

## X

### THE ANALOGY OF CITY AND SOUL IN PLATO'S *REPUBLIC*

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In making the first construction of the city, there is an assumption that it should be able to tell us something about *δικαιοσύνη* in the individual: we look to the larger inscription to help us read the smaller one, 368d. But, as Plato indeed implies, the larger inscription will help with the smaller only if they present the same message. What is Plato's reason for expecting the same message? Basically, it is that *δίκαιος* applies to both cities and men, and that it signifies one characteristic: 'So the just man will not differ at all from the just city, so far as the character of justice is concerned, but will be like it' (*καὶ δίκαιος ἄρα ἀνὴρ δικαίᾳ πόλει κατ' αὐτὸ τὸ τῆς δικαιοσύνης εἶδος οὐδὲν διοίσει, ἀλλ' ὅμοιος ἔσται*; 435b). That there should be some kind of analogy between cities and men in respect of their being *δίκαιος* would seem to be a presupposition of asking the question 'what is *δικαιοσύνη*?' and expecting one answer to it.

Indeed at 434e Plato says that when we transfer what we have said about the city back to the man, we may find that it does not work out; but the moral will be that we should go back and try again and 'perhaps by looking at the two side by side and rubbing them together, we may make justice blaze out, like fire from two sticks'. Plato clearly has a fair confidence that this technique will work: his confidence is in what I shall call the *analogy of meaning*.

At 435e, however, he takes what is in fact a different tack. Proceeding there to the division of the soul, he seems at first sight to be backing up the 'analogy of meaning'. 'Are we not absolutely compelled to admit that there are in each one of us the same kinds and characteristics as there are in the city? For how else could they have got there? It would be ridiculous to imagine that among peoples who bear the reputation for being spirited . . . the spirited character in their states does not come from the individual

citizens, etc.' This looks as though it means that we call a city, people, etc. 'spirited' because most or all of its individual persons can be called 'spirited'—and for certain terms, this style of account is very reasonable.

But for such terms (the three examples that Plato gives at 435e correspond, it is worth noting, to the three elements of his analogy), so far from having something that backs up the previous principle of finding a common characteristic in virtue of which both cities and men are called so-and-so, we have something that defeats it. For if we say that '*F*' is applied to the city just because it is applied to the men, we have already explained how the term can be applied to both cities and men, and to go on from there to look for a similar explanation of how '*F*' applies to men is at least pointless, since the phenomenon which set off the search for the analogy in the first place, viz. the fact that '*F*' applies to both cities and men, has already been explained. If, moreover, the rule for applying '*F*' to cities is taken as itself the common *lógos* that we were looking for, then we have not just pointlessness but absurdity, since the common *lógos* will have to be something like '*x* is *F* if and only if *x* has constituent parts which are *F*', which leads to a regress. Thus the argument at 435e, so far from backing up the 'analogy of meaning', defeats it.

Plato in any case does not seem to think that every term which can be applied to both cities and men obeys the rule of 435e. Thus at 419a ff. (the beginning of book 4), answering Adeimantus' objection that the guardians get a thin time of it, Socrates says that a city's being sublimely happy does not depend on all, most, the leading part, or perhaps any, of its citizens being sublimely happy, just as a statue's being beautiful does not depend on its parts being severally beautiful. This contradicts the principle of 435e, and certainly contains a truth. Leaving the importantly, and indeed deeply, contentious case of 'happy', we can certainly agree that a large crowd of sailors is not necessarily a crowd of large sailors, while an angry crowd of sailors, on the other hand, is a crowd of angry sailors. So what Plato has here are two classes of term: one class ('angry', 'spirited', etc.) obeys the rule of 435e, which we may call *the whole-part rule*; while the other class ('large', 'well-arranged', etc.) does not.

However, Plato does not proceed along the lines of this distinction. Rather, for an indeterminately large class of terms, possibly including *δικαιοσύνη*, he wants to say both:

- (a) A city is *F* if and only if its men are *F*;

and

- (b) The explanation of a city's being *F* is the same as that of a man's being *F* (the same *εἶδος* of *F*-ness applies to both).

The combination of these, as we have already seen, could lead to a regress, but Plato avoids this by holding (a) only for the city–man relation, and not for the relation of the man to any further elements—that is to say, he does not take (a) as itself identifying the λόγος of *F*-ness. Thus ‘*F*’ does not occur again in the explanation of what it is for a man to be *F*: at that stage, it is reduced to something else. Thus the explanation of a man’s being δίκαιος, and the λόγος of δικαιοσύνη in general, are alike given us by the formula

- (c) Each of the elements (λογιστικόν, θυμοειδές, and ἐπιθυμητικόν) does its job,

which of course implies

- (d) λογιστικόν rules.

Applying (a) to the particular case of δικαιοσύνη, we get

- (e) A city is δίκαιος if and only if its men are;

While at the same time, for a city as for a man, we have the requirement that its being δίκαιος consists in (c)’s being true. But what does (c) mean of a city? For like cities, the elements of cities consist of men: and how are the characters of these elements to be explained? Here it seems the whole–part rule must certainly apply—it was, we remember, with reference to these characteristics that Plato introduced us to it. We shall have

- (f) An element of the city is logistic, thymoeidic, or epithymetic if and only if its men are.

But the δικαιοσύνη of a city, as of anything else, consists in (c)’s being true. So in order to be δίκαιος, a city must have a logistic, a thymoeidic, and an epithymetic element in it. Since it must have an epithymetic element, it must, by (f), have epithymetic men: in fact, it is clear from Plato’s account that it must have a majority of such men, since the lowest class is the largest. So a δίκαιος city must have a majority of epithymetic men. But an epithymetic man—surely—is not a δίκαιος man; if he is not, then the city must have a majority of men who are not δίκαιος, which contradicts (e).

This contradiction is, I believe, powerfully at work under the surface of the *Republic*. Remaining still at a very formal and schematic level, we get another view of it by asking what follows if we accept (e) and also take the analogy between city and soul as seriously as Plato at some points wants us to. Since the men are δίκαιοι, of each man (d) will be true, and λογιστικόν (no doubt in some rather restricted way) will be at work in each member even of the lowest and epithymetic class. Some minimal exercise of λογιστικόν would seem to be involved in bringing it about that each man sticks to his own business, which is the most important manifestation of

social *δικαιοσύνη*: though it is very notable that Plato repeatedly uses formulations abstract and impersonal enough to prevent such questions pressing to the front. (A very striking example of this is at the point where *δικαιοσύνη* is first, after the hunt through the other cardinal virtues, pinned down. At 433c–d we have a reference to the beneficent effects of the *φρόνησις* of the guardians, but by contrast with this, ‘that which is in’ (*τοῦτο . . . ἐνόν*) even slaves, artisans, women, etc., and which makes the city good, is represented not as a characteristic of theirs, but merely as a *fact*, that each minds his business (*ὅτι τὸ αὐτοῦ ἕκαστος εἰς ὧν ἔπραττε καὶ οὐκ ἐπολυπραγμόνει*; 433d4–5). Clearly, this fact cannot be ‘in’ these people—the question is, what has to be in these people to bring about this fact.)

But now if the epithymetic class has in this way to exercise some *λογιστικόν*, and this helps it to stick to its tasks, recognize the rulers, and so forth, and if we read this result back through the analogy to the individual soul, we shall reach the absurd result that the *ἐπιθυμητικόν* in a just soul harkens to *λογιστικόν* in that soul through itself having an extra little *λογιστικόν* of its own. Recoiling from this absurdity, we recognize that in the individual soul, the *ἐπιθυμητικόν* cannot really harken; rather, through training, the desires are weakened and kept in their place by *λογιστικόν*, if not through the agency, at least with the co-operation, of *θυμοειδές*. If with this fact in our hand we come back once more across the bridge of the analogy to the city, we shall find not a *δίκαιος* and logistically co-operative working class, but rather a totally logistic ruling class holding down, with the help of a totally thymoeidic military class, a weakened and repressed epithymetic class; a less attractive picture. The use of the analogy, it begins to seem, is to help Plato to have it both ways.

Does Plato intend us to accept the proposition (*e*), that the citizens of the *δίκαιος* city are themselves *δίκαιοι*? The question is not altogether easy. The passage 433–4, from which I have already quoted the most notable evasion, manages to create the impression that the answer must be ‘yes’ without, so far as I can see, ever actually saying so. An important contributory difficulty here is the point which has been often remarked, that the earlier account of *σωφροσύνη* has left *δικαιοσύνη* with not enough work to do, so that it looks like merely another way of describing the same facts. In the case of *σωφροσύνη*, he comes out and says that it is a virtue of all citizens (431e–432a); but the route to this conclusion has several formulations which make even this seem shaky (431b–d, particularly: ‘the desires in the many and vulgar are mastered by the desires and the wisdom in the few and superior’). The tension is always the same. The use of the analogy is supposed in the upshot to justify the supreme rule of a logistic element in the city, where this element is identified as a class of persons; and it jus-

tifies it by reference to the evident superiority of a soul in which the logistic element controls the wayward and chaotic desires. But this will work only if the persons being ruled bear a sufficient resemblance to wayward and chaotic desires—for instance, by being persons themselves controlled by wayward and chaotic desires. And if they are enough like that, the outcome of Plato's arrangements will be less appealing than first appears.

Suppose, then, we give up the proposition that all or most people in the *δίκαιος* city are *δίκαιοι*; thus we give up the whole-part rule for *δικαιοσύνη*. We might, at the same time, put in its place something rather weaker than the whole-part rule, which we might call *the predominant section rule*:

- (g) A city is *F* if and only if the leading, most influential, or predominant citizens are *F*.

The effect of using (g) with *δικαιοσύνη* is of course to cancel any implication that the citizenry at large are *δίκαιοι*—it merely gives us something that we knew already, that the guardians are *δίκαιοι*. But the importance of (g) is in no way confined to the case of *δικαιοσύνη*—it is a rule which Plato appeals to often, and particularly in his discussions of the degenerate forms of city in book 8. It is in the light of the *predominant section* idea that we should read the reiteration of the whole-part idea which introduces those discussions at 544d. If we look at some of the things that Plato says about the degenerate cities, this will lead us back again to the just city, and to the ineliminable tension in Plato's use of his analogy.

With the degenerate cities, it is clear in general that not all the citizens are of the same character as the city, and there are references to citizens of a different character. The tyrannical city is, not surprisingly, that in which there is most emphasis on the existence of citizens different in character from the tyrant: 577c, 'the whole, so to speak, and the best element is dishonourably and wretchedly enslaved'; cf. 567a, 568a, 'the best people hate and flee the tyrant'. In other kinds of city, there may be a minority of citizens of a character inferior to that of the city as a whole: there may be a few men of tyrannical character in cities where the majority is law-abiding (575a); if few, they have little influence, but if there are many, and many others who follow their lead, then they produce a tyrant (575c). We can notice here that even in a tyranny there is a requirement that a substantial and influential section of the citizens should share the character of the city. Again, at 564d we are told that the 'drones' are already present in an oligarchy, but in a democracy they become the leading element (*τὸ προσεστώδες αὐτῆς*).

The democracy, however, presents a special difficulty. Plato says that the distinguishing mark of a democracy is that it is the state in which one finds

men of every sort (*παντοδαποί*; 557c), and like a garment of many colours it is decorated with every sort of character (*πᾶσιν ἡθεσιν*; *ibid.*). Having said this, it would be impossible for Plato to say that all the citizens were 'democratic' men as described at 561d—always shifting, without expertise in anything, prepared to indulge any *ἐπιθυμία*, etc. Nor should it be easy for him to say that the majority are such men. Yet this is precisely what he has to say. The 'predominant section' rule says that the character of the state is derived from that of the ruling citizens. In the cases where the rulers are few, this will not necessarily imply much about the character of other citizens, for the few may hold their power by force, threats, etc. (as in the case of the tyrannical state, already considered: and cf. 551b, the origin of the oligarchy). Plato says that a democracy will also come into being by threat of force, 557a—but this is merely *vis-à-vis* the ruling oligarchs. A democracy is a state in which the many rule, and if it gets its character from that of its rulers, then the majority must have a 'democratic' character. This, on the face of it, sorts none too well with the claim that the democratic state will particularly tend to contain all sorts of character—the 'democratic' character seems in fact to be a special sort of character. Moving between the social and the individual level once more, Plato seems disposed to confound two very different things: a state in which there are various characters among the people, and a state in which most of the people have a various character, that is to say, a very shifting and unsteady character.

These people, moreover, are the same people that constitute the lowest class in the *δίκαιος* city; so we are led back once more to the question we have already encountered, of how, consistently with Plato's analogy and his political aims, we are to picture their quiescent state when *λογιστικόν* (in the form of other persons) rules. It may be said that in the difficulties we have found about this, we have merely been pressing the analogy in the wrong place. The essential analogy here might be claimed to be this; just as there is a difference between a man who is controlled by *λογιστικόν* and a man who is controlled by *ἐπιθυμία*, so there is such a difference between states, and to try to infer the condition of the epithymetic class when it is ruled from its condition when it is not ruled is like trying to infer the condition of a man's *ἐπιθυμίας* when *they* are ruled from their condition when *they* are not. What we are concerned with (it may be said) is the healthy condition of man or city, and relative to that the difference between a good and a bad state of affairs can be adequately—and analogously—explained for each.

Such attempts to ease out the difficulties only serve to draw attention to them. For, first, certain things *can* be said about the *ἐπιθυμίας* when they

are 'ruled'. For instance, there is the notable difference between a man who has his *ἐπιθυμίας* under control, so that he does not act on them except where appropriate, but for whom they are nevertheless very active, so that control is the outcome of struggle and inner vigilance; and a man whose *λογιστικόν* has achieved inner peace. That inner peace, again, might be of more than one kind: some *ἐπιθυμίας* might be mildly and harmoniously active, or there may have been some more drastically ascetic achievement—*solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant* could apply to inner peace as well. But these differences, read back into the political case, precisely revive the earlier problems. Inner peace is what Plato must want, but that in the political case requires the allegiance of the epithymetic element, and we are back to the question of how we are to picture that being secured. Again, a difference between the barely self-controlled man and the man of inner peace is that the first has some *ἐπιθυμίας* which the latter does not have—if a man has inner peace, then some *ἐπιθυμίας* he will have eliminated or never had. But does the difference between the good city and democracy then lie partly in the emergence in the latter of extra and more violent epithymetic persons? If so, then Plato has to explain why the working class even in the good city has to be thought of as though they were already potentially such persons. If not, we are faced with the original problem once more, of what it was in those potentially violent persons that kept them in their place in the good city.

Let us suppose that it is the inner peace model that Plato has in mind, and that it is achieved through the exercise of *λογιστικόν*, on a modest scale, by the individuals in the working class. (They might have been said to possess some measure of *ὁρθή δόξα*, if that were not inconsistent with the eccentric theory of knowledge which the *Republic* presents.) If their individual *λογιστικόν* helps in keeping the workers in their place, then (as we saw earlier) the analogy is no longer in full working order, since that feature cannot be read back into the soul without absurdity. But let us waive that point, and ask what has to be presupposed to keep even the remnants of the analogy going for Plato's purposes. It is not enough that in its economic function, the role of the lowest class should bear some analogy to the role of the *ἐπιθυμίας* in individual life. For if we stick merely to the nature of certain roles or functions, no argument will have been produced against the view of Plato's democratic enemy, that those roles or functions can be combined with the business of ruling. Criticism of Plato often concentrates on his opinion that ruling is a matter of expertise; but he needs more than that opinion to reach his results in the *Republic*, and has to combine with it a set of views about what characteristics and talents generally coexist at the level of individual psychology. In that area, he has

to believe not only that *λογιστικόν* comes in two sizes (as we might say, regular size and king size), but also that the talents and temperament that make good soldiers go with thymoeidic motivations, and the talents and temperament that make good workers go with epithymetic motivations.

Of these, the former looks plausible enough—indeed, soldierly temperament and thymoeidic motivation are perhaps necessarily connected (that is a question we shall come back to). Again, logistic supremacy and fitness to be a guardian are of course for Plato necessarily connected. But how about epithymetic motivation and fitness to be a *δημιουργός*? Not even Plato at his loftiest can have believed that what actually qualified somebody to be a cobbler was the strength of his *ἐπιθυμία*. The most he can have thought is that the sort of man who made a good cobbler was one who had powerful *ἐπιθυμία*; and this is also the least he can think, if he is to keep any of the analogy going and justify the subordinate position of cobblers by reference to their epithymetic disposition. So what we have to believe, it seems, is that cobblers are characteristically men of powerful passions—of more powerful passions, indeed, than soldiers—who nevertheless have enough rational power to recognize the superiority of philosopher kings when there are philosopher kings, but become unmanageably volatile when there are no philosopher kings.

There have been those who thought that the working classes were naturally of powerful and disorderly desires, and had to be kept in their place. There have been those who thought that they were good-hearted and loyal fellows of no great gifts who could recognize their natural superiors and, unless stirred up, keep themselves in their place. There can have been few who have thought both; Plato in the *Republic* comes close to being such a one, even though we can recognize that his heart, and his fears, lie with the first story. His analogy helps him to combine both stories, in particular by encouraging us to believe in an outcome appropriate to the second story from arrangements motivated by the first.

What about *θυμοειδές* and the military class? Here there is a slightly different kind of tension in the structure. At no point, we must remember, does the structure present a simple contrast of the psychological and the political, for on both sides of that divide we have two sorts of thing: elements, and a whole which is affected by those elements. On the political side we have classes, and a state which is affected by which class is predominant among them (hence the 'predominant section rule' we have already looked at); the theory is supposed to yield both an analysis and a typology of states. On the psychological side, we have 'parts of the soul', and persons in which one 'part' or another is dominant; this yields, first, a classification of motives within the individual, and, second, a typology



of character. The difficulties we have just been considering, about the epithymetic class, are generated across the political-psychological boundary, in the relations that Plato finds between, on the one hand, the working class and a state dominated by that class, and on the other hand, epithymetic motivation and a character dominated by such motivation. In the case of the *θυμοειδές*, the most interesting difficulty (it seems to me) breaks out earlier, in the relations between the type of motivation that is represented by this 'part of the soul' and the type of character that is produced by its predominance. Once the type of character is established, the political consequences follow, granted Plato's general outlook, fairly easily. Indeed, it is just the appropriateness of those consequences that seems to dictate the connection of ideas on the psychological side; whatever may be the case elsewhere in the *Republic*, here the political end of the analogy is dictating certain features of the psychological end.

I shall not attempt here any general discussion of the divisions of the soul, which, particularly with regard to the distinction between *λογιστικόν* and *ἐπιθυμητικόν*, is a large subject of great independent interest;<sup>1</sup> I shall make only some remarks about *θυμοειδές*. When it first appears, it already has a rather ambivalent role. On the one hand, it seems to be something like *anger*, and we are told, in distinguishing it from *λογιστικόν*, that it is manifested by children (441a) and animals (441b), and we are reminded of the Homeric figure who reproached his own anger. However, right from the beginning it takes on the colour of something more morally ambitious (as we might put it) than mere anger or rage; the case of Leontius and other examples (439e–440e) take it rather in the direction of noble indignation, and we are told (440e) that rather than class it with *ἐπιθυμητικόν*, we should say that 'in the strife [*στάσει*, a significantly political word] of the soul it takes arms on the side of *λογιστικόν*'. If *θυμοειδές* merely represented anger this would indeed be a surprising psychological claim.

The claim is indeed weakened a little at 441a, when it is said that *θυμοειδές* acts as *ἐπίκουρος* to *λογιστικόν* 'if it has not been corrupted [*διαφθαρή*]; it can scarcely mean 'destroyed'] by bad upbringing'. But the concession is not adequate. For so long as there is any conflict at all—and if there is not, the question does not arise—it clearly is possible for anger to break out, not merely against *λογιστικόν*, but on the side of *ἐπιθυμητικόν* against *λογιστικόν*. What is more interesting than that psychological platitude is the fact that Plato reveals elsewhere that he is perfectly well aware of it, and indeed in a passage where he is defending exactly the same doctrine as in the *Republic*. In the image of the chariot and the two horses in

<sup>1</sup> For a very brief suggestion on this matter, see my 'Ethical Consistency', in *Problems of the Self* (Cambridge, 1973), 169.

the *Phaedrus*, when the black (epithymetic) horse bolts, the white (thymoeidic) horse helps the (logistic) charioteer to bring it to a halt; and when the black horse is finally stopped, it turns on its companion and 'abuses it in anger' (μόγισ ἐξαναπνεύσας ἐλοιδόρησεν ὀργή; 254c). Mere anger, Plato's dramatic realism reveals, can always side with the devil. The thymoeidic element in the soul is from its inception more than mere anger, or indeed any other such motive which there might be good reason on purely psychological grounds to distinguish from ἐπιθυμία (a drive to self-destructive risk-taking, for instance).

It is to be understood, rather, by working backwards from the character which is determined by its dominance, a character which is in turn to be understood in terms of a form of life: the military or competitive form of life which it was a standard thought to contrast with the life of contemplation on the one hand and the life of gain on the other (cf. Aristotle, *EN* 1. 5, 1095<sup>b</sup>17, with, in particular, *Rep.* 581c), a contrast embodied in the Pythagorean saying about the three sorts of people that come to the Games (Iamblichus, *VP* 58). In this contrast of types of character there is also a political or social thought, of course, and that is why, as I suggested earlier, Plato has great ease in adjusting psychology and politics in the case of θυμοειδής: as the passage in question makes explicit (440e–441a, 440d), politics is there at its introduction. 'Επιθυμητικόν has an independent psychological foundation, and Plato makes a lot of it and of its psychological relations to λογιστικόν in the individual, as a type of motivation. With that, I have argued, there are grave obstacles to Plato's reading back into the city what he needs for his political conclusions, obstacles to some extent concealed by his use of the tripartite analogy.