

Plato's Treatment of Injustice in the *Republic*

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Abstract

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At the most general level, Plato's *Republic* addresses the question of whether I should live justly or unjustly to live the best and happiest human life. This dissertation examines Plato's arguments about injustice and explores three key puzzles concerning injustice in the *Republic*.

The first puzzle concerns Glaucon and Adeimantus' speeches praising injustice that open Book 2. They both argue that Socrates' defense of justice should not reference the rewards of a just reputation. Instead, Socrates must only appeal to the intrinsic rewards of justice. However, the puzzle is this: if what I have said exhausts the functions of Glaucon and Adeimantus' speeches, then Adeimantus' speech is unnecessary. Adeimantus speaks after Glaucon, and his argument seems to come to the same conclusion as Glaucon's. So, in what way does Adeimantus' speech contribute to shaping the rest of the *Republic*?

I argue that Adeimantus' speech articulates a different perspective on injustice than Glaucon's. Glaucon's defense of injustice treats injustice as a virtue, and as such Glaucon argues that my aim should be to be as unjust as possible. Adeimantus, like Glaucon, praises injustice, but the view that Adeimantus voices aligns more closely with conventional norms—such as recognizing justice as a virtue. When Adeimantus describes people who choose to do injustice,

they make their decisions while accepting that justice is a virtue, and this means that their pursuit of injustice will be more constrained than someone who believes that injustice is a virtue.

In the following chapter, I consider a puzzle concerning psychology. As is well known, Plato, in the *Republic*, divides the human soul into three parts: reason, spirit, and appetite. Broadly speaking, Socrates characterizes appetite as desiring pleasure and physiological needs. Unfortunately, Socrates does not explicitly delineate the principle of unity, explaining which pleasures count as appetitive or not. The most prevalent interpretation is that all appetitive desires are related to the body; I call this corporeal interpretation.

I argue that the domain of appetite is not so narrowly constricted to bodily needs and pleasures. While many appetites are connected to the body, Socrates does not exclusively use examples connected to the body, as the corporeal interpretation seems to assume. Instead, Socrates frequently includes pleasures of the imagination and activities that only aim at superficial pleasure. Additionally, I argue that the corporeal interpretation of appetite does not make sense with Socrates' definitions of the subclasses of appetitive desires. Socrates' definitions of the subclasses may support a broader interpretation of appetitive desires because these definitions intentionally leave open-ended the sorts of objects that unnecessary and lawless appetites aim at.

The tyrannical character is the central puzzle of my final chapter. The tyrannical character is the culmination of Socrates' arguments about injustice, as the tyrannical character represents the greatest degree of human injustice. However, many scholars have found Socrates' depiction of the tyrannical character bizarre or dissatisfying. This is partly because the tyrannical character is often read as a hedonist, and a hedonist is not a likely candidate for a political tyrant.

I argue that the tyrannical character seeks freedom from constraint as his dominant end, disregarding laws, conventions, and normative beliefs. When I say that the tyrant seeks freedom from constraint, I mean that he places no limits or restraints on what objects of desire he may choose to pursue, nor does he restrict the means he uses to achieve his desires. The tyrant is ruled by the appetitive part of his soul, specifically his unnecessary desires, so he places no constraint on the objects of his unnecessary appetites. This understanding reflects Glaucon's depiction of complete injustice while aligning with the progressive decline of unjust souls described by Socrates.

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Introduction

At the most general level, Plato's *Republic* addresses the choice between justice and injustice—whether I should live justly or unjustly to live the best and happiest human life. This question emerges in Book 1 when Thrasymachus, one of Socrates' interlocutors, argues that injustice promotes more happiness than justice (344c). Socrates refutes him, arguing that the just life is the eudaimon life (352d-353e). Understandably, some interlocutors—namely Glaucon and Adeimantus—are dissatisfied with Socrates' refutation of Thrasymachus. They point out that it is all too easy to think of examples of people who practice injustice yet seem quite successful and happy. As a result, they challenge Socrates to provide a longer and fuller defense of the just life, and the rest of the dialogue constitutes Socrates' ensuing defense.

In this dissertation, I work through three key puzzles in Plato's argument concerning injustice in the *Republic*. This dissertation has three chapters, and each focuses primarily on one question about injustice. However, I will speak to many questions in addition to the three core questions that I shape my chapters around, and there are undoubtedly many more puzzles about injustice that I do not address. Perhaps the first puzzle about injustice is why Plato devotes so much of the dialogue to injustice. For example, Book 8 and most of Book 9 focus on unjust people and cities. Theoretically, Socrates need not say much about injustice to demonstrate that justice contributes more to happiness. If justice is a good like knowledge or health—as Socrates claims it is (358a)—then it will be enough for Socrates to explain what justice is for his audience to understand why it is necessary for happiness. After all, if I understand what health and knowledge are, then I do not really need an explanation of ignorance or ill health to know that I want to avoid those things.

However, Socrates compares the just life to the unjust life because Glaucon and Adeimantus specifically ask for a comparative defense. Glaucon asks Socrates to demonstrate that justice is *better* than injustice, and he wants Socrates to contrast justice and injustice (357a, 360e). Similarly, Adeimantus also asks Socrates to demonstrate that justice is better than injustice (366e). To meet these requests, Socrates must detail injustice and compare a just life to an unjust one.

The puzzle and solution I have just described reflect my approach to the three puzzles I focus on in this dissertation. Over the last few decades, philosophers have begun to give more attention and credit to the literary elements of Plato's dialogues, like the plot and characters.¹ However, it has proven challenging to articulate how the philosophy and the literature of the dialogues work in concert beyond pointing out somewhat superficial connections, such as how literary details underscore some part of an argument. In this dissertation, I work from the supposition that the interlocutors inform Socrates' argument because the argument is a response to their challenge and is presumably meant to be persuasive to Glaucon and Adeimantus. As such, interpretations of Socrates' ensuing argument can be evaluated and compared on the basis of whether they portray Socrates as giving an argument that considers the preconceived ideas of his interlocutors and an argument that his interlocutors would find plausible. I argue that my interpretation of Socrates' arguments concerning injustice succeeds at portraying Socrates as giving an argument that his interlocutors would find plausible while prevailing interpretations fall short.

¹ Mary Margaret McCabe's 2015 book *Platonic Conversations* and John Beversluis' 2000 book *Cross Examining Socrates* are good examples. Gerald Press' 2018 paper "The State of the Question in the Study of Plato: 20 Year Update" provides an overview of this trend.

The first puzzle about injustice that I consider concerns understanding Glaucon and Adeimantus' speeches praising injustice that open Book 2. Glaucon and Adeimantus claim that they do not truly believe that injustice promotes more happiness than justice. Still, they want to put the argument as strongly as possible so that Socrates' refutation will be as strong as possible. They both complain that justice only contributes to happiness because of the good reputation that justice brings. However, if that is the case, then it is not really justice that promotes happiness. If someone could maintain a reputation for justice while practicing injustice, then surely such a person would live the happiest life. She would reap the rewards of a just reputation while maximizing her advantage without being held back by the prescriptions of justice. Glaucon claims that such a person "rules his city because of his reputation for justice" and, at the same time, "he profits because he has no scruples about doing injustice" (362b).² If all that is beneficial about justice is the reputation it brings, then no one should seek to be truly just. Instead, the best life belongs to the unjust person with the skill to maintain a false reputation for justice.

With that in mind, both Glaucon and Adeimantus argue that Socrates' defense of justice should not reference the rewards of having a just reputation. Instead, Socrates' defense must only appeal to the intrinsic rewards of justice. In effect, they ask Socrates to demonstrate that justice is a good like health or knowledge—a good that contributes substantially to happiness and whose benefits cannot be attained by someone with a false reputation for health or knowledge. In line with that, Glaucon and Adeimantus both request a psychological account of justice and injustice.

However, the puzzle is this: if what I have said so far exhausts the functions of Glaucon and Adeimantus' praises of injustice, then Adeimantus' speech is unnecessary. Adeimantus

² All translations of the text are from C.D.C. Reeve's 2004 translation of S.R. Slings' new Greek edition.

speaks after Glaucon, and his argument seems to come to the same conclusion as Glaucon—that justice is only valuable because of the just reputation it brings. He places the same conditions on Socrates: he must not refer to the good reputation engendered by justice, he must explain justice psychologically, and he must compare the just life to the unjust life. So, in what way does Adeimantus' speech contribute to shaping the rest of the *Republic*? If all it does is further elaborate on Glaucon's points, then why is Adeimantus' speech as long as Glaucon's?³ And why does Adeimantus claim that Glaucon has omitted the most important point (362d)?

I argue that Adeimantus' speech articulates a different perspective on injustice than Glaucon's. Glaucon's defense of injustice treats injustice as a virtue, and, in doing so, Glaucon's speech is a radical departure from convention. Adeimantus, like Glaucon, praises injustice, but he does not inhabit such an extreme perspective. The view that Adeimantus voices aligns more closely with conventional moral norms—such as recognizing justice as a virtue and injustice as a vice. When Adeimantus describes people who choose to do injustice, they make their decisions while accepting that justice is a virtue, and this means that they will pursue justice as a habit while recognizing that there will be occasions when the rewards of injustice are so great that injustice nevertheless brings about more happiness than justice. But, since injustice is a vice, there must be something intrinsically bad about it, so injustice should be practiced within constraint. From Glaucon's perspective, however, there is no reason for me to constrain my practice of injustice. Rather, my aim should be to release my injustice from as much constraint as

³ Some scholars have argued that Adeimantus' speech is indeed redundant. For example, Julia Annas writes that “what [Adeimantus] adds is relatively minor” and “doesn't warrant the length of his speech” (Annas 1980 65). Roslyn Weiss writes that Adeimantus conflates Glaucon and Thrasymachus' arguments, failing to really appreciate either (Weiss 2007 105). Nikolas Pappas describes Adeimantus as “the more pedestrian brother” who echoes Glaucon's earlier claims (Pappas 2013 77). Ruby Blondell comments that Adeimantus' intellectual virtues are less than Glaucon's, and claims that Adeimantus' speech does not contribute much (Blondell 204).

possible, and, indeed, the goal of the unjust man whom Glaucon describes is to become a tyrant—someone who is above law and convention.

Ultimately, I suggest that Glaucon's speech praises injustice practiced without constraint, while Adeimantus praises injustice practiced within constraint. Glaucon and Adeimantus' speeches function to identify two distinct objections to Socrates' thesis that the just life is the eudaimon life. Glaucon argues that skilled people who practice injustice without constraint acquire immense rewards that will contribute more to happiness than justice could. Adeimantus, on the other hand, argues that a considerable number of people will be tempted by the objection that some synthesis of justice and constrained injustice will yield the greatest happiness.

In the following chapter, I consider a puzzle concerning psychology. As is well known, Plato, in the *Republic*, divides the human soul into three parts: reason, spirit, and appetite. Socrates' theory of justice and injustice in the *Republic* relies on the relationship between these parts. For various reasons, each part of the soul is suited to a particular kind of work necessary for a well-functioning human soul and so essential for a happy life. Reason rules the soul, spirit supports the rule of reason, and appetite provides motivation for various necessary needs and wants. A just soul is one in which the three parts—reason, spirit, and appetite—perform always and only their proper work. An unjust soul is one in which the parts of the soul fail to perform their proper work or try to do the work of another part. In Books 8 and 9, Socrates describes four unjust souls, each representing a different degree of injustice. The most apparent problem with each soul is that they are not ruled by reason. The timocratic soul is governed by spirit, while three unjust characters also seem to have souls controlled by appetite. As a result, any interpretation of the appetitive part of the soul will affect the interpretation of the unjust characters.

Broadly speaking, Socrates characterizes appetite as desiring pleasure and physiological needs. Unfortunately, Socrates does not explicitly delineate the principle of unity, explaining which pleasures count as appetitive or not. The most prevalent interpretation is that all appetitive desires are related to the body; I call this corporeal interpretation.⁴ According to it, appetites correspond either to biological needs, bodily pleasures, or the means necessary to achieve the former. Socrates further distinguishes between necessary and unnecessary appetites; the former is interpreted to mean physiological needs and hedonistic pleasures. This sounds plausible enough. However, the puzzle emerges when considering that the tyrannical character—the most unjust soul—is ruled by his unnecessary desires. If so, then the tyrannical character would be a hedonist.⁵

However, the problem with the hedonistic interpretation is that it portrays Socrates as giving an argument that his interlocutors would not find persuasive. Socrates' depiction of the tyrant is intended to defeat Glaucon's characterization of the tyrant, and he describes a tyrant who is privileged, powerful, and skilled at doing whatever they want and getting away with it. Someone addicted to bodily pleasures does not clearly resemble the sort of person that Glaucon asked to hear Socrates discuss. An addiction to or obsession with bodily pleasure is a familiar sort of person, but that person is not typically regarded as capable of extreme evil. Johnstone's only example of someone as obsessed with bodily pleasure as the tyrant is someone who has an addiction.⁶ I can easily imagine that someone with an addiction may end up breaking laws to

⁴ Mark Johnstone is probably the staunchest contemporary defender of the corporeal interpretation. See Johnstone 2013 and 2015.

⁵ The hedonistic interpretation is endorsed by Johnstone (2015), Pappas (2013), Annas (1981), Parry (2007), Arruzza (2019), and Barney (2008).

⁶ "Plato's tyrannical man as I understand him behaves much like a drug addict with an unmanaged addiction. Much as an addict's addictive desire for some drug can lead to desperation, and ultimately to a life of crimes committed with the aim of obtaining the drug or the money to buy it, so too, I suggest, the tyrannical man's desire for bodily pleasure leads him to turn to a life of crime with the aim of securing the money he needs to obtain the pleasure he desperately and constantly craves" (Johnstone 2013, 429).

maintain their habit, but it is harder to see how addiction could lead to evil as significant as tyranny unless the tyrant's goals expand beyond bodily pleasure.

If Socrates is to successfully defeat their argument or offer a compelling alternative conception of a tyrannical life, then Socrates' tyrant should resemble Glaucon's tyrant. That is, it should be clear how Socrates' explanation of a tyrant's psychology can explain the sorts of behaviors that Glaucon attributes to a tyrannical person. Additionally, the text implies that Socrates' account of the tyrant's psychology is persuasive, at least to Glaucon and Adeimantus. They both treat Socrates' description of the tyrannical soul as familiar and intuitive and enthusiastically accept Socrates' claims.

To that end, my project in my second chapter is to survey Socrates' characterization of appetite throughout the *Republic* and argue that the domain of appetite is not restricted to bodily wants and needs. Thus, the tyrannical character need not be interpreted as a hedonist. I demonstrate that the evidence favoring the corporeal interpretation of appetite is inconclusive, and I provide additional, novel support for the noncorporeal interpretation. I demonstrate that the domain of appetite (especially unnecessary appetites) is not so narrowly constricted to bodily needs and pleasures. While many appetites are connected to the body, Socrates does not exclusively use examples connected to the body, as the corporeal interpretation seems to assume. Instead, Socrates frequently includes pleasures of the imagination and activities that only aim at superficial pleasure. Additionally, I argue that the corporeal interpretation of appetite does not make sense with Socrates' definitions of the subclasses of appetitive desires. Socrates' definitions of the subclasses may support a broader interpretation of appetitive desires because these definitions intentionally leave open-ended the sorts of objects that unnecessary and lawless appetites aim at. In arguing against the corporeal interpretation, I hope to make space for myself

to interpret the unjust characters in Books 8 and 9 in a way that is not restricted by the corporeal interpretation, which is the topic of my third and final chapter.

The tyrannical character is the central puzzle of my final chapter. The tyrannical character is the culmination of Socrates' arguments about injustice, as the tyrannical character represents the greatest degree of human injustice. However, many scholars have found Socrates' depiction of the tyrannical character bizarre or dissatisfying. This is partly because the tyrannical character is often read as a hedonist, and a hedonist is not a likely candidate for a political tyrant. On the other hand, some commentators have argued that the tyrannical character is best understood as someone with an overwhelming desire for political power or any power over other people.⁷ The trouble with this interpretation is that Socrates does not focus on the tyrannical character's lust for power, so it is difficult to fit this interpretation with the text.

I argue that the tyrannical character seeks freedom from constraint as his dominant end. When I say that the tyrant seeks freedom from constraint, I mean that he places no limits or restraints on what objects of desire he may choose to pursue, nor does he restrict the means he uses to achieve his desires. The tyrant is ruled by the appetitive part of his soul, specifically his unnecessary desires, so he places no constraint on the objects of his unnecessary appetites. To be more specific, I am thinking of the constraints of law, convention, and normative beliefs. I highlight those sources because they appear as sources of constraint in Socrates' narratives of each of the unjust souls. In this way, the progressive decline of the four unjust souls can be viewed as the progressive dissolution of the powers of law, convention, and normative beliefs.

If Socrates is to persuade Glaucon and Adeimantus that the just life is happier than the unjust life, then his descriptions of unjust lives should resemble Glaucon and Adeimantus' earlier

⁷ Blossner 2007, Arruzza 2019, Nielsen 2019, and Nielsen 2023 defend the political interpretation.

defenses of injustice. I suggest that my interpretation of the tyrant and the progressive decline of the unjust souls can provide such a resemblance. In the first chapter of this dissertation, I argued that Glaucon and Adeimantus are defending different degrees of injustice. More specifically, I argued that the unjust life which Glaucon praised is less constrained than the injustice which Adeimantus praised. In effect, Glaucon praises injustice practiced without constraint, while Adeimantus praises injustice practiced within constraint. In this chapter, I argue that Socrates, like Glaucon and Adeimantus, differentiates between degrees of injustice by whether injustice is practiced within or without limitations.

There is also resemblance between the details that Socrates uses to distinguish degrees of injustice and Adeimantus and Glaucon's speeches. Glaucon's praise of injustice is littered with references to lawbreaking. This makes sense because he stipulates that his completely unjust man can do as much injustice as he likes and get away with it. As a result, he has no respect for the law because he knows he can get away with any crime. Glaucon describes him as someone who can and will "take whatever he wanted from the marketplace with impunity, go into people's houses and have sex with anyone he wished, kill or release from prison anyone he wished" (360b-c). Moreover, Glaucon's praise of injustice represents a radical departure from conventional moral views because he praises injustice as a virtue. Justice, on the other hand, he treats as a bedtime story told to children to encourage them to be obedient; he does not think that justice has any intrinsic goodness (359b). Adeimantus' praise of injustice is not nearly so radical. The unjust people he describes maintain their community's normative beliefs. They assume that justice is a virtue and take it for granted that injustice is evil. Similarly, and perhaps as a result, Adeimantus does not explicitly attribute any lawbreaking to the unjust people he describes.

That is all to say, Glaucon seems to conceptualize the extreme of injustice as injustice without any constraint. The constraints that Glaucon references include law, convention, and

normative beliefs. One benefit of my interpretation is that Socrates conceptualizes the extreme of injustice in the same way Glaucon does—albeit with more psychological detail. For example, in a tyrannical soul, only unnecessary appetites live without restraint, while spirit and reason are constrained. Psychologically speaking, ‘injustice without constraint’ means that unnecessary appetites place no limit on the objects of their desires or how they seek those desires.

Another benefit of my interpretation is that my reading of the decline from one unjust type to another matches the distinction between the degrees of injustice described by Glaucon and Adeimantus. Adeimantus indicates a lesser degree of injustice by describing people who practice injustice within constraint. I am not suggesting that the people Adeimantus describes necessarily conceive of themselves in this way. Still, their behavior and language indicate they are more constrained by law and conventional moral views. I argue that Socrates distinguishes lesser degrees of injustice in the same way as Adeimantus.

As such, my resolution to each of the three puzzles I consider aims to make greater sense of the *Republic* as a cohesive argument. I treat Socrates’ depiction of the unjust characters as a response to the objections that Glaucon and Adeimantus presented in Book 1, taking into consideration both Glaucon’s argument that complete injustice is best and Adeimantus’ argument that a synthesis of justice and injustice is best. To the same end, I evaluate interpretations of the *Republic*’s psychology based on whether they portray Socrates as giving an argument that considers both the objections and assumptions of his interlocutors. The corporeal interpretation of appetite and the hedonistic interpretation of the tyrannical character both fail that test.

Degrees of Injustice in *Republic 2*

In the *Republic*, Socrates' task is to defend the thesis that a just life is better and happier than an unjust life. In short, that the just life is the eudaimon life. The terms of Socrates' task and the conditions for his success are established by the interlocutors Glaucon and Adeimantus at the beginning of Book 2.⁸ Glaucon and Adeimantus have listened to the arguments Socrates presented against Thrasymachus' praise of injustice in Book 1, but they remain dissatisfied. Glaucon voices his discontent first. He delivers a speech extolling injustice in which he argues that the unjust life yields greater happiness than the just life. Glaucon concludes by challenging Socrates to demonstrate the opposite—that the just life is happiest. He further demands that Socrates praise justice and condemn injustice without referring to the social consequences of either, i.e. the good reputation that justice inspires or the shame that injustice entails. Instead, Socrates must only praise justice and condemn injustice for their powers in the soul.

However, before Socrates can respond, Adeimantus, Glaucon's brother, interrupts. Adeimantus maintains that he is generally in agreement with Glaucon, but he complains that Glaucon has left out an essential point (362e). Unfortunately, whatever essential point Adeimantus means is not obvious, as his and Glaucon's speeches mirror each other. Adeimantus reiterates many points from Glaucon's argument, and Adeimantus' challenge to Socrates is the same as Glaucon's. Namely, Adeimantus tasks Socrates with demonstrating that a just life is happier than an unjust life, and he forbids Socrates from referring to the social consequences of either. Given

⁸ I do not mean to imply that Socrates has a different task in Book 1. During his conversation with Thrasymachus, Socrates is also concerned with defending the claim that just life is the eudaimon life. However, Thrasymachus declines to continue arguing with Socrates after the end of Book 1. Afterwards, Glaucon and Adeimantus insist that Socrates continues defending justice, and they specify how Socrates ought to praise justice and condemn injustice. As a result, the rest of the *Republic* represents Socrates' response Glaucon and Adeimantus' challenges and the specific terms in which they couch it. For more on Socrates' argument with Thrasymachus, see Barney 2006.

the broad agreement between the speeches, scholars have typically treated Glaucon and Adeimantus' contributions as equivalent.⁹ Scholars often refer to 'Glaucon and Adeimantus' challenge' as if the brothers spoke in unison, and some scholars have even dismissed Adeimantus' contribution as redundant or inferior.¹⁰ At best, commentators interpret Adeimantus as offering additional evidence in support of Glaucon's conclusion, or, at worst, scholars have suggested that his speech is needlessly long.¹¹ Either way, on many interpretations, Adeimantus' contribution is modest.

Yet, the dramatic details of the dialogue do not suggest that Plato treats Adeimantus' speech as a (less essential) extension of Glaucon's. After all, Adeimantus' speech is approximately the same length as Glaucon's, and Adeimantus' is even slightly longer.¹² Socrates also praises the two brothers equally (368a). Consequently, there is good reason to think that Adeimantus' speech is significant, but the question remains: what exactly does Adeimantus' argument add to Glaucon's? One common response points out that Adeimantus surveys conventional arguments

⁹ Commentators almost universally treat Glaucon and Adeimantus as making identical challenges to Socrates. For example, Roslyn Weiss consistently speaks of Glaucon and Adeimantus as a single unit, referring to the 'demand of Glaucon and Adeimantus' and 'the brother's arguments' and noting that 'the brothers have the same end' (Weiss 2022, 83, 87, 89). Julia Annas writes that 'Glaucon and Adeimantus clearly believe that they are making the same point, the second speech filling in details not made prominent in the first' (Annas 1981, 65). Additionally, Christopher Shields speaks of what 'Glaucon and Adeimantus avowedly want' and 'Glaucon and Adeimantus' request' (Shields 2006, 68). Weiss 2007 observes 'what both Glaucon and Adeimantus demand of Socrates is a defense of justice 'in itself'' (Weiss 2007, 105). Similarly, Nikolas Pappas observes that 'Adeimantus echoes one of Glaucon's assumptions when he complains that no moral teacher has yet argued what each [justice and injustice] itself does with its own power when it is in the soul' (Pappas 2013, 76). See also Irwin 1999, 181; Reeve 2008, 78; Anderson 2020, 8.

¹⁰ Here are some examples of this treatment: Roslyn Weiss writes that Adeimantus conflates Glaucon and Thrasymachus' arguments, failing to appreciate either argument fully (Weiss 2007, 105). Nikolas Pappas describes Adeimantus as 'the more pedestrian brother', who echoes Glaucon's earlier claims (Pappas 2013, 77). Ruby Blondell comments that Adeimantus' intellectual virtues are inferior to Glaucon's, and she claims that Adeimantus' speech does not contribute much (Blondell 2002, 204).

¹¹ Here I am specifically referring to Julia Annas' observation that 'what [Adeimantus] adds is relatively minor' and 'doesn't warrant the length of his speech' (Annas 1981, 65).

¹² Glaucon's speech begins at 358b and ends at 362c; Adeimantus' speech begins at 362e and ends at 367e.

praising justice and critiques the insufficiency of those arguments.¹³ Typically, conventional arguments in favour of justice highlight the social benefits of a just reputation. Adeimantus observes that these commendations primarily serve to teach young people to practice injustice discreetly, reserving such behaviour for occasions when they can be certain to evade detection. When Adeimantus critiques those arguments, he is clarifying why Socrates' must meet the terms of Glaucon's challenge and praise justice solely based on its powers in the soul, without reference to its social consequences. However, if Adeimantus only adds additional clarity to Glaucon's challenge, then it is unclear why Adeimantus claims that Glaucon has left out an essential point. Perhaps Adeimantus is simply mistaken. After all, if Adeimantus is the less philosophical brother, then it is not so surprising that he misrepresents the importance of his speech—or so the story goes.

In this paper, I challenge the standard dismissal of Adeimantus' argument, including the conventional perspectives that he articulates in his speech. Instead, I will show that Adeimantus introduces two novel claims—claims that emerge precisely because he voices the conventional praises of justice. Specifically, I attribute the following claims to Adeimantus. One, even people who accept the conventional view that justice is a virtue may still prefer injustice. Two, different reasons for preferring injustice result in differing degrees of injustice. Specifically, someone who chooses to live unjustly despite accepting the conventional belief that justice is a virtue will pursue injustice to a lesser degree than someone who chooses injustice because they believe injustice is a virtue.

¹³ C.D.C. Reeve takes this view, for example. He characterizes Adeimantus' argument as listing conventional praises of justice and repeating Glaucon's (and Thrasymachus') challenge (Reeve 2008, 83). Nikolas Pappas makes a similar argument, noting that 'Adeimantus focuses on existing society' rather than considering the origins of justice (Pappas 2013, 77). Annas characterizes Adeimantus as '[pointing out that parents and teachers, people who nominally side with justice, still recommend it not for itself but for its rewards, and that this is true of religious teachers also; they say that while the gods do not positively approve of injustice, none the less they can be bought off' (Annas 1981, 65).

I begin by identifying key differences between the brothers' arguments, which signal that Glaucon treats injustice as a virtue while Adeimantus assumes that justice is a virtue. As both brothers conclude that the unjust life is preferable to the just life, Adeimantus' argument uniquely illustrates that even people who accept justice as a virtue may still believe that injustice promotes greater happiness. In the next section, I argue that someone who chooses to live unjustly, despite believing that justice is a virtue, will pursue injustice to a lesser degree than someone who believes that injustice is a virtue. Whether or not someone believes that injustice is a virtue will influence her perception of how much injustice is desirable. If I am inclined to think of injustice as a vice, then I will likely suspect that there is something inherently bad about injustice, which would restrict the extent to which I will find injustice desirable.

In the final section, I take up a broader question—why is Adeimantus' argument significant? Generally, what is interesting about Glaucon and Adeimantus' speeches is that they specify how Socrates ought to defend justice. If Adeimantus' argument diverges substantially from Glaucon's, then it may be the case that Adeimantus is making a challenge to Socrates that is distinct from Glaucon. If Glaucon and Adeimantus' challenges to Socrates are at variance, then this may have repercussions for how scholars ought to evaluate Socrates' success in the *Republic*. My response to the broader question and the issues it raises is twofold. First, I argue that Adeimantus expands Socrates' task in the *Republic*. Glaucon demonstrates that Socrates needs to compare a just life to an extremely unjust life, and Adeimantus expands Socrates task to include comparisons between the just life and lesser degrees of injustice. Second, I argue my interpretation of Adeimantus' challenge to Socrates contributes to a better understanding of the *Republic* as a whole. Specifically, I discuss how my interpretation reveals an unappreciated link between Adeimantus'

challenge in Book 2 and Socrates delineation of four progressive degrees of injustice in Books 8 and 9.

Glaucon and Adeimantus praise injustice

In this section, I turn to the details of the brothers' arguments.¹⁴ While both Glaucon and Adeimantus conclude that the unjust life is happier than the just life, I argue that they arrive at that conclusion via different assumptions. Namely, Glaucon concludes that the unjust life is happier by treating injustice as a virtue. Adeimantus, on the other hand, reaches the same conclusion despite accepting that justice is a virtue. As a result, Adeimantus demonstrates that even people who accept justice as a virtue may still judge that injustice is preferable to justice. I point to four differences between Glaucon and Adeimantus' arguments which demonstrate this divergence.¹⁵

¹⁴ To better underscore the extent to which the differences between Glaucon and Adeimantus' speeches are ignored, it's useful to consider how frequently commentators contrast Glaucon and Adeimantus' speeches with Thrasymachus' defense of injustice. Roslyn Weiss argues 'here are significant—and striking—differences between the argument Glaucon and Adeimantus are prepared to advance in defense of injustice and the earlier case Thrasymachus had made' and goes on to helpfully outline several subtle but important peculiarities of Thrasymachus speech (Weiss 2022, 86). Melissa Lane more simply points out that '[Glaucon and Adeimantus] contend that most people hold justice to be necessary for the good reputation that it brings...but do not value it as good in itself. This is not as extreme as Thrasymachus' view' (Lane 2007, xxi). Nickolas Pappas describes the brothers as elaborating on Thrasymachus' view, as does C.D.C. Reeve (Pappas 2013, 71 and Reeve 2008, 86). I point how frequently the brothers are compared to Thrasymachus to indicate 1) how frequently they are treated as a unit and 2) how frequently they are contrasted with Thrasymachus yet not contrasted with each other.

¹⁵ The four differences I will describe between Glaucon and Adeimantus' speeches are distinct from the differences most observed in the secondary literature. Commentators typically only note that Adeimantus' includes conventional praises of justice, which Glaucon does not discuss. For example, Roslyn Weiss comments Adeimantus '[supplements] his brother's argument' by pointing out 'those who exhort justice actually praise seeming just over being just (Weiss 2022, 103). Iakovos Vasiliou claims that 'what Adeimantus' argument emphasizes... is that the good consequences of being just are the same consequences as seeming just. Therefore, as Glaucon has already argued, if one does not seem just but only is just, there will be no good consequences' (Vasiliou 2008, 209). And Andrew Payne remarks that 'Adeimantus takes conventional views about justice and injustice to task for tacitly praising the possession of those goods (wealth, power, pleasure, honor) which can be gained unjustly and which the just person can miss out on without failing to be just' (Payne 2011, 73).

On to the first difference. Glaucon praises injustice as a natural good and discounts justice as good merely by convention. Glaucon makes this point clearly, claiming that ‘to do injustice is naturally good’ and ‘[the desire to do better] is what every nature naturally pursues as good but by law and force, it is made to deviate from this path’ (358d, 359c). Glaucon’s point is that injustice, not justice, is naturally beneficial to humans, whereas justice is only good by law and convention. In other words, injustice—not justice—is a good according to human nature. Similarly, Glaucon claims that ‘all men think that injustice is far more profitable to themselves than is justice, and what they believe is true’ (360d). According to this perspective, injustice is more profitable for all people. If injustice is truly better for *all* people, then it must be the case that injustice is good for humans by nature rather than convention, given the diversity of human social and moral conventions. Later, Glaucon repeats this point, noting that the unjust man ‘bases his practice on the truth about things and does not allow reputation to regulate his life’ (362a). Again, the point seems to be that the person who lives unjustly is following nature, whereas the just person lives according to convention.

Throughout Adeimantus’ speech, he never denies that injustice is a natural good, but the praise he offers injustice is noticeably weaker than Glaucon’s praise. Adeimantus argues that ‘unjust deeds are, for the most part, more profitable than just ones,’ which is appreciably weaker

An additional difference that is sometimes mentioned in the secondary literature is that Adeimantus is more concerned with the gods. A recent example of this observation comes from Merrick Anderson who claims that Adeimantus clarifies Glaucon’s argument when he ‘imposes’ the requirement that Socrates show that justice is good and injustice is bad, ‘whether or not one escapes the notice of gods and humans’ (Anderson 2020, 8).

Lastly, scholars sometimes suggest that Adeimantus, in comparison to Glaucon, more clearly articulates that he wants Socrates to explain what justice and injustice are in the soul and how the former promotes more happiness than the latter. For example, C. D. C. Reeve writes that ‘what Adeimantus does not want is a proof that justice is superior... What he wants it seems is something more like an explanation of how something can be superior given Thrasymachus’ argument’ (Reeve 2008, 77). Rachel Barney similarly emphasizes that Adeimantus insists that Socrates must provide not just an account of what justice is but also a ‘vivid and convincing’ account of how justice promotes happiness (Barney 2006, 58). Terence Irwin and Roslyn Weiss make similar points as well (Irwin 1999, 176 and Weiss 2007, 106).

than the claim that injustice is a natural good (364a). Additionally, in the arguments Adeimantus presents, there is an acknowledgement that justice is a genuine good in some sense. While he praises injustice for being profitable, Adeimantus also acknowledges that justice is genuinely a fine thing and that just people are better than the unjust (364a, 364b). If justice is truly a fine thing, then justice is not merely (and falsely) valuable by convention, as Glaucon holds.

The second difference between Glaucon and Adeimantus' arguments is closely related to my first point. Glaucon claims that human nature is the primary determinant which directs people to embrace injustice. As Glaucon maintains that injustice is a good according to human nature, it makes sense that he further identifies human nature as the chief factor driving people to injustice. Glaucon demonstrates this point in his introduction to the Myth of Gyges, saying, 'suppose we grant to the just and the unjust person the freedom to do whatever they like... we will catch the just person red-handed, travelling the same road as the unjust one. *The reason for this is the desire to do better. This is what every nature naturally pursues...* (359c). I take Glaucon's point to be that people incline towards injustice primarily because that is what human nature directs people to do. Similarly, Glaucon argues that no one is just willingly (360b). Again, this aligns with Glaucon's treatment of justice as merely good according to law and convention. If justice is not naturally desirable to people, then there must be some external force or compulsion to motivate people to be just.

Adeimantus disagrees that human nature serves as the principle explanatory factor for why people embrace injustice. Rather, he argues that people choose injustice primarily because they have been persuaded by arguments that injustice is better than justice. I take this as confirmation that Adeimantus—unlike Glaucon—does not treat injustice as a natural good.¹⁶ Accordingly,

¹⁶ Nickolas Pappas correctly notes that Glaucon imagines the origins of justice while Adeimantus 'focuses on existing society' (Pappas 2013, 77). However, he fails to appreciate that Glaucon must imagine the origins of justice

Adeimantus argues that people choose injustice primarily because of external influences. He claims that people will choose to do injustice because that is ‘what people say,’ what the wise claim, and ‘where the tracks of the argument lead’ (365b, c, d). Adeimantus states this point even more strongly at the end of his speech, arguing that the choice to be unjust ‘has no other cause than’ the inadequacy of arguments praising justice and blaming injustice (366d). According to Adeimantus, persuasive speeches and poor education are the only reason people choose to be unjust. If this is the case, then Adeimantus must deny that people desire to do injustice by nature or that injustice is a natural good.¹⁷

The brothers also disagree about the powers of injustice, specifically the connection between injustice and a false reputation for justice. Glaucon, in his speech, names the ability to maintain a façade of justice as a power of injustice. He says, ‘if [someone] is to be completely unjust, let the unjust person correctly attempt unjust acts and remain undetected...for the extreme of injustice is to be believed to be just without actually being so’ (361a). That is, Glaucon identifies complete injustice as injustice paired with a false reputation for justice. But Glaucon is not just stipulating that someone who is unjust with a false reputation for justice is more completely unjust than someone who lacks such a false reputation. Glaucon makes this clear when he claims that an unjust person knows how to maintain a false reputation ‘in the same way’ that any clever craftsman knows how to practice her own craft (360e). If an unjust person can

because he treats justice as unnatural. Adeimantus, on the other hand, denies that injustice is a natural good, and so he focuses on explaining the origins of injustice—rhetoric and convention. Instead, Pappas suggests that because Adeimantus is ‘the more pedestrian brother, he lacks Glaucon’s capacity to imagine the origins of justice in a time before all human societies’ (77).

¹⁷ Several commentators have noticed that Glaucon treats injustice as naturally desirable, yet I know of no one who has observed that Adeimantus treats injustice as the product of rhetoric and education. C.D.C. Reeve, for instance, emphasizes that Glaucon treats injustice as having natural origins, and Glaucon treats human nature as naturally pleonectic (Reeve 2008, 81–2). Yet, he does not remark that Adeimantus treats education as the source of injustice.

uphold a false reputation in the same way that a craftsman has cultivated the skills of her trade, then Glaucon recognizes maintaining a false reputation as one of the skills or powers of injustice.

None of the arguments put forth by Adeimantus claim that maintaining a just reputation is a power of injustice.¹⁸ Adeimantus does acknowledge that justice and a just reputation are separable, as are injustice and an unjust reputation. For example, Adeimantus complains that poets and other private citizens are willing to honour unjust people in exchange for money and power, and, similarly, they are willing to disregard or discredit the just if they lack money or power (364a). Additionally, the poets claim that even the gods can be persuaded by wealth to honour and reward the unjust (364b–e). Adeimantus connects a just reputation to wealth, and he observes that wealth is a common consequence of injustice since unjust deeds are more profitable than just ones (364a). So, Adeimantus does acknowledge that it is possible and often easy for an unjust person to cultivate a just reputation. However, Adeimantus attaches injustice to a just reputation via wealth or power, whereas Glaucon makes a stronger claim and attaches a false reputation to injustice as a skill to its craft.

I take these three differences to demonstrate that there are divergent assumptions concerning human nature underlying the brothers' speeches. These differences imply that Adeimantus assumes justice is a virtue, while Glaucon treats injustice as a virtue. Generally, the idea is this: Virtues are the excellences of human nature, so they are naturally beneficial and desirable to humans. Glaucon treats injustice as naturally beneficial and desirable to humans, and, in doing so, he treats injustice as a virtue. Additionally, when Glaucon gives injustice the power to maintain a just reputation, he is assuming that someone who becomes more unjust also becomes

¹⁸ C.D.C. Reeve makes this same point, writing 'Adeimantus does not make the attachment of false reputations depend on what powers are definitional of perfect justice and injustice, as Glaucon does' (Reeve 2008, 77). Yet Reeve surmises that Adeimantus 'probably has much the same point in view' (77).

more skilled and stronger, i.e., more virtuous. Adeimantus, on the other hand, acknowledges that injustice is desirable and beneficial. However, he does not go so far as to argue that it is a good *according to human nature*. Nor does he attribute powers to injustice, such as the power to maintain a just reputation. Despite their divergent treatment of human nature, both Glaucon and Adeimantus conclude that the unjust life is happier than the just life. As such, Adeimantus' argument, in contrast to Glaucon's, demonstrates that even people who treat justice as a virtue may still conclude that the unjust life is happiest.

The last difference between the brothers' speeches demonstrates most clearly that Adeimantus treats justice as a virtue, while Glaucon does not. Throughout his argument, Adeimantus uses 'virtue' and 'goodness' as synonymous with 'justice' and 'evil' as synonymous with 'injustice' (363b, 363c, 364b, 364c, 364d, 365a).¹⁹ Glaucon never equivocates between these terms. This feature is especially conspicuous when Adeimantus reports a conversation between young people who are trying to decide whether to live justly or pursue injustice. Early in their conversation, they conclude that the unjust person who maintains a just reputation lives well, and, in the following line, they use that as evidence that they should seek to create an 'illusionist painting of virtue' around themselves (365c). Soon after, they similarly conflate injustice and evil, wondering, 'surely...it is not easy for evil to remain always hidden' (365c). Even though these young people take it for granted that justice is a virtue, they still ultimately decide that injustice will contribute more to their happiness than justice (366b). As such, Adeimantus' argument demonstrates that even people who accept that justice is a virtue may still prefer injustice.

Different degrees of injustice

¹⁹ I owe this point to Michael Stokes. As far as I can tell, the observation originates with Kent Moors, although he does not attach the same significance as Michael Stokes and I do. See Moors 1981 and Stokes 1987.

In the preceding section I argued that Glaucon articulates the perspective of someone who that injustice as a virtue. This is a radical position. Adeimantus, like Glaucon, praises injustice, but he does not inhabit such an extreme perspective. The view that Adeimantus voices aligns more closely with conventional moral norms—such as the recognition of justice as a virtue. Indeed, Adeimantus’ praise of injustice stems from conventional arguments in favour of justice. He simply points out that justice is a moral norm that lacks a satisfactory justification from the typical authorities. I want to now propose that Glaucon’s radical praise of injustice recommends a similarly extreme degree of injustice. Glaucon’s argument implies that I should aim to be as unjust as possible, akin to a tyrant. Adeimantus’ conventional perspective does not lend itself to this conclusion. Rather, it recommends that I should be as unjust as possible within conventional grounds. Ultimately, Glaucon and Adeimantus’ arguments identify and recommend different degrees of injustice.²⁰ These differences illustrate that different beliefs about injustice or reasons for inclining to injustice will result in different degrees of injustice.

Unambiguously, Glaucon intends to delineate and endorse a profoundly radical degree of injustice. He lauds the life of the completely unjust man (361a). Considering his linguistic choice, Glaucon almost surely intends for the completely unjust man to epitomize the greatest degree of injustice. This point becomes more explicit when Glaucon explains that he has chosen to describe a completely unjust man because he wants Socrates to ‘contrast the extremes of justice and injustice’ (360e). It seems evident that Glaucon intends to portray an extreme form of injustice. I

²⁰ As far as I can tell, no one has ever suggested that Adeimantus defends a different degree of injustice. I take it that this is the case because no one considers there to be significant philosophical differences between the speeches. Adeimantus either clarifies or supplements. Even Michael Stokes who correctly notes that Adeimantus speaks of justice as a virtue does not suggest that Glaucon and Adeimantus’ speeches recommend different degrees of injustice. Rather, he seems to treat Adeimantus’ equation of justice and virtue as a literary device; he suggests that Plato uses Adeimantus’ speech to let Socrates off the hook by sneaking into the argument the assumption that justice is a virtue (Stokes 1987, 86).

think it also follows that Glaucon endorses this way of life as the best life. If an accurate assessment of justice can only emerge through a comparison to extreme injustice, then that implies that extreme injustice is most desirable and, therefore, the most meaningful point of reference for evaluating justice.

But what exactly is *extreme* or *complete* about the injustice of the completely unjust man? Glaucon explains that the completely unjust person is someone who combines injustice with a false reputation for justice, for ‘the extreme of injustice is to be believed to be just without actually being so’ (361a). I presume this makes his injustice complete because reputation typically serves as a limit on how unjust someone can be before their injustice brings about negative social consequences. The completely unjust man, in contrast, need not restrain his injustice for fear of social consequences because of his power to always maintain a just reputation. Glaucon also describes a second unjust character who meets the criteria for extreme injustice: Gyges. Glaucon recounts the story of a shepherd named Gyges who discovers a ring that gives him the power to become invisible. Prior to discovering the ring, Gyges had lived a seemingly just life in service to his king (359d). His justice turns out to be superficial, however. As soon as Gyges realizes his new powers, he uses the ring to kill the king and take over the kingdom (360a–b). Like the completely unjust man, Gyges does not find himself compelled to restrict his injustice out of fear of cultivating a bad reputation. His power of invisibility means that he can perpetually avoid the social repercussions of his action. Consequently, Gyges, like the completely unjust man, combines injustice with a false reputation for justice, so I take it that Glaucon intends for both Gyges and the completely unjust man to personify the greatest degree of injustice.

Beyond combining injustice with a false reputation, I argue there is also a second rationale for why Gyges and the completely unjust man epitomize the greatest degree of injustice. When

Glaucon speaks of Gyges and the completely unjust man, he seems to treat them as aiming to become tyrants (359b, 362b).²¹ For example, Gyges, upon discovering his ring's powers, immediately kills the current ruler and takes control of the kingdom (360b). Later, describing the completely unjust person, Glaucon claims that he will be happy because he rules his city (362b). While Glaucon does not explicitly mention tyranny (τυραννίς), as Thrasymachus does, both Gyges and the perfectly unjust man attain rule through force or fraud, and they seem to rule for the own benefit alone. A rule like that is properly called tyranny.

It makes sense for Glaucon to represent extreme injustice with tyranny. In the *Republic*, both Glaucon and Thrasymachus have identified injustice with the desire to do better (344a, 349c, 359c, 362b) and with trespassing law and convention (344a–b, 359c, 360b–c).²² Tyranny is the extreme outcome of both the desire to do better and trespassing law and convention.²³ A tyrant appropriates a city's power and wealth to herself alone, so she does better than everyone else. Moreover, a tyrant does not merely break the law—she overthrows the existing political and social order and is no longer subject to the laws.²⁴ As such, I suggest that tyranny represents the extreme of injustice because it is the extreme of the two key identifying features of injustice—the desire to outdo others and to trespass law and convention.

From a slightly different perspective, the tyrant represents extreme injustice because he surpasses two of the typical limits on injustice. One obvious limit on injustice is the law. Glaucon

²¹ While Glaucon does not explicitly mention tyranny (τυραννίς), as Thrasymachus does, both Gyges and the perfectly unjust man attain rule through force or fraud, and they rule for the own benefit alone. A rule like that is properly called tyranny.

²² Plato also treats tyrants as an example of extreme injustice and unhappiness in the *Gorgias* 466a–468e.

²³ I use the phrase 'law and convention' to capture both senses of νόμος.

²⁴ While I choose to use female pronouns to refer to the tyrannical character, it is unclear that Plato considers it possible for women to be tyrants. Plato characterizes unjust cities partly by their enforcement of strict gender roles, which disallow education to women. Plato argues that it is the bad education in unjust cities which creates tyrants, so, if women are not educated in unjust cities, then perhaps they cannot be tyrants.

describes law as forcing humans to turn away from injustice and practice justice instead (359c). As a result, anyone who lives by the law will be limited in how much injustice they could practice. A tyrant is not limited by the law, since they have power over the law, which means that they can practice injustice to a greater degree. Glaucon also identifies working with others as a restriction on injustice. He observes that someone ‘who is truly a man...would not make an agreement with anyone, neither to do injustice nor to suffer it...for him that would be insanity’ (359b). Glaucon’s point is that agreements with others serve as constraints on the scope of injustice. Anyone who possess the power to work alone should opt to do so to maximize their injustice so maximize the rewards they will accrue from their injustice. The tyrant, by definition, works alone and solely for personal gain, so his injustice is not limited in this way either. Glaucon is not clear about the mechanisms through which these agreements curtail injustice. Presumably, any agreement about committing or avoiding injustice would involve some constraints on an individual’s conduct, just as the law constrains individual behaviour. The law itself, in some ways, is an agreement with others about justice and injustice, so we can see the connection between the limits on injustice which Glaucon articulates.

I have pointed out that Glaucon describes and promotes an extreme degree of injustice, which follows from his radical treatment of injustice as a virtue. Adeimantus, on the other hand, espouses a markedly more conventional praise of justice as he adheres to the conventional belief that justice is a virtue. I argue that Adeimantus also describes a more conventional, restricted degree of injustice, consistent with his conventional praise of justice. I think this can be best observed by analyzing the unjust characters that Adeimantus describes. As I mentioned earlier, he recounts a dialogue among young people who are deliberating about whether to live justly or unjustly. During this interlude, Adeimantus does not explicitly refer to degrees of injustice; he

does not call the young people completely or incompletely unjust. However, these young people do not seem to be interested in eliminating all restrictions on their injustice—as Glaucon thinks the completely unjust person would. There is no suggestion in Adeimantus’ argument of the revolutionary, extreme injustice that Glaucon’s argument delineates.

For one, these young people plan to work together. The young people plan to form secret societies and political clubs and their plans are always stated in the first-person plural (365d, 365c–366b). Similarly, the decision to pursue injustice is itself a social decision. Adeimantus describes a conversation between at least two youths helping each other figure out how to live in the future (365b–366b). They approach the decision about how to live by collaborating with other people, rather than via isolated, individual calculation. This collaborative style is in direct contradiction to Glaucon’s claim that an unjust person would be insane to make an agreement with anyone—even an agreement to do injustice together (359b). And because they plan to work with others, they cannot aim to become tyrants or to outdo literally everyone else.

Additionally, the discourse among the young people conspicuously lacks clear references to lawbreaking. They decide to form secret political clubs, aspire to be ‘clever in dealing with assemblies,’ and aim ‘to do better than other people’ (365d). Yet, they do not specifically mention any illegal practices, such as taking other people’s property. This is not the case in Glaucon’s description of injustice. He identifies injustice with many illegal actions (360b–d). I want to clarify that I am not attempting to assert that the young individuals depicted by Adeimantus would never transgress the bounds of the law. Rather, my aim is to emphasize that there are clear markers of extreme injustice in Glaucon’s speech. One such indicator is his persistent reference to transgressing the law. This marker is conspicuously absent from Adeimantus’ speech, implying that Adeimantus does not share Glaucon’s interest in revolutionary, extreme injustice.

There is another aspect of the youths that Adeimantus reports on which suggests their injustice is curtailed in a way that the completely unjust man would not allow. These young people decide to be unjust because that is ‘what both the masses and the eminent claim’ (366b). Even though they decide to live unjustly, they justify their decision by reference to conventional moral authorities (365d). They also cite religious authorities in their decision to pursue injustice (365d–e). If these individuals are sensitive to the conventional sources of moral wisdom and are concerned with prevailing opinion, then it is likely that their decision to be unjust is not an outright rejection of the moral conventions of their society. They are stretching and adapting moral conventions to serve their own ends, but this is not the same as wholesale, radical abandonment. Since these young people are not altogether discarding the moral norms of their society, their injustice will be subject to more limitations than someone who is willing to entirely reject conventional moral beliefs. Essentially, my point is that willingness to transgress convention (as well as law) is one of the means necessary to tyranny and to outdoing everyone. The completely unjust man could never be characterized as following ‘what the masses and the eminent claim’ because that would curtail his injustice.

At this point, I want to acknowledge a readily apparent objection to my suggestion that Adeimantus depicts a lesser degree of injustice. While discussing the typical views of young people, Adeimantus remarks that no one should be surprised when young people turn to the greatest injustice (μεγίστης ἀδικίας), given the sorts of things commonly said about justice and injustice (366b). Since Adeimantus specifically speaks of the greatest injustice, it does not make sense to claim that he is interested in a lesser degree. I have two responses to this objection. One, it is not necessarily the case that Adeimantus uses the phrase to mean the greatest *degree* of injustice. Two, even if Adeimantus uses the phrase to denote the greatest degree of injustice, he

and Glaucon do not treat injustice equivalently. Adeimantus treats justice as a virtue and injustice as a vice, while Glaucon treats injustice as a virtue. These different treatments of justice imply different conceptions of the greatest degree of injustice.

The phrase ‘greatest injustice’ originates with Glaucon’s comparison of the completely just and unjust people (361a).²⁵ The key characteristic of Glaucon’s completely unjust person is that she achieves injustice alongside a false reputation for justice. I say that this is the key characteristic because Adeimantus praises Glaucon for separating justice from its reputation and agrees that Socrates should not take reputation into account (367b–c). As such, I think it is likely that when Adeimantus uses the phrase ‘greatest injustice’ he means injustice paired with a false reputation for justice. The context of Adeimantus’ use of the phrase also supports this interpretation. In his next sentence, Adeimantus speaks explicitly of injustice combined with a false reputation (366b),²⁶ so it seems that he is treating the two phrases interchangeably. At any rate, it is clear that Adeimantus uses the phrase to designate injustice paired with a just reputation, but it is not clear if he also uses it to mean the greatest degree of injustice.

For Glaucon, the degree of injustice is closely related to maintaining a false reputation. Glaucon treats injustice as a virtue, and so he treats the virtuously unjust person as having many powers or skills, one of which is the power to keep her injustice hidden (361a–b). On the contrary, failing to maintain a just reputation is a sign of incomplete or incompetent injustice (361a). Glaucon does not consider that someone might combine conservative injustice with a false reputation for justice. From Glaucon’s perspective, injustice is a natural good so there is no reason to pursue it to a lesser degree, and if someone did pursue limited injustice, then she would

²⁵ Both ‘greatest’ and ‘complete’ are translations of superlative forms of μέγας.

²⁶ The phrase is: ἤν ἐάν μετ’ εὐσχημοσύνης κιβδήλου κτησώμεθα (if we combine this [injustice] with false respectability...).

not fully develop the skills of injustice, like maintaining a false reputation. However, from Adeimantus' perspective, the degree of injustice is not related to maintaining a false reputation. Injustice is not treated as a virtue, and maintaining a false reputation is treated as a separate skill from doing injustice. Adeimantus may use the phrase 'greatest injustice' to refer to both a degree of injustice and the combination of injustice and a just reputation, but, since the two are separable from Adeimantus' perspective, he does not necessarily mean both.

Now for a more theoretical point. Given that Adeimantus does not treat injustice as a virtue, I do not think he can use the phrase 'greatest injustice' to mean the same thing as Glaucon. Even if he uses it to denote the greatest degree of injustice, what that means will depend on whether injustice is considered a virtue or not. If injustice is a virtue, then injustice is the kind of thing that can be cultivated and perfected. This implies that degrees of injustice represent degrees of mastery as well as degrees of character. If increasing injustice implies increasing mastery, then the greatest degree of injustice *possible* is greater than what it would be if injustice was not a virtue. Additionally, if injustice is a virtue, then that implies that more injustice is better than less. As such, the degree of injustice *desirable* is greater if injustice is a virtue. Whatever Adeimantus means by 'greatest injustice,' he does not mean the same thing as Glaucon because Adeimantus and Glaucon differ on key background assumptions.

This argument also applies to the young people Adeimantus discusses. They too regard justice as a virtue, interchanging 'justice' with 'virtue' and 'injustice' with 'evil' (365b–c). Since they have different assumptions about justice and injustice compared to Glaucon's completely unjust man, their conception of the greatest degree of injustice will naturally differ. This contrast is further substantiated by their articulation of the injustice they aspire to: they plan to work together, make no mention of violating the law, and justify their injustice by reference to

conventional sources of moral norms. While the completely unjust man pursues a radical and extreme form of injustice, these individuals are better characterized as preferring the greatest degree of injustice they can get away with within conventional grounds.

Comparing justice to injustice

Thus far, I have tried to demonstrate that Adeimantus' argument introduces two significant positions. One, even people who accept that justice is a virtue may still prefer an unjust life. Two, such people will pursue injustice to a lesser degree than someone who believes injustice is a virtue. In this section, I turn to the broader question of why Adeimantus' argument is significant, particularly in ways that get overlooked when we treat Adeimantus' argument simply as an extension of Glaucon's. I focus primarily on why it is important that Adeimantus describes people who aspire to a lesser degree of injustice.

Generally, Adeimantus' claim that some people will be tempted by a lesser degree of injustice matters because Glaucon and Adeimantus have asked Socrates to defend justice *comparatively*. Glaucon asks Socrates to demonstrate that justice is better than injustice, and he wants Socrates to contrast justice and injustice (357a, 360e). Similarly, Adeimantus also asks Socrates to demonstrate that justice is better than injustice (366e). To meet these challenges, Socrates must compare the just life to an unjust one. Glaucon clearly thinks that the most helpful comparison will be between the just person and someone who is extremely unjust. He observes that 'if we contrast the extremes of justice and injustice, we shall be able to make the decision correctly; but if we don't, we won't' (360e). As I have been trying to point out, Glaucon's conception of an extremely unjust person is someone who believes that injustice is a natural good and pursues injustice to the extreme of tyranny.

Adeimantus agrees with Glaucon that there should be a comparison, but he demonstrates that a comparison between the just life and a lesser degree of injustice is also important. A comparison between justice and the extremely unjust life, as Glaucon describes it, leaves out the views of people who have listened to conventional opinions about justice and injustice and assume that justice is a virtue. While those people are tempted to live unjustly, they are not tempted to become tyrants, so a comparison solely between justice and tyranny does not represent their concerns.

If Adeimantus is reporting the views of young people who aspire to a lesser degree of injustice than Glaucon's perfectly unjust man, does that imply that he is making a different challenge to Socrates than Glaucon is? Does Adeimantus' argument demonstrate that a comparison between perfect justice and perfect injustice would be an insufficient defence of justice? These are tricky questions. Not least because it has proven so difficult to identify exactly what Glaucon's challenge to Socrates amounts to.²⁷ I take Glaucon's comparison between perfect justice and perfect injustice to be the strongest statement of his challenge. In that comparison, Glaucon describes the perfectly just person as someone who appears unjust, despite being just (361b). As a result of their unjust reputation, the perfectly just person suffers enormously (361e). Glaucon's comparison of perfect justice to perfect injustice challenges Socrates to demonstrate that the just life is preferable to the unjust life, even when the just life is paired with all manner of extreme suffering. In the language of Terence Irwin, Glaucon is

²⁷ There has been substantial debate about what exactly Glaucon's challenge amounts to. Some scholars contend that Glaucon is asking Socrates to prove that justice is a good that is desirable both for itself and for its consequences. In Glaucon's division of goods, this would amount to justice being a type two good. Others, however, have argued that Socrates must show that justice is sufficient for happiness. Roslyn Weiss has recently argued for the unconventional view that Glaucon and Adeimantus task Socrates with showing that justice is valuable for its consequences—a type one good on Glaucon's division (Weiss 2022, 83–4).

challenging Socrates to show that justice is a *dominant* component of happiness.²⁸ If justice is dominant in happiness, then a just person will be happier than an unjust person, even if the unjust person acquires all other goods while the just person lacks any good other than justice. Under this interpretation of Glaucon's challenge, I do not think that Adeimantus' argument demonstrates that a comparison between perfect injustice and perfect justice would be insufficient defence of justice. If Socrates can show that justice is dominant in happiness, then that implies that the just person is happier than any degree of injustice. Sacrificing any amount of justice in exchange for other goods cannot increase my happiness.

However, it seems to me that Socrates does not need to compare justice and injustice at all. Why is a comparison necessary to demonstrate that justice is dominant in happiness? I am thinking, for example, of other goods akin to justice, like wisdom or health. Wisdom and health, like justice, are some of the greatest goods a soul can have. Once I know what health is and how it is necessary for happiness, it does not seem like I also need someone to explain why ill health is undesirable. If Socrates can show that justice is so great a good that it is dominant in happiness—something that everyone, even people with power and privilege, must cultivate for happiness—then it follows that an unjust life must be worse, even without Socrates specifically comparing justice to injustice.²⁹

²⁸ Irwin 1999, 176

²⁹ I have suggested that Socrates does not need to compare justice to injustice in order to argue that justice is a necessary part of happiness. However, there may be a good reason that Glaucon and Adeimantus specifically compare justice to injustice in their speeches. C.D.C. Reeve and Terence Irwin have both argued that Glaucon and Adeimantus ask Socrates to demonstrate that the just life is happier than the unjust life because such a demonstration does not require that someone who is just is always happy (Reeve 2008, 75; Irwin 1999, 178). As a result, the comparative claim—that the just life is happier than the unjust life—is easier to defend than a sufficiency thesis—that justice is sufficient for happiness. The comparative thesis is easier to defend because it acknowledges that not all just people will live well. For example, it is hard to imagine that the perfectly just person, as described by Glaucon, could be happy. This is no problem if Socrates' task is only to show that he is happier than the perfectly unjust man, for one person can be happier than another even if neither is entirely happy.

As such, I think the takeaway from Adeimantus' speech is this: if there is going to be a comparison between just and unjust lives, then the comparison should not only be between justice and the greatest degree of injustice, i.e. tyranny. Adeimantus *expands* Socrates' task to include a comparison between justice and incomplete injustice, which means that Socrates' defence of justice will encompass the views of a broader range of people. However, I do not claim that Adeimantus demonstrates that Glaucon's challenge to Socrates is insufficient to demonstrate that the just life is the eudaimon life. Nor do I think that Adeimantus should be understood as asking for a different defence of justice from Socrates, for they both ask Socrates to show that justice is dominant in happiness.³⁰

Even if a comparison is not strictly necessary, I think the brothers are right that comparing justice to injustice is a useful way to demonstrate the value of justice in happiness, and Adeimantus is right to argue that a comparison to multiple degrees of injustice is especially useful. In general, I want to suggest that comparing the just life to different sorts of unjust lives may prefigure some common objections to Socrates' defence of justice. I will start with Glaucon's example of the completely unjust person. If Socrates is going to demonstrate that the just life is always preferable to the unjust, then he will have to consider the objection that justice is only superior to injustice in the case of weak or limited injustice. Thrasymachus makes such an argument, claiming that injustice is superior to justice so long as injustice is practiced by a powerful enough person and achieved on a large enough scale (343e, 344c). This is a tricky objection to deal with because the objector can always accuse Socrates of underestimating the

³⁰ Adeimantus indicates that Socrates should demonstrate that justice is dominant in happiness when he asks that Socrates argue 'injustice is the greatest evil a soul can have in it, and justice the greatest good' (366e). Next, he adds that if Socrates can do this then everyone would fear doing injustice (367a). If everyone would fear doing injustice, then that implies justice contributes more to happiness than any other combination of goods that I might get through injustice. On this point I agree with Terence Irwin (Irwin 1999, 177).

rewards of injustice by failing to take seriously how powerful injustice can be. Glaucon seems to be evoking such an objection when he describes the completely unjust man. He may hope that by giving such great powers and accomplishments to the unjust life that he can avoid this objection, since accomplishments and powers are what Thrasymachus uses to characterize the sort of injustice that is superior to justice.

Glaucon assumes that the only reason Socrates needs to prove that justice is a dominant component of happiness is to ward off the objection that an unjust person of great power who practices injustice without any rt will reap the greatest rewards and live the happiest life. He is certainly right that this objection is powerful. However, Adeimantus rightly interjects that there is another powerful objection that Socrates must defend the just life against—an objection that is likely to appeal to a broader range of people. Namely, the possibility that someone might think an incompletely unjust life is best.³¹ Someone who accepts justice as a virtue and injustice as a vice might have such a view. If injustice is a vice, then there must be something bad about injustice, but someone who practices injustice within constraints will probably be able to avoid

³¹ Several commentators have suggested that this explanation underlies Socrates' analysis of multiple degrees of injustice. However, no one has suggested that thesis objection originates with Adeimantus. For example, Norbert Blössner and Terence Irwin credit Socrates with recognizing the need to review multiple unjust lives to Socrates. Blössner writes 'Socrates also brings four significant alternatives to the just life into view... were Socrates merely to demonstrate that it does not pay to become a tyrant, he would not yet have shown that there are no alternatives to justice at all that one should pursue' (Blössner 2007, 365). Similarly, Terence Irwin observes that 'Plato seeks to show... all the people with deviant souls are less well off than the person with a just soul' in order to definitely demonstrate that the just life is happier than any unjust life (Irwin 1995, 281).

Nickolas Pappas attributes Socrates' analysis of four degrees of injustice to Glaucon: 'Glaucon wanted Socrates to demonstrate, not merely that justice in the soul is worth possessing—not merely that it is profitable—but that one would rather possess justice in the soul than any other psychological arrangement: that justice is the most profitable of all conditions, that the just soul is the happiest of all possible souls' (Pappas 2013, 186). Pappas attributes this claim to Glaucon because he considers it a necessary premise that Socrates must demonstrate in order to fulfil Glaucon's challenge. While I agree that Socrates ought to demonstrate that the just life is happier than any degree of injustice, it is Adeimantus, not Glaucon or Socrates, who articulates this requirement.

the worst burdens of injustice. The incompletely unjust person will not reap rewards as great as a tyrant, but they can carefully choose opportunities to be unjust which maximize their rewards.

Moreover, if justice is a virtue, then that suggests there is something inherently good about justice, so it is likely in my benefit to be just most of the time. However, there could be select occasions when doing injustice will reap great rewards without compromising my overall habit of justice too much. For example, I am imagining the oligarchic character who generally practices justice and follows the law. However, Socrates points out that when the oligarch has opportunity to do injustice and get away with it, he is quick to do so—for instance, he is happy to steal or spend other people’s money when he gets the chance (554c, 554d).³²

Glaucon and Adeimantus identify two objections to Socrates’ thesis that the just life is the eudaimon life, both of which will require Socrates to demonstrate that justice is a dominant component of happiness. Glaucon argues that a skilled person who practices injustice without constraint could acquire for themselves immense rewards that will contribute more to happiness than justice ever could. Moreover, it is natural and inevitable that skilled injustice contributes more to happiness, since humans, by nature, seek injustice. Adeimantus, on the other hand, argues that a considerable number of people will be tempted by the objection that some synthesis of justice and constrained injustice will yield the greatest happiness. While justice is usually the best policy, I should remain on the lookout for any opportunities where a small sacrifice of justice may result in large gains elsewhere.

Lastly, I want to suggest that my interpretation of Adeimantus’ argument helps us make better sense of the Books 8 and 9. Adeimantus’ demonstration that different reasons for choosing injustice result in differing degrees of injustice prefigures Socrates’ analysis in Books 8 and 9. In

³² Another example that comes to mind are the honor-loving rulers of a timocracy who generally practice justice, but over time begin to steal more and more money from the state treasury to satisfy their own desires (550d).

those books, Socrates also argues that different reasons for choosing injustice result in different degrees of injustice, and he illustrates four different degrees of injustice. As far as I know, no one has suggested a connection between Adeimantus' speech and Socrates' description of varying degrees of injustice. The connection between Adeimantus' speech and Socrates' later discussion is undoubtedly an interesting dramatic element, but that is not all. More than that, Adeimantus' speech provides a reason for why Socrates compares justice to so many different forms of injustice.³³ If Socrates is going to describe unjust lives as part of his argument that the just life is always happier, then he should not only compare justice to the extreme of injustice. That comparison prefigures the objection of someone who believes that injustice is a virtue. Someone who has listened to the traditional praises of justice will not treat injustice as a virtue, so they probably will not be tempted to think that the extreme of injustice—tyranny—will be the happiest life. In light of this, Socrates will do well to compare justice to a variety of unjust lives.³⁴

What is the most important thing?

To conclude, I want to return to a question that I mentioned in my introduction. What is Adeimantus referring to when he claims that ‘the most important point has not been mentioned’ (362d)? I think that the right answer to this question is the obvious one: Adeimantus means that conventional praises of justice have not been mentioned. What I hope to have shown in this

³³ I do not mean to imply that Books 8 and 9 are superfluous. As the *Republic* is written, Books 8 and 9 provide significant, additional detail about why the rational part of the soul should rule the soul, that is, on why justice is dominant in happiness. However, it seems possible that Socrates could have proven that justice is dominant in happiness without comparing justice to injustice. At the behest of both Glaucon and Adeimantus, Socrates does compare justice to four degrees of injustice, and he uses Books 8 and 9 as an opportunity to elaborate on the power of justice in the soul. Thus, Books 8 and 9 serve an essential function in the *Republic*, but that function need not be served specifically by a comparison.

³⁴ An interesting literary detail that supports my suggestion: Adeimantus is Socrates' interlocutor throughout the discussion of the four unjust characters, until Socrates discusses the successful political tyrant. At that point, Glaucon becomes Socrates' interlocutor.

paper is that Adeimantus is right to claim that conventional views about justice and injustice are important. Someone who listens to the conventional accolades of justice may realize that justice—while genuinely good in some sense—is not as profitable as injustice. Nor do the traditional sources furnish sufficient rationale to recommend being just all the time. As such, they may conclude that the pursuit of perfect, absolute justice would be foolish. Rather, they would do well to be on the lookout for opportunities where they can get away with injustice while at the same time reaping significant advantage.

The mindset I have just described represents a substantial departure from the mindset of Glaucon's completely unjust man. Glaucon's speech delineates and champions a far more extreme and radical degree of injustice. The distinction between the injustice described by Glaucon and Adeimantus hinges on their alignment, or lack thereof, with conventional notions of justice and injustice. Adeimantus accepts the conventional view and treats justice as a virtue. Glaucon, on the other hand, rejects the established moral norms and instead defends the revolutionary thesis that injustice is a virtue.

When Glaucon omits the conventional views of justice, he focuses too narrowly on a comparison of perfect justice to extreme injustice, exemplified by tyranny. He leaves out the possibility that there are other forms of injustice that people may be tempted to believe are superior to both perfect justice and tyranny. By articulating the conventional praises of justice and the milder forms of injustice that such praise may rationalize, Adeimantus demonstrates the need for Socrates to establish that the just life is better and happier than a wide spectrum of unjust lives. As a result, Adeimantus expands Socrates' challenge in the *Republic*. And, as is well known, Socrates meets this challenge in Books 8 and 9 where he demonstrates the superiority of the just life over four different degrees of injustice.

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The Domain of Appetite

One of the central claims of the *Republic* is that the human soul is composed of three parts—reason, spirit, and appetite. In this chapter, my primary aim is to challenge a common interpretation of the appetitive part of the soul. I refer to this interpretation as the corporeal interpretation. According to it, all appetites are necessarily connected to the body—typically as physiological needs, bodily pleasures, or as means to the former. The interpretation of appetite is critical to the argument of the *Republic* because Socrates defines justice and injustice psychologically. That is, justice and injustice are explained in terms of the functioning of the soul. A just soul is one in which the three parts—reason, spirit, and appetite—perform their proper work. An unjust soul is one in which the parts of the soul fail to perform their proper work or try to do the work of another part. Appetite plays an especially prominent role in the unjust souls that Socrates describes in Books 8 and 9. In those books, the growth of appetite in the soul seems to mirror the growth of injustice: as the power of appetite increases, so does the degree of injustice. Three of the unjust characters also seem to have souls that are largely controlled by appetite—namely the oligarchic soul, the democratic soul, and the tyrannical soul. As a result, any interpretation of appetite, especially an interpretation that restricts the domain of appetite, will affect the interpretation of the unjust characters.

However, this connection is not always appreciated in the secondary literature. One of my goals in this chapter is to explicate the interconnections between interpretations of appetite and interpretations of the unjust souls. I focus on the interpretation of the democratic and tyrannical characters, for these are the characters whose interpretation is most affected by the interpretation of appetite. Generally, this is because the corporeal and noncorporeal interpretations of appetite diverge most concerning the interpretation of unnecessary appetites, which is a subclass of appetite

introduced in Book 8. The corporeal interpretation maintains that unnecessary appetites aim exclusively at bodily pleasures, while the noncorporeal interpretation allows a much broader range of desires to count as unnecessary appetites. Only the democrat and tyrant indulge their unnecessary appetites regularly, so they are most affected by this controversy.

Beyond explicating the connections between appetite and injustice, my other aim in this chapter is to argue against the corporeal interpretation. I hope to show that the evidence in favor of the corporeal interpretation is inconclusive and to provide additional, novel support for the noncorporeal interpretation. I will try to show that the domain of appetite (especially unnecessary appetites) is not so narrowly constricted to bodily needs and pleasures. While many appetites are connected to the body, some appetites aim at other sorts of pleasures, such as pleasures of the imagination. In arguing against the corporeal interpretation, I hope to make space for myself to interpret the tyrant in a way that is not restricted by the corporeal interpretation, which is what I plan to argue in the following chapter of this dissertation.

This chapter will proceed as follows. In the first section, I lay out the six interpretive positions that I will discuss throughout the course of this chapter. I will discuss two interpretations of appetite (the corporeal and noncorporeal interpretations), two interpretations of the democratic character (the appetitive and nonappetitive interpretations), and two interpretations of the tyrannical character (the hedonistic and nonhedonistic interpretations). In the first section, I also describe the interconnections between interpretations of appetite and interpretations of the unjust characters. Next, in the second section, I reconstruct the arguments for and against the corporeal interpretation of appetite. I focus primarily on John Cooper's argument against the corporeal interpretation and on Mark Johnstone's argument in favor of it.

In the third section, I explain how the corporeal interpretation of appetite requires that the

democratic and tyrannical characters be understood as largely hedonistic, and I suggest how the noncorporeal interpretation of appetite allows for alternative readings of those characters. In the fourth section, I advance some novel evidence in support of the noncorporeal interpretation of appetite. One, while many of Socrates' examples of appetites are clearly connected to the body, I will show that Socrates does not exclusively use examples that are obviously connected to the body, as the corporeal interpretation seems to assume. Two, I suggest that the corporeal interpretation of appetite does not make sense with Socrates' definitions of the subclasses of appetitive desires. Three, I offer some novel reasons to think that the corporeal interpretation fails to offer a satisfying explanation of either the democratic or tyrannical character.

Two Interpretations of Appetite

In the *Republic*, Plato theorizes that there are three parts of the human soul, and Socrates points to examples of mental conflict to demonstrate that the soul must have parts. That is, Socrates observes that humans often experience conflicting desires, such as a strong thirst for drink, yet, at the same time, genuinely desiring not to drink because the only drink available will cause more harm than good. According to Socrates, such examples of mental conflict demonstrate that the soul must have at least three parts. Socrates identifies the three parts of the soul as reason, spirit, and appetite.

The *Republic's* psychological theory is all important because Socrates' task, as established in Book 2, is to define and defend justice as a psychological condition. That is, Glaucon and Adeimantus, Socrates' interlocutors, challenge Socrates to identify what exactly justice is in the soul and to argue that justice, in the soul of someone who is just, contributes so greatly to human happiness that someone who is just is always happier than someone who is unjust. Socrates

identifies justice—along with the other virtues—as a psychological condition that arises from the interrelationships among reason, spirit, and appetite. A soul is just when each of the parts does always and only the work that it is suited to by its nature. Reason, in accordance with knowledge, rules the soul and determines what is overall best for the individual. Spirit allies itself with reason and uses pride and shame to motivate the individual to act in accord with what reason determines is best. Appetite, moderated by reason and spirit, motivates the individual towards goods needed both for survival and for pleasure. When the soul is organized in this way, the individual is just, and harmony among the three elements is produced. This harmony explains why justice contributes so greatly to human happiness.³⁵

Each part of the soul represents a distinct source of human motivation, or in other words, each part of the soul represents a distinct element of human nature. Generally, reason represents the rational nature of humans, spirit represents the social and political nature of humans, and appetite represents the parts of human nature concerned with superficial pleasures and physiological needs.³⁶ As a result, each part of the soul makes up part of human nature and has a unique role to play in the lives of individual humans. Plato usually speaks about the motivations contributed by each part of the soul in terms of the part desiring particular objects or general classes of objects. For example, Socrates speaks of appetite desiring money or of appetite hungering for food.

Socrates introduces a selection of different desires associated with each part of the soul. For example, reason desires to acquire knowledge *and* to rule the soul, spirit desires to accomplish the aims of reason *and* to acquire social status, and appetite desires pleasure *and* physiological

³⁵ Naturally, there exists substantial debate regarding the specific mechanisms through which psychological organization produces just behavior and regarding how exactly psychic harmony contributes so greatly to human happiness. However, the interrelationships of the three parts of the soul are outside the scope of this chapter.

³⁶ For a defense of this gloss, see Burnyeat 2002.

needs. Given that Socrates treats reason, spirit, and appetite as unified elements, there must be some unity underlying the selection of desires that Socrates attributes to the parts. For example, reason's desire to acquire knowledge and to rule the soul can be unified by appealing to the fact that reason must rule the soul to best acquire knowledge. Only if reason rules can it seek knowledge objectively, that is, without undue interference from the irrational desires of the other parts.³⁷ Unfortunately, Socrates does not ever explicitly delineate the principle of unity that explains the variety of desires he attributes to the different elements of the soul. Consequently, extensive discourse and disagreement has emerged regarding how to understand the underlying unity of each of the three parts of the soul.

In this chapter, I aim to understand the underlying unity of appetite. A prevailing interpretation of appetite suggests that all appetitive desires are unified by a connection to the body, either as physiological needs, bodily pleasures, or as means to either of the former.³⁸ I call this the *corporeal interpretation*. This interpretation is promising because Socrates consistently associates appetite with the body and with the aspects of human nature that arise from the fact that humans are animals. For example, included among the desires of the appetitive part are basic physiological desires for food, drink, and sex (519b, 559b, 580e). Additionally, Socrates also mentions a handful of other examples that are obviously physiological, such as the desire to be warm when cold (437e). The corporeal interpretation may find further support from other

³⁷ For a defense of this interpretation of the unity of rational desires see Cooper 1984 pp. 6-8.

³⁸ Mark Johnstone is probably the staunchest contemporary defender of the corporeal interpretation. See Johnstone 2013 and 2015. Johnstone puts the corporeal interpretation like this: "Plato consistently distinguishes appetitive desires as a class on the basis of their origin in the body and its pleasures and needs" (150). This corporeal interpretation has also been advanced by several other commentators. For example, Myles Burnyeat also defends a version of the corporeal interpretation, observing that "the appetitive part of Plato's divided soul houses desires and tendencies which we have because we are animal bodies programmed to survive" (8). Nicholas White makes a similar point: "we see once again that Plato is concerned with how human life is to be lived in the physical world as it is, with all of the difficulties engendered by "physical" needs and desires" (215). And Dominic Scott argues that "where the appetites are concerned, many of the examples given suggest that they are to be construed as biological urges for food, drink, or sex, or at least as desires for bodily pleasures more generally" (24).

dialogues as well. In both the *Timaeus* and the *Phaedrus*, Plato's psychology includes an element that clearly corresponds to bodily desires.³⁹⁴⁰

That being said, not all of the desires that Plato attributes to the appetitive part are straightforwardly physiological. Take, for instance, the desires for luxury and wealth, which fall within the domain of appetite (548a-b, 553c). The corporeal interpretation may still maintain that there is a connection between the desires for money and luxury and the body. For example, luxury provides sensory pleasure and in that way the desire for luxury can be traced back to the body. Additionally, since money is the means needed to acquire both physiological needs and bodily pleasure, then there is some connection between the body and money.⁴¹ With those examples easily accommodated, it is very tempting to accept that the unifying principle among appetitive desires is that they are all somehow connected to the body.

However, the corporeal interpretation is not without opponents. John Cooper is perhaps the most influential defender of a *noncorporeal* interpretation of appetite. Cooper builds his argument against the corporeal interpretation by examining the examples of appetitive desires that Socrates uses to establish appetite as distinct from reason and spirit. As I mentioned earlier, Plato argues that there are three distinct parts of the soul by highlighting examples of mental conflict. Cooper, like many others, relies on this part of the dialogue to analyze the nature of the three parts because it is one of the key passages that establishes the psychological theory of the *Republic*. Cooper's

³⁹ In the *Timaeus*, Plato speaks of "the part of the soul that has appetites for food and drink and whatever else it has a need for because of the nature of the body" (70d-e). In the *Phaedrus*, the soul is represented by two horses, and the black horse seems to represent sexual desire or hedonistic pleasure more generally.

⁴⁰ This summary of the corporeal interpretation generally follows Mark Johnstone's 2013 account. Myles Burnyeat's 2002 account is also similar.

⁴¹ For a defense of this explanation of why appetite desires money, see Annas 129-30. Various other explanations have been offered as well. For example, H. Lorenz suggests that "the appetitive part arguably lacks the cognitive resources required to form desires for money specifically as a means to the satisfaction of its primary desires. But there is no reason to think that it cannot develop tendencies to form intense desires for things like money as its patterns of attention and attachment are moulded, from early childhood onward, under the influence of the surrounding culture" (47).

argument consists of two parts. He first considers Socrates' argument for distinguishing reason and appetite. On this point, Cooper critiques the corporeal interpretation for being too quick to treat Socrates' examples of physiological desires as essential. Subsequently, he scrutinizes the example employed by Socrates to differentiate between spirit and appetite, and he argues that the corporeal interpretation fails to adequately explain the example that Socrates uses.⁴²⁴³

Socrates begins his proof that there are three parts of the soul by distinguishing reason from appetite. To do so, he appeals to physiological examples: hunger, thirst, and sexual desire. Socrates calls such examples the "most conspicuous" cases of appetites (437d). Some readers may infer from this description that physiological desires are especially representative or characteristic of appetite. However, Cooper rejects this assumption. He argues that the fact that Plato uses these examples to distinguish appetite from reason gives us evidence to think that Plato uses these

⁴² Here are some other examples of non-corporeal interpretations of appetite. Typically, non-corporeal interpretations fall into two categories. The first assumes, much like the corporeal interpretation, that the parts of the soul are best unified by reference to a specific class or classes of objects of desire. John Cooper's interpretation falls into this category. So does that of Jonathan Lear who also identifies pleasures of the imagination with appetite (209). The second category of noncorporeal interpretations denies that the parts of the soul are best unified by the kinds of objects they desire. For example, Terence Irwin (2017) suggests that the tripartition of the soul represents different degrees of rational desire, so appetites are unified based on the degree of rationality expressed by appetites rather than by the objects of appetitive desire. Similarly, Annas argues that appetite is not unified by desiring a specific kind of object but by the self-contained nature of appetitive motivation. She argues that "it is clear that desire cannot be limited to simple bodily desires. Plato's concentration on these in Book 4 is somewhat misleading. Bodily desires are 'clear' examples of desires not because of their objects but because they display clearly the fact about desire which Plato takes to be the most important: desire is limited to its own fulfilment and has no motivational impact on the person's wider concerns... Desire is blind to any considerations beyond those of getting what it wants" (130).

The corporeal interpretation assumes that the parts are best unified by the kind of object that they desire, and hence that appetite is best unified by the principle that all appetitive desires aim at objects connected to the body. As such, I chose to focus in the main text of this chapter on a version of the noncorporeal thesis that also assumes that the parts are best unified by reference to the kind of objects they desire.

⁴³ There are also some middle ground views of the domain of appetite. Generally, by 'middle ground' I mean interpretations that maintain that appetite is unified by some deep connection to the body, yet allow that Plato acknowledges some appetites that are not obviously connected to the body. For example, A.W. Price treats appetite as representing physical appetites (57) yet acknowledges that that Plato later identified the democratic man's philosophizing as an appetite (61). Price admits that "We have still to ask where his non-physiological appetite" and speculates that "they are borrowed from other parts of the soul, and then transformed by the nature of appetite...appetite can be eclectic in its objects so long as it pursues them appetitively (61-2). Similarly, Burnyeat 2002 seems to initially maintain the corporeal thesis, yet identifies that democrat's philosophizing and political activities as appetitive. He observes that such behaviors are "well classified as appetites because their attachment to the object of pursuit is 'for the pleasure/ fun of it', as opposed to 'for the good of it'. But they are no part of our biological make-up" (17-8).

examples to serve a narrow purpose, rather than reason to think that they are especially characteristic (Cooper 10). That is, Socrates highlights hunger, thirst, and sexual desire as the "conspicuous cases" of appetitive desire because they most clearly indicate the independence of appetite and reason. For one, physiological needs obviously arise without any involvement of reason since they are present in irrational animals, and moreover, most people will have no trouble recalling examples of their physiological needs conflicting with their rational belief about what is overall best. That is all to say, Plato's purpose in this passage is to distinguish reason and appetite—not to characterize appetite as a unified class of motivations. The examples that best distinguish one class or category from another are often not the examples that best characterize that class overall or best illustrate the unity of that class. As a result, the corporeal interpretation should not be too quick to essentialize Socrates' examples of physiological appetites.

Next, Socrates turns to distinguishing appetite and spirit, employing an unusual example in the process. Socrates recounts the tale of a man named Leontius who is plagued by a morbid desire to look at corpses, which is held in check by his sense of shame (439e-440a). Cooper examines whether Leontius' desire to view dead bodies can be explained by the principle that all appetitive desires are connected to either physiological needs or bodily pleasure. Cooper argues that while the constitution of the eyes may play a role in Leontius' attraction to corpses, it is more likely that his imagination is the primary source of his pleasure (Cooper 11). Plato often opposes reason and imagination, as reason seeks knowledge through an understanding of the material world, while the imagination seeks pleasure from the physical world without regard for truth (11). As a result, Cooper suggests that the pleasures of the imagination are similar to bodily pleasures since both involve taking pleasure from the physical world independent of reason's desire for truth. Thus, based on the Leontius example, Cooper suggests that the domain of appetite

extends beyond desires obviously connected with the body. At the very least, appetite also includes desires that originate with the imagination (12).⁴⁴ This does not mean that appetitive desires lack unity, however. For one, desires originating in the body and the imagination are both superficial, i.e. they arise independent of reason. Additionally, both kinds of desires involve simply taking pleasure in some aspect of the material world, independent of reason's interest in acquiring knowledge.

Throughout the rest of this chapter, my aim will be to defend Cooper's version of the corporeal interpretation, as I agree that appetite includes pleasures of the imagination and I offer further examples to support this reading. Overall, my main goal is to argue for an interpretation that allows for a broader range of desires to be classified as unnecessary appetites.⁴⁵ My problem with the corporeal reading of appetite is that it restricts the interpretation of the unjust souls who are ruled by their unnecessary appetites—the democrat and the tyrant. I will say more about how it restricts their interpretation in following sections.

Unnecessary appetites and injustice

⁴⁴ I suppose it's possible that pleasures of the imagination have some connection to the body since they are typically enjoyed via the senses. However, I do not know of anyone who defends this view. Presumably, this connection is too weak, and, if anything taken in through the senses could count as an appetite, that would hugely expand the domain of appetite, which is not typically the aim of corporeal interpretations. Rather, the corporeal interpretation typically aims to restrict appetites to physiological needs and bodily pleasures.

⁴⁵ As such, my arguments are compatible with any interpretation that acknowledges that appetites need not be restricted to physiological needs and bodily pleasures. This includes other versions of the non-corporeal thesis, such as Irwin's and Annas'. Since those versions of the thesis argue that appetite is not unified by a particular kind of object, then they allow for an even broader range of appetitive desires.

Additionally, my arguments are also compatible with some middle ground versions of the corporeal thesis. For example, Burnyeat and Price both defend the corporeal interpretation of appetite yet allow that the democrat's interest in philosophy and politics is appetitive. I find this combination of claims to be puzzling. But I take it that Burnyeat and Price advance this combination of claims simply because it makes the best sense with Plato's descriptions of appetite and of the democratic character, and they are willing to remain agnostic about why Plato treat's the democrat's desires for philosophy and politics as appetitive. Since interpretations like Burnyeat's and Price's allow for a broad range of appetites to be classed as unnecessary appetites, they are compatible with my arguments about the democrat and the tyrant—although I still argue that the noncorporeal interpretation makes better sense of the text than the corporeal.

At this point, I want to turn to another passage essential for understanding appetite: Socrates' depiction of unjust souls in Books 8 and 9. In Book 8, Socrates divides appetite into two subcategories: necessary and unnecessary appetites. Necessary appetites seem to correspond to physiological needs. They are "those we cannot deny... and also those whose satisfaction benefits us...for we are compelled by nature to try to satisfy them" (558d-e).⁴⁶ Unnecessary appetites are those "whose presence does no good and may even do the opposite" and that are "harmful to the body or to the soul's capacity for wisdom and temperance" (559a, 559b). According to the corporeal interpretation, the domain of appetite is restricted to bodily needs and pleasures. Those two categories—bodily needs and pleasures—seem to map onto the subcategories of necessary and unnecessary appetites. Necessary appetites represent physiological needs (and the means to meet those needs), while unnecessary appetites correspond to bodily pleasures.⁴⁷

On the other hand, the noncorporeal interpretation does not restrict the domain of appetite to physiological needs and bodily pleasures. This means that unnecessary desires may refer to a much broader domain than only bodily pleasures. For example, Cooper includes pleasures of the imagination under unnecessary appetites. Given how Socrates defines necessary appetites, there is less disagreement about their domain; it seems straightforward, even on the noncorporeal interpretation, that they correspond to bodily needs (although perhaps some psychological needs also fall under necessary appetites). As such, the disagreement between the corporeal and noncorporeal interpretations is primarily a disagreement about the domain of *unnecessary* appetites.

⁴⁶ Presumably, Plato is assuming that any desire that cannot be eliminated from human nature must be somehow or sometimes beneficial to humans for teleological reasons.

⁴⁷ There is one exception to this. Sometimes an object that would typically be considered a physiological need or a necessary appetite might be harmful to the soul. For example, thirst would typically be considered a necessary desire. However, if the only drinks available to me would be harmful to my soul or body, then thirst, on that occasion, would be classified as an unnecessary appetite.

Socrates introduces the distinction between necessary and unnecessary appetites in Book 8 because they are a key part of the psychology of the democratic and the tyrannical characters. In total, Socrates describes four unjust souls: the timocrat, the oligarch, the democrat, and the tyrant. Each of the unjust souls is unjust because they are not ruled by reason. Justice, according to Socrates, is realized when each of the three parts of the human soul performs always and only its proper function, and injustice entails that either spirit or appetite appropriates rule from reason, which is the soul's proper ruler.⁴⁸ The timocratic soul is ruled by spirit, while the oligarch, democrat, and tyrant are ruled by appetite. To distinguish the three appetitive souls, Socrates divides appetite into necessary and unnecessary appetites. The oligarch is ruled by his necessary desires, the democrat is sometimes ruled by his unnecessary appetites, while the tyrant is ruled entirely by unnecessary appetites. The democrat and the tyrant are the only two souls that regularly indulge their unnecessary appetites.

Given that the corporeal and noncorporeal interpretation primarily differ in their understanding of unnecessary appetites, the democrat and tyrant serve as an important source of evidence for understanding the nature of appetite.⁴⁹ Moreover, any interpretation of unnecessary appetites will affect the interpretation of the democrat and tyrant.⁵⁰

Two interpretations of the democratic character

⁴⁸ Generally speaking, the rule of spirit or appetite entails that reason comes to believe that a desire originating from either spirit or appetite represents the best possible goal around which to organize one's life.

⁴⁹ While I highlight the interconnections between interpretations of appetite and interpretations of unjust characters, this connection is often overlooked in the literature. For example, there are interpretations of the democrat and tyrant which do not engage with or mention the controversy concerning the domain of appetite. For example, Pappas (2013), Parry (2007), and Hitz (2010) all analyze the democrat as appetitive without any discussion of whether the domain of appetite, specifically unnecessary appetites, includes only bodily desires.

⁵⁰ For example, the tyrant is ruled by his unnecessary appetites. If the tyrant is a hedonist, then that supports the idea that unnecessary appetites correspond to bodily pleasures. If he is not a hedonist, then that supports my claim that unnecessary desires correspond to a broader domain.

In this section, I discuss what the corporeal interpretation implies about the democratic character. There are two possible interpretations of the democratic character: the appetitive and non-appetitive interpretations. According to the first, the democrat is ruled by some combination of necessary and unnecessary appetites, which means he is ruled exclusively by appetitive desires.⁵¹ According to the second, the democrat is *not* ruled exclusively by appetites. Instead, he is ruled by a combination of desires from all three parts of the soul. Some of those desires are necessary and unnecessary appetites, but some are rational and spirited desires.⁵²

I will treat the noncorporeal interpretation of appetite as supporting the first of those two interpretations of the democratic character and treat the corporeal interpretation as supporting the latter. To be clear, I make these connections between the two interpretations of appetite and two interpretations of the democratic character for theoretical reasons. These connections are not a precise representation of what occurs in the secondary literature. Some interpretations of the democratic character assume the noncorporeal interpretation of appetite but do not explicitly discuss the issue.⁵³ Some defenses of the noncorporeal account simply take it for granted that the democrat is solely ruled by appetite.⁵⁴ Additionally, it need not be the case that a defender of the

⁵¹ This is the predominant interpretation of the democrat. It is endorsed by Cooper (1984), Annas (1981), Price, Lear (1992), Pappas (2013), Hitz (2010), Parry (2007), and Burnyeat (2002).

⁵² This view is defended by Johnstone (2013), who I will discuss below. The non-appetitive interpretation is also defended by Dominic Scott, who argues that “The references to military and political aspirations suggest that he supplements his enjoyment of appetitive pleasures with the satisfaction of spirited desires... the pursuit of some sort of intellectual interest (though not, in Plato’s sense, philosophy) suggests that he is someone for whom discovery can occasionally be a goal and that he satisfies his rational desires” (23). Scott supports his non-appetitive interpretation by appeal to a corporeal interpretation of appetite: “Where the appetites are concerned, many of the examples given suggest that they are to be construed as biological urges for food, drink, or sex, or at least as desires for bodily pleasures more generally...if the democrat does occasionally aspire after victory and learning, the characteristic objects of the spirited and rational parts, it becomes very difficult to classify all his desires as appetites” (24). Nicholas White also endorses the non-appetitive reading (216).

⁵³ For example, Pappas (2013), Parry (2007), and Hitz (2010) all analyze the democrat as appetitive without any discussion of whether the domain of appetite, specifically unnecessary appetites, includes only bodily desires.

⁵⁴ For instance, Cooper (1984) and Annas (1981) both assume that the democrat’s desires for philosophy and politics represent unnecessary appetites, and then use the democrat’s desires as evidence that Plato does not restrict appetite to only bodily needs and wants. Of course, this is not the only evidence that either relies on.

noncorporeal interpretation also interprets the democratic character as ruled exclusively by appetite.⁵⁵ However, even though these interpretations are not always explicitly connected in the secondary literature, these two interpretive issues have deep theoretical links.

Before I go any further, it will be useful to say more about the democrat. The democrat is characterized by his love of freedom, and he orders his life around the belief that all pleasures “are alike and must be honored on an equal basis” (561c). As such, the democrat pursues whatever desire he happens to have on any given day, and Socrates describes him pursuing a wide variety of pleasures: “he lives from day to day gratifying the appetite of the moment...sometimes he goes in for physical training, while there are others when he is idle and neglects everything. Sometimes he spends his time engaged in what he takes to be philosophy. Often, though, he takes part in politics, leaping to his feet and saying and doing whatever happens to come to mind” (561c-d). At least some of the desires that the democrat pursues must be unnecessary desires because Socrates is clear that the democrat does indulge his unnecessary appetites: “someone like that spends no less money, effort, and time on the necessary pleasures than on the unnecessary pleasures” (561a).

Given Socrates’ description of the wide variety of desires that the democrat pursues, it is clear that his soul is sometimes ruled by desires that are neither physiological needs or bodily pleasures.⁵⁶ Most notably, the democrat dallies with philosophy and politics. Given that the corporeal interpretation treats physiological needs and bodily pleasures as exhaustive of appetitive desires, the corporeal interpretation implies that the democrat is not acting on his appetites when he pursues philosophy, since philosophy is not a *bodily* want or need. Instead, the corporeal

⁵⁵ See note 8.

⁵⁶ I suppose that it is technically possible that the democrat’s desire for philosophy is related to sensory pleasure. However, this seems too far-fetched to me, and I do not know of anyone in the secondary literature who defends such a claim. Burnyeat comes close, I suppose, since he argues that the democrat’s philosophy is appetitive despite maintaining that appetite represents bodily needs and pleasures. However, his main point seems to be that the democrat’s philosophizing is appetitive because of the way it is practiced (i.e., without concern for the good or the honorable) that makes it appetitive, rather than some connection or association with bodily pleasure.

interpretation would have to suppose that the democrat is acting on rational desires when he pursues philosophy and spirited desires when he takes up politics. The noncorporeal interpretation, however, is not restricted in such a way since it does not restrict unnecessary appetites to bodily pleasures. As a result, it is compatible with interpreting the democrat as acting on appetitive motivations, even when he pursues what he takes to be philosophy.

On to the appetitive interpretation of the democratic character.⁵⁷ This is the prevailing interpretation of the democratic character, and it assumes a noncorporeal interpretation of appetite.

⁵⁸ The appetitive interpretation is appealing because it makes sense of the ranking of the democratic character. The democrat is ranked below the oligarch who is ruled exclusively by necessary desires but above the tyrant who is ruled by unnecessary desires. Given the democrat's placement between the oligarch and the tyrant, it would make sense for the democrat to be ruled by a combination of necessary and unnecessary appetites.

Recently, Mark Johnstone has defended the nonappetitive interpretation of the democratic character.⁵⁹ He argues that Plato never intended for the democratic man's soul to be understood as solely ruled by appetitive desires (Johnstone 145). According to Johnstone, the democratic man's soul ought to be understood as ruled by desires from all three parts of the soul (145). The democrat's dabbling in philosophy and politics are examples of desires originating in the rational and spirited parts of his soul, respectively. Johnstone defends his interpretation by appealing to the

⁵⁷ The appetitive interpretation of the democrat maintains that the democrat is ruled by a combination of necessary and unnecessary desires. However, this need not mean that he never acts of spirited or rational desires. Richard Kraut's distinction between normative and non-normative 'rule' by a part of the soul is useful here. A part of the soul rules normatively when its desires set the overall values and goals for the agent. A part of the soul rules non-normatively when its desires win out in an isolated case of psychological conflict (Kraut 1973). The appetitive and non-appetitive interpretations of the democratic character disagree about what parts rule normatively. That is, what parts are involved in setting long term goals and values. But even if appetite rules normatively, appetites may sometimes lose out to rational or spirited desires in isolated cases.

⁵⁸ See note 9 for defenders of the appetitive interpretation of the democratic character.

⁵⁹ Johnstone 2013.

democrat's claim that he does not distinguish between his desires but chooses instead to treat them all as equally deserving of satisfaction (561c). The *Republic* suggests that every human soul has three parts: reason, spirit, and appetite, each associated with its own particular kind of desire. Therefore, every person has all three kinds of desire. If this is right, then a democratic man will sometimes have spirited and rational desires. Given the democrat's aversion to favoring one desire over another, it is hard to see why he would not surrender rule over himself to rational and spirited desires when they arise (149-50). Moreover, if the democrat does satisfy rational and spirited desires, then surely his desires to dabble in philosophy and politics are representative of the democrat doing just that.

Additionally, Johnstone argues that there is no conclusive evidence in favor of interpreting the democrat as ruled solely by a combination of necessary and unnecessary appetites. While Socrates does introduce the distinction between necessary and unnecessary appetites prior to his description of the democratic character, this does not necessarily imply that the democrat is only ruled by those two types of appetites. Socrates may introduce the distinction because the democratic character, unlike the timocrat or the oligarch, satisfies his unnecessary appetites instead of shunning them. Johnstone also denies that the ranking of the democrat between the oligarch and the tyrant conclusively demonstrates that the democrat must be ruled by a combination of necessary and unnecessary desires. After all, there may be other reasons why the democrat is ranked below the oligarch. For example, Johnstone suggests that the oligarch is ranked higher than the democrat because the oligarch's soul is more orderly and moderate than the democrat's soul (154-5).

The corporeal interpretation

Unlike in the case of the democrat, there is no dispute about what part of the soul rules in the tyrannical soul. Socrates describes the tyrant's soul as ruled by an intense, passionate *erôs*, and this *erôs* is an unnecessary appetite (572e). While the tyrant's soul is ruled by one intense unnecessary appetite, that is far from the only desire motivating him. Rather, the tyrant's *eros* serves as the "popular leader" of the masses of unnecessary appetites within the tyrannical soul (573a, b). While it is undisputed that the tyrant is ruled by his unnecessary appetites, it has proved especially difficult to identify what exactly tyrant's ruling *erôs* desires. On the corporeal reading of appetite, however, this question is not so broad. Given that the tyrant's *eros* is an unnecessary desire, then it must aim at bodily pleasure. In short, the corporeal interpretation maintains that the tyrant is a hedonist. As a result, I refer to this reading of the tyrannical character as the hedonistic interpretation.⁶⁰⁶¹

Throughout Socrates' description of the tyrannical individual's soul and life, several features emerge which lend support to the hedonistic reading. For one, Socrates describes the tyrant's soul as ruled by an intense, passionate *erôs*, and *erôs* is frequently associated with sexual lust or other passionate, hedonistic pleasures (572e). Moreover, the fervor of the tyrant's ruling

⁶⁰ The hedonistic interpretation is endorsed by Johnstone (2015), Pappas (2013), Annas (1981), Parry (2007), Arruzza (2019), and Barney (2008).

⁶¹ The hedonistic interpretation is the predominant interpretation of the tyrannical character. This strikes me as odd because it means that the predominant interpretation of the tyrannical character assumes that his unnecessary desires aim at bodily pleasures, yet, at the same time, the predominant interpretation of the democrat assumes that unnecessary appetites may aim at a much broader domain that even includes philosophy and politics. In some cases, I assume that this is simply the result of a commentator's specific focus on either the democrat or the tyrant. However, in some cases, the same commentator endorses both the appetitive reading of the democrat and the hedonistic interpretation of the tyrant, such as Annas (1981) and Pappas (2013). Of course, it is likely the case that these commentators conclude that the textual evidence is simply best analyzed in this way—after all Plato does provide many examples of the tyrant's hedonistic behavior. However, I still think that there is something strange about assuming—without discussion or argument—that Plato changes his treatment of unnecessary desires between the democrat and the tyrant. He first treats the democrat's unnecessary desires as covering a broad range, yet he then goes on to treat the tyrant's unnecessary desires as restricted to hedonistic pleasure. Perhaps Plato changes his treatment of unnecessary desires because the tyrant also indulges some lawless desires. However, as Socrates describes the tyrant, it is clear that he does not start to act on his lawless desires until after he has been ruled by *eros* for some time, which suggests that his ruling desires in a non-lawless unnecessary desire, like the unnecessary desires that rule (partly) in the democrat's soul (574d and following).

desire resembles bodily desires, which are often distinguished by their heightened intensity, such as those associated with lust or addiction. When describing the tyrant's life, Socrates includes more indications of hedonism. For example, Socrates claims that someone is truly a tyrant when his *erôs* leads him to "drunkenness, passion, and melancholia" (573c). Socrates also suggests that people with tyrannical characters will typically indulge in hedonistic pleasures, such as feasting, luxuries, all night partying, as a consequence of the ruling *erôs* (573d).⁶²

From these examples, a pattern of hedonism seems evident, and indeed, the claim that the tyrant is ruled by a desire for bodily pleasure predominates in the literature on the tyrannical character.⁶³ However, this interpretation is not without controversy. There is a common complaint among Plato scholars concerning the hedonistic interpretation of the tyrannical character—even among people who endorse it. The complaint goes as follows: Plato's account of the tyrannical character is dissatisfying because it is hard to reconcile a hedonist with the conventional conception of a tyrant as a clever and power-hungry politician. For example, Julia Annas complains that "Plato's tyrant would not last a week" because Plato's characterization of a tyrannical soul is not applicable to actual tyrants—such as Dionysius I of Syracuse, a contemporary of Plato's, or more recent examples like Stalin (Annas 304).⁶⁴

More generally, the point is this: Plato's account of the tyrannical character is meant, presumably, to explain tyrannical behavior. After all, during Socrates' description of the tyrannical character, he claims that political tyrants will have tyrannical souls (575c). While most people who have tyrannical characters will not become political tyrants, when a political tyrant does come to

⁶² Frequently, scholars identify the tyrant's ruling *eros* with sexual lust. For example, Rachel Barney argues that "this internal tyranny seems to amount to...sexual desires" (Barney 369). Similarly, Richard Parry observes that "the tyrant is an unbridled sensualist" (Parry 395).

⁶³ See note 17.

⁶⁴ Julia Annas identifies the tyrant's ruling desire as lust (Annas 303).

power, he will be someone who has a tyrannical character (575a-b, 575c). Additionally, Socrates suggests that the person who becomes a political tyrant is the person in a city whose character is the most tyrannical (575c). Given those remarks, it is safe to assume that the tyrannical character is meant to correspond to political tyranny—although that is not the only form of unjust behavior that it corresponds to. Of course, Plato need not argue that anyone with a tyrannical character could successfully become a political tyrant, but he should be able to account for the few who can and do. However, the hedonistic interpretation of the tyrant is dissatisfying because it fails to provide an explanation of how such a character could successfully become a tyrant or why he would want to.⁶⁵

Since the noncorporeal interpretation of appetite does not restrict unnecessary appetites to bodily pleasures, it is compatible with non-hedonistic interpretations of the tyrannical character. I use ‘non-hedonistic’ to refer to any interpretation that does not characterize the tyrant as ruled by a desire for bodily or sexual pleasure. Given that the noncorporeal interpretation characterizes unnecessary appetites as desiring a broad range of objects, the tyrant could theoretically be ruled by any number of desires beyond bodily pleasure. The benefit of a non-hedonistic interpretation is that it can avoid attributing to Plato the unconvincing view that political tyrants must be hedonists.

⁶⁵ I might suppose that Plato had an atypical conception of tyrants or that he simply did not intend for the tyrannical character to resemble actual political tyrants. However, there are several reasons to doubt those possibilities. First and foremost, Plato’s account of the tyrannical character is immediately preceded by a description of a successful political tyrant, and this tyrant is plenty calculating and clever. In his account, the tyrant rises to power by shrewdly manipulating the masses. He stirs up resentment against the wealthy, claiming that wealthy are the enemy of the average citizen (566a, 566c). He gathers popular support to himself by promising to promote economic equality by canceling debts and redistributing property (566d-e). Once the tyrant gains power, of course, he does not follow through on his promises. However, he retains popular support by instigating wars—a useful tactic for two reasons (566e). One, cities require strong leadership during war, and two, “impoverished by war taxes, [the masses] will be compelled to concentrate on their daily needs and be less likely to plot against him” (366e, 367a). In light of the shrewd tactics that Plato attributes to political tyrants, it seems evident that Plato shares the conventional view that political tyrants are clever and power-hungry.

For example, the most common non-hedonistic interpretation of the tyrant argues that the tyrant is ruled by a lust for power over other people.⁶⁶ This interpretation neatly avoids the pitfall of the hedonistic interpretation: if people with tyrannical souls are ruled by a desire for power, then it is easy to see why psychological tyrants sometimes become political tyrants.^{67,68}

Evaluation of the corporeal interpretation

In this section, I evaluate the strength of the corporeal interpretation of appetitive desires. To do so, I present a series of four objections to the corporeal thesis. First, I identify and examine many examples of appetites (specifically unnecessary appetites) that Plato makes use of in the *Republic* which are not clearly connected to the body. This complicates the claim that Plato's examples of appetitive desires in the *Republic* are all connected to the body in some way. Two, I suggest that Socrates' definitions of the subclasses of appetitive desires cast doubt on the corporeal interpretation's definition of the whole class of appetitive desires. The corporeal interpretation maintains that all unnecessary and lawless appetites aim exclusively at hedonistic pleasures, but I

⁶⁶ For example, Era Gavrielides characterizes the tyrant as "single-mindedly [seeking] power and the subjugation of everything and everyone to the satisfaction of his appetites" (207). Norbert Blossner defends a similar reading of the tyrant (361).

⁶⁷ Here is a summary of the connections I have made between the corporeal and noncorporeal interpretations of appetite and interpretations of the tyrant and democrat. I associate the *corporeal* interpretation of appetite with the *non-appetitive* interpretation of the democratic character and with the *hedonistic* interpretation of the tyrannical character. This is because the corporeal interpretation provides the strongest support for the non-appetitive reading of the democratic character and the hedonistic reading to the tyrannical character. The non-appetitive interpretation of the democrat and the hedonistic interpretation provide strong support for the corporeal interpretation of appetite.

On the other hand, I associate the *noncorporeal* interpretation of appetite with the *appetitive* interpretation of the democratic character and the *non-hedonistic* interpretation of the tyrannical character. This is because the appetitive and non-hedonistic interpretations provide strong support for the noncorporeal interpretation. Additionally, the appetitive and non-hedonistic interpretations are very difficult (but perhaps not impossible) to reconcile with the corporeal interpretation.

⁶⁸ Interestingly, commentators often endorse the appetitive reading of the democrat and the hedonistic interpretation of the tyrant. This means they accept that the democrat has unnecessary desires that correspond to a broad range of desires, but they treat the tyrant as only having hedonistic unnecessary desires. I think this discrepancy underscores the lack of attention given to carefully interpreting the domain of unnecessary appetites. For example, Nickolas Pappas characterizes the democrat as ruled by his necessary and unnecessary desires, and the tyrant as ruled by lust (190-1). Richard Parry describes the democrat's life as "marked by equality among appetites" while the tyrant is "an unbridled sensualist" (391, 395). Julia Annas also treats the tyrant and democrat in this way.

will try to show that this claim does not make sense with Socrates' definitions of those subclasses. Thirdly, I problematize the claim that the corporeal interpretation makes better sense of Socrates' description of the democratic character. Lastly, I provide some reasons to think that the tyrannical character should not be understood as a hedonist—a claim which follows from the corporeal interpretation of appetite.

Socrates' examples of appetites

The corporeal interpretation maintains that all appetites are unified by a connection to the body, either as physiological needs or hedonistic pleasures. In support of that conclusion, the corporeal interpretation points out that Socrates consistently identifies appetite with examples of desires that are connected to the body. I agree that Socrates invokes many examples of appetites which are clearly connected to the body. However, I deny that Socrates only identifies appetite with desires that are connected to the body. In this section, I point to passages where Socrates describes a variety of appetitive desires that are not so obviously connected to the body. As I mentioned briefly before, the key divergence between the corporeal and noncorporeal interpretations of appetite relate to the characterization of unnecessary appetites—whether or not they aim exclusively at bodily pleasure. As a result, the examples that I discuss in this section are examples of unnecessary appetites. I begin with passages where Socrates refers to unnecessary appetites in general and conclude by considering passages where Socrates discusses lawless appetites, which are a subclass of unnecessary appetites.

Socrates provides many hedonistic examples of unnecessary desires, such as wine and luxuries, which makes it tempting to assume that this category refers to sensory pleasures (573a, 573d). However, at the beginning of Book 9, Socrates provides a brief summary of unnecessary

desires as part of his introduction to the tyrannical character. In this passage, Socrates seems to be reviewing the essentials of the distinction between necessary and unnecessary desires, so I take his comments at this juncture to be especially revealing. Socrates distinguishes unnecessary appetites from necessary appetites on the basis that the objects of unnecessary desires are amusement (*παιδία*) and showing off (*καλλωπισμός*) (572c).⁶⁹ It is telling that Socrates does not mention hedonistic pleasure when summarizing the objects of unnecessary appetitive desires, which is what would be expected if Plato intended for the domain of unnecessary appetites to be limited to bodily pleasure. That being said, I suppose it is possible for the corporeal interpretation to be able to explain Socrates' claim that unnecessary appetites aim at amusement and showing off. Namely, the corporeal interpretation might accommodate this claim if there is textual evidence to show that Socrates means sensory pleasures by 'amusement' and adorning oneself with pleasant luxuries by 'showing off'—or some other interpretation to a similar effect.

However, further examination does not support the corporeal interpretation. Socrates mentions 'showing off' two other places in the *Republic*. Both times, the examples are of people who are inappropriately proud of themselves—and not because they are showing off luxuries. For example, Socrates speaks in a derogatory manner of sycophants who pride (*καλλωπίζω*) themselves on their ability to get away with doing injustice (405b). Given this example, I do not think that the corporeal interpretation can claim that 'showing off' is best interpreted as a narrow reference to luxurious adornment or other hedonistic pleasure. Instead, it seems like Socrates uses the term more broadly, which supports my claim that appetitive desires aim at a broader domain of objects than the corporeal interpretation allows. The same issue applies to Socrates' use of

⁶⁹ Defenders of the non-appetitive reading of the democrat, such as Johnstone 2013 and Scott, argue that unnecessary desires all aim at bodily pleasure, and both of those accounts curiously leave out this line from their analysis of unnecessary appetites (572c).

παίδια throughout the *Republic*. Throughout the text, Socrates applies the term broadly, using it to refer to music, stories, poetry, and imitation (396e, 424d, 424e). These are all examples of pleasure, but pleasures that are not obviously pleasures of the body. Rather, they seem more like pleasures of the imagination. Again, I think this is good evidence that Plato considers the domain of appetitive desires to be broader than corporeal desires.

I want to now draw attention to another passage where Socrates refers to *παίδια*. At the end of Book 7, Socrates outlines his plans for the education of philosopher-rulers. He warns that the candidates should not be allowed to practice philosophical dialectic while they are young. He explains that young people treat philosophical arguments as if they are a game (*παίδια*), focusing on refuting their opponent rather than on searching for the truth (539b, 539c). This passage is interesting for several reasons. One, it provides further evidence that Socrates' includes a broad variety of pleasures under the term *παίδια*. Even philosophy can be practiced in such a way as to count as an amusement (and so an unnecessary appetite) rather than a rational desire.

Two, I think this passage may help to demonstrate that the democrat's dabbling at philosophy is an expression of an unnecessary desire. When Socrates warns against allowing young people to practice philosophical arguments, he distinguishes between genuine philosophy, which aims at truth, and mere disputation, which he categorizes as an amusement (537e). The dismissive tone with which Socrates mentions the democrat's philosophizing seems to serve a similar purpose—to indicate that the democrat's philosophy is superficial compared to genuine philosophy. The fact that the democrat's philosophizing is more superficial than a philosopher's genuine dialectic does not provide enough grounds to claim that the democrat's philosophizing is an expression of an appetitive desire. After all, it is one thing to say that the democrat's dabbling in philosophy is superficial and another to say that it is an expression of an unnecessary appetitive

desire. In order to characterize the democrat's philosophizing as appetitive there needs to be evidence supporting the inference that the democrat's philosophy is appetitive because it is superficial. I suggest that the two passages I have been highlighting can support this inference. At the end of Book 7, Socrates' categorizes philosophical arguments that do not aim at truth as amusements, and, at the beginning of Book 9, Socrates states that amusements are objects of unnecessary appetites.

On the other hand, it may be possible that the democrat is sincerely interested in the truth when he takes up philosophy. I do not think this is likely, however, given the democrat's approach to politics: "leaping to his feet and saying and doing whatever happens to come into his mind" (561d). Similarly, Socrates notes that the democrat "does not accept or admit true reason... if someone tells him that some pleasures belong to fine and the good appetites and others to bad ones" (561b-c). Instead, the democrat dismisses, without argument or engagement, claims to that effect and maintains his belief that all desires are equally fine and good (561c). If Plato intended for the democrat to be read as sincerely interested in finding the truth through philosophy, then I doubt that he would describe the democrat as refusing to listen to true reason nor depict him as declining to engage with arguments that deviate from his own beliefs.

Now I will turn to my final example of unnecessary desires which are not clearly connected to the body. In Book 2, Socrates and his interlocutors agree to look for justice in the city in order to more easily identify justice in the individual soul. Socrates describes what he takes to be a just city, which he later refers to as the healthy city. He characterizes the city by the citizens' agreement to "contribute [their] own work to the common use of all" and by the citizens' simple lifestyle (369e, 372a-b). After Socrates finishes constructing the just and healthy city, Glaucon, one of Socrates' interlocutors, interrupts to complain that the city is too simple to support the happiness

of its citizens. In Glaucon's words, Socrates makes the citizens "feast without any relishes" (372c). Socrates accepts Glaucon's complaint and goes on to begin developing a second city, which he calls the feverish city.

Socrates describes the citizens of the feverish city as unsatisfied with the necessities (373a). As a result, the feverish city is filled "with a multitude of things that go beyond what is necessary" (373b). Although Socrates' construction of the feverish and healthy cities predates Socrates' distinction between necessary and unnecessary appetites, there are clear parallels between the passages, as both are concerned with distinguishing necessary and moderate pleasures from unnecessary and luxurious ones. As such, I think it is safe to assume that the unnecessary pleasures in the feverish city correspond to unnecessary appetites. Socrates enumerates a wide variety of unnecessary luxuries during this passage. Some are obviously related to bodily pleasure, such as perfumes, prostitutes, and pastries (373a). Some, however, are pleasures which do not seem to be hedonistic, such as painting, poetry, actors, and dancers (373b). Socrates even mentions tutors among the provisions in a luxurious city. If the luxuries of the feverish city correspond to unnecessary appetitive desires, then these examples are yet more evidence that unnecessary appetitive desires do not solely aim at bodily pleasure.

That being said, I suppose it is possible that the luxuries of the feverish city may represent unnecessary desires of the whole soul, rather than just unnecessary appetitive desires. However, I think this is unlikely because Socrates never mentions unnecessary desires of the rational and spirited parts.⁷⁰ Additionally, the unnecessary desires of the feverish city are defined by the same principle as unnecessary appetitive desires. In both cases, unnecessary desires are defined as unnecessary for or harmful to health (372e, 559b).

⁷⁰ Which is not conclusive evidence that there are not any, but it is suggestive that Socrates specifically uses unnecessary to refer to appetites.

More generally, Socrates' description of the unnecessary pleasures that predominate in the feverish city is important because the multifarious provisions of the feverish city signal that Plato connects hedonistic luxuries with other kinds of luxuries. As proponents of the corporeal interpretation point out, Socrates often mentions examples of hedonistic appetitive desires. When describing the feverish city, Socrates quickly jumps from hedonistic pleasures (pastries, perfumes) to a wide variety of other luxuries (tutors, plays). Socrates seems to assume that plays and tutors follow from pastries and perfumes. This connection provides reason to suppose that Socrates' use of hedonistic examples need not imply that unnecessary appetitive desires only aim at hedonistic pleasures. After all, Socrates has already assumed that there is some connection between hedonistic pleasures and other kinds of luxuries, such that the former follows from the latter.

The last thing I want to point out in this section are some examples of lawless desires which do not appear to be aimed at hedonistic pleasure. When Socrates first introduces lawless appetites as a subclass of appetites, he seems to include murder as an example of a lawless desire (571d). Describing lawless appetites, Socrates initially mentions three examples (571c-d). The first is that lawless appetites “[do] not shrink from trying to have sex with a mother or anyone else” (571c). The second is that they “will commit any foul murder” and, third, “there is no food [a lawless appetite] refuses to eat” (571d). Later, Socrates repeats similar examples saying, “there is no terrible murder, no food, and no act from which [the tyrant] will refrain” (574e). The first and last examples are clear examples of hedonistic pleasure, but murder is trickier to categorize as such. It is possible that Socrates mentions violence to signify that that lawless appetites are so strong that someone who indulges their lawless appetites is willing to go to the extremes of violence in order to get what they want. In that sense, violence would count as a lawless appetite in much the same way that money counts as a necessary appetite—because it is a means to necessary appetites.

Some of Socrates' descriptions of the tyrant support the idea that he uses violence as a means to lawless appetites. For example, the tyrant uses violence to steal money that he needs to satisfy his appetites (574d and following). However, there are also descriptions of the tyrant which may suggest that violence is itself a lawless appetite. For example, Socrates claims that many, if not most, individuals with tyrannical souls will choose to become mercenaries (575b). Of course, a tyrannical person may become a mercenary in order to make the money she needs to satisfy her appetites, but the fact that so many tyrannical people will become mercenaries specifically suggests some attraction to violence or social disruption is characteristic of tyrannical people.

I will mention two other examples of lawless desires. While Socrates does not mention lawless desires prior to his description of the tyrannical character, but he does describe activities and people as lawless on two occasions. When Adeimantus and Socrates are deciding on the education appropriate for the guardians of the just city, Socrates cautions that music, and other imitative arts, that children partake in must be law-abiding rather than lawless (424e). Later, when Socrates warns against allowing future rulers to practice philosophical argument while they are young, he complains that people who are exposed to dialectic too early are "filled with lawlessness" (537e). It is not altogether clear what Socrates means by 'lawless' in these examples, but there is no reason to think he means hedonistic. While Socrates is not speaking specifically of desires in either of these examples, I point to them to suggest that Socrates uses the term 'lawless' to refer to a broad category of objects. However, the corporeal interpretation maintains that when Socrates speaks of lawless desires, he is only referring to hedonistic desires. In contrast, I want to suggest that when Socrates speaks of lawless desires, he is continuing to use the term 'lawless' more broadly and more in keeping with the typical meaning of 'lawless,' i.e., contrary to convention or chaotic.

The subclasses of appetite

In this section, I review Socrates' definitions of the subclasses of appetitive desires. When Socrates first identifies appetite as an element of the soul, he does not provide a precise definition of appetite or some principle by which appetites are unified. However, when Socrates identifies the subclasses of appetite—necessary, unnecessary, and lawless appetites—he does offer some definitions by which the subclasses can be distinguished. I suggest that these definitions are more compatible with the noncorporeal interpretation than with the corporeal. The corporeal interpretation maintains that all unnecessary and lawless appetites aim exclusively at hedonistic pleasures, but this interpretation is not supported by Socrates' definitions of those subclasses. On the contrary, the definitions of the subclasses may support a broader interpretation of appetitive desires because these definitions leave open-ended the sorts of objects that unnecessary and lawless appetites aim at.

There are three subclasses of appetitive desires—necessary, unnecessary, and lawless appetites. Lawless appetites are a subclass of unnecessary appetitive desires (571b). Socrates defines necessary appetites as appetites that cannot be denied and “those whose satisfaction benefits us...for we are compelled by nature to satisfy them” (558d-e). Unnecessary appetites are those “whose presence does no good and may even do the opposite” and that are “harmful to the body or to the soul's capacity for wisdom and temperance” (559a, 559b). In other words, Socrates distinguishes necessary and unnecessary appetites by whether they are beneficial or harmful to the body and soul. Socrates defines lawless appetites as desires which are held in check by the laws and “our better appetites allied with reason” (571b). These appetites are unique because they “do not refrain from anything, no matter how foolish or shameful” (571c). They are “released from all

shame and wisdom” (571c). I take the point to be that lawless appetites are a subclass of unnecessary desires which are more frequently harmful and harmful to a greater degree, which is why they are typically repressed.

According to the corporeal interpretation of appetitive desires, all appetitive desires are connected to the body either as physiological needs or hedonistic pleasure. If the corporeal interpretation is correct, then necessary appetites seem to correspond to physiological needs, and unnecessary appetites would correspond to hedonistic pleasure. If all unnecessary appetites (and so lawless appetites as well) aim at bodily pleasure, then the domain of unnecessary appetite is fairly narrow. If Plato intended for unnecessary appetites to have a narrow domain, it would make sense for the definition of unnecessary appetites to reflect this. However, the definitions of unnecessary and lawless desires make no special mention of bodily pleasure. This is a strange omission if the corporeal interpretation is correct. While Socrates does mention hedonistic examples of unnecessary desires, he does not refer to bodily pleasure as part of the definition of this class of desires. And, as I mentioned above, Socrates summarizes unnecessary desires as those that aim at “amusement and showing off” (572c).

On the contrary, the definitions of unnecessary and lawless appetites are remarkably open-ended about what the objects of such desires might be. Rather than emphasize any particular kind of object, Socrates’ definitions of the subclasses all emphasize compatibility and incompatibility with reason and spirit. Indeed, the difference between the subclasses could be characterized by the degree of compatibility and incompatibility with rational and spirited desires. In a well-functioning soul, reason desires the good of the whole soul. Reason also desires knowledge, especially knowledge of the good. Spirit’s desires are predominantly concerned with honor. Necessary appetites, since they are for objects that benefit the body and soul, are compatible with the desires

of reason.⁷¹ Unnecessary appetites, if they do not cause harm, may sometimes be compatible with reason's desire for the good of the whole soul. However, any unnecessary desires that harm the soul could come into conflict with reason. Socrates' description of lawless desires continues this pattern. Socrates claims that lawless desires are "released from all shame and wisdom," which seems to suggest that they are typically held in check by spirit and reason. If they are typically held in check by reason and spirit, then they must be incompatible with the desires of those parts of the soul.

I have been speaking of incompatibility rather than conflict because, in the souls where unnecessary desires are plentiful, there would not be much active conflict between reason or spirit and unnecessary desires. While reason always desires the good of the whole soul, in an unjust soul reason fails to correctly identify what sort of desires will in fact bring about the good of the whole soul. When I claim that unnecessary desires are incompatible with reason or spirit, I am referring to the desires of reason and spirit when they are functioning well. In the souls where unnecessary and lawless desires are common, neither reason nor spirit are functioning well. Indeed, I take it as a sign of the incompatibility of reason and spirit with unnecessary desires that such desires are only plentiful in souls where reason and spirit are not functioning well. Lawless desires are only prevalent in the most unjust soul—the soul where reason and spirit are least functional—which confirms that lawless appetites are least compatible with reason and spirit.

Socrates' focus on compatibility and incompatibility with reason and spirit seems to leave open what type of objects unnecessary and lawless appetites desire. Rather, it seems like any object

⁷¹ Necessary desires typically do not conflict with reason, since they are for the good of the body and soul. However, on rare occasions, reason may oppose a necessary desire. Socrates describes such an example when he initially distinguishes reason and appetite as separate parts of the soul—he observes that sometimes people who are thirsty refuse to drink because they recognize that whatever drink is available is somehow worse than not drinking at all. In such a case, the desire to drink would be an unnecessary appetite.

can be desired by unnecessary or lawless desires so long as that desire would be opposed by reason and spirit when they are functioning well. This lack of restriction seems more compatible with the noncorporeal interpretation than the corporeal, for the noncorporeal interpretation maintains that unnecessary and lawless desires aim at a diverse range of objects—from hedonistic pleasure to (something like) philosophy. The corporeal interpretation may respond by arguing that only bodily pleasures are so incompatible with reason and spirit to qualify as unnecessary and lawless desires. However, I find this possibility unpersuasive because many of the examples that I highlighted in the preceding section seem like they could be described as incompatible with reason and spirit. For example, the provisions of the feverish city could not be described as necessary appetites, but they also are not all bodily pleasures. Additionally, superficial philosophy is also described in such a way as to suggest that it is deeply incompatible with reason and spirit—Socrates says its practitioners are filled with lawlessness (537d).

The democratic character

In this section, I consider whether the corporeal interpretation of appetitive desires makes better sense of Socrates' description of the democratic character. As a reminder, I treat the corporeal interpretation as implying the non-appetitive interpretation of the democrat. The non-appetitive interpretation of the democrat maintains that the democrat's soul is ruled intermittently by desires from all three parts of the soul, and he pursues rational, spirited, and appetitive desires equally. The main evidence for this interpretation is the democrat's claim that he does not distinguish between his desires (561c). Given that the democrat's soul is tripartite, he surely has rational, spirited, and appetitive desires. If he does not distinguish between his desires, then it seems like he ought to pursue desires from all three parts of his soul. Socrates' ensuing description

of the democrat pursuing a wide variety of desires seems to confirm this hypothesis—the democrat’s philosophizing represents rational desires, his political activities represent spirited desires, and his hedonistic pleasures represent appetitive desires.

I appreciate the appeal of this interpretation of the democrat’s claim that he does not distinguish between his desires. However, I do not think his interpretation is the only interpretation possible, nor do I think it is the best. Rather, a closer consideration of the development of the democrat casts doubt on whether his soul could function as the corporeal interpretation suggests.

While all human souls are tripartite, there are significant psychological differences between just and unjust souls. The democrat’s soul represents the second greatest degree of injustice, so the democrat’s psychology deviates considerably from the just soul. As a result, I think it is too quick to assume that because the democrat’s soul is tripartite, then he has rational and spirited desires that could rule his soul.

Rather, there are all sorts of things that might be going wrong within the democratic soul that prevent this from being possible. For one, I doubt whether the democrat’s rational and spirited elements are strong enough to rule his soul—even intermittently. I refer to strength because, when Socrates describes changes to a soul’s ruling element, the change is typically described in terms of one part gaining strength or growing (550b, 560b, 560d). Whatever it means for a psychological element to grow or gain strength, it seems to be the case that elements grow when an external influence encourages one part of the soul. For example, Socrates describes a young person, who was raised with a just character, transforming into a timocrat when “bad company” nourishes his “appetitive and spirited elements” (550a-b). Similarly, Socrates describes a young person with a democratic nature who becomes a tyrant because he associates with “tyrant-makers” who encourage his unnecessary appetites to grow (572e).

Given how Socrates describes the process by which the democrat's soul becomes democratic, it does not seem likely that his rational or spirited elements would be strong enough to rule his soul. Rather, Socrates describes the democrat's transformation as one in which his necessary appetites are weakened while his unnecessary appetites grow. As a young person, the democrat's soul is ruled by his necessary appetites because he is the son of an oligarchic father and is raised to be oligarchic (558c-d). His transformation into a democrat begins when he forms new friendships with people who are ruled by their unnecessary appetites. These new friends expose the young democrat to "multifarious pleasures of every degree and complexity" (559d). At this point, a struggle commences between his oligarchic family who encourage his necessary appetites and his new friends who encourage his unnecessary appetites (560c). For example, Socrates describes the young person being persuaded by "a multitude of useless appetites" to drive out "moderate and orderly expenditure" (560d). Throughout Socrates' description of the democrat's transformation, Socrates makes no mention of external influences that strengthen the young democrat's rational or spirited elements. He only speaks of the democrat's family who "help the thrifty part of his soul" and his new friends who encourage him to pursue unnecessary appetites (560c-e).

Yet, if the corporeal interpretation is correct, the democrat ultimately ends up with a rational, spirited, and appetitive elements that are all equally strong or that are all equal rulers of the soul.⁷² But I do not think this interpretation is compatible with how Socrates describes the

⁷² A different way of problematizing Johnstone's reading of the democratic character is by objecting to his characterization of changing rule in the soul. According to Johnstone, the democrat regularly transitions from rule by one part of the soul to another simply on the basis of whether a rational, spirited, or appetitive desire happens to be strongest at the moment. However, this assumes that changing rulers in a soul is merely a product of the strength of the parts' desires. Johnstone defends this view in a 2011 paper. But this view, which he calls the 'power struggle' view, is not without critics. There is a large interpretive camp which maintains that a soul only changes rulers when reason develops a different conception of the good, which does not seem to be what Plato is describing when the democrat flits between various interests. Rather, the democrat's changing interests seem to track whichever desires happen to be strongest, "the appetite of the moment," which many interpreters would not agree could be understood

power struggle between the democrat's oligarchic family and his new friends. Based on the description of the democrat's influences, it seems like the democrat would have a strong appetitive element with both necessary and unnecessary appetites, but his spirited and rational elements would be weak and poorly developed. A soul in which appetite is strong, while spirit and reason are weak, is unlikely to be a soul ruled equally by desires from all three parts.

I also struggle to see how the corporeal interpretation is compatible with how Socrates describes the resolution of the struggle between the young democrat's oligarchic family and his new friends. Namely, Socrates claims that the democrat "is pulled in both directions" but ultimately "settles in the middle between their two ways of life" (572c). The two directions that the democrat is pulled between are his oligarchic family, who are ruled by their necessary appetites and his new friends, who are ruled by their unnecessary appetites (572c). Socrates does not precisely specify what he means by "settling in the middle," but the context strongly suggests that the relevant compromise is between rule by necessary appetites and rule by unnecessary appetites. This implies that the democrat is ruled by some compromise between necessary and unnecessary appetites.

However, according to the corporeal interpretation, the democrat is ruled by desires from all three parts of the soul. It is not obvious to me how this interpretation could be compatible with Socrates' claim that the democrat settles in the middle between his oligarchic family and his friends who are ruled by their unnecessary desires. I suppose it is possible that Socrates is referring to some other sort of compromise when he describes the democrat as settling in the middle. For example, perhaps the unity of the democratic soul is midway between the unity of his father and his corrupters' souls. However, the problem with this suggestion is that Socrates does not mention

as a change from rule of one part to another (561c). For example, Irwin 2017 rejects Johnstone's reading of changing rulers in the soul.

anything about the unity of the souls of the democrat's friends. The only psychological feature that Socrates emphasizes about them is that they are ruled by unnecessary appetites. Due to the limited information Socrates provides regarding their psychology, I think it is most likely that the comparison between the democrat, the oligarch, and the corrupter refers to whether and to what degree each soul is ruled by necessary and unnecessary appetites.

The non-appetitive interpretation of appetite may also try to reconcile its reading with Socrates claim that the democrat is midway between his father's lifestyle and that of his new friends in the following way. The democrat's father represses his unnecessary desires, while his new friends are ruled by theirs. If the democrat sometimes acts on his unnecessary appetites (as he does according to the non-appetitive reading) then that is a compromise between his father's treatment of unnecessary desires and that of his new friends. However, while occasionally indulging unnecessary desires is between the oligarchic and tyrannical treatments of unnecessary desires, it is not *midway* between. Unnecessary desires are repressed by the government of the oligarch's soul. Unnecessary desires rule the souls of the democrat's friends. Midway between those two treatments implies that unnecessary desires achieve something like half-rule of the democratic soul. However, the non-appetitive interpretation suggests that unnecessary desires play a much smaller role in the government of the democratic soul, since they must compete with rational, spirited, and necessary desires. If the democrat indulges his unnecessary desires as often as he indulges his rational desires, spirited desires, and necessary appetites, then that seems to imply that he acts of his unnecessary desires about a quarter of the time. Someone who acts on their unnecessary desires a quarter of the time seems much closer to someone who rarely indulges their unnecessary appetites than to someone who is ruled by their unnecessary desires. As a result, it does not make much sense, on the non-appetitive reading, for Socrates to describe the democrat

as midway between his oligarchic family and his new friends.

Making sense of the tyrannical character

In this section, my aim is to suggest some novel reasons that the hedonistic interpretation of the tyrant is unconvincing. Earlier I mentioned one common objection to the hedonistic interpretation: if the tyrannical character is a hedonist, then it is unclear why the tyrannical character would desire political tyranny and how he could accomplish such a feat. As such, the hedonistic interpretation portrays Plato as providing an inadequate analysis of psychological tyranny. I agree with this objection to the hedonistic interpretation, and my task now is to offer some additional objections to the hedonistic interpretation which have not received as much, if any, attention in the secondary literature. I will discuss two problems with the hedonistic interpretation. One, the hedonistic interpretation portrays Socrates as making an argument that his interlocutors would find unconvincing. Two, the corporeal interpretation is too quick to essentialize the hedonistic characteristics and behaviors that Socrates attributes to the tyrannical person.

One, the hedonistic interpretation portrays Socrates as giving an argument that his interlocutors would not find plausible. In Books 1 and 2, Socrates' interlocutors Thrasymachus and Glaucon both praise the tyrannical life. Thrasymachus argues that the tyrannical life is the best and happiest life because the tyrant is willing to act unjustly to get what he wants, and moreover, the tyrant is skilled at injustice. Injustice, for Thrasymachus, is necessary for happiness because people who are disposed to act unjustly whenever they can always get more than people who act justly (343d). Specifically, the unjust person always gets more power over and possession of property, wealth, and other material resources (343d). The acquisition of such things is what makes a person

happy, according to Thrasymachus, and the unjust person will always get more of them because these goods are zero sum; for one person to get more requires someone else to get less than her fair share. The ideal life, the happiest life is the tyrant's life, because the tyrant has secured sole power over the city and appropriated all its material resources (434c).

Glaucon's argument is similar to Thrasymachus' except that Glaucon asks Socrates to accept, for the sake of the argument, that there could be someone capable of maintaining a reputation for justice without actually being just. Perhaps this person may occasionally make mistakes, but he is persuasive enough and powerful enough to recover his reputation. Yet, all the while, he is behaving as unjustly as the worst tyrant. Glaucon claims that such a life, which successfully pairs maximal injustice with a just reputation, would be the happiest life, for this kind of tyrant would reap the rewards of justice as well as those of injustice (362b).

Socrates' interlocutors challenge him to defeat the claim that the tyrannical life is happiest and to demonstrate that the just life is happier than the tyrannical life. As such, it seems safe to assume that Socrates' depiction of the tyrant is intended to respond to and defeat Thrasymachus' and Glaucon's claim that the tyrannical life is the best and happiest life. If Socrates is to successfully defeat his interlocutors' arguments and to offer a compelling alternative conception of what a tyrannical life is like, then Socrates' tyrant should resemble Glaucon and Thrasymachus' tyrants. That is, it should be clear how Socrates' explanation of a tyrant's psychology can explain the sorts of behaviors and skills that Glaucon and Thrasymachus attribute to a tyrannical person. However, the sort of person that Glaucon and Thrasymachus are imagining when they talk about a tyrant is a skilled and calculating politician. It is not obvious how to reconcile a skilled politician with a hedonist, for it is not clear why a hedonist would want to become a tyrant or how they would have the skills necessary to do so. As a result, it seems like Glaucon or Thrasymachus could

complain that Socrates is not giving an account of the psychology which corresponds to the sort of tyrants that they were talking about.

On to my second point. I want to suggest that the hedonistic interpretation of the tyrant is too quick to essentialize the hedonistic characteristics and behaviors that Socrates attributes to individuals with tyrannical souls. After all, Socrates attributes a variety of other behaviors and traits to the tyrannical character as well. For example, Socrates claims that an individual becomes a tyrant when his *erôs* leads him to “drunkenness, passion, and melancholia” (573c). While drunkenness and passion are hedonistic, melancholia is not, but the hedonistic interpretation treats the former as more essential to the tyrannical character than the latter.

Additionally, while it is true that Socrates describes tyrannical people as acting in hedonistic ways, that is not the only pattern among the behaviors and traits that Socrates attributes to tyrannical people. For example, here is another pattern: the tyrant’s ruling *erôs* is defined as much by how it affects the tyrant’s social characteristics as it is by hedonism. Socrates claims that the tyrant’s ruling *erôs* inevitably leads the tyrant to be incapable of cooperative social relationships: “[people] with a tyrannical nature live their entire lives without ever being friends with anyone, always masters to one man or slaves to another” (576a). Similarly, Socrates claims that the tyrant’s ruling desire will lead him to break the law, and to behave in other conventionally antisocial ways, such as lying and using force against others (574d, 575b, 573e). Since the hedonistic explanation treats the tyrant’s hedonism as essential, it must explain the tyrant’s antisocial behavior in terms of his hedonism. However, it is not clear why the tyrant’s hedonism could not be an expression of some other characteristic, like his rejection of his community’s norms.⁷³

⁷³ For example, someone who is essentially antisocial is perhaps more likely to engage in hedonistic behaviors since they are unconcerned with following the norms of their community.

One reason that commentators may essentialize the tyrant's hedonistic characteristics is because *erôs* rules his soul, and *erôs* is often associated with sexual pleasure. However, that is not what the term means, nor is that the only way Plato uses the term in the *Republic*. At other points in the *Republic*, Plato uses the term to denote a variety of strong desires, such as the love of beauty and order, which is instilled in the guardians by their education (430a). Plato also uses *erôs* to describe the philosopher's powerful desire for the truth (490b). Similarly, in the dialogues *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, Socrates speaks of an *erôs* for truth. In all those examples, the term *erôs* is used to signify the intensity of the desire, not its object, so the term *erôs* does not provide definitive support for the claim that the tyrannical soul is ruled by a desire for hedonistic or sexual pleasure.

There would be reason to essentialize the tyrant's hedonistic behaviors if hedonism was the only way to unify the various aspects of Socrates' depiction of the tyrannical character. I suspect that this assumption underlies most arguments in favor of the hedonistic interpretation, although it is not always explicitly stated or defended. This assumption is not without merit either. If the tyrant's ruling *erôs* is hedonistic, then that would explain, of course, why the tyrant is prone to hedonistic behaviors. An addiction to bodily pleasure could also explain why the tyrant turns to crime, lying, and using force against others, since these behaviors may be vehicles to getting more of the pleasure he seeks once his funds run out—and Socrates confirms that his funds will run out. It is rather trickier to explain why a hedonist would become a mercenary or even a political tyrant, but I suppose it is possible that someone might think that the political power held by a tyrant would allow them to indulge in pleasure without restraint. However, it is one thing to show that the hedonistic interpretation can unify the diverse features that Socrates attributes to the tyrannical character, but it is another thing to demonstrate that the hedonistic interpretation is the only

interpretation that can unify the diverse aspect of the tyrannical character.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have had two aims. One, to argue that the domain of appetite ought not be restricted to bodily needs and wants. While necessary appetites do correspond to physiological needs, unnecessary appetites are broader than hedonistic pleasures. There are also unnecessary appetites for pleasures of the imagination and some other pleasures as well, like the pleasure of showing off. For example, when Socrates is provisioning the feverish city with unnecessary luxuries he includes pleasures of the imagination, such as paintings and plays, and even tutors. Additionally, I also identified some passages which support the claim that Socrates treats philosophy, practiced superficially, as an object of unnecessary appetites. Next, I argued that the corporeal interpretation does not make sense with Socrates' definitions of the subclasses of appetitive desires. If Plato intended for unnecessary and lawless desires to be restricted to bodily pleasures, then it is strange that the definitions of those classes do not specify such a narrow domain.

My second aim was to explicate how any interpretation of unnecessary appetites affects how the democratic and tyrannical characters are interpreted. If unnecessary appetites are restricted to hedonistic pleasures, then the democratic character cannot be ruled solely by necessary and unnecessary appetites; he must be ruled by desires from all three parts of the soul. Additionally, the corporeal interpretation of appetite requires that the tyrannical character—who is ruled by his unnecessary appetites—be read as a hedonist. I defend the noncorporeal interpretation of appetite by arguing that it makes better sense of the democratic character.

I also outlined some reasons why the hedonistic interpretation of the tyrannical character

is dissatisfying. In the next chapter of this dissertation, I will advance an alternative reading of the tyrannical character which relies on my noncorporeal interpretation of appetite. I will also further complicate the hedonistic reading of the tyrant. I argue that the tyrant should be understood as ruled by an overwhelming desire for freedom from constraint, not an overwhelming desire for bodily pleasure. As in the case of the democratic character, I argue that my interpretation of the tyrant makes better sense of the text, and so lends further support for the noncorporeal interpretation of appetite.

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Psychological Tyranny in *Republic* 8 and 9

In the *Republic*, Socrates is charged with demonstrating that the just life is preferable to a life marked by any degree of injustice. In Books 8 and 9, Socrates transitions from describing and praising the just life to describing four unjust souls, each representing a greater degree of injustice. Socrates has specifically been tasked with explaining what injustice is in the soul and how injustice harms the soul it inhabits. The four unjust souls are analogous to unjust constitutions, and so they are called the timocrat, the oligarch, the democrat, and the tyrant. In this chapter, I focus on the life of greatest injustice: the tyrannical life. I suggest a new interpretation of what makes tyrannical soul so wholly unjust. For each unjust character, Socrates describes how he becomes unjust, what his soul is like, and what his life is like. The latter two things—what his soul is like and what his life is like—reflect each other because the description of each soul is meant to explain that person’s life. Generally, commentators identify each character’s injustice with the dominant end he organizes his life around, i.e., what they believe to be good or most desirable.⁷⁴ I adopt this same approach and argue that the tyrannical character seeks freedom from constraint as his dominant end.

Before I say more about what I mean by freedom from constraint, I want to say more about what is at stake in Books 8 and 9 and about Socrates’ task in this part of the *Republic*. The tyrannical character is called tyrannical because the ‘government’ in his soul is akin to the government of a tyrannical city. Earlier in the *Republic*, Socrates described three parts of the soul—reason, spirit, and appetite—and argued that these three parts must be related to each other in a particular way for a soul to be just. In the just soul, reason rules, spirit supports the rule of

⁷⁴ I use the term ‘tyrannical character’ instead of tyrant in order to reflect Socrates’ claim that not all people with a tyrannical character will become actual political tyrants. However, for brevity, I will use ‘tyrant’ interchangeably with ‘tyrannical character’ to refer to a person who has a tyrannical government in their soul.

reason, and appetite is the source of the bulk of human desires, especially desires for bodily needs, money, and pleasure. The soul is harmonious when each part does its proper function only and always. In effect, Socrates identifies psychic justice with psychic harmony and health. Psychic harmony is more important for happiness than any external good, like wealth or fame.

Reason does not rule in unjust souls, resulting in injustice and disharmony. Socrates describes four unjust souls, each analogous to an unjust political constitution: the timocrat, the oligarch, the democrat, and the tyrant. The timocratic character is ruled by spirit, while the other three unjust characters are all ruled by appetite. The three appetitive souls are further distinguished by what subcategory of appetites rules their souls. The oligarch is ruled by necessary appetites, the democrat is ruled by an equal mixture of necessary and unnecessary appetites, and the tyrant is ruled by his unnecessary appetites.⁷⁵

That is fairly abstract, but Plato puts the point in more recognizable terms. In the portraits of each unjust person, Socrates explains that the rule of spirit or appetite leads people to organize their lives around some particular end. For example, the timocratic soul is ruled by spirit, so the timocrat organizes his life around the pursuit of honor, as honor is one of the characteristic desires of the spirit. Each unjust soul chooses an end that is not a stable and rewarding source of happiness. The point is that if I am not ruled by reason, then I will choose the wrong end around which to organize my life. In other words, the rational part should rule because it can best decide which goals are and are not worth pursuing. The rational part loves truth and desires to know how human life should be lived, i.e., what virtues are appropriate to humans. Similarly, the rational part desires to understand what objects of desire are genuine goods, what goods should be prioritized, and when. The rational part is also concerned with the good of the whole soul, so

⁷⁵ Understanding these subcategories of appetite is the focus of the second chapter of this dissertation, so I will not discuss the domain of each of these subcategories in this chapter.

they seek to satisfy their rational, spirited, and appetitive desires in the appropriate amounts. Ideally, the just soul will eventually gain knowledge of the good, and with this knowledge, they can achieve genuine virtue and knowledge of how to live.⁷⁶

Insofar as Plato identifies justice and injustice with the arrangement of the parts of the soul, he is defending a psychological theory of justice. Plato's psychological theory of justice is often distinguished from a conventional understanding of injustice, which identifies injustice with behaviors—like breaking the law and taking more than one's fair share—or with character—being selfish or having no respect for other people's rights and property. Plato instead identifies injustice with a state of the soul, that is, with a psychological condition. Specifically, psychological injustice results when reason does not rule, and either spirit or appetite rules the soul. Plato argues that a person's psychological injustice explains their conventional injustice, and he tries to do this in recognizable language by associating the rule of spirit or appetite with familiar character flaws. For example, the oligarch is ruled by his necessary appetites, and Socrates explains that this results in someone with a disproportionate love of money (554a-b).

The dominant end of each unjust soul seems to be key to understanding how each soul's psychological injustice corresponds to conventional injustice and why each soul is less happy than the just soul. The dominant end of each soul also serves as a useful way to distinguish the souls from each other. There is little scholarly disagreement around the ends sought by the timocrat and the oligarch. The timocrat seeks honor, and the oligarch desires money above all else. Each unjust character's belief about which goods are most valuable corresponds to the

⁷⁶ Socrates argues that “those that follow knowledge and argument, and pursue with their help the pleasures that wisdom prescribes, will attain—to the degree that they can attain true pleasure at all—the truest pleasures, because they follow truth, and those that are most their own; if, indeed, what is the best for each thing is also what is most its own?” and then “when the entire soul follows the philosophic element and does not engage in faction, the result is that each element does its own work and is just; and, in particular, each enjoys its own pleasures, the best pleasures and—to the degree possible—the truest” (586d-e).

governing element of their soul. Spirit rules the timocratic soul, and spirit is the part of the soul most concerned with social status. Indeed, spirit is often identified as the part of the soul that corresponds to humans' social nature.⁷⁷ Appetite rules the oligarchic, democratic, and tyrannical souls. However, these three souls are differentiated by which type of appetite rules. Appetites can be categorized into two types: necessary and unnecessary, with the latter further subdivided into lawless (and lawful) unnecessary appetites.⁷⁸ Necessary appetites rule the oligarchic soul, while a mix of unnecessary and necessary appetites governs the democratic soul. The tyrannical soul is controlled by unnecessary appetites, including the lawless variety.

So far, Socrates' task in describing the tyrannical character looks like this: he must describe the organization of the tyrannical soul, particularly how the soul is ruled. This description must correspond, in some way, to the rule of a tyrannical city. Socrates must connect the condition of the tyrannical soul to what the tyrannical character and life are like, and a large part of this will hinge on what the ruling part of the tyrannical soul seeks as its dominant end. Socrates must explain how the misrule of the tyrannical soul will result in the tyrannical person being more conventionally unjust than any of the other characters. Moreover, there must be some plausible explanation for how and why some people with a tyrannical soul become successful political tyrants. Additionally, Socrates must explain how the misrule of the tyrannical soul causes him to be less happy than any of the other souls.

There are two other conditions that Socrates' account of the tyrant should meet. One, there ought to be some overall narrative of decline connecting the four unjust souls. That means whatever is wrong with the tyrannical soul should fit into a pattern of progressive deterioration

⁷⁷ John Cooper defends this interpretation in his 1984 essay "Plato's Theory of Human Motivation." See also Burnyeat 2006.

⁷⁸ For the sake of brevity, I will not review the division of appetites in detail in this chapter since that was the focus of the preceding chapter.

from the least to the most unjust souls. Socrates' account should also respond satisfactorily to Glaucon and Adeimantus' challenges. In Book 2, Glaucon and Adeimantus both request that Socrates compare the just life to unjust lives to demonstrate that the just life is happiest. Glaucon emphasized that Socrates must compare the just life to the tyrannical life, and to motivate this point, Glaucon described and praised a tyrannical life. Glaucon's description of a tyrant did not include a psychological account, but despite this difference, there should still be some resemblance between Socrates' tyrant and Glaucon's tyrant. Otherwise, Socrates may be talking at cross purposes with his interlocutors.

In what follows, I will try to show that my interpretation of the tyrannical character better demonstrates that Socrates' account meets these conditions than other recent interpretations. I do not propose to solve every puzzle conclusively, but I do think my interpretation does a better job of making sense of Socrates' account of the tyrannical character. As such, my interpretation shows that Socrates' account of the tyrant is more successful than it has sometimes been assumed to be. First, I review two popular interpretations of the tyrannical character—the hedonistic and political—and explain why each is dissatisfying. I next expand upon what I mean by freedom without constraint. Then, I interpret Socrates' depiction of the tyrannical character in Book 9 and demonstrate how my reading of the tyrannical character makes better sense of the textual details and of Socrates' broader task in the *Republic*.

Two interpretations of the tyrant

There have been two common interpretations of the tyrannical character in recent years. I call the first the hedonistic interpretation because this position maintains that the tyrant's dominant end is bodily pleasure. Mark Johnstone and Cinzia Arruzza are recent proponents of

this interpretation. Mark Johnstone writes that “the tyrannical man’s soul is to be understood as ruled by a single, persistent, powerful desire for bodily pleasure” (Johnstone 2015, 424). In line with that, Arruzza argues that the tyrant’s ultimate goal is unrestrained appetitive consumption and that the tyrannical character is consumed by some sort of unlawful hedonistic desire (Arruzza 2019, 63).⁷⁹ I call the second the political interpretation because these commentators suggest that the tyrannical character’s dominant end is political power. This interpretation has been most recently defended by Karen Nielsen.⁸⁰ She argues that what the tyrant ultimately wants is to assert his power and “rise above everyone else” and “he seeks political power as an expression of his superiority” (Nielsen 2019 154, 160). This desire for power “is the fundamental motive behind the tyrant’s vice,” not pleasure or appetitive satisfaction (Nielsen 2023, 34).

The hedonistic interpretation is dissatisfying because a hedonist does not resemble the conventional conception of a tyrant as a clever and skilled politician. Plato’s account of the tyrannical character is meant, presumably, to explain conventionally tyrannical behavior. That task entails, at least, an explanation of why someone with a tyrannical character would be motivated to become a political tyrant and of how someone with that character could do so successfully. However, the hedonistic interpretation does not offer a satisfactory explanation of either of these phenomena. The hedonistic interpretation suggests that someone with a tyrannical character becomes a tyrant because she is driven by her insatiable appetites. Perhaps it is possible

⁷⁹ One reason the hedonistic interpretation is attractive is that Plato says that *erôs* rules the tyrant’s soul, and *erôs* is often associated with sexual pleasure. However, that is not what the term means, nor is that the only way Plato uses the term in the *Republic*. At other points in the *Republic*, Plato uses the term to denote a variety of strong desires, such as the love of beauty and order, which is instilled in the guardians by their education (430a). Plato also uses *erôs* to describe the philosopher’s powerful desire for the truth (490b). Similarly, in the dialogues *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, Socrates speaks of an *erôs* for truth. In all those examples, the term *erôs* is used to signify the intensity of the desire, not its object, so the term *erôs* does not provide definitive support for the claim that the tyrannical soul is ruled by a desire for hedonistic or sexual pleasure.

⁸⁰ Norbert Blossner is another recent example of this interpretation, arguing that the tyrannical soul is defined by the desire for unlimited power (Blossner 2007, 361). Era Gavrielides who characterizes the tyrant as “characterizes the tyrant as “single-mindedly [seeking] power and the subjugation of everything and everyone to the satisfaction of his appetites” (Gavrielides 2013, 207) is another.

that someone would seek out political power as a means to satisfy insatiable, bodily appetites, but it is hard to reconcile this interpretation with actual, historical tyrants. Julia Annas critiques Plato's analysis of the tyrannical character for this reason. Annas interprets the tyrannical character as a hedonist and complains that "Plato's tyrant would not last a week" as a political tyrant, and, more to the point, the key characteristics of the tyrannical soul indicate that a person would be "incapacitated from being successfully unjust" (Annas 304, 305).⁸¹

Furthermore, if Socrates is indeed arguing that tyrannical character is a hedonist, then Socrates is giving an argument that his interlocutors would not find plausible. Socrates' depiction of the tyrant is intended to defeat Glaucon's characterization of the tyrant, and he describes a tyrant who is privileged, powerful, and skilled at doing whatever they want and getting away with it. Someone who is addicted to bodily pleasures does not clearly resemble the sort of person that Glaucon asked to hear Socrates discuss. An addiction to or obsession with bodily pleasure is a familiar sort of person, but that person is not typically regarded as capable of extreme evil. Johnstone's only example of someone as obsessed with bodily pleasure as the tyrant is someone suffering from addiction. I can easily imagine that someone with an addiction may end up breaking laws in order to maintain their habit, but it is harder to see how addiction could lead to evil as significant as tyranny unless the tyrant's goals expanded beyond bodily pleasure.

If Socrates is to successfully defeat their argument or to offer a compelling alternative conception of what a tyrannical life is like, then Socrates' tyrant should resemble Glaucon's tyrant. That is, it should be clear how Socrates' explanation of a tyrant's psychology can explain the sorts of behaviors that Glaucon attributes to a tyrannical person. Additionally, the text implies that Socrates' account of the tyrant's psychology is persuasive, to Glaucon and

⁸¹ Julia Annas identifies the tyrant's ruling desire as sexual lust (Annas 303).

Adeimantus at least. They both treat Socrates' description of the tyrannical soul as familiar and intuitive, and they both enthusiastically accept Socrates' claims.

My point is that the sort of person that Glaucon is imagining when he talks about a tyrant is not necessarily a hedonist, or, at least, it is not obvious that such a person would necessarily be hedonistic. As a result, it seems like Glaucon could complain that Socrates is not giving an account of the psychology which corresponds to the sort of person he was talking about. Or he might complain that not all tyrants are hedonists, even if some are, and, if being a hedonist is separable from being a tyrant, then the negative consequences of hedonism are also separable. This point is clearer when comparing the hedonistic interpretation to the political interpretation. Seeking power over other people is not separable from tyranny; it is part of the familiar concept of tyranny and both Glaucon and Thrasymachus describe their tyrants as seeking power. So, there's no possibility that Socrates is talking past the interlocutors or that some tyrant could avoid seeking power and so avoid the associated negative consequences.

The political interpretation of the tyrant sidesteps many of the snares arising from the hedonistic interpretation. On that reading, Socrates' tyrannical character resembles Glaucon's completely unjust man who does seek political power, thereby mitigating the concern that Socrates may be talking past his interlocutors. Similarly, the political interpretation straightforwardly accounts for why someone with a tyrannical character would aim for political tyranny. Nonetheless, this interpretation is not without its own set of challenges. For one, the political interpretation may do too good of a job explaining why a tyrannical character would become a political tyrant. Many people with a tyrannical character do not attempt to achieve political power (575a). Socrates suggests that a diverse range of people have tyrannical

characters: criminals, idle citizens, sycophants, rhetoricians, and others.⁸² This variety among tyrannical characters is hard to explain if Socrates' defines the tyrannical character by the desire for political power.⁸³

Both the hedonistic and political interpretations acknowledge that the tyrant aims for a greater degree of freedom from restraint compared to any other unjust character. However, interpreters regard the tyrant's pursuit of freedom from restraint as a means to either bodily pleasure or political power. For example, Arruzza comments that the tyrant's desire for pleasure "unshackles" him from "the restraints of traditional beliefs, social bonds, or mere shame" (140). The tyrant's overwhelming desire for sensory pleasure leads him to be willing to break any law, any norm, or risk any relationship. He loses all sense of moderation or shame in his pursuit of pleasure. In this way, the tyrant's desire for pleasure is like an addiction.⁸⁴

Similarly, Nielsen acknowledges that the tyrant seeks to free himself from all restraints, such as shame, the law, and social norms (Nielsen, 31).⁸⁵ She also recognizes that the tyrant's taboo behavior is part of a broader pattern of the tyrant rejecting any form of restraint: "[the tyrannical character's] eagerness to act on paranomic desires suggests that it is breaking the rule rather than what is achieved by breaking the rule that ultimately attracts the tyrant"

(32). However, Nielsen ultimately argues that the tyrant's lawlessness and lack of restraint are in

⁸² I speak more about this milieu in the section on drones below.

⁸³ Both Mark Johnstone and Cinzia Arruzza make similar critiques of the political interpretation. They both observe that when the tyrant seeks power over someone he does so as a means to reaching some other end (574a-d). Plato also claims that most tyrannical characters will not seek political power, and, even when describing the tyrant who does achieve political power, Plato does not describe power as the tyrant's ultimate goal (375c).

⁸⁴ Indeed, this is the metaphor that Johnstone uses: "Plato's tyrannical man as I understand him behaves much like a drug addict with an unmanaged addiction. Much as an addict's addictive desire for some drug can lead to desperation, and ultimately to a life of crimes committed with the aim of obtaining the drug or the money to buy it, so too, I suggest, the tyrannical man's desire for bodily pleasure leads him to turn to a life of crime with the aim of securing the money he needs to obtain the pleasure he desperately and constantly craves" (429).

⁸⁵ In an earlier paper she similarly notes that the tyrant's lawless desires all involve "transgressing natural boundaries" and that the tyrant's lawless appetites are "wholly without restraint, both in the object of its pursuit and in its choice of means" (Nielsen 2019 152, 149).

the service of a more dominant end: “power... is the fundamental motive behind the tyrant’s vice” (33). The tyrant’s lawlessness is a power move used to establish and defend his dominance over other people. Power over others is the tyrant’s dominant end, and the tyrant seeks total freedom only as a means to power over other people.

I will argue that the hedonistic and political interpretations misunderstand the tyrant’s hedonistic and power-hungry actions. I suggest that these behaviors result from his desire to free himself from all constraint—not the other way around. I do not simply mean that hedonism and power are means to freedom. Rather, I suggest that both hedonistic and power-seeking behaviors partly realize the total freedom that the tyrant seeks.⁸⁶ In pursuing hedonistic pleasures, especially lawless or extreme pleasures, the tyrant is displaying his lawlessness and shamelessness. He is demonstrating that he has freed himself from his community’s restraints. Similarly, the tyrant’s pursuit of political power is caused by his desire to completely free himself from restraint. No one is more lawless or freer than a political tyrant who controls the law.

Freedom from constraint

When I say that the tyrant seeks freedom from constraint, I mean that he places no limits or restraints on what objects of desire he may choose to pursue nor does he place any restrictions on the means that he uses to achieve his desires. The tyrant is ruled by the appetitive part of his soul, specifically his unnecessary desires, so he places no constraint on the objects of his unnecessary appetites. I am thinking of external, social constraints like law and convention, as well as internal constraints like shame and normative beliefs. There may well be other sources of

⁸⁶ For example, it is common for interpreters of Plato to say that justice partly constitutes virtue and happiness. In the same way, hedonism and power both partly constitute the extreme freedom that the tyrant seeks, i.e. his injustice.

constraint that the tyrant seeks to free himself from, but I highlight those sources because they appear as sources of constraint in Socrates' narratives of each of the unjust souls. So, in the case of the tyrant, I will argue that he can be seen to release his appetites from the constraint of each. I will also argue that the progressive decline of the four unjust souls can be viewed as the progressive dissolution of the powers of law, convention, and normative beliefs.

Let me say more about how law, convention, and normative beliefs are sources of constraint. Law and convention constrain what objects of desire I pursue because some objects of desire run counter to law or convention. I might restrain myself from pursuing those objects because I believe that law and convention are good or admirable in some way, i.e. I might assume that the law is in my interest in some general way. Or I might follow law and convention out of fear of punishment or reprisal of some kind. In the same way, law and convention constrain what means I may use to achieve my desires. Normative beliefs—my beliefs about what is good, just, healthy, and fine—constrain my behavior because many objects of desire will oppose my beliefs.⁸⁷ Ideally, of course, I would not feel any desire for objects that do not accord with my normative beliefs.⁸⁸ But for most, normative beliefs serve as a limitation upon which desires to pursue. If I do not constrain myself, I feel shame or guilt for acting badly. Of course, there is considerable overlap between an individual's beliefs and their community's norms. Indeed, people often internalize normative beliefs from their family or community's conventions. At the same time, law and convention are an external form of normative beliefs.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ In place of normative beliefs, I might say something like “respect for virtue or the virtues” but I am trying to use broader language to recognize the fact that these characters likely do not have an advanced understanding of virtue theory, although they do all have some normative beliefs.

⁸⁸ The just soul would fit this description; a virtuous person fills their rational part with “fine arguments and investigations, which he has brought to an agreed conclusion within himself,” and satisfies the desires of the other parts of her soul to a moderate degree. As a result, spirit and appetite do not come into conflict with reason (571e-572a).

⁸⁹ Jonathan Lear argues that Plato introduces the city–soul analogy in the *Republic* because Plato recognizes the transactions between individual norms and a city's norms. Individual's normative beliefs influence the norms of a

After all, a city's laws and conventions are shaped by the individuals that make up the city. Thus, another way to put my point is that the tyrant desires to be constrained by no law, internal or external. The tyrant wants to be able to pursue any object of desire by any means necessary without shame, guilt, or fear of reprisal. To the tyrant's mind, this constitutes total freedom.

The tyrant's desire for freedom from constraint is rooted in a kind of Thrasymachean moral skepticism. In Book 1, Thrasymachus dismisses Socrates claim that justice is a virtue because justice truly serves the interest of the ruling class, not my own interests. According to Thrasymachus, obedience to the law and admiration of virtue is silly and naïve (338b). The life of injustice, however, is wise and good (348d). I will argue that this kind of skepticism of law and virtue pervades Socrates' analysis of injustice and reaches its pinnacle in the tyrannical soul. The tyrant behaves as if law and convention—or any constraint representing the common good or the good of another—is a threat to his own interests. As such, he seeks freedom from all such constraints.

Glaucon and Adeimantus

In Book 2, Glaucon and Adeimantus challenge Socrates to prove that the just life is always happier than the unjust life. In the first chapter of this dissertation, I argued that Glaucon challenges Socrates to prove that the just life is happier than the completely unjust life, i.e. the life of a tyrant. Adeimantus, on the other hand, challenges Socrates to demonstrate that the just life is happier than the incompletely unjust life. Books 8 and 9 constitutes Socrates' response to Glaucon and Adeimantus' request that Socrates defend justice by comparing it to both completely and incompletely unjust lives.

city and vice versa (Lear 1992). As a result, the normative character of a city will be analogous to the normative character of the individuals who make up the city.

If Socrates is to persuade Glaucon and Adeimantus that the just life is happier than the unjust life, then his descriptions of unjust lives should resemble Glaucon and Adeimantus' earlier defenses of injustice.⁹⁰ I suggest that my interpretation of the tyrant—and of the progressive decline of the unjust souls—provides such a resemblance. In my first chapter, I argued that Glaucon and Adeimantus defend different degrees of injustice. More specifically, I argued that Glaucon praises injustice practiced without constraint, while Adeimantus praises injustice practiced within constraint. In this chapter, I argue that the Socrates, like Glaucon and Adeimantus, differentiates between degrees of injustice by whether injustice is practiced within or without limitations.

I admit that 'injustice within or without constraint' is vague, but there is also resemblance between the details that Socrates uses to distinguish degrees of injustice and his interlocutors' speeches. Glaucon and Adeimantus use a person's relationship to law and convention to represent their degree of injustice. Glaucon's praise of injustice represents a radical departure from conventional moral views because he praises *in*justice as a virtue and a natural good (359c). Like Thrasymachus, he does not think that justice has any intrinsic goodness and argues that people only practice injustice because of "law and force" (359b, c). Since Glaucon treats law and virtue as counter to a person's true interest, he praises the life of the completely unjust man who shakes off such unnatural constraints (360b, 361a-b, 362b).

Adeimantus' praise of injustice is not nearly so radical. Most notably, when Adeimantus reports the conversation of a group of young people who choose to practice injustice, the youths

⁹⁰ Socrates' description of unjust lives need not perfectly duplicate Glaucon and Adeimantus' earlier descriptions, since Glaucon and Adeimantus may have misunderstood injustice in various ways. For example, Plato is defending a psychological account of injustice, and neither Glaucon nor Adeimantus described what injustice is in the soul. Moreover, Glaucon treated injustice as a virtue, and, in doing so, attributed powers to injustice that Socrates will not, since Socrates treats injustice as vice. However, Socrates' psychological account of injustice is meant to explain the conventional understanding of vice, so there should be some connections between Books 8 and 9 and Glaucon and Adeimantus' defenses of injustice in Book 2.

assume that justice is a virtue and take it for granted that injustice is evil (363b, 363c, 364b, 364c, 364d, 365a). However, while they accept that justice must be genuinely good in some sense—it is a virtue after all—injustice is often more profitable (364b). Nor do the traditional sources furnish sufficient rationale to recommend being just all the time (365b). As such, they conclude that the pursuit of perfect, absolute justice would be foolish. Rather, they would do well to be on the lookout for opportunities where they can get away with injustice while at the same time reaping significant advantage (365c-e). That is to say, the young people recognize that justice places some undesirable limitations on them, but they do not see justice as entirely bad. And they certainly do not suggest, like Thrasymachus and Glaucon, that justice is a counterfeit good peddled by one group in order to ensure the obedience of another (338c, 359a). Similarly, Adeimantus does not explicitly attribute any lawbreaking to the unjust people he describes. This makes sense because the perspective Adeimantus describes, while unjust, is not nearly as great a rejection of convention as Glaucon endorses. In turn, Adeimantus does not stipulate as great a rejection of law when he praises injustice.

That is all to say, Glaucon seems to conceptualize the extreme of injustice as injustice without any constraint, like the constraints of law and convention. Freedom from these constraints is desirable because law and moral norms are artificial, externally imposed limits that are not in one's interest.⁹¹ According to my interpretation of the tyrannical character, Socrates conceptualizes the extreme of injustice in a very similar way to Glaucon—albeit with more psychological detail. Like Glaucon, Socrates imagines that a extremely unjust person—a tyrant—will seek to free himself from law and virtue. However, Socrates will argue that this is not genuine freedom. In a tyrannical soul, only unnecessary appetites live without restraint, while

⁹¹ They are not in an individual's interest, so long as one can practice injustice without being caught. But there are no intrinsic drawbacks to injustice.

spirit and reason are constrained. Moreover, refusing to place any constraints on one's unnecessary appetites is destructive to a person's ability to have relationships with others.

Additionally, my reading of the decline from one unjust type to another matches the distinction between the degrees of injustice described by Glaucon and Adeimantus. Adeimantus indicates a lesser degree of injustice by describing people who choose to practice injustice within constraint because they take justice (and law and virtue) to have some value. I am not suggesting that the people Adeimantus describe necessarily conceive of themselves in this way, but their behavior and language suggest that they are more constrained by law and conventional moral views. I will argue that Socrates distinguishes lesser degrees of injustice in a similar way to Adeimantus.

The origin of the tyrannical character

Most commentators agree that the democratic character seeks freedom as his dominant end.⁹² In part, I expect this is why no one else has suggested that the tyrant seeks an end like freedom, as it would be odd for the tyrant and the democrat to seek the same end. I will speak to that objection later in this paper. But for now I want to point out that the democrat and the tyrant share the same origin story—a similarity which does not apply to any other pair of unjust souls. This origin story suggests that both the tyrant and the democrat seek freedom as their dominant end.

The tyrannical character is introduced as the son of a democratic father. As a child, he is raised by his father to have a democratic character. However, Socrates explain that the son transforms into a tyrannical character when “the same things happen to him as happened to his

⁹² Scott 2000, Santas 2001, Johnstone 2013

father” (572d). From the beginning, Socrates maintains that the democratic character and the tyrannical character share an origin story—like father, like son. The democratic character becomes democratic when he meets new associates who expose him to “multifarious pleasures of every degree of complexity and sort” (559d). The democrat’s new associates influence him to free his unnecessary pleasures (561a). The same happens to the young tyrant. He meets new associates, and “he is led into all the kinds of lawlessness that those leading him call total freedom” (572d). Lawlessness refers to lawless appetites, a subcategory of unnecessary appetites. Like the democrat, the young tyrant’s transformation is spurred by new associates who expose him to new pleasures.⁹³ Moreover, Socrates is clear that the new associates justify these pleasures in the name of “total freedom” (572d). Socrates speaks of these associates praising freedom in his description of the democrat’s origins as well (560e-561a).

The difference between the democrat and the tyrant’s origin stories emerges only later in life. Socrates describes the democrat living an extravagant and hedonistic youth characterized by the “freeing and release of useless and unnecessary pleasures” (561a). However, this pattern does not continue into the democrat’s later life. Rather, Socrates observes “if [the democrat] is lucky and does not go beyond the limits in his bacchic frenzy, and if, as a result of his growing somewhat older, the great tumult within him passes, he welcomes back some of the exiles and ceases to surrender himself completely to the newcomers” (561a-b). The exiles, presumably, refer to the necessary desires honored by the oligarch as well as the shame that the oligarch uses to keep his unnecessary desires in check (560d). The newcomers must be the unnecessary desires and pleasures provided to the democrat by his new associates (560e). At that point the democrat

⁹³ I will have more to say about who these associates are and how they influence the young in the following section.

becomes truly democratic, “putting all his pleasures on an equal footing” and honoring both necessary and unnecessary desires (561b).

The tyrant, however, never reaches an age where he welcomes back his more moderate desires or shame. Rather, unlike the democrat, the tyrant does “go beyond the limits in his bacchic frenzy” and, as a result, the “great tumult within him” never passes (561a,b). The tyrant, like the democrat, lives extravagantly and hedonistically during his youth. However, his transformation into a tyrant is ensured when his new associates, “these terrible enchanters and tyrant-makers... implant a powerful passion in him as the popular leader of those idle and profligate appetites” (573a). Under the control of passion, the young tyrant is “purged” of temperance and any beliefs or appetites in him that remain moderate “or are still moved by shame” are thrown out (573b). The point seems to be that the tyrant develops one particularly strong unnecessary appetite which overpowers any remaining necessary or moderate appetites. As a result, he never regains any moderation later in life.

Socrates attributes to the young democrat and the young tyrant the same origin story, albeit with different endings. They are both influenced to change by new associates who praise a life of “total freedom” (572d). As a result, I think it makes sense to understand both the democrat and the tyrant as seeking freedom. However, the democratic character develops a more limited approach to freedom for some reason. Perhaps it is he internalized more moderation from his oligarchic family. Rather than continue to pursue unnecessary pleasures to the same degree as he did in his youth, the mature democrat lives by honoring necessary and unnecessary desires equally (561b). The tyrant is the child of a democratic family, and so he would have internalized less moderation and less appreciation for necessary appetites than the child of an oligarchic family.

The tyrant frees his unnecessary appetites to an even greater extent than the democrat. For example, the tyrannical character is the only unjust character who acts on his lawless appetites. Lawless desires, by definition, are for objects that trespass law and convention, and they are “freed from all shame and wisdom” (571c). Socrates’ examples of lawless appetites include murder and incest. Additionally, Socrates consistently characterizes lawless desires in terms of freedom. They are “free of all control by shame or reason” and “there is nothing [they] won’t dare to do” (571c). Later, he repeats this sentiment noting that lawless appetites “have been released from slavery” (574d). In contrast, in the democrat and other unjust souls, lawless desires are only “freed” during sleep (574e). As such, the tyrant places fewer limitations of the objects of his appetites than any other character. Even the democrat limits his unnecessary appetites enough to prevent the growth of lawless appetites, which flourish only in the tyrannical soul. Additionally, Socrates maintains that the tyrant will dare anything to satisfy his unnecessary appetites: “there is no terrible murder, no food, and no act from which he will refrain... Passion lives like a tyrant within him in complete anarchy and lawlessness, as his sole ruler, and drives him, as if he were a city, to dare anything that will provide sustenance for itself and the unruly mob around it” (574e-575a). This passage indicates that the tyrant places no limits on the means that he will use to satisfy his appetites, just as he places not limits on the objects of desires.

I also think it is provocative that Socrates emphasizes that the tyrannical character is the least free of all the unjust souls. Socrates consistently returns to the question of freedom throughout his description of the tyrant. For example, Socrates notes that someone with a tyrannical nature is “always a master to one man and a slave to another and never getting a taste of either freedom or true friendship” (576a). He also argues that the tyrannical soul is “full of

slavery and unfreedom” (577d). Additionally, Socrates and Glaucon agree that the tyrannical person who becomes an actual political tyrant is even less happy than other tyrannical souls precisely because he is less free. Socrates argues that “a real tyrant is really a slave to the worst sorts of fawning and slavery” and “he is the only one in the city who cannot go abroad or look at the sights at which other free people yearn to look” (579b).

When describing how a democratic city deteriorates into a tyrannical city, Socrates blames the city’s “extreme freedom” for leading to its “extreme slavery” (564a). These passages are useful because they parallel the young tyrant’s transformation and because they help to illustrate how a love of “extreme freedom” can be a source of motivation. In a democracy transforming into a tyranny, Socrates describes the citizen’s disproportionate love of freedom. The citizens mock and abuse “those who obey the rulers as voluntary slaves” and praise “subjects who are like rulers” (562d, e). Sons develop the habit of “behaving like [their parents], feeling neither shame nor fear in front of his parents—all in order to be free” (562e). Elders “[imitate] the young for fear of being thought disagreeable and masterful” (563b). The result of this social climate is that citizen’s souls become so sensitive “that if anyone tries to impose the least degree of slavery, they get irritated and cannot bear it... they take no notice of the laws—written or unwritten—in order to avoid having any master at all” (563d-e). A democratic city becomes tyrannical because of the citizens’ disproportionate love of freedom. Socrates tells a similar story about the democrat’s son who becomes a tyrant. He is raised with a love of freedom that he learns from his democratic father, but the son’s love of freedom becomes extreme through his new associates. Anything other than the utmost freedom he rejects as slavery, and so he comes to reject all forms of constraint. He tolerates no master, whether law, convention, shame, or other people.

A final source of evidence for my interpretation comes from the *Gorgias*. In that dialogue, the interlocutors Callicles and Polus defend the tyrannical life as the happiest. Callicles and Polus suggest that the tyrannical life is happiest because the tyrant does whatever he pleases. That is, the tyrant enjoys unparalleled freedom. Polus initially praises the life of Archelaus, a contemporary tyrant ruling Macedonia. Archelaus epitomizes the tyrannical life because he dared to commit any crime in his pursuit of tyranny. Archelaus somehow succeeds at getting away with his crimes. Rather than being punished, he becomes the sole ruler of Macedonia and “lived out his life ruling in his city and doing whatever he likes” (473d).

Similarly, Callicles argues that “wantonness, lack of discipline, and freedom, if available in good supply, are excellence and happiness” (492c). Moreover, tyrants can “enjoy themselves free from any interference” and need not “bring as master upon themselves the law of the many, their talk, and their criticism” (492b). Callicles also shuns people like Socrates, who are “bound and gagged” by conventional moral views (482e). At its core, Polus and Callicles’ praise of the tyrannical life is a praise of a life without law or any constraint. The tyrant lives free of the laws of his city because he is above the law. No matter what he pleases to do, he knows that he will not be punished. He is also free of “the law of the many,” as Callicles puts it, so long as he refuses to constrain his behavior or his beliefs to conform to the moral views and criticisms of the many.

A great, winged drone

One of the reasons the tyrannical character is tricky to interpret is Socrates uses a somewhat odd metaphor to describe the tyrant’s dominant end. Socrates calls it a “powerful passion” that serves as the popular leader of his unnecessary appetites and compares it to a “great, winged drone” (572e-573a). A ‘drone’ is Plato’s general term for citizens who either

harm their city or serve no function. (552b-d, 564b, d)⁹⁴ Drones first appear among the poor class of citizens in the oligarchic city. Socrates says many of the drones in an oligarchic city will be petty criminals or idle citizens (552b-d). In the democratic city, the drones begin to play a role in ruling a city, and the drones gain more and more political power as a democratic city deteriorates into a tyrannical city. A political tyrant arises out of this class of drones, and the large class of drones supports his rule in a tyrannical city. All drones are ruled by their unnecessary appetites, which suggests that drones have tyrannical souls (559c).⁹⁵

Interpreters generally read the drones as idle or hedonistic characters. For example, Mark Johnstone describes drones as beggars and criminals who “hold no jobs and make no contribution to the city’s good” (Johnstone 430). Similarly, Karen Nielsen initially identifies the drones as “a class of corrupting idlers” and later describes the drones as “hedonistic idlers” (Nielsen 2023, 27, 29). This reading is tempting because the drones in a city seem to correspond to unnecessary desires in the soul—drones have more political power in the democratic and tyrannical cities just as unnecessary desires have more ruling power in those souls. And, as I have discussed elsewhere in this dissertation, unnecessary desires are often assumed to refer to bodily pleasures. Given that the tyrannical soul is ruled by a “great, winged drone,” a hedonistic reading of drones in a city lends itself to a hedonistic interpretation of the tyrannical character.⁹⁶

I think that the hedonistic interpretation of political drones is far too quick. Socrates seems to treat drones as a general category for bad citizens, and this is a much broader category than simply idlers, criminals, or hedonists. For example, there is ample evidence that Socrates

⁹⁴ In this way they are the political version of unnecessary appetites.

⁹⁵ This is confirmed when Socrates calls drones the bodyguards of political tyrants, and later remarks that many people with tyrannical characters will become the bodyguards of political tyrants (567d, 575b).

⁹⁶ Mark Johnstone is an example of this interpretation. Karen Nielsen reads drones in a city as hedonists and treats the tyrannical character’s drone as a desire for bodily pleasure. Yet, she ultimately argues that the tyrannical character seeks political power as his dominant end.

includes rhetoricians as drones.⁹⁷ Socrates calls the new associates who influence the young democrat and the young tyrant ‘drones,’ and these drones use rhetoric and “imposter arguments” to influence the young democrat and tyrant (559d, 560c). They tell the young democrat that reverence is foolishness, temperance is cowardliness, and moderation is boorish and illiberal (560d). Once they have driven out those norms, they praise and herald “arrogance, anarchy, extravagance, and shamelessness” (560e).⁹⁸

I don’t mean to imply that arguments rationally persuade the young democrat and tyrant. In the democratic and tyrannical souls, reason is greatly diminished, so whatever is going on here is unlikely to be objective scrutiny of arguments. Instead, I think Socrates describes influence via rhetoric akin to the rhetoric that can be easily observed in contemporary politics—as well as in the politics of Plato and Socrates’ Athens. Additionally, I acknowledge that rhetoric is not the only factor that influences the young democrat and tyrant; they are likely also motivated to change by the new pleasures that the drones expose them to. The drones’ rhetoric and pleasures contribute to the transformation of the young people. In this view, young people give up their beliefs partially because they are motivated to do so by new appetites and because they are influenced by rhetoric.⁹⁹¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Cinzia Arruzza suggests that drones refer to demagogues in the democratic city, but doesn’t include rhetoricians generally.

⁹⁸ Rhetoric also features in Socrates’ narrative of the young oligarch. Socrates suggests that the young oligarch gives up his father’s timocratic lifestyle when his father is brought to court by sycophants (553b). Socrates later confirms that sycophants are drones (575b). This suggests that rhetoricians are present even in the oligarchic city, although they gain more power in the democratic city. In the timocratic city,

⁹⁹ In this way, Socrates combines the views of Glaucon and Adeimantus. In Book 2, Glaucon argues that people become unjust because of natural human desires, while Adeimantus argues that people only become unjust because they have been persuaded by arguments.

¹⁰⁰ That the young democrat and tyrant are exclusively persuaded by pleasure is a common view. Johnstone writes that Socrates “assigns [the drones] an important role in corrupting the young by introducing them to assorted pleasures” (Johnstone 430). Nielsen argues that the young democrat and young tyrant are persuaded by “unnecessary desires nurtured by his new friends” (Nielsen 2023, 29).

One connection that has gone unremarked in the secondary literature is that the drones correspond to the flatterers Socrates describes at the end of Book 7. In that passage, Socrates observes that “we hold from childhood convictions about what things are just and fine; we are brought up with them as with our parents” (538c). However, flatterers can sway young people from these beliefs by appealing to young people with “pleasures that flatter the soul” (538c).¹⁰¹ Young people who have any degree of moderation can withstand such flattery. However, young people who cannot resist flattery are changed from “being law-abiding to lawless” (539a). As in Socrates’ descriptions of the young democrat and tyrant, the flatterers appear to be rhetoricians of some kind because they use rhetoric to persuade young people to give up their childhood convictions. Socrates describes the flatterers asking a young person to answer, “what is fine,” and then refuting the young person when he answers with a conventional belief (538d). Through repeated refutations, the flatterers lead the young person to believe that “the fine is no more fine than shameful, and the same with the just, the good, and the things he honored most” (538d-e). This description mirrors the process Socrates describes the young democrat and the young tyrant undergoing in Book 8.

What would the dronish desire to correspond to rhetoricians instead of the hedonistic reading mean? As is well known, Plato frequently critiques rhetoricians for being both useless and harmful, so those descriptors are still apt for the tyrannical character’s psychological drone.¹⁰² I think the critical point is that Plato’s drone metaphor need not suggest that the tyrant’s

¹⁰¹ The *Gorgias* also features a discussion of flattery and flatterers. In that dialogue, Socrates argues that there are four kinds of flattery: oratory, sophistry, pastry making, and cosmetology. The former two activities flatter the soul, while the latter flatter the body (463c, 464a). Socrates calls each of those four activities flattery as opposed to genuine crafts. None of them qualify as crafts because they aim at pleasure rather than considering what is truly best (465a). Oratory and sophistry are kinds of flattery that are solely concerned with “the soul’s way of getting its pleasure, without considering which of the pleasures is better or worse” (501b).

¹⁰² Useless and harmful are both descriptors that apply to unnecessary desires, so this reiterates that the tyrant is ruled by unnecessary desires (559b).

dominant end is a desire for bodily pleasure. Drones in the city refer to a broader category of people than commentators typically assume—from criminals to rhetoricians—so Socrates claims that a dronish desire rules the tyrant need not imply that the tyrant is a hedonist.¹⁰³

I have been using the word ‘rhetorician’ because it is a fairly general term for anyone who uses speech to influence others. However, I think I can be more precise about the rhetoric that Socrates is critiquing and blaming for the growth of injustice. Drones primarily rule the democratic city that is deteriorating into a democracy, and the fiercest drones “do all the talking and acting” while they “[settle] near the speaker’s platform” (564d). They specifically use rhetoric to breed enmity and faction between the rich and the poor (565b). Their rhetoric—and outright deception—leads the poor to “do injustice” against the rich (565b-c). In this political climate, a tyrant emerges as the popular leader of the poor and continues to create factions against the wealthy (565d, e). Plato seems to be accusing rhetoric that encourages faction of promoting injustice. I take the point to be that drones propagate the belief that one group’s good (in this case, the good of the wealthy) is a threat to the good of another (in this case, the poor). This is a kind of Thrasymachean rhetoric, for Thrasymachus similarly claimed that there are two factions in a city, the weak and the strong, whose interests always threaten each other. If one group comes to believe that law and convention are designed to protect the interest of one group, then injustice and lawbreaking do seem like a likely result. Plato is not specific about what rhetoric exactly is used to lead the poor to injustice. Still, it would make sense (in the context of the passage and the broader context of the dialogue) if it were a kind of Thrasymachean rhetoric that accuses law and virtue of protecting the interests of the wealthy.

¹⁰³ For example, the most recent interpretations of the tyrannical character (Johnstone 2016, Arruzza 2019, and Nielsen 2023) all treat the tyrant’s dronish desire as a desire for bodily pleasure.

I think a similar kind of Thrasymachean rhetoric is at play when Socrates describes the flatterers and drones influencing the young democrat and tyrant. Both Glaucon and Thrasymachus argue that justice is not truly a virtue. Glaucon calls justice wretched, foolish, and unmanly (360d, 359b). Thrasymachus calls justice foolish and naïve (338b). In both cases, their point is that justice does not truly serve the interest of the individual who practices it but rather the good of some other group. Insofar as justice requires following law and convention, those also constrain an individual's interest. Socrates describes the drones as telling the young, "reverence is foolishness, temperance is cowardliness, and moderation is boorish and illiberal" (560d). This sounds like a Thrasymachean critique of virtue, i.e., an argument that morality is not in the interest of most people.

Similarly, the flatterers claim that "the fine is no more fine than shameful" (538d). This kind of rhetoric makes sense as promoting a tyrannical character's desire for freedom from constraint. If he has acquired Thrasymachus' moral skepticism, then he may be skeptical of law, virtue, or any constraint that claims to represent the common good.

Interpreting the drone as a desire for freedom from constraint

I interpret the drone as representing the tyrant's desire for freedom from constraint, specifically the freedom to pursue unnecessary appetites free from constraints like law, convention, and moral beliefs. As others have pointed out, the drones in the city are people ruled by their unnecessary desires, so it makes sense to suggest that the drone comes from the class of unnecessary desires. Perhaps it sounds odd to think of freedom from constraint as an unnecessary desire. Still, Socrates does speak of freedom as an object of desire: he speaks of the democratic city's "insatiable desire" for freedom and speaks of people who seek freedom as their end (562c,

562e). And he notes that citizen drones call unnecessary and lawless appetites “total freedom” (572d).¹⁰⁴

One way to motivate my interpretation is to point to the function of the great, winged drone in the tyrant’s soul. The drone is implanted in the young tyrant by his new associates to influence him to live a lawless life (572e-573a). The tyrant’s psychological drone ensures the young person’s transformation from a democratic character to a tyrant. The drone ensures the young person’s transformation into a tyrant by serving as a “popular leader” of his soul’s unnecessary desires and promoting the growth of more unnecessary desires (572e, 573d, 575a). When Socrates describes the origins of the tyrannical city, he accuses a city’s desire for “extreme freedom” and “excessive and inappropriate freedom” as ensuring that the city will transform into a tyranny (564a, 569b). Indeed, Socrates observes that “tyranny probably does not evolve from any constitution other than democracy” because the desire for freedom brings about the transformation into a tyranny (564a). Additionally, Socrates blames a city’s “general permissiveness” for causing the growth of drones in a city (564d). By my interpretation, the beginning of tyranny, both political and psychological, is the desire for excessive freedom. In this way, the tyrant’s psychological drone serves the same function as extreme freedom in the tyrannical city’s origin.

Socrates also calls the drones a “popular leader” of the other unnecessary and lawless appetites. Unnecessary appetites are a diverse group, perhaps the most diverse group out of the various desires in a human soul. Unnecessary appetites include hedonistic pleasures—like

¹⁰⁴ Of course, the citizen drones do not do this mislabeling intentionally. They certainly do not think of their souls having different kinds of appetites, some better and some worse, some necessary and some unnecessary. Part of Socrates’ point is to analyze the ‘freedom’ of people with tyrannical souls to show that what they call ‘freedom’ is not actually desirable, and, as such, not truly freedom. The citizen drones (and anyone with a tyrannical soul) may believe that they are genuinely seeking freedom, although I think it is also possible that some people with tyrannical souls may not have a clear concept of what dominant end they are seeking, but their behavior still indicated they are seeking unconstrained satisfaction of unnecessary and lawless appetites.

alcohol and luxuries—as well as pleasures of the imagination—like theater—and even rhetoric and eristic.¹⁰⁵ It is hard to imagine what leader could unify such diverse appetites unless the leader was something with broad appeal, like a desire for total freedom. The hedonistic interpretation of the drone, which is by far the most common interpretation, maintains that the drone is a desire for bodily pleasure. Still, the desire for bodily pleasure is too narrow for Socrates to call it the popular leader of the varied unnecessary appetites within the young tyrant.

I want to consider a final noteworthy remark that Socrates makes about the tyrannical character's ruling drone. Socrates claims that the tyrannical character who becomes an actual political tyrant is someone who lives in a city among many other tyrannical characters and who has “in his soul the greatest and strongest tyrant of all” (575c-d). The tyrant in his soul refers to the drone, for Socrates calls the drone a psychological tyrant at various points (573b, 573d, 575a). So, whatever desire the drone refers to, it must make sense that having more of that desire could partly explain why someone would become a political tyrant. I think my interpretation provides this explanation. The most extreme form of freedom from constraint would be tyranny. A tyrant controls the law, so he is more free from the law than anyone else. Someone with a powerful desire for freedom from constraint would be motivated to seek political power for this reason.

Someone might wonder whether an extreme desire for freedom would cause a tyrannical person to be incapable of successfully becoming a political tyrant. A desire for freedom may seem incompatible with shrewd political calculations. After all, a tyrannical person may treat planning and prioritizing as limits upon himself, or his unconstrained appetite for unnecessary pleasures may be too great a distraction. I think Aristotle's distinction between decrees and laws

¹⁰⁵ See chapter two for my argument about the domain of unnecessary desires.

may be useful here (*Politics*, 1292a5-25).¹⁰⁶ Laws are more universal and more permanent than decrees. Psychologically, a law may be a general, overarching principle or action, like the democratic character's principle of equally satisfying necessary and unnecessary desires. Or a belief about the good may be a kind of psychological law, like the timocrat's belief that honor should be honored more than any other good. The tyrannical soul lacks these overarching principles of action, except his belief that such principles are constraints. However, his commitment to not letting general principles constrain his behavior need not imply that he is unwilling to follow practical constraints and plans to achieve his ends. Like decrees, these practical constraints would be limited to particular situations and ends.

Progressive degrees of injustice

In this section, I want to support my interpretation of the tyrannical character by arguing that each progressively unjust soul shows less and less respect for constraints like law, convention, and moral beliefs. As such, the tyrant represents the pinnacle of this pattern of injustice. I will review each unjust soul's relationship to law and convention.¹⁰⁷ The timocrat is "very submissive to rulers," and his belief that honor is the good indicates that he will also respect convention (549a). After all, attaining honor in his community will require that he follow convention.¹⁰⁸ The oligarch's pursuit of money requires that he maintain a good reputation, at

¹⁰⁶ This comparison comes to mind because Aristotle argues that demagogues and tyrants rule by decree, not by law (*Politics*, 1292a5-25).

¹⁰⁷ Julia Annas similarly suggests that the decline of unjust souls can be understood as the progressive rejection of law, although she does not develop this point and focuses more on the progressive rejection of law in the unjust cities. She writes, "the decline, in Books 8 and 9, of the virtuous person is familiar as a series of increasingly destructive choices made by an individual at the four stages of timocrat, oligarch, democrat, and tyrant. This is a decline in character; at each stage the person's character has been worsened by previous choices and way of life, so that each further choice leads to an even worse character and way of life. It's less familiar, though equally stressed in Plato, that this degeneration is also a progressive rejection of law" (Annas 2017, 15).

¹⁰⁸ James Wilberding argues that this is why Plato ranks the timocrat as second best, after the philosophical soul. While believing that honor is the good may sound like being a slave to popular favor, the timocrat cares about what other people, and his community more generally, think, and, as a result, will be a reliable friend and community member (Wilberding 2009).

least insofar as he requires a good reputation in order to do business. Socrates notes that he “has a good reputation and is thought to be just” in contractual matters, and he will “be more respectable than many other people” (554c, 554e, 554a). However, the oligarch’s respectability only lasts as long as his own money is at stake. When he can use other people’s money without getting caught, he is willing to trespass convention and respectability (554c). The democrat is not described as breaking any laws, but he does indulge his unnecessary appetites more than any other type. His lifestyle of “gratifying the appetite of the moment” suggests that he may be willing to trespass law and convention (561c). And unlike the oligarch and the timocrat, the democrat is not concerned about his reputation. The tyrant, of course, is described as breaking many laws, and his lawless appetites are called lawless because their objects trespass law and convention (574d-e, 575b).

I will now consider the relationship of each soul to its normative beliefs. I will also consider what Socrates says about shame, as shame is an emotion that serves as an internal constraint, motivating me to do what is fine, just, and so on.¹⁰⁹ The oligarch and timocrat are similar in that they have an apparent guiding belief about the good—or at least about what will best promote their own happiness. Plato generally attributes shame to the spirited part of the soul, so it would make sense that the timocrat has a strong sense of shame. Socrates does not explicitly speak of the oligarch’s sense of shame but is described as using “compulsion and fear”

¹⁰⁹ I might also think of shame as internal motivation to do what is conventional (whether or not I believe it is truly good). I think this is sometimes the case, and I take this point to again underscore the continuum between internal and external law. Shame at any rate is an internal punishment (as opposed to externally inflicted embarrassment), so I think it makes sense to discuss it with normative beliefs because I am trying to draw out the progressive rejection of both internal and external constraints. Additionally, if I feel shame at violating a convention (even one I do not believe is truly good), then it may be because I believe that following convention itself is good (to some degree). This may be because following convention is in my self-interest, and I feel shame for not acting with prudence. Or shame because I have made other people uncomfortable or disrupted my community to some degree.

to tame his unnecessary appetites (554d).¹¹⁰ His spirited part admires and honors wealth, so presumably, he feels shame at spending money or not having enough wealth (553d). The oligarch's distinction between better and worse appetites is an example of internal law (554e).

The young democrat's transformation is described as a battle between his unnecessary appetites and his sense of shame. His oligarchic family appeals to and tries to enforce his sense of shame and moderation, while the drones encourage his unnecessary appetites to multiply (560a-b, 560d-e). Moreover, his transformation is described as a radical change in his normative beliefs. He loses the respect he once had for temperance and reverence and begins to honor shamelessness, extravagance, and anarchy (560e). However, the democrat eventually regains some respect for moderation and order, and this is the point at which he establishes his overarching principle of satisfying necessary and unnecessary appetites equally (561a). Moreover, the fact that the democrat eventually regains some shame and moderation separates him from the tyrant. As I pointed out earlier, the tyrant and the democrat share the same origin—drones persuade them to multiply their unnecessary pleasures—but the tyrant “goes beyond the limits in his bacchic frenzy” (561a). Socrates ultimately calls the democrat's life “neither illiberal nor lawless” (571d). Like the democrat, the tyrant's adolescence is marked by the loss of his childhood normative beliefs and the loss of his sense of shame: “his old childhood beliefs about fine or shameful things—beliefs that are accounted just—are mastered by the new [appetites] that have been released from slavery” (573d-e).

It will also be useful to attend to the generational metaphor that frames Socrates' discussion of the unjust characters. Each character is introduced as the child of the former: the

¹¹⁰ This description of the oligarch is interesting because it acknowledges why the tyrant's unconstrained life would seem appealing. After all, ruling oneself by force cannot be enjoyable, and doing whatever I please starts to look pretty desirable in comparison.

timocrat is imagined as the son of a just father, the oligarch is the son of a timocratic father, the democrat is the child of an oligarchic family, and so on. A child's relationship with their parents and family is related to his respect for law, convention, and normative beliefs. Indeed, part of Plato's motivation for using the familial metaphor is that a person's relationship with their family can stand in for their relationship to norms and conventions. For example, at the end of Book 7, Socrates uses a young person's respect for their family as a metaphor for their respect for normative values like justice and honor (537e-538e). Plato's metaphor works because parents are typically the primary source of a child's values and beliefs. A shift in a young person's normative beliefs may influence a change in their relationship with their parents and vice versa. Moreover, how a child ought to interact with her parents is itself a social convention, so a child's respect or disrespect for her parents may signal her general respect for convention. Additionally, Socrates plays on the terms 'fatherland' and 'motherland' to point out the parallels between someone's respect for his city—particularly that city's laws and conventions—and a person's respect for their parents (575d).

That is all to say, how each character treats their family demonstrates each character's relationship to law, convention, and normative beliefs. Moreover, the fact that Socrates seems to be using the familial metaphor—at least in part—to indicate each character's respect for convention and norms suggests that the latter is key to understanding what is going wrong with the unjust characters. Socrates describes the timocrat as most concerned with the opinions of his family. He “listens to what his father says” and watches him closely, but the timocrat is torn because his mother criticizes his father's way of life (550a, 549c-9). Ultimately, he “compromises on a middle way” between the recommendations of his parents (550b). As a child, the oligarch emulates his father but “then sees him suddenly crashing against the city as against a

reef” and “immediately throws the honor-loving and spirited element headlong from the throne in his own soul” (553a-b). While that may sound like a complete rejection of his father, the oligarch’s rejection of his father’s way of life is still significantly different from that of the democrat and tyrant.

The democrat and tyrant are both persuaded to reject their family’s way of life—and their childhood convictions—by flatterers. Socrates spends considerable time describing the deterioration of the democrat’s relationship with his oligarchic family (559d-561a). I think Socrates is trying to emphasize that the democrat and the tyrant prefer the company of drones and flatterers because the drones provide them with pleasures. As Socrates marvels, “for the sake of his latest love, an unnecessary girlfriend, [the tyrant] would strike his mother, who is his oldest and necessary friend” (574b). The tyrant and the democrat reject their family’s ways for the sake of pleasure, and this rejection is different in kind from the oligarch, who seems to reject his father’s way of life out of fear for his material well-being (553b). The tyrant, moreover, does more than reject his family’s conventions. He steals from his parents and uses force against them (574a, b). He believes he deserves to outdo his parents (574a). He would even enslave them (574c).

Plato’s familial metaphor serves another purpose that I think is worth mentioning. Each character’s relationship with his family may generally stand for his relationships with others. For example, it seems like the democrat and the tyrant will decide who to have a relationship with solely based on whether they please him—in the same way, that they chose the drones over their families based on the pleasures the drones provide. Such an approach to relationships seems to preclude the possibility of genuine friendship. It is hard to imagine the democrat helping a friend through a difficult time, since that would be an unenjoyable inconvenience to him. Similarly, it is

hard to imagine he would listen to any critique of his lifestyle from a friend who is genuinely concerned about his well-being. I point this out because the progressive deterioration of the quality of the unjust character's relationships likely plays a large role in their progressive unhappiness. For example, "[people] with a tyrannical nature live their entire lives without ever being friends with anyone, always masters to one man or slaves to another" (576a)

Can the democrat and tyrant both seek freedom?

It may still seem unlikely that both the tyrant and the democrat seek freedom as their dominant end. The rationale behind this doubt is twofold. One, the injustice of the unjust souls is closely associated with the goods they seek. If the democrat and the tyrant both seek the same good, then that suggests that their injustice is the same. If their injustice is the same, then they cannot represent two distinct stages of injustice. Two, the goods sought by the unjust souls correspond to their psychology, specifically to the ruling power of the soul. My claim that the tyrant and the democrat seek the same dominant end may obscure their psychological differences.

The most general response to this concern is that the democrat and the tyrant differ in the extent to which they pursue freedom. The democrat's freedom is moderated by his commitment to treating his necessary and unnecessary appetites equally. The tyrant seeks freedom without concern for treating his unnecessary and necessary desires equally. Therefore, the two characters do not pursue precisely the same end, thus representing two distinct degrees of injustice.

However, it is true that the distinction between the goods sought by the democrat and the tyrant may appear narrower than the distinction between the goods sought by any other sequence of unjust souls. For example, the just soul and the timocrat seek wisdom and honor, respectively,

while the timocrat and the oligarch seek honor and money. However, the affinity between the goods sought by the tyrant and the democrat makes sense because they have relevant similarities between their lives and psychologies. As I discussed, the origin of their transformations from one psychological constitution to another is far more similar than the origins of any other two souls. Their origins begin with new associates who influence them to release their unnecessary appetites in the name of total freedom.

Additionally, it makes psychological sense that their origins are similar. Both the tyrant and the democrat transition from an early life ruled by their appetitive desires to adulthood ruled by a different group of appetitive desires. More importantly, both the democrat and the tyrant degenerate by ceding more power to their unnecessary appetites. The democrat cedes equal rule to his unnecessary appetites, while the tyrant cedes all power to his unnecessary desires. Since their transitions are marked by the empowerment of the same subcategory of desires, then it makes sense for them to seek closely related ends. In contrast, the timocrat and oligarch degenerate by the growth of spirit and necessary appetites.

Perhaps my suggestions that the tyrant seeks freedom makes it seem like the distinction between the democrat and the tyrant is finer than the distinction between the democrat and the oligarch. However, Plato maintains that the democrat is halfway between the oligarch and the tyrant. My claim that the democrat and tyrant both seek freedom may be compatible with the democrat being halfway between the oligarch and the tyrant. When Plato says that the democrat is midway between the tyrant and the oligarch, he is speaking of psychology. The democrat is ruled equally by unnecessary and necessary appetites, so he is midway between the oligarchic soul, governed solely by necessary desires, and the tyrannical soul, ruled by unnecessary desires.

So far, my interpretation is compatible; since the democrat is only partly ruled by unnecessary desires, he will seek freedom to a lesser degree.

In terms of the psychological composition of the ruling class of the democrat, the democrat is halfway between the tyrant and the oligarch. If my claim that they both seek freedom sounds like the democrat is more like the tyrant than the oligarch, I think that is because of the progressive rejection of constraint from one soul to another. The democrat and the tyrant are the two most unjust characters, so they reject constraint more than any other soul. One consequence is that it is harder to pin down what end exactly they pursue because they are the least likely to constrain what appetites they pursue. They do not accept that some appetites are better than others, so they have no reason to pursue one appetite—like honor or money—more than another. As a result, it makes sense that Socrates must define their dominant end in more general terms, like freedom within or without constraint. The more general terms may sound too similar to represent different types, but Socrates provides sufficient psychological detail to argue that the democrat is midway between the oligarch and the tyrant.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have defended a novel interpretation of the tyrannical character. Rather than essentializing his hedonistic or power-seeking behaviors, I propose that the tyrant should be understood as one who seeks freedom from all constraints, including those of law and virtue. The tyrant rejects these constraints out of skepticism that they—or any measures purported to protect the common good—could serve his interests. Consequently, he believes that liberating himself from such constraints best serves his own advantage.

In presenting this interpretation, I aim to highlight aspects of the text that have not received sufficient attention. For instance, my interpretation underscores that the progressive

deterioration of unjust characters parallels a gradual decline in respect for law and convention. Furthermore, I have demonstrated the significant similarities between democratic and tyrannical characters—similarities not observed in any other pair of souls. Both the democrat and the tyrant, influenced by drones, reject many of their childhood convictions and adopt more permissive lifestyles. Psychologically, both the democrat and the tyrant are marked by the growth of the same part of the soul: unnecessary appetites. Additionally, I have argued that drones—central figures in Socrates’ narrative of the decline of cities and souls—encompass rhetoricians, idlers, and hedonists.

I hope to demonstrate that Socrates’ portrayal of the tyrannical character aligns more closely with the challenges Glaucon and Adeimantus pose than previously recognized. Similar to Glaucon and Adeimantus, Socrates distinguishes between degrees of injustice based on an individual's relationship to constraints such as virtue and law. The more unjust a person is, the less they value these constraints and the less they believe such constraints benefit them. Socrates constructs a narrative that acknowledges both Glaucon’s argument, which attributes injustice to human nature, and Adeimantus’ argument, which attributes it to flawed reasoning. The rhetoric of the drones partly fuels the tyrant’s injustice, as Adeimantus suggests, but it is also driven by unnecessary and lawless appetites inherent in human nature. However, in most individuals, these lawless appetites are restrained “by the laws and our better appetites allied with reason” (571a). Only in the tyrannical soul are these appetites unleashed in the pursuit of total freedom.

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Conclusion

In a conventional interpretation of Plato's *Republic*, the dialogue begins with three equivalent challenges to the just life presented by Thrasymachus, Glaucon, and Adeimantus. Each rejects Socrates' claim that the just life is the eudaimon life, instead praising injustice. Their arguments represent a kind of moral scepticism, suggesting that justice does not benefit the individual but serves the good of others. In their view, injustice is advantageous to the individual, and the more injustice, the better. They argue that the ideal life is that of an entirely unjust tyrant. A tyrant, ruling alone for personal gain, exists above the law and flouts rules whenever he pleases without facing consequences.

As such, the interlocutors challenge Socrates to demonstrate that a just life is happier than a tyrannical one. Socrates first explains that justice constitutes a harmonious and well-ordered soul. He then describes four types of unjust lives, focusing on the tyrannical soul as the epitome of complete injustice. Socrates argues that the tyrannical soul is unjust due to its domination by an insatiable desire for bodily, hedonistic pleasure. This overwhelming lust drives the tyrant to commit the most lawless acts, even to the extent of seizing control of their city. Although a life governed by such overwhelming desires may seem pleasurable, it is neither genuinely free nor happy because the soul is in a constant state of longing, with lust tyrannizing the soul.

My project in this dissertation has been to challenge this conventional reading of the *Republic*. Despite its popularity, I see many problems with this reading. The interlocutors' challenges, which prompt Socrates' speech, are treated as uniform. Yet, despite three similar praises of the tyrannical life, Socrates describes a tyrant who seems to have little resemblance to the tyrant that the interlocutors praised. Moreover, the character that Socrates describes as tyrannical does not seem like someone who could or would become an actual political tyrant.

There are deeper problems here, too. This interpretation assumes that all unnecessary appetites—those that rule the tyrannical soul—must be desires for bodily pleasure, but insufficient textual evidence supports that conclusion. Additionally, if all three interlocutors praise the tyrannical life, why does Socrates describe four different degrees of injustice?

I develop an alternative interpretation of injustice in the *Republic*. I argue that there are at least two different challenges posed to Socrates by his interlocutors. That is, there are two distinct praises of injustice. Glaucon praises the tyrannical life. The tyrant believes injustice is a natural good and seeks to practice injustice without constraint. Adeimantus praises a life of injustice practiced within some constraints. The unjust people that Adeimantus praises accept that justice is a virtue, and so, on some level, there must be something good about justice. This means that there must be something bad about justice which makes complete injustice undesirable. They are keen to bend law and convention to suit their advantage, but they do not radically reject law and convention to the same degree that Glaucon's tyrant does.

Socrates must respond to each of these challenges. He must demonstrate that a just life is happier than a completely unjust life, and he must argue that it is happier than a life that tries to combine the best advantages of justice and injustice. Socrates does this by comparing the just life to four degrees of injustice. The first three represent justice practiced with some common forms of restraint, like concern for honor or money. The tyrannical soul is characterized by his rejection of all forms of constraint—he sees all law and convention as a limit on his good. The tyrannical character with an especially extreme desire for freedom from constraint is someone who may well become a political tyrant. To his perspective, political tyranny would seem highly desirable: someone who rules his city can do as he pleases without any person or law getting in his way.

In these ways, my reading of the *Republic* makes greater sense of Socrates' response to his interlocutors than standard readings, especially the hedonistic reading. Moreover, Plato's psychology does not restrict him to depicting the tyrannical soul as hedonistic. Discussions of injustice in the *Republic* often fail to specify what they take to be the domain of appetite, particularly the unnecessary appetites that rule in the most unjust souls. Others assume that unnecessary appetites are restricted to bodily pleasures. However, Socrates' examples of unnecessary appetites throughout the text include a wider range of desires: bodily pleasures, pleasures of the imagination, flattery, showing off, disputation, and more.

Does Socrates succeed at demonstrating that the just life is happier than the unjust life? Plato depicts Glaucon and Adeimantus as convinced, and this makes sense. Socrates responds to each of their concerns. As requested, he explains what justice and injustice are in the soul without reference to reputation and delineates multiple degrees of injustice. Further, Socrates responds to their conceptions of injustice. For example, like Glaucon, he identifies the extreme of injustice as a radical rejection of law and convention. Similarly, he incorporates both human nature and popular rhetoric into his narrative of how injustice arises in individuals. Glaucon maintained that people choose to do injustice because human nature seeks injustice. At the same time, Adeimantus argued that people only seek to do injustice due to listening to various kinds of rhetoric.

In the case of the tyrant, Socrates demonstrates that someone who seeks freedom from constraint cannot have genuine relationships with others, which Glaucon fails to appreciate in his praise of the tyrannical life. Glaucon imagines that an unjust person can provide himself with friends because of the profits and advantages he reaps from injustice (361b, 362c). However, a genuine friendship would constrain a tyrannical person's freedom, so, as Socrates says, "those

with a tyrannical nature live their entire lives without ever being friends with anyone, always masters to one man or slaves to another" (576a). Moreover, the tyrannical person's freedom is illusory. While his unnecessary desires are free, the other parts of his soul are enslaved (577d).

Whether or not Socrates' argument persuades contemporary readers is a trickier question. Much will depend on how persuasive one finds Socrates' description of justice in the soul, which is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

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