PLATO ON THE JUSTICE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

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THE JUSTICE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an attempt to determine the precise meaning of Plato's notion of justice, as it applies to an individual human being. Specifically, it asks how the Republic's definition of justice as the proper ordering of the parts of a whole must manifest itself in the actual life of a just individual. This amounts to an examination of Plato's conception of the philosophic life.

This issue arises, in part, due to a recent trend, exhibited by some of the most influential commentators on Plato, to seek a social, or practical, dimension of philosophic activity. That is, these commentators assume that if Plato's account of the truly just life is to be deemed credible, he must propose, as an essential element of such a life, a course of public and/or political action to be engaged in. Some scholars accuse Plato of failing to meet this criterion of a proper account of the just life, while others try to find evidence to support the claim that Plato did meet it. It is the claim of this thesis that Plato neither did, nor wished to, make 'moral behaviour', as such, an intrinsic part of the philosophic, or just, life. Rather, I argue that Plato is deliberately overturning the ordinary understanding of justice in favour of a conception of the purely contemplative life as the most just.

My argument proceeds by way of an analysis of the interpretations of three prominent Plato scholars: David Sachs, Gregory Vlastos, and Terence Irwin. By exposing their misinterpretations of various key passages in Plato's texts, I bring to light the proper interpretation of 'Platonic justice', thus clarifying one of the Republic's central aims, namely to establish exactly why the philosophic life is the best, most just, and happiest life.

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Introduction

Plato's depiction of the philosopher, particularly in the Republic, depends heavily on his conception of individual justice, and is perhaps best illustrated by his depiction of Socrates. The virtues of moderation and courage make it possible, in a sense, for someone to be ruled by wisdom, and hence to have a just soul, which is at least a necessary, if not a sufficient, condition for being a Platonic philosopher. Through his portrayal of Socrates, however, taken together with certain biographical facts, Plato makes it clear that the philosopher's attainment of virtue is not a condition likely to gain public approval. For Socrates' trial and subsequent execution seem to have been brought about largely by a general disdain for, and perhaps legitimate fear of, the effects which philosophy is capable of having, particularly on young citizens, and consequently on the political situation at large. And even in the Republic's just city the philosopher's ability to maintain power depends, in part, on a "noble lie". It is important to note that the use of this lie, e.g. the philosopher-king's use of the 'myth of the metals', is a necessary part of the city's conventions, and that it does

not create a proper understanding of the philosopher's life, position, or virtue, among the other citizens. That is, even in the ideal state, Plato does not intend that the philosopher should hold the love and respect of the many for what he really is, but only, in some respects, for a mythical image of what he is.

The difficulty that faces us, then, is how we are to understand the philosophic life, which is so little understood by those around the philosopher himself. This involves coming to grips with what the "philosophic virtues" are, and what purpose they serve in Plato's thought. While a full treatment of this issue is beyond the scope of the current endeavour, I do hope to provide some direction regarding where the larger search must try to take us, as well as a foundation from which to begin that search. The central issue of the debate concerning the nature of the just life seems to revolve around what kinds of activities are proper to the just man. These activities can, broadly speaking, be broken down into two categories, contemplative and practical. Many commentators seem to think either that Plato holds that the just man must engage in certain practical activities which are essential to his justice, or alternatively that Plato <u>should</u> have stipulated some such necessity. In other words, they believe that Plato's notion of the just life is only coherent if the just man is

essentially a man of both contemplative and practical activities, e.g. a good citizen as well as a good thinker. It is my intention to argue against such views, and instead propose that for Plato the just life is at its core a life of contemplation alone, and that such a reading does not lead to any contradiction or incoherence in Plato's thought.

The views and criticisms against which I am arguing are rooted in certain ambiguously worded passages in the text. Many scholars are intent that there is some kind of contradiction in Plato's portrayal of the just life, which results in the need for either a small- or large-scale revision of his account of what constitutes such a life. It is my intention to reinterpret the relevant passages in order to show that there is no such difficulty plaguing Plato's theory.

Indeed, while the complexity of such an issue may in itself provide us with a picture of certain inevitable human dilemmas, or tensions, I will demonstrate that Plato's own account of the issue does not suffer from faults which further confuse the situation. Rather, he seems to want to expose the problems that arise when a human being tries to pursue a life in accordance with the divine element in him. He accomplishes this by showing us what it would mean to be truly and consistently just, and then contrasting this depiction with our ordinary understanding of what it means

to live a 'good' life. By interpreting Plato's view of individual justice less radically, as a kind of compromise between our ordinary conceptions of the just man and the primarily contemplative being implied by certain passages in the Republic, we risk missing out on the ambiguities and tensions in human nature to which Plato is drawing our attention. This thesis will be an attempt to make the more radical interpretation seem plausible.

In the first chapter, we will consider David Sachs' famous proposal that Plato has given us two different types of individual justice, and that his failure to make one kind necessarily entail the other prevents him from adequately answering the questions posed to Socrates at the beginning of the Republic. In the next chapter, we will discuss and refute Gregory Vlastos' suggestion that someone's social activity, i.e. outward actions, if governed by certain conditions set forth in the Republic, can be a "true description" of the justice of that individual, which would allow certain non-philosophers to be Platonically just. The conclusions drawn from these opening discussions will serve as the groundwork for addressing the central concern of this thesis, namely the precise nature of the properly just, i.e. philosophical, activity.

The following two chapters will be occupied by considerations stemming largely from Terence Irwin's Plato's

Moral Theory. In Chapter Three, the discussion will concern whether the just man is essentially a man of theoretical or practical activity, or if some mixture of both elements is essential to his virtue. In Chapter Four, I will concentrate on some issues concerning the just man's interaction with others.

Chapter One

It is difficult to establish the relationship between the definition of the justice of the 'truly' just man, which inspires the conversation in the Republic, and people's conventional understanding of the virtue. The source of difficulty is found in certain somewhat ambiguous passages which suggest to some that Plato is required to prove, or that he wants to prove, that the just man by Platonic standards will also be the man who satisfies many, or all, of our own 'ordinary' standards of moral behaviour. This might mean one of two things. First, Plato is trying to satisfy two distinct sets of criteria for determining someone to be just, one 'popular' or conventional, and the other Platonic, and is then drawing a connection between the two. Or, second, Plato is proposing that true, or 'Platonic', justice, by definition, includes the performance of those actions which also happen to be regarded as just by popular standards. The latter of these two alternatives will occupy the central portion of this thesis. First, however, we should assess the plausibility of the former.

The first consideration of Plato's characterization of justice that I would like to draw attention to is that of David Sachs in his famous article "A Fallacy in Plato's

Republic". Sachs differentiates between two types of justice found in the Republic, one he terms "vulgar justice" and the other "Platonic justice". The textual evidence for the first type is said to be found at 442d10-443b2.[1] In this passage, Socrates is asking Glaucon whether or not "the man whose birth and breeding was in harmony with" the just city would be someone who, if submitted to "vulgar tests", is the least likely of anyone to commit various crimes. Sachs suggests that "vulgar justice" consists in "the nonperformance of acts of certain kinds", namely the kinds of acts described by Thrasymachus and Glaucon in the first two books, e.g. temple robbing, kindnapping, etc.[2] This type of justice is contrasted to the "Platonic conception" which is exemplified, according to Sachs, by "a man, each part of whose soul attends to its business or function, performing no tasks but its own".[3] Sachs also draws our attention to the fact that Plato is here making a departure from what is typically understood by the term justice, for "Platonic justice" is characterized "not in terms of conduct and the relation of persons, but in terms of the

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[1] Sachs, pp. 36-37.

[2] Sachs, pp. 37-38.

[3] Sachs, p. 45.

relations of parts of the soul".[4]

Sachs insists that Plato fails to provide us with proof that the two types of justice described above imply one another, and that this proof is absolutely necessary if Socrates' argument is meant to answer the questions put to him in the early part of the Republic, concerning whether the just man is really the happiest.[5] In other words, Sachs thinks that Thrasymachus', Glaucon's, and Adeimantus' questions can only be adequately answered if Plato can show not only that the 'Platonically just man' is the happiest, but also that he is the 'vulgarly just man'. This problem can best be understood if we look at the two requirements which Sach's claims must be fulfilled in order for Plato to answer properly the questions posed in the first two books, the first of which he thinks Plato falls short of proving and the second of which he says Plato seemed to be entirely unaware of. The first requirement is that the 'Platonically just man' must refrain from all sorts of vulgarly unjust action, i.e. he "conforms to the ordinary or vulgar canons of justice".[6] Secondly, Plato must prove that all men who

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[4] Sachs, p. 51.

[5] Sachs, pp. 45-50.

[6] Sachs, p. 46. While Sachs on a couple of occasions implies that 'vulgar justice' is closely allied with 'ordinary' morality, he never explicitly explains the connection being made. If, however, we were to assume that by 'vulgar justice' Sachs

are 'vulgarly just' are also necessarily 'Platonically just'.[7] These conditions are meant to deal with all possible counterexamples to the idea that the just man is the happiest man, and that in an inversely related way, the more unjust you are the less happy you are, resulting in the fact that the completely unjust man is the unhappiest of all. For instance, the first requirement gets rid of the possibility that the 'Platonically just man' is happy and yet commits immoral acts on a 'vulgar' level. An example of the sort of thing that is precluded by the second requirement would be that a man who is in all aspects of his behaviour 'vulgarly just', but who lacks 'Platonic justice', is still unhappy. So, Sachs argues that because Plato fails to meet these two conditions he fails to fully account for the scope of the questions asked of Socrates, and that this failure in fact makes his answer irrelevant.[8] I should remark before we continue, however, that Sachs is not here disputing whether or not Plato has proven that the

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merely means 'ordinary' morality, then this leaves the following question unanswered: 'What is 'ordinary' morality? If we were to pursue this line in Sachs' argument, then we would be faced with further questions concerning what would motivate Plato to write the Republic only to show that the truly just man is what convention takes him to be, with some additional clarifications about the structure of his soul.

[7] Sachs, p. 46.

[8] Sachs, pp. 45-50.

'Platonically just' individual is the happiest, but rather that he has failed to show a sufficient connection between the two types of justice, 'vulgar' and 'Platonic'.[9] The flaw in Plato's argument comes down to this:

> [a]ttempts to show that Platonic justice entails ordinary morality are strikingly missing from the Republic; Plato merely assumes that having one involves having the other.[10]

Sachs' problem with what Plato has done finds its source in the early part of the Republic. For Sachs the dialogue's central or defining question, put to Socrates by his interlocutors, is whether the man who commits all sorts of unjust acts is happier or less happy than the man who refrains from committing these acts, i.e. the 'vulgarly just man'.

I would like show that Sachs' proof of Plato's failure to meet the above two requirements can be dismissed. In fact, I will go as far as to concede that Plato almost undoubtedly fails to establish either of the conditions, but I believe that this is not due to a flaw in Plato's argument.

First of all, Sachs has misunderstood the question as it is actually put to Socrates by Thrasymachus et al, thus making these requirements irrelevant with regards to

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[9] Sachs, p. 46.

[10] Sachs, p. 47.

the real issue at hand. When Socrates is asked to prove that the just man is the happiest man, not because of the effects of justice but rather because justice is good in itself, he is being asked whether the 'perfectly' just man is happiest in comparison with his counterpart, the 'perfectly' unjust man. For Glaucon says in Book II:

> [a]s to the judgment itself about the life of these two of whom we are speaking, we'll be able to make it correctly if we set the most just man and the most unjust in opposition; if we do not, we won't be able to do so. What, then, is this opposition? It is as follows: we shall take away nothing from the injustice of the unjust man nor from the justice of the just man, but we shall take each as perfect in his own pursuit.... Now, let us set him [the unjust man] down as such, and put beside him in the argument the just man in his turn, a man simple and noble, who, according to Aeschylus, does not wish to seem, but rather to be, good. (360e-361b)

So, we can see from this passage that Glaucon is asking Socrates to show that the 'perfectly' just man, not the 'vulgarly' just man, is really happiest, not because of any reputation or effect of justice but because it is good in itself. Glaucon does not appear to give any tight definition of justice, vulgar or otherwise, which Socrates must adopt to prove that this particular sort of man who does these particular things is happiest. Instead, Glaucon is asking Socrates to take the man who best exemplifies injustice, who all assume for the time being is someone who commits the most heinous crimes and yet has the "greatest

reputation for justice", and to compare his relation to happiness with that of the 'perfectly' just man, i.e. a "simple" and "noble" man. (361a-b) Clearly, Glaucon's question, along with those of Thrasymachus and Adeimantus, is the impetus for the remainder of the discussion in the Republic. In the passage quoted above, it seems fairly apparent that what Glaucon wants the discussion to answer, in part, is the question as to what justice really is, and given this answer he is asking the further question about why we should rather exhibit justice in our own lives than injustice. And, given the course of the dialogue, this does not seem to be an unreasonable interpretation of what Glaucon is asking. For in the first place, the ensuing conversation is on the lookout for what justice is in both the city and in the individual. It is not until the discussion of the philosopher in Book VII, and his counterpart, the tyrant, in Book IX, that we seem to have a picture of what the opposition of the just and unjust man is truly concerned with. That is, early on everyone assumed that the unjust man was a horrendous criminal, while the just man was the opposite, whereas in the latter stages of the dialogue we come to see who the purely unjust and just men truly are. The dialogue, then, progressively clarifies the initial question, until everyone is presented with a picture of justice which may very well differ from what they

had assumed it to be in the beginning. We are then presented with a purely unjust man who is not simply understood on the basis of his criminal activities, but also, and more importantly, is understood with regard to the state of his soul. In other words, the direction of the discussion from Book II through Book IX seems clearly to imply that the question that instigated it is, 'who will be happier, the man who lives perfectly in accordance with justice, whatever that may entail, or the similarly unjust man?' Rather than focussing the issue on some 'vulgar' standard of justice, the question seems to be implicitly demanding that we first of all decide what true justice is, so that we can use this as the standard against which to judge the unjust life. This implication of the question seems to be borne out by the fact that, having accepted the challenge of answering the question, Socrates and the others immediately set about trying to define justice.

No doubt Sachs would object here. Given the fallacy of irrelevance he claims to have found in Plato's argument, and the notion of "vulgar justice" that is central to his depiction, he would seem to be assuming that Glaucon is in fact setting out a comparison of two well-defined individuals of his own, an unjust man who commits a whole list of terrible crimes, and a just man who refrains from committing such crimes. These are, then, to use Sachs'

terms, the 'vulgarly' unjust and just man respectively, who can be judged according to the criteria of "vulgar tests" mentioned by Socrates in Book IV. Therefore, Plato is still bound by the two requirements described earlier, for he cannot simply expect that by saying that the 'Platonically just man' is happier, he has answered Glaucon's question concerning, at least in part, the 'vulgarly just man'.

This position, however, seems very hard to defend. Is it reasonable to assume that Glaucon, and others, are giving a definition of a just man on the basis of what he does not do? In other words, is Glaucon really suggesting that the just man is the man who simply does not do unjust things? Obviously, this conception of justice is problematic. If you are 'vulgarly' just, or just in any way, because you do not do certain unjust things, then justice is a property of your inaction. That is, a tremendously lazy individual who simply chooses to sit and do nothing could be characterized as being a just man, according to Sachs' implied notion of "vulgar justice", on the grounds that he lacks the requisite initiative to plunder, rape, and steal.

Sachs, however, claims that:

> [t]he vulgar conception is shared at the start of the Republic by all of Socrates' interlocutors: Cephalus, Polemarchus, Thrasymachus, Glaucon, and Adeimantus. (This is not to say that the vulgar conception exhausts the notions of justice they

> hold, or that they all believe in behaving in accord with it.)[11]

and

> It should be stressed that the examples of unjust acts are presented by Socrates' interlocutors in such a way that it is plain they conceive the commission of any of them as injustice, and not committing any of them justice.[12]

Here Sachs seems to be missing the point of what is being discussed in the early part of the dialogue. In the case of Cephalus and Polemarchus, it could not be very much more obvious that they are proposing positive definitions for what they think justice <u>really is</u>. They appear to be unconcerned with any 'vulgar' type of justice. The people here are talking about true justice and trying to ascertain what it might be, by suggesting various alternatives of what they think a just man would do. It is true that these early definitions of justice are in a sense 'vulgar', i.e. conventional or popular, perceptions of justice, but this is irrelevant to the current issue for two reasons: (1) they are not advocated <u>as</u> depictions of a lesser kind of justice, but as true justice, and (2) these definitions, which turn out to be ungrounded conventions, are entirely unlike the purely negative notion of 'vulgar justice' that Sachs is proposing. Indeed, the suggestion in Book I -- what is

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[11] <u>Sachs</u>, p. 37.

[12] <u>Sachs</u>, p. 38.

essentially the conclusion of Book I -- that these definitions represent the popular or 'vulgar', but ungrounded, beliefs about justice, seems to imply, contrary to Sachs, that there is no popular conception of justice as merely refraining from committing terrible deeds. At the very least, if there ever was such a conception, it does not appear to be one with which Plato, in writing the Republic, was at all concerned.

In fact, the whole notion that Socrates must relate the 'Platonically just man' to the 'vulgarly just man' at all seems to destroy some of the symmetry of the dialogue. For when it becomes apparent that the truly just man is the philosopher, the characterization of him is of a man who in all ways fits Glaucon's description of the 'perfectly' just man according to the original question which we have been discussing. That is, among other things he is a just man who suffers from a great reputation for injustice, and whom others hate and wish to kill for it. (517a) In other words, the man Glaucon wants to know about, so as to decide whether or not he is really the happiest man, is, in a sense that is very important to the dialogue, Socrates himself.

In the second part of the quotation above, Sachs is suggesting that all of Socrates' interlocutors would agree that "not committing" any unjust acts is justice. Now while it may very well be the case that a man who acts unjustly is

probably unjust, and that a man who does not act unjustly is probably just, this is (a) only possibly true if we judge people solely in accordance with their actions, and (b) not really a satisfying definition of justice, nor one that Sachs shows any real textual evidence for ascribing to the people involved. Again, Sachs is interpreting the question 'Who is happier, the just man or the unjust man?', to mean 'Who is happier, the man who commits evil deeds or the man who refrains from doing so?' And yet, he says that due to Plato's faulty argument, and given that 'Platonic justice' means the rule of reason in the soul, the best that Plato could say in response to this version of the question is that:

> crimes and evils could not be done by a Platonically just man in a foolish, unintelligent, cowardly, or uncontrolled way.[13]

That is, things that are commonly or 'vulgarly' regarded as unjust could be done by the 'Platonically just' man, unless Plato proves otherwise, which he does not. We should recall, however, that the original wording of the question requires that the just man be given a reputation for injustice, in order to determine that he is being just for its own sake. And in conjunction with this we should recall that the philosopher, i.e. the most 'Platonically

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[13] Sachs, p. 48.

just' man, is regarded by the 'masses' as a terrible and evil man, because he tries to tear them away from the shadows on the cave wall, with which they are content. (516e-517e) In other words, in keeping with the original question, the man who, in real life, turns out to be the most just, is also the one with the public reputation for injustice. But this seems to mean that he violates at least some of the 'vulgar' notions of justice since this is how he gets his bad reputation. This last point requires that we keep in mind that, as I have shown, vulgar justice, if it means anything, means the kind of conventional views commonly but falsely believed to be true justice, and not a true but philosophically inadequate conception, as Sachs seems to think. Sachs assumes that Plato regards 'vulgar justice', meaning refraining from committing 'vulgarly unjust acts', as being entirely consistent with 'Platonic justice', but that he has failed to prove it. But the details of the Republic seem to suggest that Plato's notion of true justice is not in all ways perfectly in line with common ideas about just behaviour, so that proving that 'vulgar' and 'Platonic' justice imply one another, as Sachs says is necessary, would actually defeat one of Plato's purposes in the dialogue.

Sachs' objection to this would have to be that the standard according to which the philosopher is judged to be

a bad man is different from the standard of vulgar justice as put forward in Book IV. So we should consider the textual evidence for the notion of 'vulgar justice' that Sachs puts forward, which can be found, as was mentioned earlier, at 442d10-443b2. Now, it would appear that here too no one is really suggesting a definition of, or strict set of criteria for, 'vulgar justice'. For at the very beginning of the passage Sachs cites, Socrates says that:

> [i]f there are still any doubts in our soul... we could reassure ourselves completely by testing our justice in the light of the vulgar standards. (442d-e)

In other words -- keeping in mind that we are still at a relatively early stage of the Republic -- having just happened upon the definition of individual justice, Socrates is simply suggesting that if anyone is still unsure of the legitimacy of what they have found, then they will be strengthened in their beliefs that it is true justice if they 'test' this justice. That is, he is reassuring his friends that while it may seem strange that what they have found is really justice, we can see that the new found justice does not completely fly in the face of all our original attitudes, by measuring it against what had earlier been proposed as examples of injustice, and seeing how much this idea of justice differs from such wrong-doing. That is, he is opposing the new idea of the just man to what had

earlier been agreed to be the unjust man, while the interlocutors' idea of injustice will also be ammended in later books. Nowhere, however, is Socrates suggesting, contrary to what Sachs alleges, that this 'Platonic justice' they have found is a different type of justice than the justice which one would have to behave in accordance with if one were to pass these 'vulgar tests'. In other words, Socrates is in effect asking, 'although we have not yet determined exactly what sort of activities the man whose soul is properly structured would engage in, is it not reasonable to assume that he would not engage in the kinds of activities that we had attributed to the unjust man?' The provisional answer given at this point, although it would be unreasonable to regard it as, strictly speaking, the conclusion of an argument, is 'yes'. Once the details of the just man's life and activity are unfolded in the later books, it becomes more clear exactly why this is the case, and also that the 'vulgar' will not <u>always</u> judge the 'Platonically just' man as just by their standards.

At this early stage, having just discovered justice, Socrates keeps his interlocutors 'with him' in the discussion by distinguishing between the man who has the justice they are investigating and their assumptions about injustice. Plato, therefore, need not show any logical connection between the two types of justice as they are

described by Sachs, for there seems to be no real justification for agreeing with him that his conception of 'vulgar justice' exists, as a part of Plato's argument.

The more general suggestion of Sachs' argument, namely that Plato recognizes, and yet fails to prove, that there is some sense in which the just man must not only have proper internal relations in his soul but that this must exhibit itself in just actions, has more plausibility to it. This is not to say that Plato is not successful at proving that the man with the best ordered soul is bound to behave justly as well. For it seems to be central to the idea of the philosopher-king that he should rule precisely because he lacks the earthly concerns that cause people to behave in the unjust manners suggested in Books I and II. In the midst of his discussion of the philosophic life, Socrates says that:

> [i]f you discover a life better than ruling for those who are going to rule, it is possible that your well-governed city will come into being. For here alone will the really rich rule, rich not in gold but in those riches required by the happy man, rich in a good and prudent life. But if beggars, men hungering for want of private goods, go to public affairs supposing that in them they must seize the good, it isn't possible. When ruling becomes a thing fought over, such a war -- a domestic war, one within the family -- destroys these men themselves and the rest of the city as well. (520e-521a)

In other words, the philosopher-king, i.e. the just man, will know that the good is not something that can be

obtained through any sort of unjust actions. As Socrates says in Book IV, the just man will act in a way that "preserves and helps to produce this condition", i.e. a just ordering of his soul. (443e) The philosopher-king, then, will be the one who will prevent faction from occurring in the city, for he, unlike others, will not take his position as an opportunity to act unjustly and take advantage of others while he has the power to protect himself from punishment. Plato has, then, succeeded in showing that the soul of a just man, by definition, recognizes its true source of happiness as belonging outside the sensible realm, and is therefore, unlike all other souls, not tempted to act in ways that have previously in the discussion been agreed to be unjust, since they do not perceive the results of such actions as desirable. The significance of this argument for philosopher-kings, and some of its surprising implications, will be taken up in the following chapters.

Sachs, then, seems not to have established that his conception of 'vulgar justice', i.e. justice of the individual understood as primarily an unwillingness to commit certain types of actions, is operative in the Republic. The discussion appears at all times to be aimed at finding and analyzing true, or 'Platonic', justice, that is, a higher sort of justice as it appears in the individual. Toward this end, the dialogue addresses the

justice of a city as a whole, but as we shall see, this 'civic' justice too is entirely a matter of internal structure, and so lends no credence to the 'vulgar' justice which Sachs insists is central to the dialogue, and the source of a major flaw in Plato's reasoning.

Chapter Two

The question we are now faced with is whether or not there is any sort of justice espoused by Plato in the Republic that can be attributed to individuals, but which is not of this higher sort. In other words, are the justice of the city as a whole, and by analogy the justice of the individual, the only legitimate types of justice, according to Plato? The implication of an affirmative answer to this question would seem to be that the only just individual is the philosopher. This is not, however, Gregory Vlastos' conclusion. We should now consider his interpretation of the relationship between the justice of the city and that of the individual, according to which all of the citizens in the ideal city, as well as any Platonic philosophers in or out of it, are just.

In his article "Justice and Happiness in the Republic", Vlastos early on draws our attention to the passage at 441e-442a:

> ...in the case of each one of us, whosoever is such that each of the three [psychic elements] in him does its own, he is a just man...[1]

He points out that it is certainly odd that this definition of justice has "no discernable link with ordinary

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[1] Vlastos1, p. 69.

usage".[2] That is, while Plato's definition here appears to refer to the order of the soul, typically others would follow Aristotle's notion that justice is the "pre-eminently social virtue" which has to refer to dealings people have with one another.[3] So, what does Plato's justice as it is defined above have to do with our understanding of justice as a social virtue?

Vlastos claims that the discussion which occurs at 441c-443b is concerned with the virtue of the individual, and hence, he calls this the "psychological" definition of justice. He also says that the prior discussion occurring at 427e-434c is meant to provide us with a "social" definition, i.e. this is about the justice of the polis.[4] As an example of this, he cites the passage where Socrates says:

> What we laid down at the start as a general requirement when we were founding the polis, this, or some form of it, is justice. We did lay down, and often stated, if you recall, that every single person ought to engage in that social function [literally: that function which concerns the polis] for which his own nature is best fitted. -We did say this. -And indeed that to do one's own and not to be meddlesome is justice, this we have often heard from many others and have often said ourselves. -We have said it. -This then, my friend, <u>if taken in a certain way, appears to be</u>

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[2] <u>Vlastos1</u>, p. 70.

[3] <u>Vlastos1</u>, p. 71.

[4] <u>Vlastos1</u>, p. 79.

justice: to do one's own. (emphasis added) [5]

Much of the consideration of 'social' justice revolves around the question of what it would mean for each citizen "to do one's own". Vlastos claims that this phrase becomes a sort of 'maxim' for the citizens so that each of them might "contribute maximally to the happiness and excellence" of his or her city.[6] However, he claims that although he had previously understood the 'social' definition to be applicable to individuals, he had been convinced that:

> [a]t the end of that discussion it had been made clear that "doing one's own" was not meant to constitute the justice of an individual person.[7]

Vlastos decided that the 'social' definition must refer to the justice of the city and not of the individual on the basis of the passage found at 434d-e. Here Socrates says:

> [l]et's not assert it [that justice has been defined] so positively just yet...But, if this form is applied to human beings singly and also agreed by us to be justice there, then we'll concede it... Now let's complete the consideration by means of which we thought that, if we should attempt to see justice first in some bigger thing that possessed it, we would more easily catch sight of what it's like in one man. And it was our opinion that this bigger thing is a city; so

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[5] Vlastos1, citing (433a-b), p. 73.

[6] Vlastos1, pp.73-74.

[7] Vlastos1, p. 79.

> we founded one as best we could, knowing full well that justice would be in a good one at least. Let's apply what came to light there to a single man, and if the two are in agreement, everything is fine. (434d-e)

Socrates is in effect claiming that the discussion leading up to this point was meant to establish what constituted justice in the city, or on a large scale, such that they might now use this information as a model to help them discover what justice is like in the individual man. The previous discussion, then, was not aimed at showing what makes any one man just but only at what makes the city just as a whole.

At this point, however, Vlastos, while admitting that the 'to do one's own' formula is inadmissable as a "definition" of the justice of the individual, is nevertheless convinced that it is a "true description" of individual justice. In other words, he thinks that Plato would easily admit that all just men must have the "disposition" which is encapsulated by the phrase 'doing one's own'.[8] The evidence he gives in support of this claim occurs at 435e. This is where Socrates asks Glaucon whether or not the "same forms and dispositions" occur in the city as those which appear in human beings.

Hence, on the basis of this passage as well as a

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[8] Vlastos1, p. 79.

similar comment at 544d-e, Vlastos suggests that Plato holds the following principle:

> P(I) A moral attribute is predicable of a given polis only when, and exactly because, it is predicable of the persons who compose that polis.[9]

Two very important implications follow from this principle. First, the citizens of the ideal city must be just if the city is to be considered just. Secondly, since the justice of the city, as we have seen from the 'social' definition, results when each of its citizens 'do their own':

> we get unavoidably a specification of the justice of the individual persons who compose a polis: each of them is just iff each "does his own".[10]

But, Vlastos asks, if the city is just due to the just dispositions of all of its citizens, and they are all just as a result of adhering to the 'do one's own' principle, why does Plato not stipulate that 'to do one's own' is merely an "alternative definition" for individual justice?[11] First of all, Vlastos remarks that for Plato the above formula is "a kind of phantom of justice".[12] He then cites the passage at 443c, where Socrates says:

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[9] Vlastos1, p. 79.

[10] Vlastos1, p. 80.

[11] Vlastos1, p.81.

[12] Vlastos1, p. 81.

> And in truth justice was, as it seems, something of this sort; however, not with respect to a man's minding his external business, but with repect to what is within, with respect to what truly concerns him and his own. (443c)

This is a sort of turning point in the dialogue where Socrates and his friends differentiate between the justice found in the city, and that found in the soul, i.e. 'psychological' justice. Vlastos speculates that Plato is unwilling to accept the 'do one's own' formula as anything more than "a kind of phantom of justice" because it is concerned with the "external" conduct of the individual or class. For Plato, what goes on inside someone is more real than his or her "external business". True justice could only be determined on the basis of what a man 'really is', and so it must be defined on the basis of what happens within him, i.e. in his soul.[13]

Now Vlastos claims that Glaucon's challenge to Socrates requires him to prove that:

> justice is good in and of itself, not merely for its consequences; and it is so great a good that no good securable by injustice could be greater.[14]

In order for Socrates to adequately meet this challenge, Vlastos suggests that he must prove that the man who has the just soul, i.e. 'psychological' justice, will

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[13] Vlastos1, p. 82.

[14] Vlastos1, p. 66.

always be someone who acts justly towards others, i.e. follows the 'do one's own' 'maxim'.[15] Vlastos assures us that Plato was certainly aware of this requirement on the basis of the passage at 441d-e. Socrates says that:

> ...in the case of each one of us, whosoever is such that the three kinds [of elements] in him does its own, he is a just man and a man who does his own.[16]

This statement, which is a conclusion of the argument, occurs at 441c-e, is taken to mean that the man who has 'psychological' justice will also act in a way that is compatible with the 'social' definition.[17] Hence, the 'do one's own' formula will be a "true description" of the justice of anyone who has a just soul. Vlastos, then, undertakes to analyze this argument in order to ascertain whether or not Plato has in fact established the above conclusion.

We should try to run through the steps of the argument as they are suggested by Vlastos. Starting with:

> [A] We have agreed with good reason that the same three kinds [of elements] exist in the polis, on the one hand, in the soul of each of us, on the other.[18]

and

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[15] Vlastos1, pp. 82-83.

[16] Vlastos1, p. 83.

[17] Vlastos1, p. 83.

[18] Vlastos1, phrasing of 441c5-7, p. 83.

> [B] Isn't it by now necessary that the man be wise in the same way and because of the same thing as the city was wise? (441c9-10)

He takes the following question as a premise which occurred earlier in the discussion:

> is that which one calls the same, whether it's bigger or smaller, unlike or like in that respect in which it's called the same? (435a5-7)

He then reformulates it as a Platonic principle. And so we have:

> P(II) If the same predicate is predicable of any two things, then, however they may differ in other ways, they must be exactly alike in the respect in which it is predicable of each.[19]

Therefore, if a man is wise, then he must be wise in respect to the "analogous elements in him that has the identical character".[20] This is necessary according to P(II), where two things, the just city and individual, which have the same thing predicated of each of them "must be exactly alike in the respect in which it is predicable of each". And much the same reasoning follows for courage:

> [C] And, further, that a city be courageous because of the same thing and in the same way as a private man is courageous...(441d1-2)

Then, Vlastos says, Socrates "generalizes":

> [D]...and must it not follow that polis and person will possess in the same way anything which pertains to virtue [i.e. any moral quality

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[19] Vlastos1, p. 84.

[20] Vlastos1, p.84.

whatsoever]?[21]

Next Socrates applies what he has already established to justice, in what Vlastos calls premise [E]:

> I suppose we'll say that a man is just in the same manner that a city too was just. (441d5-6)

Finally, Socrates finishes the argument, reaching the conclusion as follows:

> [F] And surely we have not forgotten that it [the polis] was just in virtue of each of the three kinds [of elements] in it doing its own?[22]
>
> and
>
> [G] Therefore, let us bear in mind that also in the case of each one of us, whosoever is such that each of the three kinds [of elements] in him does its own, he is a just man and a man who does his own.[23]

Now Vlastos is intent on the idea that Plato has equivocated on two separate notions of justice in [E]. He claims that when Plato is referring initially to the justice of a man in [E], "unless some warning to the contrary had been given, and none is", then he must be referring to justice in its "primary significance".[24] In other words, there is a "natural sense" which justice carries with it when it is applied to individuals, let's call it just1 as Vlastos does. In its "primary significance" everyone

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[21] Vlastos1, phrasing of 441d2-3, p. 85.

[22] Vlastos1, phrasing of 441d8-10, p. 85.

[23] Vlastos1, phrasing of 441d12-e2, pp. 85-86.

[24] Vlastos1, p. 86.

understands justice as both "virtuous conduct towards another", as well as "refraining from pleonexia" (a sort of self-advantage).[25] Now Plato's second mention of justice in [E] must, according to Vlastos, be a secondary, or "derivative", sense of justice, i.e.just2, for here it is applied to the city. For we can interpret Plato's definition of the city's justice as "predicable of groups as such, on condition that their members, or sub-groups composed of their members, are just in the primary sense", i.e. justice in terms of a relationship among parts.[26] He says this because those who follow the 'do one's own' formula within the city are what makes the city just, and not how the city qua just city relates to other cities.[27] The flaw, caused by an equivocal use of the word just, becomes clearer when we look at Vlastos' reformulation of [E]:

> And we shall say, O Glaucon, that a man is just1 in the same way in which the polis is just2.[28]

As it now stands, Socrates seems mistaken in his conclusions, for obviously a man cannot be just1, or "virtuous towards others", "in the same way" that a city is

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[25] Vlastos1, p. 86.

[26] Vlastos1, p. 86.

[27] Vlastos1, p. 86.

[28] Vlastos1, p. 87.

just2, i.e composed of individuals or classes who 'do their own' and are, hence, "virtuous towards others". In other words, Plato appears to have confusedly made a wrongful comparison between justice in its "primary significance" and justice in one of its "derivative" senses.

According to Vlastos, the mistake came about for two reasons. The first is that Plato, unaware of certain details which allow some words to be used in more than their primary sense, holds to P(II).[29] Clearly, P(II), which demands that two things which have the same predicate applied to them must be "exactly alike in the respect in which it is predicable of each", is problematic in the case of a predicate like justice which has several senses. Secondly, Vlastos claims that Plato is troubled by a "false analogy". That is, he thinks that Plato should not have generalized from the comparison between the city's and individual's wisdom and bravery to include "all moral predicates".[30] For while it may be acceptable to make such a comparison on the basis of the similar ways in which we find wisdom and bravery within both the city and individual, namely in one similar element of each, it is nonetheless inadmissable in the cases of some other moral predicates,

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[29] Vlastos1, pp. 87-88.

[30] Vlastos1, p. 88.

such as justice.[31]

Before re-considering Vlastos own argument, I would like to briefly summarize his conclusions. In short, Vlastos thinks that he can help Plato out of his dilemma by showing that he could easily have proven that "a man is just2 iff he is just1".[32] In this way, if Socrates had initially indicated that he was using the sense of just2 of the individual in order to compare him to the city, this re-constructed argument may have saved him from the flaw of equivocation. For our present purposes, we are not concerned with the various details of how Vlastos undertakes such a rehabilitative move, but rather that he thinks such a move is necessary. So, what we should keep in mind is that Vlastos believes that the purposes of Plato's argument inevitably lead him to accept that everyone who is 'psychologically' just is also (a) "virtuous towards others" and "refrains from pleonexia", i.e. just1, as well as (b) someone whose soul obtains a certain relationship among its parts, i.e. just2. In other words, Vlastos thinks that for Plato 'psychological' justice, or 'psychic harmony', is the possession of Platonic philosophers and those who follow them, i.e. members of the just city. While the philosopher

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[31] Vlastos1, p. 88.

[32] Vlastos1, p. 89.

can transmit the right beliefs and consequent 'harmony' to those in the ideal educational system, the rest of us are bound to a "delusive facade of virtue".[33] Vlastos points out that this would only have been truly disturbing to Plato, in such a way that it would cause any inconsistency in his philosophy, if the citizens of the just city were themselves incapable of achieving 'psychological' justice. For then, the city itself would not be justly structured because it was not constituted by just individuals.[34]

Vlastos' interpretation and consequent analysis, however, appear to suffer from flaws of their own. I think that his general mistake can be traced back to his interpretation of the 'social' definition of justice. As we have already seen, he suggests that while the 'psychological' definition, which is discussed at 441c and following, deals with the virtue of the individual, the 'social' definition, which is considered beginning at 427e, and is prior to the 'psychological' one, is meant to deal with the justice of the city. Vlastos, however, is not completely content with this suggestion for he is determined that while the 'to do one's own' formula may not satisfy Plato as a legitimate alternative definition of individual

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[33] Vlastos1, pp. 92-95.

[34] Vlastos1, pp. 92-93.

justice, it is still, no doubt, a "true description" of it. As we know, Vlastos uses as evidence for this claim the following passage, where Socrates asks Glaucon:

> Isn't it quite necessary for us to agree that the very same forms and dispostions as are in the city are in each of us? (435e)

And from this passage he extrapolates to the principle P(I), as quoted above (p.28).

Yet if 435e is interpreted differently, Plato need not hold P(I) at all. Vlastos' mistake is in assuming that the 'to do one's own' formula is a description of the justice of the individual. The problem will become more obvious once we have considered the following exchange between Socrates and Glaucon:

> Meddling among the classes, of which there are three, and exchange with one another is the greatest harm for the city and would most correctly be called extreme evil-doing. -Quite certainly. -Won't you say that the greatest evil-doing against one's own city is injustice? -Of course. -Then, that's injustice. Again, let's say it this way. The opposite of this - the money-making, auxiliary, and guardian classes doing what's appropriate, each of them minding its own business in a city would be justice and would make the city just. (434b-c)

Here it would appear that Socrates is saying that the failure of individuals or classes within the city 'to do one's own' is injustice, but that this injustice is a property of their actions, which have caused harm to the city, and not of the individuals themselves. So, when the

classes 'meddle' with one another, or a craftsman tries to be a warrior, for example, then his actions are unjust actions which will cause the city to be unjust also. If, on the other hand, the citizens all 'do their own', then their actions, but not necessarily the citizens themselves, are just, in the sense that they contribute to the justice of the city as a whole. Socrates is consistently maintaining that justice means only the proper hierarchy among the three parts of the whole. Actions of the parts of the whole can only be called just in the sense that they help to bring about, maintain, or are consequences of, the necessary hierarchy that is the definition of justice.

If we accept this re-interpretation of this aspect of the 'to do one's own' principle, then we can also alter our understanding of 435e. The just city and individual must have the "very same forms and dispositions" within them in the sense that they both contain appetitive, spirited, and rational elements, each of which performs its own function. In this way, the action of any individual element within the soul, or citizen within the city, which contributes to the justice and well-being of the whole, is just. In the opposite direction, should any of these elements commit some evil, i.e. try to perform the function of some other element, then this act will be called unjust on the grounds that it makes the soul or the city unjust

also. Given what has been said, it no longer appears necessary for Plato to hold P(I) above. For we can still say that the city is just, not on account of the justice of all of the individuals that compose that city, as Vlastos contends[35], but rather because all of the citizens in performing the functions best suited to them act justly, causing the justice of the city as a whole.

Vlastos' misinterpretation of the analogy of the just city and individual causes him to also confuse places where Plato is clearly separating the justice of each in order to compare them. That is, due to his belief that the social definition is in part a "description" of individual justice, he seems often to assume that Plato is referring to individual justice even at times when Plato is explicitly referring to the city's justice. At 443c, for instance, Vlastos seems to think that Socrates is saying that the "external conduct" of the <u>just</u> individual is "a kind of image", or "phantom", of justice.[36] This contributes to his overall explanation of how Plato can justify not making the 'to do one's own' formula an "alternative" definition of individual justice. That is, Vlastos assumes that Plato is here saying that the "external conduct" of a man is not

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[35] <u>Vlastos1</u>, p. 80.

[36] <u>Vlastos1</u>, p. 82.

worthy of the reality of his "inner life", and hence cannot, in itself, be regarded as properly definitive of justice.[37] This reading of the passage, however -- which involves taking the "phantom" of justice to be the practical actions of the just individual -- does not seem to be justified by the text. For if we start slightly earlier in the exchange, Socrates says:

> Then that dream of ours has reached its perfect fulfillment. I mean our saying that we suspected that straight from the beginning of the city's founding, through some god, we probably hit upon an origin and model for justice. -That's entirely certain. -Thus, Glaucon, it was after all a kind of phantom of justice -- that's also why it is helpful -- its being right for the man who is by nature a shoemaker to practice shoemaking and do nothing else, and for the carpenter to practice carpentry, and so on for the rest. (443b-c, emphasis added)

Here, Socrates seems to be suggesting not that what any given individual citizen of the just city does in his relationship to the others is a "phantom of justice", but more specifically that the justice of the city itself -- consisting in all citizens performing their proper functions in such a way as to maintain the properly structured whole -- was a "model for justice". That is, the reference, at the end of the above passage, to the 'one man/one job' principle, should not be taken to mean that each man's justice is exemplified by his actions, which are a "phantom"

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[37] Vlastos1, p. 82.

of his 'inner' justice. Rather, it should be taken to mean that the city in which the 'one man/one job' principle is followed is, as a whole, the "phantom" of justice. The idea that Socrates is referring to the city's structure as a model for justice, which is a "sort of phantom", is made even more likely by returning to the passage to which Socrates himself refers. In the second sentence of the above passage, he says that "we suspected that straight from the beginning of the city's founding, through some god, we probably hit upon an origin and model for justice". That is, he suggests that the appropriateness of the city as a model for justice has been explicitly discussed before, and has been previously depicted as having been "hit upon" "through some god". To properly interpret his meaning, then, we must refer to the previous stage of the discussion to which Socrates is alluding. In fact, there is only one earlier passage in which the city's founding is explicitly spoken of in these terms. If we look to Book II where Socrates first sets out how they should go about investigating justice, he says:

> in my opinion we should make this kind of investigation of it: if someone had, for example, ordered men who don't see very sharply to read little letters from afar and then someone had the thought that the same letters are somewhere else also, but bigger and in a bigger place, I suppose it would look like a <u>godsend</u> to be able to consider the littler ones after having read these first, if, of course, they do happen to be the

same. (368c-d, emphasis added)

He goes on to explain that the bigger example of justice would be the "whole city", and the littler would be "the justice of one man". (368e) Immediately after this, the 'do one's own' principle is introduced as the means whereby the justice of the city as a whole is achieved. (370a-b) The ordering of the citizens in accordance with this principle makes the city just, and this just city, brought about and maintained by the 'do one's own' principle, is the "model" and "phantom" of justice referred to at 443b-c. Socrates is drawing our attention to the earlier statement that the city would be like bigger letters, making it easier to read and a "godsend" for "men who don't see very sharply". In other words, there can be very little doubt that Socrates is explicitly referring to the city as the larger model of justice which came to us "through some god", and not -- as Vlastos contends -- to the individual citizens 'doing their own', except in the sense that justice requires that the parts relate to one another in a way that is according to nature, and that exhibits the proper relationship of ruling and being ruled. The relationship between the citizens in the city founded on the 'one man/one job' principle -- rather than any citizen's actions taken in isolation -- is an "image" or "phantom" of justice which can be applied to the individual, as we see

when Socrates speaks of individual justice. He says:

> And in truth justice was, as it seems, something of this sort; however, not with respect to a man's minding his external business, but with respect to what is within, with respect to what truly concerns him and his own. He doesn't let each part in him mind other people's business or the three classes in the soul meddle with each other but really sets his own house in good order and rules himself; he arranges himself, becomes his own friend, and harmonizes the three parts, exactly like three notes in a harmonic scale, lowest, highest and middle. (443c-d)

We can see, in this passage, that Plato is concentrating on the idea that a just individual, like a just city, has a certain harmonious arrangement of his "three parts". On a large scale, then, the city must arrange in "good order" its three classes in their proper relationship to one another, "lowest, highest and middle". Socrates undertakes the description of the city's arrangement first, showing that the city would be made just by each of the three classes minding its own business, the guardians ruling, the auxiliaries protecting the city, and the craftsmen producing. So too in the case of the just individual we can now see that justice is only present in the individual who has a properly ordered soul. That is, reason must be ruling over spirit and appetite, each of which also play a slightly more subtle role in the case of the soul that is still roughly analogous to a certain class within the city. Justice, then, according to Plato, appears

to refer exclusively to the proper arrangement or structure of the whole, as we see both in the case of the city and in that of the individual. First of all, he uses "a sort of phantom", or image, of justice by drawing a large picture of justice in the city. On the individual level, however, we see how justice 'really is', as a harmonious arrangement of the parts of the soul, which Plato will go on to show is actually due to the philosopher's love and admiration for the Forms.

As for Vlastos' accusation that Plato equivocates on the word justice at 441d5-6, there are two possible ways of interpreting this claim. First let's recall Vlastos' reformulation of the passage:

> And we shall say, O Glaucon, that a man is just1 in the same way in which the polis is just2.[38]

As we already know, just1 means justice in its "primary significance", and just2 means justice in what Vlastos thinks is its "derivative" sense, namely a sort of relationship among parts of a group.[39]

There are two possible ways of making sense of Vlastos' criticism here. The first is by interpreting him as objecting to Socrates' remark, above, by saying that justice in its "primary" sense (just1) must be taken to mean

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[38] Vlastos1, p. 87.

[39] Vlastos1, p. 86.

what everyone generally, or commonly, means when they use the word 'justice'. That is, justice, as attributed to the individual man in the sentence in question, simply must mean a sort of treatment of other people in the sense of 'virtuous behaviour towards others', unless, as Vlastos says, Plato has given us some indication to the contrary, which, according to Vlastos, he has not.[40] This sense of justice differs widely from just2, i.e. the ordering of a group, and so a man and a city cannot be said to be just "in the same way".

However, it is very unlikely that this is the nature of Vlastos' criticism of Plato. For if Vlastos merely assumed that Plato must mean by just1 the ordinary way in which we tend to talk about justice, then he would clearly be begging the question and thereby missing a large part of the point of the dialogue. Clearly, one of the central concerns of the Republic is to search for a definition of justice, one which may or may not capture what we ordinarily mean by 'justice'. So, it would seem unfair to characterize Vlastos' objection as one based on the assumption that Plato, when he mentions justice in Book IV, is using the common notion that we tend to share. In other words, the equivocation on the word "just" that Vlastos claims to have

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[40] Vlastos1, p. 86.

found cannot be based on the assumption that when a work focusing entirely on the nature of justice uses the word "just", it must mean it in the way that we ordinarily use that word.

The remaining, and more reasonable, option, is that Vlastos thinks that just1 has been established as the proper way to understand individual justice by the discussion in the Republic leading up to this point, and especially that found in Book IV. In this case, just1 would still have the meaning of 'virtuous behaviour towards others', but this would be altered by the qualification that 'doing one's own' is a "description" of justice. The assumption here, then, is that the citizens in the just city who 'do their own' are just, in the just1 sense. This way of reading Vlastos' criticism seems to be supported by his stipulation that just2 is a "derivative" sense of justice. For here we can see that if just1 has to do with 'doing one's own', and just2 is the relationship of parts, all of which are just1, then the city can only be just2 if all of its citizens are just1.

Yet, if what I have been arguing is correct, namely that Plato is suggesting that justice is truly concerned with the proper structure of the whole, whether in the city, the individual, or elsewhere, then Vlastos is wrong to say that Socrates is referring to just1, as Vlastos interprets

it, at 441d5-6. For if, as I have been arguing, Plato, in the passages Vlastos is discussing, is describing as just only the actions which contribute to the justice of the whole, and not the individuals who perform these actions, then the citizens of the just city need not be just, or even just1, in order for the city to be just. So, on my reading at 441d5-6, when Socrates refers to the justice of the individual and the city, they are just "in the same way" in the sense that they both have the same structure which makes them just. In this way, Plato has not wrongly compared two different senses of justice. Nor has he come into conflict with P(II), quoted above on p. 31, which Vlastos has formulated as a premise derived from 435a5-7.

Obviously, a case can be made to suggest that the just city and individual are "two things" that are "exactly alike in the respect in which" justice is predicated of each of them. For instance, they are both properly ordered arrangements of three elements, reason, spirit, and appetite. And presumably Plato would not have set out such an ambitious project as the Republic, and based it on an analogy that was so horrendously loose as Vlastos' just1/just2 reading of 441d5-6 would seem to suggest. I will return shortly to the issue of predication, as Vlastos has raised it.

A more positive piece of evidence to suggest that

Plato was not intending to suggest that all of the citizens of the just city were just, but merely that their behaviour contributed to the justice of the city, can be found in the text just after Socrates concludes that they seem to have found what justice 'really is' in the individual. Here Socrates, speaking to Glaucon about what would constitute injustice, says:

> Mustn't it [injustice], in its turn, be a certain faction among those three - a meddling, interference, and rebellion of a part of the soul against the whole? The purpose of the rebellious part is to rule in the soul although this is not proper, since by nature it is fit to be a slave to that which belongs to the ruling class. Something of this sort I suppose we'll say, and that the confusion and wandering of these parts are injustice...as for performing unjust actions and being unjust and, again, doing just things, isn't what all of them are by now clearly manifest, if injustice and justice are also manifest? (444b-c)

So, here Socrates calls injustice the "rebellion" of an element of the soul or of the city "against the whole" in its effort to rule when it it is by nature only fit to be ruled. Yet, when Socrates assumes that it is obvious to everyone by now what it means to perform just and unjust actions, and be unjust, Glaucon replies "How so?". (444c) Evidently, Plato wants to take this opportunity to further clarify what he means by justice and injustice, and he does so by means of an analogy between justice, or virtue, and health. Socrates says to Glaucon:

they [justice and injustice] don't differ from the

> healthy and the sick; what these are in a body, they are in a soul. -In what way?... -Surely healthy things produce health and sick ones sickness. -Yes. -Doesn't doing just things also produce justice and unjust ones injustice? -Necessarily. -To produce health is to establish the parts of the body in a relation of mastering, and being mastered by, one another that is according to nature, while to produce sickness is to establish a relation of ruling, and being ruled by, one another that is contrary to nature. -It is. -Then, in its turn...isn't to produce justice to establish the parts of the soul in a relation of mastering, and being mastered by, one another that is according to nature, while to produce injustice is to establish a relation of ruling, and being ruled by, one another that is contrary to nature. (444c-d)

Clearly, Plato is showing us here that certain "things" can be referred to in a way that reflects the effect that they bring about, e.g. things can be called healthy because they produce or maintain health. This means that the state brought about by these things is the 'primary' sense of health, and they derive the description "healthy things" from this state, the opposite of the relationship Vlastos claims to exist between them in the case of just1 (doing one's own) and just2 (the order of the whole). In the body, healthy things serve to "establish the parts of the body in a relation of mastering, and being mastered by, one another that is according to nature". Analogously, in the just individual "doing just things", i.e. each of the three parts performing their proper functions, will bring about "a relation of mastering, and

being mastered by, one another that is according to nature". In the case of sickness and injustice, then, unhealthy things and unjust actions will produce a "relation of ruling" "that is contrary to nature".

So, in the just city, the citizens' just actions, and not their collective individual justice as Vlastos claims, will produce a just relationship among the classes, i.e. a just city. It also seems clear that Plato is only talking about justice proper in one sense, namely a certain structure, or relationship among parts. This, then, can apply to an individual or to the city. Just behaviour or actions, are only said to be just in the sense that they contribute to the justice of the larger whole, not in the sense of being "descriptions" of the justice of the individuals (or parts of the soul) who perform them.

Strangely, given this passage, Vlastos seems to give Plato little credit for understanding that justice does not apply to all predicates in the same way, and hints that he might have avoided the problem had he read certain parts of Aristotle's work. Oddly enough, the parts he points to are precisely those sections where Aristotle describes the different ways in which "healthy" can be predicated of different things.[41] There is some suggestion that Vlastos'

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[41] Vlastos1, p. 88.

criticism is based largely on his own reformulation of 435a5-7, which he claims is a Platonic principle, i.e. P(II). The passage in the dialogue reads:

> If two things, one greater, the other smaller are called the same, will they be similar or dissimilar in the respect in which they are called the same?[42]

Now Vlastos takes this last passage together with the following as additional evidence for P(II):

> Hence the just man will not differ in any way (ouden dioisei) from the just polis in respect of the very character of justice, but will be like it...[43]

Now, let's recall P(II), in Vlastos' formulation:

> If the same predicate is predicable of any two things, then, however they may differ in other ways, they must be exactly alike in the respect in which it is predicable of each.[44]

As we well know, Vlastos charges Plato with equivocal use of the term justice at premise [E] in his argument at 441. And it would seem that Vlastos thinks that the above passages are indicative of Plato's ignorance of equivocal meaning. Vlastos goes as far as to say that:

> Had Plato seen (to turn now to an example in Aristotle) how absurd it would be to expect that a man, a complexion, a habitat, and a diet must be "exactly alike" in the respect in which the predicate "healthy" applies to each, he could

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[42] Vlastos1, phrasing of 435a5-7, pp. 83-84.

[43] Vlastos1, phrasing of 435b1-2, p. 84.

[44] Vlastos1, p. 84.

> scarcely have failed to see how little his P(II) would cover the case of a predicate like "just".[45]

Yet, if we take Plato to be saying that justice is a proper ordering of the whole, then the above passages from the Republic, at 435a5-7 and 435b1-2, do not appear to invalidate his comparison between the justice of the city and the individual. For indeed, we can see that these two things are "alike" with respect to justice, and in terms of what is necessary to constitute the correct arrangement of the whole.

There seems to be some doubt, however, as to the legitimacy of Vlastos' move to establish P(II). Clearly, at 435a5-7 Plato is echoing the passage where the just city and individual analogy was first brought up. This is where Socrates had said:

> So then, perhaps there would be more justice in the bigger and it would be easier to observe closely. If you want, first we'll investigate what justice is like in the cities. Then, we'll also go on to consider it in individuals, considering the likeness of the bigger in the idea of the littler? (368e-369a)

Here, then, we see that Socrates has found a helpful tool, a way of, in effect, magnifying justice, that will make the elements of justice itself more obvious to everyone. At 435b1-2, we are pushed along further to agree

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[45] Vlastos1, p. 88.

that indeed the just man and city are "exactly alike" in the respect of which justice is predicated of each. The fact that a man's soul is not literally made up of many citizens does not falsify Plato's claim. For indeed, given the way that justice is predicated of each of these things, they are "exactly alike". They both have the necessary elements of reason, spirit, and appetite, which can be properly arranged into a specific relationship of "mastering" and being "mastered by, one another". But none of this suggests that we should assume that Plato would hold P(II), that "any two things" we refer to with the same predicate must be "exactly alike in the respect in which it is predicable of each". Plato is not saying this of <u>any</u> two things, as a careful reading of the passage in question makes clear. Rather, he is saying that any two things of different <u>sizes</u> can still have the same attributes in the same way, just as a large and a small chair are both called chairs for the same reason, regardless of their difference in size. Or, to use the example that Socrates gives in the passage to which 435b1-2 is an allusion, large letters are the same as small letters, except in terms of size, so that reading a word in large letters will give us a knowledge of the same word in small letters. (368c-d) Vlastos' error is that his P(II) fails to account for the fact that, by explicitly referring to things of different <u>sizes</u>, Plato is deliberately limiting

the scope of the principle, such that it cannot be applied to any two things to which we apply the same name, as Vlastos claims. Thus, Plato does not appear to be making the logically naive claim that Vlastos is attributing to him in his phrasing of P(II).

For clearly, if Plato's ignorance of equivocation is as vast as Vlastos would suggest, then it would lead to some startling and stupid conclusions.[46] However, if we agree on the interpretation of the health analogy at 444c-d we considered above, namely that things are called healthy because they produce health, as things are called just because they produce justice, then we need not ascribe to Plato complete ignorance of equivocal meaning. As was discussed above, Plato is describing as 'just' those things which contribute to the justice of the city or the individual. In the city, the actions of the individual citizen are just, insofar as they are 'doing their own', and not meddling with the business of the other classes. If the citizens of the just city perform the function proper to them by nature, then the city will exhibit a just structure. This does not mean, contrary to Vlastos' suggestion, that the individuals themselves are just. Nor does it seem

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[46] On page 88, Vlastos himself points out one such ridiculous conclusion by suggesting how Plato must have understood the phrase such as "healthy complexion" to mean that the complexion itself has a heart, liver, etc.

reasonable on this account to say that all of the citizens are just, for Plato makes it entirely clear that they have different natures, and hence are ruled by different elements, whereas, in order to have a just soul, reason must be ruling.

The justice/health analogy does seem to give us reason, however, to think that Plato was aware that the term 'just' could be used in, at the very least, two different senses. The first sense would be that justice is a proper relationship among the parts of the whole. The second sense is one which could be used of things which produce or maintain justice, though they themselves need not have all of the required elements in a proper relationship to one another. For surely Plato is aware that a just action is not itself made up of the properly ordered threesome of reason, spirit, and appetite. For if we do not allow him this much, but instead hold him to P(II), then we would also have to assume that he thought, due to his own definition of health, that anything that we call a "healthy thing", medicine, for instance, must have "the parts of the body in a relation of mastering, and being mastered by, one another".

Now if Plato has not equivocated on the word just, but thinks rather that a man can be said to be just "in the same way" that a city is just, then Plato must be referring

to justice as a proper hierarchy of the three elements in the soul or city. Also, as we have already seen, if we interpret Plato to be taking justice, meaning a certain state of the soul or city, as the 'primary' sense of justice, then it could be derivatively used of things which contribute to, or maintain, the justice of the whole. Thus, actions of the citizens are just when they behave in accordance with the 'to do one's own' principle, which saves the city from 'meddlesome', or unjust actions that bring about faction. By this account, however, there appears to be no room for a definition of, or a sense in which individuals can have, justice, other than as a very strict arrangement of the soul in which reason must master over spirit and appetite. Vlastos seems to offer the most plausible argument for the existence of some other sense of individual justice which may be applicable to all citizens of the just city, but as we have seen, this account seems to have a number of flaws that bring it into question.

I do not think that there is any reason to believe that it is necessary for everyone in the just city to be just in order for the city itself to be just. First of all, we have explained away any <u>textual</u> reasons for thinking that Plato requires that all citizens be just, by showing that his descriptions of their 'unmeddlesome' actions as 'just' do not imply that the people who perform those actions need

be just, but rather that the city's structure, to which their actions contribute, is just. Secondly, by getting rid of this implication, we have removed any reason for trying to find some type of individual justice which does not involve the proper ordering of the three parts of the soul, and wisdom in the ruling part. And this, in turn, removes the apparent error of equivocation that Vlastos believes exists in the analogy of the just city and individual. This means that we should follow the analogy in order to understand Plato's notion of individual justice. Clearly, according to this analogy, the proper order of the three parts of the soul is either the essence, or at least an essential part, of justice. This, along with my argument against Vlastos' interpretation of the 'to do one's own' principle, makes it clear that no individual in the guardian or craftsman classes can be just, since they are not ruled by wisdom in their own souls. It seems, however, that the rulers of the just city must be individually just, given that their souls must be ruled by reason in order for them to be wise, and they must be wise in order for the city as a whole to possess wisdom.

Yet even in the case of the rulers, their justice is only incidental to, and does not directly cause, the city's justice. For, as we have seen, the city's just structure, strictly speaking, is caused by things which we call just

because they produce or maintain justice, not because they are themselves configured in a just manner. Justice in its primary sense means the proper hierarchy of parts. Now because justice is a certain type of relationship among parts, no part can be just as a part. This is not to say that the function or actions of that part cannot be called, in a derivative sense, just, for serving in the production or maintenance of the justice of the whole. So, in the case of the just city, the rulers are not just as rulers or citizens, for they are parts of a larger just whole, who as such contribute through their just actions to the city's justice. For as rulers these individuals provide the necessary wisdom to the city through their reason, but reason in itself, being only one of the three requisite parts of anything that can be called just in the primary sense, cannot be said to be just. Therefore, the rulers, insofar as they are seen as parts contributing to an overall just structure, cannot be just, anymore than reason can be said to be just, independent of the other parts of the soul. This is not to deny that the rulers must be just individuals in order to attain the wisdom that makes them the proper rulers in the first place. I am only denying that their ruling itself can be called just, except in the derivative sense that, as we have seen, actions of various parts of a whole can be called just because they contribute to the

justice of the whole. It seems to be a confusion of the strict division brought about by the analogy of the just city and individual to suggest that a ruler is, as a ruler, a just man, for this takes the further step of assuming that he is just because wisdom rules in him. But this crosses over the boundary of the justice of the city itself into a treatment of individual justice.

So, from the preceding arguments, it would seem that no citizen as a citizen can be regarded as just since justice lies in the relationship among parts of a whole, whereas a citizen is by definition a part and not the whole. This means that individual justice is fundamentally independent of the person's role as a citizen since he is only just insofar as he is regarded as a whole made up of parts, whereas he is only a citizen insofar as he functions as a part in relation to other individuals. To put it in another way, the philosopher, on Plato's account, is a just man whether he rules or not, whereas a ruler is not a just man whether he is a philosopher or not. For, as we shall see, the activity of philosophizing makes an individual just, whereas, as we have already seen, the proper activity of ruling serves only to make the city just.

There is a further question which can be asked here, namely whether being a just individual is even consistent with being a ruler of the just city. I will address this

question in my final chapter and examine Plato's implicit response to it, along with the implications of this response.

For the time being I should reiterate that in order to make the necessary contribution to the just structure of the city, the rulers must be wise. It turns out, however, that as a matter of fact in order to have wisdom the rulers must be individually just, although their justice is, 'theoretically', incidental to their function as rulers. (I am not arguing, of course, that Plato is not concerned whether just individuals, i.e. philosophers, become rulers, but rather that the definition of justice as a proper ordering of parts obviously cannot require that one of the parts be just, anymore than "man" can be defined as a "rational man". The practical issue of how we can establish the form of justice in a city is obviously of great concern to Plato, but it is separate from the issue of how that form actually exists in the things which possess it.)

We should next consider the question of 'What exactly constitutes a just individual?', i.e. 'Who is the just man?'

Chapter Three

As we have already seen, the just man must be ruled by reason, the wise part of his soul, and the actions of the other two parts are just insofar as they support the rule of reason. As we know from the cave allegory, the philosopher has left the cave and come to know what 'really is', i.e. he is wise. The issue at this point is whether a man whose soul is structured in such a way that the wise part is highest and rules for the good of the soul as a whole, will pursue knowledge for its own sake, or whether he will want to exhibit his knowledge in a life of just action. In other words, is the life of the perfectly just individual, i.e. the activity, or activities, that constitute justice in the individual, essentially theoretical, or rather a combination of theoretical and practical?

This question is addressed at length by Terence Irwin in his book Plato's Moral Theory. Irwin claims that Plato suggests two possibilities to explain his claim that the philosopher, having come together with what "really is", will 'beget' or 'bring forth' "intelligence and truth". (490a-b) These two possibilities he delineates as follows:

> 1. The contemplative view. Some of the rational part's desires will be desires to use reason, especially in philosophical knowledge and contemplation. Plato sometimes suggests in the

> Republic, as in the Phaedo, that contemplation will be pre-eminently worthwhile for the philosopher.
> 2. The practical view. The philosopher will want to express his knowledge of Justice, Beauty, and other moral Forms in actions which embody them.[1]

The evidence that Irwin gives for this second view is found largely in the Symposium, where he finds the erotic ascent a useful complement to the image of the cave. Before we discuss either of these two possibilities in detail, however, I should point out that Irwin is determined both that (a) the two possibilities "need not be inconsistent"[2], and that (b) Plato mistakenly overemphasizes the 'contemplative view' in the Republic.[3]

Irwin gives us only a sketch of what is involved in the 'contemplative view'. What he does say is that the philosopher will, according to Plato, "recognize the supreme value of philosophical thought", and that this will cause him to want to engage in this activity. Yet, Irwin suggests that just because philosophical thought may be of the highest value, this does not mean that it is the only activity that is worthwhile for the philosopher. That is, he thinks that the desire for contemplation will only exclude the 'practical view' as a further facet of the

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[1] PMT, pp. 236-237.

[2] PMT, p. 237.

[3] PMT, p. 242.

philosopher's goals, "if contemplation is taken to be the whole of the philosopher's rational aim".[4] In other words, Irwin thinks that the two views ought to be consistent with, if not complementary to, one another.

We should now consider the 'practical view'. One of the most important features of this view, as Irwin presents it, is that the "philosopher's knowledge of the Forms will create the desire to express his knowledge in his actions".[5] Irwin claims that the Symposium relies heavily on this view, particularly in those parts of the discussion about individuals, like "teachers and legislators", who wish to "propagate virtue".[6] Similarly, a just man, i.e. a philosopher, who is normally resisted, and hated, by the multitude, would clearly endear himself to them should he be given authority over the state. For he would be able to establish a regime that resembled the justice and the other virtues which he has come to know through knowledge of the Forms.[7] The philosopher "brings forth real virtue" due to this knowledge of what "really is" true, and virtuous, and

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[4] PMT, p. 237.

[5] PMT, p. 237.

[6] PMT, p. 237.

[7] PMT, p. 237.

so on.[8] Most importantly, the philosopher will desire to use this knowledge of 'divine patterns', not only to design his own soul after, but also to pass on this virtue to others, and this will motivate him to become a legislator.[9] For Irwin, the justice of the soul will promote what Socrates suggests that a good ruler of the city would have to have, a "single goal in life at which they must aim in doing everything they do in private or in public".[10] Irwin, in accordance with the 'practical view', takes this to mean that the just man will not be satisfied with pure contemplative activity, but will desire to see what he admires in the Forms instantiated in all things, especially people and institutions. Part of his happiness, then, must be in 'propagating virtue' outside of himself through his 'external' or 'public' actions.

Irwin goes on to offer an explanation for why it is that the "actions which express his [the just man's] ideal of a good life" should "include just actions benefiting other people".[11] He says that in the Symposium, the sense

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[8] PMT, p. 237. Irwin cites as evidence for this Symposium, 211e3-212a7; and Republic, 520c3-6.

[9] PMT, p. 237. Irwin cites as evidence for this claim, Republic, 500b8-e4, 501b1-7.

[10] PMT, p.237; and Republic, 519c2-4.

[11] PMT, p. 241.

in which someone wants to 'propagate' what one has come to admire is described as doing the "second best" thing to having what we admire now and always, by ensuring "its possession by others".[12] In other words, Irwin seems to be suggesting that the Symposium is advocating that the just man should "create", or 'embody', that which he admires in the world through his actions, and not simply have "possession" of them in his soul. Irwin himself admits that this aspect of the 'p-just man' (Irwin's way of referring to psychic justice) is not mentioned in the Republic.[13] Nevertheless, he thinks that such an explanation will aid us in our understanding of the just man in the Republic, by appealing to what Plato himself says of such a man elsewhere.

So, according to Irwin, we should look beyond Book IV to "Plato's theory of desire" to adequately account for the other-directed actions of the just man. Following this procedure, we can see that as a result of the fact that the 'p-just man' appreciates his own 'p-justice' "for itself", he will want to put it into the lives of others as well.[14] For the "Platonic lover" will be able to "give birth in

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[12] PMT, p. 241.

[13] PMT, p. 241.

[14] PMT, p. 241.

beauty" by creating the virtues, including justice, in those he loves, in "households", and even in "states".[15] It is by this same reasoning that the 'p-just man' of the Republic will care for the 'p-justice' of others, namely, that his relationship to the other citizens resembles the relationship between a "lover and his beloved". In other words, the just man will want to take part in legislation as an outlet for his creative impulses.[16]

At this point, Irwin tries to make a further extension of his admittedly "controversial" argument. This will concern how the 'p-just man' can be seen to concern himself with not only the 'p-justice' of others, but also their interests.[17] If Plato were to argue for the 'p-just' man's caring for the interests of others he would have to put together his proof, from Book IV, that the 'p-justice' is in the philosopher's best interest, with a much 'revised' explanation of how concern for 'p-justice' in others will relate to how he can ensure that "their interests are promoted".[18] This is necessary, according to Irwin, in order: (a) to satisfy people's "common beliefs about

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[15] PMT, p. 241. Irwin cites as evidence for this claim, Symposium, 208e5-209a8, and 209b4-c5.

[16] PMT, pp. 241-242.

[17] PMT, p.242.

[18] PMT, p. 242.

justice", which involve the notion that a just man will be concerned with the interests of others, and not only himself, and (b) to lend credence to an underlying assumption in Plato's argument in Book I, which was meant to show that "the just man will benefit other people".[19]

Finally, with respect to the 'practical view', we should consider what motivates the just man. According to Irwin, the just man will weigh the relative worth of the actions which he can perform, keeping in mind "what he regards as the best life for him[self]".[20] That is, he will decide whether or not he should act in some way on the basis of whether it is either an expression of "his conception of virtue" and, therefore, good for its own sake, or if it helps to satisfy his desire for happiness.[21] In other words, Irwin thinks that there are times when a just man will act not as a way of pursuing his own happiness, but rather because this action has some value in itself which is in line with the just man's conception of virtue and the best life, and which he, therefore, chooses to express in his own life. Certain aspects of this argument will show themselves to be of central importance to the question of

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[19] PMT, p. 242. The argument the Irwin refers to is at 335b2-d12.

[20] PMT, p. 240.

[21] PMT, p. 240.

whether or not the philosopher should want to rule the just city.

As support for this explanation of the just man's motivation, Irwin offers several pieces of evidence from outside of the Republic. The effort here seems to be directed toward showing that a just man does not always care about his "future good", but that he sometimes chooses to do things which may not be conducive to his long-term happiness because the action is worthwhile for its own sake.[22] He points to the following passage in the Gorgias, where Socrates says:

> But, my good sir, just reflect whether what is good and noble is not something more than saving and being saved. Perhaps the true man should ignore this question of living for a certain span of years and should not be so enamored of life, but should leave these things to God and, trusting the womenfolk who say that no man whatever could escape his destiny, should consider the ensuing question - in what way one can best live the life that is to be his... (Gorgias 512d6-e5)

Irwin interprets Socrates to be saying here that "it is living well which matters, however bad the consequences for the future welfare may be".[23] The suggestion here is that certain things in life are worth the risk of your mortal life, i.e. your continued existence and possibilities of happiness. He also points to Aristotle for support on

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[22] PMT, p. 240.

[23] PMT, p.240.

this claim, suggesting that for Aristotle the virtuous man would rather engage in "a single admirable action", although it may turn out to have "disastrous consequences" for him, than "live on without having done it".[24]

Clearly, to a large extent at least, Irwin is trying to suggest that some sort of selfless action, including sacrificing your own happiness for the sake of others, is not inconsistent with the aims of the just man. He defines "self-sacrifice" as an "extreme case of the virtuous man's normal attitude to virtuous action" that the just life "demands" us to pursue because it is "good and admirable", and not because it contributes to our own happiness.[25] So, while the philosopher is required by "self-love" to be concerned with his 'future' happiness, he will nevertheless always be willing to sacrifice some of his "future interests" for actions that he thinks express the ideal of the just man.[26] As Irwin puts it, what really sets the 'p-just man' apart from many others is that:

> [h]is decisions will sometimes need courage, to override future-directed desires and to do what he thinks best...[27]

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[24] PMT, p. 240. Irwin is here referring to Nicomachean Ethics 1169a22-25.

[25] PMT, p. 240.

[26] PMT, pp. 240-241.

[27] PMT, p. 241.

The major purpose of this part of Irwin's interpretation is to separate justice from happiness in such a way that it would make sense to speak of the just man as one who is willing to do the right thing whether it will serve his own interests or desire for happiness, or not. In other words, being just might make us happy sometimes, but it need not always do so. This suggests that while contemplation may indeed be what makes the philosopher most happy, there is no reason to think that this happiest activity is all that a just man would be willing to do.

Irwin's reading, however, hits a snag when Plato seems unwilling to compromise about the philosopher's concentrated aim, and, therefore, casts some doubt on the 'practical view'. Irwin claims that:

> Plato's theory of the virtuous man's motives is tested in VII when he tries to explain why the philosopher who knows the Forms can fairly be expected to return to the cave and take part in ruling. But he does not make the best of his theory, because he is influenced by the contemplative view of the philosopher, and describes him in terms excluded by the practical view. He mistakenly suggests that the philosopher will want to stay contemplating the Forms and will not voluntarily undertake public service. (519c4-6)2[28]

In other words, Irwin himself acknowledges that there is textual evidence to support the notion that the 'contemplative view' is thought to be exhaustive of the aim

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[28] PMT, p. 242.

of the just life, i.e. that it is all that a perfectly just man would want to do. He is not satisfied with this conclusion, however, and thinks that it is a mistake on Plato's part, which is inconsistent with his overall view. That is, the dilemma of whether or not the philosopher wants to rule appears to Irwin to be a flaw in Plato's argument, and that in order to be true to his own view of the just life, which is according to Irwin a combination of the 'contemplative' and 'practical' views, Plato should suggest that the philosopher will rule "voluntarily". Before considering Irwin's specific reasons for thinking this, we should first take a look at what might motivate Plato to insist that the philosopher would rather continue "contemplating the Forms" than rule. This will involve a reconsideration of the 'practical view', as it is described by Irwin, in order to decide whether or not Plato truly holds such a view. That is, we should examine the textual evidence in favour of Irwin's reading, and determine whether it is really strong enough to 'override' the passages that, as Irwin himself is willing to admit, seem to support the 'contemplative view'.

On the 'practical view', the just man will want to put the virtues that he admires into the world through his actions. This may be achieved by propagating virtue in others, and may also involve sacrificing, or in some cases

simply not considering, his own 'future' happiness for the sake of expressing his ideals in actions which are good for their own sake. That is, according to Irwin, the just man will have a desire to create outside of himself things which resemble the virtue which he has attained within his own soul. As a way of ascertaining the plausibility of this view, let us first consider Irwin's suggestion that the philosopher does not always act in order to bring about his own happiness.

The textual evidence that Irwin offers to suggest that the just man sometimes acts in order to express his ideal of what it is to be a just man "without concern for his happiness" is, as we have already seen, found in the Gorgias.[29] We should now return to this passage, as quoted above on p. 68.

Now, Irwin's own interpretation of this passage, and indeed his claim that the just man will sometimes forfeit his 'future' happiness for the sake of doing some noble act, or expressing the ideal of a just life, is somewhat dependent upon his idea that if a man dies as a result of one of these actions, then this constitutes his having sacrificed his own "future interests". Now, in the above passage Plato seems to be suggesting that the "true", or

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[29] PMT, p. 240.

just, man will not be concerned with the "certain span of years" that he lives, but rather how he can "best live" it. Irwin, as we have already seen, takes this to mean that "it is living well which matters, however bad the consequences for the future welfare may be".[30]

Yet Plato need not be taken to mean that giving up part of this life, which he says that the just man should "not be so enamored of", will have bad consequences. Rather, he is stressing the importance of virtuous activity over excessive attachment to this life. In other words, if "God", or some part of our fate, should take us from our present life, it is better that we had lived it to the best of our abilities, rather than clinging to it. This sort of sentiment can also be found in Book VI of the Republic, where Socrates says to Glaucon:

> To an understanding endowed with magnificence and the contemplation of all time and all being, do you think it possible that human life seem anything great?... Won't such a man also believe that death is not something terrible? -Not in the least. (486a-b)

The Republic lends more support to this reading in other places, as well. For instance, Socrates suggests in the Myth of Er that a just life will be rewarded with immortality which will more than make up for the "bad consequences" of the loss of the body. And even if we are

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[30] PMT, p. 240.

slightly more charitable to Irwin's reading than to suggest that these "bad consequences" are referring merely to the death of the body, surely Plato always emphasizes that there is good reason to believe that a just life will be rewarded and not punished. Clearly, immortal life must count as being in the best interest of the just man and his "future welfare". Perhaps someone could argue against this, that the Myth of Er is designed by Socrates to offer the possibility of future happiness to someone who chooses the just life, precisely because the just life is not always happy in itself, exactly as Irwin says.

But the purpose of the Myth of Er, as Socrates points out, is to help us "keep to the upper road and practice justice with prudence in every way". (621c) The myth is not meant to suggest that justice is not good for its own sake. Rather, it is meant to persuade those individuals, or parts of ourselves, which have yet to be entirely convinced that the just life is the best life, and that we should, therefore, devote ourselves to the pursuit of it entirely. In other words, it is a way of saying 'if rational argument was not quite enough to convince you, here is an emotional appeal'. That is, the appeal to the appetitive part of each of us is merely a way of accounting for human frailty. Most of us, Socrates is suggesting, will always be tempted to succumb to certain easier, but

ultimately less fulfilling, pleasures as though they were the true happiness that we all seek. Reason has already shown that only the activity of the just individual brings true happiness, but in order to prevent human nature from getting the better of our reason, we might try to convince ourselves that the external rewards of justice are even greater than those of injustice. In fact, however, as we learn from the Republic, Symposium, and Phaedo, complete happiness requires that we overcome the concern with external rewards.

Irwin's claim that "self-sacrifice" requires that the just man put out of his considerations the issue of how this will contribute to his happiness is also ill-served by the passage he cites from Aristotle. (This is aside from the issue of whether or not Irwin is simply making a kind of false appeal to authority here in supposing that Aristotle's arguments about a good man's admirable actions apply at all to Plato's own view of how a just man would act.) For if we look at the part that Irwin draws our attention to, and also look a couple lines further, we see that Aristotle says:

> he [the good man] would prefer a short period of intense pleasure to a long one of mild enjoyment, a twelve-month of noble life to many years of humdrum existence, and one great and noble action to many trivial ones. Now those who die for others doubtless attain this result; it is therefore a great prize that they choose for

themselves.[31]

Clearly, then, Aristotle does not appear to be saying that a just man is motivated by some other goal than his own happiness, as Irwin seems to think. Rather, these men who do the more noble and glorious actions are "doubtless" rewarded with "a great prize that they choose for themselves", since, as Aristotle claims, "happiness is activity in accordance with virtue".[32]

Hence, it would appear that Irwin has not proven that the just man may be motivated by something other than his own happiness. There appears to be a sort of misunderstanding about the just man's connection to happiness in the first place, that would bring about such a suggestion. That is, in the Republic, Plato is trying to prove that, in being virtuous, the just man is necessarily happy. For having a just soul is what makes him happy. So, anything that the just man does that in any way contributes to his justice, likewise contributes to his happiness. As Socrates says in Book VII:

> If you discover a life better than ruling [a life of contemplation] for those who are going to rule, it is possible that your well-governed city will come into being. For here alone will the really rich rule, rich not in gold but in those riches required by the happy man, rich in a good and

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[31] Nicomachean Ethics 1169a22-27.

[32] Nicomachean Ethics 1177a12.

prudent life. (520e-521a)

That is, if the "good and prudent life" means the just life, which, in this quotation, it surely does, then the just life is the life required for happiness. There is no suggestion here that Socrates is claiming that only a 'part' of the "good and prudent" life makes one happy, which would allow Irwin to maintain that a part of it is not concerned with happiness, as his 'practical view' requires.[33] And in Book IX, Socrates says that Glaucon:

> has decided that the best and most just man is happiest, as he is that man who is kingliest and is king of himself; while the worst and most unjust man is most wretched and he, in his turn, happens to be the one who, being most tyrannic, is most tyrant of himself and of the city.... (580b-c)

So, according to Plato, it does not appear to be possible for the just man to sacrifice his happiness for the sake of some action which expresses his ideal of virtue, for his virtue is what makes him happy. He would, therefore, be required to sacrifice his virtue in order to forfeit his "future interests" and along with them his happiness. But, having sacrificed his virtue, he would no longer be the just man but rather a tyrant.

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[33] Vlastos makes a similar point, criticizing Irwin's view as "instrumentalist". In other words, according to Vlastos, Irwin is suggesting that virtue is merely a means to our attainment of happiness and also, therefore, "distinct" from it. See Vlastos2, pp. 6-10.

Now, in order to buttress his claim that the philosopher, contrary to Plato's suggestions in the text, should want to rule, Irwin needs to show that the just man is not only moved to act by a desire for happiness, even though this may not make him as happy as if he were allowed to contemplate. That is, Irwin must be able to prove that the just man thinks that there are concerns other than his own "future interests", such as what is 'right' or 'good', which will contribute to his justice overall should he try to embody them in the world. Otherwise, he cannot maintain the consistency of the 'contemplative' and 'practical' views. Failing that, Irwin's account for what would make the philosopher want to act for any other purpose than that which enables him to more fully contemplate, would be seriously weakened.

But, clearly the passage from the Gorgias, as well as Republic 486a-b, does not stand in his favour. For Plato does not seem to be saying that the just man should not concern himself with what will make him happy over and against what is "best". Instead, the suggestion, if we take the two passages in conjunction with one another, is that "the contemplation of all time and all being" puts the just man's concerns beyond that of the ordinary man who can only plan his life in terms of "a certain span of years", and therefore clings to the body. The just man has a much more

intense happiness stemming from his ability to contemplate, or understand, things which are immortal and unchanging. The just man, then, is concerned with things of "all time", and therefore, for reasons unlike Irwin's suggestion, seems not to be bound to concerns for his "future". Ordinary men, on the other hand, partake of pleasures which involve clinging to their continued earthly existence, for these men are "insatiable" and fill themselves with things that are the subject of generation and decay. (586a-b)

We should next examine the other aspect of the 'practical view', which raises the issue at the heart of the matter, namely whether the just man as a just man is essentially contemplative, or whether he also desires just actions for their own sake.

Chapter Four

Irwin claims that the just man will have a desire to embody his knowledge of the Forms in the world. He uses details from the erotic ascent, in the Symposium, in addition to material from the Republic, to suggest that the just man will want to 'propagate virtue' by creating it in the souls of others, in political institutions, and so on. But the argument here stems from the assumption that it will be an integral, if not essential, part of the just life to express justice in its actions. This claim is a denial of the notion that contemplation alone will make the just man happy, and an insistence upon the idea that the other-directed actions of the philosopher, such as ruling, are necessary constituents of what makes him just and happy.

A large part of Irwin's account of the 'practical view' depends on the notion that a just man will desire to "make other people virtuous" and to "undertake legislation" on account of his knowledge of, and "admiration for", the "moral Forms".[1] The textual evidence Irwin offers for this notion can be found in the Republic. He first cites Socrates saying the following:

> For, presumably, Adeimantus, a man who has his

[1] PMT, p. 237.

> understanding truly turned toward the things that are has no leisure to look down toward the affairs of human beings and to be filled with envy and ill will as a result of fighting with them. But, rather, because he sees and contemplates things that are set in a regular arrangement and are always in the same condition - things that neither do injustice to one another nor suffer it at one another's hands, but remain all in order according to reason - he imitates them and, as much as possible, makes himself like them. Or do you suppose there is any way of keeping someone from imitating that which he admires and therefore keeps company with...If some necessity arises... for him to practice putting what he sees there into the dispositions of men, both in private and in public, instead of forming only himself, do you suppose he'll prove to be a bad craftsmen... (500b8-d, emphasis added)[2]

In the second passage that Irwin cites in support of this point about the just man's motivation to act, Socrates says:

> After that [having outlined the "shape of the regime"], I suppose that in filling out their word they would look away frequently in both directions, toward the just, fair, and moderate by nature and everything of the sort, and, again, toward what is in human beings; and thus, mixing and blending the practices as ingredients, they would produce the image of man, taking hints from exactly that phenomenon in human beings which Homer too called god-like and the image of god. (501b1-7)

Irwin cites these passages as evidence that the philosopher's regard for the Forms "stimulates" him to become a "legislator" and to "make other people virtuous". However, Plato, in these passages, is only saying that "[i]f

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[2] Irwin cites the entire passage from 500b8-e4.

some necessity arises" for the philosopher to put what he sees in these eternal realities into the "dispositions of men", then this man would seem to be good at it. That is, the philosopher will not "prove to be a bad craftsman". Nothing in either of these passages seems to suggest that the philosopher will <u>want</u> to take charge of the city, only that "if some necessity arises" he would obviously be a good man for the job. This, then, casts some doubt on Irwin's claim that somehow the "philosopher's admiration for the moral Forms stimulates", or motivates, him to take part in politics, or to try to put virtue into others.

Rather, Plato appears to be claiming that the philosopher's appreciation for the Forms will lead him to further contemplation. For "he imitates" the Forms and, "as much as possible makes himself like them". And the suggestion is that it may not even be possible to dissuade such a man from imitating the things which he most admires. So, what the philosopher is motivated to do does not seem to involve other people, but rather:

> it's the philosopher, keeping company with the divine and orderly who becomes orderly and divine, to the extent that is possible for a human being. (500d)

This sounds much like the individual justice which we discussed earlier. That is, the philosopher appeals to the 'pattern' of "divine" justice and models his own soul

after the "divine" order. But this appears to be an intellectual activity, in which the philosopher, through coming to understand the Forms, 'imitates' the unchanging being that he admires, in a manner that is analogous to the way that the recipients of the just city's early moral education will imitate in practice the actions that they have been led to find admirable. The implication is that while imitating an action involves acting in a similar manner, imitating the unchanging intelligibles involves thinking them, "to the extent that is possible for a human being."

In the second passage, Socrates is describing what the philosopher would do in the city. It is important to remember, however, that this passage comes soon after Socrates has stipulated that "if some necessity should arise", then the philosopher would appear to be a good "craftsman" of virtue. Here, then, Socrates describes the philosopher as acting like "a painter of regimes", who "would produce the image of man" with his eye directed both to what exists in human beings and also what he knows of true virtue. (501b-c) That is, he will try to make an "image", combining his knowledge of what 'really is' with the practices and human nature with which he has to work. So, the order that he draws onto the city will not be entirely unlike the order that he achieves in his own soul.

Nonetheless, the mere ability of the philosopher to pass on images of virtue to other individuals, or the city at large, does not in any way require that the philosopher desire to use this ability. Plato is clearly suggesting that the philosopher will want to have the divine order which he admires within his own soul. But taken in the light of the evidence that we have seen from his claim in Book VII that the philosopher will not want to rule, these passages do not seem to suggest any reason for believing that knowledge of the Forms should put a desire into the philosopher to rule and create virtue in others, and not only himself. While I recognize that the issue of whether the philosopher wants to put virtue in others may still seem to be highly questionable in light of certain biographical facts about Socrates and Plato, i.e. their teaching, and so on, I think that I will be able to best address this apparent difficulty once I have dealt more fully with Irwin's view.

We should now concentrate on the evidence that Irwin suggests from the Symposium, for he states:

> The same kind of creative desire [as the one that moves "someone who is pregnant of soul" to make others virtuous] explains the attitudes of the lover and his beloved, the just man's concern for other men's p-justice, and the legislator's desire to encourage virtue by legislation.[3]

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[3] PMT, pp. 241-242.

The following passages, which Irwin cites, should be useful in determining the legitimacy of such a comparison. As Socrates is recalling Diotima's lesson to him, he tells his companions that she said that:

> those whose procreancy is of the spirit rather than the flesh - and they are not unknown, Socrates - conceive and bear the things of the spirit. And what are they? you ask. Wisdom and all her sister virtues; it is the office of every poet to beget them, and of every artist whom we may call creative. Now, by far the most important kind of wisdom, she went on, is that which governs the ordering of society, and which goes by the names of justice and moderation. (Symposium 208e5-209a8)

and

> And hence his procreant nature is attracted by a comely body rather than an ill-favored one, and if, besides, he happens on a soul which is at once beautiful, distinguished, and agreeable, he is charmed to find so welcome an alliance. It will be easy for him to talk of virtue to such a listener, and to discuss what human goodness is and how the virtuous should live - in short, to undertake the other's education. And, as I believe, by constant association with so much beauty, and by thinking of his friend when he is present and when he is away, he will be delivered of the burden he has labored under all these years. (Symposium 209b4-c5)

Now Irwin is suggesting that Plato's own argument about why the just man should care about the justice of others requires him to appeal to "this account of other-directed creative desire".[4] In other words, as we have already seen, he thinks that it is necessary to draw a

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[4] PMT, p. 242.

connection between the motivations of those who are "pregnant in soul", with those who desire to make others virtuous or just, whether they be lovers, just men, or legislators.

The above passages are meant to explain how "every creature prizes its own issue", and this is due to an overwhelming love for immortality which is how they seek to be like the divine. (Symposium 208b) So, by perpetuating itself "the body and all else that is temporal partakes of the eternal". (Symposium 208a-b) First, Diotima mentions those "whose procreancy is of the body", and that these individuals will long to have children, who will hopefully continue their "memory" after they have died themselves. (Symposium 208e-209a) Next, as we can see in the above quotations, she explains those "whose procreancy is of the spirit rather than the flesh". The examples given here are "every poet" and "every artist whom we may call creative". These individuals will long to give birth to "things of the spirit", which are described as things like "wisdom and all her sister virtues". Indeed she says that "the most important kind of wisdom" has to do with ruling in the city, and this is called "justice and moderation".

A virtuous young man will also seek to "beget". (Symposium 209b) He will, then, seek out a "beautiful" soul, most likely in a "comely body", for by "constant

association" with such a friend, he too will be "delivered" from his labour pains. That is, by friendly discussion and having decided to "undertake the other's education" the lover has created together with his beloved "something lovelier and less mortal than human seed". (Symposium 209c)

But keeping in mind that "every creature" desires to perpetuate itself in immortality, this list of ways in which a creature might "partake of the eternal" is far from exhaustive. In fact, Diotima claims shortly after the passages under discussion that "we are only at the bottom of the true scale of perfection". (Symposium 210a) In other words, they have yet to discuss the "final revelation", and it is in that section that the issue of the philosophic man will be considered. (Symposium 210a)

What Irwin wants to use these passages to show is, as we have seen, that the comparison between the "creative desire" at work in all these men, and the desire of lovers, just men, and legislators to put virtue into others, is one which Plato himself favoured in the Symposium. What is really driving Irwin to make this comparison is that it would, in his opinion, provide justification for saying that just men are, as an essential element of their justice, concerned for other human beings' justice and interests, and specifically, that in order to benefit these people the just man is willing to become a legislator, so that he may

'propagate virtue' in a political context. That is, Irwin is claiming that the truly just man wants to ensure his immortality in a variety of ways, in order to justify his claim that they are motivated to "make others virtuous" and "undertake legislation".

However, the Symposium seems to resist this sort of reading. For instance, when Diotima describes what happens to the most erotic man, she says that as he is:

> turning his eyes toward the open sea of beauty, he will find in such contemplation the seed of the most fruitful discourse and the loftiest thought, and reap a golden harvest of philosophy, until, confirmed and strengthened, he will come upon one single form of knowledge, the knowledge of the beauty I am about to speak of. (Symposium 210d)

And when she describes the ascent to this "single form of knowledge", she says that:

> Starting from individual beauties, the quest for the universal beauty must find him ever mounting the heavenly ladder, stepping from rung to rung - that is, from one to two, and from two to every lovely body, from bodily beauty to the beauty of institutions, from institutions to learning, and from learning in general to the special lore that pertains to nothing but the beautiful itself - until at last he comes to know what beauty is. And if...man's life is ever worth living, it is when he has attained this vision of the very soul of beauty. (Symposium 211c-d)

For Diotima, this man, if it can be said of any man, will be worthy of being called immortal, for he has "gazed upon" "universal beauty", "in true contemplation until it had become his own forever". (Symposium 211e-212a) If this

man is the philosopher, and the most virtuous and just of all men, then why would he, as Irwin is suggesting, not be satisfied with this "final revelation", but instead climb back down the "ladder" in hopes of finding immortality of a lesser sort there?

Irwin's answer to this seems to be that while the philosopher may think that contemplation is "perhaps the single most important, constituent of the good", the just man will seek to propagate virtues in the lives of others "for its own sake". The activities of ruling, then, should be perceived by him "as necessary evils" toward his ends, and he should "recognize them as the best means available in an imperfect world".[5] Part of this explanation rests on the mistaken assumption that we have already discussed in detail, namely that while the philosopher is made happiest by contemplation, he will sometimes decide to forsake his own happiness in order to engage in certain actions for their own sake, i.e. he will choose to do the best, or 'right', thing to the detriment of his own "future interests", to use Irwin's term. As I have shown, this assumption is grounded in a flawed interpretation of certain passages concerning the just man's disregard for his 'earthly' existence.

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[5] PMT, p. 242.

The other aspect of Irwin's answer to the question of why the philosopher should want to rule, however, has to do with his interpretation of the erotic ascent in the Symposium. For him, the need to propagate what one comes to admire is the "second best" way of ensuring your own immortality.[6] So, in an "imperfect world" you are sometimes faced with a compromise of how to go about attaining your goals, and hence, although Plato's argumentative flaws have made this somewhat unclear, the philosopher should, and according to Irwin will, come to grips with this limitation and want to take part in politics, and the education of others, as a way of expressing his just ideals. Irwin, then, thinks that the mistake that he attributes to Plato, namely that he excludes the 'practical view' in favour of the 'contemplative'; could have been avoided if only he had remained consistent with certain messages in the Symposium, particularly those appearing above at 208e5-209a8 and 209b4-c5.

When we recall these passages and their context, however, Irwin seems not to gain the support he needs to show that the two views are consistent if only Plato had recognized them as such. As I have already pointed out, Diotima clearly describes the progeny of those whose

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[6] PMT, p. 242.

"procreancy is of the body" and those whose "procreancy is of the spirit" as being at a much lower stage than that of the philosopher who obtains a vision of "universal beauty". This possible difficulty would not on its own necessarily prove to be insurmountable for Irwin, for he accepts that perhaps contemplation is held in higher regard by the philosopher than "any other constituent of the good", and that propagation of virtue described as the "procreancy of the spirit" is a "second best" way to ensure immortality.

What he does not account for has to do with the fact that the erotic ascent is really meant as an ascent toward the beautiful and true, i.e. toward contemplation as a sort of union with the unchanging, and away from the body and things associated with it. In other words, immortality is not something which can be collected up in as many different ways as possible so that everyone will try to sustain themselves into posterity in as many ways as possible. As Diotima describes the stages which the philosopher passes through we should note that at each point "his passion" gives rise to "noble discourse", or the "contemplation" of beauty, which surpasses each of the lower points along the way until he reach the "final revelation". (Symposium 210a-d) After she has discussed the "beauty of the body", she says:

> And next, his attention should be diverted from

> institutions to the sciences, so that he may know the beauty of every kind of knowledge. And thus, by scanning beauty's wide horizon, he will be saved from a slavish and illiberal devotion to the individual loveliness of a single boy, a single man, or a single institution. (Symposium 210c-d)

The suggestion here is that the philosopher dissociates himself from his ties to the body and things associated with it, so that he might have the "vision" of "universal beauty". That is, as the philosopher moves from the love of one body, to "every body", to "institutions", to "learning", and finally toward the "final revelation", at each stage, and certainly by the time he achieves his "vision", he recognizes that what he had once recognized as all important and most beautiful is meagre in comparison to what he now sees. So, Irwin does not seem to have explained how someone who has the life which will earn him the title of "friend of god", and who shall be given the prize of immortality "if ever it is given to man to put on immortality", will have the "same kind of creative desire" as the individual who has "procreancy of the spirit" in the way described in the Symposium at 208e5-209a8 and 209b4-c5. (Symposium 212a)[7]

In other words, Irwin has not drawn a satisfactory connection between the motivation and progeny of the lovers, poets, and legislators mentioned as having a "procreancy of

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[7] PMT, pp.242-243.

the spirit", and the philosophers who give birth to "true virtue". Irwin would probably object by saying that the legislators are said to bring forth "justice and moderation", and the "poets" and 'creative artists' "wisdom and all her sister virtues". But, clearly, given the format of Diotima's lecture, these are not the "perfect virtue" that is begotten by the philosopher (Symposium 212a), but rather a 'lower' sort of virtue the details of which are not fully explored in the Symposium itself. Otherwise, it would be a completely self-contradictory discussion, where at one point the lower end of the scale produces certain virtues, and then it is discovered that this is the purpose of the higher part.

But there is an even more forceful way of differentiating between the philosopher's ascent and that of the others whom Irwin is trying to suggest share the "same creative desire" as the philosopher. This is that, as I have already mentioned, at each stage, from inadequate to final, the philosopher's love brings about "noble discourse", or "contemplation", of beauty, whereas those whose "procreancy is of the spirit" may only "discuss what human goodness is" as they "undertake the other's education", or make a "claim upon the admiration of posterity". (Symposium 209b-e) So, we can see that at the lower level the individual is necessarily involved with

others, or offering something to others in the form of poetry or laws, for example, which will have some bearing on the lives of others and call forth some sort of judgment, hopefully positive and long-lasting. Yet, at the higher level each stage is aimed at increasing the philosopher's knowledge as he comes closer to understanding what it is about each of the things along the way that he actually admires. This knowledge, then, does not seem to be essentially connected to the philosopher's relationship with others, but seems to be in its strictest form an activity of the mind, an attempt to grasp the "universal". That is, Irwin seems to have overlooked the fact that Plato's depiction of the 'erotic ascent' involves the implication that as one rises the 'ladder', the objects of one's concern tend to be less and less social, and one's activities become increasingly self-sufficient.

Certainly, however, there might seem to be a problem facing the 'contemplative view', as suggested by certain details of the lives of Socrates and Plato. That is, if Plato really is saying that the philosopher is motivated solely by his desire to contemplate the good, then why did he write dialogues, about someone who was a famous teacher, and and why did he himself also teach, and so on? This issue comes straight to the heart of the matter of how the just man will want to act.

The problem calls for an answer made up of two related points. First of all, if we recall the discussion of the Republic's question of whether the just man is happiest, in its initial forms in Chapter One, we will remember that Glaucon, Adeimantus, and Thrasymachus wanted Socrates to tell them of the 'perfectly just man'. In other words, Socrates' investigation of the justice of the individual in the Republic is aimed at the perfectly just individual who has a perfectly ordered soul, and is, therefore, perfectly ruled by reason. And this is the man who, Socrates says, in Book IX, "likens himself as far as possible to a god". (613b) So, this is the just man, or philosopher, in the 'precise' sense of the term, who is not distracted by the body, and who is motivated by that which you would be motivated by if you knew the Good, and were not just someone who longs to know it.

Yet, in the Phaedo we are faced with the possibility that this level of virtue may not be attainable in this life, but only when we are literally separated from the body in death. (Phaedo 66e) And this brings us to the second part of the answer to the question raised by, among other things, the biographical facts. Socrates tells us in the Phaedo that:

> when it [the soul] investigates by itself, it passes into the realm of the pure and everlasting and immortal and changeless, and being of a

> kindred nature, when it is once independent and free from interference consorts with it always and strays no longer, but remains in that realm of the absolute, constant and invariable, through contact with beings of a similar nature. And this condition of the soul we call wisdom. (Phaedo 79d)

But if this is humanly possible at all, i.e. if it is possible to some extent while the soul is still confined to the body, still it is not possible to maintain at all times. For the soul, while she may have transcended it "in thought", is still somewhat subject to "the bondage of the body". (Phaedo 83d) And here we have come to the point where Plato's and Socrates' lives may at first glance seem to be a counterexample in some ways to this picture of the just life. In fact, however, they are exemplifying it. For even the contemplation and "the most fruitful discourse" that will "reap a golden harvest of philosophy" and lead directly to knowledge of the "universal beauty", or a "vision" of the Good, may in some non-essential way involve others. For as we know, Socrates claims ignorance and searches for answers with the assistance of his interlocutors, but this does not mean that as a just man he is motivated by a desire to produce virtue in others. For those who know the Good think that their own advantage can be found in contemplation, and so want to sustain their life as much as possible in the realm of "the absolute, constant, and invariable, through contact" with the Forms. That is,

human beings do have certain limitations on their ability to contemplate, stemming from the body and its demands, but this does not mean that the philosopher can in no way approximate the truly just life which is concerned at its core with considering the Forms. Rather, the activities of the likes of Socrates and Plato, in large part, give us a picture of what a human being can do with the aid of others, through some sort of "discourse", to preserve and maintain either their attempt to attain, or the acquisition itself of, the state of justice in their souls. Yet, this "discourse" is a part of the contemplation itself, as Diotima says at 210d, quoted above. For while our body limits us to communicating with one another through speech, the discussion is of something outside of the sensible realm, and therefore transcends it. It is a "discourse" of individuals who as far as humanly possible have transcended their individuality, for in thought they are of one mind, separate from the body.

So, the philosopher, contrary to Irwin's claims, aims at maintaining his own virtue and benefitting himself through his "discourse" with others, and not, at least not primarily or in a way that is necessary to his own justice, to propagate virtue outside of himself for the benefit of others. Aristotle's discussion of the proper activity of the philosopher is quite similar to that of Plato. For he

says:

> the philosopher, even when by himself, can contemplate truth, and the better the wiser he is; he can perhaps do so better if he has fellow-workers, but still he is the most self-sufficient. And this activity alone would seem to be loved for its own sake...[8]

For Aristotle too, then, contemplation is the aim of the philosophic life. This contemplation is also associated with wisdom, which as we saw for Plato involves separating ourselves from the sensible realm, so that we might dwell in the realm of the unchanging. While it is of all activities the "most self-sufficient", a philosopher may find others to be of some use in helping him to "contemplate truth". But this does not mean that he must, as an essential aspect of his own contemplation, seek to make others virtuous, for it appears that "this activity [of contemplation] alone would seem to be loved for its own sake", and it seems that it would only bring others closer to virtue in a way that is incidental to the philosopher's own attainment of virtue.

Irwin, then, has not shown to our satisfaction how the "contemplative view" and the "practical view" can be consistent with one another, or even that Plato himself holds anything resembling the "practical view". So too has he failed to show why Plato should have suggested that the philosopher should want to rule as a way of benefitting

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[8] Nicomachean Ethics 1177a35-1177b2.

himself and others in an "imperfect world". For surely, Plato is emphasizing the importance of separating ourselves from the body in thought, so that we might achieve true virtue. This virtue, then, cannot be found in the world of action, but rather is attained through the activity of the mind, and to a greater extent the further that the mind can detach itself from the sensible realm. So, as we have seen, the philosopher will not be concerned with doing the 'right' thing in the sense of pursuing actions in the sensible realm which are good in themselves. For his life as a just man is the life of contemplation, which may, as for Aristotle, be the only sort of activity which is good for its own sake. The goal of the philosophic education is evident in Socrates discussion of geometry in Book VII. He says:

> They speak as though they were men of action and were making all the arguments for the sake of action, uttering sounds like 'squaring', 'applying', 'adding', and everything of the sort, whereas the whole study is surely pursued for the sake of knowing...it [geometry] is for the sake of knowing what is always, and not at all for what is at any time coming into being and passing away... Then, you noble man, it would draw the soul toward truth and be productive of philosophic understanding in directing upward what we now improperly direct downward. (527a-b)

So, clearly, Plato is trying to separate "philosophic understanding", and hence, philosophic virtue from the realm of action. In other words, virtue of the true, or philosophic, sort is for the sake of knowledge

itself, and not "for the sake of action". Here, some things which Aristotle has to say may prove to be extremely helpful. This is not because of his suggestions about justice being a "pre-eminently social virtue", which among others, Vlastos and Irwin use to suggest that Plato must show that justice is related to action. Rather, it is because of Aristotle's observation about what he takes to be an error on the part of Plato. He says:

> For he [Plato] confused the treatment of Virtue with that of Ideal Good. This was wrong, because inappropriate. The subject of <moral> Virtue should have been excluded from the discussion of Being and Truth; for the two subjects have nothing in common.[9]

The point of this criticism is that while for Aristotle ethics, in its proper sense, has to do with "social life and action", Plato has made "Being and Truth" the subject of ethics.[10] In other words, while they appear to agree for the most part on the nature and purpose of the philosophic life, i.e. the life of contemplation, Aristotle refuses to use the language of "<moral> Virtue" about the philosopher's activity, the way that Plato does. Aristotle, then, resists any 'confusion' in the discussion of the theoretical and practical realms.

Yet, this points to an integral aspect of Plato's

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[9] Magna Moralia 1182a25.

[10] Magna Moralia 1182b1-2.

philosophy and his purposes in writing the Republic, as alluded to, but disapproved of, by Aristotle. In the Republic, Socrates must convince his interlocutors, and most importantly the philosophically inclined Glaucon, that the philosophic life is the best and happiest life. To this end he identifies the just life, the "noble" and "simple" life which Glaucon wants to hear Socrates "praise" (358d), with the life of philosophic activity, i.e. contemplation. In this way, those who are already inclined to want to live good and virtuous lives will be more easily persuaded that the philosophic life, the most virtuous life, is the best life. Plato, then, makes his ethics into metaphysics, by suggesting that knowledge of, as he puts it in the Phaedo passage quoted above at 79d, "the realm of the absolute, constant and invariable", i.e. Being, is wisdom, and devoting yourself to its consideration is the just life.

This further explains something discussed in earlier chapters, namely why the philosopher's life alone can be referred to as the just life. No one other than the man ruled by reason can obtain the kind of knowledge that is the subject of philosophic, and therefore the just man's, activity. While others may try to attain virtues in the social arena, these are necessarily mere shadows of the true philosophic virtues. The philosopher, as a lover of wisdom, is at every stage of his development focussed on coming to

know that which he admires. He becomes increasingly separated from the body, and therefore the sensible realm, as he seeks a "vision" of the Good. He sees the insufficiencies of the loves that he has left behind, and knows and loves that which is to his true advantage. So, he pursues the life of contemplation, and no longer wants what is found in the realm of action. This is not to say that just men as human beings can entirely separate themselves from the sensible realm, thus abolishing their need to act on bodily demands. On the other hand, it does mean that the just life does not essentially involve action, or benefitting others as a way of contributing to individual justice. So, the just man is no longer motivated by earthly desires, but rather he desires those things which reside in the realm of unchanging Being. Diotima asks the following question of Socrates:

> if, I say, it were given to man to see the heavenly beauty face to face, would you call <u>his</u>,...an unenviable life, whose eyes had been opened to the vision, and who had gazed upon it in true contemplation until it had become his own forever? (<u>Symposium</u> 211e)

And given what has been said, we should, therefore, answer Diotima's question negatively. For this man is the only truly just man, he alone will really know what is to his advantage, and he will lead the happiest life of any man. So, insofar as he is human the philosopher will act,

if he must act, in a way that will preserve the condition of his soul, i.e. he will engage in just actions. However, in acting he attempts to resist the possibility of succumbing to the desires of the body, which would overthrow the rule of reason in his soul, and thereby bring him unhappiness. So it is only those actions which can contribute to the maintenance or preservation of the just structure of his soul which can be called just, in the derivative sense outlined earlier. They are not, then, actions which are pursued for their own sake, but which are done because philosophers cannot literally and completely transcend the body, and so must ensure that the actions they perform do not interfere with their ability to live the best and most just life, i.e. a life of contemplation.

Conclusion

It is my hope that what I have written has cleared away some of the misconceptions about what justice is for Plato, I believe that these misconceptions are founded largely on our own assumptions about justice and its social implications. Plato need not, for his purposes, satisfy popular demands that the just man is someone who is, first and foremost, concerned with the well-being of his fellow man. His conception of individual justice, as we have seen, has to do with the proper ordering of one's soul, and the life of contemplation, rather than with one's external actions. Some of Plato's reasons for adopting this unorthodox view of justice have been addressed in the preceding.

Clearly, the next step towards a full appreciation of Plato's position, is to examine what exactly contributes to, and what detracts from, the just state of the philosopher's soul, as well as how we are to understand the philosopher and his proper relationship to his society. There are at least of couple of areas to which we might look, in pursuing these issues. In the first instance, we might want to look further into Plato's ideas about education. Does the would-be philosopher gain from adhering

to societal conventions, e.g. obeying one's parents, or is the individual made virtuous by a more complex set of standards independent of one's society, which, if adhered to, condition one's soul in the proper way? That is, if moral behaviour can in any way contribute to the philosopher's eventual ability to pursue, or even to attain, wisdom -- to be just in the Platonic sense -- then we need to know whether this individual brings about such favourable states in his or her soul by initially obeying the city's, or more broadly speaking, society's, laws until he or she has developed beyond a need for such rules, or if there is some more specific and individualized way in which this individual's soul is 'harmonized' by means of moral standards different from those of society at large.

Secondly, the issue of whether or not it is possible to be wise 'in this life' is central to understanding exactly how a just man will behave. As we have seen, contemplation is the highest activity of which a human being is capable, but we have to question to what extent human beings are capable of sustaining contemplative activity. It would appear that the just man must first have the moral virtues of moderation, courage, and so forth, but when this man becomes wise, Plato gives us some reason to think that the 'true' virtues are in fact of an intellectual nature. That is, the suggestion appears to be that Plato's reworking

of the notion of "justice", which turns a social virtue into an intellectual one, is part of a general reinterpretation of all of the traditional virtues, such that they each have an ordinary moral or 'civic' sense, as well as a higher 'philosophic' sense, and that these two senses correspond to one another according to some sort of analogy. Lest anyone think that this contradicts the claims I made against Sachs, we must recall that, as I have argued, the 'lower' level of justice we are speaking of is the virtue of the city, and not of the citizens per se. In other words, Sachs' error is in seeking another 'level' of individual justice which is something other than the proper structure of the soul.

Hints about what this relationship between civic and intellectual virtues might be can be found in Plotinus. He divides Plato's talk of individual virtue into two levels, "civic" and "higher". Plotinus takes the "civic" virtues to be those which:

> genuinely order our lives for the better. They limit and moderate our desires and all our passions.[1]

But the "higher" virtues are those which "by purification" allow us to achieve "divine likeness". And here Plotinus interprets Plato to be saying that the

> soul is evil to the extent that it is "mingled" with the body, in sympathy with it and judges in

[1] Plotinus, p. 112.

> accord with it. And the soul is good and virtuous if this accord no longer has place and if it acts alone (such as thinking and being prudent), if it is no longer in sympathy with the body (this is temperance), if quit of the body it no longer feels fear (this is courage), if reason and intelligence control with ease (this is rectitude). The soul, thus disposed, thinks dispassionately. This disposition can be called likeness to the divinity because the divinity is pure and its act is as well. The being that imitates it possesses prudence then.[2]

In other words, the 'higher' virtues are really different aspects of prudence, or wisdom. As the just man becomes less attached to his body he becomes more god-like, because he is able to engage more fully in the activity of contemplation. Thus, while the "civic" virtues provide the necessary discipline, or moderating force, within the soul, a person is not truly just, or virtuous in general, until he or she can achieve these 'higher' virtues. For only when in possession of the intellectual virtues can one be said to be ruled fully by reason.

This distinction of two levels of virtue is well supported by Plato's texts. In the Republic, at 430a-c, Socrates describes what he stipulates as being "political courage" by saying that it is a

> kind of power and preservation, through everything, of the right and lawful opinion about what is terrible and what not... (430b)

Yet in the Phaedo at 68b-69c, Socrates clearly

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[2] Plotinus, p. 113.

divides the philosopher's courage from that of all others saying:

> [s]o in everyone except the philosopher courage is due to fear and dread...

and

> [t]he true moral ideal, whether self-control or integrity or courage, is really a kind of purgation from all these emotions, and wisdom itself is a sort of purification...

Here Plato is distinguishing between (1) "political courage", which relates to the city, and refers to how our emotions relate to certain objects, i.e. it is a courage related to the body; and (2) the courage of the philosopher, which is "a sort of purification" of these bodily tendencies. This issue, which has been largely overlooked by most commentators, is deserving of an extensive study in itself. While I can do no more than note the matter here, it should be stated that the entire issue of 'two levels of virtue' is clouded, if not negated completely by the suggestion that the philosopher, even at his highest stage of development, must -- in order to be just -- continue to act in accordance with a sort of mixture of the practical and contemplative 'approaches' to life. My thesis, as a refutation of this view, serves as a preliminary step towards a full examination of the notion of the 'higher virtues' in Plato.

If the philosopher is to take seriously the idea of

'practicing death' by somehow becoming detached from his body, then clearly he has to achieve a certain amount of independence from certain moral behaviour which prolongs, and is essentially connected to, our attachment to the body. This is not to say that morality does not help the philosopher to achieve a certain amount of moderation, which will release him from a condition of total slavery to every desire. Plato, however, does seem to suggest that the 'true' virtues are more elusive, and that they act as a sort of "purification" of the mind that will bring us closer to the divine. This interpretation of Plato's thought involves the philosopher becoming disinterested in the things of the body, in favour of pursuing contemplative activity, therefore leaving behind the requirements of the 'practical view'.

In this thesis, I have explained how this notion of the 'higher' virtues is manifest in the case of justice. The view of justice as, in fact, involving a complete separation from the social and bodily realms, may be difficult to accept or find plausible. But this view, as I have shown, is completely consistent with Plato's text, and, far from being a shortcoming of his philosophy, is in fact an indispensable part of it, without which his system loses its most radical element.

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