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Glaukon's Challenge (REPUBLIC 2) — PLATO
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- 357a With these words I [Socrates] thought myself released from talking, but it seems it was only a prelude, since Glaukon, who is always most brave about everything, did not accept Thrasymachos' withdrawal but said, "Socrates, do you want to seem to have persuaded us, or truly persuade us, that justice is better than injustice in every respect?"
- 357a "I would prefer truly," I said, "if it were in my power."
"Well you aren't doing what you want," he said. "Tell me, do you think there is the following kind of good, which we are pleased to possess not because we desire its consequences, but which we welcome for its own sake, such as pleasant experiences and pleasures that are harmless and give rise to nothing else subsequently besides the pleasure of having them?"
- b "I certainly do think there is this kind of good," I said.
"And what about a kind that we love both in its own right and for what comes from it, such as thinking and seeing and being healthy? We welcome such things for both reasons, I suppose."
"Yes," I said.
- c "And do you see some third kind of good," he said, "which includes exercise and medical treatment when sick and medical practice and other forms of money-making, since we say these things are laborious and yet beneficial for us, and we don't want to have them for their own sakes but for the sake of the wages and various other things that come from them."
"There is indeed this third kind," I said. "But what of it?"
"Into which of these would you put justice?" he said.
"I think," I said, "into the most fine, the one that is loved, by the person who intends to be blessed, for itself *and* for what comes from it."
- d "That's not where most people put it," he said, "but in the laborious class, which must be practiced for the sake of wages and the standing that comes from reputation, but which itself should be avoided because difficult."
- 358a "I know it's thought of this way," I said, "and Thrasymachos has been finding fault with it on such grounds for a long time, and praising injustice. It seems I am somewhat slow to learn."
"Come then," he said, "listen to me and see if it still seems so to you. For Thrasymachos appears to me to have been soothed by you, like a snake, earlier than he should. For me, the presentation on each of them was somewhat unsatisfactory and I still want to hear what each of them is and what effect each of them has, just by itself, on the soul, putting aside the wages and the things that come from them."
- b "So this is what I will do, if it seems okay to you. I will revive Thrasymachos' argument, first, by describing what kind of thing people say justice is and where it comes from, and second, how everyone who practices it does so unwilling, as a necessity rather than as a good, and, third, how they do so reasonably, since the life of the unjust man is far better than the life of the just man, or so they say."
- c

"It doesn't seem this way to me at all, Socrates, but my ears have been drenched by listening to Thrasymachos and countless others and I am at a loss. I haven't quite heard from anyone concerning the account of justice, that it is better than injustice, to my satisfaction. I want to hear it celebrated just by itself, and I think I will hear that from you most of all. That's why I will speak positively, step by step, about the unjust life, showing you the way I want to hear you disparage injustice and praise justice. But see if what I propose is agreeable."

d

"More than anything," I said. "What else is there that an intelligent person would appreciate talking and hearing about more often?"

"Beautifully put," he said. "And so listen to what I said would be first, what justice is and where it comes from."

e

"They say that committing injustice is *by nature* good, while suffering it is bad, but the greater evil of suffering it outstrips the benefit of doing it, so that when they commit and suffer injustice at each other's hands, and have experienced both, to those who are unable to escape the one and choose the other it seems profitable to promise one another to neither commit injustice or suffer it. And *that's* when they begin to make their laws and contracts between one another, and they name what is commanded by law "lawful" and "just".

359a

"This is the origin and nature of justice, midway between what's best—to do injustice without repaying with justice—and the worst—to be done injustice without the power to avenge it. Justice is in the middle of these both, endorsed not as something good but as worthwhile, due to the inability to commit injustice. And so the person who has the power to do this and is a truly a man would never make even a single agreement not to do injustice nor suffer it; he would be mad. And this, in sum, Socrates, is the nature of justice, and it is of this kind, and it naturally arises from these things, according to this account."

b

"That even those who practice it do so unwilling, from a lack of power to commit injustice, we can see especially if we imagine something like this: give each man, both the just and the unjust man, the freedom to do whatever he likes, and then follow them to see where the desire of each one will lead. We would catch the just man in the act, going after the same things as the unjust, due to the desire to get ahead, which every natural thing inherently pursues as good, though it is led astray by the force of law to the honor of equality."

c

"The freedom of which I speak would be illustrated especially if they were ever to acquire the power that they say befell the ancestor of Gyges the Lydian. He was working as a shepherd for the then-ruler of Lydia, when there was a great thunderstorm and an earthquake cracked open a part of the ground and a chasm opened up where he had been shepherding. He was amazed at the sight and went down into it and he saw, amongst many other marvelous objects from mythology, a bronze bull, hollow, with windows. And when he peeked inside he saw a corpse, which seemed of superhuman size, with nothing else on but a gold ring on its hand, which he removed, and he went out."

d

e "The usual meeting of the shepherds was taking place, in order to make the monthly report to the king about the flocks, and he went, wearing the ring. Sitting there with the others, it so happened that he turned the socket for the gem towards him, into the palm of his hand, and when he did this, he became invisible to those sitting around him, and they spoke about him as though he had departed. He was amazed and feeling again for the ring he turned the socket to the outside, and when he did so he became
360a visible. Taking note of this, he tested the ring to see if it had this power and in this way came to this conclusion, that, with the socket turned to the inside he became invisible, while turned to the outside he was visible.

"Perceiving this, he immediately managed to get himself appointed as one of the messengers to the king, and when he went he seduced his wife and with her help set upon the king and killed him. In this way he took possession of the throne.

b "Now if there were two such rings and one was given to the just man and one to the unjust, we would see that there was no one who would be so strong of character to stick with justice and have the resolve to stay away from the goods of others and not take them, when he is able to take whatever he wants from the market without fear, and could enter any house and have sex with whomever he wanted, and could kill, or release from bonds, anyone he wants, and anything else, since among men he is equal to a god. Acting in this way, he would be no different from the other,
c and they would both go after the same things.

"This is strong evidence, someone might surely say, that no one is just willingly but by necessity. It's not something good for the individual, since whenever someone believes he will be able to do injustice, he does it. Every man thinks that injustice is much more profitable than justice, and rightly so, or so someone giving this account would say, since if someone possessed this kind of power and did not then want to commit injustice or
d to take the goods of others, those who were aware of it would think him extremely pitiful and stupid, though they would praise him as the opposite to one another, persuading one another for fear of suffering injustice. And that's how it is, on this matter.

"In deciding between the two lives we were talking about, we will be able to make a correct decision if we juxtapose the most just man with the most unjust, and only if we do this. What, then, is this juxtaposition? This:
e we must take away nothing of injustice from the unjust man and nothing of justice from the just man, but will make each of them perfect in his particular practice.

"First, then, let the unjust man act just like clever craftsmen, such as a top-class captain or doctor. He is well aware of what is impossible and what is possible in his craft, and attempts the latter and lets the former go. If he nonetheless stumbles in some way, he is sufficient to recover himself. In the same way, let the unjust man, attempting his unjust deeds, get away with them, since he must be exceedingly unjust. The person who is caught must
361a be thought a poor specimen, since ultimate injustice is to appear just without being just. To the completely unjust man must be given the most perfect injustice. Nothing must be taken away, and it must be granted that

b he does the greatest injustices while having the greatest reputation for justice. And that, if he lets something slip, he corrects it, both by the force of his speech, which is sufficiently persuasive, if any of his unjust acts are revealed, and by force, wherever force is needed, since he is bold and strong and has friends and wealth.

c "Having set up the first one like this, we must in turn, according to our argument, set up the just man beside him, a simple and noble man, who wants, as Aeschylus says, not only to appear good but to be good. And yet the appearance must be taken away, because if he appears just, he will receive awards and gifts by appearing this way and so it would be unclear whether he was like this for the sake of justice or for the sake of the awards and gifts. He must be stripped bare of everything except justice and must be made the exact opposite of the previous character. Let him have the greatest reputation for injustice, even though he does no wrong, so that he proves his justice by not being weakened by ill-repute and what comes with it. Let him carry on like this without changing until death, appearing unjust throughout life but being just, so that, with both having arrived at the ultimate state, the one of justice, the other of injustice, we can judge which of the two is happier."

d "Wow!" I said. "My dear Glaukon! How thoroughly you have scoured clean each of the men, like statues, for the judgment!"

e "As much as I can," he said. "And with these two in this state, there'll be no further difficulty filling out the account with the kind of life that awaits each of them. So, allow me to tell it. And if I speak crudely, don't think that it is I who is speaking, Socrates, but those who praise injustice ahead of justice. They will say the following things: that in this condition the just man will be whipped, stretched on the rack, tied up in bonds, his eyes burnt out, and at the end, when he has undergone every evil, he will be impaled, and will realize that he should want to appear just rather than be just."

362a "And the saying of Aeschylus is in reality much more applicable to the unjust man, for they say of the unjust man that he really does not wish to appear unjust but to be it, because he is devoted to deeds based on reality and does not live for appearances, "Reaping a deep furrow of the mind, From which wise plans shoot forth". First, he governs the city because he is thought to be just, and next, he marries from whatever class he wants and marries his children to whomever he wants, and makes contracts and partnerships with whomever he likes, and that he benefits from all of this, b profiting because he is untroubled by acting unjustly. When he enters into contests, whether in private or public, he is successful and out-does those he hates, and by out-doing them he grows wealthy and does good things for his friends and harms his enemies. And he makes sacrifices and sets up offerings to the gods that are abundant and magnificent, and attends to the gods and to the humans he favors far better than the just man does, so that he is also more worthy to enjoy the favor of the gods more than the just c man, in all probability.

"In this way, Socrates, they say that the unjust man is provided with a better life than the just man, both from the gods and from men."



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