

Chrysippus' criticism of the theory of justice in Plato's *Republic*

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Chrysippus' treatise *On Justice against Plato*, several testimonies of which are preserved by Plutarch, has as its target (at least its main one) the theory of justice in Plato's *Republic*. Chrysippus' criticisms in this work have usually been dismissed as merely piecemeal and polemical. However, my analysis will show that he detected keenly, by reading the dialogue in its entirety, the gaps to be filled in or the vagueness to be clarified in Plato's arguments, not for its own sake, but in order to "improve" upon them.

While Chrysippus' criticism of Plato's definition of injustice as the *stasis* of the soul (Plu. *M.* 1041B–C) refers directly to a passage in Book 1 of the *Republic* (351D–352A), it is likely that he also has in mind the full-blown definition of (in)justice based on the theory of the tripartite soul in Book 4. The problem raised is one that also vexes modern readers of Plato — that his definition of justice, being concerned not with external action but with internal action (443C–D), deviates from the common meaning of the term. But in view of the fact that the Stoic view on virtue (not on justice in particular) was clearly inspired by the Platonic conception of justice as harmony of the soul, this criticism is to be seen as aiming at conceptual clarification, which he thought was necessary to achieve a more reasonable account of virtue.

As for his criticism of Cephalus' argument in *Republic* I (Plu. *M.* 1040A–B), it may seem strange that he took Cephalus as "trying to make fear of the gods a deterrent from injustice", and criticized, not Cephalus, but Plato. These problems, however, disappear if we interpret him to be anticipating the myth of Er at the end of the *Republic*. Plato's apparent appeal to the divine punishments in the myth has been baffling to many interpreters, for it seems to undermine his effort in Books 2–9 to show that justice is worth having for its own sake. This is all the more true for Chrysippus, who must have applauded the argument in Books 2–9 as drawing quite near to his own Stoic position. Chrysippus found the same kind of inconsistency (as it seemed to him) in Plato's admission of health and pleasure into "goods" (Plu. *M.* 1040D). The point at issue was whether justice (or virtue in general) was sufficient for happiness. Plato's view on this matter is notoriously vague, and we can take Chrysippus' criticism as a preliminary to the polishing of Platonic insight by use of the strict Stoic distinction between "goods" and "preferred indifferents".

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Preference of Format

“Shorter” (20-minutes presentation in the “Parallel” session)