The Pursuit of Justice in Plato's Republic

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Abstract

The pursuit of justice in the Republic commences when the elderly, wealthy Cephalus suggests that justice involves nothing more than telling the truth and repaying one's debts. But Socrates points out that by following these simple rules without exception could have dire consequences. In an effort to avoid such difficulties, Polemarchus offers a refinement of the definition by suggesting that justice means "giving to each what is owed". The new definition codifies formally our deeply-entrenched practice of seeking always to help our friends and harm our enemies. Thrasymachus recommends that justice should be seen as the advantage of the stronger because those in positions of power simply use their might to decree what shall be right. Glaucon and Adeimantus continue with the challenge concerning the meaning and the nature of justice. According to Glaucon the pursuit of justice disadvantages the just when they are deprived of the social rewards for their behaviour because justice is a social compromise. It is well known that people ignore the demands of justice when certain opportunities arise. Adeimantus places the emphasis on the condition of the individual soul, and of the individual himself, rather than the strength of justice over injustice. However not everyone will agree that justice should be defended as praiseworthy for its own sake, rather than for the extrinsic advantages that may result from its practice. Socrates expounds on the importance of justice in a simple though ambiguous sense, pointing to the fact that true justice must also contribute to the self-fulfilment of the just man. The just city serves the primary purpose of illuminating the just soul which is liberated from the subjection of injustice.

I

Justice is a theme throughout not only the entire book of the Republic but in most works of Plato.

The Greek words employed to convey the meaning of justice in ancient Greek are *dike* "δίκη" and *dikaiosune* "δικαιοσύνη". Although Plato

occasionally uses the traditional term *dike*, he normally refers to "justice" by the lengthened word *dikaiosune*. Generally it has been assumed by historians and scholars of ancient Greek thought that when pre-Platonic authors speak of *dike* they might just as well have been speaking of *dikaiosune* and would thus be reasonable to say that "justice" in Greek authors is commonly assumed to represent a conceptual constant of Greek thought. It would also be fair to say that Plato did not devise the term *dikaiosune* as it appears in the historian Herodotus approximately two generations earlier. Herodotus employs regularly and frequently the traditional word *dike* and its correlatives while the term *dikaiosune* occurs eight times over five widely scattered contexts. The semantic field of *dike* had traditionally covered a procedural process of legal idioms in all its aspects while the specific reference shifted according to the context and the focus tended to narrow down by identifying the penalty or punishment inflicted as the result of process. *Dikaiosune* was formed to indicate that there is a justice within man as well as one which he operates in society. Plato completed the internalization of justice as a quality of a man by placing it as a virtue in the psyche - a concept whose definition was not available to pre-Socratic authors, employing this word to symbolize the human personality. In doing so the semantic field of justice became richer and more complex by including the double reference to the polis (*πόλις*) and to the individual. Justice remains the symbol of a relationship within society but now it also describes one within the human personality as there presumably is an identity of some kind shared between them because of the use of the single common term.

II

In the Republic, and especially at its outset, is the most basic question of justice encountered namely "what is justice" as it is rigorously pursued by Socrates. On the one hand, Socrates plays the critic of justice when combatting Cephalus and Polemarchus' acceptance of overly plain views about what justice is, while on the other hand, he plays the defender of justice in order to counter Thrasymachus' brash dismissal of justice as bad for the just man. Therefore at the beginning of the Republic, Socrates' interest in justice is not so much in expressing a view of justice as something simpler than it really is, but rather in exposing the complexity of justice as a question or a challenge which needs to be faced. (Stauffer, 2001: 20). The Republic is of course read for other reasons too as it ranges over such diverse fields as politics, economics, education, the theory of forms, the condition of poetry, the immortality of the souls etc. but these discussions are contained within the structure of a formal design which is made explicit (Havelock, 1978: 308).

The first reference to the term justice appears in the first book but not right at the outset of the dialogue. In Socrates' conversation with his wealthy host Cephalus, Socrates asks him what it is like being old and rich. Cephalus is not simply old, for he is introduced explicitly and pointedly as a father and as such reflects a familial and generational motive that recurs throughout the Republic. Socrates suggests that perhaps Cephalus has an easy time with old age because of his wealth. To this Cephalus says that there is perhaps something to this but wealth is not nearly as important in old age as some suppose. Cephalus hears many old men complain about the woes of old age, but Cephalus claims to have good character and therefore no reason to complain. In addition, he praises the freedom from baser desires that comes with old age. Socrates then asks what is the greatest benefit Cephalus has received from the enjoyment of wealth. Cephalus responds by referring to peace of mind, i.e., wealth keeps one from having to lie and deceive others and also to leave this life owing nothing to anyone and therefore without fear of having been unjust to anyone whether god or human. At this point, Socrates asks Cephalus whether justice (*dikaiosune*) is simply telling the truth and paying back debts. Socrates picks up on this conception of justice and asks whether it is really adequate as he raises the objection that it is not always just to tell the truth and return what one has taken, since, as he supposes all would concede, it would not be just to do so in instances such as the one in which one is confronted by a mentally disordered friend demanding the return of his weapons (Stauffer, 2001: 25). The dialogue is then off and running in pursuit of the question "what is justice?" that constitutes the rest of the work (Rice, 1998: 2).

Upon Socrates' objection to the Cephalus' view of justice, Cephalus leaves the scene to be immediately followed by his son Polemarchus who invokes the authority of the poet Simonides to defend his father's view of justice. According to Polemarchus, Simonides said that repayment of a debt is just, namely it is just to give to each what is owed. Socrates confesses that he doesn't know what the poet means, and asks, "What is it that is due, and to whom?" He knows, for instance, what the functions of such crafts as medicine and cooking are. But the question posed, is what is the function of the craft of justice, if indeed it is a craft (Republic 332c-333e). Polemarchus says that justice is benefiting one's friends and harming one's enemies and eventually Socrates has a clear statement that he can systematically examine. Socrates' examination of Polemarchus' definition can be divided into three parts and thus posed in the following three questions: a) In what respect is justice useful for helping friends and harming enemies? (332d-334b); b)What is the definition of "friends" (334c- 335b); and c)Does it really belong to the just man to harm anyone whatsoever? (335c-336a).

a. Socrates asks Polemarchus to explain in what ways justice can be helpful and harmful. Through a series of direct questions Socrates leads Polemarchus to the nonsensical conclusion that justice must be useless. And Socrates pursues this line of reasoning to yet another absurdity. Because justice, according to Polemarchus' definition, appears to be the craft of keepers of things not in use namely money and property, and because good keepers are in a position to be the best thieves, one may conclude that justice is simultaneously an art of guarding and an art of stealing.

This is so since arts provide only the expertise and not what we might call the just intention. When Polemarchus stated that justice is useful in war and in contracts or partnerships he did not mean that the just man is as such a knowledgeable and skilful ally in battle or a knowledgeable and skilful partner in promoting peace. He meant that the just man is good to have on your side because he is loyal and trustworthy. By supporting the model of the arts, Socrates disregards the importance of the just intention and through his argument persistently points out that experts, as experts, are more able to help friends and harm enemies than the just man, as a just man. One may however argue that the greater ability of the experts to help friends and harm enemies does not as yet ensure their willingness to do so because only the just intention would seem to ensure that. Socrates' argument implicitly points to a knowledge of what is good for people insofar as it also is needed to help friends and harm enemies and to guide the arts to know when and to whom they should be applied. In this respect the disturbing fact about justice is that the just intention or devotion to the common good is, on the one hand, needed only in defective circumstances but on the other hand the admirable fact about justice is risking own's life for the sake of one another (Stauffer 2001: 39).

b. Polemarchus protests and Socrates concedes that maybe his problem is not knowing what Polemarchus means by "friend". Polemarchus responds that friends are those who we think are good and helpful to us. But, Socrates argues that we can be mistaken about who are our friends, and enemies. Should this be the case we may be helping or harming the wrong people, which could not be justice for one can have friends who are not good and enemies who are not bad. It also implies that it would not be just to help such friends and harm such enemies. Thus a contradiction is reached namely that justice can both help and harm friends and Polemarchus is compelled to reconsider what he means by "friend" in order to gain a balanced perspective of who are ones' real friends and real enemies.

c. At this point, Socrates focuses on the crucial aspect of his quarrel with Polemarchus' definition. In Socrates' view the function of justice is surely not to harm anyone at all. Socrates considers justice to be an excellence of

character and no other excellence, whether that of horses or humans, is ever achieved through destructive means. What is striking in this admittedly ambiguous argument is Socrates' desire to conclude that justice cannot aim at anyone's misfortune. With this claim Socrates distinguishes his view from the traditional Greek conception of social relations, in which vengeance played a dominant role (Pappas, 1995:36). Socrates shows that even on Polemarchus' conception of justice, it cannot be just to harm one's enemies who are in fact bad. The function of justice is to improve human nature and moreover justice is a form of goodness that, by its very nature, cannot participate in anything injurious to someone's character.

III

Thrasymachus explodes into the dialogue - impatient and irritated with what he thinks is a lot of hot air (Rep 336b-339a) (Rice 1998: 7-8). The first form his attacks takes is his most famous statement about justice that it is "nothing more than the advantage of the stronger". His opinion is that in any society there are those who rule, that is to say the strongest and those who are ruled. Those who rule do so by making and enforcing laws. Justice is obedience to those laws and injustice is disobedience to them. Since those who make the laws are not fools, and since they make laws that work to their own advantage, justice turns out to be the advantage of the strongest. Socrates' response is aimed at getting Thrasymachus firstly to admit that things are not always as simple as they seem. The immediate weakness in the idea that justice is the advantage of the stronger is the capacity of the strong to make mistakes about their own advantage. If a city's rulers support a law that will in fact hurt them, then, in Thrasymachus' view, justice would have to consist in disobeying that law. But such an option robs the rulers of any sense of power, for it commits their subjects to deciding what will most help the rulers and in this case the subjects will make the laws. At this point Thrasymachus may add the qualifier, as Cleitophon does, that justice is the advantage of the stronger as it appears to the stronger or he may deny that rulers make mistakes about what helps and harms them. Socrates attacks Thrasymachus' position on a series of three arguments. The first one expounds the view that the just man is wise and good whereas the unjust man is ignorant and bad. Because Thrasymachus has refused to group justice with virtues and injustice with the vices, but calls the former innocence and the later "good counsel" (348c-d), Socrates needs to begin by finding some characteristic of injustice that he and Thrasymachus can agree on. In Greek that characteristic is conveyed by the word *πλεονεξία* "pleonexia", which means the habit or trait of wanting and seizing more than one is entitled to. Justice, by contrast, is marked by the tendency to stay within

proper bounds. Justice suppresses the spirit of unchecked competition for personal gain manifested in the unjust person's disregard for law and order. Thus in Socrates' words: "The unjust try to get the better of all others, the just only to get the better of the unjust" (349b-c). However, Socrates' argument fails to convince us that a wise person will always do the right thing. The second point reasons that justice is stronger than injustice. Socrates' argument regarding justice among the members of a city, an army or even a band of robbers highlights this point (351c-352b). The members of a gang of robbers, for example, might be viewed as practical evidence of Thrasymachus' claim that injustice is good. In breaking the law, robbers are unjust, and they are living profitably in being unjust. Socrates argues, however, that unless the members of the gang govern the interactions among themselves according to some conception of justice that goes beyond legality they could not even be profitable robbers. For example, if they are to avoid falling into contentious factions, they would presumably have to adhere to some standard for justly distributing the loot among themselves. And they could hardly define this standard of just distribution by appealing to what is legal or illegal according to law. The implication is that if even robbers cannot escape treating justice as more than a question of mere lawfulness or unlawfulness, then surely the rest of humanity cannot escape doing so either. The logical outcome is that complete injustice can only lead to total chaos and destruction. In his third argument Socrates attempts to present a sketch of what the virtue of any given being is and then to apply this sketch to the human soul. However, before dealing with the general issue of virtue, Socrates begins from the concept of "work" (ergon), reasoning that the virtue of any mere being is that which enables that being to do its work well. For example, a horse has a specific work (352d8-e1) and since a good horse is one that does the work of a horse well, it makes sense to say that whatever enables it to do so is the virtue of a horse. Likewise Socrates argues one must first know the work of a being in order to determine its specific virtue and therefore the work of a being, is that which can be done only with that being or best with it (352e2-3). Having used the examples of eyes, ears and a pruning knife to explicate "work" he then proceeds to explain virtue of a being as that with which the being is able to do its work well and without which it cannot. Socrates then applies this understanding of work and virtue to the soul. For the souls, as a being, must have a work and the work of the soul of each individual is defined as that "which you could not accomplish with anything else in the world, as for example management, rule, deliberation, and the like" (353d). Having such a function as his defining characteristic, the individual can either do it well or badly. In this sense every individual is equal in that he has such a capacity for doing his distinctive human function well and thus

can achieve his justice or virtue "*αρετή*" (arete). This preliminary statement anticipates the division later in the "Republic" of the soul into three parts or aspects with their corresponding virtues brought about by justice of the entire soul. Even so, according to Stauffer (2001: 113-115) a number of serious questions spring up plainly because the soul, unlike a horse or an knife is obviously a hard being to grasp for the souls's work is not axiomatic and thus its virtue is difficult to define. By referring to his first argument namely that justice is virtue and injustice vice, Socrates comes to the tentative conclusion that the just man is happy, the unjust man is miserable and since it is certainly more beneficial to be happy than to be miserable, it follows that injustice is never more beneficial than justice (354a6-9). This defence of justice, however, is not very convincing to many and even Socrates has his misgivings when at the close of book one comments as follows: "*...So have I gone from one subject to another without having discovered what I sought at first, the nature of justice. I left that enquiry and turned away to consider whether justice is virtue and wisdom or evil and folly; and when there arose a further question about the comparative advantages of justice and injustice, I could not refrain from passing on to that. And the result of the whole discussion has been that I know nothing at all. For I know not what justice is, and therefore I am not likely to know whether it is or is not a virtue, nor can I say whether the just man is happy or unhappy*". This statement of Socrates seems out of place if it is only seen as a summary of his discussion with Thrasymachus restricted to the questions of profit and happiness. However, if Socrates is referring here to the order of his defence of justice more specifically, what he had to say here is more viable due to the fact that the question of wisdom and virtue indeed came before the question of profit and happiness. It may, therefore be deduced that his defence of justice in book one is inadequate because it is intended to pose and help the readers reflect on the problem of justice (Stauffer, 2001: 118).

IV

At the beginning of Book 2 Glaucon seeks to move the discussion from one controlled by the necessities of defeating an argument to one which attempts to find out the true dimensions of justice. By developing as compelling a defence of injustice as possible, Glaucon expects that he will likewise compel Socrates to make as concerted a defence of justice in return. To provide a better description of what he believes is the most common view of justice, Glaucon introduces a classification system for things that are good (357a-358a). Firstly he states that some things are good in themselves by virtue of the fact that their goodness stands on its own and requires nothing else to justify it. Glaucon's examples here are "rejoicing" (*το χαίρειν*) and "innocent pleasures"(*ηδοναί*

αβλαβείς) which produce only gladness at having them. Socrates is in agreement with this view. Secondly Glaucon proposes a middle category comprising things that are good in themselves and that produce other good things as well. In this regards he uses the examples of "understanding" (*το φρονείν*), "seeing" (*το οράν*), and "being healthy" (*το υγιαίνειν*). Socrates confirms that this kind of good exists as well. The third category consists of things that are good only in a secondary sense bearing in mind that they are instrumental in producing other things that are good in themselves. Glaucon is of the opinion that things in this category are considered "toilsome" (*επίπονα*) "though advantageous to us" (*ωφελείν δε ημάς*). Socrates agrees that this category of good also exists. Glaucon then asks in what category Socrates would place justice and although he already mentioned the terms "being just" and "being unjust" this is the first entrance of the term "justice" in book 2. It is introduced only after Glaucon has declared the properties of appearance, truth, good, pleasure and advantage while setting the stage for his intended dialogue between common opinion and Socrates. Much of the discussion which takes place in the remainder of the Republic pertains to the manner in which justice is to be considered given the structure put forward by Glaucon as he requests a Socratic perspective of justice.

Socrates' view is that justice is indeed so in the finest sense "it belongs in the fairest class, that which a man who is to be happy must love both for its own sake and for the results" (358a1-3). Glaucon states that this is not the opinion of the masses and justice is rather considered among the forms of toil, done for the sake of wages and reputation according to opinion and for the sake of itself is avoided as being arduous. It is obvious that Glaucon wishes Socrates not only to argue the intrinsic value of justice but to do so apart from what is the popular opinion. In this respect Glaucon is prepared to disassociate his own beliefs on the subject from those held by common opinion. Socrates acknowledges that he is aware of this argument and it is similar to the one employed by Thrasymachus when "he blamed justice as being of this sort, while injustice is praised" (358a8). Socrates views both Thrasymachus' and Glaucon's arguments as resemblances of what justice is perceived as being, but that neither is to be considered as justice correctly understood.

Glaucon stills pursues a sufficient demonstration of justice and injustice as he says "I really want to know what each one of them (justice and injustice) is and what power it has 'by itself' (*αυτό καθ' αυτό*) in the soul, leaving apart the wages and things arising from them". The phrase 'by itself' (*αυτό καθ' αυτό*) used here intensifies the idea beyond that conveyed through the pronoun alone, or some form of the simple reflexive. This phrase will be repeated by Glaucon at 358d2, but it is not found elsewhere in the dialogue. This intensive usage is reserved by Plato for those cases in which

particular notice is to be payed to the quality of the object being considered and constitutes a paradigm shift regarding what is produced as appearance or product. Moreover the ensuing connection between appearance and product on the one hand and how justice is viewed by common opinion on the other, no longer can be regarded as the sufficient means of ascertaining what justice actually is. Plato still has to allow for a collective awareness among the participants of why this transition of focus is necessary. By introducing a concern for the condition of the soul, Plato through Glaucon has created the circumstances which Socrates can put to use in order to justify the transition.

By revisiting Thrasymachus' argument, Glaucon introduces the following stages: Firstly he intends "telling what people say justice is and from where it comes", secondly "that all who practice it practice it against their will because it is necessary but not because it is good. Thirdly to show it is reasonable that they should do this, for indeed then the life of the unjust is better than the life of the just. However, Glaucon distances himself from the third argument. What justice is and from where it arises is stated as follows: *"For indeed they say that it is naturally good (αγαθόν) to be unjust (commit injustice) and bad (κακόν) to suffer injustice, but more does the bad from suffering injustice surpass (υπερβάλλειν) the good from doing injustice; so when they both act unjustly to each other and suffer injustice and experience of both, for those not having the power to escape the one and choose the other it seems to be useful to agree among themselves not to do injustice nor to suffer injustice"* (358e3-359a2). Two important issues came about in the above-mentioned statement. In the first place Glaucon introduced a consideration which will gain additional momentum in his presentation as well as becoming more cardinal to the manner in which Socrates must deal with this premise. Secondly while Glaucon attempts to outline the origin of justice, it is actually the prevalence of injustice - both committed and suffered - which brings about the initial agreement among individuals. They agree to cease doing injustice, but only because they have realised that the disadvantages of suffering injustice outbalance the advantages of doing injustice. The origin of justice according to the argument, is entirely seen in terms of what injustice has produced as Glaucon is of the opinion that justice is a result of what injustice produces. By this he means that the agreement to refrain from both doing and suffering injustice transpires, before justice emerges as a consideration.

In 359a3-5 Glaucon continues to sketch the nature and origin of justice by re-emphasising that it is the result of the compromise, or equilibrium which is achieved after individuals agree not to do nor to suffer injustice. Furthermore he suggests that if both the just man and the unjust man were allowed to do whatever they wish both would be found doing the

same thing, since *"We should then catch the just man in the very act of resorting to the same conduct as the unjust man because of the self-advantage which every creature by its nature pursues as a good, while by the convention of the law it is forcibly diverted to paying honour to equality"* 359c3-6. A contrast between nature and law is implied here as it is law and not nature, which by force compels one to act justly. People by natural propensity would attempt to gain advantage through injustice and because they are unable to escape injustice in return, or are not sufficiently convinced they can escape injustice that the original agreement is made. Once this agreement is effected, laws are introduced to curb injustice. The force of law causes honour to be given with the aim of treating others equally.

In his story of the social nature of justice, Glaucon has in mind as consequences only those consequences it produces in a society. Since Glaucon has opposed society to nature, his intention is surely to distinguish those social consequences from consequences of justice we would acknowledge as natural. A thing is then both good in itself and productive of good consequences if both its natural and social effects are good. In 360e-362c Glaucon contrasts the life of the just man who is generally considered unjust with that of an unjust man with an undeserved reputation for justice. He spells out the penalties that will fall upon the misunderstood just man, and gives generously every benefit on the sly unjust man. The unambiguous message is that any advantages that we may think belong to the one who lives justly are merely the advantages of a just reputation. The social consequences of justice and injustice need to be set aside because they follow less reliably, or less immediately, than the natural effects of the two states. For example the natural effect of physical strength would be an enhanced feeling of energy, while its social consequence might be constant hard work. Because employment requires more than strength alone, that social consequence is at best an indirect effect of the strength since excessive energy or vitality always comes with bodily strength. Glaucon wants Socrates to identify a natural effect of justice that similarly follows directly from the person's just disposition.

While Glaucon expresses his discontent regarding the bad reputation of justice, Adeimantus proposes to complete the dimensions of common opinion on justice and injustice by considering how justice is praised and injustice blamed in common opinion. As a society grows aware that its prescriptions are artificial, its moral rhetoric communicates a cynical attitude towards virtuous behaviour. When fathers exhort their sons to be just, they praise not justice itself but the good reputation it leads to (363a). Even promises of afterlife rewards for justice implicitly call it a burden, by suggesting that in the next life no one takes the trouble to practice virtue (363c). Moreover, once the just life has been posed as a mere intermediary

to something else, people will look for a shortcut to that other goal. This is confirmed by the practice of religious rituals where the gods mete out rewards and punishments after death, then supplications, sacrifices, and initiations into mystery cults can bring about bliss after death without the bother of virtuous living (365e-366b). As Adeimantus concentrates on existing society he makes a few important points. Whereas Glaucon wished to know how justice and injustice themselves affect the soul, Adeimantus is here concerned to know how things said about virtue and viciousness affect the souls of those most capable. It is noteworthy that Adeimantus' first mention of the soul includes three pivotal considerations. The first concerns what is spoken, rather than what is actually done. The second includes the position of poetic authority, since Adeimantus is commenting on the results of the "second form of speech" relating to the subject of justice. Third, it is not justice per se, but rather what is said about virtue, which is of immediate concern to an understanding of the condition of the soul. The emphasis which Adeimantus places on the condition of the individual soul, and of the individual himself, rather than the strength of justice over injustice, is meant to elicit a response from Socrates which considers the true nature of justice and injustice, not what either may reflect in the world of appearance. Adeimantus stresses this point: *"But take away opinion, as Glaucon urged. For, unless you take away the true opinion from each side and attach to each the false, we shall say that you do not praise the just but what appears to be, nor do you blame the unjust but what it appears to be, and that you really are exhorting us to be unjust but conceal it, and agree with Thrasymachus that the just is another's good, an advantage of the stronger, while the unjust is one's own advantage and profit, but not profitable to the weaker (367b5-c5).* In book 4 after the definitions of justice in the city and in the soul have been established, Socrates states that by suggesting such definitions as comprising what justice really is in them, it does not appear that they should be lying (444a6). Taken by itself, however the presence of justice in the city is not to be regarded as the most precise definition of justice. The very manner in which both Glaucon and Adeimantus have discussed justice requires that the discussants consider matters beyond concerns over what constitutes a merely acceptable definition of justice. The two brothers want Socrates to show that the features of the soul that produce just behaviour also lead, by some natural process, to more happiness than do the features that produce unjust behaviour (Moors, 1981).

V

Socrates suggests that the best way to discover real justice is to look for it first where it is easiest to see (368c-369b). One could look for justice in a

single person or in the city, he says, but the larger scale of the city might produce results more readily. Hence he begins by asking how justice emerges in a city, and only apply what he has learned to the soul. After convincing the others of this strategy, Socrates sets off to construct a city in which real justice rules. A description of the details of the just city designed according to nature occupies part of book 2, book 3 and the first half of book 4. In the remainder of book 4 Socrates concentrates on exactly what justice is in such a city and then argues that it is essentially the same thing in a single human being, the soul being parallel in structure to the city. Socrates' picture of the soul in book 4 follows out these implications of the city-soul comparison for if a city resembles a soul, it should be thought of as a unity. He begins his description of the real just city with the claim that individual human beings are not self-sufficient and are naturally disposed to perform different tasks (369b-370b). By basing his first city entirely on both these natural facts he is arguing that human society is natural. Because justice arises in that one social relationship essential to every city, justice in turn becomes a natural accompaniment to every city.

Consequently Socrates' participants have characterized a city in enough detail to assure themselves of its goodness and thus they can use it as the large-scale model of justice they needed. In pursuit of justice, Socrates' strategy consists of the following points (Pappas, 1995: 74-75):

a) The city is described as being perfectly good.

b) It is wise, courageous, moderate and just.

c) Having set aside those defining characteristics of the city responsible for its wisdom, courage and moderation, whatever characteristics remain will define its justice (427e-428a).

Socrates says that since his best city comprises all four virtues, justice can be discovered through a process of elimination and if the other three virtues are identified first, the true nature of justice will remain as obvious. Wisdom in a wise city, he says, is lodged primarily in the class of overseers comprised of philosophers, who are by definition, lovers of wisdom, learning and truth. Courage is located primarily within a single class, the auxiliaries, who need it mostly. Moderation, by contrast, is spread through all the classes and is reflected in agreement about who should rule. Members of all three classes are in agreement that only the philosophers should rule. Socrates is of the opinion that justice is the virtue that makes all the others possible. Simply put, it is the idea that the members of the various classes should hold fast to the business for which they are suited by nature and not get involved in the functions of the other classes. There is an element of truth to the commonsense notion that justice means giving to persons what rightfully belongs to them. However, in what Socrates regards as a deeper conception of justice, what belongs to a person must be interpreted to mean the tasks

assigned to that person by nature. Therefore, he views justice in the finished city as the principle according to which he and his interlocutors had constructed the city, namely the principle that everyone has a single job to do and ought only to do that one job (432e-433a).

Having established the definition of political justice Socrates focusses on the concept of justice in the soul and attempts to discern in the just individual the very form of justice which he found in the city. His model for true justice is presented as a conclusion in 443c9-444a2: *But the truth of the matter was, as it seems, that justice is indeed something of this kind, yet not in regard to the doing of one's own business externally, but with regard to that which is within and in the true sense concerns one's self, and the things of one's self. He (the truly just man) does no allow each part in him to mind the affairs of others or the classes in his soul to meddle with each other, but he really sets his own house in good order; he rules himself, orders himself, becomes his own friend, and brings the three parts into harmony, just like three notes on a harmonic scale - lowest, highest and middle. And if there turn out to be some other parts in between, he binds all of them together and becomes completely one from many. Moderate and harmonised, this is how he acts - if he acts in some way - either concerning the acquisition of money, or the care of the body, or some political matter, or concerning private contracts. In all of these actions, he believes and names a just and noble action one that preserves and helps to complete this state of the soul, and wisdom the knowledge that governs this action; but an unjust action he believes and names one that destroys this state of soul, and ignorance, in turn, the opinion that governs this action.* From his model we can deduce that Plato thinks he has established several things about the likeness of "city" and "soul". He believes he has established that soul and city have the same function for the two prosper if their parts each "do their own" and desist from being busy bodies, namely the soul and the city are just if they are harmonious. But Plato goes further, and believes he has made another discovery about justice in the city and in the soul. Both the city and the soul, he says, have three parts, "the higher, the lower, and the mean", and for either of them to be just, is for the higher part to rule, and the mean to assist it in controlling the lower part. Each part of the soul will reveal a distinct virtue, and in that sense will be similar to its counterpart in the city. For instance, wisdom is the virtue of the rational part of the soul, and that displayed by the rulers of the ideal city. The two categories of claims Plato is making about justice in the soul and the city differ essentially in the kind of claims they are. The "discovery" that justice is "doing one's own" is a widely held belief that Plato recognised early on in his explorations, in fact, one that he identifies when he arranges the first city. The claim that the city has three parts, and the various "discoveries" about each of these parts, on the other

hand, is a rather complex and somewhat strained empirical hypothesis involving politics and psychology. To put it simply, both the city and the soul have parts which must be in harmony if there is to be any justice in them. One can then choose to accept Plato's description of the parts of the city and their role, or of the parts of the soul and their role, but there certainly is no compelling reason why one should accept either, or that the parts of soul and city are alike in anyway.

VI

The great British philosopher-mathematician Alfred North Whitehead once commented that all philosophy is but a footnote to Plato and a similar point can be made regarding ancient Greek literature as a whole. According to Whitehead (1967) one may argue that in certain instances Plato posed the wrong questions but his line of thought stands as a touchstone against which much of subsequent philosophy must define itself, either positively or negatively. The question with which "The Republic" sets out, is to define justice. Given the difficulty of this task, Socrates and his interlocutors are led into a discussion of justice in the city, which they see as the same as justice in the person, but on a expansive and therefore easier to discuss scale. Because of this, some critics such as Julia Annas (1981) interpret Plato's paradigm of a just state as an allegory for the paradigm of the just person. Justice is obviously a very odd virtue, different in kind from wisdom, courage and self-control and jointly with justice, constitute the catalogue of the virtues. The difference between justice and the other virtues is that the other virtues are worth practising even though others do not practise them. It is to someone's advantage to be wise if others are feebleminded, courageous if others are cowards, and moderate if others are unrestraint. At the very least, these virtues do not make us vulnerable and they might also enable us to protect ourselves from others. Justice does not offer a similar undertaking. The just are not necessarily immune to hardship and suffering and it is not an enviable position to be especially when the unjust prosper. One may argue that wisdom, courage and temperance are obviously political virtues in a sense that justice is not. These virtues are directly and positively related to the power relations between human beings, while justice can hardly be recommended as a course of life and as a prescription of happiness. In the "Republic" Plato argues the reverse namely that justice is a political virtue in a sense in which the others are not. The other virtues are certainly worth having, and Plato will end up by showing that the just person will in fact possess all the other virtues, but he wants to convey the message that justice is the central political virtue, useful in politics in a way the others are not.

Many hold the view that justice is good but only in the secondary,

instrumental sense. If one could be certain of always being on the giving end of injustice, the practice of justice would be foolish. People recognise, however, that they are going to be on the receiving end of injustice quite often, and that suffering injustice is naturally bad. Therefore, they strike a compromise by entering into a contract with each other, promising not to do injustice to others if others, in return, will not do injustice to them, and proceed to set up a system of laws prescribing what people can and cannot do. Justice turns out to be, as Thrasymachus said, obedience to the laws, and people practice justice, not because they believe it is good in itself, but because they know they are not powerful enough to always be on the giving rather than the receiving end of injustice.

The impersonal Socratic model of justice clearly represents a significant challenge to the concept of justice as developed in the modern world, and it represents a threat to the power base that has come to rely on modern models of justice. Whether the Socratic model represents a better model is an issue we need to think and reconsider. Should this model be utilised to the immense emerging global problems based in the social, cultural, economic and environmental spheres, it may well be argued as a better model. But, if applied to the letter, Socratic Justice would most definitely represent a severe limitation of many of the individually defined freedoms that individuals, institutions and many corporations, have come to accept in a modern democracy for the simple reason that many of the so-called freedoms would be deemed to be just.

In order to see clearly the full character of the best life, including the virtue of justice as Plato understood it, it would require a study of the entire Republic and indeed all of Plato's dialogues. Since the final word on justice and the Republic has not yet been written or spoken I will rest my case with Socrates' words in the last sentence of the Republic (621c-d). *"Wherefore my counsel is that we hold fast ever to the heavenly way and follow after justice and virtue always, considering that the soul is immortal and able to endure every sort of good and every sort of evil. Thus shall we live dear to one another and to the gods, both while remaining here and when, like conquerors in the games who go round to gather gifts, we receive our reward. And it shall be well with us both in this life and in the pilgrimage of a thousand years which we have been describing".*

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