

On the Challenges the Sons of Ariston Pose to Socrates in the  
*Republic*, Socrates's Confounding Responses to Them, and  
the Character of Justice  
Part I: The Challenges<sup>†</sup>

Erik Curiel<sup>‡</sup>

August 23, 2009

I respectfully and affectionately dedicate this paper, *in memoriam*, to Prof. Arthur W. H. Adkins, a scholar, a gentleman and an inspiration without peer, who radiated a gracious and dignified joy, always with a mischievous twinkle in his eye and not quite hidden smile, the natural expression of his εὐδαιμονικοῦ life.

## Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Many Questions</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Two Brothers</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>A Few Remarks</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>One Question</b>	<b>18</b>

---

<sup>†</sup>This is the first of a series of three papers on the *Republic*, as I discuss in the opening section.

<sup>‡</sup>I thank Alan Code, Eric Brown, Casey Perin, Ian Mueller, Richard Kraut and Chris Bobonich for many discussions over many years touching directly and indirectly on the themes of this paper. I first proposed the core of this reading in a colloquium given at the Committee on Ancient Philosophy, at the University of California, Berkeley, in early 1999, and the arguments would be much the poorer without the enthusiastic (you know who you are) and salutary criticism of that audience.

## 1 Many Questions

“I went down yesterday to the Piræus with Glaukon, the son of Ariston, to pay my respects to the goddess. . . .” So begins the *Republic*.<sup>1</sup> The questions already begin to press in on one fast and thick. Why does Plato place the dramatic action in this singularly determined way? The action of no other dialogue, besides those taking place at Socrates’s trial and execution, can be placed so exactly in time.<sup>2</sup> Almost none else is narrated by Socrates himself. To whom, indeed, is Socrates talking? There’s a puzzler.

I have many, many other questions, all seemingly as unanswerable. Why does the dramatic action begin with the accosting of Socrates and Glaukon by Polemarchos, in company with Adeimantos? Why does Kephalos bequeath the discussion, like a monetary inheritance, to Polemarchos before Thrasymachos commandeers it? Do Glaukon and Adeimantos each pose the same challenge as the other at the start of book II? Why does Glaukon appear to accept immediately, at the end of book IV, what appears to be a final answer to his challenge, without hesitation or question, when it does not clearly address any straightforward gloss one may put on the challenge he posed in book II? Why does the argument appear to start afresh yet again in book V, and why based on the sorts of issues raised, and why does Polemarchos in particular raise them, by whispering in Adeimantos’s ear? Why do Glaukon and Adeimantos appear to accept immediately, near the end of book IX, what appears again to be a final answer to their challenges, without hesitation or question, when not only does it not clearly address any straightforward gloss one may put on the challenges they posed in book II, but rather seems grossly to violate on its face the basic terms of those challenges?

It would be a foolish author of a foolish paper who claimed to address or even claimed to attempt to address all of these at once. I iterate them only to attempt to express my sense of how very much would be needed in order to claim to have in hand a comprehensive reading of the work. I shall focus in this paper only on the third question in conjunction with the fourth and the last, and these three by themselves will be far more than I can do justice to.

The latter two of these three questions gesture at an extraordinary circumstance of the work as

---

<sup>1</sup>For the Greek text, I follow the OCT, ed. J. Burnet. Translations are mostly my own, though I often cannot resist pilfering Shorey’s elegance, and at times absconding with it wholesale, when nothing rides on the exact sense of the Greek. In translation and when quoting the Greek, I will almost always elide without comment the ubiquitous ‘ἦν δ’ ἐγώ’ (‘and I said’), ‘ἔφη’ (‘he said’), and the like, using rather bold capitals prepended to a speaker’s quoted speech, such as ‘S:’ for Socrates’s, ‘G:’ for Glaukon’s, and so on, to designate the speaker, eliding these as well when context suffices. I will not quote the Greek when nothing turns on any nuances of its sense. As a rule of thumb, it is safe to assume that when I do not quote the Greek then I am largely following Shorey, and when I do quote it then I am giving my own translations.

<sup>2</sup>The first celebration of the festival in honor of Bendis at the Piræus occurred on the 19th of Thargelion, 429 BCE. Why does this festival in particular provide the backdrop for the work? The followers of the goddess Bendis, in whose honor the festival was held, worshipped her orgiastically; she was a goddess in the Thracian pantheon, and this, the first festival in her honor held at Athens, was introduced for the purpose of mollifying the Thracians, non-citizens who had settled in great numbers in the Piræus. What did this festival’s occurrence signify, in light of its manner of celebration and the reasons for its occurrence, for the politics and culture of Athens at that time? The time of that festival, moreover, the year of that time, itself holds a peculiar significance for the Platonic opus as well: it is the year of Plato’s birth. Is any of this relevant?

a whole—perhaps the most puzzling of all the questions I have about this book—a circumstance, moreover, that has gone largely, and oddly, unremarked in the secondary literature. At the conclusion of both Socrates’s antepenultimate (IV.445ab) and penultimate (IX.580bc) answers to the brothers’ challenges,<sup>3</sup> he asks Glaukon to render judgement on the worth and intrinsic goodness of justice and the just man’s life. Glaukon without hesitation, indeed eagerly, declares justice to be good in and of itself, and the just life to be the best and the happiest of lives. In both places, to drive the point home, Socrates makes sure to mention one of the primary terms of the challenges: that justice and the just life have this character whether the just man is known to be just or not (IV.445a), in either the eyes of god or men (IX.580c), which Glaukon readily grants. *And yet, for the entirety of his construction of the just city, his account of justice itself, and most of all his characterization of the just man, the just man both has seemed and has been known by all to be just.* Socrates has, it seems, flagrantly flouted the most fundamental term of the challenge, and not only this term but all the rest as well, for the just man, in Socrates’s recounting of his life, has had accrue to him all the appurtenances, pleasures, rewards and good repute that Glaukon and Adeimantos demanded be stripped from him, so they could with surety conclude that justice is good in and of itself rather than on account only of its repute and rewards. Are Glaukon and Adeimantos simpletons, dupes, that they would readily accept as an answer to their challenges one that is, *prima facie*, an answer to no question they had asked?

I do not think Plato wanted us to draw this conclusion. What else, then, can be the resolution of this puzzle? I shall attempt in this series of three papers to sketch one: Socrates has, in fact, answered each of their challenges to the letter. In working out the answers, Socrates and the sons of Ariston have discovered that the nature of true justice demands that the just man live a life that will accrue to itself many (though by no means all) of the concomitants and the rewards and much of the repute given, according to common belief, to the just man (or, at least, the seemingly just man) on account of his (seeming) justice, not, however, as consequences of justice, but rather as necessary constituents, in some way or other, of justice itself. In some way, to some degree, the harmonious equilibrium of ruler and ruled among the three parts of the soul that constitutes the essence of justice requires them. It follows that justice is, by its nature, a virtue that demands that its agent inhabit a definite sort of place in a richly appointed and textured society—it is essentially a social virtue, without real substance or sense in isolation from the social roles the just man plays and the acts he performs.<sup>4</sup>

To make a beginning for this case will require a detailed examination of the challenges Adeimantos

---

<sup>3</sup>Socrates concludes the final proof, by his own reckoning, in book X (612a–d). I briefly look at the conclusion of that proof in §4 below.

<sup>4</sup>This suggestion has, among others, the intriguing consequence that for Plato, *contra* the Stoics, the perfectly just man on the rack would not only not be indifferent to his suffering but would, after some period of torture, cease even to be just, his psychic state having become so fractured and chaotic as to have not even a semblance of harmony left. He will be driven mad by pain, as Plato himself says will be its eventual consequence (III.402e). Given the mass of psychological evidence gathered in the past century substantiating the idea that the victims of torture and other calamities suffer acute psychic harm, I think Plato would have hit the mark with regard to this point, if something like this reading were correct.

and Glaukon respectively pose to Socrates at the beginning of book II, which I give in §2, along with a somewhat cursory examination of the character of each of the brothers as painted by the dramatic context and action. §3 surveys some of the more well known secondary literature to show why I find none of the standard ways of comprehending the brothers' challenges satisfactory. I require this survey because this paper concludes, in part, that almost all traditional methods of approaching the interpretation of the work as a whole fail to address the heart of the interpretative problem. I use the particular accounts I discuss not because I think they are poorly argued or poorly conceived, but, to the contrary, because I think they serve as the best, strongest exemplars of the traditional ways of approaching the work, which ways I think fundamentally flawed. The discussion in that section will serve as well to clarify my views on the issues at hand and to suggest profitable ways to work out and substantiate those views. I conclude the paper in §4 on an unresolved note, with a summary of the problems the clearing of the ground has uncovered. I address those problems in the second paper of the series, "Socrates's Confounding Responses", in which I examine in some detail the character of Socrates's answers to the challenges. This will set the stage for my attempt to offer a resolution of these problems in the third and final paper, "On the Relations among the Argumentative and Dramatic Structures of the *Republic*, and the Character of Justice".

## 2 Two Brothers

After Glaukon finishes laying out the challenge he poses to Socrates in book II, Socrates is on the point of responding when Adeimantos interrupts (362d).

**A:** You surely don't suppose, Socrates, that the statement of the case is complete? . . . .  
The most essential point has not been made.

**S:** Then, as the proverb says, "Let a brother help a man." If Glaukon omits any word or deed, so you step in to his aid.

Thus Socrates encourages Adeimantos to complete the challenge, emphasizing the fraternity of the two. On the face of it, Adeimantos is announcing his intention to articulate a challenge beyond what Glaukon has already pressed, and decidedly different, though perhaps complementary. I shall take his words at face value, to see whether the two in fact pose in essence different, though perhaps complementary, challenges.

Although the two brothers fill out their challenges—Glaukon's occupying 357a–362c, and Adeimantos's 362d–367e—with elaborations of multiple, related points, accompanied by emphatic repetitions adorned with rhetorical flourishes, I believe that each of them formulates a canonical statement of his challenge, neatly framing the two as a whole, Glaukon's at the beginning of his (358b) and Adeimantos's at the end of his (367b), a lovely and excessive chiasmus. This is Glaukon's.

For this is what I crave to hear, what each [of justice and injustice] is and what potential each possesses in and of itself in the soul, but to dismiss their recompenses and what

follows from them.<sup>5</sup>

And this is Adeimantos's.

I crave to hear from you. . . what each [of injustice and justice] produces of and by itself, the ill in one possessing the one, and the good in one possessing the other; but take away the repute, as Glaukon directed.<sup>6</sup>

Though strikingly similar in many ways, not least in their basic grammatical form and content and in their definitive ring, the two are on their face different. Stated most baldly, they differ in that Glaukon wants—craves—to know what each of justice and injustice *is* in the soul, wants to know what constitutes the psychic states, respectively, of justice and injustice, whereas Adeimantos wants—craves—to know what each of justice and injustice *does* in the soul, how each transforms the soul, what it makes of the soul as the soul performs the characteristic activities of the one or the other. The difference in the phrase each uses to connote the thing itself, the essence of the thing, emphasizes this contrast. Glaukon uses αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ, 'itself in conformity with, in accord with, itself'; Adeimantos uses αὐτῆ δι' αὐτήν, 'itself by virtue of, on account of, itself'. The former has almost a normative force, 'according to *what is fitting* for itself', the latter a causative one, 'by virtue of *its own power*'. These similarities and differences, as we will see, mirror those of the two speeches as a whole.

Perhaps the most striking similarity between the two statements is the shared use of ἐπιθυμέω ('to crave')—a peculiarly strong and visceral verb, with connotations of carnal lust, the characteristic of the appetitive man, whose epithet indeed is ἐπιθυμητικόν—to express the feeling each holds toward the hoped-for defense of justice by Socrates, rather than the more usual, and passionless, ἐθέλω ('to want', in the sense of having a goal) or βούλομαι ('to be willing to'). Plato seems to intimate that the appetitive parts of the brothers' souls are properly focused on proper ends, knowledge of what truly is, the essence of justice and injustice, rather than belief about what comes and goes and changes, as the consequences of justice and injustice do, their recompenses and reputes. Indeed, the inhabitation by the desire for and the delight in the learning and contemplation of what truly is, above all other desires and pleasures, is the mark of the philosophic character (VI.485a–d, and VII.535b–537d), given pride of place in the exposition of that character as a whole (VI.485a–487a, and VII.535b–536a). This pleasure and this desire jointly constitute the close kinship and the love the philosopher feels towards wisdom; for Socrates, they by themselves justify and warrant the epithet 'lover of wisdom'. (See especially the discussion of what it means to be a true lover of something,

---

<sup>5</sup> ἐπιθυμῶν γὰρ ἀκοῦσαι τί τ' ἔστιν ἐκότερον καὶ τίνα ἔχει δύναμιν αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ ἐνὸν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ, τοὺς δὲ μισθοὺς καὶ τὰ γιγνόμενα ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἔᾶσαι χαίρειν.

I hesitate to translate δύναμις by 'potential', but I do not think any of 'force', 'power' or 'capacity' is quite right either, or, I should rather say, the latter three seem to me more wrong than does 'potential' in this context. I'm open to suggestions.

<sup>6</sup> ἀλλ' ἐγώ. . . σοῦ ἐπιθυμῶν ἀκοῦσαι. . . τί ποιῶσα ἐκατέρᾳ τὸν ἔχοντα αὐτῆ δι' αὐτήν ἢ μὲν κακόν ἢ δὲ ἀγαθόν ἔστιν· τὰς δὲ δόξας ἀφαίρει, ὥσπερ Γλαύκων διεκελεύσατο.

at v.474c–475c.) It is therefore telling that, whereas Glaukon wants to know what each of the two is *per se*, Adeimantos wants to know how each of the two acts on the soul, making something new of it by dint of this activity.<sup>7</sup> One may suspect that Glaukon approaches more nearly by some little bit to the philosophic ideal than does Adeimantos.

To see the force of these last remarks more clearly, we turn to examine the speeches in their entirety. In concluding his canonical statement, Adeimantos enjoins Socrates to ignore “the repute of each, as Glaukon directed.” But of course Glaukon did *not* direct this; he rather directed Socrates to ignore “the recompenses and what follows upon each.” One may object that Adeimantos does not refer here specifically to the conclusion of Glaukon’s canonical statement, but that would miss the point. Glaukon does not dwell at all on the respective reputations of the just and the unjust man in his speech, at least not in so far as it may be thought of as its own reward or punishment, respectively, for each, nor does he discuss the repute of each with regard to the form and content of the language with which men name and inform that repute, as, I shall attempt to show, Adeimantos does. Glaukon does think that most, if not all, the concomitants of the lives of the perfectly just and the perfectly unjust man, respectively, stem in one way or another from the repute of each (II.361a–c and 362b). These, however, are not the facts of the matter that concern him most; rather, for him, the matter turns entirely on the difference between *seeming* and *being* just. Glaukon describes the consummately unjust man in this way (361a): “The extremity of injustice is to seem to be just without being so”;<sup>8</sup> compare this to his characterization of the just man (361b), “a simple and noble man who, according to Aeschylus, does not wish to seem but to be good.”<sup>9</sup> Glaukon immediately completes the sentiment by demanding that, in order to ensure that the just man is just for the sake of justice alone, and not for its appurtenances (361bc), “we must remove [from the just man] the seeming [to be just]. . . . We must strip him of everything but justice, and make his state the opposite to that of the first man[, *viz.*, the unjust man].”<sup>10</sup> Glaukon here emphasizes again his interest in knowing about the states of justice and injustice, rather than the respective activity or genesis of

---

<sup>7</sup>It may be more correct to say, “in so far as the soul transforms itself as it engages in, because it engages in, the characteristic activities of the one or the other.” I do not want to prejudge the issue, and nothing I discuss in the paper hinges on it, so, no matter the way I articulate the idea, the reader should feel free to take it as he or she pleases.

<sup>8</sup> ἐσχατὴ γὰρ ἀδικία δοκεῖν δίκαιον εἶναι μὴ ὄντα.

<sup>9</sup> . . . ἄνδρα ἀπλοῦν καὶ γενναῖον, κατ’ Αἰσχύλον οὐ δοκεῖν ἀλλ’ εἶναι ἀγαθὸν ἐθέλοντα.

Hamlet’s arch response to his mother’s query captures much of the sense I think Glaukon intends.

**Queen Gertrude** Why seems it so particular with thee?

**Hamlet** Seems, madam! Nay, it is; I know not ‘seems’.

Also, Cymbeline’s insightfully dense riposte to the soothsayer: “This hath some seeming.”

<sup>10</sup> ἀφαιρετέον δὴ τὸ δοκεῖν. . . . γυμνωτέος δὴ πάντων πλὴν δικαιοσύνης, καὶ ποιητέος ἐναντίως διακείμενος τῷ, προτέρῳ.

Note the difference between τὸ δοκεῖν, used by Glaukon, and τὰ δόξας, used by Adeimantos. The former cannot mean ‘the having of a reputation’; it can mean here only ‘the seeming’ or ‘the appearing-to-be’. Contrarily, the latter can mean only ‘reputation’. This is, in part, an example of the word-play, almost always to ironic effect, that Plato seems constitutionally incapable of keeping himself from.

each. More to the point, he does not direct Socrates to ignore the just man's reputation as such, but rather to strip him of "the seeming". Indeed, Glaukon intimates that this will be his focus in the very first words he speaks in book II, which are, except for one one-word response (I.327c), one two-word response (I.327b), and one three-word response (I.328b) to, respectively, Polemarchos's slave-boy and to Polemarchos himself in the very opening scene of book I, the first words he speaks in the entire book: "Socrates, do you want to *seem* to have persuaded us, or do you want *in truth* to have persuaded us that it is in every way better *to be* just than unjust?"<sup>11</sup> (The italics are mine, for emphasis, not warranted by anything in the Greek.) It is not the case that the seeming or being of a man's justice bears any logical relation to his reputation, or lack of it, for justice; one's justice can be real or only seeming, and yet one could still have the reputation either for justice or for injustice, for the very same reasons in each case. Indeed, for Glaukon seeming to be just itself constitutes part of the injustice of the degenerate man, whereas for Adeimantos, as we will see, the reputation for justice of the unjust man appears only as the most prized benefit accruing to injustice, not as part of the man's injustice itself.

The characterization of the just man at 361b has another striking feature. Glaukon does not quote from any poet, makes barely any reference to literature. He does offer a single quotation (II.362b), first paraphrased in the passage at 361b, from the *Septem* of Aeschylus (picked up and echoed by Socrates later in book VIII (550c), at a most interesting point in the argument), that most austere, most pitiless, most severe of the tragedians. He offers the quotation for, in part, the purpose of ironically inverting the Platonic relations, on the one hand, of 'being' and 'seeming' to, on the other, the just and the unjust man respectively: Glaukon concludes that, based on the evidence given so far, it is the unjust man who would truly be rather than seem unjust, who would prize the being over the seeming, whereas the just man would not wish to be just without seeming so as well, so appraising the seeming as having at least as high a value as the being. There is not only irony in this. Glaukon's remark lays down some of the fundamental terms of his challenge: show me what really is, not only what seems to be, with regard to the inherent goodness of being just and the inherent ill of being unjust. Socrates, of course, formulates part of his answer in these very terms, trying, it would seem, to answer Glaukon as directly as he can (and is not above a little *ad hominem* emolument in the process).<sup>12</sup>

In all this, Glaukon has one over-riding concern: how we may *judge* which life is best, using the criteria provided by the account of justice and injustice he demands of Socrates. This comes out most clearly in the following two passages from his challenge. This is the first (360e).

But to come now to the judgement between our two kinds of life, if we completely

<sup>11</sup> Ω Σώκρατες, πότερον ἡμᾶς βούλει δοκεῖν πεπεικέναι ἢ ὡς ἀληθῶς πείσαι ὅτι παντὶ τρόπῳ ἄμεινόν ἐστιν δίκαιον εἶναι ἢ ἄδικον.

<sup>12</sup>I think Plato has in mind not only this ironic and this argumentative point in putting these words in Glaukon's mouth. He also seems to be taking care to add depth to the dramatic portrait of Glaukon, as one who already cares most about and is driven most by the desire to understand those matters whose contemplation constitutes the definitive occupation of the philosopher.

## On the Challenges the Sons of Ariston Pose to Socrates in the *Republic*

---

separate the most just and the most unjust man [with regard to the character of the life each leads], we shall be able to pass judgment rightly, but if not, not.<sup>13</sup>

This is the second (361cd).

But let him[, the just man,] go without change until death, seeming all his life to be unjust though being just, so that, both men attaining the extremity, the one of justice and the other of injustice, we may pass judgment as to which of the two is happier.<sup>14</sup>

I shall take up and expand on this point in the third paper in this series, where I discuss the fact that, at the end of the accounting of the lives of the five types of man, in IX, Socrates invites Glaukon to pass judgment on which is happiest, nominating him “the judge of final appeal” (ὁ διὰ πάντων κριτής, IX.580a),<sup>15</sup> just before launching into the second proof that the just man’s life is happier than the unjust man’s, founded on the idea that the judgment of the best judge will decide the matter. Socrates seems again, in this, to be attempting to address at least one facet of Glaukon’s challenge as directly as he can.

Adeimantos, by contrast, emphasizes throughout his speech the education that leads to each of justice and injustice, how each arises in the man, and how each acts on the man possessed of it. He does not directly address the difference between being and seeming to be the one or the other. Above all else, he focuses on the repute of the man who manifests each, and, with regard to this, in particular on the language—both the content and the style—used to express and to inform that repute, and, of this, particularly on that used by poets, and, of those, particularly on the epic poets (II.366e).<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> τὴν δὲ κρίσιν αὐτὴν τοῦ βίου πέρι ὧν λέγομεν, ἐὰν διαστησώμεθα τὸν τε δικαιοτάτον καὶ τὸν ἀδικιώτατον, οἳοί τ' ἐσόμεθα κρίναι ὀρθῶς, εἰ δὲ μή, οὔ.

<sup>14</sup> ἀλλὰ ἴτω ἀμετάστωτας μέχρι θανάτου, δοκῶν μὲν εἶναι ἄδικος διὰ βίου, ὧν δὲ δίκαιος, ἵνα ἀμφοτέροι εἰνασσυρατερολορινγ τὸ ἔσχατον ἐληλυθότες, ὁ μὲν δικαιοσύνης, ὁ δὲ ἀδικίας, κρίνωνται ὀπότερος αὐτοῖν εὐδαιμονέστερος.

Compare Wallace Stevens’ exhortation in “The Emperor of Ice Cream”: “Let be be finale of seem.”

<sup>15</sup>There is, perhaps, a slight irony, by way of an implicit contrast, in the nomination of Glaukon as a judge. The Πολέμαρχος (Polemarchos), in Athens, was the third Archon, who presided as judge over the court in which the cases of the resident aliens were tried. Whereas Glaukon is manifestly fit to judge the value of lives alien to his own, as the best judge in the first pleasure argument must do, Polemarchos, Socrates’s interlocutor, manifestly is not.

<sup>16</sup>It is worth remarking, in this light, that Socrates, in the rest of the work, quotes Homer extensively and often, and Hesiod somewhat less, to Adeimantos, but, though he does a few times refer to Homeric themes and Homeric scenes in talking with Glaukon, to the best of my knowledge he quotes Homer only twice (iv.441b, v.368e) and Hesiod only once (v.469a) in discussion with him, all brief and sententious quotations. Not even in x, when Socrates and Glaukon discuss at some length poets in general and Homer and Hesiod in particular, does Socrates quote them. Compare this with, *e.g.*, the veritable barrage of Homer Socrates directs against Adeimantos in III (388c–391e), quoting him no fewer than 17 times in a little over two pages, in the service, note, of analyzing the sort of education the most just city ought to prepare for its best youths. Socrates offers most of the quotations, moreover, as examples of how poets ought *not* speak, giving force to Adeimantos’s charge of negligence against them, while still offering a few quotations from Homer as positive examples of the way the poet *ought* to speak, so as not to disparage too much a medium in general, and a poet in particular, so clearly dear to Adeimantos’s heart. It is difficult to imagine Socrates attempting to address in its own terms this aspect of Adeimantos’s challenge any more directly. It is perhaps a gentle irony that

## On the Challenges the Sons of Ariston Pose to Socrates in the *Republic*

---

**A:** . . . no one has ever censured injustice or praised justice otherwise than in terms of the repute and the honors and the rewards that follow from them. How each one of them acts by its own power, in the soul of one possessing it, hidden from both gods and men, no one, either in poetry or in prose, has ever adequately set forth in words. . .<sup>17</sup>

For him, what justice accomplishes in the soul (αὐτὸ δ' ἐκάτερον τῆ αὐτοῦ δυνάμει τί δρᾶ) constitutes its δύναμις (its power or capacity).<sup>18</sup> For Glaukon, recall, its δύναμις is defined by what it will become. While Adeimantos's emphasis in this passage on the doing and achieving in the soul by, respectively, justice and injustice substantiates the point I made earlier concerning the different aspects of the two each of Glaukon and Adeimantos wants Socrates to explain, I find this passage most interesting in its expression of what seems to be Adeimantos's most damning indictment of the sort of praise and censure that has been directed at each of justice and injustice: that *poets and writers* in particular have not given an account of the activity of each in the soul, and the good and the ill that each in itself produces by dint of this activity, but have rather all spoken only in terms of the repute of each, the approbation and opprobrium and the honors and shame, respectively, that accrue to each. For him, ignoring the *repute* of each life, and in particular that the poets and writers bestow, imposes the sorest handicap Socrates will suffer in making his case. In light of the fact that fathers and educators have more direct and sustained contact with youths, one might have thought that Adeimantos would have been more incensed, for example, by the similar way that fathers explain to their sons the reasons for choosing to be just rather than unjust, or the way that teachers instruct youths on the subject. Adeimantos does consider these matters (II.362e–363a), but only briefly at the beginning of his speech, and only for a few lines, before moving directly on to confront the language of the poets, which will occupy him for the remainder of his speech.

Adeimantos, in the course of his challenge, quotes Hesiod twice (363b, 364c) and Homer twice (363bc, 364e) to substantiate his claim that those who have praised justice, and in particular the poets, have done so only in terms of the repute that follows from it, and, from this reputation, the benefits that will accrue to the just man, and also to support the complementary claim that the unjust man, by seeming just, can have all the rewards of the just man and more. Adeimantos's only other direct quotation comes from Pindar (365b), the poet who celebrates victory, the peculiar concern of the timocrat (honor-lover), with an unmatched sublimity. He makes reference (363c) to Musæus,

---

Socrates concludes the barrage (III.391e) with a censured quotation from the *Niobe* of Aeschylus, the one author, recall, cited by Glaukon in his challenge. (The position—or, better, constantly shifting position—Plato takes towards Homer throughout the *Republic* seems to me one of the most complex parts of the work and one of the most difficult to comprehend. One can almost believe at times that Homer himself is Plato's primary adversary, and, like the greatest adversaries, one whom Plato cannot help but admire, and even love in a peculiar way—Socrates remarks to Glaukon, almost regretfully, at the very moment he once and for all banishes poetry from the best city (x.607cd), “Do you not yourself feel her [poetry's] enchantment, and especially when Homer is her interpreter?”)

<sup>17</sup> . . . οὐδεὶς πώποτε ἔψεξεν ἀδικίαν ἐπῆνεσεν δικαιοσύνη ἄλλως ἢ δόξας τε καὶ τιμὰς καὶ δωρεὰς τὰς ἀπ' αὐτῶν γιγνομένας· αὐτὸ δ' ἐκάτερον τῆ αὐτοῦ δυνάμει τί δρᾶ, τῆ τοῦ ἔχοντος ψύχῃ ἐνόν, καὶ λανθάνον θεοῦς τε καὶ ἀνθρώπους, οὐδεὶς πώποτε οὔτ' ἐν ποιήσει οὔτ' ἐν ἰδίῳ λόγῳ ἐπεξῆλθεν ἱκανῶς τῷ λόγῳ. . .

<sup>18</sup>I feel on somewhat firmer ground here in translating δύναμις by ‘power’ than I did earlier in translating it by ‘potential’, in so far as the emphasis here is explicitly on what the thing *does*, as opposed to what it *is*.

the mythical poet and composer of hymns, citing the treatise of fatherly advice he supposedly wrote for his son Eumalpos. And there is, finally, the one tantalizing, and somewhat puzzling, invocation of Archilochos (365c), the notorious libertine. Adeimantos quotes and paraphrases them all to substantiate not only his claims about the ways justice and injustice are praised and censured, but in particular to exhibit the *language* customarily employed in doing so. Glaukon quotes Aeschylus (and only Aeschylus), by contrast, not to substantiate any point on the respective reputes of justice and injustice, but rather in order to underscore the difference between merely seeming to be just and actually being just, and he certainly does not discuss the language in which Aeschylus couches the remark.<sup>19</sup>

It is not clear to me why the poets exercise Adeimantos in this way. I have two ideas to offer on the matter, neither of which wholly satisfies me. The first turns on the observation that it is the epic poets above all others who concern Adeimantos, and Homer most of all among these. The epic poets in particular sing of and glorify manly deeds. They are the only ones, for an ancient Greek, able to bestow κλέος ('everlasting glory and honor') on a man, the ultimate τιμή (the word for 'honor' as used in the Platonic epithet 'τιμοκρατικός' ('timocrat'), usually rendered 'honor-lover', though 'one ruled by honor' would perhaps be closer to the mark).<sup>20</sup> One can see from this straightaway why, to the timocratically minded, as I believe Adeimantos primarily to be, these poets should rank above all others in importance and persuasive force. Homer, moreover, was the genius of the ancient Greeks, their founding spirit, akin to Shakespeare and the King James Bible for English speakers, and Luther's Bible and Goethe for Germanic peoples. Infants took him in with their mothers' milk. It is natural for Adeimantos to assume that he exerts a profound effect on the development of a young man's mind. This does not explain, however, his fixation on poets and writers in general.

The second idea turns on the intimate relation of ancient Greek poetry to music. Much of what we know of as ancient Greek poetry would have been sung rather than simply spoken, or at least

---

<sup>19</sup>Along these lines, it is interesting to consider the other notable invocation of a poet in the service of making a point about justice. When Polemarchos inherits the discussion from his father Kephalos, he immediately turns the topic to more pecuniary matters than Kephalos and Socrates had been talking about, debt and financial obligation, and so on, challenging Socrates to gainsay his proposed definition of justice (1.331de), due to Simonides, formulated in terms of *ὀφειλόμενα*, a monetarily measurable benefit. Indeed, almost the entirety of Polemarchos's discussion with Socrates in book 1 turns on the possible relation of justice to the acquisition and use of money, and to other dealings with money in general, such as the holding of it in fiduciary trust for orphans and widows. In light of this, I think it is no accident that Polemarchos invokes Simonides for the account of justice he, Polemarchos, champions, Simonides who was infamous for his fondness of money, which grew to outright avarice in his old age, to the point of suffering ridicule for it from the merciless pen of Aristophanes (*Pax*, 698–700). Simonides was also known, disparagingly, as the first who wrote poetry for money, as a trade. The comparison of these sentiments to those of Kephalos, who in his old age displays anything but avarice, and appears to have the noblest, in so far as it can be noble at all, attitude towards money in general and his own wealth in particular, are too stark and obvious not to draw. Although, on pain of anachronism, it cannot be cited as evidence of anything having to do with Plato's intentions in the work, it is too delicious not to advert to the anecdote Plutarch (*Præcepta Gerendæ Rei Publicæ*) relates about Simonides: when someone admonished him for his avarice, he replied that old age, being deprived of all other enjoyments, had money as its only remaining passion to gratify. The contrast with Kephalos's attitude toward the passions in old age could not be more complete.

<sup>20</sup>*Cf.*, e.g., Nagy (1981).

declaimed in a melodious and rhythmically crafted manner, much like the davening of Jews in a recitation of the Haftorah. The Greeks believed that music—the modes of melody, harmony and rhythm—had a profound capacity to influence and shape a man’s soul and, indeed, the social order as whole. Socrates remarks in book III (400c), for example, while discussing music with Glaukon, “. . . decorum and indecorum follow upon the good rhythm and the bad,”<sup>21</sup> sounding for all the world like a southern Baptist preacher from the 1950’s damning rock ’n’ roll. Even more powerfully and surprisingly, he declares in IV (424c), “For the modes of music never change without change of the most fundamental political and social conventions. . . .”<sup>22</sup> This is strong stuff: changes in musical style can effect revolution. The obvious problem with this line of thought is that, no matter how closely related the two are, poetry is not music and music not poetry, and nowhere does Plato make analogous statements about poetry itself, though he does, clearly, accord it a tremendous influence on the minds, characters and souls of youth in their upbringing. In any event, whatever the reason for Adeimantos’s fixation on the poets, Plato himself seems no less fixated on them, dedicating a large part of the construction of the most just city in II and III to the subject of the sorts of poetry and music proper for use in the education of the youths of such a city, as well as much of X to it.

Adeimantos has one over-riding concern in all this: the effect of such language on youth, what grounds it will provide on the basis of which they will *choose* which sort of life is most worth living. For Adeimantos, the problem lies entirely in the fact that those who educate the youth do not speak properly to them of these matters. Indeed, when Adeimantos, in the course of his challenge, briefly enters the mind of a youth trying to decide between justice and injustice as a way of life, he has the youth pose the question entirely in terms of what is *said* about the consequences of each way of life, and the way it is said, rather than in terms of the actual nature of those consequences *simpliciter* (II.365b).

For the things *that are said* of my being just[, if I choose to be so,] unless I also seem so, are not, *they say*, recompenses, but painful toil and complete loss; but with regard to being unjust, having procured the reputation of justice, life is *spoken of with divinely sweet words*.<sup>23</sup>

(The italics are mine, justified by nothing in the Greek, being meant merely to drive the point home.) He makes perhaps his strongest statement (367a), best capturing the extraordinary power over the shaping of the young he attributes to language, immediately following the passage I cited above, in which he had complained of the lack of a proper account of justice and injustice by poets and writers in particular.

**A:** For if you all had spoken this way from the beginning[, praising the activity of justice itself in the soul,] and from our youth up had sought to convince us, we should not now be

<sup>21</sup> . . . τὸ τῆς εὐσχημοσύνης τε καὶ ἀσχημοσύνης τῶ, εὐρύθμῳ τε καὶ ἀρρυθμῳ ἀκολουθεῖ.

<sup>22</sup> οὐδ' αὖ μοῦ γὰρ κινεῖται μουσικῆς τρόποι ἄνευ πολιτικῶν νόμων τῶν μεγίστων. . .

<sup>23</sup> τὰ μὲν γὰρ λεγόμενα δικαίῳ μὲν ὄντι μοι, ἐὰν μὴ καὶ δοκῶ ὄφελος οὐδὲν φάσιν εἶναι, πόνους δὲ καὶ ζημίας φανεράς· ἀδίκῳ δὲ δόξαν δικαιοσύνης παρασκευασμένῳ θεσπέσιος βίος λέγεται.

guarding against one another's injustice, but each would be his own best guardian...<sup>24</sup>

Adeimantos believes that the mind of a youth will be shaped and ruled, from the start, by the words of others speaking of the words of others—all those who have educated him, parents, teachers, elders, poets (but not, it would seem, tragedians), by having defined value and worth to him in terms of the reputation he will have among other men and what those men will say of him, and how they will say it, and by having measured this value and worth solely in the units of these terms. It would seem, then, that, for Adeimantos, the most important and enticing benefits and consequences of justice and injustice consist of τὰ λεγόμενα ('what is said'), as opposed to τὰ γιγνόμενα ('what follows upon') for Glaukon, and not, moreover, any old λεγόμενα, but in particular those essayed by poets. Stripping the just man of this repute will constitute, in his eyes, the sorest handicap Socrates will labor under in answering the challenge.

We have now assembled several observations about two claimed differences between the challenges of Glaukon and Adeimantos: first, that Adeimantos focuses on the activity of the soul and Glaukon on its state; and second, that Glaukon dismisses all the appurtenances of the just man's life, emphasizing none over the rest, concerned only with the seeming versus the being, and would have Socrates judge which life is best in and of itself, whereas Adeimantos, contrarily, fastens on the repute of the just man and of the unjust, and the language used to articulate and inform that repute, especially as deployed by the poets, and so would have Socrates praise and blame the two in language not framed in the terms of traditional praise and blame, nor of repute in general, but rather in terms of the activities and effects of each of justice and injustice itself, with an eye towards constructing a curriculum appropriate for teaching youths the true worth and value of justice and injustice. How, if at all, may each of these differences bear on the other? I shall not attempt to address this question with any finality until the third paper in this series, where I shall argue that one way to understand the relations between the challenges turns almost entirely on the nature of the differences among the characters of the three parts of the soul, and how they interact to produce the five types of man Socrates describes in VIII and IX—Adeimantos's challenge typifies the ruling concerns of the timocrat, and Glaukon's those of the (proto-)philosopher.<sup>25</sup> In preparation for that attempt at an answer, I shall in the second paper in the series examine whether or not, on the face of it, Socrates's answers to the challenges address them on their own terms. In the remainder of this paper, I shall examine what I think is a representative sample of the secondary literature, to attempt to show why I find contemporary accounts of these matters unsatisfying, as the attempt will itself suggest fruitful avenues to explore.

---

<sup>24</sup> εἰ γὰρ οὕτως ἐλέγετο ἐξ ἀρχῆς ὑπὸ πάντων ὑμῶν καὶ ἐκ νέων ἡμᾶς ἐπέιθετε, οὐκ ἂν ἀλλήλους ἐφουλάττομεν μὴ ἀδικεῖν, ἀλλ' αὐτὸς αὐτοῦ ἦν ἕκαστος ἄριστος φύλοξ...

<sup>25</sup>I shall also argue that Kephalos's brief discourse typifies the ruling concerns of the appetitive man who has lived the best, happiest life possible for such a one. In this regard, it is interesting to note that Kephalos's speech is not a challenge but rather a statement. He feels content with his knowledge of justice and what makes a good life. He has no need or desire for further inquiry, which, in the event, could serve him in no good stead.

### 3 A Few Remarks

Not much of the secondary literature on the *Republic* I am familiar with considers in any detail the possible differences between the challenges of the two brothers, the ramifications these differences may have through the rest of the work by way of Socrates's attempts to address them, and, perhaps most importantly, whether Socrates ever addresses the challenges themselves.<sup>26</sup> Most of it focuses rather on whether or not the arguments Socrates offers support the claims he himself makes, irrespective of whether or not those claims answer the challenges of the two brothers.

Irwin (1977), for example, is a classic example of this. He argues that Socrates attempts to show that justice is a necessary component of happiness, without noting that this in no way addresses the brothers' challenges, no matter how one reads them, so long as one's reading takes account of the seemingly unavoidable fact that they most want to hear, in some way or other, about the nature of justice itself, whether that means its natural consequences, natural constitution, natural activity, or what have you. Indeed, one might, not unreasonably, think that showing justice to be good only in so far as it is part of happiness is exactly not to show that it is good in and of itself, but rather to show that it is good only in virtue of the worth of something else, in this case that of happiness. In Glaukon's challenge, in particular, the perfectly just man is described as stripped of friends, family, possessions and status, suffering torture and ultimately dying a wretched death—a life only a philosopher or a lunatic could call happy. What would the good of justice be in this case? None, if its worth were predicated solely on that of happiness. Indeed, this problem makes Irwin's interpretation untenable even on its own terms: if justice is not sufficient for happiness, as it cannot be on Irwin's view, as he himself admits, what guarantees that the just man is always happier than the unjust man, as Irwin bravely claims?

Having recognized similar problems in the traditional component view, Reeve (1988) constructs the notion of a "homoiomorous essential component" in an attempt to salvage it, and tries to show that justice must be such a component of happiness. He defines it as follows (p. 31).

In some cases, if being F is an essential component of being G, it is impossible to be to some degree F without being to some degree G. Having money is an essential component of being rich, and it is not possible to have any amount of money without being to some degree rich. In these cases, being F (or G) to some degree might be thought of as having some number of units or degrees of F (or G).

Such components are homoiomorous.<sup>27</sup> Reeve cites 472cd and 580a–c as textual evidence for the claim that justice is a homoiomorous essential component of happiness, since both of these passages

---

<sup>26</sup>Adkins (1960) is an interesting case. He (pp. 284ff.) explicates in some detail the terms of Glaukon's actual challenge, as most commentators do not, and does discuss whether or not Plato's account answers the challenge in its terms. He concludes it does not, but for reasons mostly dissimilar to those I give, though our views dovetail on a few important points. I discuss his account in the second paper in this series.

<sup>27</sup>Reeve never defines 'essential component'. I feel wary of taking it straightforwardly as 'necessary component', if only because Reeve seems to use the notions of necessity and sufficiency differently than I am used to. For instance, he seems to think it possible for being F to be a sufficient condition of being G while at the same time having it be possible that one might be F without being G (see Reeve 1988, p. 29). In light of his example, perhaps 'definitive

do seem to associate possession of a certain degree of justice with possession of a certain degree of happiness. Given that he would have justice be such a component of happiness, this seems to obviate one of Irwin's problems, for now one can not be to some degree just without also being to some degree happy. To rectify Irwin's first problem, Reeve claims (p. 33) that "it is only if being F is a homoiomerous essential component of being G that wanting to be F solely for the sake of being G guarantees that we want to be F for its own sake. For in this case, to fail to do so is to fail to want to be G for its own sake."<sup>28</sup> Of course, we still may not want G for its own sake, but let us grant him that; at least we (presumably) do in the case of happiness. More troublesome is that, by his own formulation, F's being a homoiomerous essential component of G is only a necessary condition of F's being wanted for its own sake (if G likewise is), and, indeed, it would seem incoherent to demand that it be also sufficient condition, unless F's being a homoiomerous component of G ensures that it is in some way equivalent to G. Reeve does not claim this, however, but speaks only in the terms of components. Unless there are no components in the stew other than the homoiomerous ones, it would be simply wrong to say the components and the whole are equivalent; and happiness surely has more components, on his view, than only justice—otherwise there is little point in talking of components. It is not difficult to produce examples of cases in which, *prima facie*, one might want a thing for itself without also thereby wanting one of its homoiomerous essential components, indeed, cases in which one detests one of its homoiomerous, essential components.<sup>29</sup> Reeve does not consider the possibility. Thus Irwin's first problem still dogs him: why is justice good in itself?

I think Reeve's attempt to salvage Irwin's reading of justice as a component of happiness was doomed to fail: in any sort of reading that takes justice as a component of happiness, the two questions will always remain, why it is that this one component overpowers the other components by so much that it can still guarantee some happiness even in the absence of other components, and why it that justice is good in itself. The second difficulty is particular debilitating with regard to the attempt to provide an answer to the brothers' challenges, for, so long as one predicates the worth of justice on that of any larger manifold it in part composes, one will not, as Glaukon rightly demanded, have stripped the just man of *everything* but justice, so as to determine whether it is good in itself. To show it to have worth on the sorts of terms suggested by Irwin and Reeve, one

---

component' comes somewhat near what he means, but 'definition' is too vague a notion to do me much good. His example itself, moreover, seems suspect, in that, if I had a total net worth of \$1.47, I would surely be called 'to some degree rich' only in a wistful or sarcastic sense, even were I totally liquid.

<sup>28</sup>Throughout the book Reeve talks as though the problem of the *Republic* were to determine whether or not justice ought to be *wanted* for its own sake, not whether it is good in itself. I think this is a serious blunder, since there is no necessary connection between what we want a thing for and in virtue of what that thing is good.

<sup>29</sup>Here is one. Let us say that Mary wants to be a successful public defender, and she does not want it for the accolades or wealth, but only for its own sake, lover as she is of our adversarial legal system and its inherent tendency to guard individual civil rights. Now, a homoiomerous essential component of being a good public defender, I think, is winning court cases, and, since we have an adversarial legal system and not a justice system, this includes winning cases that Mary, who has a strong sense of fair play and personal responsibility independent of her love for the law, would not otherwise necessarily think should be won. Mary does not particularly like winning every case she can of and for itself, and she certainly does not want it for its own sake, but she does it nonetheless because she wants to be a successful public defender, upholding the protective, adversarial aspects of our legal system.

must show that it forms a part of this larger good, with the result that one still would not know whether or not it itself, with all else stripped from it, is inherently good.

In one of the most well known studies among those that do attempt to address head-on the brothers' challenges, and whether Socrates answers them or not, Foster (1937) argues that the terms of the brothers' challenges are actually inconsistent with their own claim that they want Socrates to show that justice is a member of the second class of goods, according to Glaukon's classification at the beginning of II (357b–d), those good both in themselves and for the sake of their consequences. Foster distinguishes the “natural” consequences of justice, those that can be had only by truly being just, from the “artificial” ones, which can be had by merely seeming to be just, and concludes that Glaukon and Adeimantos really want to hear about the natural consequences of justice, and thus not about how justice is good in itself. I think Foster is half right in a third of his interpretation. It will help clarify matters to examine how, as I believe, he is right and how he is wrong.

In support of his reading, Foster translates 358b (what I refer to as Glaukon's canonical statement) as Glaukon's asking about the natural consequences of justice. He does not say what in particular justifies this translation. I must assume that he takes ‘τίνα ἔχει δύναμιν αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ’ to mean ‘natural consequence[s]’, though this still leaves ‘τί τ' ἔστιν καὶ’ unaccounted for; I suppose one could try to take it as an emphatic redundancy, driving home the point that one wishes to hear about only those consequences that accrue to the possession of justice itself, though one would have to abuse the semantics of the Greek ruthlessly to twist it to the need. It is difficult to see, for instance, how ‘τ' . . . καὶ’ can be translated by anything other than ‘both . . . and’, or some synonymous word or phrase. In any event, taking ‘τίνα ἔχει δύναμιν αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ’ to refer to consequences is itself already an abuse of the semantics. Consider, for example, the analogous clause ‘τίνα ἔχουσιν δύναμιν αὐτοὶ καθ' αὐτοὺς οἱ ὀφθαλμοί’ (not taken from the *Republic*), naturally rendered as ‘what power the eyes have in and of themselves’. It is difficult if not impossible, in something like the context of Glaukon's challenge, to take this as referring to anything but the capacity to see. In a different context, it could perhaps be used in a gruesome joke (‘What potential do the eyes have? Why, the potential to make these delightful earrings!’) or in a strained and melodramatic attempt at irony (‘The eyes of Oedipus had no power to see the truth until they were ripped out.’). I can think of no context, however, in which this phrase could be rendered by ‘the consequences the eyes have’. The same holds for the original clause; no context I can think could justify any other translation for it than something like ‘what justice has the power [to do or to be] in and of itself’. Foster quietly ignores, moreover, Glaukon's insistence at the close of the remark that he does *not* want to hear about τὰ γινόμενα—what *follows* from—justice, which manifestly controverts his reading. In sum, I can not make out how this passage supports his interpretation. He further cites 358d to support his reading, also without saying exactly how it does; I do not, however, understand how this passage can even be abused so as to have anything to do with consequences, natural, artificial or otherwise, so I let it drop.

Foster (p. 389) gives finally his most compelling evidence, a passage in 367cd almost immediately following what I call Adeimantos's canonical statement.

**A:** Since, then, you [Socrates] have agreed that justice belongs to the class of the highest goods, those possessing worth on account of their results and still more for their own sake, such as seeing, hearing, thinking, yes and being healthy too, and all other goods that are productive by their own nature and not by opinion, this is what I would have you praise about justice, how it itself, by virtue of itself, acts beneficially for its possessor and injustice acts harmfully [for its possessor]. But the recompenses and the repute, leave to others to praise.<sup>30</sup>

I did not cite this passage before, in §2, even though I think it is one of the strongest pieces of evidence in favor of my reading, because I wanted to consider it here, in the light of Foster's interpretation.<sup>31</sup> On the face of it, it has much to support his view, primarily this: Adeimantos explicitly makes something very much like Foster's distinction, distinguishing between, on the one hand, the results (τὰ ἀποβαίνοντα) of a thing that can issue from it by virtue only of its own productive (γόνιμα)<sup>32</sup> nature and, on the other, those that can issue from it by virtue of (at least) the mere repute of the thing. Adeimantos, however, employs this distinction only as a means of characterizing the second class of goods, and separating those sorts of results of justice whose praise he already knows (those depending on its repute) from those whose adequate praise he has never heard before, those produced only by its own nature. He does not explicitly invoke this distinction in stating what he wants to hear from Socrates. He says only that he wants to know how justice benefits and injustice harms the respective possessor of each.

This leads to the second most pressing problem I have with Foster's interpretation of this and other, similar passages. He slides too easily from benefits to consequences. I do think Foster is right in saying that the brothers want an account of the good of justice stated in terms of something that has only to do with its nature, and the focus Foster's reading brings on the point is salutary. Nothing in the brothers' challenges, however, commits them to the view that these natural somethings are the *consequences* of justice. I do not accept the slide from benefits to consequences, at least not without substantial argument, which Foster does not give. It seems to me that something can benefit one and that benefit not be a consequence of the thing. I count my sense of smell as a great benefit. I do not, however, know what this benefit may be a consequence of. My sense of smell itself is the benefit, the act of olfaction as a pleasure itself. One could say my sense of smell is a consequence of

<sup>30</sup> ἐπειδὴ οὖν ὠμολόγησας τῶν μεγίστων ἀγαθῶν εἶναι δικαιοσύνην, ἃ τῶν τῆς ἀποβαίνοντων ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἔνεκα ἄξια κεκτηῖσθαι, πολὺ δὲ μᾶλλον αὐτὰ αὐτῶν, οἷον ὄραν, ἀκούειν, φρονεῖν, καὶ ὑγιαίνειν δὴ, καὶ ὅσ' ἄλλα ἀγαθὰ γόνιμα τῆς αὐτῶν φύσει ἄλλ' οὐ δόξῃ ἐστίν, τοῦτ' οὖν αὐτὸ ἐπαίνεσον δικαιοσύνης, ὃ αὐτῇ δι' αὐτὴν τὸν ἔχοντα δύνῃσιν, καὶ ἀδικία βλάπτει, μισθοὺς δὲ καὶ δόξας πάρεσ ἄλλοις ἐπαινεῖν.

<sup>31</sup>Briefly, I think it supports my reading of Adeimantos's challenge as a whole in its emphasis on dismissing the *repute* of justice, as opposed to merely what follows from it, and on the fact that Adeimantos uses active, transitive verbs to describe what he wants shown: not that justice is simply a good in itself, but the way it *acts* beneficially (δύνῃσιν) for its possessor, and, similarly, that injustice *works* harm (βλάπτει) on its possessor.

<sup>32</sup>I suspect that Adeimantos's use of γόνιμα, an unusual word for this context, may be another instance of Plato's endless punning. The word primarily means not so much 'productive' as 'reproductive', or better 'procreative', and having generally to do with pregnancy and child-bearing, harking back to Adeimantos's emphasis on youth and their upbringing.

my sense of smell in, I think, only a Pickwickian sense, or perhaps as a sarcasm. My smelling the jasmine on the trellis of my neighbor's house when I walk by it this evening is a wonderful, particular benefit of my sense of smell, and could be thought of as a consequence of it as well, though even this seems a strained usage of the idea—perhaps my smelling the jasmine would better be said a manifestation of my sense of smell. Would a sommelier's distinguishing a 1970 Haut-Brion from a 1970 La Mission-Haut-Brion by the respective noses of the wines count as a consequence of her sense of smell? Would her capacity for making this distinction? I'm not sure. I'm not even sure what, in the abstract, could count as criteria for judging an attempt to answer these questions. I can say for sure only that I see no necessary connection between benefits and consequences on any reasonably straightforward understanding of the nature of a consequence.

My most pressing problem with Foster's interpretation is that it makes of Plato such a profound dunderhead, to have made such a grossly manifest and simple error, and leaves what is by general acclaim one of his greatest works mortally flawed on account of a simple and basic point, that the onus is on Foster to provide overwhelming evidence that no better rendering of the work is possible. If Foster were right about what Glaukon and Adeimantos say in the explication of their challenges, that they want to hear from Socrates only about the natural consequences of justice, then Foster would be right to say that an answer to the questions posed in those terms would not answer the question about the proper attribution to justice from Glaukon's classification of goods, for an answer to Foster's version of the challenges would not show that justice is good in and of itself. Natural consequences are still consequences, and would not by themselves suffice to place justice unequivocally into the second class of goods rather than the third, those we think are good for the sake of their consequences only. Glaukon places medicine, for instance, in the third class of goods. In order to show this, one need show only that it has as a consequence something that is itself good; since medicine does seem naturally (in Foster's sense) productive of health, one can conclude that it belongs to the third class. If one wanted to argue that Glaukon's classification of it was incorrect, that in fact it belongs to the second class of goods, one must further show that medicine is good in itself. Similarly, to show that justice is good only by extolling the natural consequences it produces, as Foster claims Glaukon and Adeimantos want shown, suffices only for concluding that justice is a member of the third class of goods.

Annas (1981) picks up and accepts Foster's distinction between natural and artificial consequences, though she modifies it (she does not note this herself), with important consequences, and so attempts to give a reading of the book II passages reconciling the apparent tension Foster had noted between the terms of the brothers' challenges and the question of the proper classification of justice as a good. I find her account in some respects more compelling than Foster's own, especially in the sensitivity it shows to the differences between the two challenges of the brothers. It suffers, however, from defects of its own. Annas argues that Glaukon wants to know how justice is good in itself, whereas Adeimantos wants to hear how the natural consequences of justice are beneficial, but both wish to set aside completely the issue of the artificial consequences of justice. An important part of her reasoning is her definition of "artificial" consequences as being those directly dependent on human practices and convention (this is where she silently departs from Foster); she does not

explicitly define “natural” consequence, but presumably it is one not so dependent. She then argues that Adeimantos wants to hear about consequences that are natural in this sense. This, to me, does seem closer to the spirit of Adeimantos’s challenge, in so far as Adeimantos, as I have argued, wants most of all the repute in particular stripped from the just man. Glaukon, rather, seems more concerned about Foster’s distinction, turning as it does on seeming versus being just.

Such a distinction as Annas’s might appear plausible, but I do not think its cogency withstands scrutiny. Take her examples. She claims, for instance, that “knowledge, sight, and health . . . don’t have any rewards in the sense of artificial consequences.”<sup>33</sup> Are the forces of nature then the true authors of college diplomas? Did the sickly kid who never got picked for a sports team in the schoolyard console himself with the thought that it was only natural that it be so, not a consequence of his ill-health conjoined with the character of sports as played in our society? Annas has no explicit examples of a natural consequence—perhaps she thought these so perspicuous as to need no exemplification. This is unfortunate, for the only aspect of, *e.g.*, sight I can think of that might plausibly be argued not to depend on human practices and convention whatsoever is seeing itself, having a vision (in the everyday, not the prophetic, sense). But seeing is not a consequence of sight; seeing is a part of sight, perhaps even constitutes sight, whatever exactly that may mean. A consequence of sight might be a ready capacity to enjoy Rodin, but being able to see *simpliciter* is surely not a consequence of sight. Seeing is, moreover, surely a benefit of sight, and is one (*pace* Foster) that is not a consequence of sight, natural or otherwise. I find it difficult to imagine anything else one might consider to be a “natural” *consequence* of sight that would not ultimately depend in some way or other upon human practices and conventions.

I suppose that one could still try to salvage something like Annas’s reading by using Foster’s original distinction between natural and artificial consequences, and not her own, in conjunction with her treatment of the challenges, but I think it would be a red herring. Any account of the *Republic* that takes consequences as the fundamental terms of even one of the brothers’ challenges thereby condemns either Plato or the brother (in Plato’s depiction) to irremediable stupidity, for any consequences of justice, natural, artificial or supernatural, will fall afoul of Glaukon’s demand—staunchly re-affirmed by Adeimantos—that the just man be stripped of everything but justice, so that we may determine unequivocally that justice is good in itself. Both Glaukon and Adeimantos freely admit that justice has good consequences. To complete the proof of the proposition, Socrates must show that justice is good strictly in and of itself and consequences be damned.

## 4 One Question

Socrates, in book x, after he has put forward what he claims is yet another answer to the brothers’ challenges, characterizes the adequacy of his answers to those challenges (612a–d).

**S:** Then we have met all the other demands of the argument and we have not invoked the rewards of and reputes of justice as you said Homer and Hesiod do, but we have

---

<sup>33</sup>Annas (1981, pp. 65-6).

## On the Challenges the Sons of Ariston Pose to Socrates in the *Republic*

---

proved that justice in itself is the best thing for the soul itself. . . Now that they[, justice and injustice, and the lives of the just and the unjust man,] have been compared and judged, I demand back from you on behalf of justice the repute that she in fact enjoys from gods and men, and I ask that we admit that she is thus esteemed in order that she may gather in the prizes she wins from the seeming and so bestows on her possessors.

He then recites (613a–e) the litany of benefits we may now allow to accrue to justice and to the just man, that, the claim goes, have been denied it and him throughout the course of the argument: that the just man will be dear to the gods, have honor from men and receive the benefits that attend such affection and honor. In particular, they will hold offices in their own city, marry into the best families, give their children in marriage to those of the best families, and so on.

When one considers the content of Socrates's answers throughout the course of II–IX, this claim and this request appear nothing more than extraordinary and unmitigated gall. So far even from having stripped nothing good from the philosopher during the course of the entire work, he has rather showered him with blessings, painting him as enjoying the best of reputations among the best of men, close comradeship with those men, physical health, well-being, security, generous satisfaction of his necessary carnal appetites, the leisure time to engage in his most treasured of occupations, the holding of high offices, marriage to the best for himself and for his children, and so on. How can we not conclude that Socrates has utterly and completely violated the most basic terms of the brothers' challenges, and that, moreover, Glaukon and Adeimantos are simpletons for having allowed him to get away with it?

I have sketched why I think that traditional ways of trying to make sense of the *Republic* are not adequate, because of their failure to address this problem. I think one must seriously consider the brothers' challenges themselves to be definitive of the question the work as a whole is trying to address, and, at the same time, one must attempt to understand Socrates's arguments and stories as attempts to answer those very challenges, rather than focus either on the character of the brothers' challenges or on Socrates's arguments, each in isolation from the other, as traditional readings tend to do.<sup>34</sup>

## References

- Adkins, A. (1960). *Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values*. Midway Reprint. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. A 1975 reprint of the 1960 edition of Oxford University Press.
- Annas, J. (1981). *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Foster, M. (1937). A mistake of Plato's in the *Republic*. *Mind* 46, 386–93.
- Irwin, T. (1977). *Plato's Moral Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

---

<sup>34</sup>A notable exception to this is Kraut (1992), who attempts to tackle head-on the two issues as dependent on one another. I consider Kraut's account in the third paper in the series.

**On the Challenges the Sons of Ariston Pose to Socrates in the *Republic***

---

- Kraut, R. (1992). The defense of justice in Plato's *Republic*. In R. Kraut (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nagy, G. (1981). *The Best of the Achæans* (First ed.). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Reeve, C. (1988). *Philosopher-Kings: The Argument of Plato's Republic*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.