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## Compulsion to Rule in Plato's *Republic*

**Abstract:** Three problems threaten any account of philosophical rule in the *Republic*. First, Socrates is supposed to show that acting justly is always beneficial, but instead he extols the benefits of having a just soul. He leaves little reason to believe practical justice and psychic justice are connected and thus to believe that philosophers will act justly. In response to this problem, I show that just acts produce just souls. Since philosophers want to have just souls, they will act justly. Second, Socrates' alleged aim is to demonstrate that justice is beneficial, but philosophers, who have to give up a life of philosophy to rule, actually appear to be harmed by ruling. I explain that, since the founders of the city justly command them to rule, philosophers cannot, in fact, obtain a better life, and so ruling does not harm them. Third, it seems incongruous that philosophers, who should, as just people, jump at the opportunity to rule Kallipolis, must be compelled to rule. I show that Plato carefully constructs an educational system that produces rulers who do not want to rule, since such rulers alone will rule best.

**Keywords:** Plato's Republic, Justice, Compulsion, Ruler, Soul

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Three problems loom for any treatment of the philosophical rulers in Plato's *Republic*.<sup>1</sup> To begin with, it seems that philosophers should jump at the opportunity to rule Kallipolis, given that it is just for them to rule over the city that educated them, yet Socrates emphasizes, again and again, that they must be compelled to rule. Why? If that problem is not troubling enough, Socrates' pro-

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper, I use 'philosophers' to refer to those people educated to rule Kallipolis. I also refer to the guardians who are not promoted to be rulers as 'auxiliaries', and the class of philosophers and auxiliaries, before being distinguished (i.e., during the first stage of their common education in music and gymnastics) as 'guardians'.

All citations of Plato are to Burnet's edition of the *Republic* (1903) unless otherwise specified; and translations of the text are my own, though I often follow the Grube-Reeve translation in Cooper 1997.

fessed aim in the *Republic* is to demonstrate the benefits of justice; but philosophers seem, if anything, to be harmed by ruling, because it takes away time from that divine activity for which their nature is ideally suited. Is justice, then, beneficial to all except the most just? Finally, Socrates is supposed to show Glaucon and Adeimantus that just *activity* is always beneficial. But Socrates proceeds to extol the benefits of a just *soul*, apparently neglecting to prove that just activity and just souls (or, as I call them, practical justice and psychic justice) are linked in any way. So is there any reason to believe that a philosopher with a just soul will act justly?

I address these questions in reverse order, tracing a path from the connection of just acts and souls to the benefit of ruling and the compulsion exercised over philosophers to do so. Before this, however, I shall first sketch a brief overview of the extensive secondary literature on these interrelated problems<sup>2</sup> and, second, focus on Eric Brown's attempt, in particular, to resolve them.<sup>3</sup> For the third part of this paper, I will offer an alternative to Brown's account of the connection between just souls and just acts and then finish, in the fourth and final section, by applying my alternative account to solve our three problems.

## I Proposed Solutions to the Problem of Compulsion in the *Republic*

In general, two approaches are used to explain why philosophers must be compelled to rule Kallipolis: one that explains away the compulsion and one that does not. The group of scholars who diminish the importance of this compulsion may be further broken down into those who think philosophers willingly rule because A) they transcend their personal view of what is good, or B) they are benefited in some way by ruling. Julia Annas, who exemplifies the first subgroup (1A), writes that philosophers rule because 'they realize that that is best – simply *best*, not best *for* any particular group of people ... . They are not seeking their own happiness. Nor are they seeking that of others. They are simply doing what is impersonally best.'<sup>4</sup> This reading is unsatisfying because it conflicts with Socrates' aim of showing how justice is in the agent's own personal inter-

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<sup>2</sup> I regret that I did not attain soon enough to consider in this paper an alternative account by Nicholas Smith, 'Return to the Cave', in McPherran, ed., *Plato's 'Republic': A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Brown 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Annas 1981, p. 267 (Annas' emphasis). Cf. White 1979, 23–24, 193–195; Cooper 1977.

est, not merely that it is *impersonally* beneficial. Others in subgroup 1A write that justice is beneficial for everyone except for the ruling philosophers, who have to ignore the path to their own happiness. This reading is, of course, scarcely better for Plato's eudaimonism, because then justice would not benefit the people who are most just.

The second subgroup (1B) holds that philosophers are willing to rule Kallipolis because they are benefited in some way by ruling. Proponents of this line of argumentation, such as Reeve 2007, generally hold that philosophers are willing to rule because they are materially supported by the city, allowed time to philosophise between periods of rule, and/or rewarded by not having to suffer under a worse ruler (cf. 346e7–347d8).<sup>5</sup> Others write that a philosopher would be willing to give up some philosophizing in exchange for being part of Kallipolis, or that he will gladly rule because ruling somehow strengthens his relationship with the forms.<sup>6</sup>

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5 Proponents of such views include, e.g., Reeve 2007; Reeve 1988, 202; Mahoney 1992; Davies 1968; Cross and Woosley 1964, 101.

Reeve 2007 thinks a *fourth* 'wage of ruling', aside from those Socrates discusses at 347a3–6 (i.e., money, honor, and a penalty), is introduced in Book VII. He hangs his case on a single Greek word: 'Both *for your own sakes* (ὑμῖν) and for the rest of the city, we have bred you to be leaders and kings in the hive, so to speak' (520b5–6, Reeve's translation and italics, 199). Reeve takes this to mean that philosophers are compelled to rule for their own sakes; they will benefit from ruling by receiving upkeep from the state and having time to philosophize. This means that they will want to rule, since ruling is in their own self-interest. Reeve is certainly right to argue that the founders have benefited philosophers, but it is not by compelling them to rule. Rather, they have *educated* philosophers and thereby enabled them to philosophize, which Socrates says is a better life than ruling (520e4–521a2). It is for this education and ability to philosophize that philosophers will be grateful, not for the command to rule, which they in fact dislike. Moreover, it is because of this education that the command to rule is just. In fact, Reeve's quotation from Book VII (520b5–6, above) is taken from a passage in which Socrates justifies the requirement that philosophers rule, which begins: 'Observe, then, Glaucon, that we will not do injustice to our philosophers when they arise among us, but we will speak justly to them when we further compel (προσαναγκάζοντες) them to care for and guard the rest' (520a6–9). As such, the founders have already ordered these philosophers to rule. This passage has nothing to do with giving an 'explanation of the motives such [philosophical] natures have to rule' (198). Rather than *explaining* philosophers' motivation to rule, Socrates is *justifying* the command to rule.

6 For example, Irwin 1977, 242–243, and 1995, 299–301, holds that philosophers are willing to rule because they express their knowledge of the forms in their actions; he further states that Plato is inconsistent in saying that they do not want to rule (which I deny: Plato consistently says that philosophers do not want to rule); Kraut 1973, 336, holds that although ruling is not in a philosopher's 'proper interest', it is nonetheless in his 'extended interest' (for Kraut 1992, see next paragraph); cf. Dahl 1999, 223 ff.

Another proponent of subgroup 1B is Nicholas White, who states that the use of compulsion does not imply that philosophers are ‘compelled against their wills’,<sup>7</sup> but rather that they need something of a reminder to moderate their philosophical impulses. Since the proponents of subgroup 1B argue that a philosopher is generally willing to rule, they tend to reduce Plato’s mention of compulsion to a mere hypothetical necessity: if a philosopher wishes to be just – and he certainly does – he will rule.<sup>8</sup> In a similar vein, Richard Kraut argues that no philosopher would refuse to imitate the forms through his rule, since Socrates at 500b8–d2 says that philosophers will imitate the divine order of the forms.<sup>9</sup> But if it is the case that philosophers rule willingly, then why does Plato use forms of ἀναγκάζειν (i.e., to force or to compel) and ἀνάγκη (i.e., compulsion or necessity) numerous times in reference to their ruling the city?<sup>10</sup> In fact, Socrates makes it clear that philosophers make themselves like forms, but they would have to be compelled to craft virtue in anyone else (500d4–8). Hence, their uncompelled imitation is confined to shaping themselves, not the city or other people.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, why does Socrates also say that the best ruler is ‘least eager to rule’ (ἥκιστα πρόθυμοι ἄρχειν, 520d2), and that philosophers do not want (οὐκ ἐθέλουσιν) to involve themselves in human affairs? (517c7–9). This repeated mention of compulsion is quite excessive and misleading if Plato merely intends to give philosophers a friendly reminder that it is time to rule.<sup>12</sup> Thus, by failing to account adequately for this theme in the text, these readings – both in subgroups 1A and in 1B – are unsatisfying.<sup>13</sup>

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7 White 1979, 192.

8 Reeve 2007, 205, agrees with Brown 2000 that the compulsion to rule takes the form of a law, so that the founders justly legislate that philosophers rule owing to their educational debt to the city. However, Reeve holds in addition that philosophers would create this law themselves if it were not put in place by the founders. In other words, philosophers would compel themselves to rule Kallipolis. On this reading, the compulsion is internal to philosophers; however, this sort of compulsion seems weaker than what we get in the *Republic*, where Socrates declares that philosophers must be forced to rule, whether they want to or not (499b5–6), and that it is the founders who compel them to rule (520a8). These are external forms of compulsion: rather than philosophers deciding – perhaps even grudgingly – to rule, something else is forcing them to take up the mantle of rulers.

9 Kraut 1992, 328

10 See, e.g., 499b5, 500d4, 519c9, 520a8, 521b7, 540b5; cf. 347c3, 347d1.

11 Cf. Sedley 2007, 277.

12 This repetition is also excessive if it is merely indicating that philosophers prefer philosophizing to ruling. Plato is making a much stronger claim: philosophers do not merely dislike ruling; ruling is, in fact, an inferior form of life upon which they look down (καταφρονοῦντα, 521b1–2, cf. 520e4–521a2).

13 For further discussion on how these readings are inadequate, see Brown 2000, 3–9.

The second main group of interpretations does not diminish the importance of compulsion but rather highlights the compulsion necessary to encourage philosophers to rule Kallipolis, though often at the expense of Plato's eudaimonism. Breaking this group into two subgroups, we can see that those in the first subgroup (2A) think that Plato fails to provide a satisfactory basis for philosophers to rule.<sup>14</sup> They maintain that Plato tries to show that justice is beneficial for the agent, but they also point out that justice requires a philosopher to accept an inferior life when he rules, since it would be better to philosophize all the time than do so only between periods of rule (520e4–521a2). If this is the case, then doing what justice demands is detrimental to a philosopher, and so they claim that Plato fails to prove that justice is always beneficial to a just agent. In effect, they claim that the philosopher rightly refuses to rule because he is not benefited by ruling.<sup>15</sup>

However, there is room for highlighting compulsion in the *Republic* by maintaining that justice is beneficial to the agent; this is precisely what the second subgroup (2B) does, as exemplified by Eric Brown. He suggests that the founders of Kallipolis enact a just law commanding philosophers to rule, and he specifies that this law is just but not required by justice.<sup>16</sup> As long as justice demands obedience to just laws, philosophers must rule, because they must obey the just law that orders them to rule. Thus, it is not justice that causes them to accept an inferior life, since they would refuse to rule if not for the law directing them to do so. Rather, the law forces them to sacrifice some time philosophizing in order to rule, since this would make the city maximally happy, and since the city spent the time, effort, and resources to educate them in the first place. Brown's account still leaves open, however, the question of *why* a philosopher accedes to the demands of justice, that is, why he chooses to obey the command to rule, and *how* this obedience benefits him. My account, which also fits in subgroup 2B, addresses these open questions.

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Rosen 2005, 280; Aronson 1972; Bloom 1968, 407; Foster 1936.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. 347d6–8: 'Everyone, knowing [that a ruler seeks not his own advantage, but that of his subject], would prefer to be benefited by others than to take the trouble to benefit them.'

<sup>16</sup> For more on this, see below, 16–17. I agree with much of Brown, 2000 who writes that he is not attempting to give an account of '*how* the philosopher's obedience gives her a more just soul and *how* the refusal to obey the law would be detrimental to her psychic condition' (11). This is in line with what I will show: 1) *why* psychically just philosophers will do just acts, such as obey the legal requirement to rule, and 2) exactly *how* philosophers are benefited by their decision to obey the law. Brown 2004 appears to attempt to cover these points, but I will show in the second section of this paper (6–9) why that attempt is inadequate.

## II Justice and the Education of the Guardians

Let us examine that first question: Why would a philosopher obey the just command to rule? This is a more specific version of the question David Sachs asks: Why would someone with a just soul consistently act as justice requires?<sup>17</sup> Socrates originally takes up the task of showing how practical justice – acting justly – is beneficial to the agent, but then he only shows that a harmonious and orderly soul, which I call psychic justice, is beneficial. What reason do we have for thinking that practical justice always comes along with psychic justice?

Brown 2004 tries to show that there is no gap between psychic justice and practical justice by defending the attribution of two beliefs to Plato concerning a good education:<sup>18</sup>

(Sufficiency) Those who are raised well help others as [practical] justice requires.

(Necessity) Those who are not raised well cannot become [psychically] just.<sup>19</sup>

According to Brown, Plato believes a good education is sufficient for practical justice and necessary for psychic justice. Given that any psychically just person must have completed a good education, and any well educated person is practically just, it follows that anyone who is psychically just is also practically just. Thus, the guardians – both philosophers and auxiliaries – meet the necessary condition for psychic justice and the sufficient condition for practical justice, since, per Books II and III, they are well educated, that is, they have gone through the *initial* (musical and gymnastic) stage of the educational plan laid out in the *Republic*.<sup>20</sup>

Brown is right to argue that those who are psychically just will act as practical justice requires; moreover, given that the guardians' education generally habituates them to do just actions and also produces psychically just philosophers, it would seem, as Brown argues, that the education is both sufficient for that habituation and necessary for the psychic justice of those philosophers. There is reason to doubt, however, that this is the case, since over the course of the *Republic* Socrates questions both beliefs here attributed to Plato.

Brown himself seems to recognize that a good education is not strictly necessary for psychic justice when he admits that good fortune can take the place

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<sup>17</sup> See Sachs in Vlastos 1978, 35–51.

<sup>18</sup> Brown 2004, 283–290. At 277–283, he also discusses previous attempts to 'fill the gap', but he ends up dismissing them, in part because they fail to account for why philosophers must be compelled to rule (i.e., they allege that philosophers rule willingly).

<sup>19</sup> Brown 2004, 283.

<sup>20</sup> Brown is concerned with the first rather than the second stage of education (the education the ruling philosophers-in-training receive in Book VII). See Brown 2004, 284–288.

of a good education.<sup>21</sup> Socrates discusses five exempla of people who, though brought up without the benefit of Kallipolis' educational system, nonetheless 'consort with philosophy in a way that's worthy of her' (496a11–e2). Socrates himself is one of them by virtue of his divine sign. Admitting that Socrates acts as practical justice requires, Brown writes that 'we do not have to assume that there are some nearly perfect philosophers who lack the motivation to help others as justice requires.'<sup>22</sup> Brown does not say that these philosophers will have just souls, but it seems that an orderly, harmonious soul is a prerequisite for doing philosophy worthily. Socrates also suggests that the exceptions he mentions – himself included – have just souls, because they 'keep quiet and do their own work' (496d6), a claim that recalls the definition of justice as doing one's own work at 443c4–d1.<sup>23</sup> Further, Socrates says that each 'is pleased if he can somehow live his life here free from injustice and impious acts and depart from it with good hope, gracious and content' (496d9–e2). Thus, we have good reason to believe that Socrates and the others have just souls. According to Brown, the reason that Socrates and these exceptional people will act justly is that 'it seems as though especially good fortune does for them what careful training does for those in the ideal city. Hence, whether we see their good fortune as good education or as the mere absence of corruption that allows their philosophical nature to flourish, the results of the good fortune would seem to approximate those of the careful training in the ideal city.'<sup>24</sup> Good fortune, then, can take the place of a proper upbringing in these exceptional cases, so that a good education is necessary *except* when good fortune renders it unnecessary. Thus, a good education cannot be strictly necessary for psychic justice.

One might attempt to save Brown's necessity thesis by revising it, so that those who are not raised well cannot come to have *perfectly* just souls. If this is what Brown means, then his case for the claim is better.<sup>25</sup> Speaking of these exceptional philosophers, Socrates does qualify their greatness by saying of each that, under a better constitution, 'his growth will be fuller, and he'll save the community along with himself' (497a4–5). Though this qualification is a bit vague – Socrates could mean that the growth of justice in his soul would be fuller, as Brown might have it, or that his philosophical growth would be fuller – I can grant that a *perfectly* just soul requires being raised under the best con-

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<sup>21</sup> Brown 2004, 290.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Cf. 441d12–e2, 433a8–b5.

<sup>24</sup> Brown 2004, 290.

<sup>25</sup> In personal correspondence with me, Brown seemed to prefer this reading.

stitution and the best educational system. However, this concession does not appear to damage my case that being well raised is unnecessary for psychic justice, because Socrates never clearly indicates that he is discussing perfectly just souls alone. In fact, at 472c4–5, Socrates says that the notion of a ‘perfectly just man’ can only be a model, for such a man would ‘in no way differ from the just itself’ (472b8–9). Socrates and his interlocutors also agree that ‘the one who is most similar to just men will have a fate most like theirs’ (472c9–d1), thereby showing that their primary concern is still about tying justice to happiness for all people – anyone who acts justly, and thus increases the justice and order of his soul, is also happier than one who acts unjustly.

Even though Kallipolis’ education is not necessary for psychic justice, one might still think that a good education suffices to make one practically just. Unfortunately, this condition fails as well, because Socrates worries that not all those who graduate from the preliminary education of music and gymnastics can continue to hold on to their convictions about virtue when they are introduced to argumentation. In a situation where young people are able to contend about what is best, eristic argument may come to the fore. A young debater may undermine and refute the conventional convictions of one who naively believes that justice is best, causing him to ‘believe that the fine is no more fine than shameful, and the same with the just, the good, and the things he honored most’ (538d8–e1). Socrates tells Glaucon that we should pity the person who abandons his convictions and becomes lawless: ‘Therefore, lest your thirty-year-olds be subject to such pity, you’ll have to be very cautious about the way you introduce them to arguments’ (539a8–9). Although these thirty-year-olds have already been through an education in music and gymnastics, as well as through ten years of study in such subjects as geometry and astronomy, Socrates still worries that they may lose their traditional beliefs about justice. Implicit in this worry is that if students can lose their conviction that virtue is best, they can also lose their motivation for behaving virtuously, thereby abandoning the virtuous habits instilled by their education.

Even later in the training of philosophers, when they are put ‘back in the cave’ for fifteen years to gain experience in matters of war and politics, ‘they must be put to the test to see whether they will remain steadfast when they’re dragged in every direction or whether they will shift their ground’ (539e5–540a2). Until the prospective rulers are fifty, even until they are led to the Good itself, there is still some doubt about whether or not they will always act as practical justice requires; they may not hold on to their belief that justice is ‘the most important and most necessary thing’ (540e1–2) as ‘true philosophers’ do. If they cannot preserve the basic belief that justice is most important, then they will not always act according to practical justice; thus, their basic education



(i.e., the education they share with the auxiliaries) does not ensure that the prospective rulers always act justly.

We may, then, change Brown's sufficiency thesis slightly and say that the basic education and later testing – a fifty-year process – are together sufficient for practical justice.<sup>26</sup> If we take the two revised theses together (i.e., the revised sufficiency thesis along with the revised necessity thesis that a good education is necessary for *perfect* psychic justice), we can say that being raised well is necessary for perfect psychic justice and – taken along with a long period of further education and testing – is also sufficient for practical justice. These revised theses do, in fact, guarantee that the ruling philosophers are both psychically just and practically just, but no hope is left for anyone short of a perfect philosopher to attain this goal. It also leaves us wondering *why* Plato thinks this long period of education leads to psychic justice and practical justice. In the next section, we will see that Plato has a simpler solution to tying psychic and practical justice together – one that leaves hope for the possibility of happiness short of complete perfection.

### III Psychic Justice and Practical Justice

If Brown's theses are not what Plato employs to close the gap between psychic justice and practical justice, then what does he employ? Or, perhaps, is Plato unaware of a gap and, thus, of a problem? The gap problem arises, according to many commentators, because Plato moves from practical to psychic justice in Book IV, where Socrates seems to stop discussing just actions in favor of discussing just souls.<sup>27</sup> If Plato does indeed move illicitly from practical to psychic justice, then we are left with Sachs' problem: Glaucon asks why one should act justly, and in response Socrates explains why one should have a just soul.

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<sup>26</sup> Brown indicated via personal correspondence that he now has some sympathy with this revised view, and he offered further examples of how the auxiliaries are not guaranteed to act as practical justice requires, e.g., 417a.

<sup>27</sup> See, e.g., Annas 1981, 160; cf. Vasiliou 2008, 247–251. In contrast, Reeve 2007 thinks that Glaucon requires a theory of psychic justice from the beginning in 367b–d: 'Socrates' focus is required to be not primarily on just *actions*, but on justice as a psychological *state*, or state of character' (203). I do not have space to argue against this claim, but it seems implausible, given that psychic justice is not introduced explicitly until 443c9. In other words, though Glaucon and Adeimantus are certainly concerned about the effects of just action *on* the soul in Book II (cf. Vasiliou 2008, 195 ff.), they are not asking about justice *in* the soul, but rather about justice as it is normally conceived, i.e., in actions.

Reeve 2007, for example, writes that we should not ‘slip unwittingly into considering actions, when traits of character alone are at issue.’<sup>28</sup> Justice itself may be choiceworthy ‘even though some of the actions it requires of its possessor are of a sort that involve choosing to do something that is somehow bad, something not desirable for its own sake.’<sup>29</sup> In other words, Reeve is saying that psychic justice, not practical justice, is what Socrates is seeking in the *Republic*; psychic justice makes its possessor happy, but it may require some amount of practical justice, which is, unfortunately, ‘somehow bad’.

It seems that, for Reeve, psychic justice is choiceworthy in itself, whereas practical justice is choiceworthy only as a means to psychic justice. This solution, however, does not address Glaucon’s concern in Book II at all; instead, it simply grants it. It is to admit that justice, here taken as practical justice – the doing of just acts – falls (at least sometimes) into the category of goods that are not choiceworthy for their own sake but, rather, for what comes from them.<sup>30</sup> Just as physical training is not choiceworthy for its own sake, but for the sake of a well-trained body, just acts would not be choiceworthy for their own sake but for the sake of an orderly soul (cf. 357c5–d2).

Socrates’ main argument in the *Republic*, however, is that justice is choiceworthy in itself (cf. 358a1–3, 361b5–d3), and only later does he add that it is, in addition, choiceworthy for its consequences (612c5 ff.). If he merely proves that a just soul is beneficial, leaving just acts by the wayside, then he has failed to meet Glaucon’s challenge. For Socrates to succeed in his task, justice (i.e., doing just actions) must be good by itself, without taking into account its consequences.<sup>31</sup>

Reeve writes that a just state of the soul ‘motivates’, ‘causes’, or ‘requires’ a person to do just actions.<sup>32</sup> Rather than saying that a just soul causes one to act justly, however, we should say that just actions cause one to have a just soul.<sup>33</sup>

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**28** Reeve 2007, 204

**29** Ibid.

**30** As mentioned in n. 27 above, given that the concept of psychic justice has yet to be introduced when Glaucon challenges Socrates to defend justice in Book II, Glaucon cannot mean for Socrates to defend the benefit of psychic justice. Rather, Glaucon is asking Socrates to defend justice as it has been conceived throughout the first book of the *Republic*. The examples we were given include paying back what one owes, speaking the truth, doing good to friends, and obeying rulers – in short, practical justice.

**31** I will take a ‘good by itself’ to mean a good for the soul (cf. n. 27 above). Cf. Vasiliou 2008, 1952–11; Sachs 1978, 38–41.

**32** Reeve 2007, pp. 203–204

**33** For inspiration on this point and others in the rest of this section, I am indebted to Iakovos Vasiliou for his graduate seminar on the *Republic* at the City University of New York Graduate Center in Spring 2006. Cf. Vasiliou 2008, 247–259.

Even at the point where Socrates is supposed to start talking about just souls instead of just actions (443c9 ff.), he continues to speak of justice (i.e., psychic justice) as the product of just acts (practical justice). Socrates declares that the just person:

... thinks (ήγούμενον) that the action that would preserve (σώζει) and help to produce (συναπεργάζηται) this state [psychic justice] is just and noble, and he names that action just and noble, ... and he thinks that the action that always destroys this [psychic justice] is unjust, and he names it unjust (443e4–444a1).

The claim that just acts preserve or maintain the justice of one's soul is fairly straightforward, though it is not yet clear whether just acts are necessary to maintain a just soul, that is, must one continue to act justly after harmonizing one's soul? The other claim, that just acts help to produce a just soul, is less clear. What along with just acts must one do? Before this, Socrates says that the just man will put himself in order and rule himself (443d4–e2), which might be seen as the other necessary condition for a just soul, but this too is not completely clear, given that the just soul seems to be that soul which is put in order and self-ruled. If such is the case, Socrates might as well say that one must make one's soul just in order to have a just soul. Vasiliou 2008 may help us with these difficulties:

[J]ust actions will have the property of preserving and helping to produce psychic health in the agent who performs them, but that property is not what *makes* the action just, rather it is the fact that the action is truly just (the ultimate explanation of which will be that it participates in the Form of Justice) that causes it to have the property of preserving and helping to produce psychic health.<sup>34</sup>

In other words, any given just action is just through its participation in the form of Justice, and it is because of its justice (i.e., because of its participation in the form of Justice) that it produces and sustains a just soul. Thus actions are *called* just because they preserve and produce just souls, but actions *are* just because they participate in the form of Justice.<sup>35</sup>

Let us take a closer look at *why* just acts cause a just soul; in other words, why should we think that practical justice has any causal effect on the ordering of one's soul? Given that just *actions* are just through their participation in the form of Justice, let us turn our attention to just *souls*. If the ordering of one's soul is an instance of justice, and, therefore, a just soul participates in the form

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Irwin 1977, 210, touches on the possibility of insisting that just actions are necessary to produce psychic justice, but he rejects this reading in favor of the 'more promising' claim that the just man expresses his psychic justice through his actions.

<sup>34</sup> Vasiliou 2008, 250–51 (Vasiliou's emphasis).

<sup>35</sup> Cf., e.g., *Phaedo* 100c3–e3.

of Justice, then perhaps practical justice produces psychic justice due to its common link to Justice. We might say, loosely, that ‘connecting’ oneself to Justice through practical justice (i.e., partaking in Justice through one’s actions) has an effect on one’s soul, namely, that justice is cultivated in that soul. To question the link between the two forms of justice, then, would simply be to question the causal efficacy of forms.

While this final question may prove intractable, Socrates clears up some of the earlier difficulties with an analogy to bodily health: ‘Then acting unjustly, being unjust, and, in turn, acting justly, don’t all these finally turn out to be ... no different than health and sickness; as these are in the body, so are justice and injustice in the soul.’ Socrates goes on to say that, as ‘wholesome things produce (ἐμποιεῖ) health, and harmful things sickness’, so do ‘just actions produce (ἐμποιεῖ) justice, and unjust actions injustice.’ In the same way that health causes a natural, orderly relation in the body, so justice ‘produces (ἐμποιεῖν) in the soul a natural relation of controlling and being controlled one part by another, while injustice produces a relation of ruling and being ruled that is contrary to nature’ (444c1–d12). Here it is clear that justice (i.e., practical justice) produces justice in the soul, that is, psychic justice. Just as health is produced by healthful things, the order in the soul called psychic justice is produced by just acts. Likewise, unjust acts destroy the harmony in one’s soul, producing what might be termed psychic injustice, in the same way that harmful things destroy the health in one’s body. The claim that just acts produce (ἐμποιεῖ) psychic justice is stronger than the claim in the previous passage that just acts help produce (συναπεργάζηται) psychic justice, but it is also clearer, as we do not have any other mysterious necessary conditions for psychic justice. Recalling the claim that just acts preserve psychic justice, we can see that just as one cannot expect to remain healthy while ceasing to exercise and beginning to eat junk food (i.e., to be healthy, one must maintain a healthy diet and exercise one’s body), in exactly the same way one cannot hope to remain psychically just if one does any of the things Socrates lists at 442e4–443a1: embezzlement, temple robbery, theft, or betrayal. Such acts are like psychic junk food (or worse), destroying the harmony of one’s soul, while a healthy diet of just actions harmonizes and orders the soul. Just acts are, therefore, necessary to produce a just soul.<sup>36</sup>

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**36** Given that just souls are produced by just actions, philosophers *may* not be the only ones in Kallipolis with just souls, because the ruling philosophers designate just actions for the rest of the city. As long as citizens obey philosophers, citizens are guaranteed to act as practical justice requires, which means, in turn, that they will be psychically just. Wisdom is still set over just actions in this case (as is demanded at 443e6–7), but wisdom does not have to be *in* the person with the just soul, as Socrates says at 590c8–d6: If one is not ruled by one’s own

We can find support for this conclusion in *Republic* book IX as well. At 588b1–592a4, Socrates constructs an image of a man with a human, a lion, and a multiform beast in his soul, which are respectively analogous to the rational, honor-loving, and appetitive parts of the soul. Doing injustice feeds the beast and starves the human being, making one's soul disordered. Acting justly (practical justice), on the contrary, puts the human being in control and tames the beast, putting the soul in order (psychic justice) so that the rational part directs the other parts. This is straightforward support for a causal connection between practical justice and psychic justice: practical justice produces psychic justice, while unjust actions lead to psychic disharmony.

Before we put all these pieces together and solve our initial problems, let me clarify how the solution I have presented to the supposed gap between psychic and practical justice differs from Brown's. For Brown, a good education makes a person act justly (the sufficiency thesis) and enables him to have a just soul (the necessity thesis). I do not deny that Plato engineers the *Republic*'s educational plan so that philosophers (and auxiliaries) act justly, although the plan is obviously not foolproof; and I also do not deny that the educational system prepares Kallipolis' philosophers to have just souls, though, again, there are other ways to attain a just soul. What I am suggesting is a mechanism by which just actions and just souls are connected. Why is it that an education that fosters just action ends up preparing its students to have just souls? This is because just actions produce just souls. Moreover, the best students, the ones who have been successfully habituated to do just action, attain psychic justice by practicing practical justice.

## IV The Philosopher's Descent into the Cave

We now have all the premises we need to argue an affirmative answer to the third question posed at the opening of the paper: Is it necessary that a philoso-

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wisdom, it is next best to be ruled by the wisdom of another. All the citizens of Kallipolis, then, could have just souls without knowledge of which actions are just, because they would have true belief as to which actions are just, courtesy of the philosopher. Defending this claim sufficiently would, of course, require another paper. Cf. *Meno* 98c1 ff., where it is noted that true belief is not inferior to knowledge in guiding human actions. Citizens of Kallipolis would be like the statesmen in the *Meno* who are virtuous without knowledge, but the citizens would have a better tie-down for their true beliefs, namely, the ruling philosopher who *does* have knowledge.

pher, a psychically just person, obey the just requirement to rule Kallipolis? The first premise below comes from *Republic* 443e5–6:

1. Just actions are ones that preserve and help produce harmony in the soul.

We discussed this premise at length above.<sup>37</sup> Our next premise is a staple of Platonic metaphysics, also discussed above:

2. Just actions are actions that participate in Justice.

We can then pull from Platonic epistemology, particularly from the central part of the *Republic*:

3. Philosophers have knowledge of the forms, including Justice.<sup>38</sup>

Premise (3) suggests the following:

4. Philosophers know which actions participate in Justice.

While not uncontroversial, (4) is licensed by the *Republic*, especially 520c3–6. There Socrates tells the philosophical rulers of Kallipolis that they would be able to see much better in the darkness of the cave than non-philosophers and that they would ‘know what each image is and of what it is an image, because they have seen the truth about beautiful and just and good things.’ Given that philosophers have seen Justice itself, they can recognize images of it, i.e., just actions. Thus, they know which actions partake of Justice, since they know that each action is an image and, moreover, an image of Justice itself.<sup>39</sup> From (2) and (4) we arrive at:

5. Philosophers know which actions are just.

We may note here that, since philosophers know which actions are just, they also know, by (1), which actions preserve and help produce harmony in the soul. This inference follows not only because they know Justice itself and, thus, the effects of justice in the soul, but also because a philosopher, as a just person, ‘names that action just and noble that would preserve and help to produce’ psychic justice (443e5–6). To the foregoing premises we add an axiom of Platonic psychology:

6. Philosophers always act so as to have harmonized souls.

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<sup>37</sup> See part III.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. *Republic* 517a8–c5, 519c8–d2, 532a1–b2.

<sup>39</sup> Justifying the move from (3) to (4) is another project altogether, one on which I am currently working. In the meantime, it might suffice to note, as I do in the text, that the ideal state depends on the validity of this move.

While this claim is familiar from the *Phaedo*, where philosophy is care for the soul, Socrates and Glaucon also assume in the *Republic* that to care for the soul is much more important than to care for the body.<sup>40</sup> According to (1), acting so as to have a harmonized soul is acting justly, and, according to (5), philosophers know how to act justly. Thus, (1), (5), and (6) yield our desired conclusion:

7. Philosophers always act justly.

We now have a straightforward proof showing that philosophers will obey the requirements of justice, no matter what they may prescribe, since to act justly is to act so as to harmonize one's soul, and philosophers always act so as to do just that.<sup>41</sup>

One may grant my argument resolving the third problem set out at the beginning of the paper and still raise the second. Given that philosophers act justly, that justice requires that they obey the legal requirement to rule Kallipolis, and that the life of ruling is inferior to the life of philosophy, does not justice compel philosophers to accept worse lives when they are capable of better?<sup>42</sup> In

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. *Republic* 445a5–b4, 618e1–2; *Phaedo* 64c10 ff., 80d5 ff.

<sup>41</sup> Thus, there is no fallacy (Sachs 1978, 35) or lacuna (Demos 1978, 52) in Plato's defense of practical justice by way of defending psychic justice. As mentioned in the previous section, however, one may still question why we should think that practical justice has any causal effect on the ordering of one's soul (premise 1). This 'new Sachs problem' would be to question the causal efficacy of forms.

One may also object that the just actions mentioned above might bear little or no resemblance to what are normally thought to be just actions, given that what determines an action's being just is its participation in Justice, which need not, it seems, track our normal intuitions about which actions are just. Although we normally think it just to return what is owed, it may turn out that such actions do not participate in Justice, and so our intuitions would be wrong. Of course, we might expect this, given that Socrates often points out that our normal intuitions about justice are faulty, as Polemarchus and Thrasymachus discover in Book I. In fact, however, we have good reason to think that real just actions (actions that participate in Justice) at least approximate conventional just actions (actions that we think are just), if we bring in the Theory of Recollection; this is because we all have had some prenatal experience of Justice that influences our conventional opinions about just actions. Though Recollection is not explicitly mentioned in the *Republic*, it is present in dialogues that are generally agreed to frame it chronologically, namely, the *Meno* and *Phaedo* beforehand and the *Phaedrus* afterward. The doctrine is also implied when Socrates, at *Republic* 518b6–c5, says that teaching is not putting knowledge into souls; knowledge, which is here called a power or capacity (δύναμις, cf. 477d7–9), is already present in everyone's soul, since we have experienced the forms before birth. See *Phaedo* 74a9–75d5; cf. Ferejohn 2006.

<sup>42</sup> This question is, of course, asked by Glaucon as well: 'But will we do them injustice and make their lives worse although it is possible for them to live better?' (519d8–9).

other words, philosophers *will* act justly, but *should* they do so? There are three complementary answers to this question, and I shall entertain them in order of strength, from weakest to strongest: first, we can mitigate the inferiority of the life of ruling; second, we can deny that justice is directly responsible for philosophers having to accept an inferior life; and, third, we can deny that the life of ruling is actually inferior for the rulers of Kallipolis.

As a preface to our response, we must remember that explaining why philosophers are benefited by a certain course of action is not the same as explaining why they choose a certain course of action; one can choose the just course of action for its own sake, even though it offers some benefit to the actor. In other words, choosing action *x qua* just is not identical to choosing action *x qua* beneficial to oneself, even if all just acts are beneficial to the actor, as Plato hopes to show. Thus, while philosophers choose to act justly for the sake of justice itself, they are also benefited – as we shall see – by their just actions.

First, we can mitigate the inferiority of the life of ruling by recalling that just acts harmonize the soul. Given that this harmony is a great good, philosophers are greatly benefited by their just acts. Thus, ruling Kallipolis does benefit philosophers, even though they would prefer not to rule. They choose to act justly, and just acts are intrinsically beneficial, so they are benefited.<sup>43</sup> Of course, this answer is not satisfactory alone, since one may easily point out that philosophers would be benefited more by the continuous activity of philosophizing and never having to rule over others. But is this possible inferiority really the fault of justice?

As a second answer, we can deny that justice is directly responsible for the inferiority of the life of ruling, if indeed that life is inferior.<sup>44</sup> This would allow Socrates' defense of justice to remain eudaimonistic, even if philosophers are compelled to accept an inferior life, because it would not be justice that does the compelling. Recall that it is a just law that compels philosophers to rule. On the hypothesis that justice demands that one obey just laws, philosophers must rule Kallipolis because a just law demands it. Thus, it is not *justice* that compels the philosopher to accept an inferior life, but the law. The founders need not make the law, since it perfectly accords with justice to offer a philosophical education to every student without expectation of repayment. However, since philosophers in Kallipolis are groomed to rule and are, therefore, also provided with an opportunity to live a much better life than other citizens (i.e., the life of philosophy), it is

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. group 1B above, in section I.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Brown 2000, 10: 'Justice alone does not force the philosophers to opt for the lesser happiness of ruling.'



just for the city to demand that they give up some portion of their life on the Isle of the Blessed to rule. Hence, the law is just, but it is not *required by* justice.<sup>45</sup>

Let us discuss this important point in more detail. I have distinguished a general requirement of justice from the specific requirement of the just law in Kallipolis. If we accept that it is a general requirement of justice that philosophers rule the city, then 1) they would be reluctant to do what justice itself requires, and 2) justice itself would require them to accept an inferior life. The alternative to this general requirement of justice (and its two attendant consequences) is that a law – contingently justified by the founders but not required by justice itself – forces philosophers to accept an inferior life and, therefore, causes their dismay. Given that Socrates says that it is not the law's concern to make any one class happy but to make the whole city happy (519e1–520a4), it makes sense that the requirement to rule is the requirement of a just law, not a general requirement of justice. Though the law does not aim to make philosophers happy, it is, nevertheless, a just law; thus, obedience to it benefits them, as all just actions benefit their doers. However, one may then object, isn't justice at least *indirectly* at fault for the inferior lives of the rulers?

Although the first two answers together may save Plato's eudaimonism, if they are found unconvincing, we can still fall back on a third answer, that is, we can deny that the lives of the ruling philosophers are actually inferior by rejecting the very possibility of a better life for them. Once they are commanded to rule, they only have two choices: obey or disobey. Disobedience, as an unjust act, would corrupt their souls. Since choosing to philosophize instead of to rule would be an act of disobedience, it would corrupt their souls, and they would never voluntarily choose a course of action that would corrupt their souls. Furthermore, such a course of action would certainly not be beneficial. Philosophers realize that their souls are the most important parts of themselves and that it is more important to cultivate their health than to do anything else, as is finally shown in the myth of Er, where in choosing one's next life one will 'call worse the life which leads the soul to become more unjust, and better that which leads it to become more just' (618e1–2).<sup>46</sup> The choice of an unjust life

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<sup>45</sup> Given that the law is not required by justice, philosophers are under no obligation to institute the law if it is lacking, contrary to what Reeve 2007, 205, suggests.

<sup>46</sup> Those who, unlike philosophers, do just actions but do not know the Form of Justice, such as citizens in Kallipolis who have true belief about what actions are just but do not *know* which actions are just, may not be able to select the best life correctly, as is made clear at 619b7–d3: souls who 'participated in virtue through habit and without philosophy' may go wrong in choosing their next life. I wish to express my thanks to Eric Brown for directing me to this passage.

is likely to lead to an inability to philosophize and, therefore, would be self-defeating.

Thus, the philosopher is compelled to obey, a fact confirmed by Glaucon, who, when asked if they will disobey, answers: ‘Impossible, for we will be giving just orders to just people, yet each of them will surely go to rule as to something compulsory (ἀναγκάϊον), which is opposite to those now ruling in every city’ (520e1–3). As pointed out above, obedience carries with it certain benefits, including – most importantly – the harmonization of one’s soul, while disobedience carries with it only harm. Certainly, philosophers may think that it would be better if they had not been ordered to rule, since they could then philosophize freely and still maintain the harmony of their souls; but, once the command has been given, this blessed isle is not an option. Thus, given that the law requiring philosophers to rule is just, the best life for a philosopher in Kallipolis is, in fact, to rule. Apart from the intrinsic benefit of an orderly soul, philosophers also gain opportunities to philosophize between periods of rule. Socrates states that: ‘Philosophers will spend much of their time doing philosophy, but each, whenever his turn comes, will labor in politics and rule for the city’s sake’ (540b2–4). Furthermore, philosophers will not begrudge the city their labor, since they owe their very ability to philosophize to the city and its educational system. The law is just, and they are just people. So they will obey.

Finally, we can now answer the initial question posed in this paper: Why does Kallipolis’ educational system fail to produce philosophers who are motivated to rule without having to be compelled? They have perfect knowledge of what is right and good and, furthermore, they know that it is through the education provided by the city that they are able to acquire this knowledge. In addition, they know that it is only through their rule that the city would be best ruled and the citizens as a whole most happy. Yet, they balk when it comes down to actually running the city. Why does Socrates say again and again that these rulers must be compelled to take charge of the city?<sup>47</sup> In other words, why must they be forced to put their knowledge to correct use?

Recall Socrates’ claim that ‘if you can discover a better life than ruling for the prospective rulers, your well-governed city will become a possibility’ (520e4–521a2). The education given in Kallipolis does precisely this: It gives its students a better way of life than ruling, namely, the life of philosophy. If Kallipolis were producing rulers who wanted to rule, it would be a disaster, because these rulers would pursue power or honor or some such thing (cf. 347a3–6). Instead, the rulers pursue wisdom; they ‘look down on (καταφρονούντα) politi-

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<sup>47</sup> See, e.g., 499b5, 500d4, 519c9, 520a8, 521b7, 540b5; cf. 347c3, 347d1.

cal rule', longing for the better life of philosophy (521b1–2). They go to rule as to something necessary (ἀναγκαῖος), not to something fine (καλός, 540b4). Given that the best rulers are those who must be compelled to rule, these philosophers who chafe at the yoke of their rule, wanting desperately to step down and leave the task of ruling to another, are in fact the best rulers. The tension between ruling and philosophizing, which seems to be such a problem, is engineered exactly so by Plato; it is not a problem, but a solution. The only way to produce good rulers is to cultivate them with this tension, making them both the best candidates for rule, owing to their knowledge of the good, and at the same time the least enthusiastic about ruling, again, paradoxically, because of their knowledge and their desire to increase it. Accordingly, they must be required to rule against their own desires, because they are just people and will never disobey. Given that Plato does not want us to think that they are harmed by obeying the demands of justice, he both clarifies the nature of justice itself and explains how philosophers are intrinsically benefited by their just acts, among which is the just act of ruling Kallipolis.

Let us recap our answers to the three questions with which we began. We asked about the apparent gap between practical and psychic justice, which we have now seen is only apparent because psychic justice is produced by practical justice. Specifically applying this question to philosophers, we asked whether they would willingly choose to rule the city or whether they would have to be forced to rule. In response, we showed that philosophers would, reluctantly, obey the command to rule, because 1) they always act to harmonize their souls and 2) just acts – which they alone can accurately identify – do in fact harmonize their souls. Our second problem questioned the benefit justice holds for philosophers. Given that Socrates is arguing that justice benefits the agent, how does justice benefit philosophers? Keeping in mind that practical justice produces psychic justice, we can see that philosophers are benefited by obeying the just law, because such obedience – as a just act – produces and maintains order in their souls, something that is essential to their *eudaimonia*. We also denied that there is, in fact, a better life for philosophers, given that the command to rule is just; moreover, even if such a life is possible, we denied that justice is responsible for compelling philosophers to reject it. Finally, we can now answer our first question about the purpose of Kallipolis' education, since it apparently produces rulers who are unmotivated to rule. We have found that this supposed fault in the educational system is actually by Plato's design, because only reluctant rulers can be the best rulers.<sup>48</sup>

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