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PLATO PART 1:
THE 'EARLY' AND 'MIDDLE' DIALOGUES

Plato Part I: The ‘Early’ and ‘Middle’ Dialogues*

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ABSTRACT

This paper extends an earlier work (Alvey 2010a), which sets the context of the ancient ethics and economy, and is a companion to (Alvey 2010b), which deals with Xenophon (434-355 BC). In this paper I discuss Plato (427-347 BC). Like Xenophon, he was a student of Socrates (469-399 BC). Subsequently, Plato became the teacher of Aristotle (384-322 BC). Plato wrote primarily dialogues, rather than treatises. These have been classified, according to assumed composition date, into ‘early’, ‘middle’, and ‘late’ dialogues. I propose to show some of the ethical elements in the political economy of Plato’s ‘early’ and ‘middle’ dialogues. In these dialogues Plato sometimes claims that possession of intellectual and moral virtue is sufficient for *eudaimonia* (human flourishing). Plato says little, in these dialogues, about household management (*oikonomia* or *oikonomikē*), or microeconomics. His analysis focuses on the psychology (i.e. the soul) of the individual and the Greek city (*polis*). In the language of Amartya Sen, there is a strong ‘ethics-related’ view of motivation in these dialogues. After a brief introduction, in the second section I discuss the rule of reason and hedonism in the *Gorgias* (one of the ‘early’ dialogues). The third section discusses the *Euthydemus* (another ‘early’ dialogue) and the *Phaedo* (a ‘middle’ dialogue). The final section discusses Plato’s most famous work, the *Republic* (another ‘middle’ dialogue).

Keywords: ethics and economics; Plato; Amartya Sen, capabilities

JEL: A12; A13; B11, B31.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Plato was a philosopher, mathematician, and founder of the Academy in Athens (the first school of higher learning in the Western world). Both Xenophon and Plato were followers of Socrates. Unlike Xenophon's writings, however, Plato's works were primarily dialogues,¹ and have been closely studied and analysed through to the present day.

The general approach to classification of the Platonic dialogues that now prevails, is based on the assumed date of composition: 'early', 'middle', and 'late' dialogues (Rowe 2003, pp. 103-4). Nussbaum finds no unity in the Platonic dialogues and asserts that making sense of them requires detailed attention to the conventional assumptions about the composition date of each work. This classification is important to Nussbaum because she discerns a gradual shift in Plato's concept of the good life. She argues that in the 'early' and 'middle' dialogues Socrates adopts a type of asceticism,² and holds, in her summary statement, that 'a good person [i.e. the philosopher] cannot be harmed—meaning that everything of relevance to living a flourishing life is safe so long as [intellectual] virtue is safe' ([1986] 2001, p. xiii). This view is modified in the 'later' dialogues, where Plato includes more items in the good life (*eudaimonia*), thus making it more fragile (Nussbaum [1986] 2001, pp. 200-33). This 'latter' Platonic view, and especially large elements that Nussbaum extracts from Aristotle, are more congenial to her Capabilities orientation. We will develop these points in this paper and in future work.

For the purposes of this paper, we will follow the generally assumed chronology of Platonic dialogues.³ Nevertheless, in order to grasp Plato's meaning, the more important principle is to discuss each dialogue separately, as far as possible.

As is true for Xenophon's dialogues, establishing Plato's true teaching on economics (and indeed on any topic) faces many difficulties, but it does suggest his opposition to purely abstract 'models' which are common in modern economics (Pangle 1980, p. 376; see Karayiannis 1990). Some commentators, including Nussbaum and Strauss, have tried to

¹ Forty-four (or even forty-five) dialogues are attributed to Plato (Rowe 2003, pp. 99-103). According to many authorities, many of these are probably, or certainly, spurious. According to Rowe, there are only 27 dialogues that Plato definitely wrote (2003, pp. 103-4). Strauss asserts the older view that 'Thirty-five dialogues and thirteen letters' have survived (1987, p. 33). The following abbreviation conventions have been adopted: Aristotle *Politics* = *Pol*; Plato *Apology* = *Apol*; Plato *Euthydemus* = *Euthyd*; Plato *Euthyphro* = *Euthyp*; Plato *Gorgias* = *Gorg*; Plato *Protagoras* = *Protag*; Plato *Republic* = *Rep*; Plato *Sophist* = *Soph*; Plato *Statesman* = *States*; Plato *Theaetetus* = *Theae*; Xenophon *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians* = *Con Lac*; Xenophon *Memorabilia* = *Mem*; Xenophon *Ways and Means* = *Ways*. Citations from classical sources follow the standard conventions.

² On Socrates and Plato as ascetics, see Baeck 1994, pp. 52, 55, 57, 66, 68-9. Socrates held that most people who desired considerable food, drink, and sex would have less net pleasure than his own moderate approach to such matters (Xenophon *Mem* I.3.5-15; 1994, pp. 19-21). Further, other things (such as philosophy) gave greater pleasure to him than the pleasures of most people (i.e. those derived from the stomach, sleep, and sex) (Xenophon *Mem* I.6.8; 1994, p. 28).

³ In principle, there is merit in this 'developmental' approach to the Platonic works, and Aristotle himself remarked that the *Laws* was written after the *Republic* (Aristotle *Pol* 1264b26-8; 1984, p. 64). The reality, however, is that there is no way to know when many of the dialogues were written. Recently, Zuckert (2009) has completed a work organized around the dramatic dates of the dialogues rather than assumed composition dates. I have no confidence in the conventional view of the composition dates of the dialogues.

discern Plato's meaning by paying careful attention to the drama of *each* dialogue (Nussbaum [1986] 2001; Strauss 1975; Strauss 1987). This way of reading Plato provides a more accurate understanding of his works than cutting out quotes on certain themes from various dialogues and stringing them together (as is often done when economists consider Plato).⁴ Unfortunately, the former approach produces commentaries of considerable length. Due to the spatial limitation, I will apply that methodology only sparingly below.

In this paper, we will look for ethical themes relevant to framing Plato's political economy and then lay out his political economy. Second, we will search for connections between Plato's approach to political economy and existing practices in ancient Greece. Third, we will compare and contrast Plato with Xenophon.⁵ Fourth, we will search for linkages to the Capability approach.

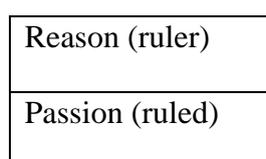
The remainder of the paper consists of three further sections. Section 2 section deals with an 'early' dialogue which addresses the theme of hedonism: the *Gorgias*. Section 3 will make some brief remarks on another 'early' dialogue, the *Euthydemus*, and a 'middle' dialogue, the *Phaedo*. The final section considers at greater length a second dialogue from the 'middle' period, the *Republic* (Nussbaum [1986] 2001, p. 120, 455 n. 16).

2. THE RULE OF REASON AND HEDONISM IN THE *GORGIAS*

Elsewhere I have discussed the *Protagoras* dialogue, in which the hedonic calculus was jointly invented by Socrates and the Sophist Protagoras (Alvey 2010a). It was asserted there that Plato's Socrates developed this measuring *technē* in order to clearly articulate Protagoras's view. In that dialogue perfectly self-interested motivation is assumed, and a technique is sought to measure pleasures and pains correctly, thus allowing one to act in a pleasure-maximizing manner. In the *Gorgias*,⁶ the hedonistic life is again examined. This time the assumption that human beings, as a matter of fact, are motivated exclusively by pleasure-seeking is rejected. Multiple motivations are possible. One alternative motivation (people seek the 'good') is proposed and defended normatively.

In the *Protagoras* and again in the *Gorgias*, human psychology (i.e. the soul) comprises two parts: the passions and reason (see Diagram 1). We will see in Section 4, however, that Plato understands the human soul to have three parts but for now let us focus on this simpler division.

Diagram 1: Individual (psychology or soul) in the *Gorgias*



⁴ For example, see Karayiannis 1990; Baeck 1994, pp. 61-72.

⁵ On Xenophon, see Alvey 2010b.

⁶ In the following summary of the *Gorgias*, I broadly follow Vaughan 1982, pp. 241-56. See also Stauffer 2006.

There are three major sections in the *Gorgias*, each of which is a conversation between Socrates and another interlocutor. The first is with Gorgias (the famous Sophist), the second is with Polus (a student of Gorgias) and the third, and longest, conversation is with Callicles (an aspiring politician in Athens). I will focus on the third section.

In the first section, Socrates says that there are disputes about what constitutes the greatest good for human beings and the artisan who provides it: health (the doctor); strength and beauty (the trainer); and wealth (the businessman) (*Gorg* 452a-c; 1998, pp. 32-3).⁷ At least provisionally, he claims that the arts of the doctor, the trainer, and the businessman are serious. Socrates then proceeds to ask Gorgias, the greatest rhetorician of the age, about the good that his art of rhetoric serves. It soon transpires that Gorgias either cares nothing for justice (and does not teach it to his students), or is *unable* to teach his students the subject effectively (Nichols 1998a, p. 134). Faced with such a choice, Gorgias effectively withdraws from the conversation.⁸

Nevertheless, in the course of the discussion, Socrates concedes that there is a certain power in Gorgias's Sophistic rhetoric. It is often able in a short period to sway large crowds i.e. in the assembly and the law courts. The view of J. S. Mill in *On Liberty* that the free play of discussion leads to truth is rejected (Mill 1981-91, Vol. 18, pp. 213-310; see Lowry 1987, p. 90; c.f. Gordon 1997). Plato suggests that the true knowledge of the expert is easily overpowered by the appearance of knowledge of the rhetorician in such large public fora (*Gorg* 458e-459c; 1998, p. 41). Clear doubts are thus cast upon the capacity of democratic processes to deliver wise outcomes.

Polus takes up the argument on behalf of Gorgias but he too is quickly defeated. In this section, Socrates argues even more strongly that the type of rhetoric taught by the Sophists is not a serious art but mere deception and flattery (*Gorg* 464d-465b; see 502c; 503a; 522d; 1998, p. 48; see pp. 99-100, 123). In the second section of the dialogue Socrates also develops the implication of his earlier remarks about the three serious arts and explicitly states that the 'money-making' art relieves people 'from poverty' (*Gorg* 478b; 1998, p. 66). While avoidance of poverty is desirable, Socrates does not disclose what he thinks of money-making overall and whether the art ceases to be serious as soon as poverty is overcome.

In the third and final section of the dialogue, after the defeat of Polus, Callicles takes over and argues for a sort of natural justice whereby the superior 'carry off by violence' the possessions of the weaker (*Gorg* 488b; 1998, p. 79; c.f. Thrasymachus's view in *Rep* 338c-339a; [1968] 1991, pp. 15-6). Later, he refines this view to claim that the rulers deserve more than the ruled (*Gorg* 491c-d; 1998, p. 83). When Socrates asks if this applies to the person who rules himself (i.e. has a well-ordered personality or soul), Callicles is outraged (*Gorg* 491d-492c; 1988a, pp. 83-4). What is beautiful and just by nature, Callicles says, is achieved by allowing one's 'own desire[s]' to grow 'as great as possible', and once the desires have become 'as great as possible,' each appetite must be satisfied as the occasion arises (*Gorg*

⁷ Following Xenophon's account (see Alvey 2010b), in the *Hipparchus* (a dialogue whose authenticity has been questioned) the Platonic Socrates seems to give qualified support to money-making and the love of lucre (Plato 1987a; Strauss 1970, p. 185 n. 6).

⁸ This victory of Socrates, at a young age, no doubt began his rise to fame.

492a; 1998, p. 84; see p. 85; Vaughan 1982, p. 245). ‘[L]uxury, intemperance, and freedom’, if supported by force, are ‘virtue and happiness [*eudaimonia*]’ (*Gorg* 492c; 1998, p. 84). For Callicles, the *eudaimon* life ‘is having the most desires and satisfying them—i.e., it is the life of unbridled hedonism’ (Vaughan 1982, p. 246; see Nichols 1998a, p. 143). We have a parallel to the *Protagoras* dialogue: a life dedicated to pleasure leaves open the possibility that it uses reason purely instrumentally for the sake of maximizing pleasure. This approach to rationality also reappears two thousand years later in David Hume’s famous view that ‘[r]eason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions’ (Hume [1739-40] 1888, p. 415).

Socrates replies that what Callicles proposes is a ‘terrible life’ and compares the soul of someone who lives it to a leaking ‘jar’ which requires constant replenishment (*Gorg* 493a-b; 1998, p. 85; see p. 86). This is Socrates’s visual representation of insatiable desires. This reminds us of Lionel Robbins’s famous definition of economics, which assumes insatiable human wants (Robbins 1932).⁹ Consistent with his own way of life (see Alvey 2010b), Socrates recommends the moderate individual, who has ‘jars’ that do not leak and easily manages his limited needs. Socrates clearly rejects the foundational assumption of neoclassical economics (and its claim to be value-free) (see Lowry 1987, p. 92).

After a series of further questions and answers, Socrates leads Callicles into the connection between the ‘pleasant’ and the ‘good’ (*Gorg* 497a; 1998, p. 91). By showing him that ‘good’ things are not identical to the ‘pleasant’, Socrates forces Callicles to concede that there are ‘good’ and ‘bad’ pleasures (*Gorg* 497d; 499c-e; 506c; 1998, pp. 92, 95, 104). Socrates concludes that ‘one must do all things for the sake of good things’; thus, one must do ‘pleasant things for the sake of good things’, rather than the reverse (*Gorg* 499e-500a; see 506c-d; 1998, pp. 95-6; see p. 104). It is ‘knowledge of the human good’ that ‘must precede pursuit of the pleasant’ (Vaughan 1982, p. 249). Such knowledge of the ‘good’ is critical for choosing how to live (*Gorg* 500c; 1998, p. 96). The true art aims not at flattery, or pleasure, but at the ‘good’.

The correct ordering of the human soul (one that is capable of achieving *eudaimonia*) is one where reason rules the passions within the human being (see Diagrams 1 and 2). The pursuit of pleasure has to be regulated by reason: reason sets the goal of acquiring only a moderate amount of pleasure.

Diagram 2: Parallel of Individual and the City in the *Gorgias*

Individual	City’s politics
Reason (ruler)	Wise rulers, laws, customs, priorities
Passions (ruled)	Pleasure and luxury (ruled)

⁹ Robbins’s definition claims to represent the universal human problem. It is self-consciously value-free. Callicles states what he believes to be a good or happy life i.e. *eudaimonia*. Neither Socrates nor Callicles understands their topic in value-free terms.

The good, in turn, is related to virtue. The virtue of each thing is related to the good arrangement and ordering of the parts. The ordered soul is moderate (*Gorg* 506e-507a; 1998, p. 104). Hence, the good soul turns out to be also moderate (*Gorg* 507a; 1998, pp. 104-5). Socrates successfully defends the ordered soul which requires justice and moderation (*Gorg* 507a-e; 1998, p. 101). He opposes Callicles's hedonistic life (and implicitly those of Gorgias, Polus, Protagoras, and the psychology assumed in modern thought generally) because it requires constant striving to satisfy desires and is nothing but 'an endless evil, living a robber's life' (*Gorg* 507e; 1998, p. 105). Plato draws a parallel from the good ordering within the individual soul to the good ordering within the city (see Diagram 2).

Throughout much of the discussion Callicles has resisted Socrates's argument and tried several times to terminate it. The reason for Socrates's persistence emerges toward the end of the dialogue; he is seeking to reform Callicles before the latter enters politics. A democratic regime like Athens, led by such hedonistic individuals as Callicles, clearly foreshadows issues confronting our own modern commercial societies.

Socrates argues that just as the individual must strive to have a well-ordered soul, so must the city and its citizens. The politicians must strive to make the citizens 'as good as possible'; they must neither inflame existing desires for pleasure nor strive to satisfy already inflamed desires (*Gorg* 513e; see 515b-c; 517b-c; 520a; 1998, p. 113; see pp. 114, 117, 120). Human motivations are not given; they are shaped and develop over time. Socrates is arguing for the shaping of motivations by the good city. In order to do so, the city's public policies (including laws) must put reason in command of the passions (see Diagram 2). Socrates is here making the case for the shaping of motivations by the good city. It is in this light that Socrates returns to the hierarchy of the arts.

The artisans, such as the baker, the cook, the weaver, the shoemaker, and the tanner, 'minister [to] the body' and are really 'slavish, servile and illiberal' (*Gorg* 517e-518a; 1925a, p. 503; 1998, p. 118). By contrast, gymnastics and medicine are arts that master the body and the other arts (*Gorg* 517e-518a; 1925a, p. 503; 1998, p. 118). The implication seems to be that only the genuine master arts should be actively encouraged in the good city.

Reforming the disposition of the disordered soul will be painful until it is corrected. Legislation aimed at virtuous *character* (moderation) is required. Yet the political regime that Callicles has in mind (a regime somewhat like modern commercial societies) is the one that promotes the unleashing of the citizen's desires and strives to satisfy those untamed pleasures. Socrates urges that the aspiring politician's entry into political life be deferred until he has put his own soul in order: until he practices 'both justice and the rest of virtue' (*Gorg* 527d; 1998, p. 129).

In summary, the life of justice and moderation must be the goal for the good individual and the good city. We now have an outline of Plato's view of the good life in the city. In the *Gorgias* and many other dialogues Plato develops 1) what Sen calls an ethics-related view of motivation (i.e. neither spontaneous hedonism, nor calculative hedonism (where pleasure controls reason)); and 2) a defence of active intervention by the city in order to promote ethical character and hence motivation (and action).

3. THE *EUTHYDEMUS* AND THE *PHAEDO*

In this section two dialogues are discussed, the *Euthydemus* and the *Phaedo*. The former revisits the issue of the good use of possessions examined elsewhere (Alvey 2010b). The focus, however, will be on the *Phaedo*, which addresses a sort of other-worldliness as the best life.

Consistent with Xenophon's teaching, the *Euthydemus* makes clear that the benefit of possessions lies in their use (*Euthyd* 280b-c; [1924] 1937, p. 409). Mere possession of wealth, without using it, does not lead to *eudaimonia* (*Euthyd* 280c; [1924] 1937, p. 409). The latter requires that acquisitions be accompanied by proper use of them (*Euthyd* 280e-281a; [1924] 1937, p. 411). Knowledge is required in order to make good use of possessions (*Euthyd* 281a-b; [1924] 1937, pp. 411-3). Thus, there is no advantage gained from the knowledge involved in 'money-making', unless it is joined to knowledge of 'how to use' money (*Euthyd* 289a; [1924] 1937, p. 441; see Plato 1987b, pp. 324, 327).

Again consistent with Xenophon, the art of farming is presented as important for human subsistence (*Euthyd* 292a; [1924] 1937, p. 449; see Plato *Euthyp* 14a; 1984a, p. 59; Bonar [1909] 1992, p. 25). It is a genuine art. The good use of food is in warding off malnourishment. Mere stockpiling of food, however, provides no benefit (*Euthyd* 280c; [1924] 1937, p. 409).¹⁰ Food may even be badly used by over-eating. The Xenophontic insights from this dialogue confirm an ethical orientation of Plato's economics and the insights reappear in other Platonic dialogues.

Knowledge is more important than mere possession of external goods (such as wealth). The theme of knowledge is developed throughout the work. Plato takes the opportunity to share some insights on the hierarchy of the arts (Baeck 1994, p. 65). Each art has some knowledge unique to itself. Both philosophy and royal art of the king (or statesman) are first-order arts that are superior to the other arts because their ends are higher (*Euthyd* 291c-e; 306b-d; [1924] 1937, pp. 449, 501-3). In addition, the political art guides or *commands* the lower arts; it is concerned to deliver the ends of the society rationally determined by political philosophy (*Euthyd* 291c-d; [1924] 1937, p. 449; Baeck 1994, p. 66). The ideal society was one guided by the knowledge of *ultimate ends*. In other dialogues, Plato describes the supreme position of philosophy.

The rest of this section considers the *Phaedo*,¹¹ the first of two 'middle' dialogues which will be discussed below. It reports the conversations with Socrates, while in prison, shortly before his execution.¹² Although the formal charges differed, it seems clear that one of the reasons that he was charged and executed was that he lived a strange philosophic life (c.f. Stone 1988).¹³ That life, Socrates said, was the best life and called for others to follow him

¹⁰ There may be a benefit in the long term storage of durable items but Socrates here is referring to the short term.

¹¹ Baeck calls it a 'work on personal ethics' (1994, p. 63).

¹² It is possible that the 'asceticism' that Nussbaum finds in this dialogue's depiction of Socrates may be partly attributed to the setting ([1986] 2001, pp. 151-2). Nevertheless, similar views are expressed by Socrates elsewhere, including the *Symposium*. On the latter dialogue, see Nussbaum [1986] 2001, pp. 165-99.

¹³ On the charges, see Plato *Apol* 24b; 1984b, p. 73; Xenophon *Mem* I.1.1; 1994, p. 1.

(Ahrens Dorf 1995, p. 199). According to Nussbaum, in this dialogue Socrates presents the philosophic life as ascetic and it is this other-worldliness that will be addressed here ([1986] 2001, pp. 151, 154).

Socrates refers to the ‘so-called pleasures’ of the body ‘such as eating and drinking’ (*Phaedo* 64d; 1914, p. 225; see Plato *Rep* 442a [1968] 1991, p. 121; Nussbaum [1986] 2001, p. 151). The philosopher, he says, will not care much for love, nor about ‘fine clothes and shoes, and the other personal adornments’ (*Phaedo* 64d; 1914, p. 225). He will only care about them ‘so far as is necessary to have them’ (*Phaedo* 64d-e; 1914, p. 225; see pp. 233, 289). The philosopher despises things of the body and concerns himself ‘with the soul’ (*Phaedo* 64e; 1914, p. 225). He strives for the ‘separation of the soul from the body’ and is thus practising for death (*Phaedo* 67d; 1914, p. 235).

Nussbaum draws out four of Socrates’s arguments for disregarding bodily desires ([1986] 2001, pp. 151-2), and I will add a fifth. First, satisfying bodily desires takes time away from more important things, such as *contemplative* reasoning (*Phaedo* 66c-d; 1914, p. 231). Second, bodily desires reduce the quality of intellectual activity; intellectual activity is best undertaken without interruption (*Phaedo* 65b-c; 66a-c; 1914, pp. 227-9). Third, bodily desires, especially sexual desire, tyrannize the soul and tend to excess rather than what is sufficient for life (*Phaedo* 66c-d; 1914, p. 231; see Plato *Rep* 573d-574d; [1968] 1991, pp. 254-5). Fourth, and extending the third point, once the bodily desires control the soul, they reorder priorities and values; contemplative activities are downgraded (*Phaedo* 81b; 82e-83a; 1914, pp. 283, 289). Fifth, bodily desires lead to acquisitiveness, which in turn leads to war (*Phaedo* 66c-d; 1914, p. 231; Strauss 1975, p. 37).

In Nussbaum’s interpretation, as depicted in the first four points above, the philosopher aims for an ‘ascetic’ life (the denial of pleasure to oneself) ([1986] 2001, pp. 151, 154). First, if she is correct, other than defining the life of most people as not the ‘best’ or ‘good’, does it have practical relevance for the bulk of the population? Does Socrates go even further than the *Gorgias* and call for an ‘ascetic’ society? Second, is Nussbaum’s assumption correct i.e. does Socrates see his philosophic life as best and a type of ‘asceticism’? We will return to Nussbaum’s view in the next section because she makes the same claim about Socrates’s view of the best life in the *Republic*, another ‘middle dialogue’.

4. THE REPUBLIC

Plato’s most famous work, *The Republic*,¹⁴ is a book-length investigation of ethics. Though generally regarded as a utopian¹⁵ presentation of justice, it actually discusses the set of four cardinal virtues-- justice, wisdom, moderation, and courage – and other topics, including ‘the good’ for the individual and the city (see Plato *Rep* 427d-433c; [1968] 1991, pp. 105-11;

¹⁴ As a general rule, citations will be from the Bloom translation (Plato [1968] 1991). In some cases, other translations will be used, in which case Stephanus numbers will be cited in addition to page numbers from the relevant translation.

¹⁵ Lowry calls it an ‘administered utopia’ (1987, p. 86).

Pangle 1980, p. 377; Lord 1984, p. 21).¹⁶ The ethical and political context of the work will be presented first. Once that has been completed, some political economy issues can be addressed.¹⁷

-- *Definitions of Justice*

Various definitions of justice are offered and rejected in Book I. One early definition¹⁸ is that justice is returning what is owed to others. If justice is to be beneficial, returning weapons to a mad man is shown to be a counterexample (Plato *Rep* 331c-d; [1968] 1991, p. 7). This leads us back to the good use of private property discussed above and elsewhere (Alvey 2010b). For justice to be good, property must be well used.

As I have discussed elsewhere, Thrasymachus also provides a definition of justice: ‘the advantage of the stronger’ (*Rep* 338c; Plato 2005, p. 31; see Alvey 2010a).¹⁹ This definition is reminiscent of the view of Calicles seen earlier in this paper. Thrasymachus was defeated when he agreed that the true ruler does not make mistakes; he has an art of ruling (*Rep* 340d-341a; Plato [1968] 1991, pp. 18-9). Socrates then draws out the point that the artisan in the ‘precise sense’ is *only* concerned with his craft, not reward; he does the job for the good of others.²⁰ Lowry compares this view of the specialist to Veblen’s ‘instinct of workmanship’ (Lowry 1987, p. 96; Veblen [1914] 1994). This notion of the artisan plays an important role throughout the *Republic*, especially for the warriors and the rulers in the good city. Needless to say, virtually all artisans in the ordinary sense practice their particular art *plus* the wage-earning art (*misthōtikē*).

-- *The Parallel Between the Individual and the City*

Early in the work it is *tacitly* agreed that one aspect of justice is law abidingness (Plato *Rep* 339b; [1968] 1991, p. 16).²¹ As law itself can be just or unjust, there is a need for the just person to be subject to *just* laws in a *good* city (Strauss 1987, p. 42). Hence, both the individual and the city need to be discussed. Unfortunately, Plato here, and in other early and middle dialogues, does not have much to say about the household. The focus of analysis is on the top and bottom levels of analysis (see Diagram 3). The middle level of analysis (the household) is stressed by Xenophon and Plato himself in the *Laws*, a ‘late’ dialogue.

¹⁶ There are, of course, various other Platonic virtues; some (such as liberality and magnificence) are mentioned in the *Republic* (Plato *Rep* 402c; [1968] 1991, pp. 81, 215). Another virtue is truth (Strauss 1975, p. 67).

¹⁷ It should be mentioned that various sections from Books II to V in this work were included in Laistner’s collection of Greek economic works (Laistner 1923, pp. 68-105).

¹⁸ The first definition of justice is that it is telling the truth and returning what one owes to others; the second is that it is merely returning deposits; the third is that it consists of helping friends and harming enemies (Plato *Rep* 331b-332d; [1968] 1991, pp. 7-8). The fourth definition is provided by Thrasymachus and is discussed in the text. At the end of Book IV Plato returns to some of these notions and agrees that the just man would generally be just in terms of the first and second definitions (*Rep* 442d-e; [1968] 1991, pp. 122-3).

¹⁹ Later, Socrates refers to Thrasymachus’s thesis as ‘pure injustice’ (*Rep* 545a; [1968] 1991, p. 223).

²⁰ *Rep* 341b-c; see 340d-342d; 346d-347d; Plato [1930-35] 1937, Vol 1, p. 57, see pp. 55-63, 79-83; Strauss 1987, p. 38.

²¹ Strict law abidingness is shown *not* to be salutary, however, as we saw in the case of the return of weapons to the mad man.

Diagram 3: Levels of Analysis

1. <i>Polis</i> and political actor
2. Household and household head
3. Individual soul

Plato²² proceeds by asserting a parallel between the justice of the city and that of the individual (Plato *Rep* 368e-369a; 441c-d; [1968] 1991, pp. 45, 121; Strauss 1987, pp. 42, 61).²³ The assumption of parallelism between the city and the individual is then extended to cover all four virtues: justice (*dikaïosunē*), wisdom (*sophia*), courage (*andreia*), and moderation (*sōphrosunē*) (see Diagram 4). Hence, detailed pictures are gradually built up throughout the work of the two *structures* in which the virtues are instantiated: the utopian city and the perfected human soul (the city within) (*Rep* 592a-b; [1968] 1991, pp. 274-5).

Diagram 4: Parallel Virtues in the Individual and the City in the *Republic*

Individual’s Justice	City’s Justice
Individual’s Wisdom	City’s Wisdom
Individual’s Courage	City’s Courage
Individual’s Moderation	City’s Moderation

At the same time, certain structural features of the city and the individual personality (soul) are sketched. Unlike some dialogues discussed earlier, Socrates asserts here that there are three parts of the human soul: the desiring (or appetitive) part (*epithumētikon*), the spirited (or emotional) part (*thumoeides*), and the reasoning (or calculating) part (*logistikon*) (Plato *Rep* 435e-436b; 441c; [1968] 1991, pp. 114, 121; Nussbaum [1986] 20001, pp. 139, 205, 209, 214, 471 n. 7; Miller 2006, p. 286; Strauss 1987, p. 47).²⁴ In order to continue the parallel adopted earlier with regard to the virtues, three parts of the city are *constructed* (*Rep* 441d-442b; Plato [1968] 1991, pp. 121, 261; Strauss 1987, p. 47; Karayiannis 1990, p. 31). These parts of the best city are: the artisans and other money-makers; the warriors; and the rulers (Plato *Rep* 428d-429b; 441a-c; [1968] 1991, pp. 106-7, 120-1; Strauss 1987, p. 47) (see Diagram 5).

²² Plato’s view, I assume, emerges in the dialogue through the words of Socrates (c.f. Zuckert 2009, p. 5).

²³ This parallel is merely ‘a leap of faith,’ according to Lowry 1987, p. 110. It is a provisional, questionable, and ultimately untenable view (Strauss 1987, pp. 48, 67) and breaks down (Bloom [1968] 1991, pp. 369, 372, 376). It is ultimately dropped by Plato, as shown by his abandonment of the perfect city but not the perfect soul.

²⁴ The *logistikon* covers both practical and theoretical reasoning.

Diagram 5: Parallel Structural Features in the Individual and the City in the *Republic*

Individual's Reasoning part	City's Rulers
Individual's Spirited part	City's Warriors
Individual's Desiring part	City's Artisans and other Moneymakers

-- *The Various Cities in Speech*

Starting in Book II, Socrates builds 'in speech the paradigm of a good city' (*Rep* 472e; see 369c; Plato 2005 p. 200; see p. 70). He does so in several stages:²⁵ the healthy city, the feverish city, the purified city (or the city of the armed camp),²⁶ and the 'beautiful city' ruled by philosophers (*Rep* 527c; see 372e-373a; 399e; Plato 2005, p. 266; see [1968] 1991 pp. 49, 78). The first city arises out of mankind's *needs* and lack of self-sufficiency (Plato *Rep* 369b-c; [1968] 1991, pp. 45-6). Once formed, it has private property, a 'spontaneous' division of labour based on *natural* needs and talent; the basic bodily needs are met without need for government (Bonar [1909] 1992, p. 17; Strauss 1987, p. 43).²⁷ Money is used to facilitate exchange but nothing more (Plato *Rep* 371b; [1968] 1991, p. 48; see *Laws* 742a-c; 1980, p. 129; Baeck 1994, p. 71). The inhabitants have some elements of *eudaimonia*; the private good and the common good coincide (Plato *Rep* 372b; [1968] 1991, p. 49). It looks somewhat like an anticipation of Adam Smith's doctrine of the 'invisible hand' (Smith [1776] 1976, p. 456; Bloom [1968] 1991, p. 346). According to Strauss, it is 'just by nature' (1987, p. 43). It has 'no higher purpose than to satisfy the needs of the body' (Strauss 1975, p. 37). Although it is a rustic economy, it immediately appeals to modern economists.

At this point, one participant in the dialogue breaks into Socrates's sketch of the healthy city and derisively calls it the 'city of pigs' (*Rep* 372d; Plato [1930-35] 1937, Vol 1, p. 159). It is this accusation which leads to an attempt to accommodate both the desire for more than mere necessities (i.e. luxury) and greater human excellence (Strauss [1968] 1989, pp. 43, 50).²⁸ The emancipation of desire (i.e. unlimited acquisition) leads to the 'luxurious city' (*Rep* 372e; Plato [1930-35] 1937, Vol 1, p. 161). At this point, modern economists feel a rush of excitement. Consistent with the *Phaedo*, however, Plato soon tells us that the acquisitiveness of this 'feverish city' leads to war, followed by imperialism (*Rep* 372e; see 373d-e; Plato [1968] 1991, p. 49; see p. 50). This brings the rush for modern economists to an end, and, after about one-sixth of the work, they are alienated and lose interest in most of the remainder of Plato's *Republic*.

With or without some disgruntled economists, let us continue Plato's presentation. A dedicated military class emerges, whose members are selected on the basis of their

²⁵ Spiegel calls this the 'method of successive approximation' (1991, p. 15).

²⁶ Strauss says that it is 'a greatly improved Sparta'; the latter had war as its primary goal (1987, p. 80).

²⁷ Later in the dialogue, the warriors assess the qualities of the child and assign him or her to an occupation (Plato *Rep* 414d-415c; [1968] 1991, pp. 93-4).

²⁸ According to Baeck, the plea for more by Glaucon is consistent with Xenophon but this trajectory of growth is soon halted (1994, p. 67).

spiritedness in early childhood (*Rep* 375a-e; Plato [1968] 1991, pp. 52-3). From the meritocratic warrior class, the rulers are later chosen on merit (Plato *Rep* 537a-540a; [1968] 1991, pp. 216-9). Those who complete the testing successfully are the rational part of the city and represent the virtue of wisdom; these are the ‘complete guardians’ (*Rep* 414b; see 428d-429a; Plato 2005, pp. 127; see p. 145). The warriors whose testing during youth betrays insufficient wisdom are called ‘auxiliaries’; they represent courage in the city (Plato *Rep* 412e-414b; 429a-b; [1968] 1991, pp. 53, 92-3, 107). To some degree at least, the practice of selecting the leaders from the meritocratic warrior class resembles the actual Spartan practice of selecting citizens.²⁹

The warrior class requires a special education, which is a combination of military training and musical education (i.e. education in fine arts, especially poetry); the latter is designed to tame their aggression³⁰ and to attach them to the common good (Plato *Rep* 376d-377a; 416a-b; [1968] 1991, pp. 54, 95). A wide range of educational and cultural reforms are proposed to purify the morality of the city (Plato *Rep* 377b-403c; [1968] 1991, pp. 54-82). Correct nurturing and education at an early age are essential because, for some years after birth, character is ‘plastic’ (*Rep* 377b; [1968] 1991, p. 54). ‘By maintaining a sound system of education you produce citizens of good character’ (*Rep* 424a; 1955, p. 169). Properly educated, the warrior becomes a ‘gentleman’ and the warrior-gentleman is *functionally* equivalent to Xenophon’s gentlemanly household head (*Rep* 374c-d; 396b; 402a; [1968] 1991, pp. 51, 74, 80; Craig 1994).³¹

The presentation of the life of the warriors blends, and improves upon, the actual Athenian and Spartan practice at that time (see Bloom [1968] 1991, p. 380; Pomeroy et al 1999, p. 156; Alvey 2010a). The education of the guardians is essentially a philosophic education.

Before leaving the education of the guardians and auxiliaries, it should be noted that Socrates urges a type of censorship of poetry. As Nussbaum points out, one of the principles used in the censorship is that humans and gods be correctly depicted (Plato *Rep* 377e-378a; [1968] 1991, p. 55; Nussbaum 1995, p. 96). Implicit in the reform of poetry is a species view of humanity i.e. separating what is appropriate for gods and humans (c.f. Strauss 1987, p. 45). This point is also discussed in the *Philebus* and I hope to discuss that work in the near future.

In ending this account of the ‘purified’ city, we should summarize what the virtues comprise there and who demonstrates them. We have seen that the leaders represent wisdom and the auxiliaries represent courage. *All* parts of the city demonstrate the other two virtues (moderation and justice). Moderation refers to a harmony between the parts of the city as to who should rule (Plato *Rep* 431d-432a; [1968] 1991, p. 110). Closely aligned with moderation is justice, which requires that each class does its own work (*Rep* 433a-435b; [1968] 1991, pp. 111-4). The members of each class practice and perfect their art and thus contribute to the common good.

²⁹ At around 18 years of age, Spartan males were subjected to a series of military tests. Those who failed these tests joined the *perioikos* (middle) class.

³⁰ Their aggression is due to their natural spiritedness plus their second-nature from military training.

³¹ Of course, when considered closely, this Platonic ‘gentleman’ will turn out to be very different from the Xenophontic gentleman. The former will be an ascetic military man or woman with no property or family, whereas the latter is a household head with property and a family.

-- *The Parallel of City and Individual and the Concept of the Good*³²

Just as the city is a complex structure, so is human psychology (i.e. the human soul). Socrates resumes the parallel between the city and the soul. In the city there are three parts (classes). These have counterparts in the individual soul: money-makers (desire); auxiliaries (spiritedness); and rulers (wisdom). Justice in the city is defined as each class (and each individual within the class) minding its own business (*ta eautou prattein*) by doing its own job (*oikeiopragia*); justice in the individual is defined as each part of the soul doing its own job.³³ While ‘meddling’ (*polypragmosynē*) within this structure ruins the city, the auxiliaries can and should aid the rulers (*Rep* 434b-c; 441a; [1968] 1991, pp. 113, 120; Baeck 1994, p. 64). Similarly, in the soul, the reasoning part should be aided by the spirited part (*Rep* 441e; [1968] 1991, p. 121). These two small parts jointly rule the desiring part, which comprises ‘the largest portion of the soul’ (*Rep* 442a; Plato 2005, p. 162). The desiring part seeks bodily pleasures and is often ‘insatiable for money’ (*Rep* 442a; [1968] 1991, p. 121). Just as we saw in the *Phaedo*, this part of the soul seeks to ‘enslave’ the other parts (*Rep* 442b; [1930-35] 1937, Vol 1, p. 409).

Now that we have some provisional idea of justice, we can ask some questions: Is the city good? Are the rulers good? What is the good? Socrates gets his audience to reply in the affirmative to the first two questions (*Rep* 427e-428a; 433a; 434d-e; 444a-b; 449a; [1968] 1991, pp. 105, 111, 113, 124, 127; White 2006, p. 360). As for ‘goodness’, no precise definition is given but, as White points out, several characteristics of a ‘good’ structure can be extracted from Books I-V of the *Republic* (see 2006, pp. 360-1). First, goodness requires stability (*Rep* 443d-e; [1968] 1991, p. 123). Second, it requires coherence and unity (*Rep* 442e-423d; 461e-462e; [1968] 1991, pp. 100-1, 141-2). Third, goodness requires the capacity to satisfy the *needs* of the relevant unit (i.e. the city or the soul) (*Rep* 363d-374e; [1968] 1991, pp. 45-6, 50-1).³⁴

According to White, the chief cause of the city being good is ‘its justice, i.e. its conformity to the Principle of the Assignment of Natural Functions’ (2006, p. 366). Hence, just arrangement of the parts of a complex structure is what makes the structure good (White 2006, p. 366). Justice then is a key feature of the goodness of the structure, whether it is the city or the individual personality. The good city has all of the individuals correctly assigned to the different classes and each individual and each class performs its appropriate job. Similarly, the good soul has each of its parts performing their job appropriately.

A complete treatment of ‘the good’ would require us to discuss Plato’s theory of Ideas or Forms (see *Rep* 369a; 380d-e; 479a; 507b; [1968] 1991, pp. 45, 58, 160, 189; White 2006, pp. 361-5). That would take us too far from our focus.

³² For an alternative view, see Strauss 1987, pp. 53-5.

³³ Plato *Rep* 434d-e; 441c-e; 443b; [1968] 1991, pp. 113-4, 121, 123; Strauss 1987, p. 59; Baeck 1994, pp. 64, 69.

³⁴ This fulfillment of needs (i.e. the self-sufficiency of the city) is the ideal rather than the reality (*Rep* 370e; [1968] 1991, p. 47).

-- *Four Revolutionary Institutions*

By the end of Book IV the argument seems to be virtually complete. Justice, as part of the well-ordered city or soul, is good for its own sake. It turns out, however, that the agreement that the city and the rulers are good was premature. In the course of Plato's argument in the *Republic*, it becomes clear that, in a perfectly just city, education must be supported by four revolutionary institutions: communism; equality of the sexes; abolition of the family (and a eugenics programme); and the rule of the philosophers (Plato *Rep* 416d-480a; [1968] 1991, pp. 95-161; Strauss 1987, p. 53).³⁵ At least three of these institutions can be justified by a principle that emerged in the early attempts to define justice, namely that just possession depends upon good usage (Plato *Rep* 331c; [1968] 1991, p. 7; Strauss 1987, p. 35).

First, the strict requirement of just possession is communism. For unstated reasons (perhaps practicality or the likelihood that only a few people could actually tolerate living without private property), communism is only imposed on the male and female warriors, but not the money-makers (*Rep* 416d-417b; [1968] 1991, pp. 95-6; Strauss 1987, pp. 49-50).³⁶ The warriors in the Platonic city are banned from earning money; they cannot have private houses, gold, silver, or other private possessions (*Rep* 416d-417b; 458c-d; 464b-c; [1968] 1991, pp. 95-6, 137, 143). They receive public support for their services but their payment is only honour plus 'bare subsistence' for their bodies (*Rep* 543c; see 416e; 465d-e; [1968] 1991, p. 221; see pp. 95-6, 145). Their way of life is just like that in an armed camp, eating in common messes and living in military barracks (*Rep* 416e; 458d-e; [1968] 1991, pp. 96, 137). The proposed communism of the best city is a perfected form of the Spartan equality of citizens (Alvey 2010a, pp. 5-6).

Why must the warriors live that way? The only justification that Plato gives in Book IV is that the desire to acquire gold and silver (i.e. wealth) is the cause of 'many impious deeds' (*Rep* 416e; Plato [1930-35] 1937, Vol 1, p. 311; see also Sophocles [1973] 1974, p. 33).³⁷ Communism is then designed to prevent immoral actions. This negative reason supports an affirmative reason given later in the work. Xenophon's analysis of Sparta, especially his discussion of Lycurgus's view of friendship, is relevant in this context (Xenophon *Con Lac*; [1925a] 1968; see Alvey 2010b). Plato follows Lycurgus and Xenophon, arguing for the institution of communism in order to promote friendship among the citizens: 'friends have all things in common' (Plato *Rep* 423e-424a; [1968] 1991, p. 101). Only by such communism can members of the upper classes avoid factional disputes over what is 'mine' arising from ownership of private possessions (*Rep* 464c; Plato 2005, p. 189). The *true* basis of communism is unity and friendship.

³⁵ Of course, it has been argued by some that this was a sort of playful joke on Plato's part (Bloom [1968] 1991, pp. 380-1; c.f. Pomeroy 1994, p. 90).

³⁶ The musical education is also restricted to the upper classes (*Rep* 377b-403c; [1968] 1991, pp. 54-82; Evers 1980, p. 50).

³⁷ In the *Laws* Plato says that the desire to be wealthy is a major cause of murders (*Laws* 870c; 1980, p. 265; Strauss 1975, p. 135).

The remaining three institutions Socrates admits will seem odd to his Athenian audience.³⁸ Second, equal treatment of men and women among the warriors is proposed; it is said to be according to nature and ‘best’ for the city (*Rep* 457a; 2005, p. 180). Perfectly equal treatment may be impossible but *rough equality* is the goal (Plato *Rep* 455c-d; [1968] 1991, pp. 133-4). It took until World War II for this goal to be really accepted in Western societies.

Third, the complete equality of women requires the abolition of the private family in the warrior class. To the extent that spouses and children are private property, these relationships conflict with the view of friendship seen above: friends share everything. If everyone feels that they are part of one family, they will be more likely to care for each other and the city (Strauss 1987, p. 46).

The means by which the good city is to continue its existence, while eliminating the private family, is even more controversial. Heterosexual intercourse and procreation are to be undertaken entirely as a *duty* for the benefit of the city (*Rep* 460e-461a; [1968] 1991, p. 140). A strict eugenics programme directs sexual pairing (and possible infanticide after birth).³⁹ Children are taken from the mother immediately after birth and raised communally.⁴⁰ Plato adopts extreme versions of two more Spartan practices (see Alvey 2010a; Alvey 2010b).⁴¹

The goal of the first three institutions is to create perfect *unity* within the city (recall the second formal principle of goodness) by removing sources of contention and by promoting friendship (see Karayiannis 1990, p. 30; Strauss 1987, p. 51). Following the aspiration of Lycurgus, the warriors are to have their private good (and their private life, including erotic attachments) eliminated; they will therefore dedicate themselves to the common good.⁴² Ideally each citizen should feel the pain of all other citizens, as if they were all part of one living body (*Rep* 462a-464a; [1968] 1991, pp. 141-3).⁴³ Plato clearly hints that such unity as

³⁸ Bloom says that the remaining three institutions are ‘preposterous’ and that Plato expects them to be ‘ridiculed’ ([1968] 1991, p. 380). Actually, two are radical versions of actual Spartan practice.

³⁹ Plato *Rep* 458e-461e; [1968] 1991, pp. 137-41; Strauss 1987, p. 52; see Plato *Theae* 160d-161a; 1921a, pp. 73-5. The eugenics scheme Plato admits will eventually collapse (*Rep* 546a-e; [1968] 1991, p. 224; White 2006, p. 363). The modern view of Plato’s adoption of eugenics is well demonstrated by Peart and Levy 2005. They assume that Plato was serious about his eugenics proposal (actually the proposal was dropped from the laws described in the *Laws*, which constitutes his *practical* proposals), and proceed by making a series of linkages to eugenicists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (2005, pp. 105-12, 114-21). Their indignant tone is traced back to Plato’s fundamental assumption of human inequality, which does not conform to their egalitarian presuppositions. Of course, they are right to condemn those who draw from any inequality assumption the view that ‘eugenicists [or scientists or philosophers] are a species apart’ (Peart and Levy 2005, p. 112).

⁴⁰ Female and male warriors are denied access to, and even knowledge of, the identity of, their children (*Rep* 457c-d; [1968] 1991, p. 136). This must be contrasted with the continuity of the private family in the artisan and money-making classes. The constant reminder of the possibility of private family life makes it likely that the public family (and the eugenics programme) will collapse.

⁴¹ First, women were treated more equally in Sparta than elsewhere in Greece. This was clear in their training and freedom to move. In addition, the usual Greek constraints on sexual behaviour were loosened considerably; polyandry was common. Husband and wife lived separately for most of their lives. The family was clearly loosely construed. Second, although eugenics was practiced elsewhere, a more rigorous programme was adopted in Sparta.

⁴² There is a parallel in certain religions, where the priestly class dedicate themselves to their religion and to their God/gods.

⁴³ What is being described is a combination of empathy, emotional contagion, and emotive telepathy on a *grand scale*. The comparable concept in the Bible is limited to heterosexual married couples (see Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5; 19:6; Mark 10:8; Ephesians 5:13).

is required for these institutions is practically impossible; friendship is good and an important human capability but it has its limits (*Rep* 450c; [1968] 1991, p. 128; see Strauss 1987, pp. 52, 54; Karayiannis 1990, p. 32; White 2006, p. 363).

Plato's final step is the introduction of rule by philosophers (which would have been regarded as ridiculous in any actual Greek city).⁴⁴ This can be traced back to the agreement that *knowledge* of how to use property well is critical. Socrates specifically includes the extraordinary claim that some *women* will be rulers, and hence he makes the unprecedented claim that there will be women philosophers (*Rep* 540c; [1968] 1991, p. 220; c.f. Bloom [1968] 1991, p. 383). Contrast this with the condition of Greek women at the time (see Alvey 2010a). In any event, the introduction of philosopher kings and queens, he says is the 'most difficult' and hence even less plausible than the first three institutions (*Rep* 472a; Plato 1955, p. 231; Strauss 1987, pp. 56-9). The difficulty of compelling the philosopher to rule, and especially the philosopher who is unwilling to rule unwilling subjects, is overlooked by many who condemn Plato's regime because it is allegedly based on the authoritarian rule of experts.⁴⁵

In the city ruled by philosophers Plato admits that neither the warriors nor any class 'live extraordinarily well'; what counts is the flourishing of the city *as a whole*.⁴⁶ Surely these facts ensure that such a regime cannot be actualized.⁴⁷ The political project of the perfectly virtuous city--where the three classes⁴⁸ representing desire, spiritedness, and reason play their appropriate roles--is actually impossible to realize.

This leaves us with the purported parallel of the perfect city, namely, the perfect human soul. Plato is more optimistic about actualizing the perfected 'city within' the human being: where reason, spiritedness, and desire play their proper roles (*Rep* 592b; [1968] 1991, p. 275). The good life is largely self-sufficient and is the outward manifestation of someone whose personality (soul) is properly ordered. We will return to this shortly.

⁴⁴ The case of Marcus Aurelius (121-180 AD) shows that it is possible for a philosopher to rule. He was a Stoic philosopher and a Roman Emperor from 161 to 180 AD (from 161 to 169 AD jointly with Lucius Verus).

⁴⁵ Popper 1945; Peart and Levy 2005; Strauss 1987, p. 57; Lowry 1987, pp. 106-7, 110, 112-4; see also p. 111 for his partial grasp of the problem.

⁴⁶ *Rep* 519e; see 420b-c; 466a-c; Plato 2005, p. 256; see pp. 135, 191-2; Spiegel 1991, p. 17; c.f. Lowry 1987, p. 84. Lowry does not believe that there is any *objective* standard for *eudaimonia* (happiness) and puts Plato's view of the goal of the city this way: it aims for the 'general welfare, as defined by the administrator' (Lowry 1987, p. 108; see pp. 114, 134-6).

⁴⁷ Nussbaum [1986] 2001, p. 163; Karayiannis 1990, p. 33; Pangle 1980, p. 460; see Plato *Rep* 349a-377b; 546a-547a; [1968] 1991, pp. 27-55, 223-4; Lord 1984, p. 21; Strauss 1987, pp. 60-1, 63, 68, 72; c.f. White 2006, pp. 367-71. One could well add that the requirement to expel from the city everyone over ten years of age and have a sympathetic army willing to do it (i.e. a group of auxiliaries ready to take their place in the best city) seems to be further evidence of the impossibility of the project (Plato *Rep* 540e-541a; [1968] 1991, p. 220; Strauss 1987, pp. 58-9, 82-3).

⁴⁸ It turns out that, in this work, and elsewhere, Plato is very ambivalent about the number of human types that exist. There are three, four, or five types in the *Republic* and nine, or eleven, types in the *Phaedrus*. On this point generally, see Nichols, 1998b, p. 100.

-- *Political Economy*

Having presented a little of the political and ethical framework in the *Republic*, we can now begin to discuss Plato's political economy. 'Plato locates the overseeing moral guidance for everyone in the [*polis*]' and his political economy operates within this moral framework (Evers 1980, p. 48; see p. 49). Six important themes from his political economy are discussed below.

First, Plato says that there are fundamental qualitative distinctions between desires. There are necessary and unnecessary desires. Necessary desires are desires for those things needed for life plus those things 'whose satisfaction benefits us'; they include (healthy) food, (modest) housing, and (functional) clothing (*Rep* 558e; see 369a-e; Plato 1955, p. 331; see p. 102). By contrast, 'unnecessary desires' are those that could be avoided by *habituation* from youth; they do 'no good' and sometimes 'positive harm' (*Rep* 559a; Plato 1955, p. 331). Bonar says that the discussion in the *Republic* may represent the first 'explicit distinction' between 'luxuries and necessities', in the history of economic thought ([1909] 1992, p. 13 n. 1). The fundamental moral distinction between 1) luxuries and necessities, or 2) wants and needs, was maintained until the beginning of the Marginal Revolution in the 1870s (when qualitative differences were reduced to mere quantitative differences). In this respect, the Marginal Revolution represented another shift away from the ethical tradition of economics towards engineering.

Inflamed desires for unnecessaries leads to acquisitiveness. This is a danger because, as we saw earlier, 'wealth' is 'in tension' with 'virtue' (Plato *Rep* 550e; [1968] 1991, p. 228). Like Xenophon, Plato says that the intelligent, virtuous individual aims for a *moderate* amount of wealth (Plato *Rep* 591d-e; [1968] 1991, p. 274). Individuals have a role to play in correctly ordering their souls but so too does the city.

'[B]adly governed' cities do not attempt to tame desires (*Rep* 426b; Plato 1955, p. 172). Plato suggests that the lack of 'education, bad rearing', and bad political institutional arrangements in the regime are responsible for unnecessary desires (Plato *Rep* 552e; [1968] 1991, p. 230). Hence, habituation, or 'discipline from youth', can help rid oneself of such bad desires (*Rep* 559a; see 519a-b; Plato [1930-35] 1937, Vol. 2, p. 293; see pp. 137-9; Karayiannis 1990, p. 12).⁴⁹ Like Xenophon, he says that motivations are not simply facts that are exogenous to political economy; they can be shaped by education and habituation within a regime. By endogenizing motivations, Plato stresses the role of institutional choices. Merely altering taxation rates on certain types of consumption, as is done today, does not deal with the fundamental issue.⁵⁰

Second, as the growth of the 'healthy city' showed, economic development is required up to a certain point, both in terms of the city's physical size (and population) and its level of affluence. Acquisition of land is limited by what the unity of the city will permit (*Rep* 423b; [1968] 1991, pp. 100-1). Affluence is limited by the goal of virtue: the city cannot promote

⁴⁹ Early education is clearly critical because Plato proposes expelling from the good city anyone over ten years of age (*Rep* 340e-341a; [1968] 1991, p. 220; Schofield 2006, p. 238).

⁵⁰ Sometimes persuasive advertising is added to taxation measures, such as has occurred in the case of tobacco health warnings. Even this, Plato would say, does *not* address the overall level of consumptive activity.

and honour wealth except by sacrificing moderation (*Rep* 555c; [1968] 1991, p. 233). The example of the ‘feverish city’ shows that Plato thought that prosperity must be capped at a certain moderate level; no doubt modern capitalist societies are ‘feverish’ in his terms. Beyond such a limit, growth of possessions distracts people from the higher human goals. He is quite prepared to sacrifice individual pursuit of wealth to the concerns of the community and civic virtue (Petrochilos 2002, p. 610).

Plato specifies an optimal size of the society and economy (recall the first formal principle of goodness). The population size of the best city must be *fixed* at about one thousand citizens (Plato *Rep* 423a; 459e-460a; [1968] 1991, pp. 100, 139). This is part of a broader view of society and economy as best conceived as a stationary state with a moderate material condition rather than one based on continual expansion; in this respect the *Republic* has more in common with the ‘limits to growth’ theory of the modern conservation movement than modern theories of economic growth (Meadows et al 1972; Gordon 1975, p. 27; Lowry 1987, p. 86). Nevertheless, markets, money, retail and even international trade are admitted (Plato *Rep* 370e-371e; 425c-e; [1968] 1991, pp. 47-8, 103).

Third, the tension between wealth and virtue mentioned above has various manifestations and policy implications. New-moneyed people are overly attached to money and they narrow their understanding of virtue to wealth; therefore, Plato holds out greater hope for those who inherited their wealth (Plato *Rep* 330b-c; [1968] 1991, p. 6). These views reinforce the case for limitations on the growth of the wealth of the city and its inhabitants. They also suggest that Plato prefers a type of economy which focuses on old money i.e. one with a large agricultural base.

As a counterpoint to his linkage of the *nouveau riche* with vice, Plato associates a poor man who has neither property nor an art with crime (Plato *Rep* 552d; [1968] 1991, p. 230). If every adult has a specialist skill, and is employed in it full-time, he or she avoids the vices of the rich and the poor. Full employment at a living wage would avoid the worst aspects of inequalities of wealth. Virtue is associated with those who are neither too rich nor too poor.

Fourth, like Xenophon, Plato was a foundational and profound analyst of the division of labour (Robbins 1998, pp. 12-4, 16). His detailed contribution to this aspect of economic doctrine is regarded highly by some commentators; some even claim that it was the inspiration for Adam Smith’s seminal account in the latter half of the eighteenth century (Karayiannis 1990, p. 18; see Foley 1974). Specialization is discussed in at least five Platonic dialogues.⁵¹

In the *Republic* context, Plato argues that the city arises because human beings lack self-sufficiency and that specialization can deliver increased quantity and quality of material goods (Plato *Rep* 369a-371d; [1968] 1991, pp. 45-8; see Gordon 1975, p. 28; Karayiannis 1990, pp. 18-20; Foley 1974, p. 233). The city begins with four or five people: a farmer; a housebuilder; a weaver; a shoemaker; and perhaps one who caters for the needs of the body; this is the ‘city of utmost necessity’ (*Rep* 369d; [1968] 1991, p. 46). Others are later added,

⁵¹ See also Plato *States* 278d-283b; [1925b] 1939, pp. 81-97; *Soph* 253b-254b; 1921b, pp. 401-3; *Protag* 322b-d; 2004, p. 19; *Laws* 643b-d, 846d-847b; 1980, pp. 23, 239.

such as carpenters, smiths, shepherds, merchants, and retailers (*Rep* 370d-371d; [1968] 1991, pp. 47-8). All of these supply *needs*. Specialization is a significant *cause* of the *desirable* growth of the city from its origins to the feverish stage (Plato *Rep* 370a-371e; [1968] 1991, pp. 46-7).

Petrochilos states that, for Plato, ‘Society flourishes because it is efficient’ (2002, p. 603). This is a serious misrepresentation of Plato; his political economy cannot be so easily assimilated to modern neoclassical economics. First, human flourishing for Plato transcends the financial calculus of modern economics; capping prosperity at a moderate level in order to promote virtue is hardly what modern economics teaches. Second, and more importantly, if efficiency is related to specialization, the modern view (based on perfect mobility of factors of production (including labour), and equilibration of wages and marginal products) is radically different from Plato’s. Plato’s Socrates defines justice as each person performing that function in the city for ‘which his [unique] *nature* made him most fit’ (Plato *Rep* 433a; [1968] 1991, p. 111 emphasis added; Gordon 1975, p. 28; see Spiegel 1991, p. 16). The root of specialization is *natural inequality*; ‘everybody has one best function’ (Lowry 1987, p. 86; see p. 93; McNulty 1975). To the extent that Plato’s view of specialization conforms to *some* notion of efficiency, it is *not* modern efficiency. Plato assumes lifetime employment in one trade: perfect immobility of labour (*Rep* 374b; [1968] 1991, p. 51; c.f. Xenophon *Ways* IV.6-7; [1925b] 1968, p. 207).

The Platonic view was broadly accepted for close to two thousand years (by authors as diverse as Saint Thomas Aquinas, Sir Thomas More, and David Hume)⁵² until Adam Smith announced that human beings are roughly equal at birth; in the latter’s view, specialization itself *created* unequal talents and it was only the ‘vanity of the philosopher’ which held otherwise ([1776] 1976, p. 29; for references see Karayiannis 1990, p. 18 n. 27; McNulty 1975; Bonar [1909] 1992, p. 15 n. 4).⁵³ Smith undertook a *moral revolution*. He did not seek a value-free foundation for political economy, merely to replace one ethics with another. Smith’s assumption led to his ethical concern with the *freedom* of labour to *change* occupation. Plato’s view is very different; occupational change, or splitting one’s time between different occupations, is a recipe for loss of specialized skills and social disunity.

⁵² The reason for supporting immobility of labour no doubt varied over this period: tradition, stability, or because it was felt that individuals were genuinely suited to their assigned job.

⁵³ In *The Vanity of the Philosopher*, Peart and Levy find Plato’s assumption of fundamental human *inequality* morally objectionable (2005). They state that classical political economy ‘*rightly* presupposed human homogeneity’ and that this presupposition underlies their book (Peart and Levy 2005, p. 3; c.f. Plato’s allegory of the cave [*Rep* 514a-515d; [1968] 1991, pp. 193-4]). At one point they address the possibility, raised by the Nobel Laureate James Buchanan and others, that Plato might be right. They say that ‘the dangers of presuming difference or hierarchy are great enough to outweigh whatever failings result from lack of empirical realism’ (Peart and Levy 2005, p. 125). They add that: ‘One purpose of our book is to help maintain a firewall in the space of ideas’ against the threat of ‘eugenic practice and theory directed by the expert-guided state’ (Peart and Levy 2005, p. 125). They apparently condemn Plato’s recommendation for deception for the public good (Peart and Levy 2005, p. 109 n. 12 quoting from the *Republic* 459d; Plato [1968] 1991, p. 138). Nevertheless, they are quite content to propagate their own Noble Lie in order to ensure equality between ‘the expert and the subject’, as recommended by modern research ethics committees.

Fifth, we can now make some comments on Plato's views on the hierarchy of the arts. As we saw in the case of the 'city of utmost necessity', the four essential artisans are the farmer, the housebuilder, the weaver, and the shoemaker. Elsewhere, he tells us that the greatest need is for food and that the farmer is useful (*Rep* 333a; 369d; [1968] 1991, pp. 9, 46). Farming is clearly a serious art.

The warrior art is obviously highly regarded, as Plato spends considerable time discussing it (see especially *Rep* 374c-d; [1968] 1991, p. 51). We saw earlier that acquisition of wealth is often associated with crime and that this was a reason for banning the warriors from holding and acquiring money. Plato 'severs the life of the warriors and lawgivers from the marketplace and from money, in order to preserve their moral character' (Evers 1980, p. 48; see p. 49; Baeck 1994, p. 65). Only the warriors are true specialists: they devote themselves fully to their art.⁵⁴ So even the serious artisans discussed above are not true specialists; they devote themselves to their true art *and* to the money-making art. The warrior art is purer.

Two other arts need to be discussed together: ruling⁵⁵ and philosophy. The art of ruling others is not to be confused with tyranny, which Plato condemns (*Rep* 579b-580c; [1968] 1991, pp. 260-1). The former involves caring for the welfare of others *within the city* (but may involve making war on outsiders). Because Plato combines the education of the rulers with the education of the philosopher, and they are discussed at length, both must be important. Indeed, the rulers are said to be 'saviours' of the city (*Rep* 463b; [1968] 1991, p. 142).

By contrast, Plato tells us that the good city does not need many doctors and judges (*Rep* 405a-410a; [1968] 1991, pp. 84-8). The multiplication of these artisans suggests that the city has entered decay; the diet has become unhealthy⁵⁶ and law suits have become excessive. The former suggests that the passions for bodily gratification have gained control over many souls. The latter suggests that honesty, trust, and friendship have broken down; the unity of the city has dissolved.

In addition, following the views of Xenophon (see Alvey 2010b), the bodies and souls of the mechanical artisans are 'mutilated' by their specialization (*Rep* 495d-e; [1968] 1991, p. 175; see Bonar [1909] 1992, pp. 16-7).⁵⁷ This concern with 'mutilation' repeats Xenophon's ethical evaluation of the effects of the specialization of labour in the mechanical arts. These arts must occupy a very low rank.

Sixth and finally, despite Plato's approval of specialization seen earlier, due to political and ethical concerns, he places various limitations on this economic principle (i.e. the need to promote friendship and the need to avoid acquisitiveness).⁵⁸ The division of labour is limited by four other factors. First, the city is limited to the very small optimal size mentioned earlier (*Rep* 423a; [1968] 1991, p. 100). Second, the goal of self-sufficiency

⁵⁴ It seems that the rulers may split their time between philosophizing and ruling (see White 2006, p. 169).

⁵⁵ As Socrates has said in the *Gorgias*, there is an art of ruling oneself as well as an art of ruling others.

⁵⁶ Only after the healthy city is abandoned does the need for doctors increase considerably.

⁵⁷ Some commentators find a narrowing of perspective of artisans due to the division of labour in Plato's *Apology* (21-3; Plato 1984b, pp. 69-72; see Gordon 1975, p. 28; Bonar [1909] 1992, p. 16).

⁵⁸ On Plato's nuanced view of the division of labour, see Karayiannis 1990.

(recall the third formal principle of goodness) tightens this constraint on the size of the market (Gordon 1975, p. 28). Third, the avoidance of luxury further limits the domestic market and hence the scope for specialization (*Rep* 426b; 430e; 590b-c; [1968] 1991, pp. 104, 109, 273; Karayiannis 1990, p. 21). Fourth, those mechanical arts which ‘mutilate’ the bodies and souls of the artisans and craftsmen will *not* be allowed to thrive. In any event, Plato’s aim is to constrain the division of labour, money making, and economic growth to within narrow bounds: to ‘a certain modest standard of material well-being’ required for what Gordon calls ‘the good life’ (1975, p. 29). Gordon’s view leads us back to the question of who actually lives the good life, which will be addressed next.

-- *The Philosopher and the Good Life*

Nussbaum thinks that the formal conditions for goodness set out earlier (in Books I-V of the *Republic*) allow a plurality of good structures ([1986] 2001, p. 158). Additional criteria of goodness (purity, stability, and truth) are added by Plato in Book IX and she says that it is these that restrict the best way of life to that of the philosopher (Nussbaum [1986] 2001, pp. 138-9, 141, 146-8; see Plato *Rep* 585b-586e; [1968] 1991, pp. 267-9). Although Nussbaum does not say so explicitly, it is clear that she understands that, for Plato, the number of philosophers in any city will be small (Plato *Rep* 428d-429a; 494a; 496a-c; [1968] 1991, pp. 106-7, 173, 176; Strauss 1987, p. 50). According to this new, elitist standard, the ‘appetitive activities’ that occupy ‘the bulk of most people’s lives’ merely relieve existing needs and can be ruled out of the definition of goodness (Nussbaum [1986] 2001, pp. 148, 153; see pp. 139, 150-1). According to Nussbaum, this represents a considerable underestimation of the complexity and importance of ‘appetitive activities’.⁵⁹ Plato strays too far from ordinary human life (Nussbaum [1986] 2001, p. 153). His perspective is an ‘external god’s eye perspective’ on human nature; because it denigrates ‘so much’ of what ordinary humans value, it is ‘not relevant to the living of *our human lives*’ (Nussbaum [1986] 2001, p. 160 emphasis added). We have now returned to Nussbaum’s concerns expressed about the philosophic way of life in the *Phaedo*, where she said that 1) Plato assumes that the philosopher lives an ascetic life and 2) that this standard is used to denigrate that of everyone else.

There are many important issues that Nussbaum raises here. I will address two points at this time and several more in the Appendix. First, Plato’s definition of goodness is elitist and does rule out almost all human beings from living the best life. Fortunately, this is remedied in the *Laws* which I hope to discuss on a later occasion.

Second, Nussbaum is wrong to equate the philosopher’s life with asceticism, or the life of a monk (Zuckert 2009, p. 784). Philosophy provides philosophers with considerable pleasures,⁶⁰ certainly more than is obtained through ruling i.e. ruling in the precise sense discussed earlier (and thus serving the interests of others) (Plato *Rep* 340d-346e; 519d-521b; [1968] 1991, pp. 18-24, 198-200).

⁵⁹ Nussbaum refers to various aesthetic components of appetitive activities, as seen in ‘the gourmet, the connoisseur of wines’, and ‘the person who can treat a sexual partner as an end’ rather a means of satisfying a physical need ([1986] 2001, p. 153).

⁶⁰ White says that ‘philosophizing is the most pleasant activity’ (2006, p. 369; see Strauss 1987, pp. 57, 59).

-- *Conclusion*

First, Plato is clearly painting the picture of a utopian society. His vision breaks with all existing Greek cities, nevertheless he is clearly heavily influenced by certain aspects of Sparta. Second, as Lowry (1987) says, both Plato and Xenophon work within the administrative tradition. There are, however, considerable differences. Xenophon is interested in practical wisdom, *kalokagathia*, and household management; Plato's focus is on contemplative wisdom, the individual, and the city. Third, modern economic principles are adopted (such as economic development and the division of labour) but, following Xenophon, they are limited by higher political and ethical goals.

Drawing attention to the broader discussion of justice in the *Republic*, Evers claims that 'for Plato economic inquiry is primarily an investigation with moral ends' (1980, p. 48; see Gordon 1975, p. 34). The discussion of the division of labour, for example, cannot be divorced from ethical concerns over acquisitiveness, self-sufficiency, friendship, and mental mutilation (see Gordon 1975, p. 44). Similar issues arise in the case of economic development.

Overall, Lowry's summary of the *Republic* is apt; it presents an 'ideal state' which is 'designed to permit maximum utilization of human intelligence and capacities in the achievement of what he [Plato] conceived to be optimum order and social excellence' (1987, p. 84). His further comment that this coincides with 'the best, most efficient economic order' repeats the misrepresentation of Petrochilos seen earlier; 'efficiency' must be understood within a Platonic political framework (i.e. a non-cosmopolitan regime) and economy (i.e. immobile factors of production within a stationary-state economy guided by virtuous, intelligent rulers) (Lowry 1987, p. 86; see p. 87; Plato *Rep* 376a-c; 413e; 423a-b; [1968] 1991, pp. 52, 93, 100). The neoclassical economic framework is not relevant. In the 'early' and 'middle' dialogues, in several respects (including his views on gender equality), Plato anticipates the Capability approach.

APPENDIX: THE PHILOSOPHER AND THE GOOD LIFE

In *The Fragility of Goodness* Nussbaum has raised various important points about the philosopher and good life; not all need to be addressed in this paper. A few additional points, to those made earlier, however, can be made here.

First, there are a range of interpretations of goodness and the good life (see Irwin 1977; White 2006; Cairns, Herrmann, and Penner 2007). According to White (2006), the formal conditions of goodness (in Books I-V of the *Republic*) plus the Principle of the Assignment of Natural Functions are enough to establish what goodness comprises.

Second, as stated in the text, the *Republic* seems to be a *purely theoretical exercise* showing what a perfectly just society would look like. It abstracts from many human realities. Indeed, it is stated in the *Laws* that the best regime of the *Republic* is a depiction of a society of ‘gods or children of gods,’ not human beings (Plato *Laws* 739d-e; 1980, p. 126). Two examples will suffice. First, it abstracts from the human body (notably the bodily differences between the genders) and erotic human attachments (Strauss 1987, pp. 48, 51-2, 64-5, 67). Second, it abstracts from the unwillingness of human philosophers to rule unwilling human subjects.

Third, whether philosophers live the good life in the mystical regime of the gods depends, to the extent that they have any human character, on whether they rule. As I have indicated already, it seems clear that *human* philosophers will *not* rule the *human* city (and the project of the ideal city collapses). According to White, however, the philosopher knows what the good structure of the city is and, because the ‘good of the city is valuable’, chooses to rule (White 2006, p. 369). This only makes sense *if* the philosophers (and the non-philosophers) are themselves ‘children of gods’.

Fourth, if, as White and others assert, the philosophers rule the mystical regime, who is required to live an ascetic life? To the extent that any denizens have any human character, the bulk of the society will *not* be expected to conform to the philosophic way of life. As we have seen, the desires of money-makers will be somewhat constrained but asceticism is not demanded of them. The auxiliaries are ascetic; they hold down their desires by their spiritedness (*Rep* 553b-c; [1968] 1991, p. 231).⁶¹

Fifth, do most of the inhabitants live a good life in the mystical city? If White is correct that the well-structured city is valuable to philosophers, it is likely to be so because those living in it secure the ‘greatest happiness [*eudaimonia*]’ that is possible (Plato *Rep* 421b3-c6 quoted in White 2006, p. 370). In other words, the philosophers rule for the sake of the goodness and *eudaimonia* of the city and deny themselves the greater pleasure of philosophizing full-time (White 2006, pp. 369-71; Plato *Rep* 520e-521b; 539e-540b; [1968] 1991, pp. 199-200, 219). Hence, if the philosophers fulfil their *duty to the mystical city*, perhaps most inhabitants live a reasonably good life in it.⁶²

⁶¹ I owe this point to Jeffrey Sikkenga.

⁶² In the *Laws*, Plato says that people who live in the best city of the *Republic* have a *eudaimon* life (739c-e; 1980, p. 126). Strictly speaking, however, if the good soul has a well-ordered structure, only the philosophers can live the good life.

Sixth, do philosophers live the best (or even a good) life in the mystical best city? Assuming that philosophers are compelled to rule, they are involved in junior military and political roles from age 35 and ruling from age 50 (*Rep* 539a-540b; [1968] 1991, pp. 218-20). Nevertheless, they may also philosophize part-time from age 35 (*Rep* 474b-c; [1968] 1991, p. 154; White 2006, p. 369).⁶³ Because the pleasures of contemplation are said to be the greatest, even part-time philosophizing may allow them to live a ‘good’ life.

In short, Nussbaum’s assertion that Plato has a ‘god’s eye perspective’ on human nature in the *Republic*, is essentially correct. Her view that the good life is ascetic, however, needs qualification.

⁶³ White (2006) thinks that if philosophers agree to rule, they miss out on their preferred life, which is *the* good life.

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