

‘On justice and the other virtues in the *Republic*: whose justice, whose virtues?’

**[N.B.: FIRST, HIGHLY PROVISIONAL DRAFT ONLY: PLEASE DO NOT CITE]**

The question from which the idea of the present paper began is this: why does justice as defined in Book IV of the *Republic* apparently play so little part *outside* the *Republic*? One could of course try proposing that we are intended to think back to – take into account, or even presuppose – the *Republic* IV definition on all subsequent occasions that justice<sup>1</sup> comes into play in Plato’s argument (I assume for the sake of argument that we could tell which occasions *were* ‘subsequent’: let us take the *Politicus* as an example<sup>2</sup>). But on the face of it that seems unlikely, given that there is at least one other quite different, and apparently incompatible, account of justice that seems to survive alongside the *Republic* IV account. So my question will not go away so easily.

Now I acknowledge at once that there are many for whom this sort of question will not be unduly worrisome. Many modern interpreters are perfectly happy to find Plato saying different things, even contradicting himself. Why should philosophers not be allowed to change their mind? Should not a Plato even be *expected* to change his mind, if he came to think he had got something wrong, or could do something better? Alternatively, or additionally, he might want to test *us*, by presenting us with different solutions to the same issues; or again, he might simply be confused, or (to put it more palatably) his thought might be ‘in tension’.<sup>3</sup> Now I fully admit these are in principle, and in general, perfectly reasonable responses to questions like the one I am raising. However I doubt whether they are useful in the present case, where Plato (or his Socrates) not only says different things about the same subject in one and the same work, but having said one thing, then something else evidently incompatible with it, appears to go back again – with no appearance of embarrassment – to what he said in the first place.

Let me explain. In Book I of the *Republic*, Socrates operates with a concept of justice that appears consistent with his treatment of the virtues or excellences in the so-called ‘Socratic’ dialogues, i.e. as a kind of knowledge.<sup>4</sup> But then, in Books II-IV, as everybody knows, he gradually reveals a new and different view, which treats justice in

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<sup>1</sup> I.e., justice proper: see following note.

<sup>2</sup> The *Laws* is more problematic, insofar as it talks about two different kinds of justice, one by implication full and unqualified, the other merely popular or ‘demotic’ (see below, and for the *Laws*, n.38). However the *Laws*, or rather the difference between the two kinds of justice, will in fact turn out to be central to the solution to the puzzles discussed in this paper.

<sup>3</sup> As, e.g., Julia Annas suggests, in the context of the twists and turns of the argument of the *Politicus*: see her Introduction to the translation of the dialogue in the series *Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought*.

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. *Republic* I, 334B-335E, 349A-350C, 352D-353E. True, none of these passages spells out what I shall call an ‘intellectualist’ account of excellence; each nonetheless implies such an account (I argue this case for 349A-350C in *Plato and the Art of Philosophical Writing*, CUP 2007, Appendix to ch.5). But see following note.

terms of the ‘doing of its own’ by each of three ‘parts’ or *eidê* of the soul.<sup>5</sup> Knowledge and wisdom are involved, on this view, but are apparently not here – in Book IV – regarded as enough by themselves to make a person just, as they evidently are on the account implied in Book I; the two lower ‘parts’ must each ‘do their own’ too.<sup>6</sup> Now some have proposed to treat *Republic* I as a mere Socratic left-over – perhaps even written as a separate work, later to be incorporated into the master-work as a kind of introduction, with the remaining nine books moving on to a different, perhaps more distinctively Platonic, perspective, of which the tripartite soul and a new account of justice based on tripartition would form two central elements. (The Socratic soul, by contrast with the new Platonic one, will have been an essentially unified, rational and desiring, entity; notoriously all the Socratic virtues are one, too, being all identical with knowledge.) But such an interpretation ignores the real complexities of the situation. True, *Republic* I looks very like some of the shorter dialogues, e.g. *Euthyphro*, or *Laches*, or *Charmides*. But it is actually far from obvious to what extent the Socrates of Books II-X really turns his back on those shorter (‘Socratic’) dialogues; indeed, as I have argued elsewhere,<sup>7</sup> in Book VI in particular he appears to go out of his way to emphasize the *continuity* of what he is saying (especially on the difficult subject of the Good) with things that he and his interlocutors have said before, in conversations whose content as he reports it sounds remarkably like what is familiar to us from a range of pre-*Republic* dialogues. And on the subject of the virtues themselves, Socrates gives clear signals (a) that the account of them in Book IV will be anything but his last word, and (b) that he is far from finished with the different kind of way he handled them in Book I. First, it is agreed in Book IV itself that either the accounts to be given of the virtues themselves, or the tripartite analysis of the soul on which they will be based,<sup>8</sup> will be reached on the basis of a method that is not the most accurate available (IV, 435C-E). Then in Book VI (504A-B) Socrates reminds Adimantus of this same Book IV passage, specifying in particular that there is or would be a ‘longer road’ leading to the virtues than the one they took using the tripartite psychology. Of course it does not follow that following another method (a ‘longer and more considerable’ one: 435D3) would have led to a different result. However in Book X Socrates does in fact re-open the very kind of question from which the Book IV analysis starts: does the soul, as it is in truth (611B10) have many *eidê*, or only one (612A4)? And that question, if it is intended as a genuinely open one (as

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<sup>5</sup> Book IV, 441D-444D. This way of treating justice seems already at least foreshadowed in one passage in Book I itself: see 351E, where Socrates talks about injustice causing conflict within an individual.

<sup>6</sup> This is borne out by the fact that in Book IV Socrates singles out *justice*, not wisdom, as the key to excellence in general (433B-C, cf. 444B); but the same will presumably apply in the case of individual justice – as Socrates seems to confirm at 444B, *sôphrosunê*, courage and wisdom will only come into existence, on the Book IV account, if all three parts or *eidê* in the soul ‘do their own’/keep to their allotted function.

<sup>7</sup> See ch.9 *Plato and the Art of Philosophical Writing* (n.4 above).

<sup>8</sup> Or indeed both: I think what Socrates says here is intended to be as vague and ambiguous as it actually is.

I suppose), is capable of taking us right back to the ‘Socratic’, unitary, account of justice and the other virtues, based as it is on a unitary concept of soul.<sup>9</sup>

Once again, there is no proof that the ultimate outcome of this re-opening of the question may not actually be a *re-affirmation* of the Book IV account, perhaps in subtler and more nuanced terms; and after all, does the *Timaeus* – generally held to be written after the *Republic* – not give us precisely a Book-IV-style tripartition of the soul? Yet at the same time, the Book X passage surely suggests, at the least, that if the soul is seen in abstraction from its travails in the body (and in relation to its love of wisdom: 611D8), it will look quite different; the Book IV treatment merely captured what happens to it, its *pathê*, and its *eidê*, in its life as part of that composite thing called an *anthrôpos* (612A4-6). My argument is that all of this allows another version of justice, and indeed of *sôphrosunê* and courage, to re-surface alongside the versions introduced in Book IV: precisely the excellences as Socrates first introduced them, however covertly,<sup>10</sup> in Book I. And, as David Sedley has argued,<sup>11</sup> these – or at any rate ‘intellectualist’ versions of the excellences (which I take to be what are in play in Book I) – are in fact the excellences that dominate the whole of the discussion in Books V-VII: that is, in the long discussion of the philosopher-rulers. *They* are just, *sôphrônes*, etc. simply by virtue of their orientation towards the objects of knowledge, exactly like the possessors of ‘genuine’ excellence in the *Phaedo*. But then, as Sedley also points out, in Books VIII and IX Socrates returns to the topic that he broke off from discussing at the beginning of Book V: the vices corresponding to the virtues treated in Book IV, and the corresponding forms of constitution. VIII and IX thus take us back, away from the intellectualist perspective, to the analysis of human excellence and the lack of it in terms of the interplay between different *eidê* or ‘parts’ of soul.<sup>12</sup>

So this is the real question I am posing in the present paper. It is not just a question about the relationship between the *Republic* and other dialogues (my original question, about why the formally undertaken, explicit definition of justice in the *Republic* – a definition which the argument of the dialogue surely requires us to take with full seriousness – is so little in evidence outside this one dialogue). The bigger question, and

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<sup>9</sup> See Rowe, ‘La concezione dell’anima in *Repubblica* IV. Che cosa manca esattamente alla ‘via più breve?’’, in Maurizio Migliori, Linda M. Valditara, Arianna Fermani (eds), *Interiorità e anima. La psychè in Platone* (Vita e Pensiero, 2007), 245-53.

<sup>10</sup> See n.4 above.

<sup>11</sup> In a paper entitled ‘Socratic intellectualism in *Republic* 5-7’, presented at colloquia in Durham and Paris, April 2010. Since this paper is as yet unpublished, I shall not quote from it; its chief outcome, however, is that the treatment of the ‘virtues’ in Books V-VII (or, strictly, from midway through Book V to the end of book VII, while still acknowledging the tripartite division of the soul, makes no reference to the two lower parts, instead treating excellence generally as the outcome of knowledge of that good which we all desire.

<sup>12</sup> Similarly with the treatment of poetry and art in the first part of Book X (equally based on tripartition, or at any rate a multi-part psychology). David Sedley points out in his paper that what may be called the tripartite and intellectualist models for virtue/excellence are similarly juxtaposed in the *Timaeus*: compare 89E3-90A2 with 90A2-D7.

the bigger problem, is about the treatment of the excellences within the *Republic* itself; and it involves not just the well-known contrast between Book I and Book IV, but all ten books together. Modern scholars, as I have said (and as everyone knows), have become used to discussing the definition in Book IV as if it were *the* definitive account of justice – as it is *the* definition – in the *Republic*, treating Book I as superseded (and at least by implication playing down Socrates’ warnings about its accuracy). But as a matter of fact the work as a whole appears to move back and forth between the two accounts of justice. The intellectualist account appears in Book I, Books V-VII, and (I propose, implicitly) at the end of Book X; the rival account, based on tripartition, appears in II-IV, VIII-VIII, and some of X. It seems reasonable enough to ask ourselves what is going on. If the two accounts of justice – and of excellence generally – are as different as I believe they are, even (perhaps) opposed to each other, how and why should Plato allow Socrates to veer between them in the way he appears to do?<sup>13</sup> And will answering this question give us any help with the smaller question, about why the Book IV definition does not figure more prominently, if it figures at all,<sup>14</sup> outside the *Republic*?

Two other passages in the *Republic* may provide us with clues. The first passage (A) is in Book VI, where Socrates refers to the conditions which will allow the philosopher to be a good craftsman (*dēmiourgos*) of ‘*sôphrosunê* and justice and demotic excellence in its entirety’ (500D6-8). This is the only explicit reference to ‘demotic’ (or ‘common-or-garden’?) excellence in the *Republic*, but the idea is familiar enough from elsewhere, most notably from the *Phaedo*:<sup>15</sup> the distinctive feature of this kind of excellence, i.e. the ‘demotic’ or popular (vulgar?) kind, as opposed to that possessed by philosophers, is that it is isolated from wisdom, *phronêsis*. Now since (a) by this stage in the *Republic*, i.e. by the time we have reached VI, 500D, one of the main themes of the work has turned out to be about the conversion of a city and its citizens to excellence, by philosophers, and (b) the four cardinal virtues or excellences as they will appear in a good city have been formally defined in Book IV, it is surely scarcely conceivable that 500D could be read except as referring back to the excellences as defined in Book IV. In other words, the excellences as defined in Book IV *are* the ‘demotic’ excellences<sup>16</sup> – including,

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<sup>13</sup> Or even juxtapose them in one and the same context, as he apparently does in Book I (see nn.4-5 above).

<sup>14</sup> That is, if it is *explicitly mentioned* at all (as opposed to being presumed: see the final paragraph of the present paper).

<sup>15</sup> *Phaedo* 82A-B, which appears at first sight to refer back to another contrast between inferior *aretê* and its philosophical counterpart, earlier in the dialogue (69A-C); but see further below.

<sup>16</sup> In fact, Socrates carefully marks off the courage of the ‘auxiliaries’ at IV, 430C3, as purely ‘civic’ – ‘civic’, or *politikos*, being the alternative term for ‘demotic’ excellence at *Phaedo* 82A10-B1. If it is argued – as David Sedley argues, in the unpublished paper referred to in n.11 above – that actually Socrates is still talking about the courage of the city, not of individuals (so that *politikê* will mean ‘belonging to a city’, not ‘civic’ = belonging to the the mass of the citizens), my response is that this is actually not so clear in the text, which has up until a moment ago been talking specifically about the auxiliaries and their training rather than about the city; and I take it as significant that Socrates’ qualification here (‘You should take this [as courage], at any rate of a *politikê*

in one sense, wisdom itself, whose true nature only emerges in Book V, with Socrates' outrageous proposal about the need to unite political power with *philosophy* (473C-D), after which wisdom itself becomes the very means by which, according to the context in Book VI, the philosopher will 'craft' ordinary or 'demotic' virtue.<sup>17</sup> The need for this 'crafting' lies in the fact that after all wisdom, and so *genuine* virtue of any kind, will not be and cannot be widely distributed. Even the good city, it seems, must make do for the most part with a decent, but still inferior, substitute.<sup>18</sup>

This will be a surprising, not to say shocking, conclusion for many. It is not just that we have become used to discussing, and (it must be added) being puzzled by, the Book IV definitions as *the* Platonic accounts (however puzzling) of the cardinal virtues, enshrined in the masterwork.<sup>19</sup> If the *sôphrosunê*, courage and justice of Book IV are merely 'demotic', they will apparently be in danger also of being consigned to the same general category as the purely calculating 'justice' that Glaucon and Adimantus so vividly described at the beginning of Book II,<sup>20</sup> built above all on fear of the consequences of injustice: the very kind of 'justice', surely, that Socrates describes in *Phaedo* 69A-C as 'slavish'. After all, if he does not intend to identify this 'slavish' justice (or courage, or *sôphrosunê*) with the 'demotic' or 'civic' brand, divorced from 'philosophy and intelligence', that he mentions – and celebrates with the faintest of praise – later on in the *Phaedo* (82A11-B3), he makes little attempt to distinguish them.

Yet there surely is a distinction, even if it may be in the interests of Socrates' argument in the *Phaedo* not to emphasize it. 'Demotic' ('civic') excellence derives from

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sort') comes after he has connected the kind of courage in question with correct belief, and after he has distinguished it from mere brute, 'slavish' (instinctual) 'courage'. Given the paramount importance that will shortly be attributed, in Book V, to the distinction between knowledge and (mere) belief, and given also that another kind of courage is in the offing, based on knowledge or wisdom instead of belief, it is hard not to think that there is more to Socrates' remark than a mere reminder that we are still talking about the *city's* virtues or excellences. And where, after all, will the city's excellences come from if not from the individuals that compose it (one of Socrates' own questions)?

<sup>17</sup> As a matter of fact, *Socrates* must already have philosophical wisdom in mind as early as IV, 428-9, when he identifies the knowledge or wisdom that belongs to the true 'guards' of the city (as yet under-described, but anyway those who know how to safeguard the city internally and externally: 428C-D), as the only kind of knowledge to be properly called wisdom (429A1-3). However *his audience* is in a different situation – to them, the proposal that philosophers should rule comes as a profound surprise, even as absurd. For the brothers Adimantus and Glaucon, ruling requires some sort of know-how, and that is all that the argument in Book IV relies on, in itself, and until we read back to it from Books V-VII.

<sup>18</sup> See n.37 below.

<sup>19</sup> For a recent example see David Keyt, 'Plato on justice', in Georgios Anagnostopoulos (ed.), *Socrates, Plato, Aristotle. In Honour of G.Santas* (published by *Philosophical Inquiry/Poluentupo Editions*, 2010), 291-307.

<sup>20</sup> With wisdom itself as that 'pure calculation'?

‘habit and practice’ (*Phaedo* 82B2),<sup>21</sup> whereas the ‘slavish’ sort, and the sort described by Glaucon and Adimantus, is presented as based on pure case-by-case calculation. ‘Can I get away with it? If not, which is worse, not having what I want, or getting myself fined or imprisoned or flogged?’ Calculations of such a sort might *become* a matter of habit, and might even be part of what ‘demotic’ excellence involves. On the other hand, the sense of the arguments at the beginning of *Republic* II is that if Glaucon’s or Adimantus’ just person sees his or her chance, he’ll take it, whereas someone who is just by ‘habit and practice’ will, if habit means anything, have at least some kind of inbuilt tendency to go, and keep going, straight. And as a matter of fact the long description of the primary education of the inhabitants of good city in Books II-III has been either all about habituation, or about habituation rather than anything else; at any rate getting the young to think and work things out for themselves has hardly been a priority. Moreover, there is no suggestion that I can find anywhere in the text that the majority of the population of the city will possess anything more than correct beliefs. Thus, if what distinguishes genuine from merely ‘demotic’ (‘civic’) excellence is the presence of real wisdom (‘philosophy and intelligence’), the majority of the citizens cannot in any case possess genuine excellence; and if the definitions of the excellences in Book IV are intended as definitions of the excellences as possessed by the citizens (of the good city), then those definitions *must* be of the excellences in their ‘demotic’ and not their genuine form. We might try quibbling about the necessity for tying the definitions to the story about Callipolis:<sup>22</sup> that might, in principle, be no more than a heuristic device, to be dropped when we get to the ultimate point of the whole discussion, which is after all about the excellences (the ‘virtues’) themselves. However in fact Socrates talks about these as emerging from the same educational process as the excellences of the city (IV, 441E-442B). The excellences or virtues of Book IV – with the possible exception of wisdom, but up to a point even including it<sup>23</sup> – are, then, ‘demotic’.<sup>24</sup> That is, they are the

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<sup>21</sup> This is not for a moment to suggest that a tripartite analysis should be imported from the *Republic* into the *Phaedo*. The psychology of the *Phaedo* has much more in common with the unitary psychology of the ‘Socratic’ dialogues (and *Republic* I, and *Republic* V-VII ...). However the actual disposition referred to in *Phaedo* 82B will surely be the same as, or rather closely related to (since there is no Callipolis in the *Phaedo*), the one that the Socrates of *Republic* VI calls ‘demotic’; it is only the analysis or explanation of that disposition that will be different (that is, if we are to connect *Republic* VI with the account of the excellences in Book IV in the way that I propose) – and that difference itself will in my view ultimately turn out to be more a difference of perspective than of substance. (I refer here to the kind of change of perspective indicated in *Republic* X, 610-11, for which see above.)

<sup>22</sup> ‘The beautiful city’, *hê kallipolis*: VII, 527C2).

<sup>23</sup> That is, insofar as wisdom has yet to be identified with *philosophical* wisdom (see preceding paragraph).

<sup>24</sup> Hence Socrates’ application of the ‘vulgar’ test for the Book IV definition of justice (for which cf. Thrasymachus at Book I, 344A-B, on small-time injustices). Many have wondered about the evident looseness of the connection between ‘Platonic’ justice and ordinary justice (‘who do you think would be more likely to steal deposits of gold and silver [or rob temples, or break oaths, or ...] than people who are not like this?’, 442E7-

excellences or virtues as possessed by ordinary people in the good city, where ‘ordinary people’ includes everyone except the philosopher-rulers – who are actually not yet in place, having not yet been discussed. *They* of course, the philosopher-rulers, when we get to them, will possess wisdom; and in consequence they will, apparently, possess justice, courage and *sôphrosunê* in their non-‘demotic’, genuine form, flowing directly from their wisdom. But no one else will.

I said earlier that there were two passages that might help solve my problem, i.e. what one might call the problem of the two justices. My second passage (B) is in Book IX, where Socrates draws a distinction between two kinds of people: those in whom the rational element is strong enough to provide an internal ‘divine rule’, and those on whom such rule needs to be imposed externally, for their own good, because of their own rational deficiencies (590C-D). This, Socrates says (590E-591A), is a function of the law, which is an ally (*summachos*) to everyone in the city; it is also the principle driving the treatment of children. We don’t allow them their freedom ‘until we’ve established a “republic” (*politeia*) in them as in the city, and looked after the best element in them to the point where they have a guard (*phulax*) ruling in them that is the counterpart to the one we’ve described [sc in the city]’ (590E3-591A3). In fact, Socrates goes on, anyone with any sense will do his best to tame the savage in him and free the tame, allowing ‘his whole soul’ (*holê hê psuchê*) to achieve a better condition and ‘acquire *sôphrosunê* and justice accompanied by wisdom’ (591B3, 5); and that means privileging learning (‘those studies that will render the soul such’, i.e. allowing it to possess ‘*sôphrosunê* and justice with wisdom’: 591C2-3) above everything else. Some of the implications of this passage seem to me immediately clear: (a) those on whom, for their own benefit, rule needs to be imposed from outside – making them even ‘slaves’ of the best (590C8-E1) – are non-philosophers generally, i.e., anyone who fails to put in the necessary study; (b) only philosophers are free/can be allowed their freedom (since that requires wisdom, i.e., having their ‘best element’ in the optimum condition, which allows them to live in the best possible way); and (c) philosophers have a different kind of excellence from the one that non-philosophers have, even at their best.

However the most important outcome of passage B is that it allows us to see how the two kinds of justice and excellence can be treated, not so much as opposed dispositions, as perhaps they are in the *Phaedo* (at least insofar as genuinely virtuous souls travel in the opposite direction after death to the one travelled by ‘demotically’ virtuous ones), but rather as different versions of one and the same thing. This is crucial, because otherwise it would be hard to see how Plato could justify having Socrates suddenly shift, without warning, from talking about the one to talking about the other, that is, as if there really was no difference. What distinguishes the non-genuine

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443A1), when the whole purpose of the exercise is to show that ordinary justice pays, i.e., justice as people ordinarily understood it, not ‘Platonic’ justice. In fact, part of the point about ‘demotic’ justice, whether understood in Platonic terms or in terms of the actions that allegedly flow from it, is that its outcomes are not reliable, or at least not wholly reliable (as *genuine* justice would be). However the question still arises, indeed even more forcibly, why Plato should have Socrates defend his thesis about the ‘profitability’ in terms of justice of an inferior and unreliable sort, and I shall come back to this question in a moment.

excellences referred to in the present context (= passage B) from those referred to in the *Phaedo*<sup>25</sup> is presumably that the ‘demotic’ virtues of the *Republic* are ‘crafted’ by philosophers and legislators, or philosophical legislators: law, and the education prescribed by law, produce behaviour that either is actually identical to or closely resembles that of the genuinely, i.e. philosophically, just and excellent person – only not so reliably, insofar as the control, the ‘rule by the best element’, is that much further removed from the agent. The three soul-parts of each member of the non-philosophical many will still perform their own proper roles, and in particular reason will rule even them.<sup>26</sup> But that will be because of their training and upbringing, the patterns of behaviour and the beliefs instilled in them in their childhood, all the time reinforced by their ‘ally’, the law; it will not be because of their own understanding and knowledge. At the same time there is a sense, in this context in Book IX, that there may be *degrees* of genuine excellence, and that individuals may through their own efforts move closer to full philosophical goodness and justice, as they move closer to wisdom proper.<sup>27</sup>

Yet there still remains a puzzle. The whole point of defining justice was originally as a preliminary to meeting the challenge of showing that justice *pays*. As Socrates put it at the conclusion of Book I, ‘when I don’t know what the just is, I’ll hardly be in a position to know whether it’s actually some sort of excellence or not, and whether the person who has it is unhappy or happy’ (354C1-3). I think in fact that in its context this statement reflects, and is fully intended to reflect, as much on the disagreement between Socrates and Thrasymachus, i.e. on their inability to agree on a common definition, and indeed on their having failed even to ask for one in the first place, as on a lack of clarity on Socrates’ part about justice; at any rate, he has shown that at the very least he has a good idea of what he thinks justice is, even if, at the same time, he might not call this knowledge, i.e. knowledge of what justice is. I shall come back to this point shortly; the point for now is that it surely looks strange to start defending justice not by defining some inferior substitute for true (‘genuine’) justice rather than the thing itself. Why should Plato choose this course?

The solution to this puzzle, I propose, has to do with Plato’s, and his Socrates’, awareness of what their audience will understand and accept. The first and crucial point that Plato needs to make is that justice is not a matter merely what we do and don’t do; a person is not just, for example, merely because of what he happens to do, and for

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<sup>25</sup> I refer here exclusively to *Phaedo* 82A-B, leaving out altogether the ‘virtues’ described in 69A-C, which – like the ‘justice’ described and defended by Glaucon and Adimantus in *Republic* II – are probably to be treated merely as impostors, pretending to be virtues (because tending to produce similar behaviour?) when they are not (because when opportunity arises they will produce quite different behaviour?).

<sup>26</sup> I shall shortly question whether *everyone* is to be thought of as having a divided soul; what of someone whose soul is in fact, and permanently, *undivided*?

<sup>27</sup> As the passage continues, we seem gradually to move away from the context of the good city, towards the conditions of ordinary life. Clearly Callipolis, as Socrates describes it, would leave little room for individuals to improve their own condition and status by embarking on their own studies, as suggested by my passage B (*mathêmata*, 591C2).



whatever reason he happens to do it.<sup>28</sup> Rather, it is a matter of a psychological disposition, the state of our souls. Now Plato's preferred position – I propose – is that justice is a matter of wisdom or knowledge, that is, about what is good and bad for us; and in the ideal case, this will mean having the whole soul turned towards what is truly good and away from what is truly bad. That is, the case will be one where there will be no possibility of wavering, of wondering whether after all *something else* might not be worth trying. The knowledge in question would be watertight, or (to use a Platonic metaphor) adamant. It would include knowing, for certain, what was good and desirable and what was not, so that – given our unswerving desire for what is actually good for us – there could be no desire for some things (evidently, most external and bodily goods, that is, beyond what was necessary for survival), and must be desire for others (goods of the soul, plus the basic requirements for physical existence). In relation to such a disposition, the arguments in Book IV for the tripartition of the soul, built as they are on internal conflicts, clearly have no purchase: reason has total control, and there will be no conflicts.<sup>29</sup> This is not, however, how most human beings, and most human souls, will be – and it is not how even Glaucon and Adimantus, are, for all their Socratic sympathies, and their general acceptance of Socrates' claims for justice. For they take it for granted that things like honour, power and wealth are desirable; they will follow Socrates only so far. And what *they* want to be shown, even though they claim already to believe it, is that there are benefits for anyone, whether he or she knows it or not, to have limits set to his or her pursuit of these alleged goods. Built into the argument of Books II-IV is the assumption that humans are rational beings who also desire external goods, and whose rational desires are always potentially in conflict with non-rational ones.<sup>30</sup> Starting from here, which is where Glaucon and Adimantus – and most of the rest of humanity – already implicitly are, Socrates produces his argument: justice, and the other excellences, depend on the proper functioning of reason and desire, with reason in the ascendant; and that, surely, must be the healthy way for souls to be – as surely as it is healthy for the right people, those qualified by their knowledge and understanding, to rule in a city.<sup>31</sup> To have formulated his argument in terms of *philosophical* justice and excellence would have been useless: nowhere, except in some putative city of philosophers, would it be helpful to argue for the profitability of a justice that can be achieved only by a tiny minority of humanity, if at all – and a city of Platonic philosophers would not need such an argument in any case. Instead, Socrates chooses to talk about a more accessible, non-philosophical counterpart of philosophical justice, one that shares its structure, centred on the control of reason, but with the difference that reason in this case is the result of the 'upbringing, learning and training' of the rational part of the soul rather than wisdom properly understood.<sup>32</sup> Retrospectively, i.e. after we have read Book IV, this will become a

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. n.24 above.

<sup>29</sup> It is, I take it, this sort of consideration that leads to Socrates' question in Book X: is the soul, then, *in its true nature* (i.e., in its best condition), truly divided?

<sup>30</sup> This is, after all, the central premiss of the argument for tripartition.

<sup>31</sup> Socrates' argument, of course, relies heavily on the political analogy: see esp. 442A-B, 443C, 444B.

<sup>32</sup> 'And [the rational and spirited parts], having been brought up in this way [sc. through *mousikê* and gymnastic, a mixture of which will 'stretch ... the one with fine words and

different kind of learning, and a different kind of reason and wisdom, and the other virtues (*sôphrosunê*, courage and justice) will also be transformed. But for now what Socrates is talking about, and must talk about, is the kind of wisdom, and the kind of justice (and *sôphrosunê*, and courage) that his audience can comprehend. True, the actual terms of his definitions, at least of justice and *sôphrosunê*, will certainly be as unfamiliar to Glaucon and Adimantus as they are to us. Nevertheless the idea on which they are based, of the soul as a potential battleground between desires, and/or between reason and desires, will have been entirely familiar. What Socrates adds, apart from the idea of tripartition itself, is the notion of a friendly resolution, as it were between fellow-citizens, between the parts of the soul, ‘crafted’ by reason; and this *is* something new. The object of definition is not, then, quite the *sôphrosunê* or the justice that Glaucon and Adimantus and their contemporaries generally would have recognised. Rather, it is an already idealised and theory-laden version of the familiar virtues, which is at the same time a popular, democratic or ‘demotic’ version of something else: true, genuine, philosophical virtue or excellence.

But (as I have argued elsewhere)<sup>33</sup> this is no more than we should have expected, given the manner in which Socrates launched into his inquiry into justice back in Book II. For in fact the ground he chooses for the inquiry is not, as he puts it, ‘the true city’ (372E6), but rather a city that is already ‘fevered’, because it has already allowed in the trappings of luxurious living.<sup>34</sup> By implication, the souls he will discuss will be similarly ‘fevered’, from exposure to the (supposed) attractions of extravagant consumption and the pursuit of honour and power. And there is some confirmation of this in the Book IX passage I discussed earlier (my passage B), which finally rounds off the main argument about justice and injustice. There Socrates implicitly compares two opposed routes, a kind of choice of Heracles for a soul who already feels the pull of the monster within him,<sup>35</sup> but has the possibility of taming it, so that ‘his whole soul settles into its own best nature and ... acquires *sôphrosunê* and justice’ (591B3-5, already cited). To take that choice, rather than giving in to his monster, will be to set up his own internal *politeia*. But in this new context, Socrates holds out the possibility that he might come to be governed by a divine wisdom of his own. Should he succeed, then perhaps he would be rid of the monster altogether, and say goodbye to those nightmares about incest or bestiality that may plague even those who appear to be wholly *metrioi* (IX, 572B4-5), becoming one of those few<sup>36</sup> who manage to rid themselves completely of ‘unnecessary desires and pleasures’ (571B2, 6-7).

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*mathêmata*, while relaxing the other by talking quietly to it, taming it with harmony and rhythm’: 441E8-442A2] and having truly learned what belongs to them and been trained in it ....’ (442A4-5).

<sup>33</sup> *Plato and the Art of Philosophical Writing* (n.4 above), ch.5, pp.168, 180 (cf.also ch.10, 258 n.12).

<sup>34</sup> When Socrates suggests at 427E6-7 that Callipolis, ‘if it really has been well founded’, will be ‘perfectly good’, what he has in mind – as he shows by what he immediately derives from this suggestion, in E9-10 – is that it will possess all the virtues rather than that it will possess them to perfection.

<sup>35</sup> See 591A-B, C.

<sup>36</sup> Socrates says ‘some people’ (571B6); they are at any rate the exceptions.

Does any of this answer my original question, about why the *Republic IV* definitions of justice and the rest do not figure more prominently outside the *Republic*? I think it does – and the answer is not quite the one I had expected when I began writing this paper. I had expected to conclude that the definitions in question were peculiar to, grew out of, the *Republic IV* context; that is, that there was something rather opportunistic about them.<sup>37</sup> Now, however, I think differently. While it is true that the definitions are useful to him in a particular context, that context is a recurring one, involving as it does – on the account I have proposed – a question that is absolutely fundamental for Plato, about the degree or kind of excellence, and of justice, achievable by the non-philosophical majority. If that is, as I suggest, a ‘demotic’ kind of excellence, and if the *Republic IV* definitions, as I also suggest, are themselves definitions of the best kind of ‘demotic’ excellence, then I currently see no objection to supposing that we are to understand them as lying behind the very brief references to ‘demotic’ excellences in the *Laws*.<sup>38</sup> But to follow up this last suggestion would require another paper,<sup>39</sup> and the present one is already too long.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> This is not, I hasten to add, a view that I would have been happy to see confirmed. After all, the definitions are an essential part of what is to all appearances an attempt to provide a persuasive argument on a subject that Plato evidently regarded as supremely important (the value of justice). If there is a puzzle – one that I hope to have contributed some sort of solution – about why Plato should have had Socrates argue his case about justice in relation to an *inferior* (but still respectable) sort of justice, it would have been not just puzzling but positively bizarre for him to portray Socrates defending justice on the basis of a notion of justice that he himself did not take seriously at all.

<sup>38</sup> *Laws IV*, 710A; *XII*, 968A. Since the *Laws* generally seems to show rather little interest in a tripartite psychology, it would probably be unhelpful to think of it as making room for an exact, copy-cat version of the *Republic IV* definitions. My suggestion is merely that in talking about (law-governed) ‘demotic’ excellences, the *Laws* may refer back to the *Republic IV* definitions while at the same time implicitly adapting them to the requirements of a different (simpler, perhaps bipartite?) psychology. The essential features of the *Republic IV* definitions that would be retained would be (a) that the virtues in question would derive from ‘habit and practice’ (to cite the *Phaedo* again: see n.21 above); (b) that they would involve the control by reason over the irrational; and (c) that this control would be on the basis (somehow) of ‘agreement’, not mere repression.

<sup>39</sup> Some elements that might perhaps form the basis of such paper are contained in my ‘Socrates in Plato’s *Laws*’, forthcoming in Arnold Herrmann, Vassilis Karasmanis, Richard Patterson (eds), *Presocratics and Plato. A Festschrift in Honor of Charles Kahn* (Parmenides Publishing), and ‘The relationship of the *Laws* to other dialogues: a proposal’ forthcoming in Chris Bobonich (ed.), *Plato’s ‘Laws’: A Critical Guide* (CUP).

<sup>40</sup> It is also in many respects unfinished, with many loose ends. But I hope that discussion at the Tokyo Symposium will help to tie up some of these – if it does not unravel my argument entirely.