

Part 1: What is Justice and why should we want it?: Plato's Moral and Political Philosophy

dikaosune: meaning both righteousness and justice; having the broad sense of “doing the right thing;” and capable of being applied to individuals and societies.

I. Point of Departure

Socrates faces two compounding challenges regarding the nature and desirability of justice and morality from Plato's brothers, Glaucon and Adeimantus.

Glaucon's Challenge—Legal Positivism and Ethical Egoism:

1. It's better to be unjust than just.
2. Justice (and right and wrong) arise because people fear being harmed.
3. There is no more to justice and morality than what we agree on—*Legal Positivism*.
4. Moreover, anyone would be unjust if he or she knew she could get away with it—*Ethical Egoism*.

Adeimantus' Challenge—Appearance, not reality, of justice is what's really good and valuable.

1. Justice is thought good and injustice bad only because of the reputation, honors, and rewards they bring (366e). E.g. “...the most accomplished form of injustice is to seem just when you are not” (361a). “...one should want not to be, but to seem just” (362a).
2. What Socrates needs to show is that justice is superior to injustice because of its “intrinsic effects” on the just person (367b, e). In other words, Socrates must show that being just is a good in itself, independent of any appearances it may produce.

Socrates' Answer: construct a model of justice in society to uncover justice in the individual.

II. Plato's Republic

In order to meet the challenges raised by Plato's brothers, Plato goes about analyzing the basic conditions of a state or society.

Basic Principles of State

1. **Non Self-Sufficiency**: society founded because individuals are not self-sufficient; we have many needs we can't fulfill by ourselves (369b).
2. **Natural Specialization**: we each have different natural aptitudes that make us best suited to a particular job (370b-c). E.g. farmer, builder, weaver, shoemaker, etc.
3. **Efficiency**: efficiency demands that we cultivate our natural aptitudes and do the job we're best suited to (370c).

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Once society is enlarged and becomes more complex, “*Guardians*” will be needed to keep order and peace.

Justice

First sense: justice will arise in the mutual relationship of the elements that compose the society (372a). The relationship that produces “health” (372e).

Status of Women

1. Basic point of philosophical analysis: “but here, as so often, what is right needs explanation” (449c). What intuitively makes the most sense, or what we feel driven to believe and find difficult to suppose not the case should nevertheless be subjected to philosophical analysis and supported (or rejected) by reason and argument.
2. Plato's position on Women and Sexual Equality.
 - i. Analogy to watchdogs: female and male watchdogs should carry out all the same duties, but females treated as the weaker and males the stronger (451d-e).
 - ii. Against Public Opinion: Public opinion, customs, “common sense” does not determine what's just, moral, natural—reason does!
 - Wasn't long ago that it was thought shocking and ridiculous for men to exercise naked, but *experience* showed it was better. – Rare appeal to experience. (452c-d)

iii. Comparison. of Men's and Women's "natural capacities" (453a-b, 454c-e)

- Plato compares sex difference to superficial difference between bald and long-haired men.
- Plato clarifies point of comparison: "we never meant that natures are the same or different in an unqualified sense, *but only with reference to kind of sameness or difference which is relevant to various employments*" (454c)
- Plato thus specifies as relevant only those qualities that bear on employment and leadership aptitude.
- Plato identifies the central difference as being that "the female bears and the male begets" and maintains that "we shall not admit that this is a difference relevant for our purpose" (454e). That is, difference between men and women do not bear on their capacity and fitness as Rulers and Guardians.

iv. General observations:

- "A good many women...are better than a good many men at a good many things" –though it's generally true that men are better than woman at most things (455d).
- Natural capacities are equally distributed between the sexes; no job *naturally* belongs to men or women.

III. Justice in the State and Justice in Individual

The Society that Plato has described will have four primary virtues: **Wisdom, Courage, Self-Discipline, and Justice**. Wisdom and Courage both arise because they are reflected in the Rulers and Auxiliaries, respectively. Self-Discipline and Justice arise in relation to the behavior of the group as a whole. Self-Discipline amounts to a harmony between the three classes when each obeys the wisdom of the Rulers. Justice is closely related to Self-Discipline but is expressed in terms of the basic principles of specialization and efficiency on which Plato's discussion of the ideal society is founded. Thus Justice in the State amounts to *each member of society performing his or her proper function (according to the rules of the guardians)* (433a-b). Justice in the State has the *intrinsic worth* of promoting a *harmonious and healthy* society.

Plato must then find analogous divisions in Mind or Soul (*Psyche*) by looking for conflicts in the mind.

Question: How do we know there are separate parts of mind/soul?

1. Principle of disaggregation by conflict and specialization (436b):
 - i. One thing cannot act or be affected in opposite ways at same time.
 - ii. We find conflict in ourselves, or conflict in our inclinations (e.g. we want to go to the beach *and* come to class).
 - iii. Conflict we experience must be due to different and conflictive parts or aspects of us.
2. Plato identifies 3 basic parts/aspects that compose us: Reason, Spirit, and Desire.

Analogy of State to Mind or Soul

<u>State</u>	<u>Mind/Soul</u>
Rulers	Reason
Auxiliaries	Spirit or Passion
Workers	Appetite or Desire

Reason guides both spirit and appetite, making sure that spirit is properly applied and appetites are kept in check.

As in the case of the State, the Individual is **wise** and **courageous** in virtue of his or her reason and spirit; is **disciplined** when spirit and appetite are properly subordinated to reason; and is **just** when all three elements of the soul perform their *proper function*. As with the State, the just individual is marked by harmony and health.

*The just person achieves an internal *unity* by effectively erasing the conflicts between the different parts of the soul (443d-e). Justice amounts to having a healthy mind (444d).

*Injustice, by contrast, is described as an internal "civil war" in which passions and desires exceed their proper bounds and produce "wickedness of all kinds" (444b). One becomes a slave to one's passions and desires when one is unjust.