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Socrates and Thrasymachus

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SOCRATES AND THRASYMACHUS

I

The encounter between Socrates and Thrasymachus in Republic I is notoriously baffling. Most of what is said seems straightforward, and the issues at stake are ones of common concern, but the argument remains elusive. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the nature and grounds of this elusiveness, and to show that some of it can be dispelled by a sufficiently free-ranging exegesis that bears in mind the general character of Plato's writing.

The normal implication of dialogue form is that the author is disengaged from his characters. Even if he usually uses one of them as his mouth-piece, we cannot assume that he stands by every word he makes him say, or that he dissents from every word the others say. He is, after all, the author of all their words alike. Where there is a genuine interchange between characters, we may look for the author's 'doctrine' not so much in what any one of them says as in what happens between them. That is to say, a writer of 'dialogues' is necessarily an ironist. In the Republic there is a second layer of iron. The discussion is annotated: we are told when Thrasymachus has been refuted (343a). But it is not Plato who tells us this in propria persona: it is still Socrates, recording his own success. To assume that Plato endorses this endorsement is to assume that he is a very naive author. But the chief characteristic of his prose style is very obviously a subtlety bordering on over-elaboration, and it is safer to be prepared for a similar refinement in his way of arguing. Plato himself has Socrates say (Phaedrus 278a) that the written word cannot be, as the spoken word can, (a) enarges (b) teleon and (c) axion spoudês. One may accordingly suspect that Plato's writings will need (a) clarification (b) supplementing from elsewhere and (c) taking with a grain of salt. Plato is in any case discernibly a philosopher of multiple connections and ambiguities: arguments and analogies are repeated from dialogue to dialogue with changed emphasis and point. We should expect that the Republic, so synoptic and inclusive in plan, would stand out among his writings in the complexity of its internal and external ramifications. In what follows I shall argue that the real point at issue between Socrates and Thrasymachus is one that is never explicitly made in the context, but which may be inferred from the nature of the arguments employed and confirmed by reference to the rest of the Republic and to other dialogues. In theory, such exegesis is objectionable as allowing merely fanciful embroidery; in practice, it makes a closer reading of the text possible by providing a context in which the whole argument makes sense.

II

When Thrasymachus says 'Phōni gar ego einaī to dikaion euk allo ti ē...',¹ what sort of question about justice is he answering? He is not defining, in the sense of explaining the meaning of a new or unfamiliar term, for (a) the term is not new or unfamiliar, (b) he expects his account to be immediately applauded as recognizably apt, (c) he goes on to provide premises from which it is the conclusion, (d) he himself insists (337c2) that his question is not like 'How many makes twelve?' (that is, presumably, it is not like the reduction of a complex idea to the simple ones of which it is made up). What he offers is rather a beltiōn apokrisis peri dikaiosunēs (337d2). The expression suggests that he means to shed a startling new light on the subject rather than to impart extra information about it; but what sort of light? There seem to be two possibilities. Polemarchus' successive characterizations of justice were all intended to provide a criterion of the justice of an action in cases where that was in doubt. That is how the problem of justice had arisen (331c): the discussion with Cephalus suggested the need for a 'horos dikaiosunēs,' a fixed boundary for justice, a recognizable property such that whatever had it could be called just. But when Glaucon and Adeimantus later ask Socrates to tell them what justice is (368c), it is not a criterion they want; what they demand is such an account of the nature of justice that its effects and advantages will appear (367e3). From this point in the dialogue on, no attempt is made to fulfil the initial demand for a criterion of justice in doubtful cases. On the contrary, it is either assumed that certain kinds of actions and individuals are just or unjust (for example, the short list of typically unjust actions at 442e-443a), or (in the case of the novel institutions of the ideal state) the question of their justice is deliberately shelved (cf. 416b5-c3). Conversely, Polemarchus, in seeking a touchstone for justice, had taken its merits for granted.² To use the terms made familiar by Mr. A. M. Hare, the two questions use, respectively, the prescriptive and descriptive aspects of the meaning of dikaion to question the other aspect. The first question is thus: 'It being granted that justice is always good, what acts are just?' And the second question is 'It being granted that certain acts are just, how shall we evaluate justice?'

Which of these two questions is Thrasymachus answering? From 343c on it becomes more and more obvious that he is concerned rather to attack than to describe justice (hence the form in which Glaucon receives the question): to call justice allogrion agathon, is, on the face of it, to condemn it. But Thrasymachus' initial formula, 'to tou kreittonos sumpheron,' might be taken simply as a criterion, and it is as such that Thrasymachus seems to be offering it--naturally enough, since it is interposed into Polemarchus' and Socrates' search for a criterion. Thrasymachus' criterion would be: justice is legality, and legality is determined by the established power in its own interest. That is how Cleitophon interprets it, and makes the necessary correction: what is actually legal is what the authorities think will be in their interest (340b). But Thrasymachus rejects this correction; and this rejection shows that he is already offering not a criterion but the basis for a revaluation. And of course, if all that is legal is just, any reference to the 'interest of the stronger' is otiose if it is a criterion that is required. Legality is more easily established than advantage is calculated or intention divined. Thrasymachus' 'better answer' is thus not an improved criterion but an illuminating truth about the actions agreed to be just. The fact that a criterion is expected is among the causes of the reader's bewilderment.

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Thrasymachus rejects Cleitophon's correction on the ground that, though rulers do make mistakes, in calling them 'the stronger' we are thinking of their successes and not of their failures: qua 'kreittones' they are infallible. It is sometimes said that he would have had a better argument if he had accepted Cleitophon's interpretation, thus basing himself squarely on the facts, instead of launching into the realm of abstraction, where Socrates is master. Quite aside from the reasons just mentioned (in effect, that this is not what he means to say), the opinion is mistaken on two counts. First, Thrasymachus has cited no particular facts but only hazarded some generalizations about the tendencies of governmental institutions. Second, an inquiry into the facts about Greek legal systems would be equally beyond the powers of Socrates and Thrasymachus, and probably of Plato himself. Nor could 'the facts,' when assembled, be expected to support unambiguously and unambiguously and particular theoretical position.³ One cannot conduct an argument by citing instances and counter-instances from history. And Thrasymachus himself invites us to consider the case of the just man in office (343e1-7).

Thrasymachus is as much a theorist as Socrates. If Cleitophon confronts him with a choice it is not one beyond fact and theory but one between two theoretical positions which he never explicitly distinguishes. The first is, that the nature of government is to seek and exert power in its own interest, and to use legal devices ('justice') as a means to this end. The second is, that the nature of just action (assumed definable without reference to government action) is favourable to constituted authority. 'To dikaion einai...to tou kreittonos sunperibon' can be taken either way. The former of these positions is a thesis about the nature of government, the latter about the nature of justice; it is justice that Thrasymachus purports to be discussing, yet it is the former position that he opts for. Presumably he makes this choice because he is more interested in power than in justice, as the sequel shows. That he has made this odd choice is, however, concealed from the reader by the fact that he evades Cleitophon's challenge by formally denying that he has to decide (340c6): on his interpretation, what the rulers command and what serves their interest is the same.

From the point of view of one arguing about the nature of government, Thrasymachus' supposedly 'unrealistic' insistence on the restriction to successful action is undoubtedly correct. It is a restriction that is always made in expounding skills. Manuals of medicine are about what doctors do right, not what they do wrong nor about actions that are irrelevant to their skill. Thrasymachus does make the assumption that government is something that can be well or ill done, and intelligently criticized accordingly; but who could deny that? Thrasymachus is thought to weaken his case because, by transferring attention from what rulers do to the standards by which they are judged, he enables Socrates to introduce the distinction between the art of ruling and the art of acquisition. But we shall see (VII) that this distinction is not in itself damaging to Thrasymachus, though he is not allowed to formulate a successful defence against it.

Thrasymachus begins by offering a double equation: of justice with legality, and of legality with the interests of the stronger. His position seems obscure: does the former equation hold only because the latter holds, or is the latter relevant only because the former is valid? He refuses to answer the question by refusing to consider whether the former equation would hold if the latter did not: since he is concerned to characterize justice and not provide a criterion, he can brush aside the cases which he holds to be atypical. But precisely because it is a question of characterization and not of criterion, there is no real obscurity: it was the 'interest of the stronger' alone that figured in his opening pronouncement (338c1-2). The mention of legality is therefore purely explanatory: it is through law that the stronger make their interests known and effective. The introduction of law is not surprising: dikaïosunē is obviously to be found in dikastēria where the adikos is compelled dikēn didonai.⁴

Setting aside (as Thrasymachus does) the question of whether the connection between justice and legality amounts to an equation (Aristotle allows it, 1129b 11-14), we may examine the equation of law with the rulers' interest. This examination will lead us to the vital spring of Thrasymachus' position.

Four things have to be distinguished: (a) the constitutional law that establishes who shall bear rule, how power and privilege shall be divided; (b) the civil and criminal codes that govern what Aristotle (Nic. Eth. V, 1131a1-9) calls voluntary and involuntary transactions between the citizens; (c) the accepted moral standards that Thucydides (II-37) and Aristotle (Met. 1374a21) call unwritten laws; (d) governmental directives (psēphismata etc.) controlling the day-to-day business of the state. Of these, (a) and (d) in their different ways are the work of the ruling group and doubtless promote its interest; (b) is its work, or that of its predecessors, but is not wholly devoted to securing its interests; (c) is neither its work nor promotes its interests. (a), (b), and (c) govern what is dikaion; but what is merely forbidden by decree is scarcely adikon, nor is a decree a nomos. The equation of law with the rulers' interest therefore really holds of (a) alone, and it is in terms most appropriate to (a) that Thrasymachus formulates his position: 'Tithetai de ge tous nomous hekaste he arche pros to hautei sumpheron, demokratia men demokratikous' ktl. (338e). But it is striking that the examples of just action given by Cephalus in the first place (331b), fallen back on by Polemarchus when pressed (333c), enumerated by Socrates (442e ff.), and adduced even by Thrasymachus himself (343d2-e7) belong not to constitutional law but to the private sector of (b) and (c), being concentrated in the area of Aristotle's en merei justice of avoiding pleonexia in exchanges and contracts. And no Greek author alleges that such behaviour is the product of or in the interest of any particular form of government. The general account of justice that Thrasymachus initially gives is thus at variance with the standard examples of just conduct given by himself and others--a fact that helps to make his position enigmatic. But the inconsistency can be easily understood--so easily that not all commentators have remarked it. The sphere of governmental arrangements is indeed that in which justice becomes most problematical and questions of justice most pressing: if it is Thrasymachus' chief interest, it is also Plato's (as the rest of the Republic shows) and Aristotle's⁵ and ours. Obviously, any general account of justice must cover both social arrangements and private bargains, both distribution and adjustment. What Thrasymachus at first provides can only be, at best, a special case of a general theory. No one challenges him in these terms because the special case that he chooses is the most conspicuous and the one most usually debated: Socratic perplexities of casuistry are less frequently and less urgently

discussed than the proper distribution of power and privilege, especially in the politically unstable conditions of fifth- and fourth-century Greece.⁶

Thrasymachus' equation of law with the strongers' interest does not merely reflect an easy preference of debate. The most striking and consistent feature of his thought is that he construes all encounters between individuals and groups as conflicts. Since the arrangements grouped under (b) and (c) can be construed as expressions of social conflict only by heroic exegesis, Thrasymachus cannot accommodate them in his theoretical structure. He can handle them only from the point of view of the conflicts between individuals that they mediate. That some arrangements may exist for the common good is simply beyond his grasp.⁷ What gives the discussion between him and Socrates its peculiar character is primarily that Thrasymachus is not challenged upon this limitation: Socrates moves, sometimes at the cost of great awkwardness, within its bounds. It is partly because of this tacit agreement to treat all interpersonal situations as conflict situations that neither disputant alludes to the argument that Socrates uses against Callicles in the Gorgias (488d ff.), that the majority is stronger than any of its parts and therefore the prevailing morality which represents what suits the mass of the weak must (from the fact of its prevalence) represent the interest of what is actually the stronger. For this is an argument essentially based on the idea of an arrangement for the common good, and is represented as such by Glaucon at 359a.⁸

Thrasymachus' equation of justice with 'another's good' at 343c3 does cover the standard examples of justice that 'The interest of the stronger' leaves out. Is the later formula consistent with the earlier? At first it seems that he contradicts himself. From the initial formula it seems to follow that the 'stronger' are themselves either just (in that they pursue their own interest, being themselves the 'stronger party'), or neutral, being above both justice and injustice which they determine for others (338c4). Yet at 343c5 ff. it is asserted that rulers are unjust, as if the secondary description of justice as allogrion agathon which Thrasymachus introduces alongside of his earlier formula (which he continues to maintain) had superseded it. But for this new attribution of injustice to the rulers, we might have supposed that the new formula merely underlined the fact that the ruled, in obeying their rulers, are seeking another's good at their own expense and thus being foolish. As it is, we must think again. Thrasymachus never actually said that the rulers were acting either justly or neutrally, so that there is no formal contradiction. Can his consistency be saved? ⁹

One solution to our problem would be to say that the first formula referred only to conventional justice, to which the rulers are not subject; but by natural justice the rulers are unjust. Or, conversely, that it is naturally just that the ruled should serve the rulers' interests, but selfish rulers are conventionally condemned as unjust. Of the two versions the latter is preferable, but neither will do: the distinction between natural and conventional justice is conspicuously absent from the discussion and it would not fit the context, since Thrasymachus denies that there is any difference except in scale between the injustice of the ruler and that of the law-breaker (344a4-c4). Indeed, he explicitly says that justice is pantachou to auto.

A better account of the relation between the two formulae is to say that Thrasymachus later generalizes a position of which he had originally expounded one half: justice in the relation between ruler and ruled is always allogrion agathon, this being (for the ruled) the ruler's good, but for the ruler the good of the ruled, so that in a state where one group dominates another which acquiesces the former are unjust and the latter just although both seek the interest of the same group. This account seems open to the objection that Thrasymachus never states it in its full symmetry, insisting that rulers are always unjust although their subjects may be either unjust or just. This insistence, however, follows inevitably from Thrasymachus' basic assumptions. He has laid it down that it is the essence of rulership as such to seek the ruler's interest unerringly (340c6 ff.): the just (altruistic) ruler of 343e is thus an anomaly. Moreover, if we assume with Thrasymachus that all interpersonal situations are necessarily competitive and that therefore the relation between ruler and ruled must involve a conflict of interest, it is obvious that a just ruler will soon cease to be a ruler: by seeking allogrion agathon, the good of the ruled, he will ensure his own deposition, since Thrasymachus never supposes that a man's good consists in anything but overcoming and exploiting others.¹⁰ If all situations involve a real conflict of interest the rulers must be those who recognize this and act on their knowledge. To act in another's interest is to make him stronger than oneself, so that it is natural for Thrasymachus to equate allogrion agathon with to tou kreittonos sumpheron. If the formula of allogrion agathon gives an account of justice in which the phenomenon (unintelligible to Thrasymachus) of a just government can be accommodated, the accommodation does not mark a sudden reversal of Thrasymachus' position but a completion of it rendered inevitable by the preceding argument in which Socrates has insisted on the possibility and even the normality of just rule.

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The lack of symmetry caused by Thrasymachus' scepticism about just governments is thus no reason for rejecting the suggested interpretation of the two formulae. But as it stands it is not general enough to cover all that Thrasymachus says, since the examples he gives (343d3 ff.) of the disadvantageousness of promoting allogtrion agathon are from relations between subjects and not between subject and ruler. We are therefore inclined to say that Thrasymachus' fundamental position is that just action is action good for another, and that justice is to tou kreittonos sumpheron only as the special case of this where relations between ruler and ruled are in point. Thus a (new) thesis about justice is after all logically prior to the thesis about government (cf. III above.). This seems to be the view that Aristotle takes, for he writes (Eth. Nic. 1130a3) 'allogtrion agathon dokei einai hē dikaiosunē monē tōn aretōn, hoti pros heteron estin allōi gar ta sumpheronta prattei, ē archonti ē koinōnōi'. Thrasymachus' reasons for taking the governmental case as typical we have already seen.

Two interpretations of the position just outlined are possible. One is, that the familiar class of actions called 'just' always happen to work for others' good. The other is, that in any situation involving more than one person there are two and only two basic principles of action, for one's own good or for another's, and the names of justice and injustice are given to these two ways of acting.¹¹ Which should be ascribed to Thrasymachus? The emotive tone of his utterances suggests the former, which is a direct debunking of justice. None the less, the latter is closer to the nerve of his argumentative position, since it expresses the thesis of universal competition which is the hidden premise of the whole discussion. It is in fact plain that Thrasymachus does think that there are two different kinds of people, the self-seekers and the other-servers (cf. 343d1-4 et seqq.); and it is plain that these two kinds of people are not conjured into existence by the laws. On the contrary, it is their existence and habits that explain the nature of law as Thrasymachus expounds it.

It is true that Adeimantus ascribes to Thrasymachus the alternative that we have rejected when he says 'To men dikaiōn allogtrion agathon, sumpheron tou kreittonos, to de adikōn hautōi men sumpheron kai lusiteloun, tōi de hēttoni asumpheron.' (Note that allogtrion agathon is here given its logical priority, and that it is recognized that the just man's 'other' is always stronger and the unjust man's 'other' always weaker.) But Glaucon and Adeimantus plainly misinterpret Thrasymachus on the issue of the conventionality of justice, for they take him to hold that the just man would be unjust if he dared (360c), whereas in fact he had attributed justice to 'panu genaia eūtheis.'

We are thus led to arrange Thrasymachus' remarks in the following pattern. There are two kinds of people, those who seek their own advantage and those who seek that of others, these two advantages being by nature incompatible and affording the only possible bases for action. People of the former kind are called unjust, the latter just. By the natural tendency of their actions, the unjust gain power over the just, so that the essential principle of just action comes to be to secure the interest of the stronger. This interest is what the laws formulate: hence the etymological and conceptual connection between justice and law. This position is consistent, and affords a place to all that Thrasymachus says. But we cannot say that Thrasymachus expounds it, however disjointedly, for what he says contains two real inconsistencies. First, he really does begin by saying that justice depends on law (and is therefore conventional), even though he withdraws this as soon as it is challenged. Second, he maintains to the end the coincidence of allogtrion agathon and to tou kreittonos sumpheron, in the sense of the rulers' interests, even while adducing examples of just action

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that refute the equation. These inconsistencies, however, are relatively superficial, in that nothing in the development of the argument depends on them.

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We observed that Thrasymachus makes no use of the distinction between 'natural and 'conventional' justice. The omission is surprising. The distinction which he is making seems to cry out for this terminology, which in any case we tend to associate with 'the sophists' among whom Thrasymachus is to be numbered. Was not Callicles making essentially the same point about legality that Thrasymachus makes, when he contrasts the 'conventional' justice of the law-abiding with the 'natural' justice whereby the strong dominate the weak (483c6-d2 etc.)? And Thrasymachus' selection of the term 'kreitton' to designate the ruling class is reminiscent not only of Callicles but of Democritus, who is said to have said that 'phusei to archein oikeion toi kressoni' (B267) and to have thought that 'to dokoun dikaion ouk einai dikaion, adikon de to enantion tes phuseos' (A166 from Epiphanius). On reflection, however, the oddness of Thrasymachus' omission disappears. Unlike Callicles, he is not opposing law to the interest of the stronger, but saying that law expresses that interest--a heroic attempt to eliminate the antithesis between nature and law, which as we have just seen introduces some minor inconsistencies into his statements. Callicles makes the contrast he does because he identifies law with the protection of the general interest against the strong individual. His neglect of the fact stressed by Thrasymachus, that some laws express a minority or class interest, is the opposite error to that of the latter, which is to suppose that all laws do so (see IV above).

Actually, Callicles and Thrasymachus are not making the same point at all. Callicles is concerned to point out the ambiguities of 'justice' in order to rescue Polus from the consequences of his failure to dissociate the descriptive force of that term from its prescriptive force, and his resulting inability to deny successfully that conventionally approved behaviour is really commendable. But no one in the Republic runs into this difficulty. Thrasymachus assumes that there is no problem about what kind of behaviour is just, and feels no qualms in raising the question of whether such action is meritorious. He is prepared to jettison the prescriptive force of the term, whereas Callicles insists on retaining both forces and can therefore only signal his dissent from conventional evaluations by saying that the term is ambiguous, its prescriptive use precluding its descriptive use and vice versa.

Thrasymachus does not say that is/what called right is really wrong, or that it is right that the just should serve the unjust (although Cleitophon wrongly credits him with this opinion, 340a7-8). All he says is that of course they actually do, and that since this is so it is foolish to be just. Plato is careful to bring this out by having Socrates ask him whether he really means that justice is wicked (348c11). The answer is that it is merely well-meaning silliness. At no point does Thrasymachus appeal to any higher legality guaranteed by nature.¹²

There seems, however, to be a serious confusion in Thrasymachus' position. When Democritus says that rule is by nature 'oikeion toi kressoni', it is plain that he is thinking of the kresson as a special kind of person. Callicles takes the same position, and Thrasymachus seems to end by doing the same (see V above and XI below). But when he first explains who the kreittous are he gives as example a democratic regime introducing and enforcing democracy-favouring laws. But a democratic majority is not made up of kreittous in a Calliclean sense, and Socrates' bdeluria at 338c is justified. Hoi kreittous is not the obvious expression for a ruling class as such, and traditionally entails superiority of kind as well as strength--kreitton is used in this sense at 347e4, lest the point should escape us.¹³ It is applicable to a democratic majority as little as to a pancratist.

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Thrasymachus is apparently going one step further than Callicles had. Callicles thought of power as the prerogative of those whose superiority is shown in other ways than in their hold on power. But to Thrasymachus the superiority of the unjust man is simply his superior control of the means to power (and hence to all other goods), and he is not susceptible to the arguments that brought Callicles down by appealing to his ideal of kalokagathia (494e ff.). Unlike Callicles, he does not commit the error which Aristotle censures (Pol. 1255a5 ff., 1280a22 ff.) of supposing that superiority in one respect entails superiority in all respects. It follows from Thrasymachus' view that the wisdom and strength that constitute excellence may belong collectively to a class as well as individually to a man. In thus denying any extra superiority to the strong, Thrasymachus is rejecting the sophistic 'natural justice': nature is not rewarding the kreittous but bestowing on them the inevitable consequences of their being what they are. His position is thus much stronger and clearer than that of Callicles, although (as we shall see, XI), he later confuses the issue by reverting to something close to the Calliclean characterization of the 'stronger.'

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So much for the inner articulation of Thrasymachus' position. We may now turn to its confrontation by Socrates. By refusing to acquiesce in Cleitophon's reduction of his position to a mere conventionalism, Thrasymachus has substituted an interesting contention for a dull one, besides following the only procedure whereby a technique can be intelligently discussed. But it may still be felt that the substitution of a technological for a sociological approach (340d-e) is a mistake. Arguments about crafts are Socrates' stock-in-trade. Plato seems to betray Thrasymachus into his opponent's hands by making him state his case in the terms that will make it easiest for Socrates to defeat him. But in fact, implausible as it may be to have another character introduce this Socratic topos, the concept of a technè is peculiarly appropriate to Thrasymachus' position and does not tell against him at all. He does not concede defeat and is not defeated, although he does not make it plain why he is not.

The superiority that Thrasymachus attributes to the unjust man lies in his intelligence and force (cf. VIII-XI). and an art or technè is, precisely, a system of directing force by intelligence. It is on this twofold basis that the claim of rhetoric to be an art is challenged by Socrates in the Gorgias (cf. 466b4-7, e9-11), and both aspects of a technè are stressed in the present context: at 342c8-10 it is agreed that arts archousi kai kratousin, and in the very next words epistemè is used as a synonym for technè. The question at issue between Socrates and Thrasymachus is not whether ruling is an art, but what sort of art it is. Whereas Socrates couples the archon with the kubernètès (342e2), Thrasymachus conjoins the archon with the kreitton, and Socrates himself recognizes that this is Thrasymachus' equation at 341b5 ('poteròs legeis ton archonta te kai ton kreittona...'). Socrates uses as analogies of government arts in which a man is employed by others to serve them, as those of pilot and doctor (341c);¹⁴ Thrasymachus takes as analogies arts in which humans exercise sway over non-humans, such as shepherding (343b).¹⁵ It is noteworthy that Socrates coolly goes on using the analogy with service arts (346a) after Thrasymachus has introduced his counter-analogy with exploitation arts. The question is, then, which analogy is the more appropriate. And here the concept of a technè itself, which already involves the connection of strength with rule (342c8-10), seems to give Thrasymachus the advantage.

In arguing that government should be regarded as administration rather than domination Socrates does not merely set up a counter-analogy to Thrasymachus but meets him head on with four arguments, none of them sufficient. The first (341d7-342d1), that no art seeks its own perfection qua art, seems entirely without relevance and I do not know what to make of it.¹⁶ The second (342d3-e11, 345b9-e2), that arts exist to make improvements in subject matters of a determinate kind, does not tell against Thrasymachus since it remains open what kind of 'improvement' is to be effected. Hog-raisers seek not to produce the most joyful possible hogs but the meatiest hogs on a certain date at lowest cost. The third argument (345e5-346d6), that the art of profit-making is distinct from other arts, makes a distinction that is useful and valid but here misapplied: Socrates argues (345c-d) that the shepherd as such seeks the welfare of his sheep and as money-maker seeks a profit from them; but should one not rather say that as shepherd he makes them marketable and as money-maker gets a good price for them at the market? Thrasymachus' incredulity at 343a is justified (though premature, since shepherds had not yet been discussed): does Socrates really think sheep would be raised out of pure benevolence?

The distinction between mīstharnetic and the other arts does however

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tell against Thrasymachus, though not in the way that Socrates suggests. The division that it effects within the art of ruling as Thrasymachus himself conceives and presents it is between rule as pure exercise of power and rule as exploitation. If Thrasymachus' notion of rule is confused, it is not because he fails to distinguish service from reward but because he runs together domination and profit, using the term pleonexia for both. But this confusion is less serious than that which Socrates alleges: fattening-for-the-market and marketing, or domination-for-exploitation, and exploitation, are functionally related as service and reward are not. It is on this functional dependence itself that Socrates' last argument (346d7-347a6) rests. The weakness of this argument can be shown by putting it in terms of our own distinction between two kinds of arts, when it appears as follows. If it be true that all the other activities of the arts of exploitation are done only for the sake of profit, this shows that they cannot themselves benefit the exploiter. Whom then do they benefit? No one is left but the exploited. So exploitation arts must be service arts after all. To this argument the sufficient reply is that there is no reason to suppose that in themselves they profit anyone: they may belong to Glaucon's third class of goods (357c) that are desirable only for their consequences¹⁷. It might be argued that there are other ways of getting rich than by ill government, so that there is still something in government to be explained: why choose this means rather than another? But Thrasymachus' reply to this is that government is nothing other than acquisition carried to its highest degree (347b6) (the love of power for its own sake is never recognized by either Plato nor Aristotle, to my knowledge; cf. Gorgias 469c8-e1).

There is one available argument that Socrates fails to use against Thrasymachus: the arts that Thrasymachus cites as analogous to government are exerted upon the non-human animals, whereas those cited by Socrates are exerted upon men; only the latter therefore afford analogies. Plato himself points out in the Laws (713d) that cows are not appointed as cow-boys. Why does Socrates not make the point here? The contrast between the two sets of analogues is so sharp that it can hardly be accidental, so it must presumably be in Plato's mind. Actually, both Socrates and Thrasymachus have reasons for not making the point. From Socrates' point of view, one cannot do so without making distinctions among kinds of arts, and Socrates' whole argument here depends on all arts having the same properties--and among these the properties that we have said distinguish service arts from exploitation arts. If Socrates concedes that there may be more than one kind of art, he opens the possibility that ruling may be the kind of art that Thrasymachus says it is. From Thrasymachus' point of view, the point has no force because his position is that there are two different kinds of men, the just and the unjust, of whom the latter rule the former: since he does not concede the presumption of equality it cannot be used against him. Nor can Socrates himself argue here that ruler and ruled are alike, since the main argument of the later books of the Republic is that there are two different kinds of human being, of whom the better alone are fit to rule.¹⁸ Where Socrates ultimately differs from Thrasymachus is on the nature of the difference and its appropriate effects, not on its reality. We are not yet in a position to say whether the sameness of origin of rulers and ruled is more relevant here than the difference in their alleys (414d-415c).

So long, then, as Thrasymachus is allowed to postulate a necessary conflict of interest between rulers and ruled, no argument to the effect that one side's interest should be preferred to the other will convince,

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and there will be two standards by which ruling may be judged and two different 'arts' of ruling, that of domination and that of administration.¹⁹ The two viewpoints correspond to the two ways in which (according to Hobbes) commonwealths may be established, by conquest or by contract.²⁰ The fact that Socrates is a more resourceful debater than Thrasymachus should not disguise the fact that neither viewpoint can be established as the only correct one. The deadlock can be resolved only by denying that either viewpoint need be taken, since they can be merged or transcended.

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The implication of describing justice as 'another's good' is that in any transaction with another one must choose between his advantage and one's own: that all such transactions are conflicts in which one must take sides (and then, of course, it is folly not to take one's own). But this is a double mistake. In the first place, where interests fail to coincide it is not necessary to identify oneself with any one of them: one may take a third-party view, simply considering what the relevant interests are and how they may be reconciled or compromised. This objective approach, which asks not 'How does this affect me?' but 'What does the situation call for?', is possible so long as interests can be objectively assessed and compared.²¹ In the second place, interests do not always conflict: often, one line of action is in the interests of all concerned. When Socrates defends just action against Thrasymachus he does not give reasons for preferring another's interest to one's own,²² but defends cooperation against conflict and objectivity against subjectivity. In Book I he does not do so openly, but pretends to operate within the terms laid down by Thrasymachus. He has two reasons for doing so. First, it is the Socratic practice to develop the weakness of a stated position rather than to build up an opposing one, and it is worth seeing if Thrasymachus' position cannot be made to break down of itself. Second, the positive view takes a great while to develop: the whole building up of the 'ideal state' is designed to demonstrate the interlocking of interests, and the whole description of the 'philosopher kings' and their education is an elaboration of the idea of objective action.

Plato's treatment of justice cannot be fully explained in terms of an internalization of standards, or a transition from 'shame' to 'guilt', trends established long before his day. Emphasis is laid on the causal priority of justice 'in the soul,' of which justice 'in the city' is a mere eidolon (443c-d), but there is no logical priority: both are manifestations of the same principle.²³ In any case, when public opinion is rejected, as at Crito 46d-47a or Republic 493b-c, it is not in favour of the individual conscience but in favour of expert knowledge and reasoning. Feelings of shame and feelings of guilt are alike feelings, and what Plato claims for justice is that it is determined by knowledge and not by any feeling at all: it represents objectivity as opposed to subjectivity.

Thrasymachus describes the unjust man's motive as pleonexia. But what is the just man's motive, with which pleonexia is to be contrasted? Thrasymachus speaks as if it were elatten echein, but that is absurd. As Aristotle remarks, no one wants less than his share of what is going (Nic. Eth. 1136b19-22).²⁴ Similarly, if we ascribe injustice to the will to overcome, we cannot ascribe justice to the will to succumb. This being so, the alternative to self-interest will be an indifference to self, and the just man's motive must be something quite different. Hence Plato peoples his imaginary society with two kinds of people with two ways of life (each of course subdivided): the ordinary people driven by pleonexia, and the guardians whose pleonexia is systematically eradicated (464c ff.) and whose actions are determined by knowledge.²⁵ The importance of the guardians' education is not simply that one cannot pursue the right policy without knowing what it is, but rather that the scientific impulse itself is an impulse to justice: the guardian's just actions simply carry over into everyday life the impartiality that his intellectual activities entail (cf. 485d10-13). His training makes him just not because it acquaints him with the Form of justice (which, significantly, is in no way emphasized over the other Forms in Plato's account), but simply because it is a thorough scientific training. It is primarily because the scientific impulse is the same as the impulse to justice that the defence of justice turns, at the end, into the

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defence of the intellectual life.

Plato supposes that ordinary people are incapable of justice in that they cannot rise to an objective view of any situation. Even Cephalus values justice not from a love of truth but as a defence against recrimination and retribution (330d-331a): that is, from self-interest. Plato is at pains to establish Thrasymachus as a mercenary thinker who as such must follow public opinion (493a6-9), a necessity which explains his inability to conceive of any other motive than pleonexia.²⁶

That the distinctive feature of justice is its impersonality and objectivity is recognized by Aristotle, who remarks that justice is distinguished from all other virtues by its being related to an objective mean rather than constituted by a subjective one (Eth. Nic. 1133b32). But the relation between intellectual activity and justice is most explicitly stated in an alleged saying of Archytas (Vors. 47B3): 'Stasin men epausen, homonoiou de auxesen logismos heuratheis. pleonexia te gar ouk esti toutou genomenou kai isotas estin. toutoi gar peri ton sunallagmaton diallassometha.' Plato is not innovating when he connects justice with objectivity: the idea of isotês is inescapably that of impartiality. What is new is the association of this idea with the new idea of an intellectual passion whose object is truth--an idea that could hardly be developed much before Plato's day since it depends on Archytas' 'discovery of reasoning,' the rise of the scientific spirit in a self-conscious form. The ability of science to attract devotees proves that there is an intellectual passion (475b8-9) and an intellectual joy (581c3-6); and these provide a motive to justice that we can set against the common motive of pleonexia. And the effect of giving the intellect its way is to replace one-sided perspectives by measurement (598a, 602c ff.). Conversely pleonexia, the desire for 'more', is as such necessarily insatiable and indeterminate,²⁷ and for Plato the indeterminate is precisely what reason dispels (cf. especially Philebus, 24c ff., 27e, 64d ff., 65d and passim).

Plato's discovery of a motive for justice in the predilections of the intellectual was undone by Aristotle in his attack on the unity of intellectual virtue. For the basic motive of a love of universal truth (Symposium 210c6) grounded in the mind's affinity for eternal reality (Phaedo 79d), he substitutes a generalized desire for knowledge (Metaph. 980a21) which he pointedly illustrates by the curiosity of the philotheamon (cf. Rep. 475d2).

Such curiosity obviously has in itself no potential moral significance, so that Aristotle is left with no motive of its own for phronêsis, which is thus confined to deliberating the means to ends otherwise determined (Nic. Eth. 1145a5). But what motive is then left for just action? None whatever. The virtue of justice thus becomes intelligible only in law-makers; otherwise, what appears as justice has to be interpreted as the higher selfishness that prefers moral prestige and the glow of virtue to external goods. Aristotle's removal of the motivational keystone from the elaborate structure that Plato had made out of the concept of justice is one of the things that makes it hard to find a way through Nic. Eth. V. His liquidation of the motivating power of objectivity is, however, balanced by allowing greater scope to that recognition of mutual advantage that enables Plato's common man to partake of a kind of justice. Instead of the mere appreciation of shared or reciprocated advantage Aristotle discerns a fellow-feeling (philia) arising out of cooperation (koinônia). 'Justice' is the formalized conditions of cooperation, so that as cooperation increases both justice and fellow-feeling increase in proportion (Nic. Eth. VIII.9). Just action thus becomes the natural expression of man's social nature, rather than a peculiar sort of behavior for which a motive must be found; and the emotion of fellow-feeling becomes its emotional counterpart rather than its motive.

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We saw that the arguments which Socrates uses to combat Thrasymachus' views on the nature of government, while inadequate in themselves, are such that to disclose their weakness is at the same time to disclose the real weakness of the position they attack. The same happens when Socrates shows that injustice is folly. It is easy to see that his arguments need not convince his opponent, but to show why they are inadequate is to show at the same time why Thrasymachus is wrong.

The general objection to Socrates' argument is (1) that it is singularly strained and artificial. The particular objections are: (2) that it proceeds by a mere analogy between just behaviour and modes of action presumed to be intelligent; (3) that the account of just behaviour on which it relies is perverse; (4) that the account given of the paradigms of intelligent action, and particularly of music, is distorted; (5) that the choice of paradigms is itself arbitrary; and (6) that the account of pleonexia on which the argument turns is strained and irrelevant.

(1) What makes the account artificial is that it accepts the Thrasymachean assumption of universal conflict. Socrates represents as a difference between intelligent and unintelligent competition what is really a difference between competitive and non-competitive situations: that is, situations where the criteria of success are competitive and those where they are not. Where there are accepted non-competitive criteria of success it is true that the expert behaves as if he were trying to compete with those unlike himself but not with those like himself, although this is an absurd way of describing the principle of his action. Plato writes implausibly here in making Thrasymachus accept without cavil the artificial terms of the comparison; but what else could he have done?

(2) One would be inclined to say that the argument was epagogic rather than analogic, in that the two examples are to serve as indicators of a general truth, did Socrates not go out of his way to emphasise its dependence on likeness: the unjust man is phronimos and agathos, (349d3), therefore 'phronimois kai agathois eoiken' (d6), and 'toioutos estin hoisper eoiken' (dl0, cf. 350cl0). Why this circumlocution? Presumably because Socrates cannot pretend that the characteristics in terms of which the comparison is made constitute the essence of wisdom, but can claim only that they are diagnostic for membership in a class.

(3) The absurdity of the account of justice is that it classes justice as a type of competitive behaviour, as aforesaid, whereas justice cannot be defined in competitive terms. In so far as such an account is possible it is by equating justice with conformism, which is a possible view of justice in its broadest sense but not one taken up anywhere in the Republic.

(4) The account of music is open to the same objection as that of justice, and to others. Tuning one's instrument is not the whole of music (though a more important part of musical skill then than now); and at festivals the musician does compete with other musicians 'like himself'. Tuning, on the other hand, is not competitive at all. But there is nothing here that helps Thrasymachus. It is not music as a whole, but precisely tuning, that is the desired point of comparison; and Plato would assign success in competition not to a superiority in technē (ex hypothesi, the technites as such is perfect, as Thrasymachus insisted at 340d-e) but to a 'trick' of pleasing (Gorgias 50ld ff.) or at best a non-rational 'inspiration' (Phaedrus 245a).

(5) Why are music and medicine chosen as analogues? Music is the paradigm of an activity in which conceded excellence is found to rest on fact: the basic intervals approved by the ear depend on simple ratios which are what they are, no matter what anyone thinks or wills. Similarly, health is determined by relations between the constituents of the body (444d3)

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which are what they are no matter what anyone may think. To take these as types of intelligent activity is to suggest that questions of value are to be settled by standards (health, concord) objectively determined. Moreover, for Plato mathematics and measurement are always the paradigms of rational method, and it is supposed that both music and medicine, being concerned with the establishment of ratios, are susceptible of mathematical treatment. Thus we find in the Gorgias (508a5-6) that geometry is opposed to pleonexia: 'Alia letēthen se hoti hē isotēs hē geometrike kai en theis kai en anthrōpōis mega dunatai, su de pleonexian oiei dein askein.' And at Republic 443d-444d, where true justice is equated with the internal order of the soul, that order is described in terms of the tuning of a musical instrument and compared with that of the healthy body.²⁸ Already in Book I, then, is foreshadowed the idea of justice as proportionality that the later books explicitly develop and that Aristotle builds into his system.

(6) Socrates speaks as if pleonexia, Thrasymachus' recommended motive, could mean not merely the wish to gain an advantage over someone but also the wish to excel. It is only the latter form of competition that Socrates seems to ascribe to doctors and musicians. Pleonexia cannot reasonably be stretched so far, but if one is determined to interpret non-competitive modes of behaviour as competitive this is the only form of competition that can do the job. Socrates, we observe, does not even represent the distinction between wise and foolish behaviour as one between forms of competition, but simply as one between objects of competition, just as he had previously argued on the assumption that all technai must have the same characteristics. On the other side, as we have observed, Thrasymachus makes no distinction (except in scale) between doing a man down in business and reducing him to slavery. This use of pleonexia, as a blanket term covering all forms of behaviour in which performance is measured by its inverse relation to the success of others,²⁹ is simply an expression of Thrasymachus' thesis of universal conflict. Thus Plato presents us with the same stark contrast as Archytas: on the one side pleonexia and stasis, on the other side logismos and homonoia.

As the attempt to show that injustice is foolish tacitly associates justice with objectivity, the attempt to show that injustice makes for weakness associates justice with the common good. The comparison of justice with music and medicine ignores both versions of Thrasymachus' account of what justice is: it starts from the identification of just actions that is common ground throughout and the (as yet unjustified) characterization of these as objectively based actions, although it is transposed into Thrasymachean terms of universal competition. Socrates' jettisoning of Thrasymachus' account, though hard to justify by the rules of dialectical procedure, is of course inevitable: not only is just action as Thrasymachus describes it psychologically incomprehensible but from that description his evaluation of it necessarily follows--Socrates is being either obtuse or facetious when he affects to suppose that Thrasymachus must still regard as a virtue the justice that he has described (348c-d) (cf. note 22). But in the ensuing discussion of the relation between injustice and weakness Socrates does adopt Thrasymachus' account of justice as allogrion agathon. He carries his acceptance so far that he refrains from pointing out that those who act koinēi are pursuing a common good, and confines himself to saying that they must not harm each other's interests as individuals. Thrasymachus' evaluation is challenged not by insinuating an alternative description but by showing that his own description is incoherent: the weakness that Socrates diagnoses in an unjust society is basically a weakness in Thrasymachus' theory. Thrasymachus switched from an account of justice in terms of class-relationships within a state to one in terms of individuals. Socrates remarks that class conflict presupposes class solidarity: 'Dokeis an ē polin ē stratopedon ē leistas ē kleptas ē allo ti ethnos, hosa koinēi epi ti erchetai adikēs, praxai an ti dunasthai ei adikōien allēlous;' (351c8-10). The key terms are koinēi and allēlous. The very idea of a class involves the idea of a common interest (352c), which Thrasymachus' view of life denies. And the term allēlous points to a reciprocity that is absent from the idea of 'the interest of the stronger,' which postulates that in every community the just and the unjust form two groups who play into each others' hands. But such limited competition (as of class with class) is what he has now acknowledged, in the comparison with music, to be characteristic of justice rather than injustice.³⁰

Socrates' objection here is not that injustice must sully its purity by an admixture of justice, for justice would then be a mere makeshift. It is rather that disunity at one level presupposes unity at a lower level: that there cannot be a clear-cut conflict unless there are units to be in conflict.³¹ The idea of a disunity with no underlying unity is simply incoherent. Socrates takes the opportunity to introduce what is to become one of the major themes of the Republic: that justice, defined in sufficiently general terms, can subsist not only between individuals or classes within a state, but also between states themselves (351c8) and even between 'parts' of the individual personality (351e8).

At three points in this argument Thrasymachus concedes to Socrates without expressing agreement. At 351e8 he replies to 'ouden hetton hexei;' by 'hēden hētton echeto.' His failure to assent is understandable, since Socrates has said nothing that would justify his claim that the soul has parts between which there can be justice; what is remarkable is rather that he makes no explicit objection. His reticence is more understandable at 352a10-b4, where he likewise says 'estō' to the proposition that the gods are just and replies to the further claim that the gods will therefore favour the just by refusing to argue 'hina mē toisde apechthōmai.' The tradition of invoking divine support for justice is long-established and notorious, and its existence is awkward for Thrasymachus since the gods are obviously

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in every sense kreittones than men: their interests should therefore take precedence over those of earthly rulers (cf. Sophocles' Antigone, 450-60). There are precedents for attributing injustice to the gods (Thucydides V. 105. ii), but no doubt Thrasymachus is right in saying that the position is offensive. His reluctance to give offence, however, is itself as much a telltale as Callicles' reluctance to sing the praises of itch-scratching: as Callicles cannot bring himself to persist in maintaining a shameless position, so Thrasymachus cannot consistently maintain an unpopular one. As Callicles, the aristocrat, must in the end subordinate his wilful hedonism to his inbred pride, so the sophist Thrasymachus cannot press his systematization of popular cynicism to the point where it conflicts with popular piety. But the underlying point seems to be that no one really wishes to make himself friendless: that is, that man is a social creature.

The same point presumably accounts for Thrasymachus having withheld his assent to the proposition that injustice generally engenders hate and justice love (351d4-5), which otherwise seems so obvious an inference from Thrasymachus' position that it seems odd that Thrasymachus should reply with 'Estc hina soi me diapheromai.' The theme persists throughout the dialogue: Cephalus values justice as a way to avoid enmity, the two brothers feel themselves out of line in demanding a further motive for justice than this, and at the end (612b ff.) Socrates returns from his theorizing to assert that hate and friendship are in the real world the inevitable concomitants of injustice and justice respectively.³²

Socrates' argument that injustice does not pay is in two parts: first he argues that it is ineffective in securing one's ends, then that it is not enjoyable. The former part of the argument (which we have just been examining) goes on the assumption that there are two conditions of successful action, strength (approximately single-mindedness or determination) and intelligence. To appreciate the pattern of this argument, and to understand why it is specifically folly and weakness that Socrates wishes to impute to injustice, one must compare the treatment of the four virtues that together make up the whole of virtue in the Republic with their treatment by Callicles in the Gorgias. Callicles splits the four virtues up. For him there are two kinds of people, the better and the worse. The excellence of the better lies in their ability to command and control, and their virtues are those of the statesman, wisdom and courage. Every statesman needs the intelligence to frame a successful policy, to foresee the consequences of his actions, and force of character, tenacity, to push his policies through to the end. (Gorgias 491a7-b4).³³ The worse sort of men, on the other hand, find their fulfilment in obedience, and their virtues are the slavish ones of sôphrosunê (lack of rebelliousness) and justice (doing what they are told) (Gorgias 492a3-b1).³⁴ Socrates' reaction to this thesis is not to deny that some people are significantly better than others, but to deny that the sagacious and energetic statesman can do without the qualities Callicles ascribes to his inferiors. In the Gorgias he argues mainly that sôphrosunê (redefined as the impulse to order in general) is the foundation of all excellence (506c5-507a2). In the Republic the interrelation of the virtues is complex. In the soul, the fundamental impulse to order is played down at the expense of that order itself ('justice'). In society, which is our present main concern, justice belongs to the whole society in its social arrangements, sôphrosunê (redefined as homocrazia on matters of government) to all citizens individually; to these are added the virtues of courage in the military and wisdom in the rulers, who are chosen from the warriors and thus manifest all four of the virtues of their society. But all this is reserved for a later book. In Book I what we have is basically a re-handling of the Gorgias argument with the focus shifted from sôphrosunê to a justice conceived (like sôphrosunê in the Gorgias) in terms of objectivity and taxis.³⁵ This shift corresponds to a significant difference between Callicles and Thrasymachus: the former conceives of a static society in which the lower orders 'know their place', but the latter takes a dynamic view and thinks in terms of social mobility.³⁶

Callicles and Thrasymachus both assume that the two kinds of men are so opposed that each is characterized by the qualities that are vices in the other. That is why Callicles makes the otherwise inexplicable (and unsuccessful) attempt to argue for an unbridled hedonism at the same time that he extols the aristocratic virtues: the opposite of sôphrosunê is akolasia. And the whole of Thrasymachus' value-scheme is thus explained. Wisdom, courage (force of character), intemperance and injustice go together.³⁷ Hence it is that he cannot admit the validity of Socrates' alternative art of government, for those tough and brainy enough to rule must be unjust; and hence it is that he makes the implausible assumption that injustice and intemperance must go together, that the unscrupulous politician is a successful libertine on a grand scale (344a1-b5) (whereas one would have thought austerity in dictators rather probable than otherwise).³⁸

Because two kinds of people are involved, justice and injustice are not opposed as virtue and vice. At 348c-d Thrasymachus argues, not that injustice is virtue, but that the perfection of injustice is so. Conversely, justice is not vice but a gennaia eustheia, a consummate silliness. To the height

of injustice is opposed feeble injustice, as well as justice of all degrees of purity. Consequently, the pairing of virtues with vices is impossible, and it is not surprising to find that in arguing with Thrasymachus Socrates does not follow his usual practice of using areté as a generic term but couples it with sophia, as tantamount to andreia or strength. In fact, we see the shift in usage taking place: at 348c2-3 Socrates asks whether justice is areté, but as soon as Thrasymachus reply at c12 has shown that he is not operating with a simple vice-virtue contrast Socrates goes over at d3-4 to the sophia/areté couplet.³⁹

What Plato ultimately does with this constellation of concepts is to replace the simple idea of an opposition between two different kinds of men operating on fundamentally different principles with that of a contrast between 'better' and 'worse' to both of whom the same virtue-concepts are relevant but whose qualities are operative on different levels and in different fields, so that there is a sumphônia of better and worse (432a6-9) not merely in the sense that their interests harmonize but in the sense that there is a fundamental unity in the principles of their successful operation. But the rulers in the 'ideal state', like those envisaged by Callicles and Thrasymachus, still monopolize the qualities of intelligence and courage in their public manifestations.

After arguing that the unjust are less effective than the just Socrates purports to show that they are less happy. The defects of this demonstration are obvious and familiar. That everything has an ergon in the sense of a single operation that it alone can perform or can best perform is at least not obvious, and is rather insinuated than declared: what begins as a description of 'Hippou kai allou hetoucun ergon' (352e2-3) becomes 'hekastou ergon' at 353a10. The notion of an ergon as introduced is ambiguous: it slides from 'what can be done with a thing' (352e2) to 'what a thing can do' (353a10-11), the former formulation being the only one which can be used to introduce the notion but the latter formulation being necessary for the progress of the argument. No doubt it is true that, wherever a function can be imputed, excellence is relative to function (353b3); but it is doubtful whether the imputation of excellence permits the postulation of a function.⁴⁰ That the soul's function is to live (353d10) depends on suchō being definable as that entity whose presence differentiates the living from the non-living; but if it is so definable we cannot concede that justice is the soul's excellence (353e7), since many things (e.g. horses, 352e2) have life to which the concept of justice is inapplicable. Even if we confine ourselves to the human soul, we cannot concede that justice is the virtue of the soul;⁴¹ justice is usually thought of as one virtue among others, and if we are to re-define 'virtue' (as the present argument demands)⁴² in such terms that man's soul can have only one virtue it is by no means clear that 'justice' will be the most suitable term for the revised concept. Moreover, all the above manoeuvres seem irrelevant to the purpose in hand, since Socrates claims already to have shown that justice is a virtue (350c10-11 and 352b6-12).⁴³ The crucial step which follows does not depend on them at all, but is a mere exploitation of the idiom whereby the same phrase may be used for a virtuous life as for an enjoyable one (353e10-354a5). This piece of effrontery is by no means palliated by the fact that Socrates had introduced the equivalence of aneinon zēn and eudaimonesteron einai at the very beginning of this stage of the argument (352d2) or by the reintroduction of the ambiguous eu prattein as the last words of the whole dialogue (621d3, cf. 353e5). It is not surprising that Thrasymachus gives no less grudging assent than 'phainetai kata ton son logon' (353e12) and 'estō' (354a5) -- a hesitation not solely to be attributed to Socrates' having discarded here Thrasymachus' original account of what justice is. One is inclined to think that this crashing equivocation, made yet more emphatic by the substitution of eu zēn at 354a1 for the eu biōsetai of 353e10, is introduced simply to give Glaucon and Adeimantus a clear excuse for being dissatisfied, much as the supposed demonstration that the just man is a sort of thief (334a10) provides an occasion for the indignation of Thrasymachus himself.

It would be rash to rest content with dismissing the argument before us as a gratuitous absurdity. For one thing, it would leave the introduction of the argument about ergon unexplained. For another, the absurdity is oddly placed. The demonstration of the equivalence of a virtuous life and a happy one is the Republic's main theme.⁴⁴ But the most striking consideration is that Aristotle takes over the whole structure of the argument about function, excellence, and happiness, including the equivocation on the 'good' life, in his Nicomachean Ethics (1.7). One must suppose that the double meaning of the phrase seemed to both men to be deeply significant⁴⁵ -- perhaps because it suggested that the ancestral wisdom of the inventors of language had divined that the antinomy of the summum bonum could be transcended.

Aristotle uses this odd argument not as an independent demonstration but as a prolegomenon for the rest of the Ethics: one begins by describing the structure of the human soul and its unique or characteristic operations,

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describes the virtues in terms of the successful performance of these functions, shows that virtue as thus conceived corresponds to the 'virtues' recognized in ordinary discourse, and suggests that a life thus lived will be the most natural and least frustrating and can therefore be expected to be the most pleasant. Since the Republic follows the same pattern (mutatis mutandis and with roccco ornamentation) as the Ethics,⁴⁶ presumably the argument about function serves here the same programmatic purpose.⁴⁷

At one point Aristotle's version of the argument differs from Plato's: where Aristotle speaks of man's function, Plato speaks of the soul's function. Aristotle's version is the obvious one. Socrates has already spoken of the ergon of a horse (which has a soul no less than man has, 618a3-4), and 'man' is the obvious parallel: at 335c4 justice was called anthrōpeia aretē by analogy with the aretai of horse and dog (335b6-11). Why does Socrates not speak here too of man, or at least of human soul? Presumably because, although the function of the soul is here said to be life, we learn from the Phaedo (79d1-7) that the true expression of the soul in itself is pure thought. It is the characteristic of pure thought to be objective and dispassionate (we note that in the Phaedo, 94b7-e6 and 99a1-4, Socrates' selfish impulses are attributed to his body). The virtue 'of the soul' will then be objectivity and dispassionateness; and this we have seen to be characteristic of justice. There is thus a peculiar appropriateness in speaking of justice as the virtue of the soul. Qua embodied, the soul has the additional task of directing and controlling a body: at 353d4-6 the soul's function is specified as 'epimeleisthai kai archein kai bouleuesthai', although the argument proceeds in terms of the general concept of 'life.' And as ruler of a body the soul will need the ruler's qualities of intelligence and strength, which are precisely those which Socrates sought to vindicate for justice. The Socratic soul is, in fact, a philosopher-king, and in speaking of 'soul' rather than 'man' Socrates is producing an argument more directly related both to his previous interchanges with Thrasymachus and to his later exposition.

The argument of the Republic as a whole shows that the impulse to just action is the scientific impulse: subjectivity is replaced by objectivity, perspective by measurement, and instead of following a private interest one seeks to realize the proper logos of the situation into which order is to be introduced. But when Socrates states explicitly what justice is, he says it is ta hautou prattein (433a8). This formula, though illustrated in its context, is by no means self-explanatory: Charmides' suggestion (Charmides 161b6) that the same formula will serve to define sôphrosunê is treated by Socrates as if he meant that cobblers should mend only their own boots. Nor does the formula seem the most obvious way of characterizing the phenomena to which Socrates applies it: in particular, it is a very awkward way of describing the 'justice' that reigns within a well-adjusted personality. One wonders why the formula is introduced.

One may indeed wonder why Socrates introduces any formula at all. One effect of the discussion with Polemarchus had been to show that such slogans cannot be used as criteria for differentiating justice because they are never less ambiguous than the terms they replace. It is as hard to explain what 'rendering each his own' means as to explain what 'justice' means. Thrasymachus accordingly refuses (336c6) to let Socrates ~~to~~ give any one-word equivalent as his account of justice, as being neither clear nor precise (336d2-3). The point is rubbed in by Thrasymachus' own misadventures with his own almost equally obscure and vague 'interest of the stronger.' We have already observed, however, that Socrates is not proposing a criterion. He is characterizing phenomena that he has already demarcated and described. To what aspects of these phenomena is he drawing attention?

Ta hautou prattein looks like the slogan of the laissez-faire bourgeois, the 'useless' man censured by Pericles (Thucydides II-40-iii) who minds his private business and leaves public affairs to Big Brother. This sense of the phrase is implicit in Socrates' account of his neglect of his own affairs (Apology 31b-c). In using this slogan (at the cost of some strain) to express his own ideals, Plato appears to be rejecting the ideology of Periclean democracy, as he does more forthrightly later. The appearance is deceptive, for he so generalizes this petty-bourgherly principle that it applies equally to public servants in the exercise of their office; and this neutralizes its effect, since one can argue that in a democracy the public business is everyone's business and the citizen in the Assembly ta hautou prattei. More important is the fact that for Plato ta hautou are not what concern oneself in the sense of impinging on one's private interest, but what pertain to one's specific capacities (434a3-b7). Plato is thus not so much acquiescing in bourgeois ideology as capturing its slogan and putting it to a fresh use. This he does with other slogans too, and his discourse incorporates an equivalent for all the catchwords that his fellow disputants have proposed. To tou kreittous sumpheron becomes the interest of the ruling mind and (*a fortiori*) the whole against its parts; ta opheilomena hekastôi apodidonai, interpreted dynamically, becomes the social mobility that makes ta hautou prattein possible; helping friends and harming enemies becomes suppressing the worse elements in oneself in favour of the better; mê polupragmosunein becomes (as opposed to not being meddlesome) not dissipating one's energies on unsuitable tasks; alotriou agathon becomes a good that is alien not because it is someone else's but because it is impersonal.

Although Platonic senses can thus be found for all these slogans, ta hautou prattein has a special status as being put forward by Socrates himself. As a formula for justice it has had little success: even Aristotle, who incorporates so much from the Republic in his Ethics, makes

no use of it.⁴⁸ Suum cuique reddere has remained the favourite heading under which the complex phenomena associated with the concept of justice have been discussed. Of this slogan, ta hautou prattein is a variant, substituting appropriateness to the agent for appropriateness to the patient. By making this substitution, it effects the internalization of the concept of justice of which one has heard so much.⁴⁹ It also has in its context a peculiar appropriateness of its own.

One of the fundamental positions of the Republic is the existence (and the possibility of discovering) of objective standards. That is the significance of the concept of εἶρος: excellence follows an operation and operation is determined by structure (cf. 353a4-5). Virtuous activity will therefore be the activity most appropriate to oneself as one really is, and thus preeminently ta hautou.

In a Socratic dialogue the principle respondent is an exponent of the virtue or skill whose intellectual basis is to be examined: conceptual enquiry and examination of life go together, and the respondent must didnai peri hautou logon (Laches 187e10). But in the body of the Republic it is Socrates who ^{is} put to the question;⁵⁰ and since justice is the subject of inquiry we take Socrates as a paragon of justice (cf. the last word of the Phaedo). If he is, and if justice is ta hautou prattein, Socrates' life must be based on the intellectual principle underlying such a life. But that principle can only be self-knowledge, the Delphic gnōthi seauton that is the constant justification of Socrates' activities: 'Cu dunamai po' kata to Delphikon garma gnōnai emauton. gelcion de moi phainetai tauto eti agnōonta ta allotria skepein' (Phaedrus 229e5). The intimate connection between gnōthi seauton and ta hautou prattein had already been exploited by Plato (Charmides 161b6-165a4); and his use of the latter slogan to define justice enables him to connect Socrates' known character with the doctrine that he is expounding.

Finally, the slogan neatly inverts the way of life that Thrasymachus has recommended: instead of attending solely to one's own advantage, one attends solely to one's own potentialities. The reversal is precisely that implied by Aristotle's insistence (Nic. Eth. 1168a5 ff. and passim) that what one does is more nearly connected with one's happiness than what happens to one, an evaluation first systematically exploited in the Gorgias.

Thus, though scarcely informative in itself, the slogan that Socrates uses incapsulates the whole articulation of ideas deployed in the sequence of Platonic and Aristotelian works of which the Republic is the most comprehensive. What is striking in the Republic is less the doctrines that Plato propounds than the relationships that he develops between ideas. We have seen that a surprising number of these relationships are already set forth, or alluded to, or relied on, in the encounter between Socrates and Thrasymachus.

NOTES

1. I use 'just' and its derivatives throughout for 'dikē' and its derivatives; the fashion of rendering by 'right' obscures the argument.
2. It is characteristic of the thematic unity of the dialogue that justice is first brought into the conversation not as a problem but as an assured value (330c-331a). Socrates raises the problem of a criterion only after this sounding of the main theme.
3. Plato thought that all actual governments were bad (Gorgias 515c-522a, Rep. 473c-d, Ep. VII 326a). If so, the proper function of government cannot be directly inferred from observation.
4. The connection is so obvious to Aristotle that he incorporates in his discussion of justice in Nic. Eth. V the whole sphere of operation of laws and courts without any acknowledgement that he is doing so, although nothing in his preliminary definitions of justice warrants the inclusion.
5. Throughout Nic. Eth. V Aristotle handles his successive topics from the standpoint of government action. 'Distributive justice,' for example, is casually equated with the sharing of the good and bad things at the disposal of the public (1131a25).
6. Recent censure of Plato for not realising that justice is essentially a corrective, second-order concept bespeaks political stagnation and social complacency. It subsumes distributive under corrective justice. Further relevant terminological discriminations are introduced by Aristotle, Nic. Eth. 1135a9 ff., where he distinguishes adikon from adikēma and introduces the term dikaiōma as epanorthōma tou adikēmatos.
7. It is probably because of his name, which places him as the apostle of conflict, that Thrasymachus is chosen as disputant. Cf. Aristotle Rhet. 1400b19.
8. One must distinguish 'democratic laws', such as those on ostracism or the payment of assemblymen, which favour the dēmos against the kaloikagathoi and which Thrasymachus mentions, from the laws which govern arrangements and transactions between individual citizens and which no ancient author interprets as serving a class-interest.
9. It seems impossible to determine whether Plato intends to represent Thrasymachus as a man with an incoherent doctrine or a man incoherently expounding a coherent one. Our question is not what Plato intends but what he does: the implications of the argument are what they are, no matter what Plato thought they were. In seeking a coherent interpretation I follow the policy of attributing to any thinker the strongest possible case.
10. When Thrasymachus' doctrine is recapitulated in the Laws, to sumpheron is glossed as hopos arxei te aei kai mē kataluthēsetai (714c2). (Thrasymachus himself uses the phrase 'heautoi lusiteloun te kai sumpheron,' 344c. For the conflation of the ideas of power and profit, see LX below).
11. If our law and morality always express how we would like other people to act towards us (and not how we mean to act ourselves), the

alternatives merge. For the actions we call 'right' will then be always those in which the agent sacrifices his own interest, although that is not what we mean by calling them 'right'.

12. At Laws 714c the Thrasymachean position is resumed in the words: 'Ten phusei heron tou dikaiou legesthai kallisth' houto ...' hoti to tou kreittonos sunpheron esti.' The expression is ambiguous: it could mean that this is naturally just, or that this is the foundation in nature for what is called 'justice.' Note the parallel to Thrasymachus' 'beltion apokrisis' in 'kallista legesthai,' which favours the latter interpretation: we are not saying what is just, but giving the best description of the true nature of what is agreed to be just.
13. Similarly, in the Gorgias Callicles asserts that 'To kreitton kai to beltion kai to ischuroteron...t'outon estin' (488c-d).
14. The choice of analogues from service arts is not casual: at Politicus 297e the pilot and the doctor are again cited as paradigms for the 'kingly' ruler.
15. Socrates seems to attribute the doctor analogy to Thrasymachus ('he toi akribei logoi hiatros, hon arti eleges', 341c4), but this is a trick: Thrasymachus had merely used medicine as an example of an art in order to illustrate the nature of technical discussion in general.
16. The same perverse interpretation of reflexivity is found in the Charmides, 164e ff., where self-knowledge is interpreted not as knowledge of the knower but as knowledge of knowledge. So here a self-seeking art is interpreted as seeking the interest of the art, not that of the artist. The equivocation comes to a head at 342c8-9: 'Archeusi ge hai technai kai kratousin ekeinon huper eisin technai', interpreted so that the art and not the artist is the kreitton.
17. Note that Glaucon here contrasts not the doctor's work with his pay but the patient's painful cure with his subsequent health.
18. The topic is discussed, somewhat uneasily, in the Politicus. Men were once ruled by a god, 'zōion en heteron theiōteron' (271e), but now for want of better rulers must rule themselves (274d): 'Tous d'enthade nun ontas politikous tois archōnōncis hōmōious te einai mallon polu tas phuseis' (275c).
19. Recourse to the 'greatest happiness of the greatest number' is ruled out from the start by the early introduction of the consideration that in a democracy (338c2) the oppressive rulers are the majority.
20. Cf. Paine Rights of Man: 'Governments must have arisen, either out of the people, or over the people.' The point did not escape Plato. The recapitulation of Thrasymachus' doctrine in the Laws adds the point that the imposition of class legislation follows a victory of the class over its rivals (714d1), and the Athenian comments: 'Archōn perimacheteōn genomenōn, hoi nikēsantes ta te pragmata kata ten polin houtos espheterisan sphōdra, hōste archēs mēd' hotioun metadidonai tois hētētheisin...Tautas depou phamen hēmeis nun out'

einai politeias, out' orthous nomous hosoi ne surpases tes poleas heneka tou koinou etethesan' (715a8-10, b2-4).

Note that Politicus 276d5-11 conjoins two distinctions: between divine and human rule, and between involuntary and voluntary rule.

21. This is a treacherous argument, because of the ambiguity of 'interests' between what I want and what is good for me, coupled with the ambiguity of 'what I want' between what I think I want and what I really want (cf. Gorgias 466d ff.). Socrates fails to use against Thrasymachus the argument that to be infallible a ruler must not only have a flawless technique of domination but must have a correct notion of what is 'supheron' -- presumably because the point has been thoroughly covered in the Gorgias.
22. At 347a Socrates himself argues on the assumption that no one prefers another's good to his own, and at 344e he says that the purpose of the present discussion is to find 'biou diagenen, hei an diagenens hekastos hemon lusitelestaten zoen zoiē.'
23. This is already laid down at 351e6-352a6.
24. Not to mention Socrates at Protagoras 358c6-d3, Rep. 413a 4-5.
25. This quality of motive is reflected at 505b5: 'Tois men pollois hedone dekei einai to agathon, tois de kempoterois phronesis.' The guardians are chosen from among the epikourai whose dominant motive is to be devoted to the community as a whole (413 c 5-7). Their training thus involves both the merging and the transcending of personal viewpoints.
26. The development of the 'city of pigs' on a basis of mutual benefit shows, however, that the plain man does not share the assumption that his neighbour's profit must entail his own loss.
27. The insatiability of greed is no new theme in Greek letters. Cf. Solon l. 71 Diehl: 'Ploutou d'ouden terma pephasmenon andrasi keitai....'
28. This passage also reveals why both paradigms were necessary: music lacks the element of control, and the 'mathematical' basis of health (cf. Timaeus 82a-b) is not demonstrable.
29. It is no doubt to remedy Plato's detaching of the concept of pleonexia that Aristotle uses the term to help define justice en meri (Nic. Eth. 1130a17).
30. The situation between the just and the unjust as Thrasymachus conceives it is akin to that agreement as to who should rule that Socrates later calls sophrosune (432a6-9).
31. This is the underlying argument of the division of the soul at 439c ff.
32. The principle of 'organic solidarity' (cf. Durkheim's Division of Labour in Society, passim) is that diversity of function serves when recognised as the basis of unanimity of feeling (homonoia). This is a persistent theme of the Republic (cf. esp. 443d), and is argued by Aristotle with great intensity at Nic. Eth. VIII. 9-12. The dependence

of homonoia on justice and of stasis on injustice is remarked in our quotation from Archytas.

33. Cf. Pericles' self-defence in Thucydides: 'Oudenos oionai hēsson einai gnōnai te ta deonta kai hermeneusai tauta.... Kai ego men ho autos eini kai ouk existanai' (II.60.v, 61.ii). Note that he goes on to say that an inconstant will is characteristic of slaves.
34. These qualities are not identical: a man may be disobedient through negligence or self-interest rather than recalcitrance, and rebelliously inclined without actually breaking the law.
The class associations of the virtues are pointedly reversed by Isocrates, Nicocles 43: 'Tēs men andrias kai tēs deinotetos kai tōn allōn tōn eudokimōnton hecōrōn kai tōn kakōn andrōn pollous metechontas, tēs de dikaiosunēs kai sōphrosunēs idia ktēnata tōn kalōn k'agathōn onta.' But it will be seen that Isocrates has missed the point.
35. The fact that the structure of the present argument is almost unintelligible without reference to the Gorgias suggests that the Gorgias must have been worked out first. Similarly, the interpretations offered in this paper are incompatible with the notion that Republic I was at first an independent dialogue to which the other nine books were added as an afterthought.
36. Social mobility is to be the one basic principle of policy in the 'ideal' society (415b3-c6). Like Thrasymachus' version, Socrates' is based on a social analogue of Aristotle's doctrine of 'natural place.' But their ideas about whose natural place is which are diametrically opposed.
37. The association of justice with weakness and folly may be found in the continuation of the alleged paraphrase of Democritus quoted above (VI): 'Epinoia gar kakēn tous nomous elege, kai "Ou chrē nomois peitharchein tōn sōphōn, alla eleutherios zēn"' (Vors. 68 A166)-- especially if we take the somewhat enigmatic phrase 'epinoia kakē' to mean 'a cowardly device.'
38. Socrates does not deny that tyranny goes with unbridled lust (578b11 ff.), or that vitality often accompanies wickedness (610d5-e4 -- Socrates does not originate this sentiment, but greets it with 'Kalos legēs'). Rather, he purports to show that other types of behaviour and personality yield better results.
39. This argument will not bear much weight. For example, at 586a1 Socrates himself couples phronēsis with aretē, just as Aristotle sometimes uses aretē to mean moral virtue only (e.g. 1144b2). But the transition does seem significant in this context.
40. To be fair, Socrates' argument depends neither on the assumption that all things have functions, nor on the supposition that excellence entails function, but only on his definition of a function itself; he then simply asks Thrasymachus 'Could you do certain things without a soul? -- if not, they are the soul's function and its excellence must lie in its performance of them' (353d3-7). The only oddity of this approach is that it speaks of the soul as if it were something other than oneself, something one uses; whereas the whole point of the argument

lies in the identification of self and an immortal soul.

41. The Greek at 353e7 is significantly ambiguous: there are no definite articles whatever, and we cannot tell whether aretē or dikaiousunē is the subject of einai.
42. 353d4-5, introducing a multiplicity of function that the line of argument then ignores, prepares the way for the later restoration of a multiplicity of virtues (and for the partition of the soul).
43. From the point of view of the participants, the demonstration may not be superfluous, since Thrasymachus is apparently silent at 350c11 (Socrates assures us that 'dichologesametha tēn dikaiousunēn aretēn einai kai sophian,' but all that Thrasymachus is quoted as saying is 'Ἐμοίγε οὐδε ἡ νῦν λέγεις ἀρεσκεί' (350d4-10)) and is not asked whether he agrees at 352d2. His 'Sunechrēsamen gar' at 353e9 (which presumably refers to the immediate context) is thus his first assent to the reversal of his whole position, and assent is needed before Socrates can go on. As Socrates says, 'Ἐτι βέλτιον σκεπτεόν' (352d5). But Plato did not need to withhold Thrasymachus' assent until this extra and quite different (and certainly no stronger) demonstration had been given.
44. This is not the first time the theme has been introduced: Polemarchus has already been got to agree that ponēria is the only blabē (335c1-5).
45. The point is well made and supported by E. R. Dodds in his edition of the Gorgias, 335-6.
46. The resemblance of the schemes is obscured by the fact that Aristotle discusses politics separately from ethics. The correspondences are shown in the following table:

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Nic. Eth.</u>	<u>Republic</u>
(1) Others' opinions (unsophisticated)	1.5	331-6
(2) Others' opinions (sophisticated)	1.6	336-352
(3) Program	1.7	352-4
(4) Others' opinions	1.8-12	357-368
(5) Analysis of (parts of) soul	1.13	435-441
(6) Moral virtues other than justice	II-IV	441-2
(7) justice	V	442-4
(8) Intellectual virtue	VI	473-540
(9) Moral weaknesses	VII, 1-10	545 4 -580
(10) analysis and defence of pleasure	VII, 11-14; X, 1-5	581-7
(11) Vindication of intellectual life	X, 6-8	587-92, 608-621.

Apart from the setting of the dialogue, the parts of the Republic not included in the above schema are approximately: sub-political social relations, 368-73; formation of the polis, 373-376; the state as educational institution, 376-427; virtues of the citizen, 428-434; utopian institutions, 449-73; classification of constitutions, 543-4; critique of inferior constitutions, 545-569 (interspersed with layers of (9) above); the value of poetry (595-608). And this is not unlike a scrambled table of contents for Aristotle's Politics, to which it

corresponds rather more closely than the program Aristotle himself lays down in the last paragraph of the Ethics.

47. It also serves to introduce the key concept of 'function' itself (see XIII).
48. He does use the phrase ta hauton echein (Nic. Eth. 1132b17, 1133b3), for which cf. Republic 433e12.
49. This internalization also appears in the shift of meaning in cikeion between Thrasymachus' description of justice as cikeia blabe (343c4) and Socrates' description of injustice as the soul's cikeion kakon (410e6).
50. Republic I is not a typical Socratic dialogue, in that the only participant to claim justice (Cephalus) is not interrogated. Thrasymachus claims not to be a just man but to be an expert on justice, and his repudiation of Socrates' exetasis biou at 349a9-10 ('Ti de soi, ephē, touto diapherei, eite noi dokei eite nē, all'ou ton logon elegcheis;'), driving a wedge between the logical and the psychological aspects of a Socratic inquiry, makes this emphatically clear. But Thrasymachus does personify the injustice that he extols, to the extent that his reasons for expounding his views are plecnetic in his own extended sense: he wishes both to excel the others (337c) and to be paid (337d).