

## Introduction

Glaucon wanted Socrates to show not only that justice was good in itself but also that being just was always preferable to being unjust. We may agree with Socrates that a just soul consists in each part of the soul doing its own job, and we may agree with him that just acts promote that harmony while unjust acts disrupt it. But we might disagree with him that such a soul is better off than an unjust soul. A just person who was imprisoned would seem worse off than an unjust tyrant who enjoyed unlimited riches and pleasure. So, Socrates needs to identify that power justice has on the soul itself which makes the just soul better of than the unjust soul in every circumstance. In other words, Socrates needs to show that the just soul is the happiest of all possible souls. He does this in Books 8–9 by contrasting justice with every form of injustice, both in the person and in the city. His goal is to show that each type of injustice will generate less happiness than justice. The four main species of injustice (see 445c) are timocracy, oligarchy, democracy, tyranny. Corresponding to each type of these unjust cities are the timocratic soul, oligarchic soul, democratic soul, and tyrannical soul (544a, d–e).

**The aristocratic soul:** ruled by its rational part, is concerned with what is best for each part of the soul in relation to the whole.

**The timocratic soul (538-9):** ruled by its spirited part, is concerned with honor and victory.

**The oligarchic soul (553ff):** a lover of money above everything else; it is concerned with being able to satisfy its necessary appetites.

**The democratic soul (559-61):** ruled by unnecessary appetites.

**The tyrannical soul (556-576):** enslaved to appetites. It constantly feels the need to satisfy this desire and never manages to fill it fully.

## Argument that injustice is worse than justice

Plato argues that any value other than justice will cause the soul and city to degenerate into an even worse state. He assumes the following:

- Most constitutions pursue a particular goal: to coordinate the city's actions and unify it around some one value. That value can be honor or money, pleasure in general or sexual pleasure in particular. The leaders agree that they need to unify their people around some goal, but they disagree about the goal.
- Only the just city pursues an ideal that produces and enhances coordination. Every ideal other than justice engenders instability in the city that honors that ideal. This instability then resolves itself into a worse constitution.

- If the ideal a constitution values causes the city to degrade further, there is something inherently wrong with that ideal.
- The cause of trouble begins when the wrong children enter the ruling class (546b–547a). This causes a lack of unity in the rulers (545d).

Plato and the participants begin by discussing the regimes and individuals that deviate the least from the just city and individual. They then proceed to discuss the ones that deviate the most (545b–c). We will look at each deterioration after briefly reviewing the best city and soul, the aristocratic city and soul.

### Aristocracy

In Greek, *aristocracy* means rule of the best. In Plato's ideal city, the just city, the philosophers rule, guardians enforce their orders, and the workers are content to be ruled. In the just soul, the rational part rules with a concern for each part of their soul as part of their overall good (586d–587a; cf. 442c). Plato illustrates this claim by appealing to an image of the soul as consisting of a man, a lion, and a many-headed beast (588c–590d). It is fitting for the man to look after the beast, with the help of the lion; only in this way does the beast get what's best for it (589ab). The point of the illustration is to emphasize that the rational part alone has a comprehensive and impartial concern for the whole soul, including each of its parts. The rational part does not deny the appetitive and spirited parts but trains them and satisfies them as is appropriate for them as parts of an ordered whole (591c–592a). The overall goal is to ensure that they can be satisfied while preserving psychic harmony. Reason inspects every motivation, then chooses which ones to permit.

Consider the health analogy: in caring for my whole body, I am concerned with the health and functioning of my bodily parts as parts of a larger, functioning whole. I will not eat as much as I can but as much as contributes to optimal functioning of someone with my frame and build. Caring for my right arm will not consist in making it as strong as possible but in strengthening it in proportion to the rest of my body. Similarly, in pursuing the good of the whole soul, one will gratify diverse appetites and passions insofar as their gratification contributes to a well functioning tripartite soul in which reason rules.

### From aristocracy to timocracy

I will discuss the degeneration in cities and souls separately.

#### Applied to cities

- The just soul city will eventually change since everything which comes into being must decay (546a–b).
- The good city will only exist given human interventions into the natural order to breed natures attuned to society's needs.

- Those interventions ultimately fail. The rulers are bound to make mistakes in assigning people jobs suited to their natural capacities and each of the classes will begin to be mixed with people who are not naturally suited for the tasks relevant to each class (546e).
- The next generation will yield a lesser crop of rulers (546a–547a).
- This will lead to class conflicts (547a).
- Timocracy arises when the rational part loses its power over the whole (547b, 550a–b). The productive class in the city insist on their claims to satisfaction. In a compromise between lowest and highest, the spirited part between them comes to rule.
- Sparta is the best illustration of this second-best type of government (544c). Although this city enjoys considerable stability, the fact that the spirited part comes to power in the midst of conflict shows that the timocracy will possess less unity than we found in the best city.

#### **Applied to souls**

- Reason miscalculates. It allows some appetites to be satisfied that don't promote harmony.
- Certain desires dominate, e.g., a successful academic might start to like the money.
- The desire for honor takes charge; out of all the bodily desires, it is the one that most resembles an organizational force. Unlike lust and hunger, greed knows the value of discipline (however anxious: 554d) and long-term planning (however ignobly aimed: 554e–555a).
- The rational part loses its power over the whole (547b, 550a–b). The appetites in the soul insist on their claims to satisfaction. In a compromise between lowest and highest, the spirited part between them comes to rule.

#### **From timocracy to oligarchy**

##### **Applied to cities**

- Oligarchy arises out of timocracy when the timocratic city emphasizes wealth rather than honor (550c–e).
- The competitive spirit of the timocracy's citizens prompts them to accumulate private wealth (550e) and turns them into oligarchs (551a).
- The productive class takes charge, and money becomes the dominant force in a society; thus it will be not all members of the producing class who rule but only the richest (551b).

- People will pursue wealth. It will essentially be two cities, a city of wealthy citizens and a city of poor people. The few wealthy will fear the many poor. The poor people will do various jobs simultaneously. The city will allow for poor people without means, but it will have a high crime rate.

#### **Applied to souls**

- The oligarchic individual comes into being by seeing his father lose his possessions and feeling insecure he begins to greedily pursue wealth (553a-c). Thus he allows his appetitive part to become a more dominant part of his soul (553c). The oligarchic individual's soul is at middle point between the spirited and the appetitive part.
- In their soul, the desire for money has taken charge; the desire for money is the one that most resembles an organizational force. Unlike lust and hunger, greed knows the value of discipline (however anxious: 554d) and long-term planning (however ignobly aimed: 554e-555a).
- This single appetite dominates the oligarchic soul, but that appetite can't unify it. Unlike reason, which inspects every motivation and chooses which ones to permit, avarice rules by insisting on its own goals. Avarice knows no way of reining itself in. Not having been born to rule, it lacks the capacity for self-examination.
- Plato would cite billionaires who crave money beyond anything they could spend as proof of the unfitness of greed to rule the soul.

#### **From oligarchy to democracy**

##### **Applied to cities**

- Democracy comes about when the rich become too rich and the poor too poor (555c-d); the oligarchy necessarily carries its greed too far, and so necessarily impoverishes its solid citizens (555d-e).
- Too much luxury makes the oligarchs soft and the poor revolt against them (556c-e).
- In democracy most of the political offices are distributed by lot (557a).
- The primary goal of the democratic regime is freedom or license (557b-c).
- People will come to hold offices without having the necessary knowledge (557e) and everyone is treated as an equal in ability (equals and unequals alike, 558c).

- No value predominates in the democratic city apart from toleration (557b, 558a). A pact of mutual toleration is like a code all citizens adhere to, and playing by the rules is the closest thing to moral principle they know. But the very idea of harmony, or of a ruler superior to the citizens, has become repugnant to.

#### **Applied to souls**

- The democratic individual comes to pursue all sorts of bodily desires excessively (558d-559d) and allows his appetitive part to rule his soul.
- The democratic soul prefers not to choose among its desires, certainly not to condemn any objects of desire (561b), but indulges each one as it arises. Desires may be necessary or unnecessary (558d-559c).
- The democratic soul has no principle to guide its steps, not even the crass and unlovely rule of greed.
- He comes about when his bad education allows him to transition from desiring money to desiring bodily and material goods (559d-e).
- The democratic individual has no shame and no self-discipline (560d).

#### **From democracy to tyranny**

##### **Applied to cities**

- Tyranny arises out of democracy when the desire for freedom to do what one wants becomes extreme (562b-c).
- The freedom or license aimed at in the democracy becomes so extreme that any limitations on anyone's freedom seem unfair.

The father habitually tries to resemble the child and is afraid of his sons, and the son likens himself to the father and feels no awe or fear of his parents, so that he may be forsooth a free man. And the resident alien feels himself equal to the citizen and the citizen to him, and the foreigner likewise

The teacher in such case fears and fawns upon the pupils, and the pupils pay no heed to the teacher or to their overseers either. And in general the young ape their elders and vie with them in speech and action, while the old, accommodating themselves to the young, are full of pleasantries and graciousness, imitating the young for fear they may be thought disagreeable and authoritative.

- When freedom is taken to such an extreme it produces its opposite, slavery (563e-564a).

- The tyrant comes about by presenting himself as a champion of the people against the class of the few people who are wealthy (565d-566a).
- The tyrant is forced to commit a number of acts to gain and retain power: accuse people falsely, attack his kinsmen, bring people to trial under false pretenses, kill many people, exile many people, and purport to cancel the debts of the poor to gain their support (565e-566a). The tyrant eliminates the rich, brave, and wise people in the city since he perceives them as threats to his power (567c).
- The tyrant faces the dilemma to either live with worthless people or with good people who may eventually depose him and chooses to live with worthless people (567d). The tyrant ends up using mercenaries as his guards since he cannot trust any of the citizens (567d-e). The tyrant also needs a very large army and will spend the city's money (568d-e), and will not hesitate to kill members of his own family if they resist his ways (569b-c).

#### Applied to souls

- The greatest dictatorship in the city arises out of the greatest anarchy (564a). In the soul, the democratic person's refusal to judge among desires brings one of those desires, lust (erôs), to outgrow all the rest (572e-573a).
- Plato separates unnecessary desires into the law-abiding and the lawless (571b). The worst of the lawless desires is lust, especially monstrous lust for forbidden persons, foods, and deeds (574e-575a).
- Unlike the oligarch's greed, this transgressive lewdness has nothing to do with self-control. It rules the soul wildly – indeed, it emerges as the dominant commitment of the tyrannical soul not by virtue of any deliberation on the person's part but because it has out-shouted every other desire. It comes to dominate by being the most uncontrollable desire and not because it is suited to controlling; thus its rule is of all states the least recognizable as rule.