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Abstract

‘Give me the same hold again’: The Three Political Justices in Plato’s Republic”

Colin Dea

In a dialogue about ostensibly about justice, Plato’s *Republic* has remarkably little to say about political justice: the justice between persons and within cities. The apparent discussions of politics in the main section of the dialogue (Books II to VII), I claim, serves as an analogue to show the proper ordering of the soul. Yet in this thesis, I argue that two other, disparate sections of *The Republic*, when read together, reveal a series of observations about political justice. In the introductory section of the text, Book I, we encounter three apparent definitions of political justice from Cephalus, Polemarchus, and Thrasymachus. Later, in the regression of the regimes, we encounter descriptions of cities, though these descriptions contain only passing references to justice.

I propose that the definitions of justice in Book I apply onto the three middle regimes of the Regression: the definition made for Cephalus is democratic, the definition presented Polemarchus is oligarchic, and Thrasymachus’ is timocratic. We know these sections are meant to be read together because Cephalus and Thrasymachus are representatives of the democratic and timocratic souls respectively. The synthesis of the two sections reveals a more complete description of three political justices, and offers a compelling account of the relationship between justice, politics, and desire. That being said, my approach does not conclude with a single cohesive understanding or satisfying account of political justice.

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Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction[1]

Socrates' description of the city in speech from Book II-VII is not a political recommendation.[2] We know this for several reasons. At the outset of the creation of the city in speech, Socrates makes clear that he discusses the city purely as an analogy for the soul[3] and again in Book V, Socrates cautions us against taking what follows[4] (Books V-VII) too seriously.[5] We also know his use of the city is analogous because he consistently diminishes differences and complexity within groups. For example, his initial dismissal of women and children as to be held in common[6] is simply a throw away line: we do not have thousands of tiny women and children running around in us, and so to discuss the role of women and children is to extend the analogy too far.

Rather, as Socrates says at the outset, the use of the city here is a means to develop the idea of virtue within the soul and not an account of how independent souls must conduct themselves to live in common with others. But of all the virtues, justice is the one that is most outward-looking in the sense that it is the one concerned in some way with conduct with respect to discreet people, groups, parts of the soul, etc. So, an account of justice which only looks at the justice between the constituent parts of the soul is necessarily incomplete. This raises a question: is there an account of political justice (that is to say justice between people and within cities) in

1. The divisions of The *Republic* which we now call 'books' were probably added some time after Plato wrote the dialogue. Though the books are therefore arbitrary (and roughly equal) divisions of the text, it is clear that an attempt was made to divide the text at points where the text changes course when possible. While the division between Books III and IV is somewhat arbitrary, it makes sense to start a new book (Book II) after Glaucon and Adeimantus take over the conversation because it is their challenge to Socrates, (which ends at 367e), that motivates the dialogue until the start of Book X, and to start another when Socrates' audience insists (Book V, 449a-450a) on his digression from the argument that makes up Books V to VII. As they are convenient divisions of the text, I will continue to refer to these sections as such.
2. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes and citations refer to Allen Bloom's translation of *The Republic.* Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Allen Bloom, (New York: Basic Books, 1991).
3. Plato, *The Republic* 369a.
4. Plato, *The Republic* 450e-451b.
5. As political recommendations.
6. Plato, *The Republic* 424a.

The Republic? And if so, where is it? We want to understand the whole of justice in *The Republic* because we suspect that it will and was intended by Plato to help us to understand true justice—that is to say, justice as it really is and without the qualifications (timocratic, oligarchic, democratic, political, ethical, etc.) that we are about to attach to it in this essay. This not only presumes that there is a justice "without qualification", but that we are not looking directly at it here. Instead, we are trying to grasp imperfect versions so as to grasp justice in itself. We want to understand the whole of justice because, whatever it is, justice is central to the human experience—by which I mean that questions of justice are inevitable when humans live amongst one another.

We can very quickly narrow our search for the section which will provide an account of political justice in *The Republic*. We can dispense with the city in speech for reasons stated above—it is an analogy, not meant to be taken as a recommendation for political organization. We need not consider tyranny, as discussed in Books VIII and IX either, as tyranny attempts to destroy politics by subsuming the city under the domination of a single man. We are then left with the discussions of what we might call the three intermediate regimes in Book VIII of *The Republic*: timocracy, oligarchy, and democracy. Yet, the regression itself presents a few interpretive problems which we should address first.

First of all, these regimes are intermediate because they come about in the context of discussing the analogous, non-political city in speech and the anti-political tyranny. We might then suspect that the intermediate regimes are also somehow inadequate descriptions of politics. We know they are not themselves analogues because they discuss the regime and the 'man corresponding' to the regime in closer proximity to one another, sometimes even switching from the city to the man and back again within a page or two. The focus of the conversation also

changes: Socrates speaks from the future tense (e.g., "won't these places be…",[7] the "young must be"[8]) when building the city in speech, to the present tense (e.g. "what happens to be honoured…"[9], "the very thing that defines a regime…"[10]) when describing the other regimes. The tone tense changes because the intent, and possibly the purpose is what has changed.

Yet what really separates the intermediate regimes from the city in speech is the way in which Socrates describes the transition between the city in speech and the timocracy.[11] The city in speech is not an intended to present a political regime which can be realised in the physical world, and so to make the real regimes come about from in imaginary one, Socrates must make use of a bit of handwaving and playful mathematics to ease the transition from the imaginary to the concrete. What this famously[12] dense passage represents is the ideal conversation crashing back down to earth. But it also shows us that the line between the two conversations has a clear division. One speaks about that which might be, and that which is, and it must follow that the intent of the almost hypothetical and descriptive conversations must differ as well.

The other potential problem with the intermediate regimes is that the topic of justice is almost never raised during the regression. Again, the regression, ostensibly, is meant to teach. Yet again, we find the answer to this problem in the discussion of Book VIII prior to the regression of regimes. The answer takes the form of a somewhat turn-of-phrase at the beginning of Book VIII. Before the regression of regimes, and after the 90-odd page tangent beginning at Book V, Socrates, curiously, says to Glaucon "like a wrestler, give me the same hold again; and when I put the same question try to tell what you were going to say then".[13] Strictly speaking, Socrates

7. Plato, *The Republic*, 415e.
8. Plato, *The Republic*, 413a.
9. Plato, *The Republic* 551a.
10. Plato, *The Republic* 551c.
11. Plato, *The Republic* 546-547a.
12. Plato, *The Republic* Bloom, n.10.
13. Plato. *The Republic,* 544b.

is asking Glaucon to recall the conversation as it occurred at the start of Book V, before the tangent, and to respond as if Books V to VII never occurred.

Such a request, if it is really directed at Glaucon, exceeds all possible limits of human endurance. The Book-V-to-VII tangent would have lasted several hours at least, and so asking Glaucon to ask the questions as if Books V to VII had not occurred is fanciful at best. Yet, we, the reading audience, are far better situated to skip back and ask *our* questions as if Books V to VII had not occurred. As such, we should suspect this request is meant for us to reread the dialogue. While this statement is probably also a caution to not take the propositions of Books V-VII too seriously,[14] it also represents an invitation for us to consider what comes after Socrates' request—i.e., the regression of the regimes—with an eye towards what has come before in the text—which is ostensibly the construction of the city of speech as Socrates intended.

Of course, if we read Socrates' suggestion as him encouraging us to go back to the conversation as it was at Book V, it does not result in any special or profound new understanding of the text. At least, the obvious route is the one taken by just about every interpreter of every level, and we should not simply rely on the obvious answer. However, while there is only one obvious 'hold' which Glaucon might re-apply to Socrates and his arguments, as readers, we are better able to give him any number of possible holds which we had taken earlier in the text. So, there is another possibility here—that Plato intends for us to go back further, and read the regression while keeping a different, earlier and less obvious section of the text.

As it so happens, there is an earlier part of the text in which justice is discussed more or less separate from politics, just as politics is discussed absent from justice in the regression. This

3. I am not interested here in Books V-VII, but that section contains the most radical proposals of *The Republic*. I leave it to you to decide if this caution is because Plato is trying to protect himself from persecution, if this passage means we should disregard those propositions outright, or if we should approach them cautiously and inquisitively rather than taking them at face value.

section is, of course, the conversations from Book I between Socrates and Cephalus, Polemarchus, and Thrasymachus and the definitions that arise from them. At the surface level, this claim is at least plausible: there are three definitions for the three regimes and these definitions come about from conversations with radically different men. There is even a certain superficial resemblance between those characters and the regimes they might represent: Cephalus lived a life of pleasure and freedom like a democratic soul might; Polemarchus interjects himself when the conversation turns to money; and Thrasymachus' entrance is about as war like as we can get in Plato's dialogues. Note that, if my suggestion is right, then the definitions are found in reverse order from the presentation of the regimes, but even this reverse order makes a certain amount of sense. If the regression is the descent from perfect justice to perfect injustice, these definitions of justice are the ascent, and, in a book in which the theme of ascent and descent recurs again and again.[15]

Our primary interest is a better understanding of political justice. However, my analysis will shed light on oft neglected sections of the dialogue in Books I and VIII as well. The conversations with the characters of Book I are somewhat discarded after their chance to speak. Polemarchus and Thrasymachus make bit appearances later on, but Cephalus literally leaves the conversation. These conversations then feel somewhat orphaned and disjointed from the rest of the dialogue dominated by Glaucon, Adeimantus, and Socrates. While at this point what I have to say is in no way certain, if we find two parts of a book that feel somewhat disjointed from the whole, *and* bear at least a superficial resemblance to one another, *and* seem incomplete in their analysis (since one speaks of justice without politics and the other politics without justice) there

15. Just for a few examples, the opening sees Socrates and Glaucon descend, and rise form the Piraeus (327a, the imagery of the three waves (452b-543a), the Allegory of the Cave (514a-520a), and the ascent and descent in the Myth of Er (614b-621d). See also Stanley Rosen, *Plato's Republic: A Study* (New Haven, Conn. London: Yale UP 2008): 1-3.

is at least a potential that we need to and are intended to by Plato to treat these sections as somehow related.

With this foundation for the argument in mind, I argue that the definitions of justice proposed in Book I of *The Republic* for Cephalus and by Polemarchus and Thrasymachus correspond to the three intermediate regimes of Book VIII, and that reading the sections of the dialogue together provides us a "political science" which is less developed if Books I and VIII are read separately. The definitions in Book I are presented in reverse order to the appearance of their regime in Book VIII: democratic, oligarchic, and timocratic justice are presented by Cephalus, Polemarchus and Thrasymachus respectively. We know that the definitions correspond to the regimes because Cephalus and Thrasymachus are obvious analogues of the democratic and timocratic souls, and that there is a good explanation for why the oligarch is absent and Polemarchus presents the oligarchic definition.

My analysis builds into a larger conversation of what justice means in *The Republic* and what true justice is. Justice, preliminarily, is an ordering of some body towards a common end or desire. The intermediate justices show us that the good which is sought by political justice is arbitrary to some extent, but that that if true justice were possible on a political scale, the specific desire which would be sought is not clear from *The Republic,* and may not be as simple as freedom, money, or honour. *The Republic* then, contains no satisfactory account of political justice, but helpfully dissects political justice to point us towards something closer to true justice.

In *The Republic,* Plato wants us to focus mostly on the souls which the various regimes represent. We know this is Plato's intent because Glaucon and Adeimantus want to know more about the just and unjust *lives*, not cities.[16] The city-soul relationship is raised only because it is

16. Plato, *The Republic* Glaucon at 357ac; Adeimantus at 362d.

easier to see the constituent parts of the city than the parts of the soul, and it is consequently easier to spot justice in the city than the soul.[17] Like all analogies, the strength of the argument rests in large part on the strength of the relationship between the compared bodies, so it stands to reason that Socrates thinks that the city and soul are strongly (though not perfectly)[18] related. To be able to decide whether the argument has something to say about souls, cities, or both, we first must understand the argument as it is presented, and so, while I will make note of the consequences of a part of the argument for the cities and souls when they differ, we cannot yet untangle the city from the soul within this argument.

The plan for this essay is as follows. We will look at Timocracy and Thrasymachus first, then the Oligarchy and the Oligarchic man, and then Democracy and Cephalus. Each chapter has largely the same structure. We will examine what is said about the city and soul in Book VIII, then I will endeavour to show that man in Book I is himself a representative of that city/soul (except in the case of Polemarchus). We will then consider the corresponding definition of justice in detail, and, in doing so, show it is also the definition which the description of city/soul in Book VIII presupposes. When discussing Thrasymachus, I will also show that the evidence for his being a timocrat is far stronger than his being a tyrant. In the oligarchy chapter, I will explain that Polemarchus presents the oligarchic definition even though he is not an oligarch because the oligarch has no reason to attend this conversation.

Chapter 2: Timocracy and Thrasymachus

2.1 The Timocratic City

Let us first consider what is said about the timocratic city. To understand what is said about the timocratic man, but this will also help us

17. Plato, *The Republic* 368e.
18. Note his hesitation at the beginning of Book V. Plato, *The Republic,* from 450a.

to show that Thrasymachus is in fact a timocrat, and that his definition of justice is indeed timocratic. Socrates' treatment of the timocrat begins with the events that result in the aristocracy becoming a timocracy and are obscured by what I can only assume is an intentionally dense passage. A failure to properly calculate the proper arrangement of the birth of new guardians results in incompetent guardians being admitted to the caste.[19] The organization of the city does not change overmuch as a result of the proportion of metals in the souls of the rulers becoming 'mixed'. It is the intent, or rather the project which the city or soul seeks to accomplish, that changes because the desire of at least the rulers changes.

The regression of the regimes begins with the standards of education becoming increasingly lax. When the previous generation "first begin[s] to neglect us [the founders of the city] by having less consideration than is required, first for music, and second for gymnastic; and from there [their] young will be more unmusical".[20] The reason that they are so disobedient is because their education gives "more distinguished honour to gymnastic than music"[21] and consequently they will have the discipline to obey directions, but not the reasoning in the soul which allows them to obey willingly, which musical education provides.

Consequently, the types of soul not suited to ruling are permitted into the ruling class, and so the timocrat is defined by his being pulled between the natures of the oligarch and the aristocrat, and as such, a new kind of regime comes about which has elements that are both unique to it and shared with its parent regimes.[22] One point of particular tension in the timocracy is the money-making arts: the oligarchic faction desires money above all, but the aristocrat

19. Plato, *The Republic*, 547a.
20. Plato, *The Republic*, 546e-547a.
21. Plato, *The Republic*, 548 c.
22. Plato, *The Republic*, 547bd.

faction sees "the manual arts and the rest of money-making" as beneath it.[23] The tension between the seemingly incompatible[24] desires of the factions creates a compromise and what is "most distinctive in [the timocracy]: love of victories and of honours."[25] Though it may seem that the timocracy seeks victory "due to the dominance of spiritedness"[26] the compromise of seeking victories allows virtue-loving part to practice virtue and the money-loving part can reap the prizes and spoils of war. The focus on victory and the ensuing prizes keeps the peace between the factions.

Socrates also tells us that only "under cover of darkness", i.e. away from prying eyes, will the timocrat pay "fierce honour to gold and silver." In the city, and presumably the man also, the active or deliberate practice of money is seen as shameful, but it is shameful only because it is associated with arts inappropriate to a warrior. If the timocrat gains prizes and victories, and those prizes or victories *happen* to come with money, it seems these prizes would not be shameful or would be less shameful. The obvious way of interpreting Socrates' comment that 'they will love to spend other people's money"[27] is that the timocrat elected to office would spend money on himself, but we may also take this to mean that they enjoy spending money of their defeated foes.

The timocrat only appears to love virtue for the honour or victory which it brings him, and not for virtue in itself, which may devolve into the love of the mere appearance of virtue. I suspect that the focus on appearance to the neglect of actual virtue would be discovered in a martial city like the timocracy quickly. Yet it is more difficult for the city to police what the

23. Plato, *The Republic*, 547 d.
24. The claim that the desire for virtue and material wealth are more-or-less incompatible is developed in the Oligarchy section.
25. Plato, *The Republic*, 548d.
26. Plato, *The Republic*, 548d.
27. Plato, *The Republic*, 548d.

timocrats 'under cover of darkness' and in situations where the timocrat's neglect of virtue—in this case moderation—would have little to no consequence in the city itself in the short run (but may have a significant effect on individual timocrats, and therefore, the city in the long run). This would also suggest that the timocrat may bend or break the laws or the expectations which the city places on them when they do not see the consequences of actually following the rules.

Socrates has something interesting to say about the quality of the wise men of the new timocracy. He says the city becomes:

> afraid to bring the wise to the ruling offices—because the men of that kind it possesses are no longer simple and earnest, but mixed—and in leaning toward spirited and simpler men, men naturally more directed to war than to peace; in holding the wiles and stratagems of war in honor; and [the city spends] all its time making war.[28]

Note that the new kind of men seem to still be counted as wise, but their more martial character makes the rest of the city hesitate when considering raising one to ruling offices. On the surface, the cause of this hesitation is not immediately clear. The man here is described as wise, which we should understand to mean that he is more than able to avoid obvious mistakes in war. We might consider that he would go to war for his own self-aggrandizement, and possibly against the city's interest, but this is a problem a city of victory loving people want to have. When the ruler wins in battle, the things which the timocrat desires most (honours, victories, prizes etc.) abound for both the wise ruler and the soldiers under his command. As such, the timocratic wise man seems to be an obvious choice for ruling offices.

We might also consider that the city hesitates to appoint the wise, not because their wise men are more interested in war, but because they are 'spirited and simpler men'. 'Spirited and simpler' may mean that these wise men would treat their subjects (or citizens) harshly or even brutally at times. Yet this is probably no different than one's average timocrat, even if they are

28. Plato, *The Republic*, eb547e-548a.

more severe than they probably should be,[29] this would be a reason for the city to hesitate. After all, timocrats—given their preoccupation with war—would be the regime which is the most tolerant of severe expectations and punishments. That the timocrats have enslaved the productive classes[30] would also mean that the timocrats would be the only ones to have a say in who would be the ruler.

Indeed, perhaps the grammar of the Socrates' statement is what is throwing us off here, for he suggests that the timocrats are afraid to have these kinds of men ruling because they perceive something about these men to be either bad or bad for the other timocrats. What if though, the timocrats do not wish to raise these men to office because that would be an admission by the other timocrats that this person is better than them. If, as we said, the timocratic city is most interested in rewards and honours, then it is a small step to assume that the ruling offices themselves become a prize. So the prize is denied to the man most deserving of it because the other timocrats wish to strengthen their own position to take the prize—if not now, then later.

When Socrates later speaks of the "man corresponding" to the timocracy, he says this man would base his "claim to rule…on warlike deeds and everything connected with war".[31] If all timocrats are like this man described later, then the rulers would base their own claim to rule on war. The wise man "holding the wiles and stratagems of war in honour", and of course, being a wise man, would have the strongest claim to rule. The hesitation would arise then because the other timocrats, in allowing the wise man to rule, would a) be forced to admit they are not worthy of the honour of ruling (insofar as there is someone better suited to receive the honour of ruling) and b) would weaken the claims of the other timocrats to rule now and in the future

29. For an illustrative example, consider their treatment of slaves. Plato, *The Republic,* 549a.
30. Plato, *The Republic*, 547c.
31. Plato, *The Republic,*549a.

(because the excellence of the wise man's rule would make future rulers seem less worthy). A timocrat may go so far as to think it would be better to give the office to a lesser and so that one's own deeds seem more worthy the next time one is appointed to that ruling office.

If the timocrats hesitate to allow their version of the wise man to rule for this reason, then we have encountered the first real problem with the timocracy. The regime's preoccupation with honours and victories can create factions amongst the rulers when they compete amongst themselves. Indeed, their strength, that they still pursue virtue to a great extent because they pursue it for victory and honour's sake, can itself weaken the regime to some extent. Indeed, all the problems we can find with the timocracy amount to the conflict between winning honours as a person and for the city.

2.2 The Timocratic Man

Of this man who corresponds to the timocracy, Socrates says several significant things which we should consider carefully. While Socrates agrees with Adeimantus' proposal that the timocratic man would love victory about as much as Glaucon, Socrates finds the timocratic man is primarily defined by his lack of musical education and excessive gymnastic education.[32] That he loves music and rhetoric, but is skilled in neither, is a product of the timocrat's lack of musical education—his soul yearns for musical education, but he has had neither the opportunities to practice nor be exposed to the stories and songs which allow one to make music and argue effectively. [33] As he is unskilled in speech, but desires to rule because it is an honour, he must base his suitability to rule on "warlike deeds and everything connected with war",[34] even if the way that Socrates phrases this claim suggests that perhaps the timocrat would not have the actual

32. Plato, *The Republic*, 548e-549a.
33. Plato, *The Republic*, 548d.
34. Plato, *The Republic*, 548a.

experience in battle to make his claim as well as he might like. His lack of musical education also explains why the timocrat comes to desire money more and more as he ages:[35] His age makes it more difficult to practice gymnastics, and the lack of musical education means that the lessons the gymnastic education teach him do not remain in his soul, and so he becomes un-educated.[36]

The lack of musical education is exactly what gives the timocrat his character. Traits which make him extremely skilled on the battlefield - decisiveness, aggression, and physical fitness all come from gymnastic education as does the stubbornness, and love of gymnastics and hunting.[37] He despises slaves because they are servile[38]—in a sense he cannot understand their willingness to submit, but they are obedient to rulers because obedience to commands would have been instilled in them by gymnastics, and this obedience gives them what they desire in part: more victories and honours on the battlefield. Yet, the stability of the regime is both helped and hindered by the overreliance of gymnastic education: because ruling is an honour which must be maintained by the ruler.

If the Timocrat thinks he can get away with disobedience, he will do so, "running away from the law like boys from a father."[39] This is important because the timocrat understands obedience only for reward's sake or for fear of punishment. They do not seem to be able to imagine a reason to obey for obedience's sake, and for the same reason they are brutal to servants and slaves, but to be disobedient is in their mind to have honour. The image of boys running from a father is particularly instructive—to disobey is a kind of freeing of oneself from arbitrary

35. Plato, The Republic,549d.
36. It is musical education in *The Republic* that provides the myth which preserves the soul's commitment to education (see the Myth of Metals, Plato, *The Republic,* 414d-415c), but, because it deals with story and music, would also be where one receiving this education would practice their ability to remember.
37. Plato, *The Republic* 549a.
38. Plato, *The Republic* 549a.
39. Plato, *The Republic* 548b

rule, to bond with one's brother or friend, to feel as if one has won some small, petty victory by breaking the rules in some small petty way is to oneself both independent and deserving of honour.

We may say this about justice in the timocracy: justice is something imposed from the top down, and the ruled have to maintain justice against the deliberate disregard for their commands by the other timocrats. We might provisionally define justice as the ability to command others to do one's bidding. That they are willing to hoard money even though this is seen as shameful and that they apparently will not give the ruling offices to the most deserving are evidence of their disregard for justice, but justice as understood as simply the commands of one's superiors or the conventions of the city. After all, this provisional definition has no reason why the subordinate needs to obey the superior—it is up to the superior themselves to make others obey him through coercion, force, or enticement.

It would seem then that the timocracy is mostly stable, but the things which cause it to be stable, the compromise between virtue and money-making and the regime's reliance on gymnastic education are also what make it vulnerable. The love of money means it is only sometimes consistent with the regime's focus on martial victory, and a city which conquers for the sake of the spoils of war may also be susceptible to division based on the promise of material wealth. The focus on gymnastics makes the free citizens, and especially the young citizens obedient to the person or persons in charge, but the regime has also made the ruling offices a kind of prize, and, if they can get away with it without punishment, the non-rulers may scheme to take the prize of ruling from the rulers. Indeed, this disobedience, even going so far as rebellion, may be counted as just. After all, it is the love of victory that motivates the timocracy. A coup could be justified on the basis that the rulers were no longer worthy of the honour of ruling by

evidence of the fact they were overthrown in the first place. So not only does the Timocrat not necessarily support the person most suited to the office of ruling because he himself does not want to hurt his own case to rule (whether or not this case is especially strong), but he may actively oppose the rulers if they do not show the requisite strength.

2.3 Thrasymachus the Timocrat

We know Thrasymachus is a timocrat based on his desire and his conduct. Simply put, we can show that Thrasymachus desires money and honour just as we see the timocrat desire in Book VIII, and he appears to be educated like a timocrat based on his lack of skill at argument and that he instead relies on spiritedness to overwhelm his adversaries in speech. I layout that which Thrasymachus desires because his desire motivates him to make decisions on the course of his conversation with Socrates which show that he lacks the tact one would expect from musical education. We will also, before turning to the question of justice, address Thrasymachus' relationship to tyranny—and thereby show that he is not in fact a tyrannical soul tyrant.

2.3.1 Timocratic Education and Spiritedness

We cannot know what kind of education Thrasymachus received, but Thrasymachus could not have been given much of what *The Republic* describes as musical education, which includes speeches,[40] and therefore rhetoric and lessons on considering one's audience.[41] We know his musical education was lacking because he makes several critical errors in engaging in the conversation which are consistent with one who lacks musical education even though he may show some tactical understanding of rhetoric. Specifically, he is too forceful in his introduction

40. Plato, *The Republic,* 377a.
41. I acknowledge this is a somewhat bizarre argument given Thrasymachus is likely a sophist—a teacher of rhetoric. That Thrasymachus is a poor arguer does not mean he is not a sophist, and one can imagine that his bombastic, overwhelm-your-opponents-with-force style might be both more successful against and more appealing to those with no experience in arguing.

which alienates the crowd, lacks tact when jockeying with Socrates for the role in the conversation, [42] is petulant and rude,[43] and the events leading up to his famous blush.[44] Perhaps the best evidence of this lack of musical education is that Thrasymachus is the only character in *The Republic,* apart from Cleitophon who speaks only briefly,[45] who does not cite poetry.[46] In sum, these would suggest that he lacks the refinement, and knowledge and practice that would come from musical education, and so must resort to forcefulness in both tone and rhetoric that one would expect of a timocrat.

The above claims depend on and are presented simultaneously to the evidence that Thrasymachus desires the same things which the timocrat desires: money and honour. If we can show that Thrasymachus desires money[47] and because he seems to be trying to take up the position in the conversation which Socrates typically adopts and which questions the accounts of others, what I call the 'asker' as opposed to the 'answerer', that he thinks will bring him honour, he abandons his campaign for the honourable only when he sees another opportunity for honour, and, of course, it is plain from his own actions and the statements of other characters that he is blatantly seeking money and honour in the conversation.

I think sometimes the theatricality of Thrasymachus bursting onto the scene can obscure the importance of the way that Socrates describes the event. Let us consider Thrasymachus' introduction carefully. While he is mentioned as being present at Cephalus' house when Socrates and the others arrive, his real introduction begins when Socrates says, to us,

> Now Thrasymachus had many times started out to take over the argument in the midst of our discussion, but he had been restrained by the men sitting next to him, who wanted to

42. Plato, *The Republic,* 336bd.
43. Plato, *The Republic,* 327c, 328c, 338d, 340b, 341a.
44. Plato, *The Republic,* 348-350c; blush at 350d.
45. Plato, *The Republic,* 340ac.
46. Plato, *The Republic,* to provide just one example for each character, Socrates 379e-380a, Glaucon 362a, Adeimantus 363a, Cephalus, 331a, Polemarchus, 331d.
47. Plato, *The Republic*, 337d.

> hear the argument out. But when we paused and I said this, he could no longer keep quiet; hunched up like a wild beast, he flung himself at us as if to tear us to pieces. Then both Polemarchus and I got all in a flutter from fright.[48]

Critically, at the outset, we can see that Thrasymachus' excitement probably manages to alienate all those in attendance. By overpowering and ignoring the wishes of the men sat next to him, and by 'frightening'[49] the men or man he wishes to speak with, we may reasonably expect that neither group is inclined to give him a fair hearing. This is not to say that they will dismiss him outright, but, if his goal is to convince those present that what he has to say is true, then he has disadvantaged himself from the outset. If he is motivated here by honour and/or money then alienating his audience in this way does not serve this apparent goal, that this does not occur to him or he does not have sufficient control over himself, would support the claim that he is a timocrat.

The obvious explanation here is that Thrasymachus interrupts and alienates his audience because his anger is real, and that the conversation so far has upset him so much that Socrates can describe Thrasymachus as he is 'flinging' himself at the conversation. Another is that Thrasymachus is to some extent feigning his anger and is trying to use that anger to achieve some end in the conversation. Both support my larger argument that Thrasymachus is a timocrat. The interpretation that his anger is genuine would suggest that Thrasymachus is ruled by his emotion, he is not *thinking* about the consequences of his actions, and he finds conversation so galling that he intercedes and in a way that harms his objectives. If this is the case, then Thrasymachus is clearly ruled by his spiritedness, and this would strongly support the idea that he is a timocratic soul.

48. Plato, *The Republic*, 336bc.
49. I think Socrates is being playful with his description of Thrasymachus and his reaction, the point stands however.

But then, we should find it odd that Thrasymachus takes issue with style of the conversation first, for he seems particularly frustrated with Socrates and Polemarchus "act[ing] like fools making way for one another"[50]. If he is genuinely angry, and we assume that people as upset as Thrasymachus tend to lead with the thing that upsets them most, it would seem it is Socrates' and Polemarchus 'making way' for one another, which is to say the style of conversation is what most upsets him rather than the content of the argument.

To Thrasymachus, the way that Polemarchus and Socrates conduct their conversation is, somehow, contrary to the idea of justice. That cooperating with another in a conversation about justice would anger Thrasymachus makes sense considering Thrasymachus' more acrimonious and adversarial approach, but it would suggest that cooperation is contrary to justice somehow. In sum then, Thrasymachus' first statement in *The Republic,* would, given the context of the cooperative conversation that comes before, and the adversarial one that follows, would suggest that justice, or at least the privilege to decide what justice is, is a contest.

Another possibility is that Thrasymachus' 'wild beast' is an affectation, and he interrupts the conversation for some reasoned and intentional end. This possibility would suggest that he is at least partly aware that his behaviour would alienate his audience and does so because he thinks this is in some way to his advantage. If this is the case, we should suspect that his tactic is to make his opponents fearful of his response should they choose to respond to his opening statement. It would seem then, that Thrasymachus is not so interested in convincing his audience, but rather to be seen to beat Socrates (and to a lesser extent, Polemarchus) in a conversation. That Thrasymachus is simply trying to overwhelm Socrates here, rather than refute his and Polemarchus' claims in detail would suggest a) that he is more interested in impressing the others

50. Plato, *The Republic* 336c.

in attendance than with convincing Socrates and Polemarchus and b) that he assumes those in attendance would mistake his harassing of his opponents for refutation of their ideas.

Even if Thrasymachus' anger is a tactic, this tactic seems to be such a bad idea with respect to Thrasymachus' audience and objectives that we must conclude that Thrasymachus is genuinely angry here. First, his audience is smarter than that, and he should know it: the way Socrates introduces the silent members of the audience suggests that the men in attendance are from important families or are themselves of some note: [51] not the type of audience who would mistake brow-beating for refutation. While such a tactic, while it might work on a mob, would not work with these men here. But even if his audience were receptive to it, and we assume his goal here is to be seen defeating Socrates, berating Socrates in this way is more likely to get Thrasymachus a reputation of a mad dog than a skilled rhetorician.

The opening speech is not the only time that Thrasymachus risks alienating his audience. He calls Socrates "disgusting",[52] a "sycophant",[53] in need of a wet nurse for his runny nose.[54] A good, well-timed insult can be fatal to an opposing argument, and Socrates is not above using them from time to time.[55] Thrasymachus here again seems to be devolving to tactics more appropriate to schoolboy than an adult. His sustained insults, at least for the first portion of the conversation, do not harm the argument that Socrates is making, and likely come off as petulant and childish to those in attendance (as they do to us, the reading audience). This childish arguing is not helped by Thrasymachus' apparent eristic stubbornness, as evidenced by the times when Socrates must skip over some of what Thrasymachus says for the sake of time.[56] While Socrates

51. Plato, *The Republic,* 327c, 328c.
52. Plato, *The Republic,* 327c 338d.
53. Plato, *The Republic*, 340b, 341a.
54. Plato, *The Republic,* 343a.
55. See Plato, *Gorgias*, 494e. where Socrates implies that Calicles is a catamite.
56. Plato, *The Republic,* 342d, 346d, 350d.

might be skipping Thrasymachus' best arguments at these points, it seems likely that Thrasymachus is simply nit-picking or digging in his heels to delay his inevitable loss. Taken together, it does not seem Thrasymachus is capable of endearing himself to his audience even though that is, I claim, what he desires insofar as support of the audience is a sign of his victory over Socrates, and both the childishness of the tactics and the failure to meet a basic principle of rhetoric—that one must consider one's audience—would suggest he is not well-versed in musical education.

That Thrasymachus adopts this tactic at all then, even if he has some objective in mind in its adoption, is either evidence that he is not well versed in the arts of argument, or someone who cannot control his spiritedness. That we know him to be a sophist, a teacher of rhetoric, and his conduct in the rest of the dialogue would suggest that he should or at least makes claim to rhetorical knowledge, and so we are left with the conclusion that he is instead overly spirited, which, again, would suggest he is a timocratic soul.

In turn, this changes how we read the 'making way' comment. For if he is playing up his frustration for effect, then we need to also consider that his opening lines are meant to set up the rest of his statement and his strategy for his conversation with Socrates per se. The 'making way' for one another is not the only complaint Thrasymachus raises about the conversation thus far. He tells Socrates,

> If you truly want to know what the just is, don't only ask and gratify your love of honour by refuting whatever someone answers—you know that it is easier to ask than to answer—but answer yourself and say that you assert the just to be.[57]

In short then, he wants Socrates to give his own definition of justice and presumes that it is Socrates' love of honour that makes him want to refute the positions of others by asking them

57. Plato, *The Republic*, 336d.

questions. Here though, however frustrated Thrasymachus is, we can see he is setting down a deliberate strategy when approaching the larger conversation that he has started with Socrates. He intends to force Socrates to answer by laying bare what and why Socrates usually operates. By suggesting that Socrates asks the questions he is so seemingly to appear smart, it would force Socrates to adopt the position that Thrasymachus sees as more difficult. He tries to hem in the answers that Socrates can give by further limiting the kinds of answers that Socrates can provide[58] which suggests he does not find Socrates' methods distasteful, but that he can gain a reputation by showing that Socrates does not know.

When Socrates says it is because he does not know that he does not answer, Thrasymachus tries to shame him, "laughing very scornfully" and claiming he predicted such a response from Socrates,[59] is clearly an attempt to shame and goad Socrates into giving an answer. This almost playground level taunt, combined with the assumption that Socrates acts to gratify his love of honour means that Thrasymachus seems to have misunderstood Socrates' own motivations and desires. Instead, Thrasymachus has seemingly assumed Socrates has the same motivations as he does, to win honour, and will answer slights of honour as he, Thrasymachus, would. This assumption would indicate that Thrasymachus lacks an ability to consider his adversary in conversation—in turn suggesting that he lacks formal training in something we might expect a musical education might provide. If this is not the case, we might also consider that he has rashly entered a conversation before he understands Socrates—which would suggest he is overly spirited and imprudent. In contrast, we know it is possible to make Socrates give a

58. Plato, *The Republic*, 336d.
59. Plato, *The Republic*, 337a.

definition of justice (though, not a short one), as Adeimantus and Glaucon successfully lure Socrates into giving his answer[60] at the start of Book II.

It is in the 'making way' section that we see Thrasymachus' motivation for entering the conversation as well. That Thrasymachus says Socrates asks rather than answers 'to gratify [Socrates'] love of honour, shows that to Thrasymachus, Socrates' behaviour seems to be that of a seeker of honour, but while Socrates is accused of many things in the dialogues, this is probably the only time that someone accuses him of acting for his own honour's sake.[61] As such, that Thrasymachus assumes Socrates is withholding the answer for honour's sake should tell us that when Thrasymachus withholds his own answer, he himself does it for honour's sake.

Yet Thrasymachus makes a critical error in his quest for the asker position: by saying "what if I could show you another answer about justice…?",[62] Thrasymachus admits he has a definition to give. Socrates uses this statement as leverage to compel Thrasymachus to give an answer; Socrates can maintain his accustomed position of the 'asker' by simple patience. Thrasymachus continues to press Socrates for an answer[63] but and he simply waits for an opportunity to drive home his advantage. Indeed, it is the other attendees who present the opportunity to drive home the advantage when they get involved.[64] Of this exchange Socrates says, "Thrasymachus evidently desired to speak so that he could win a good reputation…But he kept up the pretense of wanting to prevail on me to do the answering".[65]

This exchange is noteworthy for a few reasons. First, not only is Thrasymachus shown to defer to the wishes of the crowd, which possibly indicates he wishes the honour that approval of

60. Plato, *The Republic,* 357a-367e.
61. If nothing else, at 338a, Socrates says "gratify me by answering" to Thrasymachus, which would suggest that the answer in itself is what would gratify Socrates, and not the honour the position of 'asker' might hold.
62. Plato, *The Republic*, 337c.
63. Plato, *The Republic*, 337bc.
64. Plato, *The Republic*, 338a.
65. Plato, *The Republic*, 338a.

the crowd would grant him. Second and third, Socrates reports two cases of Thrasymachus seeking honour in the same sentence: it is his desire for a good reputation that makes him want to answer, but that he wishes to compel Socrates to answer further suggests that he still wants the position which he previously claimed to be honour-winning. He is, in effect, torn between which honour he wants to pursue, the asker position or the direction the crowd wants him to take, and Socrates uses this knowledge to compel him to give his answer.

Thrasymachus also brings into the conversation the possibility that he be paid, either as a means of punishing Socrates or as compensation for giving his definition of justice. Thrasymachus demands Socrates "pay a fine in money"[66] if Thrasymachus can show him and the others present that his definition is better than any Socrates might be able to offer. As a sophist, that Thrasymachus demands payment to 'teach' Socrates, should not be surprising to us. What is odd here is that he demands payment if and only if, he is able prove he has the stronger argument.

Clearly, he wants the money, but, if we are correct about him being a timocrat, he cannot ask for money outright because wage-earning is dishonourable. Instead, he has to make his receipt of money a condition of his victory because money as a prize is not dishonorable, or possibly less dishonorable, to a timocrat. If this is the case, we could understand Thrasymachus' action here as an attempt to turn his payment into a prize earned by defeating his opponent. It matters not if he seeks the prize for money's sake or for honour's; what is critical is that he turns his payment into a prize.

What is more, Thrasymachus wants his prize to be a penalty paid by Socrates himself not Glaucon or others since the money coming from Socrates would be all the more noteworthy.

66. Plato, *The Republic*, 337c, 337d.

Glaucon offers to pay, urging, "now, for money's sake, speak, Thrasymachus. We shall all contribute for Socrates" and Thrasymachus replies, "I certainly believe it… so that Socrates can get away with his usual trick; he'll not answer himself, and when someone else has answered he gets a hold of the argument and refutes it."[67] This exchange shows that it is apparent to Glaucon that Thrasymachus is seeking money, but it also shows that Thrasymachus is not willing to accept money in any fashion as he chides Glaucon for giving Socrates an 'out' with which he can escape impunity. Taking money from Glaucon and the others might be seen as him taking a wage from his audience rather than demonstrating his victory over Socrates. Note though, Thrasymachus does not refuse the money.

2.3.2 Thrasymachus and his Famous Blush

Later on, it is not entirely clear why Thrasymachus blushes[68] in the conversation. It is clear that the blush is meant to convey shame, but what causes the shame is not immediately clear. We can consider three possibilities as to why Thrasymachus blushes, each of which may plausibly support our suspicion that Thrasymachus is a timocrat, but none of which are wholly satisfactory in their explanation of either the blush or the argument from Socrates which produces it.

It may be that Thrasymachus blushes because he was somehow tricked by Socrates earlier in the conversation, and that he has only just now realised the deceit and it is too late to call Socrates out for the deception. The likely candidate for the trick that Socrates deploys and Thrasymachus misses is in Socrates' discussion of virtue. Socrates establishes a) that knowers do not try to get the better of other knowers,[69] and b) since the i) just man does not try to get the

67. Plato, *The Republic* 337de.
68. Plato, *The Republic,* 350d.
69. Plato, *The Republic,* 349e-350b.

better of the just, and ii) the unjust man tries to get the better of both the just and the unjust,[70] c) the just man is the knower and the unjust man is the ignorant one.[71] The trick here comes from the assumption that all knowers of a knowledge do not seek to get the better of one another. Not only was "making war"[72] established as an art earlier, but the example that Socrates uses, of musical men not wishing to out-tune other musicians, borders on the absurd. For while a lyre is either in or out of tune, musicians, and just about any other artisan, often compete with one another to make better versions of their art.[73] The problem with this interpretation is then that it would still be reasonable for Thrasymachus to call out Socrates' faulty reasoning here, as he did when Thrasymachus clarifies his position after Cleitophon and Polemarchus interject.[74] Thus If Thrasymachus is deceived, then this would serve as further evidence that he is not skilled in things that one would most readily acquire from a musical education.

We might also consider that Thrasymachus was not tricked, but rather, that he has some commitment to virtue and is ashamed to have the position for which he argues likened to vice and not virtue. Remember that the timocrat loves not simply money and honour, but virtue as well, so to be shown to support a vice would be to support something which is opposite to that which he desires. Thrasymachus still thinks highly of virtue: agreeing that wisdom[75] and prudence[76] are virtues and implicitly that virtue is desirable. His disagreement with Socrates is over the status of justice and injustice as virtues. Whether or not Socrates resorted to trickery, it is not the trick that embarrasses Thrasymachus, but that Socrates has made him look as though he supports vice as opposed to virtue. Whether or not the argument is cogent, Thrasymachus

70. Plato, *The Republic,* 350b.
71. Plato, *The Republic,* 350bc.
72. Plato, *The Republic*, 332e.
73. Consider Plato's *Symposium*.
74. Plato, *The Republic*, 330d-341a.
75. Plato, *The Republic*, 351c.
76. Plato, *The Republic*, 349c.

cannot bear to look be seen to be supporting vice. Thrasymachus' apparent commitment to virtue here is consistent with the timocrat.

Lastly, we could consider also that Thrasymachus is ashamed of the way that he has treated Socrates over the course of the conversation. Recall, that Socrates says that "with slaves" the timocrat "would be brutal", but with "freemen he would be tame and to rulers most obedient"[77]. It may be then that Thrasymachus has been working under the assumption that Socrates is somehow contemptable, not quite a slave, but certainly not an equal as the freeman would be to Thrasymachus. The basis for this argument is that Thrasymachus becomes tame after he blushes, which would suggest that Thrasymachus has realised that Socrates is not his inferior, but his peer or superior. Of course, we know too that timocrats are not ones to immediately obey authority. If they can get away with it, they will run "from the law like boys from a father."[78] Socrates has not coerced Thrasymachus here though, it would seem instead that he has impressed upon the sophist that he has something to learn from Socrates.

Whatever the reason that Thrasymachus blushes, that he blushes is perhaps the strongest evidence that he is a timocratic soul. Thrasymachus is the only one in *The Republic* to show any physiological response to emotions, which would associate him closely with spiritedness and therefore the timocrat.[79] He is either less able to hide his emotions than the others, or he is more invested in the conversation than they are, but that is to say that he *cares* a great deal for either those present or his honour. Remember that Cephalus is also somewhat embarrassed by the position that Socrates puts him in, and yet his response is to leave, and, while doing so, laughing

77. Plato, *The Republic*, 548e-549a.
78. Plato, *The Republic*, 548a.
79. Cf. Socrates' blush in *The Phaedrus* Plato, *The Phaedrus,* 342c

at his son's small joke.[80] To Cephalus, and Polemarchus, the stakes of the conversation are not nearly as high as for Thrasymachus.

2.3.3 Thrasymachus, a Tyrant?

I think we have established the case for why Thrasymachus is a timocrat. But we have not addressed an apparent alternative to Thrasymachus' character—that he is in fact a tyrant. [81] The assumption that Thrasymachus is a tyrant comes mostly from his open, unqualified praise of the tyrant. Yet what we find is he praises the tyrant on timocratic grounds. We need also address Thrasymachus' preoccupation with the crowd and Socrates use of similar zoological allusions to describe Thrasymachus and the tyrant, for they might also be raised as evidence that Thrasymachus is a tyrant. We will find that the preoccupation is incidental—two souls desiring the same end for different reasons—and that the allusions show similarity, but nor identity.

Were we to argue that Thrasymachus is a tyrant, a good place to start would undoubtedly be where Thrasymachus says:

> [the tyrant] gets called happy and blessed, not only by the citizens but also by whomever else hears that he has done injustice entire. For it is not because they fear doing unjust deeds, but because they fear suffering them, that those who blame injustice do so. So, Socrates, injustice, when it comes into being on a sufficient scale, is mightier, freer, and more masterful than justice; and, as I have said from the beginning, the just is the advantage of the stronger, and unjust is what is profitable and advantageous for oneself.[82]

One might conclude that such a breathless exhortation of the tyrant can only serve to demonstrate that Thrasymachus' is the tyrant. While breathless, this exhortation is precisely the kind of praise that we would expect a timocrat to make. While the Tyrant would certainly seek praise from the crowd,[83] so would the timocrat, as he desires the praise from the crowd as a sign

80. Plato, *The Republic*, 331d.
81. For longer accounts of why Thrasymachus is a tyrant, see Jan Patocka, *Plato and Europe: Cultural Memory in the Present*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 85-128; and Ralph Wedgewood. "The Coherence of Thrasymachus". *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 53 (2018): 35-66.
82. Plato, *The Republic,* 344ac.
83. Plato, *The Republic*, 568d.

of his victory or conquest. Thrasymachus thinks the crowd praises the tyrant because he has accomplished something they could not, and specifically, that he is the only one to have conquered his fear of punishment to seize power, while later on, the tyrant is praised, at first at least, because he has rescued the others from the chaotic-ness of the democracy turned bad. Similarly, the reasons Thrasymachus' ideas have a timocratic sense to them—might and mastery connote victory, while by 'freer' we can at least imagine that Socrates has something in mind like the timocrat's opposition to obedience. While he does praise the tyrant here, Thrasymachus does so on extremely timocratic grounds. That a timocrat praises the tyrant should not be surprising since nothing in *The Republic* says that two soul-types might desire the same thing for different reasons (albeit for different reasons).

That fear is mentioned here at all is somewhat surprising because we have not talked about fear in the context of either Thrasymachus or of the timocracy: the most spiritedness regime. But given both their preoccupation with warfare, and that they are most guided by the part of the soul which deals with fear, would mean the timocrats would consider the conquest of fear to be particularly significant in their understanding of ethics. The man who is able to overcome that which he perceives all others to fear is not simply the victor; his feats border on the heroic. So it is precisely that the tyrant does something, that the tyrant performs a feat particularly appealing to the timocrat, that he finds the actions of the tyrant so praiseworthy.

That Thrasymachus praises injustice in the wider section of the text here[84] might also make one think that he is a tyrant since that soul/regime is aligned with perfect injustice. Remember though, that the timocrat is more ambivalent to justice for several reasons. It is up to the ruler or leader to enforce justice on their subjects or subordinates, and their understanding of

84. Plato, *The Republic*, 343b-344c.

ruling is the art of getting others to obey through various means. To not enforce justice onto others is evidence that one is not fit to rule, and, because they both wish to be ruled by a good ruler (insofar as good timocratic rulers win victories and share both the victory and the spoils with their subordinates) and wish to be rulers themselves (because they see ruling itself as a prize) means that the subordinate timocrats will challenge the authority of their superiors and this would be counted as unjust. As such, it is perfectly reasonable for Thrasymachus, if he is a timocrat, to praise injustice, especially if he sees no reason, incentive, or consequence, to obey the established ruling body. To rule as the tyrant does here, is to rule perfectly on timocratic grounds, which is to say without the help of others (or with the help of only a few).

As such, it would also appear that Thrasymachus and Socrates are discussing the term tyrant in *The Republic* differently, for while Socrates speaks of regimes to describe the relationship between education, desire, the city and the citizen (and, as I argue, justice, however implicitly), Thrasymachus is simply praising the technical description of the tyranny: where one man rules in a city without some kind of hereditary or traditional authority. Socrates understands the tyrant as someone who seeks to satisfy his desires without shame, and thereby needs to subsume the city under himself to achieve his end.[85] So, even if there were something in the text that would indicate that the soul-types are somehow prohibited from what another soul-type tends to have (with the understanding that the same ends may be desired for different reasons) that the timocratic soul praises the tyrant should not be surprising.

Some might argue that the fact that Thrasymachus seems to be able to be swayed by the crowd is also in itself evidence that he is a tyrant. This is not the case. For while Socrates says the tyrant is to some extent dependent on the many to come to power,[86] and consequently gives

85. Plato, *The Republic*, 571ce
86. Plato, *The Republic*, 566e.

them what they ask for, at least until he can come to power,[87] and this might appear as if the tyrant is preoccupied with the opinions of the crowd, it is not the praise of others which the tyrant truly desires. Praise is merely a means to an end for the tyrant, while praise is the end for the timocrat. Conversely, Socrates is twice persuaded by what the others want him to do: first on the Road in Book I[88] and again before he begins the digression of Books V to VII.[89] Socrates is not going along with what the crowd wants simply to please the crowd, but for some other end. Indeed, Socrates seems to follow the will of the crowd first because it is what Glaucon wants to do, and second because it is what the others say is required to defend justice. It seems then that the philosopher, as well as the timocrat and tyrant have a cause to follow what the other would want them to do.

Some others might raise the issue of the allusions to wolves that Socrates uses when describing Thrasymachus and the tyrant. Of Thrasymachus, Socrates says, "I think that if I had not seen him before he saw me, I would have been speechless," (an apparent reference to a popular belief about wolves)[90], and of the tyrant Socrates twice likens the transformation of a man into a tyrant to a man into a wolf.[91] Yet Socrates uses similes to a wild beast[92] and a lion[93] as well, and the various uses of wild beasts would suggest that Socrates is trying to convey an image of a wild and spirited man, one who is not ruled by the reasoning part of his soul, rather than directly likening him to a tyrant. Again, we see that there are similarities to Thrasymachus and the tyrant, but nothing, except his praise of the tyrant, to tie him to tyranny.

87. Plato, *The Republic*, 565c.
88. Plato, *The Republic*, 328b.
89. Plato, *The Republic*, 450a.
90. Plato, *The Republic*, 336d, Bloom n30.
91. Plato, *The Republic*, 565e, 566a.
92. Plato, *The Republic*, 336b.
93. Plato, *The Republic*, 341c.

That Thrasymachus' praise of the tyrant can be read in timocratic terms and that Socrates' use of 'wild beasts' to describe both the tyrant and Thrasymachus can be explained away will not and should not completely dispel our suspicion that Thrasymachus has a tyrannic soul. For us to be certain, we need find something in the description of the tyrant in Book VIII or IX that is sufficiently distinct from what we know of Thrasymachus already. In the interest of time, we cannot examine the whole of the section on tyranny, and so we will consider only that which serves our interest in disproving the claim that Thrasymachus is a tyrant. I put it to you that it is simply that Thrasymachus is shamed,[94] but that the Tyrant is shameless insofar as they seek to satisfy any and all desire,[95] that shows that Thrasymachus is not the tyrant.

Our analysis of the passage between when Thrasymachus enters the conversation and shows that Thrasymachus is motivated by money and honour, but that the way he goes about trying to win money and honour is like the timocrat in terms of both his spirited and emotional approach and his myopic tactical decisions and errors that will make it harder to win the favour of the crowd and allow Socrates to evade Thrasymachus' demand to answer and press Thrasymachus at the same time. Now, to lose to Socrates, a master in the art of taking the position of asker, is in no way a deficiency against Thrasymachus, and we have seen far shrewder and cagier interlocutors compelled to speak by Socrates and on Socrates' terms. But we can see that Thrasymachus could have put up a better showing.

Just the quantity and variety of mistakes is somewhat telling of his lack of understanding of how to conduct an argument. Some of these we have discussed, others are apparent if we return to the text, but he alienates all in attendance by his outburst, he mis-judges Socrates' motivation and character, he presses Socrates to answer before establishing that Socrates has an

94. Plato, *The Republic*, 350d.
95. Plato, *The Republic*, 571dc.

answer to give, he lets slip that he himself has an answer, and he is lured by the crowd's wants. Taken together, it is obvious that Thrasymachus lacks an understanding of the finer points of argumentation and instead relies on sheer spiritedness to overawe or overwhelm his opponents.

Most of the content of Thrasymachus' actual discussion of justice will be examined when we turn our attention there in the next section, but there are a few more points I would like to raise as evidence that Thrasymachus fits the criteria as a timocrat as stated above. The later point in the text shows that Thrasymachus is a timocrat by way of showing his commitment to victory, the latter, by way of showing that he has been tricked and that he has a dramatic connection to the *thumos* through his blush.

2.4 Timocratic Justice

That Thrasymachus is a timocrat is meant to indicate to us that his definition is timocratic. However, that he is a timocrat does not necessarily mean his definition of justice is timocratic. We need to consider the finer points of the definition as it relates to the timocratic city and soul to understand why Thrasymachus' definition is timocratic. Thrasymachus speaks to Socrates for almost half of Book I, but the definition only takes up a few pages, he first tries to force Socrates to define the just, as we saw above, and then most of Thrasymachus' section is taken up by Socrates' attempt to refute Thrasymachus' definition. Clearly, Socrates' explicit arguments do not refute this definition, however, implicitly, Socrates successfully refutes the definition for his audience in this conversation: the timocratic Thrasymachus.

2.4.1 The Timocratic Definition

We know that Thrasymachus' definition of justice, that it is "nothing other than the advantage of the stronger", [96] is timocratic because it assumes that justice is a prize to be held by

96. Plato, *Republic,* 338c.

those who are strong enough to keep it, but to see this, we need to develop the definition a little more. When Socrates asks if it is just for the weak to eat meat because it is good for Polydamas to eat meat, Thrasymachus rejects the premise, [97] which indicates to us that Thrasymachus is not interested in instances in which the actions of the strong also, probably incidentally, help the poor. Rather, he thinks that the strongest group lays down laws which benefit them,[98] and often, we may suspect that it is advantageous for the strong to keep others weak so that the weak cannot challenge the strong. In other words, as Thrasymachus says, justice is merely the laws set down by the most powerful group within a given city,[99] these laws often, incidentally or otherwise, harm the weaker faction(s) within the city and there is no essential quality to justice other than this.

So far, Thrasymachus' definition is perfectly compatible with both tyranny and timocracy. Thrasymachus separates his definition of justice from the tyrannical one when he states that "the ruler insofar as he is a ruler, does not make mistakes; and not making mistakes, he sets down what is best for himself.[100] Consequently, making mistakes weakens and even threatens the rulers' position.[101] When they are overthrown for making mistakes, the rulers have no one to blame but themselves—for they squandered what was otherwise an insurmountable advantage. Indeed, the ruler cannot even claim that the group challenging their rule is unjust in a positive sense—for the rulers set down the laws the weak use to challenge the strong. Justice then is the advantage of the stronger, regardless of who happens to be stronger. If the democrats cede power to the tyrant, or overthrow an oligarchic regime, it is simply a change in the relative strength of

97. Plato, *Republic,* 338d.
98. Plato, *Republic,* 338e-339a.
99. Plato, *Republic,* 338e-339a.
100. Plato, *Republic,* 341a.
101. Whether or not this other faction was benefited directly by the ruler's mistakes.

the various factions of the city and justice is more-or-less silent on the subject of particular rulers. Under this definition justice becomes, just as the ruling offices for a timocrat, a prize which is won and lost by the strong or cunning.

Note that justice only pertains to the laws, and not actual order of the citizens or groups within a city unlike what is said later by Socrates[102]. As such, the justice of any given city is mere convention, and there is no necessary reason to follow what is said to be just. The ruled must do what is just because they are weak, but Thrasymachus accepts that strength is relative to the other individuals or people within the city. There is nothing essential about weakness, and there is nothing inherently wrong with a weaker group becoming strong or stronger. Indeed, implicit in the way that Thrasymachus proposes his definition, is that the weak challenging the strong make the strong stronger. The strong would invite others to challenge their rule.

That Thrasymachus understands justice in this way is made all the more clear because it is a rejection of Cleitophon's amendment. Socrates asks Thrasymachus what he thinks of an apparent contradiction in the definition as he apparently set it down: that is that it is both just and unjust for the weak to do as the strong command when the strong deem something that is not to their advantage to be just.[103] In response, Cleitophon offers an amendment to the previous definition by saying "the advantage of the stronger is what the stronger believe to be [their] advantage".[104] In Cleitophon's amendment, it is clearly and always unjust for the weak to go against the interest of the strong. Their obligation is serve the strong. Indeed, because the definition relies on belief, and not actual advantageousness, the strong can rescind any command

102. Plato, *Republic,* 433e ("the having and doing of one's own and what belongs to oneself would be agreed to be justice"), 434b ("Meddling among the classes, of which there are three, and exchange with one another is the greatest harm for the city and would most correctly be called extreme evil-doing").
103. Plato, *The Republic*, 339e.
104. Plato, *The Republic*, 340ab.

once it is apparent that this was not to their advantage, and it would be unjust for the weak not to obey *even if* they are now strong enough to refuse that command.

It would seem that 'the stronger' is an immutable title in Cleitophon's definition. With the argument Thrasymachus makes, there is a clear way to tell who is the stronger—the one who errs, and errs frequently, is not strong, and one can lose the title of 'the stronger' simply by making too many errors. Conversely, Cleitophon's statement does not contain a suggestion of how we might determine who the stronger are, and that he does not define the stronger, along with the apparent ability of 'the strong' to reverse course when they realise what they set down is not in their advantage, makes it seem as though 'the strong' are the strong because they are strong, and not because of any actual demonstration of their ability to rule as with Thrasymachus.

The way that Cleitophon's amendment is presented is meant to show the audience, both those present in the text and those reading it, something about Thrasymachus' definition. It is possible that Cleitophon does have an idea of how he would define the strong with his definition, but he does not even get to suggest what this might be, and so I think we are supposed to assume that his argument is meant to highlight that, for Thrasymachus, the stronger, the ruler, and therefore justice, are not static things, but change as the relative strengths of factions change within the body, the city, or world.[105]

It is for this reason we know the advantage-of-the-stronger definition is the timocratic one. This definition turns justice into a prize one can hold only so long as someone does not

105. I think there is a case to be made that Cleitophon's amendment is more consistent, not with the tyrant himself, but with the situation in the democracy that allows the tyrant to come about. The tyranny comes about from democracy when the freedoms of others become a threat to the freedoms of others, and the regime becomes about protecting one's freedoms from others rather than pursing freedom (564a-565a). It would seem those looking for salvation from the anarchy of a democracy turned bad turn to a "special leader" which becomes a tyrant (565d). Because they seek this tyrant as a means of avoiding the unpleasantness of freedom, they would assume that anything that goes against the tyrant is necessarily a bad thing. As such, they would see any thing the tyrant sets down as just, regardless of what that thing set down would is.

come along and take it away. To determine what is just is something that one must hold against those who would disagree with one. The definition then, allows the timocrat, in seeking justice, to seek something which they themselves desire: victory over the other claimants to justice, and honour from the privilege of saying what is just. Indeed, this would give us yet another reason that Thrasymachus seems so frustrated with the style of argument that Polemarchus and Socrates adopt, and why he seems to care so much about the conversation. As a timocrat, Thrasymachus desires justice as he understands it, which is not something we can say about the more ambivalent oligarch or democrat.

The advantage-of-the-stronger definition also allows the timocrats to openly seek the other things that they desire. As one example, conquest is always just under this definition. The very act of taking a city and holding it is a sign of strength. The timocrat need not concern themselves with the conquered city or their wishes—if they wanted a say in what is just, they should have defended their city successfully. To win any prize then, is just, and winning it in a way that shows that one is stronger gives one a better claim to deciding what it just.

Nothing but the demonstration of strength, the ability to compel others, determines who is the stronger, so if the strong decide something is just, they must also enforce it. Justice is not simply a prize in the sense that to determine what is just is the privilege of the stronger, but determining what is just also serves to demonstrate one's strength. The weak on the other hand, have no say in what is just, but the weak do not need to follow what the just say, and it is for this reason that Thrasymachus praises injustice. For because justice is simply the advantage over another, if one is sufficiently unjust, that is to say strong enough, to go against what the strong command, then one shows oneself to be strong, and therefore have the opportunity to say what is just. It would seem then that, under the definition of justice he supports, Thrasymachus is right to

praise injustice—to be unjust and avoid punishment is to be strong enough to at least challenge the arbitrary justice that is in place.

But the definition is more cooperative than Thrasymachus, or our description of it, make it seem so far. Only the most exceptional man would be strong enough to rule a city on their own. Instead, the rulers must share the duty of ruling amongst themselves to create a stable government within the city. That a timocrat is so rarely strong enough to rule on his own is why creates web of loyalties, coercion, and incentives come about in the timocracy: as a way of ensuring that those in power remain so. So, a small cadre of rulers, all cooperating with each other only so long as it is still to their advantage to do so is the most likely arrangement one will see in a timocracy.

2.4.2 Socrates' Criticisms of Timocratic Justice

But then we have stumbled on the primary failing of the timocratic account of justice: that their definition pits the glory of the city against their own personal glory, and so their definition makes it harder to win honour of either kind. This is also the main thrust of the critiques that Socrates levels against Thrasymachus' argument to which we will now turn. Socrates levels four distinct critiques against the definition: that art is aimed at the betterment of the subject and not the artisan, that Thrasymachus does not understand friendship and personal relationships, his commentary around Thrasymachus' blush, and that justice is required to achieve victory on the scale of both city and soul. Importantly, these criticisms are not in themselves fatal to the definition. They do, however, show a timocrat, like the blushing Thrasymachus, that this definition is ultimately contrary to the things which they actually desire—virtue and honour. This section serves also as dramatic demonstration as to how to turn a timocrat back towards the good: exploit the shame they feel towards their desire for money and

turn their love of the crowd (insofar as they are a source of honour to them) towards caring for the members of the many in and of itself, and turn their love of the crowd into the love of the individuals present.

The first criticism Socrates raises against the definition is that the arts seek the good of the thing at which the art is directed and not the art itself or the artisan, and so, as ruling is an art, ruling seeks the betterment of the ruled and not the ruler.[106] Thrasymachus objects, raising the example of the shepherd, cowherds, and rulers as arts which exploit their wards.[107] Socrates counters that Thrasymachus was not speaking in the "strict sense" as he was before, and has confused the herder for a money maker, and because the herder asks for payment, he must be looking out for the good of the herd.[108]

We might raise several objections to the claim that the herder looks to the good of his flock. Of course, the herders are not paid by the herd, but by their employers or in the market when they come to sell the animals. We might also suspect that, if Socrates' argument that all artisans demand a wage, then all arts contain some small part of moneymaking. The herder is only there to fatten the animals, as Thrasymachus says, so that they might be slaughtered. But I would conjecture that we must remember that Socrates is speaking to a timocrat when he makes this argument, and that his intent of this argument is to show that something which timocrats are ashamed of, money and their desire for it, is the cause for the exploitation of sheep, cows, and the ruled alike as Thrasymachus claims.

Socrates offers that there are three kinds of payment that rulers demand: money, honour, and a "penalty" if the man best suited to rule "should not rule".[109] The timocrat desires all three

106. Plato, *The Republic,* Socrates establishes the foundation for the claim 341d-343a, and states it at 343a.
107. Plato, *The Republic,* 343ab.
108. Plato, *The Republic,* 345ce.
109. Plato, *The Republic,* 347a.

of these things if we understand the penalty to be the possession of virtue. By saying that "the good aren't willing to rule for the sake of money or honour", and that the money seekers are either hirelings or thieves and the good are not honour seekers, [110] Socrates establishes a hierarchy of the things that Thrasymachus already desires as a timocrat. Socrates is in effect turning Thrasymachus' desire to rule into an incentive for him to want to be good. He gives reason that a timocrat like Thrasymachus should be ashamed of desiring to rule for money or honour's sake but offers him an alternative: he desires rule because he is good and does not wish to suffer being ruled by his inferior. More generally, we see that Socrates has used Thrasymachus' desire to rule to turn him towards the desire of the good rather than his lesser desires.

Between the two parts of Socrates' argument that the arts work for the good of the object of the art, and that the rulers always demand some kind of payment for ruling, Thrasymachus gives the exhortation of tyranny,[111] and then tries to leave, but is "forced to stay" by the others.[112] In turn, Socrates admonishes him for trying to leave before giving the whole argument, and then says, "you have no care for us" were he to leave.[113] Thrasymachus is compelled once again to do as the crowd asks, although they are more forceful here than they were when they wanted him to define justice. Earlier, we established that he desires to obey the crowd because he wishes to win honour. But here Socrates offers a different reason that Thrasymachus stays: that he cares for the betterment of at least those present. Now, it is to Thrasymachus' advantage (and therefore he can reason that it is just) to not inform others of the true definition of justice. It is all the easier to

110. Plato, *The Republic,* 347c.
111. Plato, *The Republic,* 343b-344c.
112. Plato, *The Republic,* 344d. Socrates does not include himself in 'the others.'
113. Plato, *The Republic,* 344e-345a.

exploit the weaker if they are not aware of the true definition of justice. And yet, he not only gives the true definition, but he stays to try to convince the others that he is right.

Now, we can attribute this to his desire to win honour, but when Socrates suggests that Thrasymachus cares if he stays, we should wonder if it is care that compelled him to stay all along. Thrasymachus might not even be aware that this was the reason that he stayed, thinking he was actually interested in honour or even with winning the penalty he claimed he was owed. I think we are meant to read this as a means to more generally turn timocrats back towards the good: take their love of the crowd and turn it into the care of those *in* the crowd. By doing so, Socrates brings to Thrasymachus' attention a reason to consider the good of others for the sake of that he cares about the others. This speaks to a fundamental problem also with timocratic justice on the whole: there is no consideration to whom one's friends are and how one must act towards those for whom one cares. This may be why the oligarchy takes an ostensible interest in friends and enemies in their definition, even though there is a problem with how they deal with friends and enemies as well. On the whole, the success of the timocracy as a city depends in large part to the loyalty of the top group to itself, and so it seems it cannot deal with friendship and suggests that this is yet another deficiency in the timocratic argument.

As we said before, it is difficult to establish exactly what about Socrates' argument that causes Thrasymachus' blush. However, and while this is also evidence that Thrasymachus is a timocrat, we may understand that that Thrasymachus blushes as instruction on how to deal with timocrats. Remember that there is something wrong with Socrates' argument but that Thrasymachus blushes rather than calling out the probable deception anyway. We may take this to mean here that lovers of honour must be shamed before they will listen, for after

Thrasymachus blushes, he seems to give up the argument.[114] He does not leave as Cephalus does, and he continues "to give very fine answers"[115] which would suggest that he is not completely 'checked out' of the conversation—he still has some investment in what is going to be said.

The fourth criticism is leveled after Thrasymachus blushes and then becomes tame—it is that justice within a group is required to maintain sufficient order within a group so that they may commit injustice against those outside it.[116] The point here is twofold, not only does injustice depend on justice, and what is implied in this argument is that justice does not depend on injustice, but that some group acts unjust towards the outsiders produces within the group distrust and hatred. When Socrates states that injustice appears in a body rather than within a group of men, and that makes the man "unable to act, because he is at faction and is not one mind of himself"[117] we may surmise that this occurs also in the group, and that injustice can and will paralyze some company[118] against action for which they organized.

Yet when we remember that this is said to a timocrat, we realise also that Socrates' argument is designed to dismantle the whole system of justice that the timocrat has set up. For the argument puts personal honour and victory of the group, let us say a city, into conflict with one another. The timocrat does not have an intrinsic reason to obey the stronger, but here Socrates presents one: that to disobey the rulers of a city is to make it harder for the city to win victory. It is not simply that one obeys the rulers because one has decided that the rulers' plan can win honour, or that they obey in the hopes of reward or a fear of punishment, Socrates is suggesting that one owes some loyalty to one's city. In short then, Socrates shows the

114. Plato, *The Republic,* 350e-351ab.
115. Plato, *The Republic,* 351c.
116. Plato, *The Republic,* 351d.
117. Plato, *The Republic,* 352a.
118. i.e. a grouping of people organized towards a common cause, and not a business relationship necessarily.

fundamental flaw of the timocracy—that while the timocratic city and soul are directed towards the same ends, personal honour often conflicts with the honour of the city, and there is no way of overcoming this conflict within the timocratic understanding of justice.

The timocracy, city and soul, is built on the love of honour as a compromise between the love of money and virtue. Yet without the understanding of justice in that city which we gain from establishing Thrasymachus as a timocrat, the strengths and weaknesses of that definition are likely missed. It is up to the rulers to dictate and enforce justice onto the ruled, and such an arrangement creates strong, competent, driven rulers necessarily, for an inept ruler is quickly replaced with someone more suited to the job.

The problem with this city, however, is explained by the criticisms Socrates levels above, and there are some serious deficiencies in the way that the timocracy understands justice. Most prominent, is that the definition cannot reconcile personal and public glory—the desires are always, in a timocracy, in conflict to some extent. It would seem then that the greatest threat to a timocracy as Socrates describes it, is faction within the city. Because they will not obey without an obvious reason to do so, which we can call injustice in the eyes of the timocracy, and that injustice causes faction, the timocracy is particularly prone to faction. Indeed, if there is no outside force[119] to keep the timocrats united against, the regime is likely to fall to faction rather quickly and bring about the oligarchy.

Chapter 3: Oligarchy and Polemarchus:

3.1 The Oligarchic City

The oligarchy is a "regime founded on a property assessment… in which the rich rule and poor man has no part in ruling."[120] It comes about when the money-loving part of the timocracy

119. Plato, *The Republic*, 547b.
120. Plato, *The Republic*, 550d.

wins over the honour/virtue loving part, and rulers begin to 'value' material wealth rather than honour, victory or virtue.[121] It is "The treasure house full of gold…which each man has," and that was introduced in the compromise that first created the timocracy that "destroys the regime"[the timocracy]. First, they seek out expenditures for themselves and pervert laws in that direction; they themselves and their wives disobey them" [the laws].[122]

Earlier, the timocrats were said to flee "the law like boys from the father" because they were educated only through force and gymnastic, and not the right kind of musical education to understand why one should obey the laws for their own sake.[123] Even so, the timocrats at least partially understood the need to obey the law and obeyed the laws at least when they believed they were being watched or would be caught. Here though, the oligarchs, or at least the oligarchic rulers,[124] are willing to openly amend the laws to their personal interest and openly break the laws when they do not suit them. That they are willing to amend the laws in their interest implies that the timocrats had some reliance on the laws as they were set down and would amend them only sparingly.

This is important into our inquiry into the nature of justice because it suggests two non-exclusive possibilities. The first is that the timocrat was unwilling to amend laws, the second, that the difference between the justice of the oligarchy and timocracy is far greater than that of the city in speech and the timocracy. If the timocrat was unwilling to amend laws, this would further support the idea that the timocratic soul still has some allegiance to tradition through a longing for musical education. At this point, it seems that the education of the rulers has been

121. Plato, *The Republic*, 550de. From Bloom's notes (n9), the word he translates as 'assessment'*,* *timēma*, can mean both 'value' or 'honour'.
122. Plato, The Republic, 550d.
123. Plato, The Republic, 548c.
124. We will find that the oligarchic man is more or less in accord with this description, but he is not yet being discussed.

neglected to such an extent that the oligarchs have no understanding of why the laws should be obeyed. If the shift between regimes is greater this time around, it would imply either that justice is now simply some body's self-interest, which we will see is not quite the case, or simply there is an oligarchic standard of justice, but is incompatible with laws that are interested in preserving virtue as set down in the city in speech.

The observation that their wives will openly break the laws as well[125] suggests two things: that the wives are at least somewhat independent of their husbands and that the wives understand their status on the basis of their husbands. However, it also speaks to a lack of order: if the perfectly-just city had women equal to men, but now the wives are not said to be part of the oligarchy, and so presumably are again subject to their husbands' authority. Yet if they are willing to disobey the law because of their husbands' authority, it seems doubtful that the oligarchic wives would be willing to obey their husbands if it did not suit them.

It is the private wealth, that eventually results in the creation of a pure oligarchy.[126] As money making becomes a more acceptable pastime,[127] virtue is regarded less and less.[128] Indeed, Socrates goes so far as to say that money and virtue are opposites, and that honouring one leads to the neglect of the other[129] which would support our supposition that justice has shifted fundamentally from timocracy to oligarchy. Eventually, the citizens "become lovers of money-making and money; and they praise and admire the wealthy man and bring him to the ruling offices, while they dishonour the poor man;"[130] and so wealth becomes a necessary criterion to occupy the ruling offices. This remark made in passing helps us to understand why the regression

125. Plato, *The Republic*, 550e.
126. Plato, *The Republic*, 550e.
127. i.e. money making beyond self-sufficiency.
128. Plato, *The Republic*, 550e-551a.
129. Plato, *The Republic*, 550e-551a.
130. Plato, *The Republic*, 551a

of the regimes is in the order it is. The timocracy still seeks to be virtuous, even if they seek it for the honour and praise of others and then perhaps the prizes which others would or must give to them. The oligarchy here is opposed to virtue, but at least they are committed to some kind of order, whereas the democracy, insofar as it is preoccupied with pleasure and freedom, is even more disordered.

The timocratic city is hesitant to bring their version of the wise man into the ruling offices,[131] but this hesitancy does not seem to exist here for the oligarchy, who expect and legislate for their rulers to be wealthy.[132] Perhaps the hesitancy to elect the best among the oligarchs (i.e., the richest), carries over from the timocracy, but this is not said explicitly. Socrates claims the key flaw of the oligarchy is the wealth qualification to ruling, but that wealth is not a good indicator of skill and especially skill in ruling a city.[133] On the surface, Socrates' argument seems a bit too harsh: for a rich pilot presumably is, at least, a competent one, even if there may be poorer, better pilots for the ship owner to choose.[134] The wealth qualification is at least a reasonable measure of the ability of an artisan, in the same way that an account of a genera5l's record in battles and on campaign would be a good indicator of his success in battle. The problem arises when we overextend the role which wealth plays. We might imagine a skilled pilot or capable ruler being passed over for a self-made rich man. To the question of ruling, the moderation, organization, and commitment necessary to amass a fortune would seem, in theory, to translate fairly well to the ruling of a city, though these may only be necessary conditions for good rulers.

131. Plato, *The Republic*, 548e.
132. Plato, *The Republic*, 551b
133. Plato, *The Republic*, 551bc.
134. Plato, *The Republic*, 551c.

As we abstract one's fortune further from these things which both amass fortunes and make one a good ruler. We might imagine a situation where a man who has inherited his fortune is given a ruling office on the reasoning that wealth alone is a sign of the man's chances of success in an endeavour. In fairness, the rationale is probably that, the man's father, or his ancestor(s) showed prudence in amassing and maintaining the family fortune, and so the son or descendant probably possesses these skills as well. Of course, that the father was a capable money-maker not only does not necessarily mean that his son will be one, it actually suggests that the father neglected the education of his son so that he focused on his fortune.[135] So, despite what Socrates says, the strength of the wealth qualification as a prerequisite to rule might in fact be helpful if it takes into account the other factors when considering to whom to give ruling offices.

But, of course, this presumes that a competent money manager translates to a competent ruler. Socrates may instead mean that even a self-made man does not possess the pre-requisites to ruler. Skill in money making at least shows one to be a competent manager of resources, and therefore, if properly motivated to look after the good of the city, at least a competent if unimaginative ruler. And while those who desire loftier things, virtue, the good, victory, might find this galling, to the many, this is not such a bad man to have in charge. Of course, the preceding statement hinges on the phrase 'properly motivated', and the problem that those good at justice man is also a good thief is something we will discuss when we get to the analysis of oligarchic justice.

The second problem the oligarchic city faces that Socrates mentions is that such a city is not "being one but of necessity two, the city of the poor and the city of the rich, dwelling

135. Cf. Plato, *Meno,* 96a.

together in the same place, ever plotting against each other."[136] There are two problems expressed in this statement. The first is that unlike the timocracy which found a compromise between the two factions of the city that allowed them to rule without conflict, in the oligarchy, the conflict and faction are unresolved. The poor and the rich have divergent interests, which we must assume come into conflict from time to time. The other problem, and again, unlike the timocracy where any group has at least a chance to rule,[137] the oligarchy necessarily excludes one of the factions is by the definition of the regime, the poor faction is excluded from a share in the ruling.

Socrates gives several consequences which result from the problem of having two cities in the same place: these cities are ineffective in war, for the rich must either arm the poor, and they would "be more afraid of [the multitude] than the enemy or not use [the multitude] and thus show up [to battle] as true oligarchs" by which he means to show up with very few soldiers.[138] It is perhaps worth noting that the oligarchic arrangement is, with the possible exception of the tyranny, the regime that is least able to fight wars as a consequence.[139]

Such a city would have a tendency to produce what Socrates calls "busybodies", who practice several arts, including war-making, simultaneously, and, as a result, are unable to practice any of these arts with any real skill.[140] The one-man-one-art maxim was set in place because the man practicing one art would do a better job than the one practicing many,[141] to

136. Plato, *The Republic*, 551e.
137. Even those the timocracy enslaves at the start of Socrates' description (Plato, *The Republic*, 547c) are able to participate in justice if they show they are strong enough. In the oligarchy, the poor are definitionally excluded.
138. Plato, *The Republic*, 551e, n11.
139. Sparta, ostensibly an oligarchy, would better fit under the timocracy in our model here as the rulers are more interested in war making than with material gain. In any event, Socrates is clearly more interested in the desire which the city is oriented towards by their justice. We have and will continue to see that Socrates is mostly ambivalent to particular political organization in Book VIII.
140. Plato, *The Republic*, 551e-552e.
141. Plato, *The Republic,* 370b.

break this means that the oligarchs do everything they do worse than before. If performing many arts harms the performance of each art, then, because money making is almost always accompanied by another art (exceptions being brokers, middlemen, and certain merchants) it would seem that the money maker is always necessarily inferior to the man of one art. It would seem then this might be another reason that money-makers make poor leaders, though presumably this criticism would extend to timocrats trained in war (perhaps to a lesser extent, or perhaps a timocrat would devote himself to ruling if called upon).

It seems though that Socrates is especially concerned with the last problem he foresees in the oligarchy: that the city permits "one man to sell everything that belongs to him and another to get hold of it; and when he has sold it, allowing him to live in the city while belonging to none of its parts…but [to be] a poor man without means"[142]. While this provision is no doubt set about in part because of the greed of the oligarchs who desire the wealth and property of others, it also suggests that the oligarchs understand wealth partially in ethical terms. The ethic comes from the distinction Glaucon and Socrates make between a ruler and a spender.[143] For a man to maintain his own wealth is a sign of his good character, but a man who ruins himself or his fortune is foolish and deserves what is coming to him. Laws which protect people from spending away their fortunes or being duped out of their wealth make it harder to tell who is good (here seen as 'able to hold on to one's wealth') and who is not.[144] More generally though, this suggests that the Oligarch equates the accumulation of wealth with being a good person, even, and perhaps even especially, if the attainment of wealth results in the ruin of another citizen. This helps to

142. Plato, *The Republic*, 552a.
143. Plato, *The Republic*, 552c
144. I accept that this description is both self-serving for the Oligarch and probably a rationalization to allow the oligarch to take more from their fellow citizens.

explain why the oligarchs require a property qualification to participate in government: they take wealth as a sign of something like virtue.

That the oligarchs understand the ability to gain and maintain a fortune as a kind of ethic, it might explain why it seemed earlier that the timocrats would readily elect the richest among them to office. After all, the rich prove their worthiness to rule to other oligarchs by way of the richest man's fortunes. It may also be that the oligarchs expect that such a man's understanding of wealth and their ability to rule justly indicate also that their rule would make other oligarchs, or at least those moderately well-off in the city wealthier. Later, the oligarchy is said to concentrate wealth in a small number of hands, so the soundness of the assumption that electing the richest would itself make others richer is somewhat dubious (unless one belonged to the clique closest to this ruler). If we consider the observations that the oligarchs live in two cities and find it acceptable for a citizen to ruin himself, we also find that the Oligarchs seems to be preoccupied with their own good. Specifically, the oligarchs seem to think of themselves first, and people like them, the oligarchs, second, and there seems to be an assumption that one helps one's own kind, which again helps us understand their assumption that electing the rich makes the other rich richer.

Another problem which the oligarchy brings about by allowing citizens to ruin themselves, and thereby create abject poverty in the city, the oligarchy produces wrongdoers.[145] This is the only regime which is said to, by its fundamental organization, produce crime. We may assume that the crime comes about in part because the poor are desperate, but we must also consider that they cannot afford an education and so commit crimes without thought to the good or bad, just as the rulers seem to be lacking. [146] The rich at least understand how to get what they

145. Plato, *The Republic*, 552d.
146. Plato, *The Republic*, 552e, 554c.

want within the law, which would amount to some level of education. Even worse though, because the system creates so much crime, the oligarchy must use force to keep the poor in check. In turn this exacerbates many of the problems which arrived before and makes the city over all worse and worse.

3.2 The Oligarchic Man

The man corresponding to the oligarchic regime comes about because the father is ruined by the sycophants of the city, and, in seeing his honour-loving father so poorly treated and "having lost his substance, [the son] is frightened… and turns greedily to money making."[147] He honours and thinks about nothing other than how to make money,[148] and consequently, he only indulges the desires necessary to sustain life, while filling up his storeroom with wealth any way he can,[149] and "such a man has a good reputation in other contractual relations—because he seems to be just—he is forcibly holding down bad desires".[150]

Yet by holding down these bad desires through fear and force, just as the city was only able to do, the oligarchic man is likely to gain a reputation as a just person, whether or not he really deserves it.[151] Indeed, it would seem that the oligarchic man wants to hold down these bad desires for the sake of reputation, for Socrates informs us that when placed in situations where they can abuse their authority, like the "guardianship of orphans" they tend to abuse this authority.[152] I say that they hold these desires for reputations' sake because they seem more interested in not being seen to do these 'injustices'. It would seem that oligarchs then, no longer understand the intrinsic benefits of justice which forms the question Socrates tries to answer

147. Plato, The Republic, 553c.
148. Plato, The Republic, 553d.
149. Plato, The Republic, 554b
150. Plato, The Republic, 554d.
151. Plato, The Republic, 554d.
152. Plato, *The Republic*, 554c.

from Books II to IX. Instead, they see justice for what material benefits it has: which is to say it appears justice is good for one's reputation, and therefore one's bottom line. The example of abusing orphans then is important because they can do wrong to the orphan within their own home—away form the eyes of the public—and to a people who would find it difficult to report the abuse (given they are under the guardianship of the abusive oligarch).

So, the oligarchy enjoys some stability, this time based on a small cadre of rich citizens and a largely-poor, dispossessed, and hostile multitude. The stability comes apparently from the rich 'sticking together', and that their common interest unites them for the most part. Just as with the timocracy though, the things which allow the regime to exist also make it vulnerable. While the unity of the rich is true in general, in particular, the rich compete with one another and seem willing to cheat or to get the better of the others in their partnerships. Of course, living so close to the hostile poor is also a serious cause for concern to the point that their ability to protect themselves from outside threats is hindered by the instability within the city.

3.3 Polemarchus, a Character of Convenience?

While Cephalus and Thrasymachus fit the democratic and timocratic souls respectively, Polemarchus does not fit the oligarchic soul at all. Polemarchus is the most complex character of the three studied here. Cephalus and Thrasymachus must be relatively simple characters because they are analogues of the soul-type, and the soul-types themselves must be simple because Socrates is "only outlining a regime's figure in speech."[153] As outlines, they are necessarily somewhat flat. But that Polemarchus does not fit the mold of the oligarchic soul is not fatal to our argument, for no oligarch has a reason to participate in the festival which acts as the setting for the dialogue. A timocrat looks to win honour and build his own reputation in contests, the

153. Plato, *The Republic* 548d.

philosopher is drawn to the novelty and spectacle, young men are drawn to the revelry, the tyrant to the crowd, and even the democrat is drawn to the festival for its more pleasant aspects,[154] but the oligarch, if he attends at all, is there only to sell his wares to the other attendees. Similarly, he has no reason to engage in what he could consider these frivolous kinds of discussions which bear no material or immediate profit which take place in the dialogue. Because there is no dramatic reason for the oligarch to appear in the dialogue, the oligarchic definition of justice requires a spokesman willing to present the definition but not representing the soul.

Though I think Socrates suggests historical analogues of the oligarchic justice, which we will discuss later, the oligarch is exemplified in this discussion *by his absence*. Our main goal then, is to briefly establish Polemarchus' character, propose some roles he plays in *The Republic*, and to explain how he comes to defend a definition of justice which he does not hold true. In some sense, Polemarchus seems to be a utility character that serves Plato's needs at a given time but is not himself representative of any larger theme in the book. For example, the way that Adeimantus councils the selectively deaf, physically stronger, (and probably drunk) Polemarchus[155] on the road is reminiscent of the ship owner from the ship-state allegory.[156] On the road, he represents the city per se persecuting the weaker philosopher,[157] and acts as a vehicle to get Socrates to where the dialogue happens in earnest.

Once Socrates and Glaucon agree to return to Polemarchus' house, Polemarchus remains silent during Socrates' conversation with Cephalus until Socrates asks Cephalus if it would be

154. As we shall see, the character of the man described by Socrates and exemplified by Cephalus would indeed be attracted to the festival and for these reasons. Note though that Cephalus' age means the festival no longer appeals to him, as he can no longer partake in the pleasures he once could in his youth, but the pleasantness of speeches means he has a reason to be a member of the conversation at least. This being a religious festival, we should note also that the Pious man is also conspicuously absent.
155. Plato, *The Republic* 327a-328c.
156. Plato, *The Republic* 327c.
157. Bloom, *Interpretive Essay,* 310.

just to return weapons to a man who is mad when the man was sane when he deposited them.[158] This section of the text is odd for the repeated reference to Polemarchus as heir. Polemarchus' status as heir, already confirmed earlier in the conversation,[159] is reaffirmed here three times: Cephalus "hand[s] down the argument" to Polemarchus, Polemarchus asks if he is "the heir of what belongs to" Cephalus (which Polemarchus confirms, laughing apparently at his son's extension of the idea of inheritance to ideas themselves), and Socrates calls Polemarchus the "heir of [Cephalus'] the argument".[160]

If we think of inheritance as something owed to the heir, what I think Plato is trying to bring to our attention is that the problem Socrates poses to the definition of justice may challenge Polemarchus' ability to inherit from his father. If it is indeed unjust to return weapons to a now-madman, and Cephalus at least nominally agrees that it is, it might be unjust to return any number of things which are owed but with which the debtor might harm themselves or others in any number of ways. Indeed, such a stipulation opens the door to all kinds of situations in which it would be just to not pay one's debt in the interest of the person to whom one owes the thing [161] including one's inheritance. As such, it is here that Polemarchus appears most oligarchic, though Bloom also points out that Socrates corrects Polemarchus' use of "contracts" to "partnerships" which expands the scope of justice from merely money-based agreements to a more general, public scope,[162] as his motivation for entering the text *seems* to be his share of his father's estate.

Turning to the definition Polemarchus supplies, we should note that the definition is not, 'to help friend and harm enemies,' as it is presumed for most of the conversation, but rather, as

158. Plato, *The Republic*, 331c.
159. Plato, *The Republic*, 330a. Cephalus says "I am satisfied if I leave not less, but rather a little bit more than I inherited, to my sons here".
160. Plato, *The Republic*, 331d.
161. Not to mention any number of excuses one might make to this effect.
162. Plato, *The Republic*, 333b. Bloom's observation is in n.23.

Simonides says, “to give each what is owed”.[163] The friends and enemies examples come about when Polemarches says Simonides “supposes that friends owe it to friends to do some good and nothing bad”.[164] This is quite the leap in reasoning—it does not follow necessarily that Simonides was referring to friends. We might assume that the interpretation is one that Polemarchus invents on his own and given that he makes no special claim to poetic interpretation or religious knowledge, and this would likely mean the interpretation is self serving. In turn, this would seem to support the idea that Polemarchus is an oligarchic soul going off the context of the implicit threat towards his inheritance.

However, the speed that Polemarchus comes to the interpretation would suggest that he does not come to the interpretation on the spot, but that he either considered the idea earlier or adopted it earlier and never thought to question the assumption about Simonides’ meaning. What assures us that we are supposed to take the interpretation as inherited is that Cephalus interprets the poets differently than his son. That the different ways that Cephalus and Polemarchus, interpret poetry is significant, is not a new idea. [165] What is often missed is that while Cephalus makes traditional reference to the Pindar’s poems[166] he also breaks convention by relying on what he heard the Sophocles say personally.[167] This gives Cephalus special access to traditional knowledge on which Polemarchus does not and probably cannot rely and which he cannot inherit from his father. Cephalus’ special knowledge implies that Polemarchus must rely on what has been handed down to him by either his father or others instead. If we are correct and Cephalus is

163. Plato, *The Republic*, 332a
164. Plato, *The Republic*, 332b.
165. The difference in the ways of interpretating the poets in Book I is not a new idea. See Frank’s analysis on how this affects political and poetic authority. Jill Frank, *Poetic Justice: Rereading Plato’s Republic* (Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 2018), 51-5.
166. Plato, *The Republic*, 331a.
167. Plato, *The Republic*, 329c.

a democrat, then Polemarchus likely picked up this definition of justice from the "general store of regimes" which Socrates says is typical in a democracy. [168]

That this interpretation is not Polemarchus' own is also supported that he is seemingly more interested in testing the strength of the argument than with defending it. He frequently makes statements like, "if the answer has to be consistent with what preceded, Socrates",[169] "I no longer know what I did mean…it is still my opinion…",[170] "for the argument seems to be bad"[171] when Socrates presents his definition with an apparent problem. That he places such an emphasis on the argument would suggest that Polemarchus is testing the definition against Socrates. At the very least, he does not seem to be taking it personally that Socrates continually shows the argument which he has introduced to be deficient, as opposed to Thrasymachus whose outraged interruption to the text is almost as famous as the blush which ends his resistance, and Cephalus, who flees the conversation at the mere suggestion of his not knowing what justice is.[172]

Concurrently, there is a sort of playfulness that pervades Polemarchus' whole experience that would seem to emphasize either his unseriousness or perhaps that he is child-like. His threat to drag Glaucon and Socrates back to his house is done in jest,[173] he makes his father laugh as he inherits the conversation from him,[174] he gives somewhat odd and humorous answers to Socrates' questions (it is somewhat odd to think the cook 'owes' seasonings to the meats he cooks),[175] and he ends his conversation with Socrates with a somewhat silly pledge of allegiance to the philosopher[176] (especially, as we will see, after presenting the definition of justice that he

168. Plato, *The Republic,* 557d. I discuss the general store idea more when we turn to democracy.
169. Plato, *The Republic* 332d.
170. Plato, *The Republic* 334b.
171. Plato, *The Republic* 334d.
172. Plato, *The Republic* 331d.
173. Plato, *The Republic*, 327c.
174. Plato, *The Republic,* 331d.
175. Plato, *The Republic,* 332d.
176. Plato, *The Republic,* 335e.

does). This suggests both that Polemarchus is not fully mature, and so his relationship is very much student to Socrates' teacher, and that Polemarchus is not taking justice very seriously at all. As we saw with Thrasymachus, the latter suggestion may be why Thrasymachus is so angry to open his section.

That he would be testing a definition dialectically (but which he does not hold genuinely) suggests a kind of, if not education, at least a deliberate act of thought that points toward education. And yet he is also rather stupid. To be sure, he catches on to Cleitophon's misrepresentation of the argument,[177] but misses that a crooked expert in horses might not be so great a partner when he agrees with Socrates that the horse expert would be a better partner than the just man.[178] Polemarchus refuses to listen at the outset, and then, rather than listening to his father, he rudely interrupts him. Later though, Polemarchus allies himself with Socrates[179] and reaches down to speak with Adeimantus,[180] which implies he is 'above' Adeimantus and possibly further along the philosophic education than Adeimantus or possibly Glaucon. Taken together, all this evidence would suggest we are meant to take Polemarchus as a young man on the way towards philosophy but only in the early stages (that he is a step above Polemarchus, is not saying much). He is, in a pedagogical sense, half-formed, able to playfully adopt definitions he has found in the 'general-store' of democracy, and prone to glaring errors in judgement, protocol and in conversation, but able to be counselled and willing to listen… eventually.

3.4 The Oligarchic Men: Socrates Suggestion and the Absent Oligarch

Plato uses Polemarchus differently than Cephalus or Thrasymachus because he does not need an oligarch present as I said earlier. Socrates however, offers us "to whom, in [his] opinion"

177. Plato, *The Republic,* 340b.
178. Plato, *The Republic,* 333c.
179. Plato, *The Republic,* 335e.
180. Plato, *The Republic,* 449b.

the "friends-and-enemies" definition of justice belongs to: "Periander, or Perdiccas, or Xerxes, or Ismenias the Theban, or some other rich man who has a high opinion of what he can do."[181] Of course, that Socrates apparently explains this group as rich men should make us wonder if these men were oligarchic souls in his opinion. This again would suggest that this definition does not belong to Polemarchus (as Polemarchus is not in the list; though in context, Socrates says it does not belong to the poets and wise men)[182] but it also gives us an indication of the kind of men who would subscribe to this definition. Bloom notes that all but Ismenias were kings or tyrants, which we might mean that this is a definition of justice reserved for kings, but Bloom tells us there is some indication that Ismenias himself was 'excessively fond of money',[183] which, given that it is reasonable to expect kings and tyrants to be fond of money, would indicate that his inclusion broadens the category to oligarchic rulers.

'Rich men who have a high opinion of their own abilities is itself an interesting category—is reminiscent of the landed nobility but we might also take the phrase to mean men who have a high opinion of their abilities because they are rich. In itself, the comment then foreshadows the belief of the oligarch that the ability to amass and manage a fortune is itself a sign of the ability to rule and, in turn, that the very richest should be the ones in power. Unfortunately, we do not get to hear Socrates' explanation of why these men tend to subscribe to the friends and enemies' definition because Thrasymachus interrupts the conversation.

That Socrates says this definition belongs to a certain kind of rich man which has an initial similarity to the oligarchic government and man described in Book VIII, and that there is good reason to expect that the oligarchic man would be absent from both the dramatic setting and

181. Plato, *The Republic* 335e-336a.
182. Plato, *The Republic* 335e. See Bloom's note also. n. 28
183. Plato, *The Republic* Bloom, n.29.

conversation of this nature, both explains why Polemarchus offers the definition even though he is not an oligarch, and gives us some indication that this is the oligarchic definition of justice. I believe we are now prepared to consider the definition of justice directly, and whether it belongs to the oligarchy.

3.5 The Oligarchic Definition of Justice

3.5.1 The Genisis of Oligarchic Justice

Unlike with Thrasymachus, who presented his own argument, Polemarchus is presenting a definition which he is testing out. As such, we need to take a look at the version least-altered by Socrates' questioning. The questioning results in Polemarchus making amendments to the definition to respond to Socrates' critiques. Yet, because Polemarchus is not an oligarch, and he is making these changes so that the definition makes sense to him relative to what Socrates has said, we cannot take them as authentic descriptions of oligarchic justice. We can however read them as criticisms that both specify the definition itself and problems with the definition especially as it relates to oligarchs.

So, the definition which we will examine is that justice is "give to each what is owed". Because we established that Polemarchus has inherited an interpretation of this definition, we may add to the definition that that this refers specifically to doing good to friends, and, therefore, because it is implied in the inherited interpretation, that harm to enemies is central to the definition as well. We can then reformulate it as 'justice is to give to each what is owed and especially as it relates to helping friends and harming enemies.' Of course, this definition seems to ignore those with whom one is neither friends nor enemies. There are two possibilities as to how the oligarch can approach the problem of neutral parties—either we must revert back to the first part of the definition, and simply consider one owes a given neutral party, but what we will

find in the course of our analysis is that the oligarch sees the world in terms of friends and enemies, and that neutral parties do not really exist. Though it bears keeping in mind why friends and enemies are important but are not central to the definition, we shall still refer to this definition as the friends-and-enemies definition.

It might seem odd to jump to the criticisms of the definition before fully fleshing out the definition, but there is not much to go on with the definition as it stands. As I said, *The Republic,* refines this particular definition through criticism, so we can take the critiques as clarifications of the original definition, but we cannot take the consequent amendments as better versions of the definition. Socrates levels three main criticisms against the friends-and-enemies definition: that justice has no practical value, that the definition requires knowledge of who is one's friends and one's enemies and that justice cannot involve harming of enemies.

3.5.2 The Practical Value of Justice

The first correction Socrates and Polemarchus make is not stated as explicitly as the other two are but can be formulated as that justice has little to no practical value or utility. By this I mean that 'justice' does not produce a tangible good like the examples the pair consider like medicine or cooking.[184] Now, this idea that justice is unlike these arts is something that Socrates comes back to repeatedly throughout the rest of Book I, but we should find it interesting that he chooses his line of questioning here, because it does not seem to be a direct criticism of the definition as Polemarchus presented it. It would stand to reason that Socrates knows more about the definition than has been stated explicitly in the text, as his suggestion of who this definition actually belongs to would indicate, Socrates is aware of who normally adopts the friends' and enemies' definition.. In turn, assuming Socrates is critiquing the larger understanding of the

184. Plato, *The Republic*, 332c.

definition rather than the stated one tells us more about the broader definition: that the friends and enemies definition thinks of justice in terms of a material or technical benefit.

By material or technical benefit, I mean simply that justice provides neither a material good like farming, food, or shoe-making, or a good arising from technical know-how like medicine, health, or piloting safe passage. In this sense, we might add a third category to Glaucon's typology of goods at the start of Book II. Glaucon offers three kinds of goods: those which are enjoyed only for their own sake, those which are enjoyed in themselves and for their consequences, and those which are enjoyed only for their consequences,[185] but while Socrates would count justice in the second category, Glaucon claims the many opine that justice "should be practiced for the sake of wages and the reputation that comes from opinion."[186] Note that the many say justice is good because being just gives one a good reputation from which one can then benefit. In Book I it would see we are looking for the direct or actual direct wages that justice might produce.

In turn, this distinction between direct and reputational benefits would suggest that the type of person who subscribes to this definition is part of not the many, for the many at least see a reputational benefit to justice (if not an intrinsic one that Glaucon is looking for). The type of person which subscribes to the definition would seem to be only interested in material benefits of justice. Because this type is particularly interested in material benefits means that they have a dubious relationship to justice from the outset of the analysis. After all, Socrates' critique seems to indicate that there is no material or technical benefit to justice. Justice does not produce a useful good, nor technical knowledge that one can deploy. Justice is and produces good, but, it appears, not the kind of good that the friends-and-enemies definition is necessarily looking for.

185. Plato, *The Republic*, 357a.
186. Plato, *The Republic*, 358a.

This apparent uselessness is also shown by what few situations that Polemarchus can find for which justice is useful. Polemarchus first finds justice would be useful in "making war and being an ally",[187] but while being an ally is consistent with helping one's friends, and so superficially consistent with the definition, it would also follow from Socrates' other questions to say that justice it is not more useful in the actual conduct of war than the art of war-making.[188] So justice is only useful in actually showing up in support of your ally, but then the benefit of justice, in the moment, is apparently only for one's ally, and, in the long run, the benefit would be only the hope that one's ally would show up to battle when they were needed later on. Again, this makes justice seem like a not-so-appealing prospect. By extension here, it would seem justice in this definition is primarily meant for the benefit of friends because there is no obvious benefit to justice for the person practicing it. Indeed, we may have a reason that one ought to be just under this definition—for the love of another. Of course, there are few reasons for a city to love another, so the example serves somewhat to obscure the potential reason to practice justice.

Polemarchus does find that justice is useful in contracts and partnerships, but not more than technical knowledge of the subject, be it draughts, housebuilding or buying horses, would be.[189] Now, in the case of the draughts player, a just man *would* be less helpful than someone possessing technical knowledge of draughts, except in one important situation: when the other person does not know the rules. In this case, the unjust-but-skilled draughts player might take advantage of his opponent, not simply by bending the rules, but in the same way a car salesman might sell a rube a lemon today. More generally, a just man may only be useful to the other partner in situations where the other partner is desperate, overly trusting, or both.

187. Plato, *The Republic*, 333e.
188. i.e. tactics, strategy, logistics, etc.
189. Plato, *The Republic*, 333b.

If this is when justice is useful, then it would mean that one can protect oneself from injustice by taking certain precautions. If a person has some knowledge of the subject, along with a healthy amount of guile and general distrust of other people, they might be able to deal with a less-than-honest expert for the most part. For example, one might deal with an expert in horses, but a person who distrusts people would not give the horse expert his money without receipt of the goods. Polemarchus has assumed the person entering the partnership would have taken these precautions and so could benefit more from the knowledge of the expert than the honesty of the just man.

The final place that justice is found to be useful by Polemarchus is in guarding things when not in use.[190] In this case, to guard things probably has its own special technical knowledge that would be more useful than justice in the actual guarding of things; instead, one would need the just man to return the items left for safekeeping. But even if justice were guarding things, Socrates raises another problem for justice to be useful in this case: that those guarding against theft also and often make good thieves.[191] Again, the just man being a good thief would mean also that a just man is good at being unjust generally. And indeed, whatever justice might be, it would seem that to have such knowledge would necessarily require knowledge of injustice, and this would be the case with knowledge of all of the virtues. But it is not as clear whether knowledge of the virtues is required for virtue—it is certainly better that one is aware of and knows why one is being virtuous. With the probable exception of wisdom, it is possible to have any of the virtues discussed in *The Republic* without knowledge of the virtues. After all the guardians of the city in speech are not taught by *logos*, reasoned speech, but with music and

190. Plato, *The Republic*, 333d.
191. Plato, *The Republic*, 334ab.

gymnastic.[192] Indeed, this would seem to be the case for how the guardians come to have virtue in Books II-VII—coming to know about virtue after they have been raised with it in them.

Already, we should be beginning to see the similarity between what was said about the oligarchy in Book VIII and the friends-and-enemies definition of justice. Of course, this can and should remind one of the oligarch, who is preoccupied with the necessary desires in Book VIII. For the same reason I argue they would not partake in a religious festival or a conversation about justice—the oligarch would also be skeptical of justice because it has no immediate or obvious benefit to the immediate desires. With respect to warfare, this might provide yet another reason why the oligarchs are not good at war: they rarely have a good reason for being a good ally. It would seem the oligarchs understand justice merely as good for its benefits to reputation. Also, as you will recall, they will not act just if they think they can get away with it, as the example of the orphan showed in the analysis of the regime. Similarly, the oligarchs would not come to the aid of their allies in battle if either they did not see a clear benefit to helping or a consequence for not. Likewise, we also see from this criticism that the friends-and-enemies definition seems to imply that one need not rely on others being just if one is cautious and prudent in ensuring their dealing with them aligns with the oligarchic principal that gaining or protecting a fortune is a kind of virtue in their eyes.

3.5.3 Knowing one's Friends and Enemies

The second correction the pair arrive at can be summed up as, 'it is just to give each what is owed so long as one knows what each is owed'.[193] This amendment is really a specification, because knowledge of what each is owed is implied in the original definition. There is a naïve

192. Plato, *The Republic*, 410c though the Guardian's receive further education as described in Book VII: 525d-529a. The city, and so presumably its guardians to some extent, are said to be virtuous by 432b.
193. Plato, *The Republic*, 334d.

and general assumption that one knows whom one is friends with (and by extension, who one is enemies with). I think this assumption comes from our observation of children, who can name their friends from an early age. Socrates is raising here the possibility that seeming and being are harder to distinguish from one another with respect to friends and enemies than we may naively assume.

That we may not know who our friends are is a more direct criticism of the definition as stated, but we should presume that Socrates does not have a single avenue to critique a definition such as this. Plato at least, has the benefit of revision to alter what was said, and so we should be aware that other possible options exist and so it is important that Socrates raises this one. Raising the criticism that this definition contains no explicit understanding of friends should indicate to us that the people who adopt this definition also do not understand who are their friends and enemies.

Now we might assume this means that oligarchs are generally distrusting, both as cities and persons, and an incautious reader might think only that oligarchs are simply wary of others as a rule. Let us remember the greatest evil in the oligarchic city: that men can ruin themselves and sell all that belongs to them, and that allowing this to occur, results in oligarchs turning on one another if they come to covet another's wealth or possessions. That the oligarchs want to turn on one another suggests that not only do they distrust one another as we saw when looking at the last critique, but, more troubling, that they either understand friends and enemies in terms of the person or groups' utility to themselves, or that they have no understanding of friendship. In either case, this would mean that whomever an oligarch counts as a friend would change depending either on circumstance or on a whim. Indeed, friends and enemies are reduced to an understanding of the apparent value of a person as the given oligarch sees it. A friend simply

becomes someone to whom it is advantageous to aid, and an enemy simply someone who one would benefit from harming.

Friendship, of course, is a kind of love one feels towards another, a willingness to help another, not in magnanimity, charity, or because there is profit in aiding that person, but because one genuinely wants to see that other person profit, flourish and otherwise be well. This would suggest that the oligarch is incapable of love. That they cannot love is consistent with what we already know of oligarchs: for love is not one of the necessary desires and as such, love would be a mostly alien concept to them.

3.5.4 Justice does no Harm

The third correction Socrates makes can be summed up as, 'it is just to give each what is needed to make each one good or virtuous'.[194] Of the three criticisms, this one is the one that changes the definition most fundamentally from its original presentation, for it changes not simply the subject matter, away from friends and enemies, but also the aim of justice, which is no longer one's particular good or the good of one's friends towards the good in general and especially as it relates to the thing one is being just towards (i.e. virtue). This definition offers us the strongest evidence that the oligarch subscribes to this definition of justice, for it is the oligarch definition since the oligarchs desire money and "virtue [is] in tension with wealth".[195] Again, that this criticism is raised suggests that it is particularly crafted to undermine the position it is being raised against, so that the interpretation of the Simonides quote is specifically placed at odds with virtue, but that Thrasymachus' open praise of the tyrant is not compared to viciousness should indicate to us that the oligarchic definition itself is particularly vicious.

194. Plato, *The Republic,* 335b.

195. Plato, *The Republic,* 551a.

The friends and enemies' definition of justice is the definition most consistent with oligarchic cities and souls. The problems that Socrates raises for this definition demonstrates first that the oligarch, because he is only interested in a reputation for justice and expects others to be wary of tricks and deceptions designed to steal away one's wealth, has very little use for considerations of justice, and, second that oligarchs do not understand what they mean by friends and enemies, and so friends and enemies become those who it is convenient to help and harm respectively and in a given situation. This definition not only is extremely consistent with what is said about the oligarchy, but it also anticipates the downfall of the regime: because they do not understand their friends and enemies, oligarchs tend to turn on their friends, or not come to their aid when they are in need, which contributes to the growing class of disposed which eventually causes the transition from oligarchy to democracy.

3.5.5 The Friends-and-Enemies Definition and the Oligarchic City

From our analysis so far, we suspect that justice is somehow related to that which a person desires. That the oligarchs subscribe to the friends-and-enemies definition of justice is no surprise because it rationalizes their desire for money, is consistent with their belief that having and protecting one's wealth is a kind of ethic, and both clarifies and allows for their willingness to turn on their friends. However, there is a certain sense to the oligarchic position.

Chapter 4: Democracy and Cephalus

Plato often presents the number three to structure his dialogues, be it in the *Republic* (three interlocutors in Book I, the Three Waves, three cities in the regression) or elsewhere (*The Gorgias* has three main interlocutors for Socrates, *The Sophist* and *Statesman* operate on the assumption the namesakes for those dialogues are somehow interrelated with a third category of intellectual (for lack of a better word), the philosopher). It should be no surprise that Plato saves

his most important and/or shocking conversation for last when he does use a triplet. Thrasymachus and Callicles are certainly the most interesting and longest parts of Book I and *The Gorgias*, the Third wave is the "biggest and most difficult"[196], and *The Philosopher* is conspicuous for its absence in the *Sophist-Statesman-Philosopher* series. So consequently, just as our section on Thrasymachus was somewhat longer in the first chapter, our section on the democratic city is going to be longer than our other treatments of the regime. Though not a rule, the pattern we have established above should make us think what is said about the democracy is most important, shocking, or complex. Indeed, we will find is that the democracy as *a city* is probably the most just of any of the real political regimes because it operates on the principle of minding its business and allowing its citizens to do the same, even though Socrates is contemptuous of the kind of people who correspond to the regime.

4.1 The Democratic City

4.1 The Democratic Transition

The democracy comes about in the regression because the rich are overthrown by the poor and a more equal arrangement is set down in the city. But the poor are able to overthrow the rich because the oligarchy's assumption that wealth is virtue falls apart. The desire of the rich to become even richer results in them making it easier to go into debt, and this causes other citizens, and especially "the youth who become licentious…to spend and waste what belongs to them."[197] This encouragement of greater and greater debts causes "human beings who are not ignoble to become poor,"[198] which is to say not that good people become poor necessarily, but that people are driven into debt by their circumstances or the pressures of the city, and probably

196. Plato, *The Republic*, 472a.
197. Plato, *The Republic*, 555b.
198. Plato, *The Republic*, 555d.

their lack of education. We may take this to mean that the poor are understood to be poor because of some flaw in their character, but in fact it is the arrangement of the city and the greed of the rulers that passed laws which made it easier for the now-poor to lose everything.

So, parts of the poor city are not simply hostile to the rulers because of the difference in wealth between the two parties: many of the poor blame the rich and the laws they enacted for making them destitute in the first place. This causes many in the city, and especially the poor to be "gripped by a love of change".[199] This comment is interesting for a few reasons: first, one might assume that these regimes are defined by what they love: timocracy: honour; oligarchy: money; democracy: freedom; and tyranny: power. But then, there is a fifth regime hidden within the regression: the lovers of change. This comment suggests that it is not love which defines these steps between regimes, but something else.

But it is not until the rich and poor are for some reason obliged to live in proximity—on a ship, in battle, or elsewhere—that the illusion of the superiority of the rich man is shattered.[200] The poor realize the rich, having enjoyed their lives of luxury, are soft, and not worthy of the wealth they have managed to amass. More importantly it seems, the poor realizes he is not poor simply because of his own vice, but that the rich have managed to get the better of him. With the myth on which the oligarchs depend to maintain their rule over the multitude no longer believed, the city only requires a small push, perhaps an approaching army, or some other "external influence" to cause the poor to revolt.[201]

199. Plato, *The Republic*, 555e.
200. Plato, *The Republic*, 556c-d.
201. Plato, *The Republic*, 556e.

4.1.2 Socrates' Description of The Democratic City

Socrates says that men in the democracy are free, and the city is "full of freedom and free speech" and there is "license in [the city] to do whatever one wants" and so "each man would organize his life in it privately just as it pleases him".[202] Because people may organize their life as they please, "all sorts of human beings come to be",[203] in democracy. This freedom can be problematic: allowing citizens to go against what the majority of the city has set out to do, and Socrates goes so far as to allow those it has condemned to death to escape into exile or even live free within the city.[204] This freedom does not seem to be such a problem in most cases, and especially those in which the majority are acting one way, but there is no resolution or law prohibiting contrary action and in situations where the citizens, in adopting a contrary course, do not harm the interests of the city. But if what Socrates reports here is true, there is a tendency in democracy to not simply disobey but disregard the laws entirely.

Because all men may choose, and this freedom of choice produces a variety of different ways of living, democracy "is probably the fairest of the regime" and is likened to a "many-coloured cloak decorated" in all hues. This regime, decorated with all dispositions, would also look fairest, and many perhaps… boys and women looking at many-coloured things, would judge this to be the fairest regime."[205] The audience seems more interested in spectacle or pleasure than with serious conversation or given that the cloak presents a spectacle, and so we might say that the democracy is a city filled with spectacles. Given what he has to say about women earlier in the dialogue, and specifically that they are capable of joining the ranks of the guardians, we should hesitate to read this passage as outright criticism. Given that women (we

202. Plato, *The Republic*, 557b.
203. Plato, *The Republic*, 557b.
204. Plato, *The Republic* 557e-558a.
205. Plato, *The Republic*, 557c.

can assume that the city has returned to a more traditional arrangement given what is said in the oligarchy[206] and timocracy,[207]) and boys would not have received a complete education, we may suspect perhaps that the regime is especially attractive to the uneducated.

Yet Socrates goes on to say it because the citizens of a democracy enjoy so much freedom, the democracy becomes like a "general store of regimes" in which citizens might pick and choose the advantages and disadvantages as they see fit.[208] This passage is critical because it suggests that Socrates is not as critical of democracies as the position of democracy in the regression and what he says later of democracy might suggest this. Indeed, Socrates' comparison to a many-coloured cloak might be praising by faint damnation in light of the consequences we might derive.

First, the comparison to the general store suggests that the regression of the regime, political science, and even possibly the analysis that preoccupies the conversation from Thrasymachus' interjection (in which he discusses the laws of various regimes) until now is only possible in a democracy. Second, we know from *The Apology*, that philosophy is not especially compatible with the city and that the city only tolerates philosophy at best. Yet here, given the many various regimes contained within the city, philosophy is far less conspicuous in a democracy than any other type of regime. What is more, whereas in a timocracy or oligarchy, where philosophy would be required to justify itself on the basis of honour or material profit, the democracy's emphasis on free speech and freedom per se means that the citizens are, if not more tolerant, at least more lenient on philosophy. These first two reasons together seem to suggest

206. Plato, *The Republic*, 551e. The Oligarchs are said to have wives. Which would suggest that they no longer follow the maxim that women and children should be held in common.
207. Plato, *The Republic*,547c. While not stated explicitly, that the Timocrats introduce slavery, private property, etc. we should at leas suspect that the city has also taken wives as well.
208. Plato, *The Republic*, 557d.

that philosophy can only come into being in a democracy, and that with the exception of the hitherto-only-created-in-speech aristocracy, it is the regime in which philosophy is most able to thrive.

Third, democracy is as low on the regression of regimes as it is because the democratic souls, because of their commitment to freedom, place almost no priority on formal education, and unlike the gymnastic-focused timocracy and inverted virtue of oligarchy (not all oligarchs are expelled)[209]. But the democracy's 'general-store' characteristic means that the democracy provides a hap-hazard education to its citizens—some receiving none, some receiving an excellent education, and others receiving all kinds of partial education.[210] In contrast, while there may be more types of education in an oligarchy than what can be called an oligarchic education,[211] there is no single, overarching type of education in the democracy. While this consequently means that a great deal of citizens, possibly even the majority, do not receive any formal education, it also means that the ones that do receive an education receive varied types of education. While this variation in education that allows different parts of the city to enjoy the strengths of each of those types of education, it also means it contributes to the strife and faction which Socrates is so focused on discouraging.

Fourth, and despite the general ambivalence to formal education, the democracy provides its own type of education as precisely typified by the general-store analogy. For while the philosopher probably benefits most from the analysis of various types of lives and the education that bring those lives into being, the average citizen is going to take notice of the consequences

209. Plato, *The Republic*, 557a.
210. By partial here, I mean that some would receive a smattering of different kinds of education from the general store, but nothing amounting to a true education.
211. This would probably be focused on how not to be fooled by the unscrupulous, while also some informal instruction on how one might be unscrupulous oneself.

of the lives that they see and avoid the lives they see as undesirable and pursue the lives they see as desirable. On the surface, and to our democratically-prejudiced eyes, this might seem to be an unqualified good. If nothing else, this kind of education would probably draw a good number of students to philosophy, given the challenge and possibilities it presents, but this unstructured education means that the young are likely to fall victim to those lives which appear most attractive, whether or not they really are.

Socrates a little later, offers a very complex passage when he says that:

> democracy's sympathy and total lack of pettiness in despising what we were saying so solemnly when we were founding the city [in speech]—that unless a man has a transcendent nature he would never become good if from the earliest childhood his play isn't noble and all his practices aren't such—how magnificently it tramples all this underfoot and doesn't care at all from what kinds of practices a man goes to political action, but honours him if only he says he's well disposed toward the multitude?"[212]

That the democracy lacks solemnity when discussing the things Socrates and others were talking about when they set out the city in speech suggests that the regime is either flippant or indifferent to the things which Socrates and the others took so seriously. Yet, the way Socrates sets out the sentence, it seems as if he is more frustrated that the democracy is not hostile to the things which he set out than that they are more or less indifferent to them. While this suggests something about education that is beyond the scope of this paper (that education requires a level of spiritedness), it also suggests that one of the serious problems with democracy is not that they are hostile to the good, but that they are ambivalent to it, and that this means that it is difficult to sway a democracy from its current trajectory.

Consequently, democracies also do not care about the kinds of people they bring into the ruling offices, and the only people who enjoy success are the ones that pander to the masses.

212. Plato, *The Republic* 558bc.

However, it is actually said that it is a man's claim that he is 'disposed to the multitude' that he justifies his rule. This statement is surprising: the democrat's claim to rule is based on his *claim* to be popular.[213] This suggests that the many are not themselves in control of who sits in these offices, but that they allow (for the many rule) those who claim they will be popular to occupy the offices. While this comment is not as bad as it seems, because it would suggest many kinds of rulers to participate in the ruling of the city, it also means that the democracy's condition for ruling is the claim to be popular, which in turn means that the goal of the rulers is to a) ingratiate themselves to the many, and b) to be seen to be popular with the many.

4.2 The Democratic Man

But this is shown by the other part of the passage that is not immediately clear: which concerns how Socrates understands the relationship between those with transcendent natures and those children whose play is noble.[214] It seems as if Socrates is saying here that a democracy will not typically give children the capacity or opportunity to play nobly, but that those with transcendent natures, however rare they may be, can still achieve the level of education set out in the aristocracy. Once again, there is an implicit praise built into this statement: unlike the other regimes, Socrates thinks it is possible for exceptional people to meet their potential in the democracy even if many of the 'gold souls' of the aristocracy probably could not rise to this occasion. Indeed, and while the regime itself works better than we might expect, this seems to be Socrates' central concern about the democracy: it fails to meet its potential as a city or push its citizens to meet their potential per se.

As such the democratic regime is not an altogether unpleasant place to live. If the oligarchy is a regime where two cities live amongst one another, the democracy is not a city, but

213. Plato, *The Republic*, 558bc.
214. Plato, *The Republic,*

hundreds of thousands of cities all living in the same place. When things go well, the city is very pleasant: one is free to live as one pleases so long as it is not especially offensive to others, the government makes few if any demands on one's person or property, and the government is not especially interested in the lives of its citizens. This will probably come out more as we look at the democratic man, but it seems so far that the freedom and choice offered by democracies, and the ambivalence of most of the people and the government to the actions of others, allows for good, great, and even exceptional men to live in the city more or less unmolested and the city and the average democratic citizen benefits tacitly and directly from its cultivation of these types of people.

The problem with democracy though, as with last two regimes, is that the good it produces is also ultimately its greatest weakness: it produces a regime in which the majority and the government are ambivalent and difficult to rouse to anger. This apathy would suggest that if a democracy solves a problem at all, it is because the problem has grown so large that exceptional effort is required to address the problems. Of course, the democracy is pleasant when times are good, but the lack of any education of the many and their susceptibility to things which appear to be good means that they are easily manipulated and will tend to lash out at things which have not shared a cause in their anger.

Returning to the text, Socrates turns to the matter of the democratic man, but unlike the last two regimes, Socrates begins by talking about how the democratic man comes into being rather than first discussing what he is like. This is likely due to the nature of the democracy per se. Unlike timocracy and oligarchy[215] the diversity in the kinds of people one would encounter in democracy means there is no single type which we can draw from for the democratic man.

215. In this sense the poor and rich are more or less the same except that the poor, believing it is their vice that has caused their poverty, are more likely to indulge that vice.

Instead, Socrates has to describe a man most like the regime, but perhaps not the one most common in the democracy.

In any event, the democratic man is preoccupied by unnecessary desires, but we need to address how Socrates defines necessary and unnecessary desires. For he says that "those [desires] we aren't able to turn aside justly be called necessary, as well as those whose satisfaction benefit us…we are by nature compelled to long for both of these," and unnecessary desires as those "which a man could rid himself if he were to practice from youth on and whose presence, moreover, does no good, and sometimes even does the opposite of good."[216] Note that desire has something to do with justice—or at least it is unjust to not partake in the necessary desires—to deny oneself the good is unjust. The unnecessary desires are those which benefit us, which seems to contain the example of bread and relish (in the proper amounts)[217] that Socrates then offers: these things benefit us by making us strong and healthy. While we might suspect that I would be unjust to myself were I not to give myself enough to eat, Socrates' statement suggests a category of desires which do not benefit us—at least not in the way that bread and relish do—but in which it would be unjust to not to partake.

The oligarch is said to partake only in the necessary desires,[218] but it is difficult to imagine an oligarch, given their preoccupation with material wealth, partaking or abstaining from desires on the basis of the justness of those desires (whatever justness might mean). It would be more consistent with what Socrates said previously, that the oligarchy would simply *not* partake in the unnecessary desires because they would cost money and time which one could be spending making money. Conversely, the lack of formal education in a democracy would

216. Plato, *The Republic,*558e-559a.
217. Plato, *The Republic*, 559b.
218. Plato, *The Republic* 559c.

predispose many citizens to the unnecessary desires as they did not have the opportunity to abstain from their practice as youths.

In this case, what Socrates offers of the democratic man, he says the democratic man is one who has an oligarchic father, who received an oligarchic education[219] (such as it is), but who is later exposed to and becomes possessed by, the unnecessary desires present in the city.[220] Just as in the oligarchy, the influence of the unnecessary pleasures from outside the body will often overwhelm the flimsy justification which allowed the oligarchic rule in the first place and caused the son to become democratic despite his father's best interest.[221]

We know very little of Cephalus' psyche, and so cannot be certain if he, for example, would call "shame, simplicity", "moderation, cowardice" and "measure and orderly expenditure, rustic and illiberal",[222] or would have done so when he was younger. Instead, we are forced to judge Cephalus on the way he has led his life, and we are given a passage which allows us to compare the democratic man and Cephalus very easily:

> [the democratic man] lives along day by day, gratifying the desire that occurs to him at one time drinking and listening to the flute, at another downing water and reducing; now practicing gymnastic, and again idling and neglecting everything; and sometimes spending his time as though occupied with philosophy. Often he engages in politics and, jumping up, says and does whatever chances to come to him; and if he ever admires any soldiers, he turns in that direction, and if it's money-makers, in that one. And there is no order nor necessity in his life, but calling this life sweet, free and blessed, he follows it throughout.[223]

As you can see, the life of the democratic man is ruled by pleasure, and he partakes in many great pursuits only so far as they are pleasurable. None of the pursuits themselves are sought for their own sake, and it seems, given that, in the description, 'downing water and

219. Plato, *The Republic* 558a
220. Plato, *The Republic*, 558a-559a.
221. Plato, *The Republic* 559e-560b.
222. Plato, *The Republic*, 560d. I added the commas, but they do not change the meaning of the sentence.
223. Plato, *The Republic*, 561d.

reducing' follows drinking that each thing is pursued only insofar as it is it is pleasurable. That, if the democratic man admires a soldier or money-maker, he will pursue those arts, suggests that the arts themselves may not be what produces pleasure per se, but their desire for this particular soldier or money-maker (or, I assume, whomsoever they admire) means that they will pursue these arts. However, this young man has been deafened to the effects of reason by his focus on pleasure. His indulgence in desire means that he less able to partake in reason or receive reasonable council.

4.3 Cephalus the Democrat

The first thing that we should find odd about the conversation between Cephalus and Socrates is that the participants have very different ideas on how to present Cephalus' life. Socrates wants to align Cephalus, first with tradition, and then with wealth, but Cephalus is clearly more interested in pleasures and freedoms and is at times incredulous that Socrates would ask him questions which imply he is something other than a hedonist. These competing visions of Cephalus' life are how Plato shows that Cephalus is in fact a democratic soul.

Cephalus is introduced to us by Socrates in terms of familial, political, and religious tradition and not simply as 'very old'[224]. Cephalus is thrice said to be a father: Polemarchus is introduced as Cephalus' son, [225] Cephalus is introduced as Polemarchus' father, [226] and, later we discover that Cephalus' grandfather was also named Cephalus[227] which associates his name, if not this Cephalus per se, with fatherhood. All other introductions are given on the basis of either their own father, their deme, their city or their brother in cases where the father has already been

224. Plato, *The Republic*, 328b.
225. Plato, *The Republic*, 327b.
226. Plato, *The Republic*, 328b.
227. Plato, *The Republic*, 330b.

introduced.[228] The juxtaposition of Cephalus and the others shows Socrates wants to associate him with the idea of fatherhood and perhaps try to paint him as a representative of the idea.

But Socrates also tries to tie Cephalus to the idea of kingship and religion. Socrates presents Cephalus is an obviously kingly position: seated in a special chair around which the other chairs are arranged, crowned in a wreath, and already at home when we, the audience arrive in much the same way that a king would be presented to an audience.[229] His connection to religion is similarly obvious given that he wears the wreath because he has just finished with the sacrifices.[230] Now, this tying of Cephalus with tradition, while perhaps not entirely appropriate, is not entirely without merit. A little later, Cephalus tells a story about Sophocles, [231] which shows he knew the poets personally and so does not even need to quote the poems per se. He was present when the tradition was being formed, which further ties him to tradition. In short, were we to stop reading here, based on Socrates' description, it would be perfectly reasonable to think that Cephalus is that stand-in for tradition.

Cephalus however, presents himself differently than Socrates. His opening speech associates himself more with a lover; he comes off as one preoccupied with pleasure rather than with anything associated with tradition. Cephalus begins with an exhortation for Socrates "to come down to us in the Piraeus" more often.[232] The 'us' here is somewhat ambiguous, but, in an apparent attempt to entice Socrates to visit more often, Cephalus says "I want you [Socrates] to know that as the other pleasures, those connected with the body, wither away in me, the desires

228. Plato, *The Republic*, 327a-328b.
229. Plato, *The Republic*, 328bd. Note that one almost always travels to a king in literature and not the other way around.
230. Plato, *The Republic*, 328d.
231. Plato, *The Republic*, 329c.
[232]. Plato, *The Republic*, 328cd.

and pleasures that have to do with speeches grow the more,"[233] which shows Cephalus primarily wants Socrates to visit for Cephalus' sake.

Indeed, Cephalus goes so far as to issue a command to Socrates here. It appears he only gives this command because he wishes to see more of Socrates and/or he finds the arts concerning speeches pleasurable. Indeed, if we recall from our initial analysis of the democratic man, we found that a democratic man will pursue an art that this not especially pleasurable because they admire a man or the men who practice the art. While speech-listening is an inherently pleasurable art, and speechmaking is pleasurable because one is praised by one's audience if one makes a fine speech, it is also possible that Cephalus has discovered the pleasures of speeches because he is infatuated with speechmakers or Socrates in particular and so wishes to spend more time with them or Socrates. Cephalus' command may be that of an admirer who is unable to travel to visit the one he admires.

This passage concerning the pleasures of speeches though, is interesting for its own sake as well. It would seem that that Cephalus now finds speeches more pleasant is both the reason Cephalus wants to see more of Socrates and his argument for why Socrates should make the trip.[234] Cephalus' warm greeting to Socrates suggests that they have known each other previously, but that Cephalus 'wants Socrates to know' suggests that this is new information to Socrates and this information will change their relationship in some way either advantageous to, or desired by, Cephalus. This suggests that Cephalus was too interested in other pleasures the last time that the two met for them to really have anything to talk about. Now that those pleasure have faded, Cephalus has more time for speech lovers such as Socrates.

233. Plato, *The Republic*, 328d.
234. We cannot fairly say that Socrates loves speeches in the same way that Cephalus finds them pleasurable.

Yet we should question whether Socrates and Cephalus are drawn to speeches for the same reason. Though Cephalus reports that the pleasures *and* desires of speeches have grown, Cephalus says only the pleasures of the body have faded, which suggests that the desire for the bodily pleasures remains, but that Cephalus can no longer partake in them. In his speech about old age, his Sophocles anecdote suggests that desire only fades after the ability to partake in the pleasure has faded.[235] It seems then that Cephalus is ruled by his desire for pleasant things (not by any one pleasure per se), and it is only because he is less able to partake in bodily pleasure, has he turned to the pleasures of speeches. Cephalus does not say that the desire and pleasure of speeches had not existed in him before, but that those desires and pleasures grow because they have fewer desires and pleasures with which to compete for Cephalus' attention. This suggests that having been obliged to partake in these pleasures, he has found them more pleasant than he expected or previously knew (insofar as his desire for speeches grows) and that he enjoys speeches more now that he has spent time listening to (and, as we will see, making) them. This latter observation tells the likely reason that Cephalus seems to have been preoccupied with pleasures other than speeches: it requires effort or practice to realize the pleasantness of speeches and so speeches are less immediate. Socrates, conversely, is not interested in speeches only for pleasures' sake,[236] and seems to have been able to resist (or not have) the desire for the bodily pleasures which allowed him to turn to speeches at a younger age.

That the pursuit of pleasure and desire is what has made him interested in speeches indicates to us too the kinds of speeches he wants to listen to, or, at least, the kind of speeches that would draw his attention: ones which are immediately pleasurable. Clearly, as a neophyte

235. Plato, *The Republic*, 329c.
236. See Plato, *Phaedrus,* 242c for an example of Plato apparently indulging in the pleasures of speeches even though they the speech he makes to be shameful.

turning to speeches for the sake of pleasure, and away from more immediate pleasures, he will be drawn more to the more immediately pleasurable kinds of speeches. We should suspect that he is more attracted to fancy flourishes and clever turns-of-phrase than he is to good argument and counter-argument—i.e. reasoned speech—even if his taste might turn to more artful and subtle speeches later on. Speeches which he does not find pleasant are less appealing to him, and so we find already a potential reason for his sudden departure: he found Socrates' speech was putting him into an uncomfortable position, and therefore the conversation ceases to be pleasurable for him. This also explains why Socrates does not, we may assume given his absence in the rest of the Socratic dialogues, often visit him. Cephalus' reason for making and listening to speeches is not the same a Socrates (whatever Socrates' reasons for liking speeches might be).

As we can see, Cephalus' opening statement ties him less to tradition and more to pleasure and seeking out new pleasures as old ones fade away. Whether or not this was Cephalus' intention in making the first speech, Socrates takes Cephalus' new-found attraction to speeches as an as an invitation to give Cephalus a subject on which to speak and show his new-found skill.[237] After all, he speaks of the plural 'pleasures' of speeches, which suggests that he finds it pleasurable to both make speeches and to listen. While Socrates' following comment might, initially, seem to be a change of topic, it should really be read as Socrates giving Cephalus an opportunity to show off his new-found pastime.

The subject that Socrates picks would seem to be a fairly easy prompt for the likes of Cephalus: it is a subject about which rest of the much-younger group knows little, and which Cephalus knows a good deal. On the one hand this seems quite salutary and polite of Socrates, but he prompts Cephalus somewhat obliquely: calling Cephalus old and then saying that he is at

237. Plato, *The Republic*, 329c.

the "threshold of old age" an apparent reference to 'death's door'[238] That Cephalus misses the 'left-handed' comments of Socrates, implies either that he is excited to speak or somewhat stupid. However, we also get the sense that Socrates is of two minds about Cephalus, he is both gracious and condescending, and indeed we will later find that Cephalus is more a subject of analysis for Socrates than a true dialectical partner.

In the speech however which we break down into three parts: his introductory comments about the men with which he associates, his mention of Sophocles, and his somewhat dubious conclusion, Cephalus again indirectly contradicts Socrates: here saying that he is actually a decent man and better than most of his peers. Cephalus tells of the laments of other very old men, with which he meets, about how the pleasures that were enjoyed in youth have escaped them, and, having been deprived of those pleasures, feel as though they are already dead.[239] The men who Cephalus meets with equate pleasure, and the capacity to enjoy pleasure, with life. This does not seem to be the quality of all very old men, but instead suggests the men Cephalus associates with are very old men who are mostly lovers of pleasures. So far, the difference between they and he is that Cephalus has simply discovered a new pleasure with which to pass the time: speeches. Even though his companions think they partake in these laments to air their grievances and commiserate with others facing this trouble, it is probably here that Cephalus has noticed that the hearing and listening to these laments is in some respect pleasurable and that he first discovered or rediscovered the pleasures of speeches. That the laments of his elderly companions are where his new-found interest in speeches originates supports our earlier supposition that Cephalus would be specifically drawn to speeches that he finds pleasant or at least to which he broadly agrees.

238. Plato, *The Republic*, 328e; Bloom n.12 p.441.
239. Plato, *The Republic*, 329a.

In the second section, Cephalus reports that, like Sophocles, he is relieved to be free of the desires which dictated his life in youth.[240] Note that the pleasures are now absent from the discussion as Cephalus specifically says it is "when the desires relax",[241] that one receives this benefit from old age. As I noted before, it is odd that Cephalus refers to a poet but not a poem. That he does so, if for no other reason than his decision defies the convention of quoting poets' poems rather than passing remarks and anecdotes, might be intended to show his inexperience in speech making. Indeed, that he knows to quote the poets but knows not that one ought to quote the poems suggests like his status as a money maker (to be covered momentarily), he is only an intermediate speech maker.

The conclusion of Cephalus' speech finds that the reason the likes of he and Sophocles find old age, if not pleasant, at least not only "moderately troublesome"[242] is their good character, and that men with bad characters find all ages to be difficult. Note that he does not refer to these men as his friends, but, rather, men of similar age to him.[243] It would seem that Cephalus is obliged to spend time with these men, and that they are not his friends. Cephalus' slight is worse than it may first appear however: for presumably these men also enjoy the relaxation of their desires, and yet they do not notice how pleasant it is to be free of desires. And yet this seems to be a slight against Cephalus as well, for Cephalus is not as great as one might expect. It is simply that he is better at finding pleasure other than the immediate bodily ones: namely, speeches and now the absence of desire. Indeed, it is not even that the desire to make love has faded, Sophocles suggests that it is his loss of the ability to make love that lessens the desire. The pleasure is taken away, so the desire fades. It makes more sense than why the desire

240. Plato, *The Republic*, 329ad.
241. Plato, *The Republic*, 329c
242. Plato, *The Republic*, 329d.
243. Plato, *The Republic* 330a.

in these other men has not faded as in the case with Sophocles and Cephalus. Pleasure and desire are distinct, and it is only the pleasure that necessarily disappears when one's ability to partake in that pleasure is taken away.

Socrates then proposes something of an amendment to Cephalus' speech. Socrates reports that he:

> was full of wonder at what he said and, wanting him to say still more, [so he] stirred him up, saying: 'Cephalus, when you say these things, I suppose that the many do not accept them from you, but believe rather that it is not due to character that you bear old age so easily, but due to possessing great substance'[244].

Initially, we may suppose that Socrates agrees with the many here, but what he says to us, the audience, indicates his statement may be somewhat ironic or disingenuous. That he was 'full of wonder' indicates that he found something in Cephalus' speech to be unexpected. However, it is not the argument per se that Socrates finds unexpected, but something that this argument implies about Cephalus. Consequently, Socrates tries to 'stir Cephalus up', which we may take to mean that his statement is intended to cause some kind of emotional reaction in Cephalus. Were the thing that piqued Socrates' interest something to do with the argument per se, Socrates would have simply asked Cephalus a question, and the aside to us would have been unnecessary.

Knowing that Socrates' statement is supposed to illicit some kind of emotional response, what kind of response is this question supposed to cause in Cephalus? I propose to you that Socrates' statement is a kind of test of Cephalus' soul. Giving this statement to the many, tests how Cephalus would react to hearing many's opinion of him. This test is rather ingenious, because it seems that each of the souls encountered in Book VIII would react differently. The timocrat, in despising those beneath them, would spurn their opinion; the oligarch in valuing only the opinion of the rich, would dismiss the statement; the democrat, would only be mildly

244. Plato, *The Republic*, 329e.

interested given he is interested in freedom, or, like the tyrant, be extremely interested in what the many have to say.

To Socrates' objection, Cephalus, with reference to Themistocles, a politician, this time, says that wealth and good character are required to bear old age easily.[245] If our suspicion that Socrates is testing Cephalus' soul here is correct, then Cephalus's response seems to be distinctly democratic, insofar as he is corrects the apparent opinion of the many, but is neither dismissive or especially interested in how the many see him.

What is also striking about the way Cephalus responds here, is how quickly he amends his argument to an objection. Cephalus immediately accepts that old age is made easier by his wealth. Perhaps this is because the other very old men that he meets with are also wealthy, and so he does not think the addition of wealth to his argument changes his position overmuch. In either event, he does not see Socrates' statement as an objection as such then, but, rather, as a helpful amendment. However, we might also consider that Cephalus agrees with Socrates because of Cephalus' desire to have Socrates visit thus gratifying him by conceding to him a point, or Cephalus' inexperience to speeches makes him unsure or unwilling to defend his claim. But while me might consider excuses for why Cephalus does face Socrates' objection head on, that he does not oppose the objection is itself significant for reasons we will see later.

Socrates apparently changes tack again and asks Cephalus if he inherited or earned his fortune; a question which Cephalus seems to find surprising.[246] If taken with Socrates discussion of poets, fathers, and money makers, Socrates' apparent change in subject matter may be another test to see what kind of soul Cephalus is. From what is said in the text, we cannot be sure exactly how much money Cephalus has actually earned. Cephalus says, his grandfather, also Cephalus,

245. Plato, *The Republic*, 329e-330a.
246. Plato, *The Republic*, 330a.

inherited less than Cephalus the younger has now, and increased his fortune several fold, but his father "used [his fortune] to a point where it was still less than"[247] Cephalus now possesses. The difficulty arises when he says how much he plans to give to his sons: "I am satisfied if I leave not less, but rather a bit more than I inherited, to my sons here."[248] Either, he plans to give each of his sons a share of his inheritance that are *each* a little more than his own inheritance, and which suggests that Cephalus more than tripled his fortune in his lifetime, or Polemarchus and his brothers will receive shares which, in sum, are about equal to what he himself inherited which would mean he only managed to keep the sum roughly the same.

> This is important not only because Socrates seems to be deliberately presenting Cephalus as if his life is not pursued by pleasure, but because the interpretation that Cephalus tripled his wealth is more consistent with the claim that he is an oligarch, given that Socrates says it is the family's material ruin at the hands of sycophants that causes the son to turn "greedily to moneymaking."[249]

While somewhat vague, I think the above indicates that Cephalus is not the money-maker Socrates is trying to portray him as. If Cephalus is between his father, who lost a good deal of the fortune, and grandfather, who increased it greatly, then it stands to reason he had managed only to maintain his fortune. We may be tempted to take Cephalus' use of the word 'mean' here to mean arithmetic mean, but we must remember that the arithmetic mean, while extent in Ancient Greek astronomy, is not nearly as common as the use of averages today.[250] Lysanias is in no way presented as a timocrat here, and that he seems to have wasted his fortune places him more firmly in the camp of the democrats than the timocrats. After all, the timocrats still covet money, however secretly and ashamedly. Also, if he only maintained the fortune, this would explain also

247. Plato, *The Republic*, 330b.
248. Plato, *The Republic*, 330b.
249. Plato, *The Republic*, 553c.
250. See R.L. Plackett's exceptionally dry, "Studies in the History of Probability and Statistics: VII. The Principle of the Arithmetic Mean'. *Biometrika* 45, no.1 (June 1958).

why he is surprised at the assumption that he had 'earned' his fortune: for he had hardly been able to increase his fortune from what he inherited.

Apparently in response to Cephalus' discomfort, Socrates clarifies the reason he asked the question is that Cephalus "didn't seem overly fond of money", and that they tend to be even more attached to the money they make. [251] Socrates says something extremely curious. He claims that,

"just as poets are *fond* of their poems and fathers of their children, so money-makers too are *serious* about money as their own product; and they also are serious about it for the same reason other men are—for its use. They are therefore, hard even to be with because they are willing to praise nothing but wealth."[252]

The first thing that makes this passage curious is the distinction between fondness, seriousness and attachment. Fathers and poets are said to be fond of and serious about their progeny, but money-makers are said to be doubly serious about their money. It would seem that attachment derives from either fondness or seriousness. Fathers and poets are said to be fond of their progeny, and also serious about it "as their own product" and "for its use".[253] Money-makers are not said to be fond of their product, but, instead, serious about the product in the same way that fathers and poets are fond of theirs. Fondness and seriousness do not seem equivalent here, or, if they were, we would have to conclude that Socrates is saying that fathers and poets are fond of their children and poems because of their utility which may be the case,

251. Plato, *The Republic*, 330c.
252. Plato, *The Republic*, 330c. Emphasis added.
253. Plato, *The Republic*, 330c.

though the poet is not simply fond of their poem because it can be sold or performed for money, and while a father might put his son to work, this is not what makes the father fond of his son.[254]

Cephalus seems here to be fond of speeches, and his sons, but we have not seen him to be serious about anything per se. What ties these seemingly disparate categories together it seems, is Cephalus himself: he is partly a father, a money-maker, and, given his recent interest in speeches, a poet to some extent as well. What Socrates is trying to draw from this passage is that Cephalus' interest and attention is drawn in many directions, and he is fond of many things, including money, his sons, and his pursuit of various pleasures. His time is even more taxed, and even in old age he visits with his peers (though perhaps not his friends) and tends to the sacrifices (which we will discuss in a moment). He is not an especially good speech-maker, though he shows talent, nor a particularly good father (for now, let us say that Polemarchus' arrest of Socrates on the road[255] shows a lack of education), and only a competent money-manager, with no talent or seriousness for the making of money.

Socrates doubles down on the apparent test of Cephalus' commitment to money, asking what the greatest good Cephalus has enjoyed from possessing great wealth.[256] In response, Cephalus says that the greatest good his money has brought him is that of, in effect, hope. He is hopeful that, having been able to pay his debts to and tell the truth to gods and men alike, he will be given a pleasant afterlife. [257] It is hope that is central to his life, at least in old age. Yet Cephalus is no zealot: he makes no pilgrimages, sacrifices nothing dear to him—he does not even sacrifice his wealth seeing as how he expects to give most of it to his sons. His intent is not

254. Indeed, this may be what divides Cephalus and Socrates on the matter of speeches: Cephalus is fond of speeches, he finds them pleasant, but Socrates as a Philosopher, like a money-maker is serious about money, is serious about speeches.
255 Plato, *The Republic*, 327a.
256. Plato, *The Republic*, 330d
257. Plato, *The Republic*, 330d-331a.

to gain favour, or even, it seems, to guarantee a certain place in the afterlife: his sacrifices are enough to ease his anxieties and nothing more.

The most vivid example of his commitment to pleasure is his exit. As we noted earlier, he is happy to give speeches about topics with which he is comfortable and in which he is able to cast himself in a good light, but the moment that he is at all challenged though and is unable to avoid or pass off the challenge, he leaves.[258] After all, the time between the sacrifices seems too short, since Socrates noted that Cephalus had recently finished the sacrifices when the party from the road arrives, and not more than twenty minutes or so could have passed between Socrates' arrival and Cephalus' departure to tend to the sacrifices.[259] It would seem then that Cephalus is making an excuse to leave a conversation in which he is no longer comfortable. But what has made him so uncomfortable? It is not simply that Socrates has challenged something which Cephalus claims, for Socrates also challenges Cephalus about the role which money plays in his ability to bear old age,[260] and about what Cephalus is serious.[261]

The many and varied things that Cephalus pursues may at this point seem somewhat arbitrary, and in many respects, Plato has given us a very detailed portrait of the democratic soul. From his conversation with Socrates, we have seen that it is appetite that connects everything that Cephalus pursues, for he pursues everything only to the point that he finds it pleasant—or rather, only so long as he has an appetite for the pursuit. Over the course of the few pages that Cephalus is present in *The Republic*, he and Socrates seem to be undecided over Cephalus' legacy. Socrates introduces Cephalus in traditional terms, but Cephalus dramatically rebuts this by being more interested in pleasure. Cephalus claims he bears old age well, but Socrates

258 . Plato, *The Republic*, 331d.
259. Plato, *The Republic*, 331d.
260. Plato, *The Republic*, 329d.
261. Plato, *The Republic*, 330c.

interjects that he bears it well, at least partially, because of his wealth. In an attempt to 'get a rise out of' Cephalus, Socrates discovers, despite his wealth, Cephalus is not himself a lover of money, and it is revealed that his affections pull him in many different directions. He is pious, but only insofar as he seeks something from the gods, a lover of moneymaking only so far as to maintain his wealth, a lover of speeches only when his body can no longer enjoy the pleasures of the body.

We might read Cephalus and Socrates' conversation as Socrates investigating who Cephalus really is, trying on different 'hats' for Cephalus, patriarch, money-lover, pious man, and finding that all fit only partially. Indeed, we may begin to suspect that the reason that Socrates is "delighted to discuss with the very old" is not because they may tell what the road is like, but because he wants to know what *their* road is like. In turn, Cephalus' 'road' bears a striking resemblance to the democratic man: "such a man lives spending no more money, effort and time on the necessary, than on the unnecessary pleasures. However, if he has good luck frenzy it does not go beyond bounds—and if, also, as a result of getting somewhat older and the great disturbances [i.e. great desires] having passed by… then he lives his life in accord with a certain equality of pleasures he has established."[262] Who else does this man living with a certain equality of the pleasures describe other than Cephalus?

4.4 Socrates' Mixed Evaluation of Democratic Justice

Cephalus never states the definition of justice which Socrates attributes to him. We cannot be completely certain what Cephalus would say about justice, but his silence is itself instructive. As we know, part of the problem of justice in a democracy is the competing types of souls provide a variety of citizens with a variety of competing definitions of justice within the

262. Plato, *The Republic*, 561b.

city (as dramatically shown by the definitions of justice in Book I, which are all given in the Piraeus, the most diverse, and novel part of democratic Athens).

When Socrates defines justice for Cephalus, he is apparently interpreting Cephalus' statement that, "the possession of money contributes a great deal to not cheating or lying to any man against one's will, and, moreover, to not departing for that other place frightened because one owes some sacrifices to a god or money to a human being"[263] when he defines justice as "but as to this very thing, justice, shall we so simply assert that it is the truth and giving back what a man has taken from another".[264] Socrates seems to be twisting Cephalus' words against him: for Cephalus, while he has strayed into the territory of justice when speaking of telling the truth and paying debts to gods and men, is really only focused on the good that money can bring.[265] In no way was Cephalus defining justice, and so Socrates is not really playing fair.

Indeed, Socrates does not even seem to take all of what Cephalus has to say into account in his definition, for the definition omits reference to the gods.[266] Now, it may be that Socrates has omitted the gods because religion simply is not that serious for Cephalus—he is making sacrifices to 'hedge his bets' against the chance of a real afterlife and not out of any real piety. In other words, Socrates is helping Cephalus by cutting out a part of the definition to which he is not overly committed. Though it may also be that Socrates omits the gods because the gods do not suit the line of questioning, he wants to pursue with Cephalus. What exactly humans owe to gods, what gods owe to humans, or whether this is relevant to the discussion of justice is not discussed in *The Republic*, and so we cannot be sure that Socrates' omission is appropriate, but it

263. Plato, *The Republic*, 331b.
264. Plato, *The Republic*, 331b
265. Plato, *The Republic*, 331b.
266. Plato, *The Republic*, 331b.

bears keeping in mind that Socrates is not faithfully reproducing what Cephalus says in the definition.

Indeed, this definition is almost deliberately weak and for two reasons. First, Socrates manages to refute the definition as soon as he states it by giving the example of returning weapons to a now-mad man.[267] Of course, whether this should count as a refutation is somewhat questionable in the first place. It is probably just to return what is owed almost all of the time, and while there are times when telling the truth and paying one's debts is unjust, this is probably a good rule to follow. We might even consider a variety of fairly straightforward addendums which would account for those less-common situations when lying and reneging/defaulting on debts is actually the just action. Again, that Socrates presents the definition in this way should tell us that Socrates is neither offering a serious definition of justice nor defining justice for Cephalus in good faith.

The second problem is that the definition is not a definition, but a list of things which apparently satisfy the definition. We either need to accept justice is tautological, that justice is only about paying debts and telling the truth, or we need an explanation for why these two things are justice, and not, say, withholding one's debts, or giving to the poor, or teaching your son. Even if we accept the definition as either justice or democratic justice then, we can only accept it as a clue towards the true definition of justice. Now because, we are operating under the assumption that Plato does not give all the answers in obvious ways, it stands to reason that the definition is left intentionally incomplete so that we might try to find the true definition on our own. In a sense then, in having Socrates laying down an inadequate definition, he has thrown

267. Plato, *The Republic*, 331c.

down a challenge to us to try and come up with a better and more generous definition for justice and consequently, democracy.

With Socrates' suggestion in hand, and given the brunt of the conversation so far has concerned Cephalus' life, we should look to Cephalus' life and his conduct in the conversation to see if we can find a true definition of justice for the democrat. The first thing about Cephalus that should suggest something about his understanding of justice is that at no point does he disagree with anyone. Cephalus partially accepts the suggestion that his wealth has made it easier for him to bear old age,[268] and objects neither to the definition of justice Socrates gives on his behalf,[269] nor Socrates' refutation of that definition,[270] nor to Polemarchus' assertion that he is Cephalus' heir.[271] Cephalus makes these agreements despite, as I note above, that Socrates' preliminary definition does not take into account all of Cephalus's statement on which it is based, that there are any number of amendments or arguments one might offer against Socrates' refutation of the definition (including the one offered by Polemarchus), and that Polemarchus is not in fact Cephalus' *only* heir. If he were to make all of these objections, I am sure he would be eristic, but that he makes none of them suggests that he is passive and perhaps even hesitant to engage in adversarial argument.

In fairness, Cephalus does command Socrates when he first speaks,[272] but his command is really more of an exhortation: if nothing else, it is backed by arguments only and not by coercion like Polemarchus' command to Socrates on the road,[273] or Thrasymachus' demand for payment later on.[274] I have already said that if we consider Cephalus' command in light of what

268. Plato, *The Republic*, 329d.
269. Plato, *The Republic*, 331b
270. Plato, *The Republic*, 331c.
271. Plato, *The Republic*, 331d.
272. Plato, *The Republic*, 328d.
273. Plato, *The Republic*, 327e.
274. Plato, *The Republic*, 337.

Socrates says about the democratic man pursuing less-than-pleasurable arts only because he admires the practitioner(s) then it would seem that when Cephalus commands Socrates to stay, it is because he admires him, then we may also discount his command for him to stay as more a product of 'courting' Socrates than a command which he actually expects to be obeyed.

On top of that, we know that both Cephalus in particular and the democrats in general are primarily interested in pleasure, and that freedom becomes a central pillar of democratic law so that individual citizens may pursue pleasure as much as practical. It stands to reason that our democratic definition of justice has to in some way allow for the individual pursuit of pleasure. Taken together with the definition which Socrates provides for him (and to which he at least nominally agrees), we can come to a definition that is both slightly broader and more fundamental than simply paying debts and telling the truth: mind one's business and cause no offence. By this I mean that, in order to pursue freedom Cephalus and democrats have stripped down their standard of justice for the individual soul, the inter-personal relationship, and the city down to the bare minimum to allow for some functioning of the city and to allow others to pursue their own pleasure. Cephalus' definition of justice is not simply conventional, it *is* convention in the sense of being uncontroversial, but not in the sense that Cephalus thinks justice is to follow particular customs, or to conform to local tradition. The reason that telling the truth and paying one's debts are constituent parts of justice then is because they prevent conflict with others. In an idiom, justice for the democrats is not rocking the boat.

Such a definition is consistent with the way in which he has led his life: he has pursued things which are pleasurable insofar as they are pleasurable and has left others more or less to their own devices. Such a life only requires that others interfere in one's pursuit of pleasure as little as possible, and so only demands that one show others the same level of deference. There is

no duty in such a life and if there is, that duty can be summed up as mind your business or do unto others. A city built by and for people such as Cephalus is likely one in which only the necessary minimum standard of justice is maintained, and laws are as unobtrusive as possible. Indeed, because different people will pursue different pleasures, the standard of such a city cannot be said pursuit, and instead the fundamental aim of such a city is freedom for its citizens to do as they please.

4.4.1 Democracy's…Virtue?

Just as Socrates' evaluation of the democracy is not as bad as its position as the neighbour to tyranny might suggest, this definition is not as inadequate as we might first assume. I think what good that Socrates finds in democratic justice is that it is largely consistent with what is said about justice in Book VI. Most strikingly, Socrates repeats himself in quick succession when he says, "that justice is the minding of one's own business and not being a busybody" and "this—the practice of minding one's own business—when it comes into being in a certain way, is probably justice".[275] Given the repetition, and that Socrates here seems to have an understanding of justice, we should suspect that this definition is or is close to true justice, by which we simply mean justice without qualification. So, democratic justice bears at least a superficial resemblance to what might be true justice.

But perhaps a closer analysis of those passages from Book IV might lead us to a better understanding of why this resemblance exists. That this repetition takes place so closely together and that it is rephrased, though only slightly, should tell us that Plato thinks these formulations of true justice are of some significance, and so their analysis cannot hurt our larger investigation of political justice in *The Republic*. Socrates' first rendition of Socrates' apparent definition of

275. Plato, *The Republic,* 433ab.

justice makes reference to busybodies which were set down previously in this paper as people who practice multiple arts. Yet I do not think Socrates has such a problem with people who practice multiple arts as the borders between arts are not clearly delineated. Socrates would have no issue with a farrier who also smithed, or, if you will forgive the anachronism, an electrician who also plumbs, but he does take issue with the one who tries to do too much across many significantly different arts.

Of course, 'busybody' usually has the connotation of a person who involves themselves in the affairs of others, and I think Socrates means this in this sense as well.[276] If he does then the problem of meddling in things, be it the arts or the concerns of others, is centrally unjust. Just as with the oligarch, who's knowledge of justice depends on knowledge of one's friends and enemies, democratic justice depends on knowledge that is not intrinsic to the definition—the knowledge of where one's business begins and ends. In this case, given that Socrates offers this definition only after his first description of the city in speech, it is clear though that the person who holds such a definition has the knowledge on which the definition depends.

There are two changes between the two renditions of justice here. First, justice becomes a practice—of minding one's own business, and second, that Socrates adds a vague addendum—that the practice of minding one's business is justice only if it is done in a certain way. That justice is a practice is as close as Socrates gets to affirming that justice is an art. Indeed, that it is a practice may be why Socrates spent so much time in Book I considering whether justice was an art and if so, what kind. It would seem that a practice is something that one does in and for itself

276. This connotation may not extend into the Greek. At 433a, 434c, 449c, and 552a, where Bloom uses the term 'busybody' Sachs (Plato. *Republic*. Trans. Joe Sachs. Focus Philosophical Library (Newburyport: Focus Pub, 2007)) does not give a noun, but seems to translate the phrase from Greek as "not meddling" or "avoiding aggravation". I think the observation can still be made using Sachs translation, though perhaps Bloom is leading me astray here.

and not because one desires the material or technical knowledge that it produces, like an art. So this may explain why justice seems like an art, but is not.

Perhaps more important is the addendum. Minding one's business in a certain way implies that the exact way that one must mind one's business is not clearly stated. Indeed, as we said in the introduction, the bulk of *The Republic* is concerned with ethical, as opposed to political, justice, and so it is easy enough to say there is a proper ordering of the soul and the spirited part must mind the things most appropriate to spiritedness (i.e. what we might today call emotions) but as we are looking for political justice, it is not always as clear to know what is and is not one's business. Another possibility that is raised by Socrates' addition of 'in a certain way' is meant to indicate that there are times when it would be just to not mind one's business, that certain situations demand that one break the letter, if not the spirit, of the rule as Socrates sets down here. We might rephrase this observation as, there are times when the business of others becomes one's own business.

Justice for the democracy is also minding one's own business. Probably not in the 'certain way' that Socrates has in mind, and probably not for the right reasons—as democrats mind their own business in the interest of freedom rather than as a genuine desire for justice. All the same, democracies at least appear to be the most just of the middle regimes when they are working well. Others are left to their own devices, people are not accosted or robbed as in the oligarchy or conquered and enslaved for the sake of it as with the timocracy.

Indeed, the initial seeming that the democracy is a bad regime is mostly predicated on the idea that the regime is near the end of the regression, but this is because the regression is built around the decay of education and the democrat takes education the least seriously of any of the intermediate regimes. However, all kinds of education, including philosophic and aristocratic

education, are permitted in the democracy. So the democratic maxim of minding of one's business allows for goods to be introduced into the city that are either harder or impossible to find in timocracy and oligarchy. Even still, there is good reason to doubt the possibility of the true justice of which Socrates speaks in Books II-VII, and if it is not realizable on a city-scale, perhaps the democratic justice is the next best thing.

4.4.2 Democracy's Problem

The problem that Socrates raises with his single criticism of Cephalus' apparent definition of justice is that while justice often means minding one's business, there are times where it is just to involve oneself in another's business, and the democrat has no reasonable standard on which to judge when involvement in another's life is warranted. The friend demanding return of his weapons now that he is mad is the perfect example for Socrates to raise the problem of a lack of that standard. This is a clear case in which the friend, whomever the friend encounters, including oneself, and the city as a whole all benefit from one refusing to return the arms. But the principle of not rocking the boat means that justice may not be done by the democrat in this situation because he wishes not to rock the boat.

But then we have also found something that distinguishes the democratic regime from the oligarchy and timocracy: unlike in the other regimes, where the soul and city of the type are largely in accord with that which they desire and seek, in the democracy, the soul desires pleasures, whereas the city is set down to preserve freedom. The good of a city is not quite the good of a soul in the democratic case. This poses a problem. For insofar as the maxim of minding one's business is followed in the democracy, it is done so for the protection of freedom and not in the pursuit of pleasure. Not only does pursuit of pleasure mean the democrat is not

bound to minding their business, but the pursuit of pleasure might actually demand the democrat meddle in the affairs of others.

It is precisely that the democrat is not bound to the justice of the city, not to mention the citizens of other soul types, that ultimately leads to the situation from which the tyrant arises. As it becomes more about protecting one's freedoms in the democracy, the citizens meddle in each other's business all the more. We perhaps did not state the true danger of the democracy when we were looking at the city and soul. When things are good in the democracy, it might be the best of the intermediates, but there is neither any reliable, general education of the citizens which might uphold in them some single standard of justice, nor any intrinsic reason for the democrat, as one who desires pleasures, to uphold the justice most consistent with the city. Indeed, it seems the democracy may be so low on the list because there are so few things preserving the regime. It is unstable, by which we mean prone to change into the tyranny or oligarchy, in the extreme.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Let us review what we know about the intermediate kinds of justice, city, and soul. Timocracy desires victory as a compromise between the desires for virtue and money. Thrasymachus' definition of justice—that justice is the advantage of the stronger—should be understood as justice being something which the strong may set down and must enforce. Because justice is concerned with the ruler, the ruled have no necessary obligation to follow the rules—they do so because they are forced or enticed by the ruler, and, should they disobey, this is a sign of strength and possibly honour. The definition is compatible with the timocracy because victory and conquest are always just, and that it creates martially strong cities most suited to conquer and be victorious. Timocracy's central failing is that it cannot reconcile the desire for personal and

civic honour and may paralyze the city and prevent it from gaining victory for itself or honour for its citizens.

Oligarchy desires money and the necessary desires--money is a means of avoiding scarcity. Justice is ostensibly helping friends and harming enemies. Because the oligarch does not or perhaps cannot know who his friends are, justice becomes about helping those whom it is advantageous to help, and harming those whom it is advantageous to harm. In short, justice devolves into helping oneself. The definition that Polemarchus offers is compatible with the oligarchy because one's profit can always be rationalized. The ambiguity of friends and enemies means one can change allegiances as it suits them to maximize material gain. This definition is ultimately self-defeating—the constant back biting of the oligarchs leaves each of them in a state of relative weakness, and rarely able to muster any kind of cooperation in the city. In times when the city demands cooperation, they can muster little, and when they themselves are in need, they show themselves to be "true oligarchs".[277]

The democracy, we saw, is a regime divided. The city is set up to protect the freedoms of its citizens, but democratic souls seek pleasure rather than freedom. Justice is there to provide the minimum amount of structure to allow for the city/person to function to some extent. This works much better for a city than it does a person. Justice has no definition in the strict sense of the word. Rather, democratic justice is the minimum of rules or laws which must be maintained to keep one's freedom from interfering with another's. For the person, justice in the democratic city is simply the maxim, 'don't rock the boat'. As a city, the democracy seeks to allow its citizens, whatever kind of soul they might be: to seek that which they desire. The aim of the democratic city works well for the pleasure-seeking democratic person and so earns their (apathetic) support.

277. Plato, *The Republic*, 552e.

While the regime works when things are going well, democracy has no allegiance to justice, and a general understanding to mind one's business, which is what passes for justice in a democracy, is not enough to preserve the regime. Because justice for the democrat is solely minding one's business, democracy does not know when it is right to intercede. On top of that, there is no reason to mind the maxim of minding one's business which creates the conditions for tyranny to come about.

One point about justice that we have established with certainty is that political justice is the ordering of some group towards the attainment of some desire(s) or ends. It might be then that we must find either the best desire to order our city towards, or we must find an arrangement of the desires in which they each address the shortcomings of the others. Of course, as a definition, this is unsatisfactory. But what is more, our goal is to see if there is some more profound or interesting observation that we can make about justice. Better yet, our goal is to understand justice, and a clinical, somewhat vague observation that justice is 'organization towards an end' can only be a preliminary observation.

Upon seeing the justices beside one another, one thing we might notice is that they each seem to deal with a different kind of relationship. The timocracy deals with what one owes the city, as understood as what the rulers demand. The democracy with what the city owes one, as understood as the primary goal of the city is to protect the freedoms of its citizens. The oligarchy has little to say to the city, but is concerned with the justice between people and specifically citizens. This observation brings new light to the problems facing these regimes. The timocracy is silent on the city's duty to one, and to one's duty to others, and this is why they have no reason to obey and seem to not have an account of how to deal with one's friends as we saw above. The democracy makes no demands on its citizens, for this would limit their freedoms, but also the

there is nothing requiring the citizens to act justly—to mind their business—or even to know where their business starts and ends.

The city in the oligarchy would expect and demand little of its citizens, though this might be less obvious to see. Remember though that the oligarch's desire for the wealth of others leads them to strip the protection the city provides against selling all of what one owes and becoming destitute. Similarly, there is little that the oligarchs do to command the rich or the poor, for the rich tend to disobey the laws, and the poor have no reason to obey the commands of a city which has left them destitute, except for a vague notion that the rich are better than they are by virtue of being rich.

It would seem then that there are three parts of justice[278] and that each city in the regression has only a single part. The timocracy is preoccupied with what the citizens owe the city, the oligarchy with what citizens owe one another, and the democracy with what the city owes the citizens. Perhaps then we see how we can put what we learned together to understand justice more fully: we would need to find some kind of arrangement of a city that built in a good reason to observe each of these three types of relationships. This is easier said than done: even in the magnificent city in speech, the relationships and the reasons that the parts of the city obey are not clear. This is not a criticism, the city in speech is meant to show us something about the soul, not the political, but it remains that we ultimately find *The Republic*'s answer on political justice incomplete, with the possibility, given that we have established the city in speech is neither real nor intended as political recommendation, that there is no such thing as perfect political justice.

278. This is remarkably similar to the basic forms of justice as discussed in Thomist Philosophy. See Josef Pieper, "Justice". In The Four Cardinal Virtues, (Alexandria, VA: Alexander Street P, 2019), 113.

5.1 So What?

I think this paper has shown that there is an undeniable relationship between what Cephalus, Polemarchus and Thrasymachus say in Book I, and what is said about the timocracy, oligarchy, and democracy in Book VII. Given that politics and considerations of political organization are absent in Book I and that justice is absent in Book VIII taken with Socrates' encouragement to us, to "take the same hold again" to read the Regression in light of what came before offers us a sound foundation for my thesis. That Thrasymachus and Cephalus match up with the regimes so well, and that the gain-minded oligarch would not appear and requires Polemarchus to speak on his behalf, means that my argument stands on its own as well.

If we do not read Books I and VIII in concert with one another, then we are left with two ultimately incomplete and perplexing conversations. That is only to say that neither section is complete without the other, and not that either is incomprehensible. So this loose group of scholars which variously supposes that Book I is meant to highlight war, [279] poetry, [280], piety[281] the 'relevance' of justice, [282] preliminary-but-false opinions of justice, [283] challenges to the rightful rule of philosophy, [284] are not wrong; their reading of Book I is at least incomplete. Of course, that there can be so many readings in the first place itself suggests that Book I is not meant to be read on its own. We need the structure of the political regime, both city and soul, to understand the context from which these understandings of justice come about.

279. Craig, Leon. *The War Lover: A Study of Plato's Republic* (Toronto: U Toronto P, 1996): 22.
280. Frank, *Poetic Justice,* 52.
281. Dobbs, Darrell. "The Piety of Thought in Plato's Republic, Book I." *The American Political Science Review* 88, no. 3 (September 1994): 668.
282. Daryl Rice, *A Guide to Plato's Republic*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), 1-30.
283. Leo Strauss, "On Plato's *Republic*", in *The City and Man* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1964), 68.
284. Bloom, "Interpretive Essay", 316, 325, 337; Stanley Rosen, *Plato's Republic: A Study,* 56; Sean Sayers, *Plato's Republic, An Introduction*, (Edinburgh, Edinburgh UP, 1999), 5-6.

Dorter's argument is perhaps the closest to the one I want to present in my own thesis. His argument is that Book I plays a critical role in the structure of *The Republic*: first as an arc in Books I-VII that "parallels the liberated prisoner's ascent to wisdom" from the allegory of the Cave,[285] and as a mirror in both form and content to Book X.[286] I do not think Dorter is wrong to see Book I's structural relationships with the rest of the dialogue, I am merely contending that there is third such relationship independent of the two that Dorter discusses in his book. The third structural reading of the text reads Book I as the structural mirror of the regression. Where the regression descends to injustice, Book I leads us up out of the somewhat pedestrian concerns of politics to loftier ideas.

Even if you do not agree with the larger the argument, the reading of Thrasymachus as a timocrat is simply far too strong to ignore. Without the explanation from Book VIII, he comes off either as a tyrant, or as a buffoon. And he is very close to those things, but his actions are best explained in light of his being a timocrat. The potential significances for his being a lover of honour would probably challenge our reading of *The Republic*. The traditional antagonist of the philosopher is variously the tyrant or the sophist, but here Socrates' greatest battle before he can move on to philosophical investigation of justice is a manifestation of the love of honour. In some sense then, the greatest challenge to the philosopher, or perhaps philosophic education, is something like pride, or the self-aggrandizing love of honour. While we do not have time to consider this idea at length, perhaps the greatest foe in a dialogue that, let us face it, is really concerned with ethics and education, the greatest challenger to wisdom is pride.

285. Dorter, Kenneth. *The Transformation of Plato's Republic* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006): 7-8.
286. Dorter, *Transformation*, 6-7, 8. For a similar argument, see also D.C. Schindler *Plato's Critique of Impure Reason: On Goodness and Truth in the Republic* (Washington: Catholic U of America P, 2008), 53.

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