>4</sup> Finley, M. I., *The World of Odysseus* (p.134)

*Aretē* refers to those qualities which enable an individual to do what is required by his or her role. These qualities are praised not only because they help the individual to do what is needed by his role but also because they help to preserve the order that is *dikē*.<sup>5</sup> As Alexander Nehamas has written:

Arete also applies to animals as well as to inanimate objects. In the Republic, for example Socrates speaks of arete of eyes and knives. Anything that has a function has a corresponding arete which it exhibits when it performs that function well. Homer speaks of arete of horses. Herodotus praises the arete of Indian cotton and Thucydides the arete of fertile soil. Far from being confined to morality, arete refers to whatever it is that makes something a good instance of its kind. Arete is the quality that makes something outstanding in its group, as the feature that accounts for its justified notability.<sup>6</sup>

Sometimes it means the same as *andreia*, courage, manliness and that use is often coupled with *sōphrosunē* where the latter means careful and sensible action. In this pairing *aretē* is the virtue of knowing how and when to dare, assertion and *sōphrosunē* is knowing how and when to draw back and pause, the virtue of slowing and stopping, of restraint. Closely connected to the concept of excellence are the virtues of courage, friendship, and the concepts of death and fate. In Homeric understanding courage carries significant importance both as a quality of the individual as well as that of the community as it plays an important role in helping to sustain the public order mainly

---

<sup>5</sup> MacIntyre, Alasdair, *Whose Justice Which Rationality* (p.14-15)

<sup>6</sup> Nehamas, Alexander, *Virtues of Authenticity Essays on Plato and Socrates* (p.319)

comprising of friendship and kinship. Other qualities connected to courage also carry significance as they are also ingredients of friendship and kinship. There are also powers in the world which cannot be controlled by anyone. Passions invade certain human lives and they are sometimes seen as impersonal forces or interference of gods. Human beings are unable to evade those. Passions feed the *thumos* which is a kind of energy that carries the individual forward and lead to action which is often destructive. The gods may give such passions as a punishment and sometimes they do warn humans against them. Fate is a social reality and discovery of it is an important social role. Death waits everyone alike. Life is fragile and men are vulnerable.<sup>7</sup>

In the Homeric society, self interest of an individual is always his interest as per the role he carries. Since what is required of oneself by one's role in the social structure is due to others who have other roles in relation to one's own, there is not a contrast between what is to self interest and what is to the interest of others. The modern uses of 'self interest' does not apply to the Homeric individual. Likewise, virtues in the heroic society cannot be divorced from their context, the social structure. It would be impossible to give an adequate account of one without the other. They cannot be understood apart from each other. All are embedded in a larger conceptual scheme. Morality and social structure are the same and one in heroic societies and the former as something separate does not exist. Concerning the individual, the self of the heroic age lacks the essential characteristic of what is taken to be an essential characteristic of modern human selfhood. For the heroic self, the capacity to detach oneself from the framework, or any particular standpoint, to step back and to judge that standpoint from outside does not apply. In heroic societies the 'outside' does not exist. All morality is tied to, at least to some degree, the socially local and particular. The strong desire of the morality of modernity to

---

<sup>7</sup> MacIntyre, Alasdair, *Whose Justice Which Rationality* (p.15-16)

a universality disengaged from particularity is an illusion. Understanding and possessing virtues without being a part of a tradition-which is the predecessor for many other following traditions-is not possible for the Homeric man.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, although most of the Homeric virtues are still preserved in the classical society, those values no longer designate the moral framework. First and foremost, the conception of virtue in the classical society has noticeably become disconnected from a virtue of a particular social role. The main emphasis now rests on virtues of men rather than virtues of kings. Whereas for the Homeric man there could be no chance to question the community he lives in, Athenian man's understanding of virtues provide him with the ability to question his own community, life in general and enquire whether this act or policy is just or not. The Athenian man also knows that he possesses all the virtues he has only because he is a member of a certain group of community. General Athenian understanding is that virtues hold their place within the social context of a city state as they are linked to being a good citizen. The city is a guardian, a parent, and an educator.<sup>9</sup> The virtues which make the good man and the good citizen are the same. Excelling in being *sophron*, *dikaios* and *sophos*; courage, straightforwardness, telling the truth fearlessly and taking responsibility for actions are praised. Meanness, lack of generosity, lack of sensitivity and lack of pity are denounced.

W.K.C. Guthrie also suggests that in order to understand an ancient Greek thinker like Plato, it is crucial to know the history, affinities and usage of the most important terms that he employs rather than resting content with the loose English equivalents such as 'justice', 'virtue', or 'god'.<sup>10</sup> As suggested by Guthrie in *The Greek Philosophers*, the original meaning of *dikē* may have been literally a way or a path. He further explains that no matter what its etymological origin is, the earliest significance of the term in Greek literature is

---

<sup>8</sup> MacIntyre, Alasdair, *After Virtue* (p.121-122)

<sup>9</sup> MacIntyre, Alasdair, *After Virtue* (p.133)

<sup>10</sup> Guthrie, W.K.C., *The Greek Philosophers* (p.5)

certainly no more than the way in which a certain class of people usually behaves or the normal course of nature. There is no implication that it is the right way, nor does the word contain any suggestion of obligation. While *dikē* initially had a non-moral sense of what was expected in the normal course of events, a transition in its meaning came about and it was personified as the majestic spirit of righteousness seated on a throne by the side of Zeus. This transition came about early. In the poetry of Aeschylus, a century before Plato, *dikē* was already personified as a conception with a strong moral sense.<sup>11</sup>

MacIntyre states that although we do not see the word *dikaionê* in Homer, it has Homeric overtones as *dikē* and *dikaios* appear in Homeric pieces. *Dikē* basically means the order of the universe and *dikaios* is the man who respects and does not break that order. Nevertheless, in the fifth century the nature of the relationship between *dikaionê* and some cosmic order is not clear in the way that it was in the Homeric poems. By the latter part of the fifth century it is possible to ask if it is or is not *dikaionê* to do what the established order requires; and it is possible to disagree radically as to what it would be to act in accordance with *dike*, to be *dikaios*.<sup>12</sup> In *Whose Justice Which Rationality* MacIntyre notes that in Homer, there is the order in which kings reign, which is part of the larger order in which gods and especially Zeus reign. To be *dikaios* in Homer is not to violate that order. Thus in Homer the virtue of the *dikaios* is to do what the accepted order requires, and in this sense it is like every other Homeric virtue. Like their Homeric ancestors, classical Greeks also think of the forms and structures of their communities as a manifestation of the order of *dikē*. In the fifth and fourth century Athens, Homeric poems had a significant role and they were taught systematically to the Athenian young males. Athena, Zeus' favourite daughter brings peace and reconciliation at the end of *The Odyssey* and her cult is the core of the Athenian religion. The

---

<sup>11</sup> Guthrie, W.K.C., *The Greek Philosophers* (p.6-7)

<sup>12</sup> Guthrie, W.K.C., *The Greek Philosophers* (p.134)

original institution of jury trials were established by the justice of the Athenian polis and institutionalization of justice in Athens is a local expression of the justice of Zeus.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, any legitimate claim to *dikē* and *dikaioṣunē* has to be an expression of the unitary order structuring human life and the only form of community which could achieve that would be one in which each kind of activity has a specific goal to integrate within itself other forms of activities practiced by other members of the society. This would generate and sustain a form of life within which the ultimate degree of good of each and every practice could be enjoyed by all members of the society. Each particular polis is meant to include principles about how those goods are to be embedded into a way of life which would be the best to enjoy and flourish, to be *eudaimon*.

Leading a life of *eudaimonia* is the highest achievement in Greek thinking. By acting well and leading an appropriate life an individual achieves fulfillment and satisfaction and becomes successful as a human being. *Eudaimonia* being the supreme Greek value is important in terms of assessment of any virtue, as such an assessment needs to justify that a particular virtue is a component of it or leads to it. This is because the starting point for the ancients is the human good, they begin from flourishing or happiness and from there onward they derive the principles of virtue. The main ethical problem of the period, the question of how we should live the best life for human beings depends on what is good or bad for us and their very order of importance. Sometimes this question is stated in terms of happiness, but it comes to the same thing, for human happiness is conceived in terms of what is good for human beings, as the ultimate good. In like manner, in the *Republic* -although many diverse topics are discussed and various other subjects are given a unified treatment- the focus is on what is good and how it occupies the central stage and the aforementioned elements contribute to this main argument.

---

<sup>13</sup> MacIntyre, Alasdair, *Whose Justice Which Rationality* (p.25-26)



The subject matter of the *Republic* is the nature of justice (*dikaionês*) and its relation to human well being and *eudaimonia*. It is widely held that the book belongs to the middle period of Plato's series of writings although Book I carries all the features of an earlier 'Socratic' dialogue. Even if the dialogue form is retained throughout Book I, it differs markedly in style from the rest of the *Republic* and presents strongly characterized interlocutors and a detailed dramatic setting. From Book II onwards, the principal character of the dialogue and mouthpiece of Plato -Socrates- presents an account of justice showing how and why, the individuals and communities that possess justice in the way that he describes, benefit from it. Such an understanding of the true nature of justice requires manifestation of its links with excellence and human well being. Book I stands as an introduction or preamble to the main discussion in the rest of the *Republic* (it is called so by Socrates at 357a2). Arguments, themes and ideas receive their full elaboration in the following chapters. Thus, the main function of Book I is clearing the ground of past and inadequate accounts of justice in order to create room for the new theory. It is an introduction that prepares the reader for the unorthodox theory that is to come and its special function is to reshape thinking about justice in a certain direction. It both attempts to show that previous certain beliefs about justice are inadequate and suggests how those inadequacies of the traditional view shall be addressed and overcome. Plato does this by presenting via his interlocutors to his contemporaries what he sees as an obstacle to a true understanding of justice and its real value. As Plato's contemporaries keep on mislocating where justice stands and how it operates, they are not able to perceive it as an unqualified excellence. Socrates tries to urge that unless internal links of justice with human powers with their best and fullest development are understood, it cannot be perceived as an unqualified good. Clearly this needs a conversion from the traditional view of justice which sees it as external to the elements that enable individuals and communities to achieve the best use of their capacities and talents.

Traditionally justice was regarded as one of the cardinal virtues and was seen as a part of what was expected from a good man (an *agathos*). Still it was not clear how its benefits were to be perceived. In ancient thought and myth as well as the more naturalistic thought of the sixth century, justice was perceived as a cosmic power. Although by the fifth century Greeks were aware of the value of justice as a power to maintain stable and harmonious relationships in the community, it was not clear to them how much '*aristos*' the excellent man should make it a personal ideal. Justice was conceived as a cosmic force of power that governed the ways of men, communities and natural elements. As it was viewed as a cosmic dimension of life, it occupied a relatively lower place in the scale of personal excellences. Yet, it was occupying a high place in the overall scheme of things which determined the way people comprehended their lives and destiny. By its very nature justice was a power transcending individual human will which imposed limitations on ambitions and the insatiable desires, passions and interests of the individuals. Plato's critique of his contemporaries' understanding of justice relies on this traditional dimension and cannot be comprehended fully without it. His solution consists in identifying justice with the power gained when reason rule over passions and appetites in individuals. This same power would also mean internalising of the supra-personal dimension of justice.<sup>14</sup>

As Kimon Lycos explains in *Plato on Justice and Power* benefits of a particular virtue may be understood externally, from the perspective of social norms and expectations. For example, given a particular community frequently engaging in war and competitive conflict with other communities, courage comes to be a highly valued attribute. Such an assessment of a virtue consists in valuing primarily the behaviour and the types of action and response. Although people are encouraged or trained to develop a character which correspond to that virtue, it is the virtue, the behaviour rather than the state of mind or psychic constitution of the acting agent which is primarily valued. The main problem with the external assessment of a virtue is that it does not determine

---

<sup>14</sup> Lycos, Kymon, *Plato on Justice and Power* (p.13-14)

whether the genuine possession of the virtue or the social appearance of it is valuable. Contrary to this, Socrates urges his contemporaries to adopt an internal way of thinking the benefits of justice. From that perspective what matters is primarily the quality of mind and psychic organisation which enables a person to act virtuously. Such is a quality which can be valued for itself. Socrates' attempt to switch his contemporaries to an internal assessment of justice requires from him to show how such an assessment justifies the view that virtue leads to or a component of *eudaimonia*. The contradiction between two types of assessment is a major theme in Socrates' examination of his interlocutors about justice. The main question Socrates needs to address is how, justice, like other virtues is a mental quality in itself but also the exercise and manifestation of it enables its possessor to achieve the highest realisation of his capacities and the best use of his talents. The *Republic* is an attempt to elaborate and to provide a metaphysical defence of this idea. Plato, in his characterisation of Socrates' interlocutors combines the aspects of traditional attitudes he sees as resistance to a true understanding of justice. By establishing the need for his contemporaries to rethink their attitude to justice, he sustains a powerful strategy to force a revision in how people should understand a commitment to virtue and justice. Actually, Plato tells us in the *Republic* that if we do not know the form of the good we will not know that anything else -including virtue- is good.<sup>15</sup>

Obviously, it is necessary to underline that Plato's concept of *dikaïosunê* is not legalistic but it is rather concerned with the harmonious relations between the parts of the soul, the state and the individual as well as between the fellow citizens of the state. Thus the Greek *dikaïosunê* is quite different from the Roman *justitia* which covers the formal legal regulations. The term implies the ideal good of society across a wide range of collective existence, not solely in terms of laws and their applications. As clearly seen, the question of justice was central to the conception of what was the best and the right way for a society to live. Social change accompanied the ideological transformations and

---

<sup>15</sup> Lycos, Kymon, *Plato on Justice and Power* (p.3-6)

with the recognition of justice as a concept for which every citizen was responsible, the question of how will the citizens of the polis correctly identify what justice is emerged. The mythico religious idea of *dikē* as a supra-human force is now to be replaced by the power of reason. The new conception locates justice at the very heart of the human capacity to control life with the proper exercise of human intelligence. Justice becomes internal to the power of reason. Obviously Plato saw a new role for the philosopher within such an ideological transformation, which is being the only appropriate and competent agency that can be relegated with the determination of justice.

It is also important to take into consideration that certain shifts in how the Greeks came to think about justice and the socio-political concerns in the Greek city states are related. Changes in ideas on justice tend to go in parallel with shifts in socio-economic and political structures. Political and social structure of Athens was not suitable for coping efficiently with the problems of diplomacy and economic problems that emerged as a result of her turning into an empire which entailed the downfall of the polis structure. Radical changes in her social and political structures were required. As Terence Irwin has stated:

Between the end of the Persian Wars in 478 and the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War in 431, Athens reached the peak of its power and posterity in the Greek world. In 431 Peloponnesian War broke out between Athens and Sparta. It lasted for 27 years and (with interruption) including the first 24 years of Plato's life. After a long war Athenian resources of money and manpower were severely strained. The strains encouraged opponents of democracy to plot, with Spartan help, to set up an oligarchic regime and to abolish the

democratic assembly and jury courts. The first result of these plots was the short lived regime of the Four Hundreds and the second result was the regime of the Thirty. The Peloponnesian War created the sort of tensions in Athens that would appear to support Thucydides' analysis. Obligations to the community required greater sacrifice and presented a clearer conflict of self-seeking 'Homeric' pursuit of one's status, power and pleasure. In political terms people had to decide whether or not to plot against democracy to bring off an oligarchic coup. In moral terms they had to decide whether or not to ignore the demands of the community, summed up in the requirements of 'justice' in favour of their own honor, status, power and in general their perceived interest.<sup>16</sup>

Still, as Julia Annas suggests in *Platonic Ethics Old and New* we actually have no concrete evidence for locating the *Republic* as a statement of Plato's supposed attitude to politics and in particular his disillusionment with the Athenian politics. While Annas rejects the historicized approach, namely the nineteenth and the twentieth century tradition of the political interpretation of the *Republic*, she also underlines that even if the *Republic* should be read primarily as a moral theory, it still contains a political component and admits that its political aspect is crucial to its moral argument.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Kraut, Richard, *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (p.59-60)

<sup>17</sup> Annas, Julia, *Platonic Ethics Old and New* (p.80)

## CHAPTER III DEFENSE OF JUSTICE

### III.I Connexions, Reciprocity and the Unity of Virtues

For Plato, concepts of virtue and goodness and those of happiness, fulfilment of desire and success are perpetually linked. His account of the virtuous man is inseparable from his account of the virtuous citizen. Indeed there is no way to be excellent as a man which does not involve excellence as a citizen and vice versa. Still, the excellent citizen will not be at home in any actual city, as for Plato, in no polis that actually existed in the physical world those who ruled the city themselves are ruled by reason. As Plato 's account of the virtuous man is inseparable from the account of the virtuous citizen, the concept of virtue remains inevitably political. Thus his theory links the virtues to the political practice of an ideal and with the same theory he also explains the conflicts and disharmonies of actual states as well as actual personalities.

The rule of reason entails each part of the soul performing its specific function. Accordingly, a particular virtue is the exercise of a specific function. The bodily appetites are to accept the constraint imposed by reason; this exhibits the virtue of *sōphrosunē*. The high spirited virtue that responds to the challenge of danger when reason requests it, exhibits the virtue of courage (*andreia*). When reason disciplines itself by mathematical and dialectical enquiry, and becomes able to discern what justice, beauty, and above all what the form of Good is, it exhibits its own specific virtue of wisdom, (*sophia*). Plato states that these three virtues can only be exhibited when *dikaiosunē*, that is allocating each part of the soul its particular function and no other is exhibited. Plato's theory suggests that in both the political and personal realm, virtue and conflict are incompatible and exclusive. He is committed to the view that both within the person and the city a virtue cannot be in conflict with virtue. The presence of a good requires the presence of all other goods and there cannot be opposing goods at war with each other.

MacIntyre explains that this strong thesis regarding the unity of virtues is restated by Aristotle and Aquinas as well. All three share the view that there exists a cosmic order which dictates the place of each virtue in a harmonious scheme of human life and truth in the moral sphere is based on the conformity of a moral judgment to the order of this scheme.<sup>18</sup>

We can examine Guthrie's explanation while tracking the building blocks of the subject idea in Plato's philosophy. Guthrie argues that in Plato's ethical doctrine, not only the transcendent forms but also the conception of unity of virtues is fundamental. According to Guthrie's view, in early societies where communities are small and cultural conditions are relatively simple, there is not any conflict between the moral duty and self interest. If a man observes the existing customs in his relationships with fellow men and the gods, he is respected, considered good and praised. Obedience to the law brings gain, happiness and contentment. Nevertheless when the Greeks reached a more complex state of civilization, contrary acts arised. The conquering hero-defying law and custom-pushed the law abiding individual to live in very modest circumstances, even under oppression and persecution. Out of this arose the sophistic opposition of 'natural' to the 'law abiding'. The strong man who is nature's just man acts according to his own pleasures and has no other duty. This understanding is an equation of the good with the pleasant and both Socrates and Plato were concerned to deny the subject equation. Socrates insisted on the need of knowledge to understand what was good. Accordingly an unreflecting pursuit of pleasure may only lead to misery. Some actions, although they are pleasant may cause great harm to man. This could not happen if pleasure was identical with the good. Thus another word to equate with and explain the good was needed. The good must be something that always benefits and never harms. Socrates maintained that there is a necessity for knowledge in the conduct of our lives so that unreflecting acceptance of the pleasures of the moment would be avoided. 'The right conduct of life calls for

---

<sup>18</sup> MacIntyre, Alasdair, *After Virtue* (p.141-142)

the same skill in living as the shoemaker must have in cobbling.<sup>19</sup> Hence, Socrates reduced all the virtues to one and described that virtue as wisdom or knowledge-the knowledge of good and evil. In Plato's thinking, obedience to law, the elements of presence of order (*kosmos*) and orderly arrangement (*taxis*) is provided by justice and self-control. Bringing about a right relationship between the parts and faculties of an organism makes a thing good of its kind. Giving a certain form to a thing necessitates 'bringing each part to its proper place in the arrangement and compelling one part to fit in suitably with another until the whole stands for as a thing of ordered beauty.'<sup>20</sup>

As regards the connexions between the virtues, we can also examine Irwin's explanation of the Reciprocity Thesis and the Unity Thesis in *Plato's Ethics*. Whilst the former means that every virtue must result in fine and beneficial action and that all virtues are needed for such actions, the latter means that all the virtues are identical to knowledge of the good. It is also suggested that the Unity Thesis relies on the claim that knowledge is necessary and sufficient for virtue. Irwin probes the question and suggests that justice raises a sharp question about the separability of the virtues. He has written:

Plato seems to treat wisdom as the virtue of the rational part, and temperance as the virtue of the appetitive part. Justice however, has no proprietary part of the soul; on the contrary, it is the state in which each part of the soul does its own work or performs its own function (441e1). Does Plato believe that someone could have the other three virtues or some of them without meeting this condition for psychic justice? If he does, then he rejects the reciprocity of the

---

<sup>19</sup> Guthrie, W.K.C., *The Greek Philosophers* (p.104)

<sup>20</sup> Guthrie, W.K.C., *The Greek Philosophers* (p.101-107)



virtues. If on the other hand he thinks each of the other virtues involves psychic justice why does he treat it as a distinct virtue rather than as an aspect of each virtue? First what is required for each part of the soul to perform its own function?<sup>21</sup>

As Irwin suggests, in the *Republic*, connexion between justice and performing one's function has been focused on many times. Plato acknowledges a connexion between performing one's function and justice as a part of the Simonidean conception of justice<sup>22</sup> and in the argument about the human function in Book I (331e1-335d14), as well as in the discussion about justice in the city in Book IV. He strives to further clarify this connexion by arguing that if each individual sticks to his own function which is assigned to him by the city, then the city remains just. Thus having one's own and doing one's own are connected. Also, as regards the discussion of justice in the individual, when Socrates claims that an individual is just and will remain just if the parts of his soul perform their own functions, a further connexion between justice and performing one's own function is established. We can clearly see in the *Republic* that the related argument puts individual justice in parallel to justice in the city (441d1-10). Irwin states that in the last claim, performing one's own function is explained by appeal to the tripartition of the soul by Plato as he argues that performing one's own function that is relevant to the justice in the individual consists of the right relations and states of parts of one's soul. It does not consist in external action (443c8-9). Thus what is meant by performing one's own function does not refer to what is prescribed by the city to an individual. As regards function, Plato has a conception of the psychic condition that is proper for a human being with human capacities and argues that this condition

---

<sup>21</sup> Irwin, Terence, *Plato's Ethics* (p.227)

<sup>22</sup> Simonidean view suggests assigning to each person what is due to him. Returning what one has received.

necessitates the rational part to rule by its wisdom, the spirited part to support the rational part with the help of affective training, and the appetitive part to remain submissive to the other two parts (441e3-5).

Irwin further examines the cooperation between the parts of the soul by questioning whether the cooperation required by the virtues could exist in a soul whose parts did not perform their proper functions. He gives an example of an alleged case of temperance in which someone's appetitive part reluctantly agrees to get controlled by the rational part and inquires whether this constitutes good order in the soul. He then explains that such a person would always be facing a struggle and even if he would win it, his appetites would be often reluctant and disobedient. Irwin states that the sort of person explained above is described as 'continent' but not properly virtuous by Aristotle. He further explains that in the continent person the non-rational part obeys the demands of the rational part but this confirmation is reluctant. However in the virtuous person, there is a harmony between the rational and the non-rational part as it does not have the kinds of desires that cause the continent person's reluctance. The struggle to do the right thing in the continent person that is caused by regretting to give up the particular appetitive satisfactions does not exist in the virtuous person as he has well-trained appetites that do not cause reluctance or regret. This view suggests that conformity is not sufficient for virtue. Virtue demands harmony as well. Irwin questions whether Plato also adopts the same view as Aristotle and if he takes conformity to be sufficient for virtue. He has stated:

Some of his remarks might suggest that conformity is sufficient for virtue. He describes temperance as self mastery and control over pleasures and appetites (430e6-4331a2). This description anticipates Aristotle's description of continence. A similar view of bravery might be defended. These remarks suggest that control by

the rational part and conformity by the non-rational part are together sufficient for virtue. If this is what Plato means, then his conditions for some virtues are similar to Aristotle's conditions for continence and so are less demanding than Aristotle's conditions for virtue.<sup>23</sup>

Irwin asserts that such sort of conformity cannot constitute psychic justice as even if the non-rational part of a continent person's soul conforms to the demands of the rational part, they do not perform their proper functions for the good of the entirety of the soul. Harmony cannot exist when other parts are resisting or complaining about the rule of the rational part. He proposes that Plato does not take conformity to be sufficient for temperance. Irwin has stated: 'Although Plato first describes temperance as conformity and control, he also describes it as concord (431d8, 432a6-9) and even friendship (442c10-d3) between the three parts under the wise control of the rational part.'<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, the distinction between conformity and friendship is justified by Plato's view that a part of the soul has some of the characteristics of an agent. Friendship between the parts of the soul results from the recognition of shared concerns and interests under the correct guidance of the rational part. Thus concord and friendship among the parts of the soul can only be achieved if different parts of it perform their proper functions as they do in a just soul.

Irwin concludes by affirming that Plato wants to distinguish justice from the other conditions for virtue not because he believes it is separable from other virtues but because he wants to mark the distinction between the Aristotelian conception of continence and virtue. By distinguishing justice as psychic harmony from mere conformity and control, Plato makes it clear that genuine virtue requires more than those elements.

---

<sup>23</sup> Irwin, Terence, *Plato's Ethics* (p.228)

<sup>24</sup> Irwin, Terence, *Plato's Ethics* (p.229)

C.D.C. Reeve in *Philosopher Kings-Argument of Plato's Republic* proposes to see Plato's theory of justice as a sequential line of thought. He starts the investigation of justice with the analogy used by Socrates in the beginning of Book II:

The investigation we're undertaking is not an easy one but requires keen eyesight. Therefore, since we're not clever people, we should adopt the method of investigation that we'd use if, lacking keen eyesight, we were to read small letters from a distance and then noticed that the same letters existed elsewhere in a larger size and on a larger surface. We'd consider it a godsend, I think, to be allowed to read the larger ones first and then to examine the smaller ones, to see whether they are really the same.<sup>25</sup>

Reeve claims that Plato is not assuming that justice of a psyche and of a polis is the same thing. Thus, that is not something to be taken for granted, and instead needs to be investigated. The search for justice needs to start in the polis. Still, Socrates does not carry it out in just any polis but in the Kallipolis. Glaucon and Adeimantus are also confident that they will find it there: 'I hope to find it in this way. I think our city, if indeed it has been correctly founded, is completely good. Necessarily so. Clearly, then it is wise, courageous, moderate and just.'<sup>26</sup> Reeve, then suggests that the sources of Adeimantus' and Glaucon's confidence need to be unearthed. He draws a parallel between function, virtue, goodness and happiness in the psyche and those in the poleis. According to the explanation at the end of Book I, the function (*ergon*) of a thing is that which one can do only with it or best with it (352e2-3). Its virtue

---

<sup>25</sup> Plato, *Republic* (368c4-368d6)

<sup>26</sup> Plato, *Republic* (427e4-7)

(*aretē*) is that only which enables to do its work well and be a good (*agathon*) thing rather than a bad (*kakon*) of its kind (353b2-d2). Living is a part of the function of a psyche (353d9). Thus a good psyche, a just soul that possesses all the appropriate virtues will live well (353e9) and so be blessed and happy (354a1). Reeve then explains the case for the poleis and suggests that it is exactly parallel as a) a completely good polis possesses all the virtues b) these virtues guarantee that a polis will realize its function well c) the function of a polis is to satisfy the needs and desires upon which its coming into being is established d) a completely good or virtuous polis satisfies the needs and desires of its members and thereby ensures their happiness.<sup>27</sup>

If the Kallipolis is appropriately founded, it is completely good and this entails its being wise, courageous, moderate and just (427e5-8). The Kallipolis is wise because it has good judgment (428b3-4). This knowledge is possessed by the smallest-ruling class (429a1-2). Because of this wisdom which resides in the ruling class, a polis is established in accordance with its nature and is wise as a whole (428e6-8). Courage is the next virtue. It resides in the guardian class (430a2-6). As they have the proper nature and upbringing they will have a true belief about what is to be feared. Reeve identifies this as political courage. It is crucial to preserve the polis and if the guardians do not possess political courage, the wise decisions of the rulers will not be implemented. This political version of *akrasia* will prevent the Kallipolis from doing the wise thing and endanger its being. The combination of wisdom in the rulers and the political courage in the guardians require one another. A polis is just only if it is courageous. Moderation is another virtue of the polis. It is the order and mastery of certain kinds of pleasures and desires. The Kallipolis is moderate because it is controlled in a way induced by law and education. This control is based on consent. Socrates says:

---

<sup>27</sup> Reeve, C.D.C., *Philosopher Kings-The Argument of Plato's Republic* (p.237-238)

In the soul of that very person, there is a better and a worse one and that whenever the naturally better part is in control of the worse, this is expressed by saying that the person is self-controlled or master of himself. But when, on the other hand, the smaller and better part is overpowered by the larger, because of bad upbringing or bad company, this is called being self-defeated or licentious and is a reproach.<sup>28</sup>

Reeve asserts that of the two alternative kinds of control, the former is present in the Kallipolis. Hence the desires of the many producers are controlled both by the true beliefs of the guardians and the wisdom of the rulers. Again, in the *Republic* this is explained by the passage:

Then you see how right we were to divine that moderation resembles a kind of harmony?...Because unlike courage and wisdom, each of which resides in one part, making the city brave and wise respectively, moderation spreads throughout the whole. It makes the weakest, the strongest, and those in between - whether in regard to reason, physical strength, numbers, wealth or anything else - all sing the same song together. And this unanimity, this agreement between the naturally worse and naturally better as to which of the two is to rule both in the city and in each one, is rightly called moderation.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Plato, *Republic* (431a3-431b1)

<sup>29</sup> Plato, *Republic* (431e6-432a6)

Justice is a feature of the Kallipolis because its members are properly ruled. Only the producers produce, guardians guard and the rulers rule. Thus everyone in it does his own work. No one meddles with the other. We can see the consequence of the said structural relations as that a polis cannot have any of the four cardinal virtues if it does not have all of them. A polis has wisdom only if it has courage and courage only if it has moderation and moderation only if it has justice. Accordingly, justice is not simply a single virtue but all the cardinal virtues in one. Reeve suggests that the psyche has three parts analogous to the three classes of the Kallipolis, namely the producers, guardians and rulers; quoting from the Republic:

Well, then, I said isn't it necessary for us to agree that the very same forms (eide) and ethical dispositions as are in the polis are also in each of us? Surely they didn't get there from anywhere else. It would be ridiculous for anyone to think that spiritedness has not come to be in the polis from those private individuals who are just the ones held to possess it....or that the same is not true of the love of learning...or the love of money.<sup>30</sup>

Money lovers as they are ruled by certain appetites identify the good with a mode, a sub-structure of the good that is getting throughout life the pleasure of making money as much as possible. If honour, rather than money is one's ultimate goal as in the case of the honour-lovers, one would like to discover how to acquire the traits that are rewarded with social approval. Finally the wisdom loving philosopher kings see things as they are and identify the good with the good itself. They define the virtues with the forms of the virtues which are also parallel to the properties of their own psyches. The wisdom lovers identify happiness with getting as much pleasure through knowing and

---

<sup>30</sup>Plato, *Republic* (435e1-436a3)

learning the truth as possible. Reeve affirms that in the *Republic*, this degree of understanding of justice not with its modes or figures but rather with justice itself is seen as the characteristic of the philosopher and represented by Socrates.<sup>31</sup> The misidentification of justice as in the case of money lovers and honour lovers is an understandable and anticipated outcome of their way of looking at the world, the way their psyches are ruled. Hence we can suggest that 'psychic harmony', a phrase extensively used to describe inner justice (Platonic justice) in the secondary literature, does not only refer to a psychological stability which can also exist in a perfectly unjust person who follows a path of complete injustice but still organized in a perfectly rational, masterful manner. We see in the description of the oligarchic man that he is typically ruled by the temptation in the pursuit of money and in a sense he is ruled by reason. Still, it is clear that his reason only serves his appetites. We've already noted that psychic harmony, inner justice refers to the proper order between the parts of the soul. Nevertheless, the aforementioned ordering should be according to a certain normative ideal. Here, the rule of reason suggests that desire for wisdom must dominate over the desires of the other parts of the soul. Plato retained the idea that the noblest part of the soul is the intellect and that should rule over the other parts and this in turn will bring a state of harmony.

The subject view is based on Plato's Pythagorean background as well the theory he inherited from Socrates who identified the intellect with the soul. The Pythagorean view suggests the purification of the soul from disturbing and uncontrollable passions whilst the Socratic formula suggests that virtue is knowledge and that it can be taught. Plato's ethical theory necessitates knowing the good and acting in a way which would be an instantiation of the good. Knowledge of the good is achieved by philosophical reasoning only and no other part of the soul besides reason has got the ability to lead that.

---

<sup>31</sup> Reeve, C.D.C., *Philosopher Kings-The Argument of Plato's Republic* (p.249)



The appetitive and the spirited parts are incapable of apprehending the good since it is a matter for reasoning. Hence a soul is capable of virtuous action if and only if it is led by reason.

Virtues of moderation, justice, courage and wisdom are the same in the psyche as in the polis. They are interrelated in a similar fashion. According to Socrates everything that has to do with virtue is the same in both. 'The same number and the same kinds of classes as are in the city are also in the soul of each individual.'<sup>32</sup> Proper psychic rule is identical to proper political rule, as the property the psyche has as it is ruled by reason is identical to the property the polis has because it is ruled by the philosopher kings. Accordingly, the properly ruled Kallipolis cannot sustain its existence unless philosophers become the rulers. But it is also equally true that philosophers cannot rule and achieve their highest potential outside the properly ruled Kallipolis. By the rule of the philosophers, the psyches of both themselves and the members of the polis will be modified. This will result in the properly ruled polis and the properly ruled philosophers. The complete man and the polis come into existence together. Reeve identifies this as a symbiotic relationship between the psychic harmony and the political harmony.<sup>33</sup> Both are identical to justice.<sup>34</sup>

Reeve concludes by affirming that, hence, proper psychic and political rule is justice, it is the same thing, the complete virtue of both the psyche and the polis. A polis or psyche cannot be happy without being just.

By constructing a theory of how the psyche works, Plato handles the problem of justice and identifies it as the right sort of relations between the components-the harmony both within the psyche and in the polis.

---

<sup>32</sup> Plato, *Republic* (441c4-5)

<sup>33</sup> Reeve, C.D.C., *Philosopher Kings-The Argument of Plato's Republic* (p.260)

<sup>34</sup> Reeve, C.D.C., *Philosopher Kings-The Argument of Plato's Republic* (p.244)

### III.II Understanding the Good

The conception of good is an essential part of Plato's ethical theory. Inner psychic justice refers to the proper ordering between the parts of the soul and according to the subject theory it should be carried out towards a certain normative ideal which is the pursuit of intellect. The person with knowledge is the person who thinks in a reflective manner with a realization that there are objects of knowledge that cannot be found in experience, the forms.

In Books VI and VII of the *Republic*, Plato gives a long account of knowledge in the form of three figures of Sun, Line and the Cave. In *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*, Annas argues that as regards his theory of forms, Plato links knowledge with understanding. She suggests that for Plato knowledge requires understanding and in turn understanding requires and essentially involves two features, explanation and reference to goodness. She has written:

Knowledge, for Plato, forms an explanatory whole...Understanding is connected with explanation, with being able to say why things are the way they are; and to be able to explain things is to be able to relate them systematically and show what is basic and what dependent, and how they are interrelated...Plato's model for such an explanatory system is mathematics. The other requirement for understanding is that it must crucially involve reference to goodness. We tend to think goodness as something that defies systematic explanation; Plato however is far from thinking that goodness is subjective or marginal, something that cannot be part of an

organized explanation. Indeed, he makes it fundamental to all real explanation, and hence all understanding.<sup>35</sup>

According to Plato's theory, the good, which is the object of all human striving is the form of the good. The good which is sought by everyone must be what is really and unqualifiedly good. Plato calls this a form, the sole unqualified bearer of the good. Annas explains that forms are essentially distinct from particular things to which the same predicate applies. Accordingly, the form of good is not the same as anything we call good. It does not exist in the daily world of experience. Annas recalls Aristotle's criticism at *Nicomachean Ethics* and asserts that for Aristotle, it is absurd for the object of people's attempts to be or have something unattainable in the world of particular actions, a form which is separate from particular good things is agreeable, something which is *ex hypothesi*. She argues that Plato, right at the very beginning turns the good into an object of detached, rather than practical knowledge and chooses not to argue for the existence of the form of the good. She then acknowledges that Plato thinks that an ethical theory cannot proceed with the premise that besides particular goods that are relative to various interests and criteria, there is also an objective and just good which is not good dependent on or relative to anything.<sup>36</sup>

The first figure, the Sun implies the distinction between forms and the predicates, the 'many'. Forms as objects of thought are opposed to the many things and actions that are only instances of them. We know the latter only through experience. The Sun, which is supreme in the visible realm corresponds to the Good, that is supreme in the realm of thought. It causes things to be seen and objects of knowledge to be known by the mind. The Line as a passage from the world of sense to that of thought is introduced as

---

<sup>35</sup> Annas, Julia, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* (p.242-243)

<sup>36</sup> Annas, Julia, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* (p.242-244)

separating the intelligible and the visible world. Carrying on from the Sun, it also puts the two worlds on a continuous scale of epistemological achievement. The Line presents a move from image to the original. Finally the Cave, which is Plato's most famous image, symbolizes the power of philosophy to free and enlighten. With the image of the Cave, abstract thinking, philosophical insight is portrayed as something liberating and the person who starts to think is depicted as someone who breaks the bonds of ordinary experience and starts a journey from darkness into light. The ascent from the Cave represents a journey from the world of senses to the world of thought. Annas thinks this movement is worrying and suggests that it is mysterious why anybody would be prompted to start the journey. She has written:

In the *Symposium*, Plato stresses the force of personal love in turning us from the unthinkingness of everyday life to the eternal and impersonal Forms, and in the *Phaedrus*(250b-d) says that Beauty is the Form that is first and most easily found attractive. But the *Republic* is more austere. The philosopher turns towards the impersonal Good because that is where they are led by impersonal disciplines like mathematics. The message of Sun, Line and Cave is that it is mathematics that leads to the Forms.<sup>37</sup>

For Annas therefore, Sun, Line and Cave, more than anything else, stress the impersonal nature of the knowledge of the Good which in Plato's theory is the basis of the just person's understanding. She suggests that the Line tells us that the abstract and mathematical disciplines which lead us to real knowledge are

---

<sup>37</sup> Annas, Julia, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* (p.259)

not directly concerned with the moral aspects of the world. The Sun and the Cave stress the extreme difference between our ordinary thinking about personal concerns and the thinking that will lead to knowledge.

Hence, Annas is not content with the argument and she sees something quite wrong about it. She suggests that the idea of justice is worth having for the person, is a part of the argument which Socrates uses to show that justice is the harmonious state of a person's soul. Justice in the soul and the body are similar. Reason in the soul knows what is best for all the other parts including the personal desires and aspirations. Annas says, however, with the theory of forms we find that the same knowledge which controls what is best for all the related factors requires an abandonment of one's personal concerns. She claims that, accordingly, the Good which is the supreme object of knowledge has nothing to do with personal good. It is the purely impersonal form of Good:

But how can the knowledge that produces harmony in my soul, caring for all my concerns, require me to turn away from the world I share with others and concentrate on what is simply just and good, not just or good for me? How can the knowledge developed by mathematics, the kind of understanding it engenders make my soul harmonious? And if not, why should it be something that I would obviously want to have? But the whole argument of the *Republic* was meant to show that justice, and the knowledge it involves was something that I should want to have. Something seems to have gone very wrong.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Annas, Julia, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* (p.260)

Annas asserts that the Line, Cave and Sun suggest a different picture of the philosopher who is characterized by his desire to escape the world of practical affairs. She argues that, philosophical knowledge, rather than carrying the desire to solve actual moral problems, is associated with impersonal disciplines such as mathematics. For Annas forms are represented so infinitely worthwhile in themselves that everything else related to the human condition is meaningless by comparison. Accordingly, it looks as if this inevitably requires a wholesale downgrading of any consideration of particular matters, as the idea suggests that knowledge not only begins but ends with forms. However, Plato makes it clear that to be truly just one needs to have full articulate understanding. Thus even if knowledge requires a theoretical grounding, and highly abstract reasoning, still it must be of a practical kind as well. Having this knowledge should make a difference in experience and particular decisions. Socrates states that philosopher kings are the ones who are better and more completely educated than the others and are better able to share in both types of lives (520c1-2). Obviously both types of lives here refer to the practical life of ruling the city and the theoretical life of studying the good itself. Moreover, Plato does not want the conflict of theoretical and practical reasoning. He thinks of reason as a single faculty and suggests that both in practical context and in theoretical contemplation the exercise of the same reason rules. Contrary to many interpretations he does not see two different conceptions of the philosopher as contemplative or practical. For Plato the reason is supreme in both contemplating the forms and making good practical decisions and that is a characteristic of the just person.

Annas also claims that 'the *Republic* began from the inadequacy of act-centered theories, which represented justice as a set of arbitrary and external demands.<sup>39</sup> She suggests that the discussion as regards the parts of the state and the soul as well as virtues allowed Plato to show that justice is a state of the person, a condition for the psychic health and unity. Nevertheless for

---

<sup>39</sup> Annas, Julia, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* (p.267)

Annas, this theory has been undermined as the knowledge required to be just is knowledge of what is impersonally just. This suggests that just people do not act in or against anybody's interest but in accordance with the impersonal perceptions of what is absolutely just and good. Annas concludes her argument by posing the same question: 'Plato forces us to ask the question 'why should I be just?' by turning the philosopher into a contemplator of eternal forms who abstracts from everything individual and personal.'<sup>40</sup>

An attempt to understand goodness in ethics of Plato could have a key role in trying to resolve Anna's question. Goodness, being the most fundamental normative concept in Plato's ethics is used to explain derivative concepts such as happiness and virtue. Plato plainly tells us in the *Republic* that unless we know the form of the good we will not know anything else, that even virtue is good.

The role of the good in the ancients is cardinal and both Plato and Aristotle fought the subjective and relativistic theories of good. Equally, an objective understanding of good engenders that all disputes in ethics are responsive to reason and are rationally intelligible. This is mainly because the central ethical question of the period how one should live was thought of in terms of what is good and bad for humans. The subject question was sometimes stated in terms of happiness or pleasure or virtues of character. Still, they all came to the same thing. Human happiness was assumed in terms of what is good for human beings, or pleasure was thought the only thing good in itself. When the issue was virtues of character, contributions of such virtues are interpreted as leading to happiness or the ultimate good. Also, both for Plato and Aristotle disputes about the ultimate good can be resolved by human reason, which is seen by both as the divine element in a human. For Plato good can be known if the universe can be known. Human good and the good of the universe are

---

<sup>40</sup> Annas Julia, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* (p.270)

knowable by human beings. Even though very few intelligent people with advanced education can achieve this knowledge, in Plato's thinking, potentially it can be acquired by all.

According to Plato's view, knowledge of the good is the basis for knowledge of justice. The priority of the knowledge of good over knowledge of justice is clearly seen in the full definition of the just city and the just person. In both explanations, a particular structure and organization is said to be just only if it promotes the good of the whole complex. As justice is dependent on the knowledge of the good, the question of knowledge of the good inevitably becomes the most fundamental epistemological question of the *Republic*. In Book VI, from Plato's comments we see that his view of what the good is what his whole theory depends on: 'You've often heard it said that the form of the good is the most important thing to learn about and that it's by their relation to it that just things and the others become useful and beneficial. You know very well now that I am going to say this, and, besides, that we have no adequate knowledge of it.'<sup>41</sup>

In order to explain the objectivity of Plato's theory of good, the functional-perfectionist theory can be examined. The subject theory is introduced as the theoretical foundation on which Plato established his ideals of the good city, the good individual, definitions of justice and the other virtues. The point that everything has its proper function, *ergon* forms the basis of the theory. Tools, eyes and ears are taken as examples. Things with a function may perform their function well or poorly. There is a virtue for everything that has a function. A thing performs its function well by its own proper virtue, which is *arete*. Like many Greek words of praise and blame, *arete* combines a number of different connotations. Related to Ares, the name of the war god, it primarily referred to manly powers in battle and nobility. Then, its meaning spread to include every sort of moral excellence.

---

<sup>41</sup> Plato, *Republic* (505a3-4)



Outside the moral domain, it made ordinary sense as a term of praise for animals, property or anything else.<sup>42</sup> Thus, the *arete* of a thing is the condition in which it can perform its *ergon* in the best way.<sup>43</sup>

The main argument can be exhibited as follows: A city is just when each of the natural kinds of people performs its own naturally best social function (433a4-5). The main social functions of the city are ruling, defending and production (369-375). There are three natural kinds of people in the city, those of inborn high intelligence, persons of inborn high spirit and those of inborn abilities for arts and trades (415-435). The appropriate social function of the first class is to rule, the second to defend the city whilst the best function of the third class is to continue the production in the city (434). Therefore a city is just when everyone is having and doing one's own function and there is no meddling and exchange between the three classes (434). Cities and persons won't differ in respect to justice (435b). An individual has these three parts in his soul and thus can be correctly called by the same names as the city if he has the same conditions in them (435b7-9). Therefore a person is just when each of the parts in his psyche performs its own naturally best suited function (441e). There are three psychic parts in the human soul; reason, spirit and appetite (436-441). The human soul also has three main functions; to rule oneself, defend oneself and to satisfy one's bodily needs (441e-442). Reason is the psychic part which corresponds to the ruling class in the city, spirit to the auxiliaries and appetite to the productive class (440-441). Therefore, the best suited function for reason is to rule, spirit to defend and appetite to provide the bodily needs (441e). Hence, a soul is just when it is so organized that the reason rules, the spirit defends and the appetite provides the needs of it (441e).

---

<sup>42</sup> Pappas, Nickolas, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Plato and the Republic* (p.48)

<sup>43</sup> Guthrie, W.K.C., *The Greek Philosophers* (p.109)

Here, we see an extremely strong isomorphism between a just person and a just city-state. It is not just a relation between the two abstract principles of justice but also between the two definitions in complete. A one to one correspondence between the two sets of parts and functions. Thus Plato's analogy is like the relation between a page of a book and its enlarged photocopy. Not only the structure is identical but also the words, sentences even letters are similar.

Still, the famous analogy and its connection to the conception of justice raise many questions and are keenly debated. Obviously the terms *dikaiosunê* and *dikaios* have a much broader sense than the currently applicable terms of justice and just. They could be used to cover all social conduct which is morally right. When Socrates undertook to prove to Glaucon that justice is good in and of itself, not just for its consequences, justice is perceived to be so great a good that no good attainable by injustice could be greater. Good here means good for oneself, that which contributes to one's well-being, happiness, *eudaimonia*. The thesis suggests one has more gain than one could obtain at the price of becoming unjust. Here, by no means performing a single just act or a series of just acts is equivalent to being a just man. In Plato's thinking being a just man requires having justice in the soul. Justice, although is the active disposition of justly behaviors towards one's fellows, is a property not of actions but rather of agents. There is a condition of soul that is called psychic harmony and it is in and of itself a greater good for one who has it. One has psychic harmony only if one has a firm and stable disposition to act justly towards others.

Regarding the arguments of individual and social justice, Gregory Vlastos, in *Platonic Studies* suggests that Plato does not distinguish the two aspects of the argument clearly and that they are not presented in the proper order. Instead of showing what a precious thing psychic harmony is and then demonstrating its connection with the disposition to act justly, Plato does the opposite and reserves the praise of psychic harmony for the conclusion of his argument in

Book IV (444c-444e).<sup>44</sup> Vlastos notes that the first part of the argument does not need any further discussion as that depicts the condition of the human soul in its health and beauty. The ontologically correct hierarchic internal order is maintained. Still, he brings a different interpretation to the second part of the argument.

We see the related definition in Book IV: 'Each one of us in whom each part is doing its own work will himself be just and do his own.'<sup>45</sup> This definition discloses the components of the soul in the tripartite analysis. One is a just man if each of the three parts, namely the reasoning, spirited and the appetitive parts functions optimally. This will result in a state of concord, inner peace and amity. Vlastos calls this state as psychic harmony. He then defines the perplexing element in the definition. The said argument presents no tangible and apparent link with ordinary usage. Taking into consideration the many sources including Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* for what people commonly understood from *dikaiosunê* was broad enough to cover all virtuous conduct towards others, but for the most part it was used specifically in a sense to mean refrain from *pleonexia*. Thus for Vlastos, *dikaiosunê* is preeminently the social virtue and it stands for right dealings between people. Just is a relational predicate. To speak of a person who carries this property is to contemplate the way in which he relates himself to persons or groups in his life. He claims that this is altogether without parallel in the Platonic corpus. For making the issue more explicit Vlastos says: 'If a contemporary had been told that there is an enviable state of soul, characterized by proper functioning of every one of its parts, only by accident he could have guessed that this is supposed to be the moral attribute of justice.'<sup>46</sup> Also, the context is not easy to comprehend. Socrates is trying to convince Glaucon that justice pays and by justice, as everyone else, Glaucon understands constraints of morality and law. Vlastos questions how could Socrates prove Glaucon that refraining from

---

<sup>44</sup> Vlastos, Gregory, *Platonic Studies* (p.114)

<sup>45</sup> Plato, *Republic* (441d10-441e1)

<sup>46</sup> Vlastos, Gregory, *Platonic Studies* (p.117)

*pleonexia* pays by proving him that having a well ordered harmonious soul is equivalent to justice. Vlastos claims that many of Plato's contemporaries would have agreed with the definition of *dikaionê* which would involve refraining from *pleonexia* and suggests that Plato was doubtlessly confident that the link between doing one's own and the common conception of justice would be fully apparent to his readers. Apparently he believes Plato was counting on his contemporaries to understand his definition to imply that in any community where everyone lived up to the maxim 'do your own' there would be no *pleonexia*.

One other issue which is quite important to take into consideration that in Platonic morality a conception of private life in which one has the right to do what one pleases without any connection to social service does not exist. Doing one's own does not only involve doing a job but extends over the whole of one's life including the private and the public in the polis. Thus everything in one's social conduct within the polis, all of one's dealings with other persons in the context of the only form of life would come directly or indirectly within the scope of justice as defined by the doing one's own formula. Vlastos then asks why Plato did not accept the formula as an alternative definition of justice of the individual, as complementary to the psychological definition. Plato contrasts the doing of one's own by a person with the doing of their own by the parts of the soul at 443c: 'And in truth justice is, it seems, something of this sort. However it is not concerned with someone's doing his own externally, but with what is inside him, with what is truly himself and his own.'<sup>47</sup> Clearly for Plato what a man does is only an image of what he is. External conduct is only a reflection of the real man, the soul. Hence when he is asked what it is that a man's justice truly consists of he is to look to what goes inside a man. Seemingly Plato could only count the psychological formula as the true definition of justice. As suggested by

---

<sup>47</sup> Plato, *Republic* (443c8-443d1)

Vlastos, Plato has to show us then, how the two must always be satisfied as that would be the basis of Socrates' argument against Glaucon. Vlastos' question is enlightening in that sense:

This is what Plato has to show us, else the whole of Socrates' argument against Glaucon would come to naught. To show Glaucon that it pays to have the justice of a harmonious psyche would do nothing to show him that justice pays unless it were proved that whoever has this inner disposition will have the outer disposition to deal with his fellows.<sup>48</sup>

Accordingly for Vlastos, the definition of the just man in the just city which engenders a conception of justice as a relational predicate as explained above does not establish that a man who satisfies the condition for having psychic justice has *ipso facto* satisfied the condition for being just in the social sense.<sup>49</sup>

Gerasimos Santas in *Goodness and Justice* argues that Plato used the functional theory in his defense of justice and rejection of various different systems of justice.<sup>50</sup> Accordingly 'the functions of human soul are to live, deliberate, plan and guide living. A good soul will do these things well, a bad soul badly. Justice (perhaps in the broadest sense of virtue) is the virtue of the soul, injustice is its vice (assumption). Therefore, a just soul will deliberate well, plan life well and live well, an unjust soul poorly.<sup>51</sup> Santas identifies the main problems of the argument, the ambiguity of 'doing or living well' and the lack of a particular conception of justice. Obviously the argument acknowledges that justice is a human virtue and as such it enables things to perform their

---

<sup>48</sup> Vlastos, Gregory, *Platonic Studies* (p.127)

<sup>49</sup> Vlastos, Gregory, *Platonic Studies* (p.131)

<sup>50</sup> Santas, Gerasimos, *Goodness and Justice, Plato, Aristotle and the Moderns* (p.66)

<sup>51</sup> Santas, Gerasimos, *Goodness and Justice, Plato, Aristotle and the Moderns* (p.67)

particular functions well, but still it does not tell us what exactly justice is. As Santas points out there have already been several answers to that and we cannot know whether justice will enable us to live a right or a prosperous life or both. Living well and living happily are the same, but we cannot see any definition of either conception as well as no definition of justice. Santas also suggests that the theory has various ambiguities and thus it is open to problems and objections. He explains that *ergon* corresponds to the words 'function' and 'work' in English. In the *Republic* though, it appears to favor activity or process. Thus when a function is assigned to the artifact or thing in question, Plato defines function on the basis of capabilities of a thing. The key question is what only things of a given kind can do or what things of a given kind can do best. Santas underlines Plato's use of analogy between justice and health and suggests that he was using the concept of function he found in medicine. Function here makes no reference essentially to human desires, interests or purposes. The heart has a function which is independent of human desires and interests. It holds its function no matter what humans desire or take interest in. Socrates' conception of *ergon* is similar. Santas has explained:

Socrates gives criteria for a thing's *ergon* which may not correspond to some of our notions of function. Things made for a purpose, artifacts, are clearly only a subset of things with Platonic functions. Since we have definitions of good of a kind and of the good of a thing based on the defined notion of function, we clearly have a theory of good different from the conception of the good as the satisfaction of desire or relative to human interests. Plato's theory of good is objective, ontologically objective in that goodness inheres in the objects, in the performing of their functions and not in the

subjects making the judgments, or in some relation of a sentient subject to an object such as desiring or taking an interest.<sup>52</sup>

We see the introduction of the good in the theory as a contextual definition of good of a kind. A thing is good of its kind if it performs well the function of things of that kind.

The application of the functional theory to the city entails division of labor and optimal matching of social labors to innate abilities properly educated. The principle of social justice contributes to the better performance of functions of ruling, defending and provisioning the city. They are done better in cooperation and organization than by individuals could do for themselves and by themselves, better than without division of labor or matching of talents. Still, as regards social justice the question of 'Is Plato's social justice equally good for all citizens?' is inevitable. In the opening lines of Book IV Socrates' reply to Adeimantus' objection in relation to the deprivation of the rulers and soldiers of various things that are thought to make people happy such as families and kids, lands and houses, entertainment and mistresses etc. is revealing:

In establishing our city, we aren't aiming to make any one group outstandingly happy, but to make the whole city so, as far as possible... We take ourselves then to be fashioning the happy city, not picking out a few happy people and putting them in it, but making the whole city happy.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Santas, Gerasimos, *Goodness and Justice, Plato, Aristotle and the Moderns* (p.70)

<sup>53</sup> Plato, *Republic* (420b5-6)

Obviously in the Kallipolis, the aim is not to make one class of people as happy as possible, but to make the city as whole as happy as possible. For only in such a city social justice would be found. Here Plato affirms the nonegoistic and teleological nature of justice as maximizing the good of a city as a whole. Santas explains Plato's approach clearly by stating:

Plato agrees what human happiness is depends on what is good for human beings, but disagrees that what is good for human beings depends on their desires, as shown by what people ordinarily pursue as their good... This happiness is not the satisfaction of desires, whatever they happen to be, nor the enjoyment of the usual things of life, for these are not peculiar to any one class of human beings or citizens; but a happiness which is relative to optimal social function, a functional good. It is the good of doing well that one is best at, among the various social tasks..... And there is general agreement that this is an important human good.<sup>54</sup>

Regarding the good of justice in our souls, Plato claims that just actions are to psychic justice as healthful actions are to health. Accordingly both actions produce and maintain the psychic and bodily states (analogously injustice and disease). Socrates draws the analogy by saying:

Acting justly, acting unjustly, and doing justice... are no different for the soul than healthy and unhealthy things are for the body.

---

<sup>54</sup> Santas, Gerasimos, *Goodness and Justice, Plato, Aristotle and the Moderns* (p.94)



Just actions produce justice in the soul and unjust ones injustice. To produce health is to establish the components of the body in a natural relation of control and being controlled, one by another, while to produce disease is to establish a relation of ruling and being ruled contrary to nature. Virtue, seems then, to be a kind of health, fine condition and well-being of the soul, while vice is disease and weakness.<sup>55</sup>

Santas suggests that the fundamental ideas in Plato's theory of justice thus, are not the ideas of ruling over, but those of exclusive and optimal functions and natural division of labor found in nature. 'All three (city, psyche and the body) are conceived functionally or teleologically as complexes with naturally divided parts which are naturally suited or adapted for some function or other, exclusive or optimal, needed by the complex'<sup>56</sup>

When each part of the city, body or soul does its own proper work for which it is naturally suited and appropriately educated, this promotes most of the good of the whole and the good of each part. We see this in Socrates' reply to Adeimantus (419-421), in the isomorphism between the city and the soul, the analogy between virtue and health. Thus, whether we are talking about a complex, city, soul, eyes or ears or reason or appetite, the same principle applies: when each is doing its own proper work, it finds its own proper good in doing that and this contributes maximally to the good of the whole. There is no conflict between good of the parts and that of the whole.

---

<sup>55</sup> Plato, *Republic* (444c-444d)

<sup>56</sup> Santas, Gerasimos, *Goodness and Justice, Plato, Aristotle and the Moderns* (p.138)

Nevertheless, complaints of Annas and Aristotle, and the considerable scholarly controversy on the issue are understandable. Plato builds up the theory of social and individual virtues on the functional theory of good which deals with the sensibles, the particulars and it is closer to our evaluative practices such as medicine and various arts and crafts.

On the other hand Plato's metaphysical theory of good remains so formal, abstract and removed from evident application that it seems empty to many interpreters. Santas claims that Plato thought the two theories of good in the *Republic* are in obvious agreement and not in need of argument and that the theory of the Form of good is evidently more fundamental. A sensible, by knowing the form resembles and determines how well it carries out its correct function relative to other things carrying the same function. The degree of resemblance to the form makes it good. Things become perfectly good of their kind by virtue of participating in the form of the good. The knowledge of good, still, is not presupposed in the *Republic*. Through dialectic, the philosopher kings achieve the knowledge of the form of the Good and humans approach the forms by being 'reminded' of them through the perception of their sensible participants. The forms are the best objects of their kind because of what they are, not because of what they do or their function. Their goodness is not in time. They are at rest. They do not perform any activities. They do not do anything. They may not be even in time. Their goodness is different from the functional goodness of the sensibles. Santas suggests that 'the seeming chasm between the two theories of good is a direct consequence of the chasm which separates forms and sensible participants, the chasm of time space and change, chasm between becoming and being.'<sup>57</sup> The gap is not unbridgable though. Relations between forms and sensibles, ontological dependence and resemblance are illustrated by the three great similes, the Sun, Cave and the Line.

---

<sup>57</sup> Santas, Gerasimos, *Goodness and Justice, Plato, Aristotle and the Moderns* (p.189)

These similes remind us that though forms have no functions, all sensibles with functions have form in the sense that they resemble or participate in them.

In *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, Richard Kraut brings a thorough explanation of our relation to the Forms. He suggests that we need to transform our lives in order to recognize a radically different kind of good – the Forms – and that we need to incorporate these objects into our lives by loving, understanding and imitating them as they are superior to any other kind of good that can be possessed.

Kraut says discovery of the Forms is obviously a momentous one because they are the preeminent good we must possess in order to be happy, and accordingly reason is the most worthwhile capacity of our soul as it is only through reason that we can get hold of the Forms.<sup>58</sup>

For Plato, the philosopher, having escaped the limitations of ordinary existence is so much better off, and the objects with which he is acquainted are more worthy objects of love than the typical objects of human passion. Hence, Plato is not assuming that developing and satisfying our intellectual curiosity is intrinsically worthwhile. The sorts of objects which our curiosity leads us to are essentially important. In the *Republic* the argument that a life devoted to reasoning has superiority over other kinds of lives invokes the idea that there is something worthwhile outside of ourselves for reason to discover. Something outside of human life is taken to be ideal and elements of human life that most fully approach this ideal are to receive priority.

Kraut argues that in Plato's thinking the Forms are not the sort of things a person can have or possess but still we can speak of having things without holding any property rights in them. A Form can be studied and known but

---

<sup>58</sup> Kraut, Richard, *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (P.319)

that does not necessarily confer to ownership. He then questions what it can mean having a thing without possessing and brings forward the conception of friendship where he finds strong similarities to the way in which Plato thinks we should be related to the Forms. Accordingly, having a friend, knowing someone, an inspiring person could be regarded as one of the greatest privileges of life, this involves an emotional bond and sharing of activities but still that is quite different from possessing physical objects, or, for instance, even if one is not a close friend of a certain person one may have great love and admiration for that person and take pleasure in studying his thoughts.

Kraut claims that this is the sort of relationship Plato thinks we should have with the Forms, not on the basis that loving and studying are good activities whatever their objects are, but on the basis that Forms are preeminently good and so our lives are greatly improved when we come to know, love and imitate them, that is when we are properly related to them. In his defense of justice, Plato puts forward that a general theory of goodness should be sought. His proposal suggests that when we say a human body, soul or a political community is in good condition, there is some common feature that we refer to. Because of this common feature they are called good. In Book X Socrates says: 'As you know we customarily hypothesize a single form in connection with each of the many things to which we apply the same name.'<sup>59</sup> However Plato points to no common feature of all good things. He says that it is neither pleasure nor knowledge (505b-c). Thus, Plato does not explicitly state what property goodness holds preeminently. Nor yet he clearly states that the forms exhibit that particular property more than anything else. As suggested by Kraut in his article, "*The Defense of Justice in the Republic*", Plato thinks that Forms are more real than corporeal objects and that counts as an evidence of their superiority in value. By taking into consideration the examples of healthy and diseased bodies, we can follow a revealing line of reasoning though. He equates health, the good condition of the body with a certain harmony among its elements. He also argues that justice, which is the good condition of the

---

<sup>59</sup> Plato, *Republic* (596a5-7)

soul, is also a certain harmony among its parts. The thought suggests that Plato takes the goodness of anything of a certain kind to be the harmony or proportion which is appropriate for things of that kind. Accordingly, as noted by Kraut, 'the goodness of Forms consists in the fact that they possess a kind of harmony, balance or proportion; and their superiority to all other things consists in the fact that the kind of order they possess gives them a higher degree of harmony than any other type of object.'<sup>60</sup>

Obviously Plato thinks that the Forms exhibit the highest kind of organized arrangement. By studying the divine order, the philosopher's soul becomes as orderly and divine as it is possible for a human soul to be. 'By consorting with what is ordered and divine and despite all the slanders around that say otherwise, himself becomes as divine and ordered as a human being can.'<sup>61</sup>

Socrates explains a similar sense of harmony and orderliness at 529c7-d5:

We should consider the decorations in the sky to be the most beautiful and exact of visible things, seeing that they're embroidered on a visible surface. But we should consider their motions to fall far short of the true ones-motions that are really fast or slow as measured in true numbers, that trace out true geometrical figures, that are all in relation to one another, and that are the true motions of the things carried along in them. And these of course must be grasped by reason and thought, not by sight.<sup>62</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> Kraut, Richard, *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (p.322)

<sup>61</sup> Plato, *Republic* (500c6-8)

<sup>62</sup> Plato, *Republic* (529c7-529d5)

The shapes and numbers which are far more beautiful than the patterns exhibited in the night sky present perfect harmony, as the corporeality of the stars causes an inevitable deviation whereas the incorporeality of the Forms ensures that they will never deviate.

We can still question the relevance of this idea to the defense of justice. Obviously Plato sees the philosophical life as best but how and why is the philosopher the paradigm of the just person? When the very few selected people with inborn abilities are educated by the ideal state to become philosophers, their emotions and appetites are transformed in such a way that serves the philosophical life. Someone who has been trained to love the orderly pattern of the Forms will be freed from the urge to seek worldly advantages over other human beings. Still, love and knowledge of Forms by itself does not guarantee the behavior or the emotional discipline that characterizes a just person. Kraut claims that behind Plato's portrayal of the philosopher as the paradigm of human justice lies the idea that one will be in the best position to lead a life ruled by the love of Forms if one trains the non-rational components of one's soul to serve one's love of philosophy.<sup>63</sup> Thus the existence of unjust lovers of Forms does not refute Plato's theory as the issue is not whether they exist or not but whether their psychological condition that strengthens their injustice makes them less able to profit from the recognition of Forms. Sensuality, greed and limitless appetite are obvious obstacles to the philosophical life. On the contrary, those who are in the best position to study the Forms will have reasonable and balanced appetites, which will not destroy their tranquility. The philosophical life will have the felt harmony of the soul as well as the more complex kind of harmony one can only understand through philosophical investigation of the metaphysical objects that enter one's life when the reason rules. The just person has access to the world of completely harmonious objects and so she possesses the greatest good there. Plato makes it clear at 500c1-3 that this is also an imitative relationship: 'As he

---

<sup>63</sup> Kraut, Richard, *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (p.324)

looks at and studies things that are organized and always the same, that neither do injustice to one another nor suffer it, being all in a rational order, he imitates them and tries to become as like them as he can.’<sup>64</sup> He also adds that, when the philosophers need to sculpt human character in their likeness, they will be in an excellent position to do that. Thus when they start to rule their imitative activity is no longer merely contemplative. They actually start behaving in a way that produces harmony in the city that is a correlation of the harmony of the Forms. This way of thinking suggests that acting justly should not be merely because of the lack of motives such as limitless greed, sensuality or desire to dominate others. There should be something attractive about relationships in which a person does his/her appropriate part in communities. Our love of justice should protect these structures. When an individual acts justly and does her fair share she sees herself as participating in a social pattern which reflects the harmony of the Forms. This is the main connection between social harmony or any kind of harmony within an organization and the harmony of the Forms.

What this reflects is that Plato’s theory, more than anything else tries to show that one’s highest good is not only contemplating the Forms. It is to establish and maintain a certain relationship which is an imitative one, with the Forms. This relationship is disturbed and broken when one fails to do one’s fair share in a just community.

Kraut relates the conception of goodness in human life in Platonic thinking by further elaborating the idea of the ‘other’. He suggests that the powerful aspect in Plato’s argument that justice pays is his thesis that ‘the goodness of human life depends heavily on our having a close connection with something eminently worthwhile that lies outside ourselves. To live well one must be in the right psychological condition and that condition consists in receptivity to

---

<sup>64</sup> Plato, *Republic* (500c1-3)

the valuable objects that exist independently of oneself.<sup>65</sup> When one is negligent to these objects and absorbs oneself in the acquisition of power only, or accumulation of wealth or satisfaction of erotic appetites, one becomes a danger for others while also failing to achieve one's own good. Powerful psychological forces that lead to injustice need to be moderated for one's own good as when they are too strong they interfere with one's ability to possess the most valuable things in life.

Kraut further argues that such kind of a harmony, connection of the goodness of human life with some goodness external to one's soul can be seen in diverse examples such as Christianity or Romanticism or even in the great works of art. In religions when the external good is God, no human life is worth leading unless God is somehow present in it. In the Romantic conceptions of nature, if one is alienated from the beauty of the natural order one leads a secluded, cold existence. As regards the great works of art, they enrich human lives and the inability to respond to them is a deprivation. Hence any relationship to an external object, divinity, a work of art or beauty of nature, something greater than oneself enriches and makes human life better.

Kraut concludes his argument by underlining a risky aspect. He says: 'Plato would of course reject these alternatives to his theory. He claims that the natural world for all its beauty is no model for perfection and that the works of poets are of lesser value still.'<sup>66</sup>

Consequently, this brings forward the need to separate weak Platonism from strong Platonism where the former holds that the human good consists in having the proper relationship to some valuable external object whilst the latter goes further and holds that the valuable object in question must be eternal and unchanging such as the Forms.

---

<sup>65</sup> Kraut, Richard, *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (p.329)

<sup>66</sup> Kraut, Richard, *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (p.330)



### III.III Harmony, Happiness Vs. Injustice

Socrates, by the end of Book IV defines justice in the soul as a harmony analogous to health (444d-e). Nevertheless Glaucon's challenge does not merely call for a definition of justice, but at the same time a demonstration on universally acceptable grounds that the just soul is the happiest soul of all possible souls. Thus, Book VIII starts with the aim of juxtaposing justice with various forms of injustice in order to show that, contrary to justice that creates happiness, each of those other forms will generate less happiness both in the private person and in the city.

At 445c, Socrates identifies the four kinds of injustice with the already existing governments in the world: timocracy, oligarchy, democracy and tyranny. Also, corresponding to each, there is a psychological constitution. In Plato's account, among all those, timocracy works best for cities and for souls. Both arise when reason, the rational part loses its hegemony over the whole (550a-b). In timocracy the productive class in the city and the appetitive part in the soul insist on their claim to satisfaction. The part in between the two, the spirited part comes to rule. Though this form of life promises considerable amount of stability, the spirited part continues rule in the midst of conflict and this shows that there is less unity than can be found in the best soul and the city. The transition to oligarchy entails the third class or part of the soul taking place of the second. Correspondingly, in the city when the productive class takes charge money becomes the dominant force in the society. When wealth and value are honored in a city, virtue and good people are valued less (551a). Likewise in the soul the desire for money takes charge. Still, unlike hunger or lust this desire at least requires long term planning and necessitates discipline (554e-555a). Democracy presupposes disagreement as an inherent condition of society. In the democratic city no value predominates and as the citizens can agree only to disagree, no public virtue is encouraged and the citizens appeal to no common value. For the citizens of the democratic city the idea of unity, or of a ruler superior to citizens is repulsive. Equally egalitarian the

democratic soul chooses not to make a preference among its desires, and having lost the power to see necessary from the unnecessary the democratic soul has no principle to guide its steps. Tyranny, the greatest dictatorship arises out of the greatest anarchy (564a). The democratic person's refusal to judge among the desires in the soul brings one of the desires, lust, *erôs* to surpass all the rest (572e-573a). Consequently, as a lawless drive it rules lawlessly in the soul.<sup>67</sup>

Here we notice that all the defined stages of degeneration have certain characteristics. Plato takes social decay equivalent to injustice and this entails degeneration of performance of natural functions. Also bad constitutions have only pretended signs of unity. In the soul, a single appetite dominates the rest and still that appetite cannot unify it. Unlike reason which inspects every motivation and makes preferences, the other desires rule simply by insisting on their own goals. They lack the capacity of self examination. Finally, any ideal other than justice, if allowed to dominate, brings the city and the soul into worse injustice going through an inner logic of degenerative process. Any ideal but justice produces an instability or tension that resolves itself in a worse system. Any ideal but justice has something wrong with its values as a guide for the city and the soul. What makes the soul worse also makes it unhappier and every step into greater injustice follows from a further loss of unity and harmony in the soul. Inner conflict is seen as a source of unhappiness and disintegration is the process that applies to both city and the soul until one reaches the worst case, tyranny.

---

<sup>67</sup> Although Socrates seems to condemn *erôs*, at many other instances he recognizes its importance (458d,474d-475b). Also in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, Plato finds metaphysical importance in sexual love. The *Timaeus* lists the bad effects of celibacy at 91b-91c, and so does *Laws* at 930c.

There is a vital point to note at this juncture. As justice in the state maintains peace, security and concord, psychic justice in the individual allows him to live at peace with himself. As he has become one instead of many, all his energies are channelled into achieving his overall goals. On the other hand, injustice occurs when the elements of the mind are displaced and confused. Accordingly, Glaucon and Socrates agree that we all want to be healthy both bodily and psychically and this state of psychic health can also be identified with *eudaimonia*. Glaucon expresses that our lives would not be worth living if our psychic harmony disintegrated, our soul is in ruin and in turmoil. Socrates concurs (445a). When Glaucon sees mental health as essential for life worth living, Socrates confirms this view at 588d by likening the rational part of the soul to a little human being. This suggests that we can only have a genuinely human life if our reason is in control. To be ruled by our thumos or our various appetites is similar to being ruled by a many-headed beast.

However such a conception of psychic harmony raises many questions. Plato's ideal of psychic health and inner harmony which comes about when reason is in control may seem to be an undemocratic model. Just like the producers have no saying in the state, their psychic counterpart, the appetites are supposed to have only a minimal say in the structuring of the personality. Thus the best the so called non-rational desires can do is to be subdued by the reason that satisfies the best and truest amongst them (568e-587a). Consequently are we not faced with the unacceptable repression of many of our appetites and desires? Can we call this justice? Plato suggests that there is a difference between repression of desire and rechanneling of them onto different objects. Socrates's words are explanatory: 'We surely know that when someone's desires incline strongly for one thing, they are thereby weakened for others, just like a stream that has been partly diverted into another channel.'<sup>68</sup> This understanding also connects with Socrates' recounting of Diotima's speech at the *Symposium* in which the prophetess tells Socrates how *erôs* can be directed away from particular bodies to ever more abstract objects

---

<sup>68</sup> Kraut, Richard, *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (485d6-8)

of desire until eventually it reaches the ultimate erotic object, the form of Beauty itself. Hence in both the *Republic* and the *Symposium*, desire is viewed as a single stream of energy that can, with appropriate guidance be rechannelled onto different objects. This understanding deems reason to divert potentially damaging drives into more constructive and wholesome goals.

Obviously Plato's understanding assumes an ideal of the human. According to Socrates' explanation we see that those who accord with the rationally controlled model of mental health are the ones who are endowed with humanity and those who are dominated by their appetites or spirited part are ruled by their inner beasts and they are the impaired ones. Still we see the uncertainty in Plato's stance. If the appetites are as fierce and indiscriminating as described, how could they accept the harmonious rule of reason? There is also ambivalence in Plato's thinking as to the nature of desires: Are they never responsive to goodness and beauty? Likewise, as regards the counterpart of the desires in the city, is the producer class to be educated and persuaded or simply be repressed by force and intimidation? Plato's reply is fluctuating. At 434a-434b the producers are said to be repressed, at 590c-590d they are to be enslaved, but contrarily at 432a we see the conception of *sophrosune* in the polis, which means the agreement between three classes on who ought to rule and finally at 430e and 431e-432a we see that this agreement is harmony and concord.

Nickolas Pappas, in *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Plato and the Republic*, analyzes the core conceptions of desire and inner conflict of the soul.<sup>69</sup> Initially he gives the argument step by step: Conflict in the soul means different parts of it are opposed to each other (436b-438a). Desire is opposed by the calculating part of the soul (438a-439d). Spirit is different from the calculating part and the desire (439e-441c). Parts of the soul are identical to those of the city in terms of number and function (441c). Virtue in the individual is structured in the same way as the virtue in the city (441c-442d).

---

<sup>69</sup> Pappas, Nickolas, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Plato and the Republic* (p.83)

Pappas points to a similarity between Plato's analysis and that of Freud as regards conflicts of the soul which is also defined as psychic injustice. He claims that Plato, like Freud sees inner conflict as the most intrinsically significant fact about human existence and the most revealing phenomenon as regards the structure of the personality. In Plato's thinking injustice approximately equates to Freud's neurosis. Both are considered to be the greatest misery, as the loss of control when one feels inclined at once to accept and refuse, to love and reject (437b).

Plato's definition suggests that when one thing performs two different acts at once, the thing must contain more than one part (436b-437a). Hence the soul performs two different acts when it moves towards an object and at the same time it keeps itself away from it (437a-438a). Socrates argues that desires are blind impulses and they do not regulate themselves in any way (438a-439a). Pappas claims that, therefore, a thirsty person's urge not to drink is different from the desire to drink as the faculty of reason is counselled in not drinking (439c-439d). He explains further by saying:

The dieter's debate over whether to take another helping, the night guard's battle to stay awake, and the celibate's struggle with lust, all exemplify the conflict between reason and desire. Reason sometimes holds back desire out of what we call moral motives, sometimes out of prudential ones. But always reason seems to be that part of the soul best suited, and most inclined to look after the welfare of the entire person.<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>70</sup> Pappas, Nickolas, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Plato and the Republic* (p.84)

Accordingly, it is always that part of the soul by virtue, reason, which decides between the desires. In order to show that many desires of the soul share some essential property, Socrates distinguishes their demands from that of the reason. He argues that they lack any means to qualify themselves aside from their choice of object: 'Thirst itself will never be for anything other than what it is in its nature to be for, namely, drink itself and hunger for food.'<sup>71</sup> 'Therefore a particular sort of thirst is for a particular sort of drink. But thirst itself isn't for much or little, good or bad, or, in a word, for drink of a particular sort. Rather, thirst itself is in its nature only for drink itself.'<sup>72</sup> Similarly, in the city although the rulers and auxiliaries have a single job to do, the large productive class which is defined as 'the ruled' by Socrates have multiplicity of skills. Shipbuilders, farmers, musicians, barbers, doctors work for non-political goals. Pappas argues that so too in the soul, appetites although they may be different, resemble one another in their unconcern for the whole, entirety of the person.<sup>73</sup> They are not necessarily more stupid than reason. Reason deserves to rule because it is really wise and exercises foresight on behalf of the whole soul (441e3-4). It contemplates the question of how a desire or its satisfaction will affect the entirety of the person. Hence, 'all desires, natural or perverse, join together in their unconcern for the good of the person'<sup>74</sup>

The following passage in the Republic is revealing as regards the subject argument:

One who is just regulates well what is really his own and rules himself. He puts himself in order, is his own friend and harmonizes the three parts of himself like the three limiting notes in a musical scale- high, low and middle. He binds

---

<sup>71</sup> Plato, *Republic* (437e4-5)

<sup>72</sup> Plato, *Republic* (439a3-5)

<sup>73</sup> Pappas, Nickolas, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Plato and the Republic* (p.90)

<sup>74</sup> Pappas, Nickolas, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Plato and the Republic* (p.90)

together those parts and any others there may be in between, and from having been many things he becomes entirely one, moderate and harmonious. And when he does anything, whether acquiring wealth, taking care of his body, engaging in politics, or in private contracts- in all of these, he believes that the action is just and fine that preserves this inner harmony, and helps achieve it, and calls it so, and regards as wisdom the knowledge that oversees such actions. And he believes that the action that destroys this harmony is unjust, and calls it so, and regards the belief that oversees it as ignorance.<sup>75</sup>

At the heart of this argument we see that there is a connection between promise of harmony and stability and acting according to one's true wishes. Here, true wishes are not the instant desires of the moment (*eputhemia*), they arise out of informed reflection on one's overall best interests (*boulēsis*). These informed wishes are what we want to have and they are constitutive of flourishing (*eudaimonia*) and moral goodness (*arete*). Both flourishing and moral goodness provide us with freedom as neither the morally wicked or the mad person is free. Both are in the the grip of irrational obsessions and desires and in the worst case, they suffer moral wickedness and madness like in the case of the tyrant.

Pappas suggests that normally Plato does not think of all desires as dirty, bodily and bad. He argues that on the whole, Book IV refrains from calling the appetites a worse part of the soul. For sure, they form the lowest part (443d), the part that ought to be ruled by reason (444b), but still it is not a part with intrinsically immoral aims. Immorality arises not from the existence of desires,

---

<sup>75</sup> Plato, *Republic* (443d)

as many of them are necessary for life, but from their usurpation of the rule that belongs to reason. Hence, In Pappas' view, Plato, although he sometimes uses a condemnatory attitude toward the appetites, or a bestial interpretation of desires, does not conceive of justice as a state of constant repression but as a discipline that a just person finds gratifying. Consequently, for Plato natural desires exist to be expressed and harmonized, not denied.

### III.IV Why Be Just?

A well tuned violin section contributes to the playing of a symphony. Part of what it means for the symphony to be well played is for the violin section to be played well. Similarly health contributes to a good life. We value health as something contributing to a good beyond itself insofar as it constitutes that good, still it is not something left behind without value once we come to attain the good we seek via it. We praise health both as something good in itself and also because of its contribution to the best sort of life we can have.

Socrates' response to Glaucon's challenge tries to defend a similar conception. In the same way, the question is on whether justice is valued both for itself and as something beyond itself. The inquiry Socrates undertakes aims to show that justice, like health is something choiceworthy in itself precisely because it constitutes and contributes to an overarching good which is still more ultimate than itself.

Glaucon and Adeimantus put the strongest case against Socrates' defense (358c6-358d3, 367a9-367b2). By refuting the strongest challenge to his theory, Socrates would genuinely convince others too. When they challenge Socrates to praise justice, Glaucon and Adeimantus also challenge him to analyze it. They simultaneously challenge us to do the same. Why should we want to be just? According to Glaucon people practice justice as they get its origin and nature in a certain way. This idea suggests that people, because of their coordinated rational self interests exercise justice. They obey the dictates of



justice only to the degree that they have to for to lead a tranquil life. Glaucon suggests that this is the very origin of justice. Thus according to Glaucon's argument, due to the contractual origin of justice, people practice it only unwillingly and to the extent that they must in order to escape the lawless state.

Cross and Woosley in *Plato's Republic, A Philosophical Commentary* suggest that Glaucon's thesis about the origin of justice reduces to two propositions. I) factual-the allegedly historical proposition that it is only through individual weakness that men come to form social communities and to make agreements not to exploit each other II) ethical-that justice, the obligation to abide by rules of conduct, has its origin in the agreements and laws which men have made.<sup>76</sup> The first, or allegedly the factual proposition, for Cross and Woosley, is strictly irrelevant to the subject theory. They suggest that even if it were true, what the factual proposition suggests, that prior to the agreement men lived in a state of nature would provide no support to the theory. They argue that even if our remote ancestors had entered into a mutual agreement, this would provide no justification or explanation of our present obligation to obey law.

Christopher Shields in *The Blackwell Guide to Plato's Republic* argues that Plato disputes the claims about the nature of justice reflected in Glaucon's characterizing its contractual origin. Shields suggests that while Plato agrees that justice has a nature, he denies that it has an origin in any contractual agreement, historical or counterfactual. On the contrary, he argues that the nature that belongs to justice reveals it to be a virtue without any origin in time or place.<sup>77</sup> Shields also notes that Glaucon wants justice praised in isolation from its relation to other goods, as itself and on its own account (auto hautou heneka-357b6), itself, in terms of itself (auto kath'hauto-358b5), and itself, because of itself (autodei hauten-367b4). Similarly, Adeimantus expects

---

<sup>76</sup> Cross, R.C. and Woosley, A.D., *Plato's Republic A Philosophical Commentary* (p.70)

<sup>77</sup> Santas, Gerasimos, *The Blackwell Guide to Plato's Republic* (p. 72)

Socrates to focus on how justice in itself benefits the man who has it in him, leaving rewards and reputation for others to praise (367d3-5, 366e5-9, 367b2-9, 367d3-4, 367e3-5).

Shields argues that both Adeimantus and Glaucon are not asking Socrates to prove that justice should be praised as an ultimate good, they ask him to show that it is the kind of good we prize both for its own nature and for the contribution it makes to our lives. The hidden complexity of the question is vivid.

In the *Republic*, the Tale of Gyges, as Shields characterizes it, is a great thought experiment on the subject question. Gyges is a ring which bestows the power of invisibility and so undetectability upon its wearer. Gyges was a shepherd working for the king. One day while attending his flocks he found a ring and appropriated it for himself. Some time later he met with others under king's employment and he discovered that the ring had the power to make him invisible. Upon this astonishing discovery Gyges started using the power of the ring to satisfy his interests. He seduced the queen, killed the king and established himself as the ruler (360a4-360b2).

Clearly, the story of Gyges' ring is a story about one's course of action when liberated from the fear of detection. As Shields analyzes, the real power Gyges gained was the power of undetectability which carries with it the power to disconnect two things which are normally inextricably intertwined, the motive to avoid injustice because it is an injustice and the motive to avoid injustice because we may be punished if we are caught being unjust.<sup>78</sup> He suggests that in line with Glaucon's conclusion, for some this story is a great proof that in essence no one is willingly just.

---

<sup>78</sup> Santas, Gerasimos, *The Blackwell Guide to Plato's Republic* (p.73)

Shields then argues that the two features of the story are significant. The first is that the story can be framed as a proof as Glaucon intends to encode an argument for a conclusion with this story. The second is that this story indeed encodes an argument as it is introduced as a certain kind of thought-experiment (359b7-359c1) and as such it is perhaps the first of its kind in the history of philosophy. The tale of Gyges encourages each of us to ask and answer an essential question in the privacy of our own reflections, it makes us question the important claim that our real, maybe hidden reason for choosing justice: we are just only because we are afraid of being caught. Thus if Glaucon is right, when freed from fear of detection we are freed from constraints of justice simultaneously. According to this understanding, justice is an unpleasant but unavoidable burden. It is often advantageous to be just, but only because of the consequences resulting from the established conventions, and not for any other reason. On the contrary those who are able to avoid these consequences will find committing injustice more preferable.

Shields reminds the readers of the *Republic* about the possibility that justice is not as justice has sometimes seemed. Plato will ultimately insist that justice may be desirable as something valuable in itself like health (444d6, 445c5, 591a10-591d3, 441e1-442a1), by drawing up a distinction between the conception of justice readily and unreflectively supposed by many such as Glaucon and Adeimantus and true conception of the term.

In interpreting the *Republic* it is important to remember that Plato, all through his argument, tries to reflect justice as a value that is to be chosen independently rather than a rule that is to be imposed upon people. As opposed to Glaucon and Adeimantus who see that justice is created by certain conventions governing conduct and that one can be called unjust only if one violates these conventions, Plato's view is that both justice and injustice are neither merely a matter of human convention nor simply a matter of action or outward behavior. This understanding becomes evident when we examine his notion of justice in the soul, and notice the precedence it takes over justice in

actions (443b-444a). For Plato being just is never a matter of abiding by the conventions in force. In his treatment of the analogy between justice in the city and justice in the soul, as noted by Nicolas P. White in *A Companion to Plato's Republic*: 'It is important to remember that the word 'city' is not entirely accurate translation of the Greek word 'polis'. The translation 'city state' is closer, but it is cumbersome and ugly. What is important to bear in mind is that the term polis connotes a certain degree of independence of government and self-sufficiency of economy.'<sup>79</sup> Thus, development of the city is a natural occurrence, rather than one that is imposed on people from outside in some manner. This confronts with the view suggested by Glaucon about justice, that it is a kind of imposition, established by convention, on those who would otherwise be unable to pursue their own gain unmolested. White argues that although at this point Plato is not talking about justice, he is paving the way for asserting that justice is not a sort of arbitrary imposition on one's inclinations such as his opponents take it to be. Rather, it is something independent of strictures human beings ordain.<sup>80</sup>

White argues that prior to expanding his argument about justice in the individual and justice in the city, Plato gives an account of the need for establishment of a city in the beginning of his explanation of what justice is. Socrates states: 'And because people need many things, and because one person calls on a second out of one need, and on a third out of a different need, many people in a single place to live as partners and helpers. And such a settlement is called a city.'<sup>81</sup> Thus the beginning of a city is described from the perspective of needs that produce it. People need cities because they are not self sufficient. It seems that in this short passage many of Plato's ideas about justice are packed. Firstly, cities are established because individuals are not self sufficient and they need others to remain alive. Also they form exchanges with each other because it is better for them to do that. As White underlines

---

<sup>79</sup> White, Nicholas, P., *A Companion to Plato's Republic* (p. 82)

<sup>80</sup> White, Nicholas, P., *A Companion to Plato's Republic* (p. 85)

<sup>81</sup> Plato, *Republic* (369c)

'Plato evidently does not expect his opponents to claim that a strong man could do without society altogether, even the dictatorial man who is the most anti-social of the types whom Plato delineates (573c-576b) does not aim to do without other people.'<sup>82</sup> According to Plato we have natural needs and cities are established to fulfill those needs.

As White puts forward, this idea also suggests that a city is necessary by unavoidable imperfections in the human constitution. Accordingly if a man were perfect in sense of having no needs, then cities would be unnecessary. Plato makes clear the ways in which the city is suited to cope with human imperfections (370c, 371e-373c, 410a,403c-404a, 502c-504d, 558c-559d). There is also the idea of gathering of many men into one place for living. This idea undoubtedly implies a strong sense of unity. The important point in the argument is that Plato constructs a city in response to a human need. White suggests that Plato here, is never committed to the view that a city is good in the exact proportion that it satisfies the needs of the individual citizens. He also underlines that the only principle that is to be applied in the city, which is natural division of labor, differs from the notion of division of labor in modern economic theory. Crucial to Plato's principle is the idea that people should be given tasks which they are naturally suited by ability and temperament and which provides the unity of the city.

The idea of natural need in Plato's thinking is an important conception. Such an understanding implies that whatever is natural, be it the need of people or their abilities, is not somehow arbitrarily assigned to or imposed upon them. White explains Plato's line of thought:

He begins with the claim that a city or polis is a natural response to human needs. His argument continues by saying that if the city

---

<sup>82</sup> White, Nicholas, P., *A Companion to Plato's Republic* (p.85 )

is to provide for human needs satisfactorily, then certain functions must be formed within it. The conclusion drawn is that these required functions must themselves be natural, and that there must be people who are naturally suited to perform them.<sup>83</sup>

In *A Short History of Ethics*, MacIntyre explains that being in a state of well-being or happiness belongs not to a man's specific social function but to his function as a man. Accordingly, the connection between virtue and happiness is written into this concept in what initially seems an arbitrary way. MacIntyre suggests that the rest of the argument in the *Republic* is an attempt to remove this arbitrariness. For MacIntyre though, Plato's argument versus Glaucon and Adeimantus is not without problems.

Thrasymachus' case revived by Glaucon and Adeimantus assumes that men in a state of nature are moved entirely by self interest and the origin of laws lies in the instance when men discovered and agreed that it was more to their interest to obey the law, as doing injury to others for their interests might bring the risk of being injured by the others. Thus, ever since, men have been obeyed law only from fear of consequences. Relating to Glaucon's and Adeimantus' argument, MacIntyre's passage is explanatory:

If men could avoid suffering the ill consequences of their actions, unlimited self love would manifest itself openly instead of in law-abiding disguises. Suppose two men, one man now apparently just, the other unjust, were given a magic ring such as Gyges had to make himself invisible, so that both had complete liberty of action; then both would behave in the

---

<sup>83</sup> White, Nicholas, P., *A Companion to Plato's Republic* (p. 86)

same way. They would, like Gyges, who seduced his queen and murdered his king, pursue the path of complete self-aggrandizement. That is, everyone prefers injustice to justice if he can be unjust successfully.<sup>84</sup>

MacIntyre claims that Plato, with this case now sharply turns toward the identification of self interest as a trait of social and not merely natural man. Accordingly, Plato makes Adeimantus stress that the conventionally virtuous and just citizen is on the side of Thrasymachus not of Socrates. The Greek equivalent of the bourgeois father teaches his children to pursue virtue and flee vice precisely and only because the former brings rewards and the latter has unfortunate consequences and these are the reasons for praising justice. Plato's argument versus this understanding will involve that as the unjust man sets no curbs upon his desires, and that his desires are without limits, they can never be satisfied and he will always be discontented.

MacIntyre suggests that with this argument Socrates completes his reiteration of his earlier attack on unlimited self-assertion. Consequently, restraint within the personality and between people is a condition of their well being.

MacIntyre also underlines Plato's second argument which is that only the philosopher is in a position to contrast the pleasures of reason with those of limitless appetite and sensuality, for he alone knows both sides.

Finally it is argued that pleasures of intellect are genuine. What man of appetite takes to be pleasure is often cessation of pain and discomfort (as in the case of hunger and eating), and far less real (in terms of Plato's conception of the real as unchanging and immaterial) than what the intellect enjoys.

---

<sup>84</sup> MacIntyre, Alasdair, *A Short History of Ethics* (p. 34)

For MacIntyre all are bad arguments.<sup>85</sup> He claims that the first argument fallaciously infers from the premise that the sensualist always has appetites which have not yet been satisfied and the conclusion that he will always feel unsatisfied and dissatisfied. MacIntyre claims that 'the second argument is simply false as even in Plato's terms the philosopher is no more acquainted with the pleasures of limitless desire, than the sensualist is with the delights of rational control.'<sup>86</sup> and as regards the third argument, he says that the said argument depends for part of what it seeks to prove upon the arguments of the Forms and it ignores the many genuine bodily pleasures. MacIntyre characterizes the aforementioned arguments as sealed with 'Plato's characteristic and utterly deplorable puritanism'<sup>87</sup> He states that this is also due to Plato's inherited Pythagorean and Orphic beliefs in the separation of an immortal soul from a body that is a prison and a tomb. He explains:

It is not the badness of the particular arguments that is so important. Given Plato's psychology, only bad arguments were available to him. For the complete divorce of reason and desire in the soul entails that the contrast has to be between reason on the one hand and senseless and uncontrollable appetite on the other. These are the only alternatives available, given the Platonic psychology.<sup>88</sup>

Obviously, from MacIntyre's perspective, in the Platonic scheme, reason can only dominate and not inform or guide appetite and appetite is essentially irrational. He claims that the despotic man pictured by Plato was drawn so extremely that what was described was no longer a possible moral type. For

---

<sup>85</sup> MacIntyre, Alasdair, *A Short History of Ethics* (p.45)

<sup>86</sup> MacIntyre, Alasdair, *A Short History of Ethics* (p.45)

<sup>87</sup> MacIntyre, Alasdair, *A Short History of Ethics* (p.45)

<sup>88</sup> MacIntyre, Alasdair, *A Short History of Ethics* (p.45)



MacIntyre, as well as the despotic man the other types depicted in Plato's conceptual scheme- the oligarchical and the democratic types- are just less extreme versions of the despotic man and suffer from the same problem of validity. Thus, the type of man that was described by Plato, for MacIntyre cannot help appearing as a compulsive neurotic. He also suggests that the question of justification of justice is still left without a clear answer in the *Republic*.

Above all, the biggest problem of the *Republic* in MacIntyre's view is that the argument begins from the need to understand and make understood the meaning of ethical predicates apart from their particular applications. He explains that when we inquire about what it is for something to be just or red or blue or equal, the first rational move is to offer examples; to try and give a list of actions carrying similar characteristics. But the point of inquiry is missed in such a list, because what we want to know is not which actions are just, but what it is in virtue of which actions are just. The main question is what the element that enables us to mark off those cases which belong on our list from those that do not is. Simply it is a criterion that is being searched for. MacIntyre next explains that, justification in radically different types of context shall be taken into consideration:

Within a discipline like geometry, the justification of a theorem consists in showing how it follows validly from the axioms. There is no question here of what counts as a justification for one person not counting as justification to another. Within the field of conduct, however, this is not so. To justify one course of action is against another is not only to show that it accords with some standard or conduces to some end, but also to show this to someone who accepts the relevant standard or

shares the particular end. In other words, justifications of this type are always justifications to somebody.<sup>89</sup>

MacIntyre concludes his argument by asserting that to treat justice and good as the names of Forms is to miss at once one essential feature of justice and goodness, namely that they characterize what is, not what ought to be. According to his view, justice and goodness could not be objects or states of affairs about which it would make sense to inquire in this way with a 'use of profoundly unsatisfactory arguments to support the said convictions.<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>89</sup> MacIntyre, Alasdair, *A Short History of Ethics* (p.47)

<sup>90</sup> MacIntyre, Alasdair, *A Short History of Ethics* (p.48)

## CHAPTER IV CONCLUDING REMARKS

Should we accept Plato's defense of justice? I think we can adopt a holistic way of understanding Socrates' defense of justice. On my interpretation, the *Republic* suggests and provides us with the tools to think that the just individual has a natural, self-interested reason to be concerned with the goodness of others. To me, it looks like the ideal on which Socrates' defense relies. Accordingly, we have a reason to behaving justly because doing so is necessary for fulfilling a deeply significant need that we all have, namely the need to be connected and unified with other people.

Clearly the *Republic* reveals three main ideas about justice which are all Greek conventional views at the time. Socrates believes each of these views is an attempt to look for justice in the wrong place. First is the understanding that justice is fulfilling obligations and duties to gods and people, or those that are contracted in the course of living with others, as well as other obligations imposed on an individual living in a polis with its distinct customs, norms and culture. The second idea suggests that justice consists in doing what is appropriate and suitable and good to others. Such an understanding sets a criteria of appropriateness decided by the type of social relation an individual stands in to the receiver of the just act. The third idea consists in ignoring one's self interest out of consideration for the benefit or good of the other. Here, the other may be interpreted as an individual or a group such as the body of citizens in the polis.

There is a common point relevant to all of the above mentioned views. All three of the ideas understand justice and its benefits from an external point of view. Although they recognize that justice is a good thing and people accept acting justly for the sake of peace and harmony, what they primarily value are actions in conformity with what is socially deemed as just. Thus justice primarily becomes a social value. The general idea governing this conception

of justice may be the idea of fairness. Still what is thought of fair can change at any time or place. Fairness leads to social harmony which in turn contributes to the general well being but this does not necessarily mean that it contributes to one's eudaimonia.

Socrates' examination of justice does not yield a theory of justice. Neither by the end of the last chapter have all the issues been resolved. However, although Socrates does not give a theory of justice, his discussions prepare the way for such a theory. Socrates suggests a new perspective on justice. This perspective takes seriously the idea that justice, more than a social or artificial virtue, is a human one. From Socrates' arguments we see that justice is an essential component of what enables human beings to lead a good and flourishing life as individuals, or as societies. Hence, although, in the *Republic* there seems to be a gap between the just individual's motives and the good of others, it seems that the individual with a just soul knows how to bring about the objective good in the world as she knows what is objectively good. The objective good also includes the good of others. According to Socrates' explanation, the just individual who is ruled by reason aims to act on the knowledge of what is good. The object of such knowledge, for Socrates is the form of the Good.

This is why the philosopher, the just individual is motivated to rule the city. By doing so, he will bring about the objective good. The philosopher aims, rather than his own personal good, at instantiating goodness in the city (500b-501c). Accordingly, Socrates thinks that such actions motivated by the aim of creating goodness cannot be unjust (505a). As the just individual is motivated to bring about the good, his actions cannot involve treating others wrongly. This does not necessarily mean that the just person sacrifices his own self interest for the sake of others or for the sake of bringing about the objective good.

Socrates' arguments imply that the individual who is ruled by reason loves wisdom. This love of wisdom transforms into love of the Forms. Forms make knowledge possible. According to Socrates, if someone truly loves something then he loves everything akin to it (474c-475c, 479e-480a). As argued by many commentators that since the just individual does not only have a desire to contemplate the Forms but also to imitate them, he desires to act in ways that are consistent with the ideal he follows.

Socrates states that the Forms themselves constitute a just order (500b-500c). Accordingly imitating the forms will necessitate acting justly. Finding the objective good helps the individual to be fair-minded.

The value of being fair-minded does not lie in treating similar cases differently or different cases similarly. Rather than those, it brings a holistic perspective. A fair-minded individual starts looking for similar forces and impulses in individuals, groups, communities, or any type of social structure. A fair-minded individual ruled by reason becomes able to detect patterns in human living that enhance or diminish the powers and thus make it a good or bad living.

Socrates' defense also tells us that our happiness resides, at least in part in getting unified with others and this requires considering others' goods as well as ours. Thus, behaving unjustly which at the very least involves disregarding the other's good is incompatible with being unified with the other, so it is also incompatible with our happiness.

The account of good which Socrates tries to develop in the *Republic*, is interpreted as unity or harmony by many commentators. The idea that the good is unity or harmony can be seen in Socrates' claims that the good is responsible for the knowability of the Forms, as they never exhibit contrasting features and as such are always unified and harmonious (479a-e). His claim

that the greatest good for a city is that which binds it together and makes it one and the greatest evil is that which tears it apart and makes it many instead of one (426a-b) is another evidence that good is seen as harmony and unity.

Finally in the description of the psychic justice, the same understanding can be seen in Socrates' argument that the most desirable soul is entirely one, harmonious and moderate and the most undesirable souls are those that lack this unity (443e, 554d-554e, 560a, 573a-577e).

Consequently if we think that happiness resides in having good things in life, and if this good is unity, then it follows that happiness consists in having harmony and unity in our lives. Thus, as Socrates suggests, being a part of unified relationships is an essential part of our happiness. Similarly, feelings of isolation, suspicion and fear are incompatible with happiness and those are exactly the kind of elements Socrates notes in his discussion of unjust-unharmonious souls. It is also obvious that unity and connection with others are universal and fundamental human values. The desirability of unity with others is something we all intuitively recognize and experience. Thus we all have a reason to be just as justice is a central and essential component of a good life.

I believe the overall argument of the *Republic* can be best seen, and probably the mistakes about its components be best avoided if the argument is taken as a whole. It looks as if this is the way in which we may gain from the work that is philosophically most interesting. The difficulty with Plato's *Republic* is mainly related to its scope. Plato tries to achieve so much in so little a space. The attempt to answer the question what is justice, which appears like a simple request for definition, becomes an attempt to characterize both the virtue that is to be manifested in particular human lives, as well as a form of political life. But more than anything else, the challenges that are posed to Plato (via the mouthpiece Socrates) in the *Republic* are also challenges for the entire audience. Those are the issues Plato attempted to answer to the

satisfaction of severest critics. Objections and criticisms against him started with Aristotle and like certain cases that have been reviewed in this work, are still continued by some prolific contemporary philosophers.

Personally I find it very difficult to decide which perspective would be the best to use, for interpreting Plato's discussions and arguments in the *Republic*. But more than the various approaches to be adopted while interpreting it, I've found the complexity and depth of the *Republic* as the most distinctive and compelling feature of it. Plato obviously succeeded in making the *Republic* a self contained and coherent work. Despite the gaps or the aforementioned problems in relation to the arguments included in the *Republic*, I believe Plato delivered a most inspiring work as he made explicit that however simple the question of whether we should be really just may appear in its preliminary formulation, we are actually in need of a response at the level of complication provided by himself, if when considering it, we wish to be really satisfied and not merely silenced by a superior dialectician.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Annas, Julia, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*, Oxford University Press, Clarendon Press Oxford, Printed in Great Britain, 1981

Annas, Julia, *Platonic Ethics Old and New*, Cornell University Press, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, Printed in the USA, 2000

Cross, R.C., and Woosley, A.D., *Plato's Republic A Philosophical Commentary*, Macmillan St Martin's Press, Redwood Press, Trowbridge, London, Printed in Great Britain, 1970

Finley, M.I., *The World of Odysseus*, New York Review Book, The New York Review Of Books, New York, Printed in the USA, 2002

Grube, G.M.A., *Plato's Thought*, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis, Indiana, Printed in the USA, 1980

Guthrie, W.K.C., *The Greek Philosophers From Thales to Aristotle*, Harper Torchbooks, Harper & Row Publishers, Printed in the USA, 1960

Irwin, Terence, *Plato's Ethics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford University Press New York, Printed in the USA, 1995

Kraut, Richard, *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, edited by Richard Kraut, Cambridge University Press, Printed in the USA, 1999

Lycos, Kimon, *Plato on Justice and Power*, State University of New York, State University of New York Press, Printed in Hong Kong, 1987

MacIntyre, Alasdair, *A Short History of Ethics A History of Moral Philosophy From the Homeric Age to the Twentieth Century*, Routledge Classics, Printed in Great Britain, 2004

MacIntyre, Alasdair, *After Virtue A Study in Moral Theory*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Indiana, Printed in the USA, 2007

MacIntyre, Alasdair, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Indiana, Printed in the USA, 1988

Nehamas, Alexander, *Virtues of Authenticity Essays on Plato and Socrates*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, Printed in the USA, 1999

Pappas, Nickolas, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Plato and the Republic*, edited by Tim Crane and Jonathan Wolf, Routledge Philosophy Guidebooks, Printed in Great Britain, 1997



Plato, *Republic*, Translated by G.M.A. Grube, Revised by C.D.C. Reeve, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis, Indiana, Printed in the USA, 1992

Reeve, C.D.C., *Philosopher Kings, The Argument of Plato's Republic*, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis, Indiana, Printed in the USA, 2006

Santas, Gerasimos, *Goodness and Justice Plato Aristotle and the Moderns*, Blackwell Publishers, Blackwell Publishers Ltd. Oxford, Printed in Great Britain, 2001

Santas, Gerasimos, *The Blackwell Guide to Plato's Republic*, edited by Gerasimos Santas, Blackwell Publishing, Blackwell Publishing Ltd., Printed in Great Britain, 2006

Vlastos, Gregory, *Platonic Studies*, Princeton University Press, Princeton Academic Press, Printed in the USA, 1981

White, Nicholas P., *A Companion to Plato's Republic*, Hackett Publishing Company Indianapolis Indiana, Printed in the USA, 1979