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## Mind Your Own Business: The Trouble with Justice in Plato's Republic

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**MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS:  
THE TROUBLE WITH JUSTICE IN PLATO'S *REPUBLIC***

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## **Mind Your Own Business: The Trouble with Justice in Plato's *Republic***

### **Abstract**

The *Republic's* paradoxical definition of justice—minding one's own business—comes mainly from Socrates' examination of the arts. The definition applies well to artisans who specialize in single trades, but poorly to warriors who meddle in everyone's affairs. Are the warriors then unjust? Rather than conclude that they are, the paper maintains that justice is conditioned by class and that the justice practiced by warriors (self-sacrificing and homogenizing) differs from the justice practiced by workers (self-serving and differentiating). But because the formal definition never changes, despite the awkwardness of fit, the paper further suggests that something is askew with justice, with its demand for right order, and that the transcendence of justice is a goal which the dialogue secretly endorses. The paper thus supports those scholars who contend that the *Republic* falls short in its efforts to prove the goodness of justice or who see in the *Republic* a warning against the perfection of justice.

## **Mind Your Own Business: The Trouble with Justice in Plato's *Republic***

Scholars over the years have given careful and copious attention to Plato's *Republic*, though not always to its subtitled topic, justice, and not principally to the first of its two justice questions, the meaning of justice. Rather, the second justice question, the goodness of justice—or the truth of Socrates' claim that justice leads to happiness—is the subject which scholars find the more intriguing (e.g., Sachs 1971, Vlastos 1971; White 1984; Kraut, 1997). This paper focuses on the first of these questions (touching on the second briefly at the end) and offers as a definition of justice—order.

The dialogue, though, defines justice differently, as minding one's own business. Examination of this definition shows that it derives from the technical arts, in particular from the division of labor, and that it describes, quite accurately, the behavior and responsibilities of the artisan class. But when applied to the warrior class, the definition, while not incomprehensible, is peculiar and inapt—indeed, given the behavior and responsibilities of the warrior class, it is the last definition that would come to mind. Are the warriors then unjust, or, if just, does justice change its meaning? Neither conclusion is warranted, at least not fully: the warriors are just—after a fashion—and the meaning of justice remains the same—so long as one understands that justice, substantively, is order. As for minding one's own business, the formal definition, it now is explained as the motive for maintaining order and the manner in which order is maintained. But it is the motive and manner of artisans, not of warriors, who maintain order as patriots, not as professionals, and by self-abnegation in a community of pleasure and pain, not by self-absorption in specialized arts. Warriors practice justice differently because their duties are different as is their potential for harm.

The conundrum that just warriors seem hardly to mind their own business is accounted for partly by the realization that justice, at bottom, is order (which the warriors also, but differently, maintain) and that right order exists where discrete parts are arranged to comprise an integral whole capable of performing a specific function. But then a problem arises, for Socrates' city seems neither to have a function more specific than its own self-preservation nor to have parts genuinely distinct. Justice is an abstraction which no city or soul can perfectly embody. The point, however, is not that Socrates' political and pedagogical foundations fail to measure up, but that the measure itself is not good, that justice as order comes at the price of individual achievement. Evidence is presented that the city is straining against its own order, or that subjects and citizens, in each of the classes, are quietly encouraged to transcend justice, to move beyond their partiality and strive to become complete. It finally is suggested that the reason why justice is so strangely, so unattractively, and, in the case of warriors, so inappropriately defined—as minding one's own business—is precisely to provoke just this sort of resistance. Other scholars, mainly of the Straussian persuasion, have come to a similar conclusion (Strauss 1964, 127; Bloom 1991, 409-11; Nichols 1987, 122-23), but none by the route taken herein.

### **The Characteristics of Justice**

What is justice? It is truth-telling and giving back what is owed, says Cephalus, the aging, metic patriarch whose home is the site of Plato's *Republic* (331c). Not exactly, interjects Polemarchus, Cephalus's solicitous son; justice, rather, is helping friends and hurting enemies (332d). Nonsense, thunders Thrasymachus, the impatient and petulant sophist. Justice is the advantage of the stronger (338c); it is ruling (with all the trappings

of law and justice) for the sake of the rulers—the strong. But who are the rulers and who are the strong, queries Glaucon, a companion of Socrates and the dialogue’s most perspicacious interlocutor. Are not the many strong against the few, and is not justice their agreement not to do wrong so as not to suffer wrong? Justice, he proposes, is a social contract mutually useful to all (weaklings) who sign on (359a-b). Or is justice something infinitely more mysterious? When Socrates finally declares himself, after founding a city in speech and locating its several virtues, he defines justice as “the minding of one’s own business and not being a busybody” (*ta hautou prattein kai mē polupragmonein*) (433a8-9).<sup>1</sup>

As mysterious as this definition may be, it is not wholly unexpected, since Socrates prepares for it by his responses to the expository efforts of others. Thrasymachus likens the sophist-trained ruler to a precise artisan, and Socrates replies that such a ruler would not employ his art for selfish advantage but for the benefit of the ruled (340d-342e). The professionalism that comes from doing one thing only and doing it well—i.e., from minding one’s own business—obliges the artisan to keep faith with the standards of his craft. Also, the city of pigs, constructed by Socrates in answer to Glaucon’s brief against justice (and that by Adeimantus, Glaucon’s brother), has as its foundational principle “one person one art” (*heis mian*) (370b6), or the division of labor, which Socrates later suggests is a “phantom” of justice (*eidōlon*) (443c4). In fact, from the very beginning, in response to Cephalus and Polemarchus, Socrates implies a kinship between justice and knowledge, insisting that the just man is one who knows ends (the

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<sup>1</sup> Translations of the Greek are from Bloom 1991. Line numbers are those in *Platonis Opera*, vol. IV 1978 and are given only when necessary.

consequences of truth-telling and repayment of debts) and one who knows means (the how-to skill of craft). Just behavior seems thus to arise from technical knowledge, itself the product of specialized labor, and specialized labor seems to be the standard way in which people go about minding their own business.<sup>2</sup>

What then can we infer about justice, defined as minding one's own business, once we know its ties to, and perhaps its origin in, the practice of art?<sup>3</sup> First, that justice—much to our wonderment—is privatizing, meaning that justice is nonrelational or minimally relational. It is nonrelational in the case of the jack-of-all-trades, as he

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<sup>2</sup> The standard way in which Socrates' contemporaries mind their own business, as determined by scholars studying the history *ta hautou prattein* and *apragmosynē*, is by political quietism, both domestic and foreign, its opposite, political activism—i.e., litigiousness on the part of individuals, presumptuousness on the part of the demos, and imperialism on the part of the state. Oftentimes this quietism (*hēsuchia* or *apragmosunē*) is applauded, but sometimes it is condemned, with busyness (*polupragmosunē*) recommended instead (e.g., Thucydides, II.40; Plato, *Statesman*, 307e; Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens*, 8.5). Socrates once uses “minding one's own business” this way, to justify the apoliticism of the philosopher living in a corrupt state (496d), and he may intend this meaning when he describes *ta hautou prattein* and *mē polupragmonein* as expressions “we have both heard from many others and have often said ourselves” (433a9-b1). But notwithstanding the currency of these expressions, Socrates' derivation of them from divided labor (*heis mian*) (433a, 443c) is quite the novelty, and one with ramifications for the city's structure and its distribution of power (philosophers rule because they are knowledgeable, not warriors because they are proud).

For a discussion of *apragmosunē/polupragmosunē* in the foreign affairs of Greek politics, see Ehrenberg 1947, 46-67. For a discussion of the same in the domestic (and foreign) affairs of Greek politics, see Adkins 1976, 301-27. For a general study of *apragmosunē*, see Carter 1986.

<sup>3</sup> Parry (1996) defends use of the craft analogy when discussing justice in the *Republic* against others who treat it as a Socratic vestige discarded after Book 1 (Irwin 1977, 8, 185; Reeve 1988, 22-23).

might be called (Benardete 1989, 49), the unassociated subsistence worker who supplies all his needs and shares his produce with no one—and about whom the phrase “minding one’s own business” is first used (369e-370a).<sup>4</sup> It is minimally relational in the case of the artisan who plies his own one trade and is related as producer and consumer to other artisans plying separate trades of their own.<sup>5</sup> The farmer sells his corn to the carpenter and buys his plow from the blacksmith and is otherwise little obligated to his neighbors.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> In its last use, the phrase is nonrelational as well, as it describes the private life chosen by the shade of Odysseus (620c).

<sup>5</sup> For Annas (1981, 74-76), minding one’s own business (which she translates as “doing one’s own thing”) is suggestive of a needy, social, and cooperative human nature and is seen as imposing restraints and duties on the individual should he or she ever take a fancy to trying something new. Annas discovers these communal proclivities and responsibilities in the residents of the city of pigs. But then she also describes the residents as “motivated in their association *entirely* by self-interest” (78); and elsewhere she says of their ergonomic descendants, the artisans of the producing class, that they are not engaged in the public life of the city nor expected to make sacrifices for its values (172). So, is minding one’s own business a socializing or individualizing principle? Vlastos says it’s the former (1977, 18). I would say it’s the latter, but that the potential for socialization, or for what I will call transcendence, lies latent within it.

<sup>6</sup> Using Aristotle for a guide, one might incline to the thought that arts are hierarchical, with the bridle maker taking orders from the horseman, the horseman taking orders from the general, and the general taking orders from the statesman (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1094a6-16). But Socrates does little to invite this line of thought: his arts seem rather to operate independently, connecting only at the point of exchange. The excellence of the plow, for example, depends on the expertise of the blacksmith, or toolmaker, and hardly at all on information supplied by the farmer, who minds the business of agriculture (370b-d). There is, of course, a higher art of guarding which assigns people their trades, but the chief aim of this art is to keep the classes separate, not to integrate them in a single enterprise (e.g., the uncertainty surrounding the moral education of the workers [see below, n. 27]). Or, if integration is the purpose, as to



It is said that artisans enjoy “sweet intercourse” with one another (372b7); this they may do, but their communal feasting, in the city of “utmost necessity” (369d11), is not an activity connected to justice. Need is the basis of justice, and exchange is the activity by which justice is practiced (371e-372a).<sup>7</sup> Of the two, the jack-of-all-trades is the more self-sufficient and self-involved, but he is quickly discarded in favor of the specialized artisan because divided labor develops the natural aptitudes of workers and differentiates them by trade (370a-c).

So, the second thing we learn from the association of justice and art is that justice is specializing, and, as a related third, that it is differentiating. Artisans are not interchangeable laborers but are separate, individuated beings. The shoemaker is different from the weaver because neither can do the work of the other. Shoemaker and weaver are known by their crafts. How common it is for people, when introducing themselves, to specify what work they do: “Hi, my name is Sam Malone; I’m a barkeeper and ex-baseball player”; or to inquire as to the occupation of others: “Nice to meet you; what line

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some degree it is (e.g., the moderation of the workers [432a]), the virtue which carries out this supervisory work is wisdom, not justice (443e).

Stauffer (2001, 74-77) observes that Socrates, in the interchange with Thrasymachus (342a-c), is oddly uncurious about the deficiency of arts (e.g., horse training’s dependence on farming) and happy to have them described as “without blemish or taint” (342b5). Stauffer then explains this insouciance in light of the trap which Socrates is setting for Thrasymachus over the question of precise art and its obligation to serve. In any event, we have here another instance in which arts are presented as self-contained activities, complete and sovereign within their own spheres.

<sup>7</sup> This is Adeimantus’s suggestion, which Socrates neither confirms nor denies. Instead, he describes the way of life of these first artisans before turning to Glaucon’s luxurious city as the better place in which to find justice and injustice (372e).

of work are you in?” Occupation defines people; it individuates, it differentiates, it confers identity. It also causes dependence. Without the shepherd, the weaver has no wool; without the weaver the house builder has no coat. Divided labor binds the arts together in a network of mutual dependencies. There is community in that network, if only of the minimalist kind.

We are told that true art is knowledge put to service for others (342c-d). The doctor in the precise sense serves his patients, the pilot in the precise sense serves his passengers. Accordingly, artisans serve themselves by the wages they collect—usually money, though other forms of compensation exist (347a).

How then do these separate, individuated, and dependent beings—these specialized, fee-for-service artisans—relate? At first quite haphazardly, because their city of pigs is an unregulated marketplace (though one seemingly protected by an invisible hand ensuring the proper supply and distribution of artisans). But when Socrates and his cofounders move from the true and healthy city to the luxurious and feverish city, and from there to the purged city (399e8) of guardians and auxiliaries, the relation among the arts falls under closer scrutiny. Need, aptitude, and good fortune are insufficient to arrange the various arts because class division and government arrive in tandem with the warriors. The parts of the city are no longer just arts, separate but equal; they now are classes, separate and unequal, and designated by their metallic qualities: gold, silver, bronze, or iron. Likewise, command, obedience, and common purpose all enter the city. With these the association changes from a loose aggregation of crafts to a highly structured, articulated whole. The city becomes a composition, with differentiated parts performing tasks for which they are specially designed. Were the city a bicycle, its form

would include a frame, handlebar, and seat, and wheels, tires, chains, peddles, and brakes; and the parts would keep to their places and mind their separate businesses in order for the bike to accomplish its vehicular mission. The seat, for instance, would not ask to change places with the handlebar so as to have a chance at steering, because the ride would be unsafe as well as uncomfortable! Like a bicycle then, the city, divided by classes, is a hierarchy of parts. Similarly, justice is a hierarchy, an arrangement of discrete and unequal components into a functional unit.

Justice then, defined as minding one's own business and extrapolated from the arts, exhibits the following five characteristics: specialization, differentiation, dependence, fee-for-service, and privacy (saved for last). The artisan is a specialist who practices only one craft. He derives his separate and distinct identity from the art that he perfects and the role that he performs. He depends on other specialists to supply his unmet needs. He is useful to his customers through the product that he sells and useful to himself through the fee that he earns. And, in general, he is private; he keeps to himself, is minimally relational, and does not meddle in the affairs of others. Justice exists where there are (as in the case of the bicycle) specialized, differentiated, and interdependent parts, rightly related, with each part sticking to its own job, and with the collection of parts forming a purposeful whole.

### **Justice and the Warriors**

But if this is justice as applied to artisans, what about justice as applied to warriors? Is the warrior a just man (or woman) for being specialized, differentiated, dependent, compensated for services, and private? Warriors are specialists in the art of war, added to the city out of deference to the principle of one person one art (374b). So,

yes, warriors are specialists—except that the art they are taught is not the art of war per se (we hear nothing about their training as heavy-armed infantry), but music and gymnastics; and the wars they fight are not against neighboring states (mainly) but against pedagogical reformers wanting to change the curriculum. Of course the warriors do constitute an army, and the army does fight wars—and some attention is paid to the army’s size (423a), to the wages, mess, and quartering of its soldiers (416d-e, 543c), to the safety of gold and silver children, who as apprentice warriors accompany their elders on campaign (466e-467e), to the rewards for courage and the penalties for cowardice (468a-469b), and to the treatment of defeated enemies (469b-471b). But the army is not ordered by ranks (phalanxes) or subdivided by jobs (archers, slingers, cavalry, hoplites); its command structure is undeveloped (consisting merely of guardians and auxiliaries); and its weapons, as with all the city’s goods, are rudimentary and unimproved. Often the competence of this army is asserted (416e, 422b, 467c, 521d, 543c), but never is it really argued for, and what prowess it exhibits seems more a function of solidarity and troop morale than of soldierly skill (423a). Compared to carpenters, smiths, herdsmen and the like, these warriors have no art, no specialty (Bloom 1991, 351); what they have instead are finely tuned souls. Even their gymnastic training serves psychological purposes chiefly (410b-c). Book V is where the rigors of the warriors’ lives under communism are fully disclosed; it is a book conspicuously lacking in one-person-one-art specialists, for in it are women given work and training belonging to men, comedians implored to be serious (452c5-6), and philosophers compelled to rule as kings.

Might the warriors, though, be differentiated beings, even if not made that way by the precise practice of art? Actually, they are distinguished from workers by metallic

qualities and divided among themselves into guardians and auxiliaries. Collectively they are a class apart—and then a class within a class. But individually they are quite alike. Birth does not distinguish them, since, without families, they are neither well-born nor base-born. Nor does wealth, since they have no property. And we have seen that art is of no use here since they are not divided by military specialty. Some do command while others obey, but guardians are promoted in rank, primarily it seems, because of their age. They are the elders among the warriors, the auxiliaries the young, who, when senior, become overseers themselves (412c, 414b). There are real differences of spirit and intellect which must be passed on to the next generation, but the “courageous doctor” who supervises the eugenic “marriages” struggles to disguise the inequality and its sexual consequences with lies, ceremonies, and the charade of chance distributions (459c-460b). And although the disguise is not complete, with martial accomplishments publicly acknowledged (468a-e), the most fundamental of all distinctions, that of psychic worth or natural aptitude, is disregarded in the end, since golden class status is accorded to all who die honorably in battle (468e) (Benardete 1989, 121). They, and others who lead exemplary lives, are in death worshipped as demons (469a-b). Significantly, it is not in life, but in death, that they are worshipped, at a time when special distinctions can do no harm to the egalitarian oneness of the city. In fact, so alike are the warriors that even female warriors are the same, or about the same, as their male counterparts (454d-456b). Indeed, so alike are they all that when one is joyous, all are joyous, when one is sad, all are sad. There is a “community of pleasure and pain” in which “most say ‘my own’ and ‘not my own’ about the same thing” and no one drags “off to his own house whatever he

can get his hands on apart from the others” or introduces “private pleasures and griefs of things that are private” (462b-c, 464c-d).

But are not the warriors dependent beings, seeing as how they depend on farmers for their food, on weavers for their cloaks, on carpenters for their barracks, and on armorers for their weapons? Yes, warriors do one thing and depend on others to do the rest. But that “rest” does not include fancy meals prepared by gourmet chefs or advanced medicines provided by expert physicians (403e-410a). The warriors’ education in music and gymnastics is intended to minimize needs by anesthetizing appetites. Warriors achieve near self-sufficiency by doing without, not by doing for themselves. And self-sufficiency born of self-denial is the goal because abstemious warriors are less likely to covet the modest possessions of the working class. As for dependencies within their own class, the absence of divided labor removes that source of diversity most responsible for rendering workers interdependent beings. Warriors all practice the same, undifferentiated martial craft, so there are no specialized archers on whom the hoplites depend. Warriors do depend on guardians for their instruction, but that relationship is generational and on the model of a family; and the final hope is that even these “family members” will coalesce into a “single human being” (462c10) with a single set of experiences. In sum, the warriors strive to exist as one uniform and homogenized being, not as interdependent members of a multifarious class.

Plainly the warriors serve their community; the question is whether, like artisans, they also serve themselves. The justice of minding one’s own business is self-referential and self-interested (Craig 1994, 141). But the warriors receive practically nothing in the way of material reward, and the spiritual reward of honor goes principally to

philosophers. Thus, when asked if the warriors are happy, Socrates equivocates (420b-421c).

Privacy, the first characteristic noticed, is the last characteristic considered, because of its somewhat generic status.<sup>8</sup> Are the warriors private? Hardly. They live in public housing without locks on their doors. Their meals they take in common (416d-e, 468c-d). They possess no property, for the gold and silver of their souls substitute for gold and silver vessels and adornments (416e-417a). They have neither spouses nor children to call their own, nor parents whose love once nurtured them or whose identities they even know. They pass through the same schooling, take the same exams, and—apart from the sorting into guardians and auxiliaries (a distinction of no real consequence until the appearance of philosophers)—do pretty much the same thing. They certainly meddle in each other’s affairs, for what could be more private than the rearing of a child—but the children are raised communally; or more private than sexual love—but the matings are arranged by an agent of the city. The warriors live under communistic institutions, and communism’s goal is to perfect the public and destroy the private (Nichols 1987, 62).

It is important to note that Socrates does try extending his definition of justice to warriors and rulers, observing, for example, that rulers, when judging lawsuits, take care to ensure an appropriate assignment of goods. This assignment, by causing petitioners to have what properly belongs to them and to have nothing more, is thought to be an instance of justice from another view. But it is “the having and doing of one’s own and what belongs to oneself” that Socrates stipulates is justice, not the ruler’s judging as such

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<sup>8</sup> Dependency suggests (partial) association, but specialization, differentiation, and fee-for-service suggest separate, private selves.

(433e-434a). Socrates also states that warriors are just by attending only to their auxiliary duties, leaving money-making to the workers and governing to the rulers, or that justice is a matter of the three great classes staying in their places, not trading jobs and meddling in each other's affairs (434b-c). But then it belongs to the warriors to meddle in the money-making affairs of the workers, watching to see that no one is rich and no one is poor (421e-422a).<sup>9</sup> Nor is the warriors' meddling limited to controlling profits and income disparities, since the arts are further supervised to ensure the grace and harmony of all manufactured goods, with standards of beauty imposed from without (401b).<sup>10</sup> It will be objected that such interference is a part of the warriors' job. Agreed; but then it is a job that sometimes overrides the class barriers otherwise thought to be essential to justice and a job that mostly is indifferent to the technical specializations of one person one art. In any case, minding one's own business is proffered as a definition of justice before all the institutions of the city have been disclosed (Craig 1994, 233), before it is fully revealed (in Book V) that the warriors individually have no business of their own to mind.

Justice is defined as minding one's own business, and private business is best minded by the differentiated specialist sticking to his craft, while at the same time exchanging goods and services with complementary specialists sticking to theirs. The warriors, though, do not mind their own business (except in the attenuated sense of forswearing property and supremacy); instead, they mind each other's business and are

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<sup>9</sup> Warriors are called guardians on the occasion because philosophers have yet to be introduced.

<sup>10</sup> It is Socrates and his cofounders who comprise the supervisory "we"; but once the city is set in motion, the work of supervising the arts falls to philosopher-kings and to warriors—which is to say that the city's police are involved in the enforcement of aesthetic norms. Would their oversight be any less meddlesome to the workers than having, say, a Communist Party monitor present on the factory floor?



consummate busybodies. Are we to conclude then that the warriors, the city's most representative members (419a), are unjust for possessing none of the characteristics of justice? Such a conclusion is too improbable, however much some sections of the dialogue might suggest it. Better, then, to say that the warriors practice justice differently, but so differently that one wonders why Socrates would still want to call what the warriors do "minding one's own business."

### **Justice Defined**

We will consider later the dialogue's purpose in bringing forward a definition of justice so ill-suited to the warrior class. For now, let us look again at the definition itself and at what it implies. That look will uncover problems with the definition, problems which go to explain Socrates' intention in eschewing the commonsensical definition of justice, as a social virtue, in favor of one so asocial and paradoxical.

Artisans in a city and appetites in a soul constitute parts of civic and psychic wholes, and justice obtains, it has been said, when parts stay in their places and do their own thing. But why are parts willing to play a subordinate's role? What interior state disposes each part to perform its assigned function and to do no more? In the case of artisans, that state is specialization, called "one person one art," from which "minding one's own business" as the definition of justice later emerges (433a). Minding one's own business is the motive artisans have for being just, since by narrowing their focus to what they do well, they are less attracted to what they do poorly and are less tempted to interfere where they do not belong. A modern example makes the same point: unionized carpenters would never presume to install wiring, nor would electricians presume to hang sheet rock. Justice is given this privatized definition because specialized labor explains

why artisans keep to their tasks and respect the organization of the economy and the economy of the whole. Or, put differently, specialized labor explains the manner in which artisans behave justly—the how instead of the why. Artisans maintain order by contentedly practicing their single trades and leaving the management of the city to others. Justice is the maintenance of order—at least when examined at the level of the part. Since artisans are not rulers with supervisory duties, artisans contribute to the maintenance of order merely by honing their technical skills.

But the situation is different for warriors. While not rulers themselves, they nonetheless are public persons with public responsibilities. They know more of the city's business than do artisans, and they defend the city's order, less by minding the business of javelin throwing, than by lending loyal support to philosopher-kings. In this, their motive is patriotic devotion, self-sacrifice, and class solidarity, rather than one-person-one-art specialization. Warriors are actively just, maintaining order by what they do—defense—unlike artisans who are passively just, maintaining order by what they refrain from doing—meddling.<sup>11</sup> Also, warriors have power. They are the strong and spirited ones, the ones with training as soldiers and access to arms. If injustice is to their liking, no person or institution is positioned to stop them. And so injustice must never be to their liking. To that end they are reared to love the city and serve the common good. The temptations of private goods do not much disturb them because they are one with the city and take its good to be their own. Should artisans succumb to these temptations, warriors

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<sup>11</sup> The injunction against meddling applies also to warriors (434b-c), but only to their interclass relations; and even then it is blunted by the fact, as argued above, that warriors cross class lines when they intervene in the economy.

stand at the ready to police their unjust behavior; but with no police force outside their own ranks, warriors must internalize a sterner morality, a morality able to direct and constrain even though lacking the philosopher's knowledge of natural justice. Selfishness, of a kind—a satisfied and unambitious selfishness—is the foundation of artisan justice; for artisans are just by developing their differences, by minding their private business, and by separating themselves from the whole. But selflessness is the basis of warrior justice; for warriors are just by disavowing their differences, by meddling in the business of others, and by losing themselves inside the whole.

While minding one's own business is justice as experienced and practiced by the part—and by the artisan part more obviously than by the warrior part—viewed from afar, justice is the order of a whole. Order, right order, is the better, more comprehensive definition of justice. Socrates implies as much when at 443d he describes the concord of a rightly ordered soul, with parts cooperating as friends or as notes on a harmonic scale. Once elsewhere does Socrates associate justice with harmony, in his attempt to prove to Thrasymachus that the just soul is mightier than the unjust soul—for justice causes harmony, and harmony causes strength, whereas injustice causes faction, and faction causes weakness (350d-352b). Immediately thereafter (this time wanting to show that the just soul is happy) Socrates associates justice with virtue, and virtue with power needed for work. Eyes and ears have work peculiar to themselves (seeing, hearing), and virtue is the power (sight, hearing) by which the organ's work is properly done (352e). The soul's work, he says on the occasion, is managing, ruling, deliberating, and living (353d); and the soul's power, he later states, at 518c, is prudence (to which animation should be added to account for living). Also, at 518c, he likens prudence in the soul to sight in the

eye, each a natural power that depends on the proper orientation, upward toward light, to accomplish its work. Art, or education, is the agency which effects this “turning around” (*periagōgē*) (518d4), in the course of which other virtues, “produced by habits and exercises” (518e1-2) are developed and lend assistance. Justice is among these conventional virtues. Justice is the right orientation, organization, or conditioning of a soul such that its natural, even “divine” (518e2), power of prudence can perform its true function. Or, as said at 443e, justice is any act which helps to produce and sustain this right condition; or again at 444d-e, justice, equated now with virtue, is “a certain health, beauty, and good condition of a soul” (*euexia psychēs*) (444e1).

Although there is some imprecision about whether justice is a single virtue or is virtue entire, in light of the above citations, it seems appropriate to say that justice/virtue involves three fairly distinct elements. It is, first, the power, faculty, or capacity present in any natural or artificial thing. Horses have virtue, the capacity to run, carry, and pull; likewise pruning knives have virtue, the capacity to cut vines (352d-353a). Virtue, secondly, is correct conditioning, which in the case of a horse is the nourishment, exercise, and rest needed for health, and which in the case of a pruning knife is the care and maintenance of a well-sharpened blade. In the case of multipartite organisms or machines, conditioning also is the right assembly of parts. Finally, there is work, a function of power. Because horses have the power to run, running is their work. Creatures other than horses also run, but not as fast or with as much grace and stamina. Horses are made for running—although some breeds run faster or longer than others, while some breeds pull heavier loads or show more spirit in battle. Specialization is therefore a critical factor, for the more specialized the power, the more certain is the work

belonging to the agent. Specialization explains why vine cutting is the work of pruning knives and not the work of daggers or leather-cutters (353a). Specialization is responsible for the quality of work, but so also is conditioning since a pruning knife with a dull blade may be worse at vine-cutting than sharp-edged dagger. Thus, a highly specialized power, properly organized, oriented, or conditioned, as the case may be, has work to do and performs it well, and the expert execution of work is what causes fulfillment or happiness. Work-produced happiness is the end; virtue is the means. And either the soul's virtue is justice simply, or the soul's virtue is justice (good condition) and prudence (specialized power) combined. In Socrates' closing remarks on the subject, justice is enlarged to include the prudence of intellect, the force of spirit, and the desires of appetite, each *power* trained and tempered and the three together arranged into a harmonious whole (i.e., *conditioned*) (444d). That arrangement, rightly done, puts reason or the philosopher in charge, with spirit or the warriors in an auxiliary station, and with appetite or the workers in a subaltern's role taking orders from above.

### **The Problem of Justice**

To repeat: Justice is an ordering of parts (a conditioning of powers) that assists in the performance of a task. The city is rightly ordered when wise guardians, aided by spirited warriors, govern appetitive workers. But what purpose does the city realize by being ordered this way? Has the city an objective which when achieved proves the rightness of its order and justness of its actions? The easy answer is that the city's purpose is the making of philosophers. In most cities philosophical potential is squelched, squandered, or despised (490e-497c); in Socrates' city it is carefully cultivated. But then Socrates' city educates philosophers in expectation of using them as kings; and

philosopher-kings, rather than ends in their own right, are instrumental goods serving a higher purpose. This we know, in part, from one of the dialogue's many parables—the “ship of state.” In the telling, Socrates likens the philosopher-king to a stargazer onboard ship, a man whose astronomical expertise qualifies him as the ship's true pilot, but who is passed over, nevertheless, in favor of one or more assertive sailors competing for the captaincy (488a-489c). The stargazer belongs at the helm because his navigational skills are needed to bring the ship safely to port. But a question arises: Has this “ship of state” a destination the reaching of which requires that knowledgeable stargazers be put in charge, or is its function simply to stay afloat? *Where is the city going such that it needs philosopher-kings to get it there?* Trading aqueous for terrene metaphors, we know that the philosopher, at least, is going out of the cave, out of the land of shadows and into the land of light. But it is not the philosopher's mission to bring this sunlit truth into the cave; nor is it his mission to escort all the citizens to the light above (Bloom 1991, 403). The philosopher returns to the cave and rules there as king in order to establish a social hierarchy (by assigning people to their respective classes), to prevent faction within the warrior class (by monopolizing high office), to provide for auxiliaries deferential to himself (by overseeing the music and gymnastic education and supervising the institutions of communism), and to train his own philosophical replacements (by teaching dialectics to a gifted few). Working backwards we discover the true purpose of these activities: for students are instructed in dialectics so that there might be philosophers who are kings; and there are philosopher-kings so that there might be warriors educated as auxiliaries; and there are educated warriors so that the laboring class might enjoy the blessings of a government that does not oppress. Without philosophers in authority,

power passes to undisciplined warriors who exercise it for their own selfish advantage, just as Thrasymachus asserts. “Rest from ills” (*kakōn paula*) (473d5) is the stated purpose of philosophical rule. But “rest from ills” means domestic peace provided by good government—in other words, staying afloat by the “ship of state.” It would seem, therefore, that the “ship of state” has no destination, the city no function. Order is for its own sake.<sup>12</sup> But order is justice, and justice is virtue, and virtue is the power/condition that facilitates work. Justice is, or is supposed to be, a means to something higher, not an end in itself.<sup>13</sup> It is a means to what is indubitably higher in the case of the philosopher who uses the right ordering of his soul to ascend to the Good. But no other soul makes that ascent, and, at any rate, the philosopher is for the sake of the city (520a), not the city for the sake of the philosopher. Accordingly, justice is problematic because no communal

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<sup>12</sup> This entails a good deal, however: a contented population deriving satisfaction from the precise practice of trades and free of the uncertainty and exploitation that comes with a market economy and the profit motive; a government that does its work well (better still if philosophers actually are in charge) and that neither burdens its subjects with expense nor threatens them with oppression; and peaceful relations with neighboring cities—more often than not. On the psychological level, order means beauty—which, while not the highest good, can be for its own sake.

<sup>13</sup> We’re trapped in a means-ends cycle: The work of the soul—and by extension the work of the city—is, we recall, managing, ruling, deliberating, and living. But it now appears that this work, and the power exercised by it, namely prudence (leaving aside living), is for the sake of harmonious relations (order/justice) rather than harmonious relations for the sake of prudence and its work. Aristotle could say that prudence is an end in its own right and that the city’s work is to cultivate this capacity in all its citizens; but Plato cannot, since too few people (philosopher-kings) practice this reasoning and since this reasoning is not their true business and highest work.

work is accomplished by it; and, except for the philosopher, no psychic work is accomplished either.

There is a second problem complicating justice in the city. Justice is the relationship of parts to each other and parts to the whole. Without parts comprising a working whole, justice does not, cannot, exist. We have already seen that the whole is in doubt since the city serves no purpose beyond its own well-ordered survival.<sup>14</sup> But an even larger question pertains to the parts. Are people really carpenters, shepherds, shoemakers by nature? They have aptitudes, inclinations, and opportunities, and if they act on these, they develop skills and are able to perform competently fairly specialized tasks. But in Socrates' city they are assigned their jobs and sometimes compelled to stay at them (374b, 406c, 421b-c, 519b-520a). If carpentry were a natural calling, would an assigner be needed to discover this woodworking aptitude, and would compulsion be needed to keep carpenters at their labors? It appears that either the city does not respect natural aptitude in every case, and occasionally converts carpenters into, say, stone masons, or that natural aptitude is less certain, less determinative, and frankly less useful than Socrates would have it be. For the city needs not just carpentry but specialized

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<sup>14</sup> A caveat is in order. Socrates says the following about the purpose of philosophic rule: "When all the soul follows the philosophic and is not factious, the result is that each part may, so far as other things are concerned, mind its own business and be just and, in particular, enjoy its own pleasures, the best pleasures, and, to the greatest possible extent, the truest pleasures" (586e). The expression "truest pleasures" suggests that some educational uplift extends to the whole community, perhaps in the form of improved shadows more reflective of the truth of the Good (cp. 500e and 605b-c). Nevertheless, the overriding purpose of right order in the city and right order in the soul seems to be friendship between civic classes and psychic parts, lest they "bite and fight and devour each other" (589a4).



applications of the woodworking skill. Now a person may well have an aptitude for woodworking, but is there such a thing as a natural-born furniture maker distinct from a natural-born home builder, shipbuilder, or wagon maker? How specialized can the arts become and still be products of nature (Craig 1994, 144)? In fact, is not the very idea of a specialist by nature something of an exaggeration, a fiction or noble lie serving the interests of the city?<sup>15</sup> The city needs specialized workers, and so the city sets about creating them, fine tuning capacities and inclinations which nature only generally suggests (Nichols 1987, 67-68). But if people are not this partial by nature, how rightly ordered, how just, is the association which treats them as parts?

Carpenters minding their specialized business is not the real issue, however (421a, 434a), and by Book 4 Socrates de-emphasizes these professional designations, calling carpenters, and their fellow artisans, money-makers instead (*chrēmatisteis*) (434a7-8, 441a1). As members of the money-making or chrematistic class, artisans represent the appetitive many, and the challenge henceforth is to prevent money-makers from interfering with the business of the ruling class and to defend the metallic divisions against amalgamation (434b-c).<sup>16</sup> The justice of the city consists then in separating appetitive workers from spirited warriors from rational guardians and giving to each group responsibilities appropriate to its nature. In the process, two of these groups develop specialized virtues: prudence in the case of guardians, and courage in the case of auxiliaries—and all three classes practice moderation. But how different are these

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<sup>15</sup> Adam Smith (1998, 23-24) dismisses entirely the notion of natural aptitude, supposing that even philosophers (scientists) are the product of divided labor.

<sup>16</sup> Reeve (1988, 242) names this division by classes, as opposed to division by arts, the “principle of quasispecialization.”

virtues? The prudence of guardians is once described as knowledge of the city as a whole (428d). But the examinations which identify guardians do not test their knowledge, but rather their steadfastness, stubbornness, and lack of curiosity. Guardians are those among the warriors whose opinions cannot be stolen from them by speech or by time, or taken forcibly from them by grief or by pain, or surrendered unwittingly by them owing to bewitchment by pleasure or fear. Guardians are dogged defenders of the opinions communicated by the city's education (413b-414a). They guard the city by caring intensely for its institutions more than by knowing acutely its business.<sup>17</sup> Their prudence, such as it is, rests on habit and experience and reflects the wisdom that comes with age (522a). They supposedly are different from auxiliary warriors whose class virtue is courage. But warrior courage is similarly defined as the preservation of opinion, in particular the opinion that educational change is terrible beyond compare. Likened to a colorfast dye, warrior courage is touted for its resistance properties, its insensibility to pain, fear, and bodily desires. Speech and forgetfulness are not repeated, so it is possible that guardians have some intellectual defenses against sophistic novelties and better memories. But the difference seems one of degree, not of kind. After all, what the guardians guard is exactly what the auxiliaries guard, namely the education and rearing from subversive change (423e-424c). As for moderation, called "a certain kind of order" (430e6), it is barely distinguishable from justice (a certain kind of order), the former

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<sup>17</sup> The guardians' skill seems to be a product of their care, their care a product of their love, and their love a product of their identification with the city (Bloom 1991, 365). It is interesting that in the conversation with Polemarchus, care counts for nothing and knowledge counts for all (the just man knows how to . . . steal! [332e-334b]), whereas in the description of (nonphilosophic) guardians, knowledge is eclipsed by care.

defined as agreement about who should rule (431e-432a), the latter defined as parts in their proper places.<sup>18</sup> In fact, so extensive is this blending that all virtues are comprehended by the one virtue, justice. For consider: The city is just by virtue of the classes minding their own business. When that happens, the classes also are moderate, since they agree about whose business it is (and is not) to rule (thus moderation effectively is justice). Some citizens are additionally courageous when they defend the city's education, the central tenet of which is the hierarchy of the metallic classes, or the right ordering that is justice (thus courage effectively is justice). And some are prudent when they care for the city which makes them its rulers—i.e., they care and are prudent when by minding their own and the city's business they are just (thus wisdom effectively is justice). If differentiated by their virtues, the classes are simultaneously compounded by their virtues, as moderation, practiced alike by rulers, warriors, and artisans,<sup>19</sup> verges into justice; as prudence and courage verge into each other, then also into justice; and as justice, the comprehensive virtue, animates—indeed causes—moderation, prudence, and

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<sup>18</sup> In the *Charmides* (161b-163c) minding one's own business is offered as one of the definitions of moderation.

<sup>19</sup> The fact that moderation is a communal virtue and not a class virtue suggests that ruling is viewed differently by the classes. By the workers, ruling is viewed as a choiceworthy activity, and so when the workers agree not to rule (and thus practice moderation), they are giving up something they take to be advantageous and good. By the guardians (if only by the philosophic guardians), ruling is viewed as a burden; called upon to assume this burden (347b-d, 520e), guardians too have need of (and by their agreement practice) moderation. See Annas 1981, 115-16.

courage.<sup>20</sup> All these virtues relate to the order of the city; indeed, they all reduce to an opinionated acceptance of the order of the city.

There is more equality in human nature than Socrates' city chooses to admit. That is so since all human types are mixed, with honor-loving warriors tempted by money-loving desires (548a), and with pleasure-loving artisans capable of prideful rebellion (556d).<sup>21</sup> Radical inequality is confined to the philosopher, who, knowing being while others opine becoming (475c-480a), seems practically of another species, a god among men. And yet even the philosopher is mixed (547e), for as philosopher and king, he is

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<sup>20</sup> Justice, Socrates contends, is the cause of the other virtues, providing for their existence and their preservation (433b). It is easy to see how justice causes moderation, in that minding one's own business clears the way for agreement about whose business it is to rule. Nor is the causal relation of justice to the good counsel of prudence that difficult to ascertain, since professionals doing their one thing are more expert than amateurs dabbling in a variety of arts. Courage, though, is another matter; for how does minding one's own business produce hostility toward innovation? After all, it doesn't in the arts, where professionalism leads to progress. The answer, presumably, is fear of obsolescence. As defenders of the city's education, warriors have a set job to perform, which job inspires in them a commitment to the city as it presently is constituted. Because innovation might leave them with no job to do, innovation threatens their well-being and is regarded by them as evil. An important side effect is that warrior courage, used thus for conservative purposes, is deflected from its more natural course, which is conquest and expansion. This conservatism is eroded, however, to the degree that warriors engage in transcendence. See n. 29 below. For another discussion of the relation of the virtues, see Reeve 1989, 236-43.

<sup>21</sup> In recognition of this problem, the music education in Socrates' city aims at producing unmixed people content to do one thing (397d-e).

both contemplative and spirited.<sup>22</sup> Truly pure types are not to be found instantiated in matter but exist as forms intellected by mind. “Of the many fair things,” asks Socrates, “is there any that won’t also look ugly? And of the just, any that won’t look unjust?” (479a; also, 523b-c, 538d-e). Justice, the idea, is unsullied by injustice, but just men and just deeds partake of their opposites. So also does the just city: its division into parts looks just and unjust because no person or class is perfectly distinct from other persons or classes (Strauss 1964, 118-19). Appetitive workers, for example, develop their rational capacities through the arts that they practice, and spirited warriors can ally equally with philosophers or money-makers (441a, 547e-548a).

It is not our thesis that no reality attaches to reason, spirit, and appetite, or that significant differences in tendencies and aptitudes do not exist.<sup>23</sup> People are unequal—only not as unequal as natural justice requires. No person (with faculties unimpaired) is so captured by appetite as to be devoid of spirit and reason; and no person is so head-in-the-clouds abstract as to be disconnected from emotions and physical needs. Perfect justice obtains—or would obtain—where there were bodiless brains and brainless bodies united to form an operational whole. But people are not made this way, and so the union of people is less than essential and less than perfectly just.<sup>24</sup> All three parts of the soul are

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<sup>22</sup> It is several times said that the philosopher is a champion in war (521d, 525b, 543a-c), and the education in mathematics and dialectics which produces the philosopher builds on the music and gymnastic education which produces the warrior (503a-e).

<sup>23</sup> Craig is especially good on spiritedness as a natural attribute of the soul (1994, 64-67, 104-09). He notes that people divide into types automatically depending on the objects of their love: a few love truth; a few more love competition and honor; most love wealth, ease, and pleasure (161).

<sup>24</sup> The only essential union is that between man and woman for the purpose of procreation.

present in every soul (505e, 518c). Accordingly, it is inexact to portray the artisan as personified appetite or the warrior as personified spiritedness. It also is inexact to treat the city as an image of the soul (Annas 1981, 129-31; Williams 1999, 255-65). The individual person is a potential whole, who, for the sake of the city, is turned into a part (though not without notice taken of personal strengths and weaknesses). To say this is not to deny that people are incomplete; but they respond to their incompleteness by aspiring to be more. Some workers aspire to be inventors; some warriors aspire to be rulers. All people aspire to be happy, and happiness requires that potentially whole people rise above the civic roles they are assigned (420b).<sup>25</sup> The trouble with justice, defined as maintenance of order, is that it condemns human aspiration that exceeds the limits of talent or the needs of the city. Workers wanting to be citizens are unjust, as are warriors wanting to have families.

### **The Transcendence of Justice**

The anomaly of a warrior class exhibiting none of the (art-derived) characteristics of justice was previously accounted for by the special policing function performed by the warriors—the fact that warriors have power and so require a morality based on self-forgetting rather than on self-regard. A modest elaboration on the meaning of justice helped further to explain the exceptional morality of warriors: to wit, justice is order, and just people are those who maintain order (443e), the artisans by perfecting a trade, the warriors by defending the city. As it happens, perfecting a trade is closely related to

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<sup>25</sup> On the psychological level, appetite aspiring to completeness is creativity (we might say), and spiritedness aspiring to completeness is freedom, each achieved by rebellion against the strict order

minding one's own business (443c), the formal definition of justice, whereas defending the city is only distantly related and seems not related at all when one reflects on how meddling the warriors actually are. And yet the formal definition never changes to accommodate the dilated occupation of the warriors. If justice is particularized work, where parts of a whole mind their specialized business, then the effort by warriors to mind the city's business, renouncing the private for the sake of the public, while ordinarily an act of justice, is by the terms of the dialogue an act of injustice or at least an act of non-justice. So, a second explanation for the anomaly of a "non-just" warrior class is that Plato is trying subtly to alert his readers to the problematic status of justice (that order has no purpose and the parts are not real), while Socrates is trying subtly to wean his interlocutors from their need for justice—to dampen, that is, their demands for perfect order, where everything is exactly as it should be (e.g., 358d, 366e, 367e).<sup>26</sup> By this account, the warriors are not just (i.e., specialized, differentiated, dependent, compensated for services, private) because the dialogue is moving steadily toward the transcendence of justice, sowing discontent with partiality and place by enlarging the range of class-bound responsibilities.<sup>27</sup> The warriors transcend justice (parts in their

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required by justice.

<sup>26</sup> This is Nichols's thesis (1987, 44-47, 58-66). Mine differs in that I associate with perfect justice diversity, partiality, and dependence, whereas Nichols associates with it uniformity, universality, and self-sufficiency. In my view, the individual surrenders his separate self, not in the city, practicing justice by doing and knowing his own, but outside the city, transcending justice by daring to do and know all—and, *mutatis mutandis*, in the various attempts to do and know more.

<sup>27</sup> Diskin Clay (1988, 21-23) argues, in response to Karl Popper's closed-society thesis, that the *Republic* is an open dialogue addressed to multiple audiences (the characters who participate in the

places) in the sense that they identify with their class and their class with the city. They interest themselves in public affairs (contracts, lawsuits, imposts, regulations, etc.) (425c-d, 433e)<sup>28</sup> and expand their horizons beyond weapons proficiency. They further combine with the city, itself undying, by sacrificing their mortal selves in combat. This they do notwithstanding the fact that the city, whose closed education they ferociously defend, becomes a laboratory for the discovery of new disciplines (528a-c)—and so as the city opens itself to new ideas, so also must the warriors. (What are the warriors supposed to think when solid geometry is added to the curriculum? Surely, they cannot go on believing that change necessarily is decline from perfection.) But most telling in this campaign to lift the warriors from the particular to the universal (from parts to wholes) is the injunction that they regard all of Greece as but one city, and warfare among Greeks as but faction among citizens (470b-471b). Warriors are noble dogs who love the familiar and hate the unknown (375d-e); under Socrates' tutelage, the boundaries of the unknown recede for these warriors, with Hellenic cities "incorporated" and barbarian lands "surveyed"—since barbarians are now treated as formerly were Greeks (471b). Initially told that their birth is autochthonous and that their city is native to its people like the soil

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conversation, the Athenians to whom the conversation is related, the readers of the dialogue) whose resistance is expected and welcomed. I would add to these "rebellious" audiences the citizens of Callipolis, who, invited to develop themselves beyond the limited parts they are assigned, resist the order that justice imposes on them.

<sup>28</sup> There are few real laws in Socrates' city in speech (Annas 1981, 105-06), and so case-by case decisions determine many of these matters, with warriors acting as administrators and subordinate officials.



is home to a plant (414e), the warriors finally are told that the whole of Greece is their motherland.<sup>29</sup>

This effort to transcend justice—to go beyond it, escape it, resist it, overcome it—is in fact constant across the dialogue, beginning with the first discussion of art and continuing into the foundings of healthy, feverish, and purged cities respectively—to say nothing of Callipolis, presided over by philosopher-kings. Artisans come in two varieties: precise artisans and wage-earners. Precise artisans think not of themselves, but of the needs of their customers (342c)—or if they think of themselves, they endeavor to satisfy their artistic, not their material, needs. Artisans are enjoined to concentrate on the perfection of their arts and to disregard the pleasures of wage-earning. In this they face a pedestrian version of the choice between philosophy and tyranny—the satisfactions of the mind versus the satisfactions of the body. They transcend their bodies, even their personal identities, in the process of becoming physicians in the precise sense, musicians in the precise sense, etc. They do not “get the better of” (*pleonektein*) their equals or superiors, because they know their art well enough to respect its standards and to honor those practitioners blessed with surpassing talent (349b-350c). They are paid a fee, but the wages they earn come to them as add-ons and as a secondary affair (e.g., the trained physician who secondarily is a businessperson managing an office) and not from the practice of art, *per se*. Thus, from the start, precise artisans are put on a path of transcendence. Innovation is a transcending of established patterns; and while precise

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<sup>29</sup> The conclusion Benardete (1989, 122) draws is that the city will stake a claim to Greek hegemony and become imperialistic. Something of this nature could occur once the city’s horizon widens and its fixed institutions (e.g., curriculum) allowed to change. Transcendence causes evil as well as good, which is why the dialogue mainly, or overtly, is against it. See n. 20 above and pp. 34-36 below.

artisans are forbidden to innovate (422a), they will do so nonetheless (they will rebel), since innovation is an invariable consequence of divided labor (370c) and preciseness a measure with no fixed meaning.<sup>30</sup>

Precise artisanship is a concept that appears again in the city of pigs. It is noteworthy that Socrates, when looking for building blocks of this his first city, chooses art over family, knowledge over love. Had he chosen otherwise (as does Aristotle, for example),<sup>31</sup> particularity and exclusivity would have figured more prominently in the city. Blood, not trade, would have acted as the bond of union. Rational and objective standards of regularity, efficiency, and precision would have counted for less. And the groundwork would not have been laid for women to transcend their biological mission and to function instead as artisans, warriors, or philosophers, depending on their individual psychic talents. Technical knowledge does separate and particularize (one person one art), but hardly to the same extent as do kinship relations. Precise artisans honor the best; family units favor their own.

The feverish city emerges out of the city of pigs at the point where appetites are emancipated and legitimized. If reason is a universalizing activity, appetite is a localizing one. Accordingly, the feverish city is not rising toward universality but slouching toward particularity. On the other hand, the city's need of extra crafts opens its gates to new arrivals, and its need of extra land brings it into contact with neighboring peoples.

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<sup>30</sup> Socrates acknowledges that with divided labor the arts progress, becoming "more plentiful, finer, and easier." Why think, then, that this process can be commanded to stop, if divided labor is its cause and divided labor (from which class division is extrapolated) is the principle upon which the city is founded?

<sup>31</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, I.2.1-2.

Initially that contact is violent and unjust; but it also is the beginning of a process which culminates in the revelation that all Greeks are fellow citizens and all barbarians fellow Greeks. Of course, in between comes the purging of appetites and the assignment of individuals to their respective metallic classes.

The purged city is the perfection of one-person-one-art particularity. It is the place where justice, once located, is determined to mean minding one's own business. But even here there is wider knowledge in play than the professionalism of art. Workers are moderate, not merely submissive and indifferent. They agree about who should rule, and so the philosopher's kingly business is partly their own, enough to enable them to consent to his government. And the warriors' education in music and gymnastics must be extended to them too, enough that their souls can be properly assayed (415b-c; cf. 459e, 460b, 546d).<sup>32</sup> Certainly they are taught the tenets of the Noble Lie, and so they learn what the warriors learn, that the city is by nature, harmonious and one. And since they are

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<sup>32</sup> A much-debated point is this matter of educating (or not educating) the offspring of the working class. The ambiguity in Plato's account is first called attention to by Aristotle who takes no position (*Politics*, II.5.18-24). Hourani (1949, 58-60), Strauss (1964, 114), and Reeve (1988, 186-91) all argue for a strict separation of the classes even at the cost of injustice toward artisans and farmers with golden- and silver-soul potential. Perhaps though an either-or answer is not what's required. True it is that perfect justice is impossible unless communism applies equally to all, but the city might still take a stab at discovering gold and silver prodigies among the bronze and iron workers by providing all its children with edifying stories (389d-e), organized exercise (410a), and mathematical instruction of the simplest kind (522c, 525c, 526b)—and then accepting the fact that mistakes will be made. There is an oracle that warns the city against promotion of iron or bronze souls to guardian status (415c), but there is no corresponding oracle warning the city not to leave golden souls among the workers. Some mistakes the city can survive.

tasked with creating beautiful wares to help tame the warriors' spirit (401b-c), they must to some degree imbibe the warriors' sense of beauty.

The dominant lesson issuing forth from the city of appetites purged is that workers and warriors must stay in the places to which they are assigned and that it is unjust to be more than one can be. Is it though unjust to be *all that* one can be? What are we to make of those artisans who try their hand at philosophy because "their bodies are mutilated by the arts and crafts . . . [and] their souls are doubled up and spoiled as a result of being in mechanical occupations" (495d; also, 522b)? For some artisans, the "subtlest" at their crafts, art is a "prison," Socrates admits (495d4, d2). Are they unjust for flying from their confinement toward occupations more challenging and magnificent? If justice condemns their aspiration, because order is disturbed by ambition, freedom, and excellence pursued, then is not something amiss with justice, and might the transcendence of justice take on the character of an obligation to oneself?

We have overreached. The artisans just described are labeled impostors by Socrates, unworthy suitors of the maiden philosophy. Their ambition is unjust because they aspire to a position they cannot fill and do not deserve. Presumptuous of their worth or disdainful of merited status, they are akin, Socrates suggests, to a bronze worker, who, released from his bonds and possessing some silver, asks for the hand of his impoverished master's daughter. They marry, bondsman and daughter, but their union is unnatural, yielding offspring who are deformed, "sophisms" in place of "true prudence" (496a8-9). The imagery used by Socrates implies that the artisan-sophist is male, while philosophy, the beloved, is female. By contrast, the philosopher, pictured elsewhere, is both male and female—and offspring to boot:

It is the nature of the real lover of learning to strive for what *is*; and he does not tarry by each of the many things opined to *be* but goes forward and does not lose the keenness of his passionate love nor cease from it before he grasps the nature itself of each thing which *is* . . . . And once near it and coupled with what really is, having begotten intelligence and truth [male], he knows and lives truly, is nourished [offspring] and so ceases from his labor pains [female], but not before (490a-b).

The philosopher is complete, whole, and self-sufficient. He is all that he can be, exiting the cave of society and dwelling among the forms. The dialogue celebrates his achievement even though his self-sufficiency means that no longer is he part of an entity larger than himself and that therefore he is not just. For justice requires membership in and dependence on a group; but the philosopher has left the city, does not need the city, and is not naturally a part of the city.<sup>33</sup> The philosopher compelled to rule is like a vocalist capable of solo performances but made to sing accompaniment in a chorus.<sup>34</sup> Is justice human excellence developed to the fullest, or excellence compromised but put to service in an association of unequals (Craig 167, 1994)?<sup>35</sup> By all accounts it is the latter—parts keeping to their places for the sake of a whole not generally comprehended. But there is this contrary action whereby parts transcend their places so as to upgrade their business and widen their perspective. Artisans, warriors, and philosophers all extend

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<sup>33</sup> The philosopher's relation to the city is contractual, not natural—the repayment of a debt incurred, not the association of a part with the whole.

<sup>34</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, III.13.21.

<sup>35</sup> Similar problems are encountered with state welfare and public education. People capable of caring for themselves are forced into association with people less able—and the former want out, out from under high taxes and bad schools. Their reward, like that of the philosopher compelled to rule, is political influence beyond what their numbers would justify.

themselves in the direction of universality, augmenting their narrow arts of making, fighting, and guarding with employments more comprehensively conceived—consenting, governing, philosophizing. When they do so, however, order is disturbed and injustice committed. Education destabilizes order and is putatively unjust.<sup>36</sup> Is education good, notwithstanding its unjust effects? If it is, then is justice not good, or what kind of good is justice (357b-358a).<sup>37</sup> When the soul makes its ascent to the Good, it does so dissociated from the body and dissociated from its spirited and appetitive parts (532c). Reason associated, including reason ruling, is reason maimed, for the body and the soul's lesser parts constitute a community that maims the contemplative properties of the soul (611b). Reason is fulfilled and happiness achieved when reason is alone, minding its noetic business, rather than associated, minding the political business of human beings.<sup>38</sup> This utmost in human striving can be alternately regarded as divinization and the soul's

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<sup>36</sup> The city's education is as responsible for these disturbances as is the ambition and restlessness of the individual. The education comes in stages, each stage topped off by examinations. Presumably, some of those educated will fail the exams and in failing be returned to a lower, auxiliary position. But they will not be like other auxiliaries who never were exposed to the more advanced, say dialectical, training. These failures (and all others up and down the educational line) will exist in between the fixed places of society, exceptions to society's ordering and to its justice.

<sup>37</sup> Justice is a partial good, a consequence of the fact that people are needy, dependent, and incomplete (or that the soul is a composite). As a remedy for an imperfect human condition, justice seems onerous and debilitating whenever a more perfect human condition is dreamed of and aspired to.

<sup>38</sup> There are, I believe, two passages which suggest that the philosopher benefits from his work as guardian (497a, 499b). But then there are many others which suggest or imply the opposite (347b-d, 489b, 519c, 540a). Nor should it be forgotten that the philosopher is wanted as guardian because he alone looks upon ruling as a "necessary thing," not as a good (520d-521a). See In Ha Jong 1996, 95-96.

salvation (500c-d, 589d, 590d), or as hubris and (changing spiritual traditions) original sin. For the most part the dialogue adopts the latter view (e.g., the bronze worker's rebuff, the philosopher's descent), but the encouragement it gives to enterprise, growth, and transcendence shows the former view to be present as well. There is a challenge put to Socrates to prove justice congruent with the happiness of the individual. This is not a challenge that Socrates satisfactorily can meet. The associational requirements of justice are static and confining; the educational needs of the individual are dynamic and expanding.

## Conclusion

When students are asked if they would like to live in Plato's Callipolis, not many respond affirmatively—and this despite the fact that, to a surprising degree, they already do. For while on campus they live in barracks called dorms; they eat their meals communally, in messes called student centers; they have little or no money, or little or nothing to spend it on; and those who bring cars have no place to park them; they have friends and acquaintances, but not spouses and children, and their sexual partners they change frequently; they spend their days in study (of course they do!) and depend on others to supply their material needs; finally, they are watched and graded and promoted according to merit, with a chosen few invited to join the “guardian class” by becoming professors themselves. Still, they denounce the *Republic*—firmly, consistently, and almost unanimously—and by implication the lives they presently are leading. Their objections to the best city's practices are numerous, to be sure (the censorship of poetry, the telling of lies, the abolition of families, the exposure of children, etc.), but none is so common or so vehemently expressed as their dislike of job specialization. Partly they

worry about premature judgments (this partly caused, one suspects, by their recently having taken the SATs!); partly they crave choice and variation and expect that doing the same thing always, no matter how well, can lead only to boredom; partly they are egalitarians and will countenance no discriminations of any sort. Mainly though they see assignment to class as a discouragement to ambition, effort, and self-improvement—good things all which they expect justice to promote and reward. That justice instead says keep to your place and mind your own business is incomprehensible to them and morally repugnant. They think they are rejecting the *Republic*. It is the argument of this paper, however, that the *Republic* supports them in their discontent and may even be responsible for it, by greatly complicating, if not quietly subverting, its own teaching about justice.

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