

Abstract

An Aspect of the Originality of Plato's Concept of Justice in the *Republic*: the Critical Use of Poetical Ideas in the Tripartite Theory

Plato often quotes from poets and criticizes the quoted poetical ideas to develop his philosophical arguments, just as he does in book 1 of the *Republic* where Polemarchus quotes Simonides and Socrates criticizes the quoted view. This paper argues that the concept of justice based on the tripartite theory of the soul/state can also be seen as a critical development of various poetical representations.

The truly original aspect of Plato's tripartite theory is the ascription of a particular psychological feature, which is closely related to a virtue or a vice, to each social stratum. In the description of these virtues or vices, on the other hand, one can discern echoes of poetical representations. Most notable echoes are those of the characterization of the bravery of the heroes in the *Iliad*, the description of the greed of the suitors and beggars in the *Odyssey*, Hesiod's characterization of farmers as greedy, Solon's accusation of the citizens as selfish, and Pindar's advice to kings (or tyrants) to be discreet. Compared to the ascription of various virtues and vices by poets, Plato's ascription of three virtues (wisdom, courage, temperance) to three social strata (rulers, warriors, people) is drastically simplified. It is notable that he ingeniously arranged the traditional categories of virtues and vices represented in poetry to suit his simple scheme.

Reminiscences of poetic representations can also be discerned in the conception of justice within the framework of the tripartite theory, i. e. to do one's own work without interfering others. One should note that work is conceived as the source of justice in Hesiod's *Works & Days*.

The notion of keeping within one's own field of work may be related to Heraclitus' representation of Justice, who forbids the sun to deviate from its course, and Parmenides representation of Justice, who forbids the transgression of nature's true state (unborn, indestructible, unified, continuous, etc.). Behind these representations lie the poetical images of

dike as natural order, including Hesiod's genealogy of the personified Justice as one of the three Seasons (together with *Eunomia* and *Eirene*). One should, however, note that the correspondence between ethical notions and natural phenomena, which is apparent in these poetical representations, are absent in Plato's notion of justice, which sees the correspondence between soul and state.

Early representations of justice (*dike*) are often associated with the idea of reciprocity, since *dike* also means 'punishment'. This association is not ignored in the examination of justice in book 1 of the *Republic*. In book 4, it is significant that this association seems to be suppressed in Plato's concept of justice based on the tripartite theory.

The above considerations will show that Plato may have adapted various earlier notions of justice including its poetical representations when he constructed his on the whole unique and original concept of justice.

Bibliography

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