

The Just Society and its Enemies:
Week 3: Justice as a Political Principle

- I. Justice as a distributive principle
- II. The principle of appropriate work
- III. Four quick arguments
- IV. *Erga* and the common good

Some terminology:

the principle of justice (general): in a just city, every citizen practises the occupation appropriate to their natural abilities

= the *appropriate work principle*

the principle of justice (special): in a just city, government is the occupation only of those who have the natural abilities appropriate for political work, and have been given the appropriate education for it

the resources corollary: in a just city, every citizen has the necessary resources to practise the occupation appropriate to their natural abilities, including education and other resources and instruments as needed (the 'second distribution') (=Vlastos' 'Principle of Functional Reciprocity')

the wages corollary: in a just city, every citizen who contributes to the common good receives reciprocal benefits from the contributions of others as a wage for doing so

the common good: the collective happiness of a community, understood as the flourishing of the citizens, as harmonized and constrained by the good of each other and of the city itself

the transference principle: certain properties of a city, including justice and other salient ethical traits, are a function of the same property in some set of its citizens, transferred to the whole by the structure of the city (435d9-6a3, 544d5-e2)

eudaimonia: happiness

Justice as a distributive principle:

Four questions for a theory of distributive justice:

1. what does justice distribute (and to whom)?
2. according to what principle should it be distributed?
3. who should do the distributing?
4. what constraints should there be on the distribution?

Arguments for Plato's principle of political justice:

1. The argument from the opposite (= recognition argument (4), see below)
2. The argument from justice as an enabling virtue (= recognition argument (1), see below)
3. The argument from 'Hesiodic' justice
4. The argument from the nature of the city
5. The transference of happiness argument
- [6. The individual fulfilment argument]

Two Key Passages:

I. The principle of political justice and the recognition arguments (433a-4d):

[**the principle**] "Listen whether after all I make any sense," I said. "That rule we set down at the beginning as to what must be done in everything when we were founding the city-this, or a certain

form of it, is, in my opinion, justice. Surely we set down and often said, if you remember, that **each one must practice one of the functions in the city, that one for which his nature made him naturally most fit.**" -- "Yes, we were saying that."

"And further, that justice is the minding of one's own business and not being a busybody, this we have both heard from many others and have often said ourselves." -- "Yes, we have."

"Well, then, my friend," I said, "this-the practice of minding one's own business-when it comes into being in a certain way, is probably justice. Do you know how I infer this?" -- "No," he said, "tell me."

[recognition argument 1: justice as the enabling virtue] "In my opinion," I said, "after having considered moderation, courage, and prudence, this is what's left over in the city; **it provided the power by which all these others came into being; and, once having come into being, it provides them with preservation as long as it's in the city.** And yet we were saying that justice would be what's left over from the three if we found them." -- "Yes, we did," he said, "and it's necessarily so:"

[recognition argument 2: justice as good-making] "Moreover," I said, "if one had to judge which of them by coming to be will do our city the most good, it would be a difficult judgment. Is it the unity of opinion among rulers and ruled? Or is it the coming into being in the soldiers of that preserving of the lawful opinion as to which things are terrible and which are not? Or is it the prudence and guardianship present in the rulers? Or is the city done the most good by the fact that-in the case of child, woman, slave, freeman, craftsman, ruler and ruled-each one minded his own business and wasn't a busybody?" -- "It would, of course," he said, "be a difficult judgment."

"Then, as it seems, with respect to a city's virtue, this power that consists in each man's minding his own business in the city is a rival to wisdom, moderation and courage."

-- "Very much so," he said.

"Wouldn't you name justice that which is the rival of these others in contributing to a city's virtue?"

-- "That's entirely certain."

[recognition argument 3: 'doing one's own'] "Now consider if it will seem the same from this viewpoint too. Will you assign the judging of lawsuits in the city to the rulers?" -- "Of course."

"Will they have any other aim in their judging than that no one have what belongs to others, nor be deprived of what belongs to him?" -- "None other than this."

"Because that's just?" -- "Yes."

"And therefore, from this point of view too, the having and doing of one's own and what belongs to oneself would be agreed to be justice." -- "That's so."

[recognition argument 4: argument from the opposite] "Now see if you have the same opinion as I do. A carpenter's trying to do the job of a shoemaker or a shoemaker that of a carpenter, or their exchanging tools or honors with one another, or even the same man's trying to do both, with everything else being changed along with it, in your opinion, would that do any great harm to the city?" -- "Hardly," he said.

"But, I suppose, when one who is a craftsman or some other kind of money-maker by nature, inflated by wealth, multitude, strength, or something else of the kind, tries to get into the class of the warrior, or one of the warriors who's unworthy into that of the adviser and

guardian, and these men exchange tools and honors with one another; or when the same man tries to do all these things at once-then I suppose it's also your opinion that this change in them and this meddling are the destruction of the city." -- "That's entirely certain."

"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." -- "Quite certainly."

"Won't you say that the greatest evil-doing against one's own city is injustice?" -- "Of course."

"Then, that's injustice. Again, let's say it this way. The opposite of this-the money-making, auxiliary, and guardian classes doing what's appropriate, each of them minding its own business in a city would be justice and would make the city just."

-- "My opinion," he said, "is also that and no other."

"Let's not assert it so positively just yet," I said. "But, if this form is applied to human beings singly and also agreed by us to be justice there, then we'll concede it."

Ἄλλ', ἣν δ' ἐγώ, ἄκουε εἴ τι ἄρα λέγω. ὁ γὰρ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐθέμεθα δεῖν ποιεῖν διὰ παντός, ὅτε τὴν πόλιν κατὰκίζομεν, τοῦτό ἐστιν, ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, ἦτοι τούτου τι εἶδος, ἢ δικαιοσύνη. ἐθέμεθα δὲ δήπου καὶ

πολλάκις ἐλέγομεν, εἰ μέμνησαι, ὅτι ἓνα ἕκαστον ἐν δέοι ἐπιτηδεύειν τῶν περὶ τὴν πόλιν, εἰς ὃ αὐτοῦ ἢ φύσις ἐπιτηδειοτάτη πεφυκυῖα εἶη. -- Ἐλέγομεν γάρ.

Καὶ μὴν ὅτι γε τὸ τὰ αὐτοῦ πράττειν καὶ μὴ πολυπραγμανεῖν δικαιοσύνη ἐστὶ, καὶ τοῦτο ἄλλων τε πολλῶν ἀκηκόαμεν καὶ αὐτοὶ πολλάκις εἰρήκαμεν. -- Εἰρήκαμεν γάρ.

Τοῦτο τοίνυν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ὃ φίλε, κινδυνεῖει τρόπον τινὰ γιγνόμενον ἢ δικαιοσύνη εἶναι, τὸ τὰ αὐτοῦ πράττειν. οἴσθα ὅθεν τεκμαίρομαι; -- Οὐκ, ἀλλὰ λέγ', ἔφη.

Δοκεῖ μοι, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, τὸ ὑπόλοιπον ἐν τῇ πόλει τῶν <*> ὦν> ἐσκέμμεθα, σωφροσύνης καὶ ἀνδρείας καὶ φρονήσεως, τοῦτο εἶναι ὃ πᾶσιν ἐκείνοις τὴν δύναμιν παρέσχεν ὥστε ἐγγενέσθαι, καὶ ἐγγενομένοις γε σωτηρίαν παρέχειν, ἕωσπερ ἂν ἐνῆ. καίτοι ἔφαμεν δικαιοσύνην ἔσεσθαι τὸ ὑπολειφθὲν ἐκείνων, εἰ τὰ τρία εὐροίμεν. -- Καὶ γὰρ ἀνάγκη, ἔφη.

Ἀλλὰ μέντοι, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, εἰ δέοι γε κρίναι τί τὴν πόλιν ἡμῖν τούτων μάλιστα ἀγαθὴν ἀπεργάσεται ἐγγενομένου, δύσκριτον ἂν εἶη πότερον ἢ ὁμοδοξία τῶν ἀρχόντων τε καὶ ἀρχομένων, ἢ ἡ περὶ δεινῶν τε καὶ μὴ, ἅττα ἐστὶ, δόξης ἐννόμου σωτηρία ἐν τοῖς στρατιώταις ἐγγενομένη, ἢ ἡ ἐν τοῖς ἄρχουσι φρόνησις τε καὶ φυλακὴ ἐνοῦσα, ἢ τοῦτο μάλιστα ἀγαθὴν αὐτὴν ποιεῖ ἐνὸν καὶ ἐν παιδί καὶ ἐν γυναικὶ καὶ δούλῳ καὶ ἐλευθέρῳ καὶ δημιουργῷ καὶ ἄρχοντι καὶ ἀρχομένῳ, ὅτι τὸ αὐτοῦ ἕκαστος εἰς ὧν ἔπραττε καὶ οὐκ ἐπολυπραγμόνει. -- Δύσκριτον, ἔφη· πῶς δ' οὐ;

Ἐνάμιλλον ἄρα, ὡς εἴοικε, πρὸς ἀρετὴν πόλεως τῇ τε σοφίᾳ αὐτῆς καὶ τῇ σωφροσύνῃ καὶ τῇ ἀνδρείᾳ ἢ τοῦ ἕκαστου ἐν αὐτῇ τὰ αὐτοῦ πράττειν δύναμις. -- Καὶ μάλα, ἔφη.

Οὐκοῦν δικαιοσύνην τό γε τούτοις ἐνάμιλλον ἂν εἰς ἀρετὴν πόλεως θείης; -- Παντάπασι μὲν οὖν.

Σκόπει δὴ καὶ τῆδε εἰ οὕτω δόξει· ἄρα τοῖς ἄρχουσιν ἐν τῇ πόλει τὰς δίκας προστάξεις δικάζειν;

--Τί μήν;

Ἴῃ ἄλλου τινὸς οὖν μᾶλλον ἐφιέμενοι δικάσουσιν ἢ τούτου, ὅπως ἂν ἕκαστοι μὴτ' ἔχωσι τὰλλότρια μῆτε τῶν αὐτῶν στέρωνται; -- Οὐκ, ἀλλὰ τούτου.

Ὡς δικαίου ὄντος; -- Ναί.

Καὶ ταύτη ἄρα πῃ ἢ τοῦ οἰκείου τε καὶ ἑαυτοῦ ἕξις τε καὶ πρᾶξις δικαιοσύνη ἂν ὁμολογοῖτο. -- Ἔστι ταῦτα.

Ἴδὲ δὴ ἐὰν σοὶ ὅπερ ἐμοὶ συνδοκῆ. τέκτων σκυτοτόμου ἐπιχειρῶν ἔργα ἐργάζεσθαι ἢ σκυτοτόμος τέκτονος, ἢ τὰ ὄργανα μεταλαμβάνοντες τὰλλήλων ἢ τιμάς, ἢ καὶ ὁ αὐτὸς ἐπιχειρῶν ἀμφοτέρα πράττειν, πάντα τᾶλλα μεταλλαττόμενα, ἄρα σοὶ ἂν τι δοκεῖ μέγα βλάψαι πόλιν; -- Οὐ πάνυ, ἔφη.

Ἀλλ' ὅταν γε, οἶμαι, δημιουργὸς ὧν ἢ τις ἄλλος χρηματιστὴς φύσει, ἔπειτα ἐπαίρομενος ἢ πλούτῳ ἢ πληθείῃ ἢ ἰσχύϊ ἢ ἄλλῳ τῷ τοιούτῳ εἰς τὸ τοῦ πολεμικοῦ εἶδος ἐπιχειρῆ ἰέναι, ἢ τῶν πολεμικῶν τις εἰς τὸ τοῦ βουλευτικοῦ καὶ φύλακος, ἀνάξιος ὧν, καὶ τὰ ἀλλήλων οὗτοι ὄργανα μεταλαμβάνωσι καὶ τὰς τιμάς, ἢ ὅταν ὁ αὐτὸς πάντα ταῦτα ἅμα ἐπιχειρῆ πράττειν, τότε οἶμαι καὶ σοὶ δοκεῖν ταύτην τὴν τούτων μεταβολὴν καὶ πολυπραγμοσύνην ὄλεθρον εἶναι τῇ πόλει. -- Παντάπασι μὲν οὖν.

Ἡ τριῶν ἄρα ὄντων γενῶν πολυπραγμοσύνη καὶ μεταβολὴ εἰς ἄλληλα μεγίστη τε βλάβη τῇ πόλει καὶ ὀρθότατ' ἂν προσαγορευέοιτο μάλιστα κακουργία. -- Κομιδῆ μὲν οὖν.

Κακουργίαν δὲ τὴν μεγίστην τῆς ἑαυτοῦ πόλεως οὐκ ἀδικίαν φήσεις εἶναι; -- Πῶς δ' οὐ;

Τοῦτο μὲν ἄρα ἀδικία. πάλιν δὲ ὧδε λέγωμεν· χρηματιστικοῦ, ἐπικουρικοῦ, φυλακικοῦ γένους οἰκειοπραγία, ἐκάστου τούτων τὸ αὐτοῦ πράττοντος ἐν πόλει, τοῦναντίον ἐκείνου δικαιοσύνη τ' ἂν εἶη καὶ τὴν πόλιν δικαίαν παρέχοι;

Οὐκ ἄλλη ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ, ἢ δ' ὅς, ἔχειν ἢ ταύτη.

Μηδέν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, πῶ πάνυ παγίως αὐτὸ λέγωμεν, ἀλλ' ἐὰν μὲν ἡμῖν καὶ εἰς ἓνα ἕκαστον τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἰὸν τὸ εἶδος τοῦτο ὁμολογῆται καὶ ἐκεῖ δικαιοσύνη εἶναι, συγχωρησόμεθα ἡδὴ.

II. Two Kinds of Happiness:

"Making our way by the same road," I said, "I suppose we'll find what has to be said. We'll say that it wouldn't be surprising if these men, as they are, are also happiest. However, in founding the city we are not looking to the exceptional happiness of any one group among us but, as far as possible, that of the city as a whole. We supposed we would find justice most in such a city, and injustice, in its turn, in the worst-governed one, and taking a careful look at them, we would judge what we've been seeking for so long. Now then, we suppose we're fashioning the happy city -- a whole city, not setting apart a happy few and putting them in it. We'll consider its opposite presently. Just as if we were painting statues and someone came up and began to blame us, saying that we weren't putting the fairest colors on the fairest parts of the animal--for the eyes, which are fairest, had not been painted purple but black--we would seem to make a sensible apology to him by saying: 'You surprising man,

don't suppose we ought to paint eyes so fair that they don't even look like eyes, and the same for the other parts; but observe whether, assigning what's suitable to each of them, we make the whole fair.

So now too, don't compel us to attach to the guardians a happiness that will turn them into everything except guardians. We know how to clothe the farmers in fine robes and hang gold on them and bid them work the earth at their pleasure, and how to make the potters recline before the fire, drinking in competition from left to right and feasting, and having their wheel set before them as often as they get a desire to make pots, and how to make all the others blessed in the same way just so the city as a whole may be happy. But don't give us this kind of advice, since, if we were to be persuaded by you, the farmer won't be a farmer, nor the potter a potter, nor will anyone else assume any of those roles that go to make up a city.

The argument has less weight for these others. That men should become poor menders of shoes, corrupted and pretending to be what they're not, isn't so terrible for a city. But you surely see that men who are not guardians of the laws and the city, but seem to be, utterly destroy an entire city, just as they alone are masters of the occasion to govern it well and to make it happy.' Now if we're making true guardians, men least likely to do harm to the city, and the one who made that speech is making some farmers and happy banqueters, like men at a public festival and not like members of a city, then he must be speaking of something other than a city. So we have to consider whether we are establishing the guardians looking to their having the most happiness. Or else, whether looking to this happiness for the city as a whole, we must see if it comes to be in the city, and must compel and persuade these auxiliaries and guardians to do the same, so that they'll be the best possible craftsmen at their jobs, and similarly for all the others, and, with the entire city growing thus and being fairly founded, we must let nature assign to each of the groups its share of happiness."

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