

# Plato's *Republic*

## An Introduction

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# 6. The *Republic*'s First Question Answered at Last

## Personal Justice

### Book IV

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Whatever worries or quibbles we might have about Socrates' definition of political justice, Glaucon finds it satisfactory: 'I agree. Justice is that and nothing else' (4.434d). A reminder about methodology might be in order here. Back in Book I, Socrates opted for question-and-answer over speechifying as the preferred method for investigating the nature of justice. Crucial to this method is 'seeking agreement with each other' (1.348b), arriving at a conclusion from shared premises, and then in turn treating that conclusion as a premise from which to derive new conclusions. Sometimes Glaucon and others seem too ready to agree with Socrates, and they often fail to critically scrutinize his claims, but an important feature of Socrates' method is its cooperative, agreement-securing nature. (This is perhaps surprising in light of cinematic and televisual depictions of 'the Socratic method' as a matter of antagonistic intellectual combat between a knowing professor and a terrified first-year law student.) So before putting the definition of *political* justice to work in order to understand *personal* justice, Socrates wants to be sure that Glaucon accepts the conclusion of their investigation into the nature of political justice. Given the focus on theoretical city-building, it is easy to forget that the political theorizing is not an end in itself but rather a means to grasping what justice is for the individual. Now Socrates must

make good on the promissory note he wrote in Book II and justify the assumption that city and soul are sufficiently analogous so that what is true of the former is also true of the latter.

### Platonic Psychology: The Divided Soul (4.434d–441c)

If Socrates is to 'apply what has come to light in the city to an individual' (4.434e), he first needs to show that city and soul have the same structure. He has been proceeding on the assumption that they do, and now it is time to make good on the big *if* he has been operating with: 'if an individual has these same three parts in his soul' (4.435b). In a few pages, he thinks he has done the job, noting 'we are pretty much agreed that the same number and the same kinds of classes as are in the city are also in the soul of each individual' (4.441c). How does he get there?

Earlier, when discussing personal, Socrates suggested that the commonsense idea of self-control was puzzling, for it seems 'ridiculous' (4.430e) that something could control itself. But he makes sense of this intuitive account of moderation by positing that the soul has parts. In a moderate person's soul, a better, rational part is in charge, governing by 'calculation in accordance with understanding and correct belief' (4.431c) the worse part, which contains 'all kinds of diverse desires, pleasures, and pains' (4.431c). He now makes explicit the principle by which he arrived at this distinction, which I will call the Opposition Principle: 'the same thing will not be willing to do or undergo opposites in the same part of itself, in relation to the same thing, at the same time. So, if we ever find this happening in the soul, we will know that we are not dealing with one thing but many' (4.436b).

To get a sense of the Opposition Principle, suppose you have one hand in a bucket of hot water and the other in a bucket of cold water. It seems that you are both hot and cold—but how could that be, since hot and cold are opposites? The Opposition Principle tells us you must have parts, which indeed you (obviously) do: one of your parts is hot while the other is cold. Another example: if I am standing in one spot, but nodding my head, am I moving or not? The answer seems to be both yes and no: I am not changing my location, so in that sense I am not moving, but in another sense, I am moving, since I am moving my

head. The Opposition Principle tells us that I must have parts, since I can simultaneously undergo or instantiate incompatible opposites.

Most of us have had the experience of wanting to do something but not doing it, even when we are able. I am really hungry and there is a piece of pizza right in front of me, but I do not eat it—perhaps because I see that it is *your* pizza, not mine, and I think that I should not take what is not mine. I am really jonesing for a cigarette, yet I do not light up—not because there are no cigarettes available, but because I am trying to quit. Whatever the details, the question is essentially the same: what explains my having a desire or appetite that I am able to fulfill but do not? It might be that I have another desire and that both of these desires cannot be satisfied at the same time. If I am really, really hungry and really, really, really tired, whichever one is stronger—whichever has more ‘really’s—will probably determine what I do. A conflict of desires shows that I have many desires, but not that my soul is divided. But the kinds of cases Socrates discusses are not like that: they are cases in which I *choose* not to act on my desire because I have a *reason* not to do so. In these sorts of cases the Opposition Principle tells me that my soul must have at least two parts, one appetitive and one rational. But Socrates soon comes to see that there must be a third part, as well:

Do we do these things with the same part of ourselves, or do we do them with three different parts? Do we learn with one part, get angry with another and with some third part desire the pleasure of food, drink, sex, and the others that are closely akin to them? Or, when we set out after something, do we act with the whole of our soul, in each case? (4.436a)

Now he suggests there is a third part, spirit, in addition to reason and appetite. In contrast to the rational part, which is ‘the part of the soul with which it calculates’ (4.439d), and the irrational appetitive part, which is ‘the part with which it lusts, hungers, thirsts, and gets excited by other appetites’ (4.439d), there is also ‘the spirited part,<sub>[1]</sub> by which we get angry’ (4.439e)—both at others, when we have been treated unjustly, and also at ourselves, when we have acted unjustly. To illustrate this, Socrates offers the rather disturbing example of Leontius’ necrophilia:

He had an appetite to look at them but at the same time he was disgusted and turned away. For a time he struggled with himself and covered his face, but, finally, overpowered by the appetite, he pushed his eyes wide



open and rushed towards the corpses, saying, 'Look for yourselves, you evil wretches, take your fill of the beautiful sight!' (4.439e)

Leontius' spirited element 'makes war against the appetites' (4.440a) but ultimately loses, giving in to a desire that Leontius himself is disgusted by—which results in his self-directed anger.

Let us pause for a moment and consider the role disgust plays in the *Republic*. Socrates has praised the person 'of godlike character who is disgusted by injustice' (2.366c), in contrast to the unjust person who 'has no scruples about [—i.e., is not disgusted by] doing injustice' (2.362b). The would-be guardians are being educated to 'disdain to act' (3.388a)—to be disgusted to act—as Thrasymachus would. We have already remarked upon the moral point of their aesthetic education, the point of which is to acquire 'the right distastes' (3.401e). It is the same Greek word in all these passages, *δυσχεραίνω* (*duscherainô*): to be unable to endure, to be disgusted with. Disgust at rotting meat seems to be a universal human reaction, one we come to naturally, without learning. But moral disgust is a product of education and upbringing. Someone raised on the Thrasymachus plan will fail to be appropriately disgusted at wrongdoing and other modes of moral ugliness. And unlike its physiological counterpart, moral disgust is conceptual. It is not the *thought* of rotting meat that disgusts us, it is the smell of the rotting meat itself (although physical revulsion may well arise if I imagine rotting meat robustly enough). I should be morally disgusted at witnessing an outrageous act of injustice, but—if I have been properly raised—I should also feel moral disgust at the thought of injustice and be angry about it.

Leontius was disgusted both by the corpses and by his attraction to them, which suggests that his problem is not that he 'lacks the right distastes' (3.401a). His problem, rather, is that his soul is not properly aligned: his spirited part is not strong enough to overcome his appetites and thus it sides with them rather than with reason. A conflict between reason and desire, between what we think we *ought* to do and what we *want* to do, is a common feature of the human condition. On Plato's psychology—literally, his *logos* of the *psychê*—the conflict requires a third party for its resolution: spirit, which sides with reason in a well-ordered soul, and with appetite in a poorly ordered one. Spirit is 'by nature the helper of the rational part', Socrates says, but to call the arrangement natural is not to say that it will occur all by itself, without

outside help, but rather that this is what spirit's function is. Spirit will perform its natural function 'provided that it has not been corrupted by a bad upbringing' (4.441a).

It is telling that spirit is defined as the part of the soul 'we get angry with', for anger of a particularly moral type—resentment or indignation—can be the appropriate emotional response to injustice suffered or witnessed, respectively, just as shame, a kind of moral self-disgust, is the proper emotional response to having acted unjustly. Spirit, like reason but unlike appetite, is evaluative, but its evaluative scope is narrower than reason's. Spirit seeks to protect its distinctive good, honor, and views the actions of oneself and others through this lens. Many philosophers agree with Jeffrie Murphy's view that wrongdoing can communicate the demeaning message that it is permissible for the wrongdoer to treat the victim as they do, and that the victim's anger, which often involves a desire to retaliate, can be seen as a way of denying the wrongdoer's demeaning message.<sup>1</sup> While spirit is able to see what is good and bad for *it* and to defend its own turf, it is not able to see what is good *all things considered*—that is reason's task. When one has been wronged, the spirited part of the soul typically burns with anger and a desire for revenge, to negate the demeaning message the wrongdoing seems to encode. 'It would be good to harm him in return!' it seems to say. But spirit is 'the part that is angry without calculation' (4.441c). Where spirit is passionate and hot, reason is detached and cool, seeking 'what is advantageous for each part and for the whole soul' (4.442c) rather than for any particular part. Reason might offer an alternative interpretation of the event that has angered passion, suggesting perhaps that the wrongdoer did not mean it that way or that it was an accident, etc., and thus that spirit's anger is unjustified, so retaliation is inappropriate in this case. Or reason might reject retaliation altogether since 'it is never just to harm anyone' (1.335e), as Socrates argued in Book I.

The upshot of all this is that spirit is distinct from appetite and reason, though it shares affinities with each. In a well-ordered soul, spirit can be 'called to heel by the reason within [...] like a dog by a shepherd' (4.440d). Of course, this order must be cultivated from an early age, by the proper

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1 Jeffrie Murphy, 'Forgiveness and Resentment', in Jeffrie Murphy and Jean Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 25.

balance of musical and physical training. Overdoing physical training results in someone who is under-responsive to the demands of reason and who, like a rogue soldier, is unable or unwilling to obey orders. Underdoing physical education results in someone unable to subdue the appetites and passions. Readers familiar with Freud's psychology will see an intriguing parallel between the roles reason, appetite, and spirit play in Plato's psychology and the roles ego, id, and super-ego play in Freud's.

### The Personal Virtues (4.441c–444e)

Having secured agreement that the soul has the same three-part structure as the ideal city, Socrates has justified to his companions' satisfaction the dangling *if* at the heart of their method of investigating personal justice. If the assumption that city and soul are isomorphic—that they have the same three-part structure—were false, then we would have no reason to think that anything we have discovered about the nature of the political virtues tells us anything about the nature of the personal virtues. But having justified the hypothesis that underlies their method—at least to the satisfaction of Glaucon and Adeimantus—they can now 'apply what has come to light in the city to an individual' (4.434e).

Socrates makes quick work of the first three personal virtues, each of which is parallel to the corresponding political virtue. Just as political courage involves preserving law-inculcated beliefs about what are appropriate objects of fear, personal courage is not the preservation of innate or natural or accidentally acquired beliefs about what is to be feared but rather 'the declarations of reason about what is to be feared and what is not' (4.442c). In a well-ordered soul, the rational part is the part making these declarations, since *it* is the part capable of 'knowledge of what is advantageous for each part and for the whole soul' (4.447c), which is wisdom. As with political wisdom, personal wisdom requires the capacity to see the big picture.

We encounter a problem when we try to map political moderation onto the individual soul. Like political moderation, personal moderation involves harmony—the Greek word is *συνφωνία* (*sumphōnia*), whence the English word 'symphony'—between the rational and appetitive parts of the soul. With political moderation, this agreement is not merely practical, as when we say things like, 'cabin life really agrees with him', or when



subject and verb agree in a grammatically coherent sentence. It is also *cognitive*: 'the ruler and the ruled believe in common that the rational part should rule' (4.442c). But in the soul, the irrational appetites are parties to the agreement, and it is hard to see how mere appetites like hunger and thirst can agree with anything in the cognitive sense. One implication of the otherwise puzzling claim that 'each appetite itself is only for its natural object' (4.437e) is that the appetites are non-cognitive, non-evaluative drives incapable of belief, judgment, and agreement. There is no corresponding head-scratching about the craftspeople agreeing with the guardians that the latter should govern the *polis*, since the craftspeople are *people* and thus capable of agreeing and disagreeing with claims or propositions. Personifying the parts of the soul helps us to make sense of Socrates' account of moderation as a personal virtue, but in addition to the weirdness of thinking of appetites as being like persons, capable of forming beliefs and of making agreements, personifying the parts of the soul puts us on the road to an infinite regress: a person's soul comprises three parts, each of which is itself a miniature person or is like one; but then each of these miniature sub-persons would comprise even more miniature sub-sub-persons, and on and on. Like the poet Walt Whitman, we contain multitudes, apparently.

Perhaps Socrates' talk of agreement between the rational and irrational parts should be taken metaphorically. Socrates regularly appeals to metaphors in the *Republic*, such as the famous Allegory of the Cave and the less famous (but no less important) metaphors of the Sun and the Divided Line, which we will soon be exploring. But while thinking of personification metaphorically staves off the looming infinite regress, it leaves unexplained just how the irrational and rational parts come to an agreement. Are we letting Socrates off the hook too easily if we accept his metaphorical explanation?

Albert Camus raised a parallel worry about metaphorically explaining the atom by appealing to the solar system:

You tell me of an invisible planetary system in which electrons gravitate around a nucleus. You explain this world to me with an image. I realize that you have been reduced to poetry [...] So that science that was to

teach me everything ends up in a hypothesis, that lucidity founders in metaphor, that uncertainty is resolved in a work of art.<sup>2</sup>

Though I understand his complaint, it seems that Camus fails to appreciate the cognitive power of metaphor, which is odd, given the centrality of the metaphor of Sisyphus to his account of the human condition. Are metaphorical explanations intrinsically problematic, as Camus seems to suggest? Metaphorical explanations are problematic when the metaphor that is offered to clarify the target concept is itself unclear or insufficiently understood. If the physics and nature of the solar system are well understood, why would appealing to the metaphor of the solar system be problematic? Perhaps Plato is here reminding us that we have agreed to forgo the 'longer and fuller road' that leads to 'precise answer[s]' (4.435c) in favor of a less demanding path that leads to a vantage point from which we see the same truths as we would from the more demanding path, but we see them less clearly and distinctly, from a distance. Walking the longer road of dialectic requires doing without hypotheses and metaphors, Socrates tells us later (6.511ae, 7.533c), but we will find them helpful while walking the less demanding trail we are on.

Interestingly enough, Socrates does not exactly go in for personification of the soul's parts in a metaphor he explicitly endorses later in the *Republic*. In the 'image of the soul in words' (9.588b) he offers in Book IX, the appetitive part is not a person but rather 'a multicolored beast with a ring of many heads that it can grow and change at will' (9.488c). While we might worry about the capacity of such a creature to form beliefs and agreements, remember that in distinguishing political courage from its natural analogue, which resembles but strictly speaking is not courage, Socrates notes that 'animals and slaves' can possess 'correct belief' about what is appropriately feared, however such beliefs are 'not the result of education [... nor] inculcated by law' (4.430b) and thus they cannot possess courage proper but only its natural facsimile. While the hydra-headed beast representing the appetites can come to *obey* the commands issued by the rational part, as a dog can come to

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2 Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. by Justin O'Brien (New York: Vintage International, 2018), p. 20.

obey its master's commands, it is a stretch to think the beast or the dog *agrees* in the robust cognitive sense required.

So it seems there is a glitch in the city-soul analogy, but perhaps such glitches are to be expected on the less precise path we are treading, since an analogy need not be perfect for it to be correct and helpful.

### Personal Justice: Intrapersonal Being versus Interpersonal Doing (4.443c–444e)

Finally, we get Plato's answer to the *Republic's* first question. Just as a city is just when each class does its own work, a person is just when each part of the soul does its own work. A person who possesses a just soul will do their own work: bakers will bake, cobblers will cobble, auxiliaries will defend, guardians will rule, etc. But the essence of justice is the harmony of the soul's parts, not the individual's acting in certain ways.

Socrates' definition of justice is strikingly different from the definitions Polemarchus and Cephalus offered in Book I. To think of justice as telling the truth and paying one's debts or to think of it as benefiting one's friends and harming one's enemies is to think of justice primarily in terms of how one acts toward others. While Socrates thinks that the just person will treat others in certain ways, he does not think of justice primarily in terms of action: 'Justice [...] is not concerned with someone doing his own externally, but with what is inside him, with what is truly himself and his own' (4.443c). So where Cephalus and Polemarchus, both spokesmen for the commonsense morality of the day, think of justice as a matter of what one does, Socrates thinks of it as primarily a matter of how one is, of what one is like, internally. The essence of justice is not to be found in external, interpersonal doing, but rather in internal, intrapersonal being.

That is quite a shift—so much so that some philosophers think that Socrates has changed the subject and indeed has committed the fallacy of irrelevance.<sup>3</sup> Although I understand the point of this objection, I cannot say that I find it compelling. Socrates has not really changed the subject

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3 David Sachs, 'A Fallacy in Plato's *Republic*', *Philosophical Review*, 72 (1963), 141–58. The first of many responses is Raphael Demos, 'A Fallacy in Plato's *Republic*?', *Philosophical Review*, 73 (1964), 395–98.

so much as deepened it. Polemarchus is thinking of justice in terms of action, but Socrates argues that it is something more fundamental than that, that Polemarchus' thinking is literally too superficial: it is looking at the surface manifestations of justice without understanding its underlying essence, just as someone who thinks of water in terms of clarity and wetness is missing its molecular essence. It is not that Socrates is unconcerned with just actions, but rather than he thinks they are really merely expressions of the underlying virtue, to be explained in terms of inner character: 'the action is just and fine that preserves this inner harmony and helps achieve it' (4.443e).

As we noted earlier, Plato is offering what is nowadays called a *virtue ethics*, which takes the virtues to be morally fundamental. Consequentialist moral philosophers like John Stuart Mill think that good outcomes are morally basic, explaining right action and virtuous character in terms of those outcomes: an action is right if and only if it produces the best possible (or a sufficiently good) outcome, and a virtue is a reliable disposition to bring about good outcomes. Deontological moral philosophers such as Immanuel Kant deny that right action is to be explained in terms of good consequences, thinking that certain kinds of action are right in themselves; for deontologists like Kant, virtues are dispositions to do one's duty.

Although this is a bit of a simplification, moral theories can be distinguished by which family of moral concepts—virtues, outcomes, duties—they take to be explanatorily basic in the sense of explaining or defining the other moral concepts. Although deontology and consequentialism have dominated modern moral philosophizing in the English-speaking world for several centuries, virtue ethics has enjoyed a revival in recent decades. The basic idea, really, is that *being* a certain kind of person is morally more fundamental than *doing* certain kinds of actions. While the consequentialists and deontologists focus on actions—although they differ strenuously in what explains why right actions are right—virtue ethicists focus on persons and their characters, thinking that someone in whom the virtues have been cultivated (by upbringing, education, and individual effort) can be trusted to figure out what action to perform in whatever circumstances they find themselves.

So, for a virtue ethicist such as Plato, an action is just because it is the sort of action a just person would perform in the circumstances. Now,

merely doing *what* the just person does is not enough to make one just: there is a distinction between *doing a just* act and *being just*. If I am doing what the just person would do, then I am acting justly, but I might not yet possess the virtue of justice. Plato's student Aristotle insisted that to *act* justly, I must do what the just person does; but to *be* just, to possess the virtue of justice, I must perform just acts *as* the just person performs them. I must be properly motivated, which requires at a minimum that I be motivated by what is fine or noble (what is *kalon*, that crucial concept we encountered in Books II and III) rather than by self-interest, and that, with a few exceptions we enjoy or at least are not internally resistant to performing the action.

Socrates puts his definition to the test by asking Glaucon what kind of acts the just person, as they have defined her or him, will and will not perform. Socrates is asking Glaucon whether the proposed definition of personal justice squares with commonsense. If the just person, as conceived of by Socrates, would rob temples, steal, betray friends, or break contracts (4.443a)—a list of unjust actions which Thrasyarchus earlier specified as parts of injustice (1.344a) and which will be noted later as typical of people with tyrannical souls (9.575b)—then the definition must be rejected, just as Cephalus' and Polemarchus' definitions were rejected for having implications that they themselves could not accept. If Socrates' definition implied that a just person would perform such actions, it would theoretically be open to Glaucon to still accept the definition and change his mind about the moral status of thievery, temple robbery, betrayal, etc. But that would sound the death-knell for Socrates' moral theory and would be rhetorically disastrous. Glaucon agrees that the just person would not perform these kinds of actions, the kinds of actions we can expect of someone wearing Gyges' ring, of someone who thinks they can 'do injustice with impunity' (2.360c). Socrates thinks his just person *is* incorruptible: they are ἀδαμάντινος (*adamantinos*) (1.360b): adamant, made of steel, unshakably committed to justice and disgusted by injustice.

As Socrates has defined it, justice (which, we should remember, is best thought of as virtue generally) is a kind of inner, psychic health: 'Virtue seems, then, to be a kind of health, fine condition, and wellbeing of the soul' (4.444d). This is unsurprising, given Socrates' moral realism. There are facts about what health is and what contributes to it, and we

are likely to roll our eyes at someone who says, 'Who's to say that a diet of potato chips and ice cream is unhealthy?' 'Experts and indeed anyone who understands nutrition is to say', we want to respond. As a kind of inner health and harmony, virtue is similarly susceptible to this same kind of realism. If Socrates is right, there turn out to be moral facts, just as there are dietary facts—and what those facts are is not up to us in any meaningful way. We may be unaware of these facts, but we *discover* them, we do not *invent* them.

There is an objection we should address before closing. The objection turns on Socrates' emphasis on inner harmony in his account of justice. For example, he says that the just person 'harmonizes the three parts of himself like three limiting notes in a musical scale—high, low, and middle' (4.443d), that 'he becomes entirely one, moderate and harmonious' (4.443e); moreover, 'the action is just [...] that preserves this inner harmony and helps achieve it' (4.443e). The objection is that inner harmony is compatible with injustice. Consider a harmonious psychopath in whom reason, with the aid of spirit, rules the appetites. The psychopath does not really want to kill and eat other human beings, but believes that reason commands him to do so. So, the objection goes, if a harmonious soul is a just soul, it follows that a Socratically just person *could* do these awful things. But clearly a just person would not murder and cannibalize (let alone rob temples and break promises), so Socrates' account must be rejected.

Given what he says in Book IX, we can imagine that Socrates might respond by insisting that our harmonious psychopath has a tyrannical soul, which is highly disordered and unharmonious—that our imagined counter-example is not really conceivable. But this seems to simply beg the question, to assume the truth of the very thing Socrates is supposed to be arguing for. A better response would be to point out that while harmony is a necessary condition of a soul's being just (that is, a soul cannot be just without also being harmonious), it is not by itself sufficient (that is, it is false that any soul that is harmonious is thereby just). It is not that a harmonious soul is a just soul, as the objection assumes, but rather that a just soul is a harmonious soul. It is not enough that the rational part governs, Socrates should reply; it must get things right: wisdom is a kind of knowledge and knowledge requires truth—we can only know what is true, and it is not true that



murder and cannibalism are morally permissible, other things being equal. We can probably imagine circumstances in which they might be, but the remorseless, harmonious psychopath we have imagined is not in such a situation.

It should not be surprising that Socrates' response presupposes moral realism. He thinks that moral knowledge, which presupposes moral truth, is possible. Such knowledge is rare and limited to philosopher-queens and -kings, but it is possible. Readers who are more skeptical will take this as a point of weakness—not because they themselves reject moral realism (though some surely will) but rather because Socrates' response presupposes moral realism without ever arguing for it. Even if we share his belief that there are genuine moral truths, we might find ourselves in a situation analogous to the situation Glaucon and Adeimantus found themselves in in Book II, agreeing with Socrates but seeing that our belief in moral realism is not justified. Of course, that does not make it false, but it leaves us in an epistemically perilous state. Socrates, we should remember, does not claim to *know* that moral realism is true; he is working with what his interlocutors believe, so his assuming the truth of moral realism is not problematic from within the framework of the *Republic*. But from outside that framework, as critical readers and thinkers, we should find it problematic, if we agree with him but can offer no arguments that would justify that agreement.

Many readers will find this account of justice intuitively appealing, especially as it places reason at the center—or, perhaps better, at the helm—of a well-lived life. Socrates will discuss the varieties of unjust souls in Books VIII and IX, but it will be helpful to trace one out here, if only briefly, in order to give us a richer sense of this account of justice. A clear, illustrative contrast is with a soul (and city) he deems oligarchic, one which takes amassing wealth to be life's ultimate purpose. While the just person loves virtue, the oligarch loves wealth. As Socrates describes the oligarch, they are still more or less conventionally decent, though they are likely to cheat a bit if they can do so with impunity. In terms of their soul's structure, the most distinctive contrast is that while reason governs the just person's soul, appetite—in particular the desire for money—governs the money-loving oligarch's. For Plato, in a well-ordered and thus just soul, reason determines which ends and

goals one ought to pursue. This is its task, a task that requires the personal virtue of wisdom in order to be done well. But the oligarchic money-lover has appetite setting their ends: 'He makes the rational and spirited parts sit on the ground beneath appetite, one on either side, reducing them to slaves' (8.553c). In contemporary philosophical lingo, the money-lover reduces reason to the purely instrumental role of determining the best means to achieve the ends set by appetite. It is not that figuring out the most effective means to a given end is not a task for reason; it surely is. But that is not all reason is good for, and indeed, important as such reasoning is, it is decidedly secondary in importance, in Plato's view, to determining what is good in itself, what is worth pursuing as an end. The problem, Plato thinks, is that reason has *only* this instrumental role in the money-lover's soul and that in determining what ends and goals to pursue, appetite is taking over a task that does not properly belong to it. Appetite is meddling and not doing its own work, as the Specialization Principle and justice require. Reason, not appetite, is supposed to determine which things are good, so a soul in which appetite is doing reason's work is unjust. If we are reluctant to label as unjust souls whose possessors adhere to conventional morality despite being governed by appetite rather than reason—the example of Cephalus immediately comes to mind—we can at least regard them as non-just, reserving 'unjust' for more obviously bad folk.

Though many of us are no doubt inclined to agree with Plato about the centrality of reason to a well-lived life, we would do well to remember that great eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher David Hume disagrees strenuously with Plato about the role reason should (and indeed can) play in a well-lived life. Hume famously says, 'Reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions',<sup>4</sup> but Hume is emphatically not suggesting that we should give ourselves over to a passion for money; instead, he is making a point about human psychology that plays up the affective, emotional side of our nature and downplays the rational. We regularly mistake the 'calm passions'—such as benevolence, kindness to children, and the general appetite for good—for reason, since they lack the force of 'violent passions' such as anger and romantic love. We will

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4 Hume, *Treatise*, p. 415 (II.iii.3).

not settle Hume's disagreement with Plato here, but I raise it to remind readers that, despite the prominence of reason in the history of Western philosophy, the issue is, like most fundamental philosophical issues, not settled.

Hopefully this brief foray into the oligarchic soul helps to illustrate Plato's definition of justice.

### Some Suggestions for Further Reading

Readers interested in a philosophically astute discussion of the three-part soul will want to read Chapter 13 ('*Republic* IV: The Division of the Soul') of Terence Irwin, *Plato's Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 203–22, which has informed my understanding of Plato's psychology. Irwin is a leading scholar of ancient philosophy and the book as a whole is extraordinarily good, covering not just the *Republic* but many other dialogues as well. *Plato and the Divided Self*, ed. by Rachel Barney, Tad Brennan, and Charles Brittain (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511977831>, contains excellent essays on Plato's division of the soul in the *Republic* and elsewhere.

For an excellent discussion of the concept of virtue, both epistemic and moral, interested readers should see Heather Battaly, *Virtue* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2015).

Readers interested in exploring the biological, social, and philosophical nature of disgust should see William Ian Miller's *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), along with a helpful review: Martha Nussbaum, 'Foul Play', *The New Republic*, 217.20 (1997), 32–38.

Readers interested in metaphor will find Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) well worth their attention.

Readers interested in Hume's view that sentiment, not reason, is the basis of morality, should see the first two sections of Book III of his classic *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 'Moral Distinctions Not Deriv'd From Reason' and 'Moral Distinctions Deriv'd From a Moral Sense.' The

*Treatise* is available in many editions and readers will find a modernized version of the *Treatise* (and most significant philosophical texts of the early modern period) at Jonathan Bennett's wonderfully helpful *Early Modern Texts* (<http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/>).

Readers interested in parallels between Plato and Freud might start with A.W. Price, 'Plato and Freud', in *The Person and the Human Mind: Issues in Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, ed. by Christopher Gill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990). For an engaging account of Freud's philosophical significance, see Jonathan Lear, *Freud*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315771915>, part of the excellent *Routledge Philosophers* series.

Readers curious about the potential permissibility of cannibalism will find a fascinating discussion in Peter Suber, *The Case of the Speluncean Explorers: Nine New Opinions* (New York: Routledge, 1998), which includes and expands on Lon Fuller, 'The Case of the Speluncean Explorers', *Harvard Law Review*, 62 (1949), 616–45, on the occasion of its 50th anniversary.

For an excellent exploration of the relations between virtue and health, interested readers should see Paul Bloomfield, *Moral Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), <https://doi.org/10.1093/0195137132.001.0001>.

