

GOOD IS BETTER THAN EVIL BECAUSE IT IS NICER: SOCRATES' DEFENSE OF JUSTICE IN THE *REPUBLIC*

T. F. MORRIS

In this article I argue that the *Republic* has a literary quality for which it is not generally given credit. There is a subtext that shows that, in order for Socrates to answer Glaucon's objections to the goodness of the just life, he must identify (1) something that is worse than pain and (2) something that is better than pleasure. I then show that the dialogue supplies answers to these two challenges.

I. What is Better than Pleasure and What is Worse than Pain

Glaucon argues that those who think justice is merely a means to future ends are correct on the grounds that when we juxtapose a perfectly unjust life with a perfectly just life it is obvious that the unjust life is "by far the better of the two" (358c5-6). He pictures a just man being tortured and an unjust man living a life of luxury and security. If there were nothing worse than pain, then there would be nothing worse than the life of the just man who refuses to allow himself to care about how he appears to his torturers and therefore accepts being tortured. If there were nothing better than pleasure, then there would seem to be nothing better than the life of the man who is such a master of injustice that he can attain great luxury and security without ever appearing to be unjust (as long as he is healthy).¹ On the other hand, if there were something worse to experience than

¹ I take the *Republic's* two proofs that intellectual pleasure is superior to bodily pleasure (580c-583a, 583b-588a) to be facetious. After having observed that a just man's true character might be unknown to heaven and to mankind (580c6-7), Socrates employs as a premise that is in contradiction with this: that the brave and wise have experienced the pleasure of being honored by the many (582c5-7). And after observing that experience would be required to judge which life is the most pleasant (582a4-5), Socrates presents an argument that is in contradiction with this claim, for he does not refer to experience when he deduces that intellectual pleasure is exactly 729 times more pleasant than bodily pleasure. Either I have had no experience of intellec-

pain, then it might make sense to undergo terrible torture for the sake of avoiding that even worse thing; and if there were something better to experience than pleasure, it might make sense to forego injustice in order to attain to that even better thing.²

I realized that the task confronting Socrates was that of finding something that is worse than pain and something that is better than pleasure only after I read Adeimantus' description of what the poets say about the just life. The reward they promise to people who have a good name with the gods is "a banquet of the blest, where they sit for all time carousing with garlands on their heads, as if the noblest reward for virtue were an eternity of intoxication" (363c5-d2). Adeimantus' formulation, "as if the noblest reward for virtue were," seemed to imply that the poets were limited in their ability to think of good rewards. He thus seemed to be raising the possibility that, if the poets were more able, they might be able to envision a nobler reward for virtue than the pleasure of intoxication. And then he goes on to say that, when the poets depict what is in store for the unjust, they merely recite "all those tortures which Glaucon described ... they can think of no others" (363d7-e3). The ostensible point of this second pas-

tual pleasure or intellectual pleasure is considerably less than that many times more pleasant than some intensities of sexual pleasure. Furthermore, as Dorter observes, "It is odd that Socrates would introduce the subject of pleasure at all, since he was challenged to show only that just people are happier than unjust ones, not that they live more pleasantly, and Socrates is the last person to equate pleasure with happiness (p. 290).

² Thus Ranasinghe is incorrect when he claims that the problem is framed in such a way as to "make it impossible for Socrates to defend the good life in any positive way" (p. 10).

Bosanquet is unnecessarily Kantian when he claims, "The question 'why should I be moral?' if referred to consequences outside morality, is of course self-contradictory" (p.171).

Stauffer is incorrect when he says that Glaucon is asking why justice is more important than one's own good (p.126). Glaucon is explicitly asking Socrates to explain why being just is in one's own good.

Irwin (p. 249), Geels (p. 454), and Mackenzie (pp. 619-620) see Socrates' task as that of showing that the just man is happy even while he is being tortured. But Glaucon's position is that it is obvious that when one juxtaposes the thoroughly just life with the thoroughly unjust life, "the unjust life is much the better of the two" (358c5-6). Socrates is to meet this challenge by "showing what each in and of itself does to its possessor, whereby the unjust life is bad and the just life is good" (367b3-5). Socrates would need to show that the just man is happy even while being tortured only if it is presupposed that the just life involves nothing but torture. For that matter, even if the just man were tortured to death, there would still be the possibility that the afterlife would make it worthwhile for the just man to accept torture.

Butler must be mistaken when he suggests that the question of "which life is happiest" is ultimately resolved by answering the question "which life is most pleasant" (p.15). Any finite amount of pleasure one receives from being just can be offset by ratcheting up the pain of the just man's torture. Prichard makes a similar mistake (pp.176-177).

sage is that if even the poets cannot think of something worse than the pain of Glaucon's torture then Glaucon would seem to be correct: it would make no sense to choose to be the just person being tortured rather than the unjust person living a life of luxury and security.³ But the emphasis on the poets' inability again suggests that someone with more insight might be able to name something worse than pain. Plato does not actually say that Socrates' defense of the goodness of justice requires that he find something better than pleasure and something worse than pain, but it seems clear that he has purposely left these clues to show us that that is what is required of Socrates. It is surely not a mere coincidence that the ideas in one set of passages shows how to resolve the problem raised in the other set.

What injustice causes that is worse than pain is eventually shown to be the making of one's life so that it is not worth living (445a5-b4). Would you be willing to endure great pain, if the alternative were living a meaningless life? I suppose that I might break down if the pain were great enough, but I would certainly be willing to experience, say, the pain of hitting my thumb with a hammer, if the alternative were living a meaningless life. I want my life to be meaningful.

Socrates also addresses the other half of the problem: he describes a happiness that is in contrast with "a happiness like that of a party of peasants feasting at a fair" (421b1-3)—and thus also in contrast to the eternity of intoxication that was all that the poets could promise to those who appear to the gods to be good (363c5-d2). Socrates' happiness—the most happiness of which the guardians' nature can partake (421b5)—is for the guardians "to make themselves masters each of his own craft" (421c1-5).⁴ Even though the good of the state will require them to severely limit their material possessions, "it would not surprise us if the

³ Rosen is mistaken in holding that Adeimantus is here criticizing the poets because they make a powerful contribution to the corruption of the many (p. 67). Adeimantus is explicitly supporting Glaucon's position, that people do not value justice apart from the future states to which it gives rise (362d2-5), by arguing that they have been taught from childhood (by poets and others) to value justice for the sake of its future consequences.

⁴ Mohr sees that "a Platonic happiness is something quite close to what we would call job satisfaction or a sense of actualizing ourselves through work" (p. 131).

Prichard (p. 179) and Schipper (p. 73) think that happiness is attained through desiring to serve the good of the state. But other ways of serving the good of the state would not give just people this specific happiness. It is not serving the good of the state, per se, that makes them happy; it just so happens that, in making themselves masters of the craft that comes naturally to them, these people will also be serving the good of the state.

Missing this passage, Reeve thinks that the guardians' happiness consists in such negative traits as not having lawsuits or assaults, etc., and also in engaging in outdoor sports, and being able to rely on such a state continuing (*Philosopher-Kings*, p. 185).

men living in this way prove to be most happy" (420b4-5).⁵ This "most happiness" would have to be the happiness that Plato thinks comes from justice—otherwise there would be something which he would have to say would be more valuable than justice and for the sake of which therefore one should be willing to forego being just (that is, unless the negative effects of injustice were so great that they outweighed the positive benefits of this new thing).

Their great happiness is not a matter of merely practicing the craft for which they are fitted; it is making themselves "masters each of their own craft." But would such mastery really be better than pleasure?⁶ Who is happier: Michelangelo working on a statue or people who are so high on drugs that their eyes are glazed over? While Michelangelo is, no doubt, experiencing pleasure, it would not be as much pleasure as a person extremely high on heroin. But we are being too easy on Plato in using the example of a great artist; let us merely use the example of someone whose natural occupation is that of repairing cars. And, furthermore, let us say that it is possible to experience even more pleasure than that of heroin by having a certain area of one's brain stimulated by electrodes. I was once told of someone who had had such an experience and who had described it as being "as if all the bells of heaven were ringing." Would that not be better than working on cars? I think not, for does it not seem that, after a while, someone experiencing these bells of heaven would want to stop having their brain stimulated, leave the hospital, and do something? Thanks; it has been a great vacation, but I do not want to be here for the rest of my life. That is the reason why people do not want to be junkies. Junkies surely experience pleasure, but they lose their ability to be humanly responsive to what is around them. There is something better than pleasure, and that has to do with interacting with the world in a human way. Of course there are other types of human responsiveness besides that of doing one's job masterfully. There are feasting with one's children, singing hymns to the gods, and begetting offspring (372b5-c1), but Plato evidently thinks that fulfilling ourselves through mastery in our natural work is both a necessary condition and a sufficient condition for the most happiness we can experience.

⁵ Nichols (p. 86) and Bloom (p. 370) are mistaken in thinking that Plato implies that the guardians are not happy.

Newell is mistaken when he writes that one of the germs of Plato's political philosophy is "the hypothesis that the fullest human satisfaction can only come to sight by way of convention" (p. 110). We can have the most happiness, if we merely master the job that comes naturally to us.

⁶ Strauss mistakes pleasure for happiness when he concludes, from 583a's (surely facetious) claim that philosophy is the most pleasant work, that "only in philosophy do justice and happiness coincide" (p. 59).

Thus a defense of justice would explain how a just life would enable one to avoid living a meaningless life and also how it would enable one to become a master of the job that comes naturally to one. But, before we see how Plato accomplishes these explanations, we shall first consider Glaucon's challenge to Socrates in greater detail.

II. Glaucon's Examples of the Types of Objects of Desire

In Book 1 Socrates defends justice as a means to future, beneficial circumstances. For example, if one is just then one will have the practical advantage of having the gods be on one's side (352a5-b2). The really good thing here is being aligned with the gods, and justice is merely a means to bringing about that particular future state of affairs. But a means to future goods can *also* be valued for its immediate effects. At the beginning of Book 2 Glaucon wants to know if this is true of justice.

He lists three possibilities. There is a problem with the examples he uses for one of them.

- (1) Such things as joy and harmless pleasures are valued merely for their immediate effects, even though they do not lead to any further consequences in the future (εἰς τὸν ἔπειτα χρόνον)(357b7-8).⁷

⁷ The secondary literature, beginning with Foster (p.386), has often confused Glaucon's distinction with the distinction between 'a means to an end' and 'an end in itself'. This confusion causes Foster (p.386) and Irwin (pp. 213-214) to hold that Socrates does not succeed in his job of defending the noninstrumental goodness of justice. But, if Glaucon were asking whether or not justice were an end in itself, then Socrates' job would not be what Adeimantus describes it as being: "to show what injustice and justice each in and of itself does to its possessor, whereby the unjust life is bad and the just life is good" (367b3-5). If I value justice for what it does to its possessor, then I value it as a means to an end. But I can still value it for what it brings to me immediately, regardless of what future circumstances arise, rather than for the sake of its instrumentality in bringing about those future circumstances (εἰς τὸν ἔπειτα χρόνον). (As White observes, "We are on extremely weak ground if we hold, *simply* because he uses a phrase traditionally translated as [good for its own sake], that the notion he has in mind is the one which we use it to express" [p. 410].)

Lutz makes the same mistake, but then correctly adds: "The most obvious difference among the categories seems to be that the goods in the first two categories are enjoyable immediately, while those in the third category are enjoyed only for what they subsequently bring" (p. 573).

Sachs (p. 41) (followed by White [p. 420], Hyland [p. 38], and Reeve [*Philosopher-Kings*, pp. 29ff.]) thinks that Plato is concerned with the distinction between what follows with necessity and what follows contingently. But necessary consequences (for example, death following upon

- (2) There are things valued both for their immediate effects and for sake of the future consequences to which they give rise. These are things such as “knowledge and seeing and health” (357c2-3).
- (3) There are burdensome things that we value only for the sake of the future consequences to which they give rise. This class includes “physical training, medical treatment, and making one’s money as a doctor or otherwise” (357c5-7).

The problem has to do with Glaucon’s examples of the third type of object. While there is a pink medicine that my children enjoyed taking, and while I once knew someone who was very enthusiastic about the possibility of sexual therapy, it is not fair to use such modern medical treatments as counterexamples to Glaucon’s claim that medical treatment is merely a means to a future good. As for physical training, I do not think anyone actually enjoys doing push-ups—after one has finished doing the last push-up of which one is capable one is certainly glad that the pushups are over. But is it really true that no one enjoys his or her means of making a living? For example, rich people sometimes have hobbies, activities that they enjoy doing even though no one pays them to do them. Is it false that no one has ever made their living by doing what they would be doing as a hobby if they were rich? Does George Bernard Shaw’s dictum “Happy is the man who can make a living by his hobby” (*Pygmalion* act 1, line 111) apply to no one? Did not Picasso still enjoy painting pictures after he was rich? Some people enjoy repairing cars. I know that I often enjoy teaching a class. (Indeed, all other things being equal, would not poor people doing what they love to do forty hours a week have a better life than, say, highly paid lawyers who do not like doing their job? If you do not like your job, then you need to buy that BMW to make up for the fact that you have not been happy all week long. But if you love what you have been doing, you would not feel such a need.) Perhaps Plato merely wrote this passage carelessly, or perhaps he is a great writer and has some purpose in drawing our attention to the fact that sometimes people find that doing their work makes them happy. (This is also an issue at 346e7-347a3 where Socrates claims that no one would rule a country without also being paid wages

the taking of poison) can still be in the future, and Glaucon is explicitly talking about things which are valued without regard to their future consequences. There is the same problem with the view of Dorter (p. 57), Devereux (p. 277), and Mitchell & Lucas (p. 21) that the distinction is between what is intrinsic and what is extrinsic.

(346e7-347a3), for no one would employ an art that merely benefits others unless they could derive some personal benefit from doing so.)

In any case, in order to defend justice Socrates must show that justice has an immediate effect upon the soul that is desirable even if no future ends are attained to, and that injustice has an immediate effect upon the soul that is undesirable even if future desirable ends are attained to. Thus he will attempt an “inquiry as to the relation of pure justice and pure injustice in respect of the happiness and unhappiness of the possessor” (545a6-8). He needs to consider both the good effects of justice and the bad effects of injustice, because the mere fact that justice gives something better than pleasure does not show that justice is better to experience than injustice. It might still be possible for the unjust man to attain to that thing (e.g., an unjust natural musician might still have the opportunity to play music masterfully), and thus the unjust life might still be the superior; and it also might be possible that the badness of the just man’s experience of pain would outweigh the goodness of the thing that is better than pleasure, and thus again the just life might still be the inferior.⁸

III. The Ring of Gyges

Glaucon explained to Socrates that he would play the devil’s advocate and make the case that justice is one of those burdensome things that are not valued for their immediate effects. One of the ways he did so was to use the ring of Gyges—a ring that can make its wearer invisible—to argue that people do not really value justice apart from the future states to which it gives rise.

He supplied many details about the initial discovery of this ring. If Plato is a good writer, these details ought to have some significance. A great storm and an earthquake were occurring at the same time. A chasm opened up.

Gyges’ ancestor went down into the chasm and saw, among other wonders of which the story tells, a bronze horse, hollow, with windows in its sides. Peering in, he saw a dead body, which seemed to be of more than human size. It was naked save for a gold ring, which he took from its finger and made his way out. (359d3-e1)

First of all, what are we to make of the hollow horse? It would seem to be an allusion to the Trojan horse. What would be the point of alluding to the Trojan

⁸ Reeve is mistaken in thinking that the issue is whether justice itself (i.e., without regard to its necessary consequences, according to Reeve) is better than injustice itself (“Socrates, the Apollonian?” p. 30). The issue is whether justice itself is better than injustice *with* all the future consequences that Thrasymachus, Glaucon, and Adeimantus attribute to injustice.

horse immediately before Gyges' ancestor makes a discovery that would make one's heart leap for joy? The point would be that perhaps this ring is a Trojan horse; perhaps it will not turn out to be so good for Gyges' ancestor after all.⁹ (Perhaps it will even destroy his soul and make his life not worth living.)

Secondly, the ring is found on a dead body. While the previous owner of the ring might have had his fun for a while, it evidently did not solve all of his problems: he is now a disgusting dead body. (I hope Gyges' ancestor wiped the ring off before he put it on.)¹⁰ That part of us that would leap for joy at possessing the ring of Gyges has a limited perspective. If we had the big picture and realized that we too shall eventually die, we would not see the ring as establishing our happiness. (This would also be the significance of the fact that the story is about Gyges' ancestor, rather than about Gyges: we think of him as already being dead.)

Thirdly, it would seem that the ring had an effect upon its previous owner, for the dead body is now larger than a normal human body.¹¹ Perhaps being able to get whatever one desires might have a negative side effect upon the wearer of the ring. (Perhaps it would even corrupt his soul to the point where his life would no longer be worth living.)

Glaucon made a very strong point when he argued that, if so-called just people were to have the opportunity, they would also use the ring to get what they want: "No one would be so adamant as to stand fast in doing what is just" (360b4-5). If you think you would be able to stand fast, then you must also think that you would never give in to *any* temptation, for the ring would offer you the sweetest, most luscious temptation of which you could possibly think. If you have ever given in to temptation, Glaucon could say to you, "You gave in to *that* temptation, and now you expect us to believe that you will not give in to the temptations offered by the ring?"¹² It does seem impossible. But, when Socrates

⁹ Howland sees that this is reminiscent of the Trojan horse, but he takes the point to be that the power of the ring is politically destructive (*The Republic*, pp.81-82). This must be incorrect, for, other than the fact that Gyges replaces the old king, there is no political destruction: the kingdom merely has a new king. Ophir makes a similar mistake (p.22).

¹⁰ Howland's view that the grave robbing shows that Gyges's ancestor had vigor in pursuing injustice ("Storytelling and Philosophy in Plato's *Republic*, p. 272) is incorrect. Gyges' ancestor does not even exhibit the vigor of a grave robber, for he doesn't even have to dig up the dead body. All he has to do is stoop down and remove the ring from the hand of the corpse.

¹¹ I see no justification for Howland's view that "the corpse's hugeness suggests complete erotic fulfillment" (*The Republic*, p.82).

¹² Irwin argues that because use of the ring upsets the system of justice which benefits me, "I apparently have good reason to refuse Gyges' ring" (*Plato's Moral Theory*, p.186). But the justice

eventually says, "I am afraid to commit a sin by holding aloof while I have breath and strength to say a word in the defense of justice," (368b7-c2) he is indicating that at least he himself would not forsake justice, even if he were being terribly tortured.¹³

In order to be faithful to justice while being tortured, Socrates would have to have some understanding of what is so good about justice or of what is so bad about injustice. For example, merely thinking that it is a sin not to defend justice would not be enough to prevent one from using the ring. But, if, for example, he did better than Adam in the Garden of Eden and actually kept God in mind, then he could abstain from temptation because he did not want to disappoint God. With the parameters in Glaucon's example, he would need to hold before his mind's eye either the thing that is better than justice or the thing that is worse than pain.

Glaucon next imagines something equivalent to having the ring of Gyges: "We must endow a man with the full complement of injustice; we must allow him to have secured a spotless reputation for virtue while committing the blackest of crimes" (361a5-b1). The great thing about the ring of Gyges is that it allows one to do injustice and not be blamed, but there are other ways of avoiding blame: one might be so clever that one can be thoroughly unjust and still "defend oneself with convincing eloquence if one's misdeeds come to light" (361b2-3). This would be just as effective as the ring of Gyges.¹⁴ For example, some people

that is established by Glaucon's social contract theory only benefits "those who have not the power to seize the advantage of doing injustice and the power to escape the harm of having injustice done to them" (358e6-359a1). With a ring that makes one invisible one would have both of these powers.

Dorter is mistaken in thinking that the story of Gyges' ring is saying that power corrupts (p. 270). The power given by the ring merely makes evident that one did not really care about justice in the first place.

¹³ Taylor begs the question when he writes, "We all know that there is no human virtue which would not be deteriorated by confidence of immunity from detection" (p.270). Plato, after all, consistently presents Socrates as Mr. Perfect.

Tenkku does not see the strength of Glaucon's position when he suggests the counterexample of a devoted patriot who acts "justly and nobly even in secret" (p.127). Glaucon is not denying that people sometimes refrain from giving in to temptation; he is saying that, when the temptation is unlimited, people will give in.

¹⁴ I do not see why Bernardete thinks that only the unjust person who never makes mistakes is equivalent to Gyges (p.38). Gyges' ancestor could certainly still make mistakes, e.g., he could mistake the maid-in-waiting for the queen. But the ring makes it so that no one can see that he has done something unjust. Similarly, the great ability of the perfectly unjust person is that, even if he makes mistakes and thus his "misdeeds come to light" (361b3), he can still persuade people to think he is just.

are so clever that they can steal the White House furniture, get caught, say they thought the pieces of furniture were gifts to them personally, and not have it affect how large an honorarium they receive when they speak.

And then Socrates is presented with the choice we discussed above: would you rather have a life like that of such a president, or would you prefer to be a truly just person—i.e., someone who cares about being just, rather than about appearing to be just (361b8-9)—and who, because he appears to others to be hideously evil, is tortured in a terrible way?¹⁵

IV. Injustice Can Make Your Life Not Worth Living

At the end of Book IV Socrates implicitly addresses the issue of the master of injustice who is clever enough to get away with injustice and still be thought to be just even after his misdeed has come to light. Such a one would have luxury and wealth and power, but:

People think that all the luxury and wealth and power in the world cannot make life worth living when the bodily constitution is going to rack and ruin; and are

Irwin (following Grote) is mistaken in thinking that Glaucon is arguing that, because justice is regarded by people as merely an instrumental good, they therefore value the appearance of justice over the reality (*Plato's Ethics*, p.182). It is clearly the other way around; Glaucon's point is that, because people value the appearance of justice over the reality, justice is regarded by people merely as instrumental to future goods. Whether or not justice is merely instrumental to future goods is the explicit issue with which Glaucon is concerned.

Fussi is mistaken when she claims that we are not told what people really think of the master of injustice (p. 60). If he can defend himself with *convincing* eloquence, then his audience would be convinced that he is innocent.

¹⁵ Bernardete thinks Socrates is here referring to the torture of the merely so-called just person, who *would* make use of the ring of Gyges (p.38), but Glaucon differentiates the torture victim from the so-called just person when he says that this victim would care about being good rather than about appearing to be good (361b5-8). The so-called just person merely cares about appearing to be just. That is why he would use the ring; it allows him to avoid appearing unjust even as he garners the fruits of injustice.

Howland feels that this is unfair to the just person: "It would be fairer and more reasonable to give him a neutral reputation" ("Storytelling and Philosophy in Plato's *Republic*," p. 222n). This is correct, for Glaucon explains that his reason of stripping the just man of the appearance of being just is merely that otherwise "we cannot be sure whether he is just for the sake of justice or for the sake of the gifts and honors that come from being esteemed just" (361b8-c1). However the reputation for injustice is needed to set up the contrast that poses the basic problem of the *Republic*. If the just man were living in bourgeois comfort, it would not be so clear that there must be something very good about being just in order to make the just life an end-in-itself. But if I am going to refrain from giving up my concern for justice and continue to refuse to care about what my torturers think of me, I need to think either that there is something very good about justice or that there is something very bad about injustice.

we to believe that, when the very principle whereby we live is deranged and corrupted, life will be worth living so long as a man can do as he will, and wills to do anything rather than to free himself from vice and wrongdoing and to win justice and virtue? (445a6-b3)

The answer to this question is not as obvious as Socrates and Glaucon take it to be. Surely many people who are caught up in vice would reply to Socrates by saying that having the principle whereby one lives deranged is not as bad as having a ruined body. They might well think of their particular vice as being a lot of fun—so what if I am deranged? (We all pursue that which we think to be good [505e].) The appropriate response from them would be to ask Socrates (1) what he means by "the principle by which they live being deranged and corrupted," and to ask him (2) why that principle's derangement and corruption should make their lives not worth living.¹⁶

The answer the text gives to the first of these two questions is that the appetites are by nature insatiably covetous; by battenning on bodily pleasures they can become so great and powerful that they usurp dominion (442a7-442b2). Exactly how this takes place is described at 485d6-8: "We surely know that when a man's desires set strongly in one direction, in every other channel they flow more feebly, like a stream diverted into another bed."¹⁷ The more we desire something, the greater the predisposition we build up to desire that sort of thing again. We will therefore have a lesser predisposition to care about other things. With time we can become almost entirely given over to that sort of desire—the other channels flowing extremely feebly.¹⁸ For example, when Charles Dickens' Scrooge was

¹⁶ Kochin is mistaken when he claims, "Socrates' conception of justice—which is psychic health—is almost self-evidently in one's own best interest" (p.35). It is not obvious that avoiding terrible torture is not worth giving up some degree of psychic health.

¹⁷ Scott thinks that, because the superficial issues in the vicinity of 485d only deal with justice in a perfunctory way, Plato could not "be described as actually revisiting the conclusion of Book IV to support it further" (pp.8-9). But we should not presuppose a limitation to Plato's artistry *a priori*. For example, the passage that pointed out that the poets cannot think of a better reward for virtue than an eternity of intoxication was not superficially dealing with the fact that Socrates needs to find something better than pleasure in order to answer Glaucon.

¹⁸ Kraut writes, "Plato's idea is that if these features [being able to seduce anyone or kill anyone] of injustice capture its subrational appeal, then it is fair to describe the paradigm of injustice as someone whose sexual appetites and murderous tendencies are extreme" (p.326). But the mere fact that Gyges happened to give in to sexual temptation does not mean that this is characteristic of the unjust person. The channelization of the soul can be caused by any appetite—it does not need to be specifically sexual or murderous. (Kraut also holds that frustration is characteristic of the tyrant [p. 326], but with the ring of Gyges one's desires would not be frustrated.)

a young person he had a number of interests, but as he came to care more and more about money, all of these other interests were no longer important to him.

But, again, what is so bad about becoming fixated upon one thing? Why should that make my life not worth living?

Socrates presents an extremely similar argument in the *Crito*:

1. There is something within us which we used to say is benefited by justice and destroyed by injustice (*Crito* 47d3-5).¹⁹
2. Crito (not Socrates) takes the stand that life is not worth living when the body is ruined (*Crito* 47e3-5).
3. That within us that is benefited by justice and destroyed by injustice is much more important than the body (*Crito* 47e7-48a1).
4. Life is not worth living with that part of us destroyed that is benefited by justice and destroyed by injustice (*Crito* 47e6-7).

The only real difference between this argument and the argument in *Republic* Book 4 is that the *Crito* does not indicate how justice benefits the soul and how injustice destroys the soul (apart from saying that misdirected passion makes things more difficult to deal with [46b1-3]).

Those who would defend a life given over to vice could still disagree with Socrates and say that their souls are not more important than their bodies. We need an indication of why Socrates takes the soul to be so valuable.

Geels sees the dope addict as exemplifying what Plato is talking about, and objects that "such a person bears little, if any, similarity to Glaucon's description of the perfectly unjust man" (p. 457). But psychological addictions can sometimes be more subtle than dope addiction. For example, Socrates talks of people the keen vision of whose little souls is forcibly enlisted in the service of evil and is quick to discern the things that are in those people's interests (519a1-6).

Parry is mistaken in thinking that reason rules the appetites by persuading them as to the badness of long-term consequences (p.114). Appetites would be kept in their place by the individual desiring other things and thus limiting the amount of passion (water) that flows down an appetite's channels. Appetites do not pass judgment; Parry has been lead into making a category mistake.

¹⁹ Blyth writes "It is certainly not an immortal soul if it can be destroyed by injustice" (p.64). But there is more than one possible meaning of destruction. For example the people who are excluded from consideration at *Apology* 28b6-8, people who are not good for the least thing, might have done something to their souls that prevents them from being able to perform with virtue.

Vlastos sees that what makes life not worth living, for Socrates, is the forfeiture of virtue (*Socratic Studies*, p.72).

Socrates reveals what is important to him—in a passage which is therefore very significant, even if its context makes it seem insignificant—when he explains his own motivation to Crito: it would be *disharmonious* for him, at his age, to be disturbed because he must now die (*Crito* 43b10-11). He does not want to be out of harmony with his situation. People who are given over to vice lose the ability to be humanly responsive; they have built up such deep channels within their souls toward the objects of their vice that they are forced to respond mechanically and desire that sort of object yet again. You do not want to be out of it, do you? You do not want it to be appropriate for a Hamlet to come up to you and say: "Have you eyes?" (*Hamlet* 3.4.65). Well then, you had better be careful of the channels that you are developing in your soul. If you are letting yourself care about something more than you care about doing what is just, you are in danger of gradually becoming so devoted to that thing that you make yourself into an unresponsive person. This lack of responsiveness would be why having a ruined soul make one's life not worth living. Thoreau observes, "I wished ... not, when I came to die, [to] discover that I had not lived,"²⁰ and Socrates has a similar desire to live. Neither of them wants to be out of it.

V. Justice as Doing the Job that Comes Naturally

Socrates seems rather coy when, near the end of Book IV, he elliptically describes what it means for someone to be just: "A man will be just by observing the principle we have so often stated" (442d4-5). What principle that might be seems to be made clear by the formulation at 433a1-6:

You remember how, when we first began to establish our commonwealth and several times since, we have laid down, as a universal principle, that everyone ought to perform the one function in the community for which their nature best suits them. Well I believe that that principle, or some form of it, is justice.

These two formulations would seem to be referring to the same principle, because (1) in both formulations Socrates refers to having mentioned the principle a number of times, and (2) because both principles are meant to indicate the meaning of justice. Thus, in the words of 433e12-434a1, justice is the having and doing of one's own; it is performing the function for which one's nature best fits one.²¹ The second of these two similarities can be called into question because at

²⁰ Thoreau, p. 343.

²¹ Irwin holds that "really doing our own work is concerned with good order in the soul, because that good order is most appropriate for us" (*Plato's Moral Theory*, p. 209), rather than being concerned with doing a particular kind of vocation. (Parry similarly holds that the awareness that

433a1-6 the principle is what makes *the state* just, while at 442d4-5 the principle is what makes *an individual* just. But this difficulty is resolved by realizing that this second passage is saying that just individuals make the state just: the state is just through having its citizens perform the function for which their nature best suits them.²² When the individuals within the state are experiencing the happiness of performing their natural craft with mastery (421c1-5), there would be no reason for the state to be unjust either in its dealing with other states or in its dealings with its own citizens; the individual citizens merely want to perform their craft, for that is what the channels they have developed in their souls cause them to desire. For example, they would not have the desires for luxuries that are the cause of war (373e4-7, *Phaedo* 66c8-d1).

Thus individual people being just would mean that they have the happiness that Socrates explicitly contrasted with the happiness of a party of peasants feasting at a fair (421b1-3)—i.e., the happiness that is superior to the pleasure of intoxication—by allowing them to become masters of the craft that comes naturally to them. And thus justice would give a greater happiness than that of the unjust person who is clever enough to get away with injustice.

But what in the text can we turn to, if poor Howard Hughes still insists that the pleasure of getting high is better than doing one's natural job? It would be the elitism implicit in "a party of peasants feasting at a fair." Let us say that all these drunken peasants are having an uproarious time laughing at *The Three Stooges*. There must be something better than that in life! And, of course, there is. Human beings are capable of a higher level of interaction. It is better to be

one is ordering one's soul well is the happiness that justice brings [p.109].) But Plato is explaining the meaning of the doing one's own that is justice when he says, "It really was a sort of adumbration of justice, this principle that it is right for the cobbler by nature to cobble and occupy himself with nothing else, and the carpenter to practice carpentry, and similarly all others" (443c4-7). He is clearly referring to specific vocations. It just so happens that one's soul will be well-ordered when one concentrates on one's proper occupation, for one's other appetites will then be held more or less in abeyance—one will have developed a deep channel in one's soul for doing one's natural occupation.

Allen offers no support for the claim that doing what is his own generally includes acknowledging "the ordinary moral rules of the social order to which he belongs" (p. xix).

²² Vlastos sees this (*Platonic Studies*, pp.123-4). But he then writes, "Why is it then that Plato does not accept the [doing one's own] formula as an alternative definition of the justice of the individual, coordinate with, and complementary to, the psychological definition?" (p.125). He seems to be unaware of 442d4-5 where, as we have seen, Plato does accept doing one's natural function as a definition of justice in the individual.

Carmola sees that the city is just through each individual doing what is appropriate to his or her nature (p. 52).

fully human than it is to be a drunken peasant, as it is better to be fully human than it is to be a drunken pig.

On the other hand it is not obvious that there is something inferior to the life of Annie Smith, who really enjoys her work as a housekeeper.²³ While one might abstractly prefer to write music like Mozart rather than clean hotel rooms like Annie Smith, if her nature finds fulfillment in being a housekeeper, she will have greater happiness cleaning hotel rooms than pursuing a career in composing music. We have seen that what makes a life not worth living for Socrates is its lack of responsiveness, and now we see that the just life is the most responsive. Socrates wants to be in harmony with his circumstances, and now we see that for Socrates the highest harmony is that of masterful interaction with that with which it comes naturally to one to interact.

Plato indicates the job that comes naturally to him personally, the job the mastery of which gives him happiness greater than that of a peasant feasting at a fair, when he writes:

The writer will sow his seed in literary gardens, and write when he does write by way of pastime, collecting a store of refreshment both for his own memory, against the day "when age oblivious comes," and for all such as tread in his footsteps, and he will take pleasure in watching them send forth tender shoots. And when other men resort to other pastimes, regaling themselves with drinking parties and suchlike, he will doubtless prefer to indulge in the recreation to which I refer. (*Phaedrus* 276d1-8)

At least Plato prefers making riddles to the pleasure of intoxication.

VI. Reconciling the Two Understandings of Justice

Socrates also says that justice is having the natural relationships of controlling and being controlled within the soul (444c7-11). We need to reconcile this with the understanding of justice that we have developed thus far.

As we have seen, some form of the principle that everyone ought to perform the one function in the community for which their nature best suits them is justice in the individual (433a1-6). When the rulers of the state assign people to their natural jobs, they are in accordance with this principle. Robert Hall mistakes a sufficient condition for a necessary condition when he concludes that an ordinary person can acquire virtues "only if he is living within the right kind of society, that ruled by the philosopher."²⁴ Perhaps there is another way in which someone

²³ See Wee, *passim*.

²⁴ Hall, p. 36.

can be led into the work that comes naturally to them. If the natural relationships of controlling and being controlled within the soul could also lead one into doing the job that comes naturally to one, then the two understandings of justice would be equivalent for practical purposes. Indeed, if one were just in the sense of being *natural* in the control of one's appetites, one would also be just in the sense of being *natural* in choosing one's job. With no channels built up toward competing objects of desire, one would be free to follow one's natural bent. Even if there is no one to assign me to my natural job, I could still be drawn to it by acting naturally.

While doing what comes naturally would suffice to lead me into my natural job, it is not necessarily easy to be natural. For example a boy who is a natural ballet dancer might feel pressure from his society not to do what he feels like doing. My daughter used to say that her dream was to be a professional basketball player, but that was not really her natural inclination—it was merely an ideal that society was presenting before her. When she failed to make the high school team, she was provided with an opportunity to get in touch with her true interests. Nor is the problem merely popular culture. To the extent that we are mentally unhealthy, we are preoccupied with issues that prevent us from being genuinely responsive. Sometimes, for example, people are so caught up in what they think will bring them money or honor that they do not give themselves the leisure to follow their own true interests (cf. *Apology* 29d9-e3).

In the *Apology* Socrates claims to make people happy (36d9-10).²⁵ He would not do so by making us virtuous, for he explicitly says that he does not know

²⁵ West's view, that "Socrates' claim, of course, is an empty boast" (on the grounds that Socrates is ignorant of the end of human life) (p.212) is out of keeping with the tenor of the *Apology*. Socrates is no empty boaster. Even though Socrates cannot tell us what end to pursue, he might still make us happy by freeing us from pursuing artificially imposed ends and thereby allowing us to follow our natural instincts.

Gould thinks that Socrates is equating his elenctic activity with happiness (p. 62). This view is supported by *Apology* 41c2-4, where Socrates says that he would be immeasurably happy if he could continue his elenctic activity in Hades. But the idea that everyone would be happy, if they acted as Socrates did, seems patently ridiculous. Mozart would, no doubt, rather be making music. No, the happiness that Socrates could give other people would be the *result* of his elenctic activity, rather than its actual performance. Socrates indicates that the goal of this activity is that his interlocutors become angry with themselves (*Apology* 23c8-d1). The happiness that he gives would have to do with what happens *after* they have become angry with themselves. (Note also that Socrates tells us that he has restrained his followers from engaging in elenctic activity [39d1]; thus, if Gould were correct, Socrates would be restraining his followers from being happy.)

Croce's suggestion that Socrates' happiness resembles the tranquil conscience of the person who fulfills his proper duties (Spiegelberg, p.283) is not enough. In order to be better than pleas-

how to convey virtue (*Apology* 20b8-c3). He merely goes about challenging people, saying, "Are you not ashamed to care for the acquisition of wealth and for reputation and honor, when you neither care nor take thought for sensibleness and truth and the perfection of your soul?" (*Apology* 29d9-e3). He indicates that his reason for doing so is to make people angry with themselves (*Apology* 23c8-d1). If I become angry with myself for caring about trivial things, I have the opportunity to break from my usual preoccupations, and I could thus be freed to follow my genuine feelings. To the extent that I succeed in doing so, I will develop channels in my soul toward the activity the mastery of which can give me the greatest happiness my nature can encompass.

The role of justice when considered from the psychological principle of keeping one's appetites under control would thus be negative; it removes the preoccupations that prevent us from being genuinely responsive, and thereby frees us to respond with our natural feelings. Justice seen from the psychological point of view of keeping one's appetites under control frees us to be just according to the sociological principle of doing the job that comes naturally to us. For example someone stuck with an unrewarding job might have such a strong desire for security that they would not be willing to quit their job and follow their true interests. But, on the other hand, someone else might rather quit their job in the belief that from virtue comes money and all other good things for people (*Apology* 30b3-4) and in the belief that no harm can come to good people because they are not neglected by the gods (*Apology* 41c9-d3).

VII. A Parallel with the *Lysis* and the *Charmides*

The *Lysis* is also concerned with the happiness that can be found in pursuing one's natural bent. Socrates observes "There is a certain possession that I have desired from my childhood, as all people do in their own ways. One person wants to get possession of horses, another dogs, another money, and another honor (211d7-e1). While money and honor would be desired merely for the sake of property rights, the dialogue establishes a sense of ownership of an object as

ure Socrates' happiness must have something positive about it—not merely the avoidance of the negative.

Reeve feels that, because Socrates' elenctic examinations can convince people of the truth of certain moral propositions, Socrates could not make people happy unless these propositions were true ("Socrates the Apollonian?" p.29). This is a non sequitur, because there might be some other aspect of Socratic examination that makes people happy. In particular, I can be happy even though I hold certain false beliefs, if I am led to do my natural job.

interacting masterfully with that object, and this type of ownership could be desired by those who desire to *possess* horses or dogs.

At *Lysis* 210b5-6 Socrates says that if someone with a property right to something gives that thing to someone who really understands it, the person with understanding owns the thing. The reason he owns it is said to be because he derives delight (ὄνασθαι) from it. ὄνασθαι is usually translated here as 'derives advantage', but that sense of the word is incompatible with the context. Lysis's father gives control of his horses to a hired servant, someone who knows about horses (208a5-6). Any advantage that the servant derives from the horses goes to Lysis's father; the reason that the servant must be given wages (208a7-b1) is that the advantages which he derives from interacting with the horses is not his own. Clearly the servant cannot be said to own the horses because of the advantage which he derives from them for someone else. But ὄνασθαι can also mean 'derive delight'. Can we not say that it is the servant (rather than Lysis' father) who truly owns the horses, because of the delight he derives from interacting with them?

Socrates is clearly referring to such extra-legal ownership, for the argument that culminates in the assertion that things belong to the person who understands them, tells us that a person who does not understand his horses will entrust them to the person who does understand them. Even a very unsophisticated person can see the problem that no one will entrust a knowledgeable person with their horses if they think that person will cheat them out of their property. While the reader is carrying this problem with the text in one hand and turning pages with the other, Plato has Socrates say that the property in question will not belong to its legal owner. The only way to resolve this conflict is to see a new sense of ownership being introduced—ownership in the sense that is caused by deriving delight. The hired servant, who derives delight from the horses in a way that their ignorant legal owner cannot, can be thought of as having the horses belong to him in a way that they do not belong to their legal owner. The person who truly owns something is the person who has the delight of truly interacting with it.

Charmides 171e7-172a2 argues that those who do the work they understand will do their work well, and, doing well, will be happy. T. G. Tuckey sees this move as being sophistical, playing upon an ambiguity of εὖ πράττειν, two of whose meanings are 'to act well' and 'to fare well'. He claims that while there is a traditional identification of happiness with εὖ πράττειν in the sense of *faring* well, the argument only establishes that someone who acts with understanding will *act* well. He claims that the gap between these two senses of εὖ πράττειν is unbridgeable because, while "it may be that any action well executed does bring a feeling

of satisfaction to the doer," such a feeling could hardly be happiness.²⁶ But the delight that constitutes ownership in the *Lysis* should not be dismissed as such a "feeling of satisfaction," for the satisfaction of having done well that Tuckey has in mind would be experienced after one has completed one's task. The person who experiences the delight that causes true ownership would be happy *as* he or she went about doing their work.

Hence the significance of Charmides' last definition of temperance: doing one's own business (*Charmides* 161b6). Those who limit their desires can be led to the business that they have desired since childhood, and interacting with that field's subject matter can give that delight which constitutes true ownership of the object. Just as this interaction with that which one understands is seen as producing happiness in the *Charmides*, and just as truly owning that which I understand and have desired to "own" since childhood is seen as producing delight in the *Lysis*, being a master of the work that comes naturally to one is seen as producing happiness in the *Republic*.

VIII. Conclusion

In order to defend the goodness of justice apart from the goodness of the future states of affairs to which it gives rise, Socrates needs to show that the immediate effects of justice are better than pleasure and the immediate effects of injustice are worse than pain. While being a just person would eventually lead one to be a master of the craft that comes naturally to one, and while being an unjust person would eventually lead one to ruin one's soul and makes one's life not worth living, these would not be the *immediate* benefits of justice. The immediate benefit of justice would pertain merely to one's immediate situation: are you going to be in harmony with it, or are you going to follow some channel you have dug into your soul instead? The reason why mastering one's craft is good is that it allows one to have moments of harmonious interaction, and the reason why letting one appetites rule one's soul is bad is that they cause one to respond mechanically. There is something intrinsically good about being responsive to one's situation and something intrinsically bad about being unresponsive. I do not want Hamlet to be justified in asking me "Have you eyes?" Being just allows us to be responsive to what is before us in the present moment.

Thus Al Capp's Mamy Yokum got it about right: good is better than evil because it's nicer. Plato is saying that what is nicer about justice is not its effect upon other people, but its effects upon the agent. It entails the maximum of

²⁶ Tuckey, pp. 71-75.

harmonious responsiveness. Injustice, on the other hand, entails no responsiveness at all: merely mechanically desiring the objects of appetites that one has desired in the past.

People make the mistake of thinking that if they get this or if they get that then they will be happy. They don't know that happiness has to do with how one interacts with what one has. According to Socrates, the great king of Persia—a man who could get anything he wanted as long as it was within his kingdom—did not even have a pleasant life (*Apology* 40d2-e2). The way to find the most happiness is not to acquire the sort of things you can acquire with the ring of Gyges, but to follow your true feelings toward the craft that fits your nature and then make yourself a master of that craft, interacting with the material of that craft in your own beautiful way. In order to do this one must be just in the sense of mastering those competing appetites that tend to lead one toward their objects instead.

George Washington University

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