

what justice is I'm hardly likely to find out whether it is an excellence or not, or whether it makes a man happy or unhappy.'

This section claims to prove that the just man is happier than the unjust. Similarly at 361d Glaucon asks Socrates to answer the question whether the just or unjust man is happier; and the theme of happiness will recur throughout the dialogue, as e.g. on 419-421c. The common Greek word for 'happy' (eudaimōn) has overtones rather different from those of the English word. It implies less an immediate state of mind or feeling ('I feel happy today') than a more permanent condition of life or disposition of character, something between prosperity and integration of personality, though of course feeling is involved too.

BK II

4. Adeimantus and Glaucon Restate the Case for Injustice

There has been a touch of broad caricature about the picture of Thrasymachus, and Plato evidently thinks that the view which he represents needs a clearer statement and fairer treatment. Accordingly, Glaucon says that he is not content with the way in which Socrates has dealt with Thrasymachus and proceeds to restate his argument in a different form; he is followed by Adeimantus, who supplements what he has said.

1. Glaucon argues that justice, or morality, is merely a matter of convenience. It is natural for men to pursue their own interests regardless of others; but it would be impossible to run an orderly society on that basis, and the system of morality is arrived at as a compromise. But it is only a compromise and has no other authority, as can be seen easily enough by considering how a man would behave if its sanctions were removed. And a contrast between the perfectly 'just' and perfectly 'unjust' man shows conclusively that 'injustice' is the more paying proposition.

357 a I thought, when I said this, that the argument was over; but in fact, as it turned out, we had only had its prelude. For

Glaucon, with his customary pertinacity, characteristically would not accept Thrasymachus' withdrawal, but asked: 'Do you want our conviction that right action is in all circumstances better than wrong to be genuine or merely apparent?' b

'If I were given the choice,' I replied, 'I should want it to be genuine.'

'Well then, you are not making much progress,' he returned. 'Tell me, do you agree that there is one kind of good which we want to have not with a view to its consequences but because we welcome it for its own sake? For example, enjoyment or pleasure, so long as pleasure brings no harm and its only result is the enjoyment it brings.'

'Yes, that is one kind of good.'

'And is there not another kind of good which we desire, both for itself and its consequences? Wisdom and sight and health, for example, we welcome on both grounds.' c

'We do,' I said.

'And there is a third category of good, which includes exercise and medical treatment and earning one's living as a doctor or otherwise. All these we should regard as painful but beneficial; we should not choose them for their own sakes but for the wages and other benefits we get from them.' d

'There is this third category. But what is your point?'

'In which category do you place justice and right?'

'In the highest category, which anyone who is to be happy welcomes both for its own sake and for its consequences.' 358 a

'That is not the common opinion,' Glaucon replied. 'It is normally put into the painful category, of goods which we pursue for the rewards they bring and in the hope of a good reputation, but which in themselves are to be avoided as unpleasant.'

'I know that is the common opinion,' I answered; 'which is why Thrasymachus has been criticizing it and praising injustice. But it seems I'm slow to learn.'

'Listen to me then, and see if I can get you to agree,' he said. 'For you seem to have fascinated Thrasymachus into a premature submission, like a snake charmer; but I am not satisfied yet about justice and injustice. I want to be told what exactly b

each of them is and what effects it has as such on the mind of its possessor, leaving aside any question of rewards or consequences. So what I propose to do, if you agree, is this. I shall c revive Thrasymachus' argument under three heads: first, I shall state the common opinion on the nature and origin of justice; second, I shall show that those who practise it do so under compulsion and not because they think it a good; third, I shall argue that this conduct is reasonable because the unjust man has, by common reckoning, a better life than the just man. I don't believe all this myself, Socrates, but Thrasymachus and hundreds of others have dinned it into my ears till I don't know what to think; and I've never heard the case for the superiority d of justice to injustice argued to my satisfaction, that is, I've never heard the praises of justice sung simply for its own sake. That is what I expect to hear from you. I therefore propose to state, forcibly, the argument in praise of injustice, and thus give you a model which I want you to follow when your turn comes to speak in praise of justice and censure injustice. Do you like this suggestion?

e 'Nothing could please me better,' I replied, 'for it's a subject which all sensible men should be glad to discuss.'

'Splendid,' said Glaucon. 'And now for my first heading, the nature and origin of justice. What they say is that it is according to nature a good thing to inflict wrong or injury,⁴⁵ and a bad thing to suffer it, but that the disadvantages of suffering it exceed the advantages of inflicting it; after a taste of both, therefore, 359 a men decide that, as they can't evade the one and achieve the other, it will pay to make a compact with each other by which they forgo both. They accordingly proceed to make laws and mutual agreements, and what the law lays down they call lawful and right. This is the origin and nature of justice. It lies between what is most desirable, to do wrong and avoid punishment, and what is most undesirable, to suffer wrong without being able to get redress; justice lies between these two and is accepted not as being good in itself, but as having a relative value due to our inability to do wrong. For anyone who had the power to do wrong and was a real man would never make any such agreement with anyone – he would be mad if he did.⁴⁶' b

'This then is the account they give of the nature and the origins of justice; the next point is that men practise it against their will and only because they are unable to do wrong. This we can most easily see if we imagine that a just man and an unjust man have each been given liberty to do what they like, c and then follow them and see where their inclinations lead them. We shall catch the just man red-handed in exactly the same pursuits as the unjust, led on by self-interest, the motive which all men naturally follow if they are not forcibly restrained by the law and made to respect each other's claims.

'The best illustration of the liberty I am talking about would be if we supposed them both to be possessed of the power which Gyges, the ancestor of Gyges the Lydian, had in the story. He was a shepherd in the service of the then king of Lydia, and one day there was a great storm and an earthquake in the district where he was pasturing his flock and a chasm opened in the earth. He was amazed at the sight, and descended into the chasm and saw many astonishing things there, among them, so the story goes, a bronze horse, which was hollow and fitted with doors, through which he peeped and saw a corpse which seemed to be of more than human size. He took nothing from it save a gold ring it had on its finger, and then made his way out. He was wearing this ring when he attended the usual meeting of e shepherds which reported monthly to the king on the state of his flocks; and as he was sitting there with the others he happened to twist the bezel of the ring towards the inside of his hand. Thereupon he became invisible to his companions, and they 360 a began to refer to him as if he had left them. He was astonished, and began fingering the ring again, and turned the bezel outwards; whereupon he became visible again. When he saw this he started experimenting with the ring to see if it really had this power, and found that every time he turned the bezel inwards he became invisible, and when he turned it outwards he became visible. Having made his discovery he managed to get himself included in the party that was to report to the king, and when he arrived seduced the queen, and with her help attacked and murdered the king and seized the throne. b

'Imagine now that two such rings existed and the just man

put on one, the unjust the other. There is no one, it would commonly be supposed, who would have such iron strength of will as to stick to what is right and keep his hands from taking other people's property. For he would be able to steal from the market whatever he wanted without fear of detection, to go into
 c any man's house and seduce anyone he liked, to murder or to release from prison anyone he felt inclined, and generally behave as if he had supernatural powers. And in all this the just man would differ in no way from the unjust, but both would follow the same course. This, it would be claimed, is strong evidence that no man is just of his own free will, but only under compulsion, and that no man thinks justice pays him personally, since he will always do wrong when he gets the chance. Indeed, the
 d supporter of this view will continue, men are right in thinking that injustice pays the individual better than justice; and if anyone who had the liberty of which we have been speaking neither wronged nor robbed his neighbour, men would think him a most miserable idiot, though of course they would pretend to admire him in public because of their own fear of being wronged.

e 'So much for that. Finally, we come to the decision between the two lives, and we shall only be able to make this decision if we contrast extreme examples of just and unjust men. By that I mean if we make each of them perfect in his own line, and do not in any way mitigate the injustice of the one or the justice of the other. To begin with the unjust man. He must operate like a skilled professional – for example, a top-class pilot or doctor, who know just what they can or can't do, never attempt the
 361 a impossible, and are able to retrieve any errors they make. The unjust man must, similarly, if he is to be thoroughly unjust, be able to avoid detection in his wrongdoing; for the man who is found out must be reckoned a poor specimen, and the most accomplished form of injustice is to seem just when you are not. So our perfectly unjust man must be perfect in his wickedness; he must be able to commit the greatest crimes⁴⁷ perfectly and at
 b the same time get himself a reputation for the highest probity,⁴⁸ while, if he makes a mistake he must be able to retrieve it, and, if any of his wrongdoing comes to light, be ready with a

convincing defence, or when force is needed be prepared to use force, relying on his own courage and energy or making use of his friends or his wealth.

'Beside our picture of the unjust man let us set one of the just man, the man of true simplicity of character who, as Aeschylus says, wants "to be and not to seem good".⁴⁹ We must, indeed, not allow him to seem good, for if he does he will have all the
 c rewards and honours paid to the man who has a reputation for justice, and we shall not be able to tell whether his motive is love of justice or love of the rewards and honours. No, we must strip him of everything except his justice, and our picture of him must be drawn in a way diametrically opposite to that of the unjust man. Our just man must have the worst of reputations for wrongdoing even though he has done no wrong, so that we can test his justice and see if it weakens in the face of unpopularity and all that goes with it; we shall give him an undeserved
 d and life-long reputation for wickedness, and make him stick to his chosen course until death. In this way, when we have pushed the life of justice and of injustice each to its extreme, we shall be able to judge which of the two is the happier.'

'I say, Glaucon,' I put in, 'you're putting the finishing touches to your two pictures as vigorously as if you were getting them ready for an exhibition.'

'I'm doing my best,' he said. 'And these being our two characters, it is not, I think, difficult to describe the sort of life that awaits each. And if the description is somewhat brutal, remember that it's not I that am responsible for it, Socrates, but those
 e who praise injustice more highly than justice. It is their account that I must now repeat.'

'They will say that the just man, as we have pictured him, will be scourged, tortured, and imprisoned, his eyes will be put out, and after enduring every humiliation he will be crucified, and learn at last that one should want not to be, but to seem just.
 362 a And so that remark which I quoted from Aeschylus could be more appropriately applied to the unjust man; for he, because he deals with realities and does not live by appearances, really wants not to *seem* but to *be* unjust. He

Reaps thought's deep furrow, for therefrom
 Spring goodly schemes⁵⁰

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– schemes which bring him respectability and office, and which enable him to marry into any family he likes, to make desirable matches for his children, and to pick his partners in business transactions, while all the time, because he has no scruples about committing injustice, he is on the make. In all kinds of competition public or private he always comes off best and does
 c down his rivals, and so becomes rich and can do good to his friends and harm his enemies. His sacrifices and votive offerings to the gods are on a suitably magnificent scale, and his services to the gods, and to any man he wishes to serve, are far better than those of the just man, so that it is reasonable to suppose that the gods care more for him than for the just man. And so they conclude, Socrates, that a better life is provided for the unjust man than for the just by both gods and men.'

2. Adeimantus, *supplementing what Glaucon has said, stresses the unworthy motives commonly given for right conduct. Men only do right for what they can get out of it, in this life and the next. They much prefer to do wrong, because in general it pays better; and they are encouraged to do wrong by contemporary religious beliefs which tell them that they can avoid punishment in this world if they sacrifice to the gods lavishly enough, and in the next if they go through the appropriate initiation ceremonies. Adeimantus and Glaucon ask Socrates to show that just or right conduct is preferable in itself and without reference to any external rewards or punishments.*

d When Glaucon had finished speaking I had it in mind again to make some reply to him, but his brother Adeimantus forestalled me, saying, 'You don't suppose that is a complete statement of the argument, do you, Socrates?'

'Well, isn't it?' I replied.

'The most essential point has not been stated.'

'Well,' said I, 'they say blood is thicker than water;⁵¹ so if your brother has left anything out, lend him a hand. Though as

far as I am concerned, he has said quite enough to floor me and make me quite incapable of coming to the rescue of justice.'

'That's nonsense,' he answered. 'But listen to what I have to say. In order to make clearer what I take to be Glaucon's meaning, we ought to examine the converse of the view he stated, that is, the arguments normally used in favour of justice and against injustice. For fathers tell their sons, and pastors and masters of all kinds urge their charges to be just not because they value justice for itself, but for the good reputation it brings; they want them to secure by a show of justice the power and family connections and other things which Glaucon enumerated, all of which are procured for the just man by a good reputation. And they go on to enlarge on the importance of reputation, and add that if a man stands well with heaven there is a whole list of benefits available for the pious, citing the authority of Hesiod and Homer. For Hesiod⁵² says that for the just the gods make the oaks bear "acorns at the top, bees in the middle", while his "wool-bearing sheep are weighed down by their fleeces". And Homer⁵³ speaks in similar terms of "some perfect king, ruling with the fear of god in his heart, and upholding the right, so that the dark soil yields its wheat and barley, the trees are laden with ripe fruit, the sheep never fail to bring forth their lambs, nor the sea to provide its fish".

'The rewards which Musaeus and his son⁵⁴ give for the just are still more exciting. After they have got them to the other world they sit them down to a banquet of the Blest and leave them garlanded and drinking for all time, as if they thought that the supreme reward of virtue was to be drunk for eternity. And some extend the rewards of heaven still further and say that the pious and honest leave children's children and a long posterity to follow them. That is the sort of recommendation they produce for justice. The unjust and the irreligious they plunge into some sort of mud in the underworld or make them carry water in sieves, while in this world they give them a bad reputation and inflict on them all the punishments which Glaucon described as falling on the just man who seemed to be wicked – they can think of no others.

'So much for the way in which justice is recommended and

injustice blamed. But there is another line of argument about them which one meets in the poets as well as in ordinary conversation. People are unanimous in hymning the worth of self-control or justice, but think they are difficult to practise and call for hard work, while self-indulgence and injustice are easy enough to acquire, and regarded as disgraceful only by convention; wrong on the whole pays better than right, they say, and they are ready enough to call a bad man happy and respect him both in public and private provided he is rich and powerful, while they have no respect for the poor and powerless, and despise him, even though they agree that he is the better man. But most surprising of all are the stories about the gods and virtue, which tell how they often allot misfortune and a hard life to the good and the reverse to the wicked. There are itinerant evangelists and prophets who knock at the door of the rich man's house, and persuade him that by sacrifices and spells they have accumulated some kind of divine power, and that any wrong that either he or his ancestors have done can be expiated by means of charms and sacrifices and the pleasures of the accompanying feasts; while if he has any enemy he wants to injure they can for a small fee damage him (whether he is a good man or not) with their spells and incantations, by which they profess to be able to persuade the gods to do their will. In support of all this they cite the evidence of the poets. Some, in support of the easiness of vice, quote Hesiod:⁵⁵ "Evil can men attain easily and in companies: the road is smooth and her dwelling near. But the gods have decreed much sweat before a man reaches virtue" and a road that is long and hard and steep. Others quote Homer⁵⁶ on turning aside the gods –

The very gods are capable of being swayed. Even they are turned from their course by sacrifice and humble prayers, libations and burnt offerings, when the miscreant and sinner bend the knee to them in supplication.

Or they produce a whole collection of books of ritual instructions written by Musaeus and Orpheus, whom they call descendants of the Moon and the Muses; and they persuade not only

individuals but whole communities that, both for living and dead, remission and absolution of sins may be had by sacrifices and pleasant trivialities, which they are pleased to call initiations, and which they allege deliver us from all ills in the next world, where terrible things await those who have failed to sacrifice.

'Now what do you think, Socrates, is likely to be the effect of all this sort of talk about virtue and vice, and how far gods and men think them worth while, on the minds of young men who have enough natural intelligence to gather the implications of what they hear for their own lives and how best to lead them, the sort of person they ought to be and the sort of ends they ought to pursue? Such a young man may well ask himself, in Pindar's⁵⁷ words,

Shall I by justice reach the higher stronghold, or by deceit,

and there live entrenched securely? For it is clear from what they tell me that if I am just, it will bring me no advantage but only trouble and loss, unless I also have a reputation for justice; whereas if I am unjust, but can contrive to get a reputation for justice, I shall have a marvellous time. Well then, since the sages tell me that "appearance has more force than reality" and determines our happiness, I had better devote myself entirely to appearances; I must put up a façade that gives the illusory appearance of virtue, but I must always have at my back the "cunning, wily fox" of which Archilochus⁵⁸ so shrewdly speaks. You may object that it is not easy to be wicked and never be found out; I reply, that nothing worth while is easy, and that all we have been told points to this as the road to happiness. To help us avoid being found out we shall form clubs and secret societies, and there are always those who will teach us the art of persuasion, political or forensic; and so we shall get our way by persuasion or force and avoid the penalty for doing our neighbour down. "Yet neither deceit nor force is effective against the gods." But if there are no gods or if they care nothing for human affairs, why should we bother to deceive them? And if there are gods and they do care, our only knowledge of them

is derived from tradition and the poets who have written their genealogies, and they tell us that they can be persuaded to change their minds by sacrifices and "humble prayers" and offerings. We must believe them in both types of testimony or neither; and if we believe them then the thing to do is to sin first and sacrifice afterwards from the proceeds. For if we do right
 366 a we shall merely avoid the wrath of heaven, but lose the profits of wrongdoing; but if we do wrong we shall get the profits and, provided that we accompany our sins and wickednesses with prayer, be able to persuade the gods to let us go unpunished. "But we shall pay in the next world for the sins we commit in this, either ourselves or our descendants." To which the calculating answer is that initiation and the gods who give absolution are very powerful, as we are told both by the most
 b important among human societies, and by children of the gods who have become poets and prophets with a divine message and have revealed that these things are so.

"What argument, then, remains for preferring justice to the worst injustice, when both common men and great men agree that, provided it has a veneer of respectability, injustice will enable us, in this world and the next, to do as we like with gods
 c and men? And how can anyone, when he has heard all we have said, possibly value justice and avoid laughing when he hears it being praised, if he has any force of character at all, any advantages of person, wealth, or rank? For indeed if there is anyone capable of disproving what we have said, and assuring himself of the superiority of justice, his feeling for the wicked will be forgiveness rather than anger; he will know that unless a man is
 d born with some heaven-sent aversion to wrongdoing, or unless he acquires the knowledge to refrain from it, he will never do right of his own free will, but will censure wrongdoing only if cowardice or age or weakness make him powerless to practise it himself. That is all too obvious: once give him the power, and he will be the first to use it as fully as he can.

"The root of the whole matter is the assertion from which this whole discussion between the three of us started, Socrates, and which we may put as follows. "All you professed partisans of
 e justice, from the heroes of old whose tales have survived to our

own contemporaries, have never blamed injustice or praised justice except for the reputation and honours and rewards they bring; no one, poet or layman, has ever sufficiently inquired what the effect of each is on the mind⁵⁹ of the individual (an effect that may be unobserved by either gods or men), or explained how it is that injustice has the worst possible effect on the mind and justice the reverse. Had you adopted that
 367 a method from the beginning and set about convincing us when we were young, there would be no need to protect ourselves against our neighbours wronging us; each man would be his own best protector, because he would be afraid that by doing wrong he was doing himself a grave and lasting injury."

"This, and indeed a good deal more than this, is what Thrasymachus and others would say about justice and injustice. It is, in my opinion, a gross distortion of their real effect; but (to be candid) I have stated it as forcibly as I can because I want to hear you argue against it. What we want from you is not only a
 b demonstration that justice is superior to injustice, but a description of the essential effects, harmful or otherwise, which each produces on its possessor. And follow Glaucon's instructions and leave out the common estimation in which they are held. Indeed, if you do not assign to each the reputation the other bears, we shall consider that you are concerned to praise or blame the appearance and not the reality, and that your advice is that we should do wrong and avoid being found out, and that
 c you agree with Thrasymachus that justice is what is good for someone else, the interest of the stronger party, while injustice is what is to one's own interest and advantage, and pursued at the expense of the weaker party. You have agreed that justice falls into the highest category of goods, of goods, that is, which are worth choosing not only for their consequences but also, and far more, for themselves, such things as sight, hearing,
 d intelligence, health, and all other qualities which bring us a real and not merely an apparent benefit. Let us therefore hear you commending justice for the real benefits it brings its possessor, compared with the damage injustice does him, and leave it to others to dwell on rewards and reputation. I am prepared to listen to other people commending or condemning justice and

injustice in this way by an assessment of rewards and reputation; but you have spent your life studying the question, and from
 e you, if I may say so, we expect something better. Prove to us therefore, not only that justice is superior to injustice, but that, irrespective of whether gods or men know it or not, one is good and the other evil because of its inherent effects on its possessor.'

PART II

PRELIMINARIES

I. First Principles of Social Organization

So far the discussion has been about justice (or right conduct or morality) in the individual. But Socrates now says that it is easier to study things on a large scale than on a small, and proposes accordingly to discuss justice in the state or community first, and then see how the conclusions so reached apply to the individual. This method of argument from the state or community to the individual, runs throughout the dialogue.

Socrates starts by asking how society is made up. His account is historical in form. But the Greeks knew little archaeology or prehistory, and the historical form should not be taken too seriously. Socrates is concerned to find out what are the underlying principles of any society, even the simplest. He finds them to be two. First, mutual need. Men are not self-sufficient, they need to live together in society. Second, difference of aptitude. Different people are good at different things, and it is best for all that each should concentrate on developing his particular aptitudes. In this sense, society, with its regulations, is a 'natural' growth.

Starting from these two principles Socrates deals first with what we should call the economic structure of society, though in a very simple form. He finds five main economic classes or functions: (1) Producers, agricultural or industrial, (2) Merchants, (3) Sailors and Shipowners, etc., (4) Retail traders, (5) Wage-earners or manual labourers. (Slaves are not mentioned, but their existence, it is clear from elsewhere (e.g. 469c, 471a), is assumed.¹ Plato would regard them as appendages to