

## The Role of *dynamis* in Two Central Arguments of the *Republic*

### Abstract

Glaucon's objection in *Rep. II*, and Socrates' argument against the lovers of sights and sounds at the end of *Rep. V*, both use the notion of *dynamis* very prominently. Glaucon's objection sets the stage for the main ethical argument of the *Republic*; Socrates' argument in *Rep. V* prepares the ground for the central metaphysical and epistemological considerations of this dialogue. Yet while the significance of these two arguments can hardly be overestimated, they are both beset by problems regarding the way the notion of *dynamis* is used. My paper will focus on the *Rep. II* argument, but also take into account the use of *dynamis* in *Rep. V* (which will involve a critical look at Souilhé's book-length study on this notion).

Here is a brief (hence somewhat simplifying) exposition of the problem in *Rep. II*: Glaucon's objection is based on two distinctions: (1) a distinction between goods that are final, instrumental, or both (357b-d); and (2) a distinction between praising justice either with reference to its essence and its *dynamis within* the soul, or with reference to its external rewards and consequences (358b). The Socratic claim is that living justly is desirable both qua final good and qua instrumental good, while the theory that Glaucon sets forth as a challenge values justice only qua instrumental good (or lesser evil), and only in view of the external rewards for justice (which depend on having the reputation of justice). Glaucon demands from Socrates that he praise justice with reference to its nature and *dynamis*, not with reference to the external rewards. Now, it would seem that praising the *dynamis* of justice within the soul is just another (though, perhaps, more pertinent) way of praising justice for its consequences and, hence(?), as an instrumental good. This is how some scholars, e.g. Annas 1981, construe the text. But there is also strong textual evidence (esp. 367cd) for an alternative reading (e.g. Irwin 1995) according to which Socrates, and his interlocutors Glaucon and Adeimantus, take praising justice's *dynamis* to be part of praising justice as a final good (which, as such, is a constituent of *eudaimonia*). The fact that Socrates lumps the essence and *dynamis* of justice together can be explained by pointing out that virtue, for Plato, is *essentially* a *dynamis*. Yet this consideration does not suffice to vindicate justice's status as a final good since instrumental goods, too, can have certain functions essentially (as in the case of artifacts). Thus there is a puzzle.

In my paper, I will try to show how the *dynamis* of justice, understood as its essential function in the soul, makes it an essential *part* of the overarching final good and how this may resolve the puzzle. In this connection, I will also look at Socrates' remarks on the notion of *dynamis* in *Rep. V*, and, time permitting, comment on strategies for how to explain the fallacy in 478ab.

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