



A Fallacy in Plato's Republic

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A FALLACY IN PLATO'S *REPUBLIC*

RECENT writers on the *Republic* tend to refrain from detailed discussion of the argument about justice and happiness, the main argument of the work.¹ In the last decades there have been few assessments of Plato's conclusions about the relationship of justice and happiness, namely that just men are happier than any men who are unjust, and that the more unjust a man is, the more wretched he will be. Equally rare have been attempts to examine critically the argument by which Plato reached those conclusions.² In this paper I make such an attempt. My aim is to show that Plato's conclusions are irrelevant to what he sets out—and purports—to establish. The fallacy of irrelevance that, in my judgment, wrecks the *Republic's* main argument is due to the lack of connection between two conceptions of justice that Plato employs. I begin with an account of the two conceptions. While discussing them, I try to correct some errors and possible confusions about Plato's argument and his understanding of it. In particular, I try to show that Plato consistently viewed his defense of justice as one made solely in terms of justice's effects. I then examine the fallacy in detail. At the end, I briefly speculate about why Plato proceeded as he did.

THE TWO CONCEPTIONS OF JUSTICE

Like other dialogues that have been called "aporetic" or "dialogues of refutation," *Republic* I ends with an avowal of

¹ "Justice," "injustice," etc. are notoriously unsatisfactory translations of many occurrences in Plato's dialogues of *δικαιοσύνη*, *ἀδικία*, and their relevant cognates. My use of the conventional translations does not, however, affect the claims of this paper. I am indebted to Mr. Gerald Barnes and Prof. Marshall Cohen for helpful discussion of some of the points I have tried to make.

² To my knowledge, the last detailed criticism of both Plato's procedure and conclusions is to be found in H. A. Prichard's inaugural lecture, *Duty and Interest* (Oxford, 1928), and in the title essay of the same author's posthumously published collection, *Moral Obligation* (Oxford, 1949).

ignorance by Socrates. Plato has him say that, not knowing what justice is, he can hardly know whether it is a virtue and whether its possessor is happy or not. An impression likely to be made by Socrates' last words in Book I is, as Richard Robinson remarked of the early dialogues as a whole, "that Socrates thinks that there is no truth whatever about x that can be known before we know what x is."³ Robinson observes that though Socrates never actually says this, Socrates also never places any limits on the priority of answering questions of the form "What is x ?" As a result, there is a general problem about the dialogues of refutation; do they include any assertions of doctrine by Plato?⁴ Thus, in *Republic* I, Socrates makes various statements about justice; is his avowal of ignorance intended to question all of them? Certainly no doubt is cast upon one repeatedly implied claim, a claim taken for granted in the later books and presupposed by the over-all structure of the *Republic*: namely, that whether one should lead a just or unjust life is to be decided by determining which life is the happier.⁵ It is, however, indispensable for evaluating the main argument of the *Republic* to realize that this claim cannot be understood in the same way throughout; it cannot, because of the two conceptions of justice in the *Republic*. I will call the first the vulgar conception of justice, the second the Platonic conception.

The Vulgar Conception

Toward the end of *Republic* IV, immediately after the first exposition of the Platonic conception of justice, there is an important text for what I am terming the vulgar conception of justice. Socrates, speaking to Glaucon, says:

³ Richard Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic* (2nd ed.; Oxford, 1953), p. 51.

⁴ It is widely held that Socrates' professions of ignorance have to be discounted to some extent. For instance, Plato often—if not always—must have thought that the "absurdities" he had Socrates elicit really were absurdities. For an example in *Rep.* I, see 333e 1-2 *et supra*.

⁵ See, e.g., 344e 1-3; 345a 2-7; 352d 5-6; 347e 2-4ff.; as these lines, together with the contexts in which they occur, show, the formulations in terms of an advantageous or profitable or better life are intended as equivalent to the formulation in terms of happiness. See also 392a-c; 420b-c; 427d; 472c-d; 484a-b; 544a; 545a-b; 578c; 580 *ad fin.*

"We might . . . completely confirm . . . our own conviction . . . by applying . . . vulgar tests to it." "What are these?" "For example, if an answer were demanded to the question concerning that city and the man whose birth and breeding was in harmony with it, whether we believe that such a man, entrusted with a deposit of gold or silver, would withhold it and embezzle it, who do you suppose would think that he would be more likely so to act than men of a different kind?" "No one would." "And would not he be far removed from sacrilege and theft and betrayal of comrades in private life or of the state in public? . . . And, moreover, he would not be in any way faithless either in the keeping of his oaths or in other agreements. . . . Adultery, surely, and neglect of parents and of the due service of the gods would pertain to anyone rather than to such a man. . . . And is not the cause of this to be found in the fact that each of the principles within him does its own work in the matter of ruling and being ruled?"⁶

As Plato states them in this passage, the vulgar criteria for justice consist in the nonperformance of acts of certain kinds; and, of course, injustice, according to the vulgar conception, consists in performing such acts. The passage shows that Plato supposes that the just man—as he conceives him—is less likely than anyone else to perform those acts, to embezzle, to steal, to betray, to behave sacrilegiously, to fail to keep oaths or agreements, to commit adultery, to neglect his parents or the service he owes to the gods. Plato thinks the conduct of his just man, far from being at variance with the vulgar conception of justice, will exemplify it.

The 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.)

Thrasymachus, at 344a 3-b 5, describes consummate (*τελεω-τάτης*) injustice and several kinds or "parts" (*μέρη*) of injustice; his list of kinds of injustice emphasizes gross types of immorality and evil-doing: temple-robbing, kidnaping, swindling, and so forth (see 348d 5-8). On Thrasymachus' view, to perpetrate such acts is

⁶ 442d 10-443b 2; I have excerpted the passage from Shorey's translation in the Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass., Vol. I, 1937; Vol. II, 1942). Except where otherwise indicated, I use Shorey's translation.

to do injustice; not to commit them is essential to being just. Similarly, when Glaucon, for the sake of the argument, extols injustice, he finds it apt to relate the story of Gyges' ancestor, a man who seduced his king's wife, murdered the king, and usurped the kingdom; Glaucon then alleges that no one who enjoyed the impunity of Gyges' progenitor would "persevere in justice and endure to refrain his hands from the possessions of others and not touch them . . . [but would] take what he wished even from the market place and enter into houses and lie with whom he pleased, and slay and loose from bonds whomsoever he would" (360b 5-360c 2). Here, again, is a list of acts set forth as incompatible with justice and as constituting injustice. 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.⁷

The Platonic Conception

Although the speeches of Glaucon and Adeimantus at the beginning of Book II give expression to the vulgar conception of justice, elements of the Platonic conception are also prominent in them. Commentators have often recognized that the speeches are vital for an understanding of how Plato conceives justice and for grasping what he tries to establish concerning it.

Glaucon, before his speech, asks Socrates if he really wishes to persuade them that it is in every way better to be just than unjust. The phrase "in every way" (*παντι τρόπω*, 357b 1) is then glossed by Glaucon's classification of goods and his and Socrates' discussion of it. The classification appears to be roughly the following: goods valued for their own sake, goods valued for their

⁷ This statement of conditions for *ἀδικία* and *δικαιοσύνη* exhausts the notion of justice of Socrates' host, the scrupulous and fearful Cephalus; that Polemarchus shares much of the ordinary understanding of morality (and, unlike Thrasymachus, remains largely committed to it) is shown by the manner in which he reacts when Socrates reduces one of his positions to the absurd consequence that being just requires a "kind" of stealing (*κλεπτική τις*). See 334b 3-7. The few examples of injustice that Adeimantus gives are among those mentioned by Thrasymachus and Glaucon.

own sake and their effects, and goods valued only for their effects. The second type of goods is the one better in every way and Socrates says that, if a man is to be happy, he should thus regard justice; that is, value it both for its own sake and for its effects.

Plato's use of the expressions which I have conventionally rendered by the phrase "valued for their own sake" has perplexed readers about the main argument and aroused controversy.⁸ The difficulty to which it has given rise is this: on the one hand, Socrates states to Glaucon that justice is to be valued for its own sake as well as for its effects, and Glaucon and Adeimantus stress in their speeches that they want Socrates to praise justice in itself (358d 1-2; 363a 1-2; cf. 367c 5-d 5); on the other hand, throughout the *Republic*, Socrates confines himself to an attempt to show that being just eventuates in happiness and pleasure for the just man; that is, he praises justice solely for what he alleges are its effects. Consequently, it has been charged that Plato, at the start of Book II, misconceived the task he thereafter tried to carry out; that he promised to prove that justice is good both for its own sake and for its effects, but addressed himself only to what he presumed were its effects.⁹

The expressions Plato uses are indeed likely to perplex contemporary readers, but an examination of the contexts in which

⁸ E.g., *αὐτὸ αὐτοῦ ἔνεκα ἀσπαζόμενοι* (357b 6); *αὐτὸ τε αὐτοῦ χάριν ἀγαπῶμεν* (357c 1); *αὐτὰ . . . ἑαυτῶν ἔνεκα . . . ἂν δεξαίμεθα ἔχειν* (357c 8). For a compilation of the troubling expressions, see J. D. Mabbott, "Is Plato's Republic Utilitarian?," *Mind*, N.S. XLVI (1937), 469-470.

⁹ A quarter of a century ago, M. B. Foster criticized Plato on this score (M. B. Foster, "A Mistake of Plato's in the Republic," *Mind*, N.S. XLVI [1937], 386-393). J. D. Mabbott replied, claiming that Plato does try to prove justice good for its own sake, or a good in itself (*op. cit.*). Foster, in answer to Mabbott, modified his criticism of Plato, saying that the vexing expressions made merely for a verbal ambiguity, "two different (and mutually inconsistent) ways of expressing what he [Plato] nevertheless conceived always as the same thing." According to Foster, Plato always meant to be claiming that justice is valuable because of its effects. Foster continued to maintain, in my belief rightly, that Plato did not try to prove justice a good in itself, or good for its own sake—in the sense which those qualifying phrases usually bear at present. See M. B. Foster, "A Mistake of Plato's in the Republic: A Rejoinder to Mr. Mabbott," *Mind*, N.S. XLVII (1938), 226-232. See n. 14 *infra*.

they occur can help to remove the perplexity. When characterizing the first of the three types of goods, Glaucon says, "Are there not some which we should wish to have, not for their consequences, but just for their own sake, such as harmless pleasures and enjoyments that have no further result beyond the satisfaction of the moment?" The sentence just quoted is Cornford's very free translation of the problematic lines 357b 4-8; it has the merit, in comparison to other translations, of forcibly suggesting that *αἱ ἡδοναὶ* signifies activities or objects which produce pleasure, and not the pleasure produced.¹⁰ The clause beginning "that have no *further* result" should suggest that "for their own sake" is not being contrasted with "for (all and) any effects whatsoever" and that, instead, a distinction *among* effects is implicit. This is also suggested by the mention of enjoyment (*χαίρειν ἔχοντα* 357b 8), which one would naturally take to be an effect; indeed, if the sole effect of something is pleasure or enjoyment, it would appear to be an instance of the first type of goods in Glaucon's classification.¹¹

When Socrates is asked where he places justice in the classification, he replies, "In the fairest class . . . amongst those which he who would be blessed, must love both for their own sake and their consequences."¹² Again, a present-day reader may wonder: how does Socrates conceive the relation of justice, which he places among the second type of goods, to blessedness or happiness? Socrates' remark is difficult, but Glaucon's comment on it is

¹⁰ F. M. Cornford (trans.), *The Republic of Plato* (New York, 1945), p. 42. Cornford's translation of *τὸ χαίρειν* (357b 7) as "enjoyments" is, at best, doubtful. (The occurrence of the phrase at 357b 7 poses, I admit, a difficulty—though hardly a decisive one—for my contentions in this section.) If, contrary to Cornford and following most translators, *αἱ ἡδοναὶ* at 357b 7 is taken to mean pleasure(s) rather than what produces it, the conclusion of Plato's sentence presents a considerable obstacle: since *ταύτας* in *καὶ μηδὲν εἰς τὸν ἔπειτα χρόνον διὰ ταύτας γίγνεται ἄλλο ἢ χαίρειν ἔχοντα* refers to *αἱ ἡδοναὶ*, it will have to be understood as pleasure which produces enjoyment, i.e. pleasure. Plato would then implausibly have to be understood as thinking that pleasure produces pleasure.

¹¹ For a surprising yet likely example, cf. 584b.

¹² A. D. Lindsay (trans.), *The Republic of Plato* (New York, 1957), p. 44, 358a 1-3.

helpful: "That is not the opinion of most people. . . . They place it in the *troublesome* class of good things, which must be pursued for the sake of the reward and the high place in public opinion which they bring but which *in themselves are irksome* and to be avoided."¹³ Glaucon's words are clear; according to the many, he is saying, justice in itself, since it is harsh or painful, should be avoided. The troublesomeness and harshness of it, then, are included under the heading "in itself." By analogy, the blessedness or happiness which Socrates thinks being just produces may be placed under the same heading. The need for discriminating the kind of effect intended by the phrases "in itself" and "for their own sake," from those intended by "effects" or "consequences" said *simpliciter*, is plain.

The distinction among effects is clarified by the repeated and virtually identical demands made of Socrates in Glaucon's and Adeimantus' speeches. Glaucon's request at 358b 4-7 is typical (see 366e 5-9; 367b 3-5; 367e 1-5; also 367a 1-8; 367c 5-d 5). He asks to be told the powers (*δύναμεις*) that justice and injustice, being present in the soul, exert *by themselves*—leaving aside the rewards and effects of both. From these passages it can be seen that Plato conceived of justice as good in itself, a good for its own sake, in terms of the effect which he supposed it exerted within the soul of its possessor. In the same way, he thought injustice an evil in itself. (The expressions literally translated by "for its own sake" and "in itself" might be paraphrased in a less confusing way for present-day readers by the locutions "on its own" and "by itself.") For Plato, *no other* effects of justice and injustice were grounds for characterizing them as good or evil in themselves—and notably not those effects due to the knowledge or opinion others have of one's justice or injustice.

Glaucon's classification of goods, then, proves quite complex: first, items which by themselves (or on their own) are productive of good and of nothing else; second, those which by themselves are productive of good and, in conjunction with other things, have additional good effects; third, those which by themselves have bad effects but also have good ones which outweigh them.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 358a 4-6; my italics.

Obviously, the classification is neither exhaustive nor neat, but if my account of the vexing phrases that occur in it and in Glaucon's and Adeimantus' speeches is correct, then Plato is not open to the charge of having promised to undertake what he never attempts.¹⁴

Plato's notion of the effects of the powers of justice and injustice in the souls of men is fundamental to the Platonic conception of justice (see 366e 5-6ff.; 367b 2-5). When Adeimantus complains that no one has adequately stated how justice and injustice, because of their powers, constitute respectively the greatest good and the greatest evil in the soul, he is anticipating theses Socrates will expound in Books IV, VIII, and IX. Adeimantus' speech is especially important because it repeatedly expresses Plato's aim of delineating the powers of justice and injustice as powers exerted solely by their existence or presence in the soul (see 366e 5-9). In this connection the word "power," though it correctly translates *δύναμις*, can prove misleading. For if it is conceived after the model of other uses of "power"—indeed on the model of other uses of *δύναμις* in Adeimantus' speech (e.g., 366c 2; 366e 4)—it will not be thought a power which *must* be exercised. What Adeimantus asks to be shown, however, is the good which justice inevitably works by its mere existence in the soul. Injustice, likewise, is to be proven an inescapable evil for the soul in which it is present. And these, of course, are the very demands Socrates attempts to meet in Books IV, VIII, and IX.

The most familiar evidence that Plato is intent on characterizing justice and injustice as things which cannot but work good and evil is, of course, contained in the famous similes of Book IV, where the just soul is compared to the healthy body, the unjust to diseased bodies, and the entire *ἀρετή*, or virtue, of the soul is

¹⁴ Even Foster's charge of verbal ambiguity (cf. n. 9 *supra*) should be dismissed. It imports into Glaucon's and Adeimantus' speeches a possibly anachronistic interpretation of "good for its own sake" and "good in itself," one in which those phrases mark a contrast with things that are good because of their effects, even when the good they produce is happiness or pleasure. As I have argued, Glaucon's and Socrates' remarks show that Plato did not intend this contrast. See 367c 5-d 2, where Adeimantus places justice among *ἀγαθὰ γόνιμα τῇ αὐτῶν φύσει*; cf. Adam's conjecture *ad loc.*, and Foster, in *Mind*, N.S. XLVI (1937), 392-393.

called a kind of health and beauty and good condition, its contrary, *κακία*, being termed the soul's disease, ugliness, and enfeeblement (see 444c-e *et circa*).

If Socrates were to succeed in proving that justice by itself cannot but be good for the soul of its possessor, and injustice evil, he still would not be meeting Glaucon's and Adeimantus' challenge; for they ask him to show that justice is the greatest good of the soul, injustice its greatest evil. Further, showing this will not be sufficient unless Socrates thereby shows that the life of the man whose soul possesses justice is happier than the life of anyone whose soul is unjust. The latter is required of Socrates when Glaucon asks him to compare certain lives in terms of happiness. Glaucon envisages a just man's life "bare of everything but justice. . . . Though doing no injustice he must have the repute of the greatest injustice . . . let him on to his course unchangeable even unto death . . . the just man will have to endure the lash, the rack, chains, the branding-iron in his eyes, and finally, after every extremity of suffering, he will be [impaled]."¹⁵ On the other hand, the unjust man pictured by Glaucon enjoys a position of "rule in the city, a wife from any family he chooses, and the giving of his children in marriage to whomsoever he pleases, dealings and partnerships with whom he will, and in all these transactions advantage and profit for himself," and so forth, including a not unreasonable expectation of divine favor.¹⁶ Socrates has to prove that a just man whose condition is that described by Glaucon will still lead a happier life than anyone who is unjust if he is to show that, in terms of happiness, which is the Platonic criterion for the choice among lives,¹⁷ one ought to choose the just life. Again, if Socrates is able to show that an unjust man who enjoys the existence depicted by Glaucon is more wretched than any just man, that will suffice for choosing to reject any unjust life. As Prichard remarked, "Plato certainly did not underrate his task. Indeed, in reading his statement

¹⁵ Excerpted from 361c 3-362a 2; cf. the entire passage, 360e 1-362c 8.

¹⁶ Compare 613c 8-614a 3.

¹⁷ See the passages cited in n. 5 *supra*. Cf. also Foster, in *Mind* (1937), 387, and (1938), 229, 231-232; A. W. H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility, A Study in Greek Values* (Oxford, 1960), pp. 264, 283 ff., especially 290-291.

of it, we wonder how he ever came to think that he could execute it.”

Some questions present themselves here. Assuming that the reader is acquainted with Plato's characterization of justice as a particular ordering of the parts of the soul, I will discuss these questions very briefly. Could Plato have thought it possible to lead a life which was neither just nor unjust? In Books VIII and IX he ranks kinds of souls according to degrees of injustice in them; might he have held that some souls lack both *δικαιοσύνη* and *ἀδικία*? On the Platonic conception of justice, the answer has to be no because, first, Plato is obliged to affirm, concerning numerous actions which may involve no one besides the agent, that they are done either justly or unjustly; for they, too, can alter the ordering, the polity or constitution, of the soul's parts. Secondly and decisively, even if one could avoid all actions that, on Plato's encompassing view, are just or unjust, the soul's parts would nevertheless be ordered one way or another; that is, either justice or injustice would be present (cf. 449a 1-5).

Another question, one often touched upon by H. W. B. Joseph in his *Essays in Ancient and Modern Philosophy*,¹⁸ can be posed as follows. Few persons, if any, are perfectly just or consummately unjust; does Plato really try to maintain that all such intermediate lives are less happy than any perfectly just man's life would be? Since Socrates agrees that there are a variety of good things besides justice,¹⁹ this question might be put by asking whether Plato really thinks that a life which includes an abundance of goods other than justice—but involves some injustice—must be less happy than, for example, the existence of Glaucon's beleaguered though just man. Anyone familiar with the *Republic* will know that this question has to be answered in the affirmative. Plato's consideration of the matter, it should be observed, is developed in terms of his own conception of justice. Thus in Book IV, Socrates states that there is one form of *ἀρετή*, or excellence, of the soul but limitless ones of *κακία*, or defect (cf. 445c 5-d 1; also 449a 1-5), four of which are worth special notice; they

¹⁸ Pp. 76, 80-81, 140-141, 153-154.

¹⁹ See, however, *Rep.*, 491c-495a, 505a ff., 521a.

are the defects responsible for the timocratic, oligarchical, democratic, and tyrannical polities of the soul, the famous discussion of which occupies Books VIII and IX. There, while contending that the man whose soul possesses its ἀρετή is happier than any man whose soul lacks it, Plato tries to determine which of the four forms of κακία produces the least unhappiness and which the greatest wretchedness. Clearly, what Plato attempts to establish—but again in terms of his own conception of justice—is that any intermediate life, any soul characterized by some degree of injustice, is inferior in point of happiness to the perfectly just, despite any other good things an intermediate life might include; and that the extent to which a soul is unjust is paralleled, *pari passu*, by the misery of the man whose soul it is (cf. 576b-e; 580a-c).

To summarize thus far: I began with the familiar observation that Plato held that the choice between the just life and an unjust life is to be decided by determining which is the happier. I then claimed that this position of Plato's is complicated by the presence in the *Republic* of two conceptions of justice, Socrates maintaining a distinctively Platonic one and Thrasymachus a vulgar one, while Glaucon and Adeimantus give expression to both. After stating the vulgar conception, I discussed some aspects of the Platonic one. In my discussion of the latter I tried to clarify what was meant when Socrates affirmed—and when Glaucon and Adeimantus insisted that he establish—that justice is good for its own sake or good in itself, and injustice evil in itself. Plato, I contended, characterized justice and injustice in these ways because he thought that on their own—or by themselves—they effect the soul's greatest good and greatest evil; this being due, Plato believed, to the powers which they inevitably exert upon the souls in which they are present. I further claimed that, on Plato's view, justice or injustice—one or the other but not both—must exist in every soul, and that the man in whose soul justice exists will be happier than a man whose soul includes any degree of injustice, happiness varying inversely with injustice.

In what follows, I argue that Plato failed to relate the two conceptions of justice adequately and that it is implausible to suppose that the omission, a complex one, can be repaired. Con-

sequently, Plato's conclusions about happiness and justice—as he conceives the latter—prove irrelevant to the dispute between Socrates and Thrasymachus (and Glaucon and Adeimantus, in so far as they, too, are concerned with the happiness of vulgarly just and unjust men).

THE FALLACY

Toward the end of Book IV, Socrates formulates the Platonic conception of the just man: a man, each part of whose soul attends to its business or function, performing no tasks but its own. Further, Socrates says that if an action preserves or helps to produce the condition of the soul in which each of its parts does its own task, one ought to believe the action just and name it so, and believe an action unjust and name it so if it has a contrary effect (see 443e 4-444a 2). In accord with this, Socrates suggests that acting justly is to be understood as acting in a way which will produce the condition of justice in the soul, and that acting unjustly is to be understood as behavior which produces a contrary condition. Glaucon, I take it, is sounding a like note when he affirms that just acts are necessarily productive of justice, unjust ones of injustice (444c 1-3; 444c 10-d 2).

It will be recalled that Thrasymachus, in stating his position, mentioned among unjust acts temple-robbing, kidnaping, swindling, thieving, and so forth. This list, again, was enlarged by Glaucon's mention of sexual relations with whom one pleases, killing, freeing from bonds anyone one wishes, and so forth; that is, acts commonly judged immoral or criminal. The man of whom it was to be proven that his life will be happier than other lives is the man who does not commit such acts.

What Plato tries to establish, however, is that a man each of the parts of whose soul performs its own task, and who conducts himself throughout his days in such a way that this condition will remain unaltered, leads a happier life than any men whose souls are not thus ordered. Regardless of Plato's success or failure in this endeavor, for it to be at all relevant he has to prove that his conception of the just man precludes behavior commonly judged immoral or criminal; that is, he must prove that the con-

duct of his just man also conforms to the ordinary or vulgar canons of justice. Second, he has to prove that his conception of the just man applies to—is exemplified by—every man who is just according to the vulgar conception. For, short of this last, he will not have shown it impossible for men to conform to vulgar justice and still be less happy than men who do not. Plato had to meet both of these requirements if his conclusions about happiness and justice are to bear successfully against Thrasymachus' contentions and satisfy Glaucon's and Adeimantus' demands of Socrates. There are passages in the *Republic* which show that Plato thought there was no problem about the first requirement; there are, however, no passages which indicate that he was aware of the second. In any event, the fact is that he met neither requirement; nor is it plausible to suppose that he could have met either of them. Before I argue that this is the position as regards the main argument of the *Republic*, some objections which may be raised here should be faced.

For the purposes of this paper, which are the internal criticism and incidental clarification of the main argument of the *Republic*, I am not questioning—what have often been questioned—Plato's conclusions to the effect that men who are Platonically just are happier than men who are not, and that the farther a man's soul is from Platonic justice the more wretched he will be. My object is to show that these conclusions of Plato's are irrelevant to the dispute between Socrates and Thrasymachus and Thrasymachus' sometime advocates, Glaucon and Adeimantus. However, to press both of the requirements that I have stated may seem too stringent. It may be felt that, if Plato's conclusions are granted, he then need fulfill only the first requirement; that is, provide a demonstration that the Platonically just man cannot perpetrate vulgar injustice. For Plato's conclusions, together with such a demonstration, would have the consequence that the happiest men are among those who conform to vulgar justice; thereby, Thrasymachus' position would be refuted. But even granting Plato's conclusions, had he met the first requirement and not the second, he would have left open the possibility of Platonically unjust men who were vulgarly just and yet no happier, perhaps less so, than vulgarly unjust men. Alternatively,

it may be thought that the satisfaction of the second requirement—namely, a demonstration that the vulgarly just man is Platonically just—would, together with Plato's conclusions, have sufficed. For it would then follow that no one was happier than vulgarly just individuals; and this, too, would refute Thrasymachus' position. It would, however, leave open the possibility of there being men who were Platonically just, and consequently as happy as anyone else, yet capable of vulgar injustices and crimes. Because of these considerations, both requirements had to be satisfied.

Both explicitly and by implication, Plato distinguished his special conception of justice from the ordinary understanding of morality.²⁰ Moreover, he repeatedly alleged connections between the two. In Book IV, after Socrates defines the virtues (441c-442d), he and Glaucon agree that the Platonically just man is least likely of all men to commit what would ordinarily be thought immoral acts; and in Book VI, Socrates attributes the vulgar moral virtues to men of a philosophical nature—to men, that is, whose souls are pre-eminently ordered by Platonic justice (484a-487a). Doubtless, then, Plato thought that men who were just according to his conception of justice would pass the tests of ordinary morality. But although Plato more than once has Socrates say things to this effect, he nowhere tries to prove it. Attempts to show that Platonic justice entails ordinary morality are strikingly missing from the *Republic*; Plato merely assumes that having the one involves having the other. The assumption, moreover, is implausible. On Plato's view, the fulfillment of the functions of the soul's parts constitutes wisdom or intelligence,²¹ courage, and self-control; and if these obtain, justice, according to Plato, also obtains. Intelligence, courage, and self-control are, however, *prima facie* compatible with a variety of vulgar injustices and evil-

²⁰ In addition to the passage cited in note 8 *supra*, see 517d-e and 538c-539d.

²¹ Because "wisdom," the orthodox translation of *σοφία*, is the name of something intimately connected with justice and morality as they are ordinarily understood, I suggest, as an alternative, "intelligence"; whatever Plato intended by his employment of *σοφία* toward the end of Book IV, one is not entitled to assume without argument that a man who possesses it will be ordinarily just or moral. There is some warrant for using "intelligence" because, in at least one relevant passage, Plato employs *φρόνησις* interchangeably with *σοφία*. See 433b 8 *et circa*.

doing. Neither as usually understood nor as Plato characterizes them are those virtues inconsistent with performing any of the acts Thrasymachus and Glaucon mention as examples of injustice. In this regard it is tempting to assert that the most that can be said on behalf of Plato's argument is that crimes and evils could not be done by a Platonically just man in a foolish, unintelligent, cowardly, or uncontrolled way.

In Books VIII and IX, where Plato sketches the degeneration of the polities of city and soul, the motives he uses to characterize the timocratic, oligarchical, and democratic types of soul are motives which, especially when strong, may lead to vulgar immorality and crime. But Plato, it should be noted, does not state or even suggest that it is inevitable for them to do so. By contrast, his account of the tyrannical soul, the opposite extreme from the Platonically just, is replete with the description of crimes that men who have tyrannical souls commit (573e-576a); their immorality and wickedness, aggravated if they become actual tyrants, is said to pertain necessarily to them (580a 1-7). However, the suggestion that men with souls of a timocratic or oligarchical or democratic kind are prone to perform immoral acts of course fails to satisfy the first requirement for Plato's conclusions to be relevant. And if it were granted that men whose souls are tyrannical are somehow necessarily evil-doers, this still would not meet the requirement. That is, neither separately nor conjointly do the theses of Books VIII and IX about other types of soul exclude the possibility of men whose souls are Platonically just committing what would ordinarily be judged immoral acts. Any supposition to the effect that the theses of Books VIII and IX were meant by Plato to establish the claim that vulgarly unjust acts can be performed only by men whose souls lack Platonic justice is unconfirmed by the text of those books;²² in any case, Books VIII and IX contain neither proof nor intimation of a proof for that further thesis.

²² As I have stated, at other places in the *Republic* Plato makes unsupported claims tantamount to the assertion that if one's soul is Platonically just, one will be vulgarly just, and this of course implies that, if vulgar injustice is done, it is done by men whose souls lack Platonic justice.

The first requirement, then, is left unfulfilled. Plato merely has Socrates reiterate the implausible assumption a demonstration of which was needed. The second requirement, it will be recalled, is a proof that the vulgarly just man is Platonically just. While there are passages in the *Republic* which indicate that Plato thought there were no difficulties about the first requirement, the position is not even this favorable in regard to the second: he nowhere so much as assumes that men who are just according to the ordinary conception are also Platonically just. Indeed, there is no reason to suppose that this was his belief; but the omission of a claim to that effect within the framework of his argument cannot but seem surprising. Plato abundantly represents Thrasymachus, Glaucon, and Adeimantus as questioning the happiness of ordinarily just, moral men. It seems incontrovertible that when they ask to be shown how justice, because of its power, constitutes the greatest good of the soul, Glaucon and Adeimantus are taking for granted that the souls of vulgarly just men will enjoy the effects of justice. Nonetheless, an examination of Socrates' reply to Glaucon and Adeimantus (an examination, that is, of Book II, 367e to Book X, 612b) fails to uncover any claim whose import is that vulgar justice entails Platonic justice.

A remark I quoted earlier may seem capable of being drafted into Plato's service here. After Socrates and Glaucon agree that the Platonically just man is the least likely of all men to commit vulgar injustices, Socrates says, "And is not the cause of this to be found in the fact that each of the principles within him does its own work in the matter of ruling and being ruled?" (443b 1-2). Socrates is here stating that the cause of the Platonically just man's vulgar justice is precisely that he is Platonically just. Perhaps someone might be tempted, on the basis of the remark, to think that Plato was suggesting that Platonic justice is a necessary condition for vulgar justice. There is, however, no warrant for extending the remark in this way. Although Plato sometimes speaks of an item as the cause (*αἰτία*) of something where it seems that he thinks of it as a necessary condition of it (for example, when he speaks of the "forms" as causes at *Phaedo* 100c-d *et circa*), his uses of *αἰτία* are by no means always of this kind. Nor do I see any reasons for thinking he is so using it at 443b 1-2. A more likely construction

of those lines would take them as equivalent to the claim that Platonic justice is sufficient to insure vulgar justice; that is, as equivalent to the implausible assumption, a proof of which is my first requirement.

Apart from the fact that Plato never states that being vulgarly just entails being Platonically just, one may wonder if such a claim is at all plausible. It does not seem to be; for instance, scrupulous, rule-bound men of the very type evoked by Plato's portrait of Cephalus at the beginning of the *Republic* provide examples of men who are vulgarly just but whose souls lack Platonic justice, and men with timocratic souls might provide additional Platonic counterexamples to the claim that vulgar justice entails Platonic justice.

My criticism of Plato's argument, it is worth observing, is unaffected by considerations of how he understood happiness (*εὐδαιμονία*) or blessedness (*μακαριότης*); and, again, my criticism is independent of the success or failure of his attempts to establish the happiness of *his* just man. Had Plato succeeded in showing that the happiest or most blessed of men are those who are just according to his conception of justice, and that the farther a man is from exemplifying Platonic justice the more unhappy he will be, Plato still would not have shown either that Platonic justice entails vulgar justice or the converse. That is, he would still have to relate his conclusions to the controversy which, plainly, they are intended to settle.†

In conclusion, a speculation: it concerns one of the possible philosophical motives for Plato's conception of *δικαιοσύνη*. In the first interchanges of the *Republic*, the existence of exceptions to moral rules of conduct is emphasized. Plato has Socrates more than once assert—both of telling the truth and paying back or restoring what one owes—that it is sometimes just to do these things, sometimes unjust (*ἐνίοτε μὲν δικάως, ἐνίοτε δὲ ἀδίκως ποιεῖν*, 331c 4-5; cf. 331c 1-332a 5 entire). Partly on this basis, partly because of similar passages in other dialogues, I believe it likely that Plato held that there are allowable exceptions to every moral rule, or virtually every moral rule, of conduct.²³ What is more, I believe that Plato was so impressed by what he took to be permissible exceptions to moral rules of

conduct that his certainty of the existence of those exceptions, together with his certainty that no defining logos could have any exceptions, led him to—or confirmed him in—the view that rules of conduct do not constitute anything essential to morality or justice. This, I believe, was one of the principal motives for his characterization of *δικαιοσύνη*, a characterization not in terms of conduct and the relations of persons, but in terms of the relations of parts of the soul.

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²³ Cf., e.g., the vexed passage, *Phaedo* 62a 1-7 *et circa*; *Symposium* 180e 4-181a 6; 183d 3-6. The remarks in Pausanias' speech in the *Symposium* are, of course, of dubious value as evidence for Plato's own views. For further discussion of the point and additional references, see G. Santas, *The Socratic Paradoxes and Virtue and Happiness in Plato's Earlier Dialogues* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1961), p. 68 *et passim*.

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⁸ **Is Plato's Republic Utilitarian?**

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⁹ **A Mistake of Plato's in the "Republic": A Rejoinder to Mr. Mabbott**

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¹⁴ **A Mistake of Plato's in the Republic**

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¹⁷ **A Mistake of Plato's in the Republic**

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