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### The Republic's Reluctant Rulers

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# The *Republic's* Reluctant Rulers

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In this paper I attempt to resolve three closely related problems concerning philosophers' rule over Kallipolis in the *Republic*.<sup>1</sup> First and foremost, when it seems that the rulers should willingly take up ruling, since it is just to rule and the rulers are just people, why does Plato emphasize that they must be compelled to rule? Second, since just acts are beneficial, how does ruling, *qua* just act, benefit philosophers? Third, since Plato has been accused of jumping unfairly between just actions and just souls, what exactly is the connection between the two? I submit that these questions are intricately related, so that the answer for each depends on that of the next. Due to space restrictions, I cannot consider much of the secondary literature on these questions, but I will begin with a brief look at a recent article by Eric Brown, who attempts to connect just action and just souls by means of the educational plan set out in the *Republic*.<sup>2</sup> In section II, I'll offer an alternative account of the distinction between just actions and just souls, which I will also call practical justice and psychic justice, respectively.<sup>3</sup> In section III, we dissolve our third problem, regarding the relation between just acts and just souls, when we realize that the former cause the latter. We now also know that philosophers' souls are improved by ruling, which is a just act, and this resolves our second problem, in section IV. We will then be able to see, in section V, that Plato has clearly answered our first problem, why philosophers must be compelled to rule Kallipolis, given that the best rulers (of any state, including the ideal one) are the ones who do not want to rule, i.e., those who rule reluctantly.

## I. Justice and the Education of the Guardians

Brown 2000 suggests that the founders enact a just law commanding philosophers to rule, and he specifies that this law is just but not required by justice.<sup>4</sup> As long as justice demands obedience to just laws, the philosophers must rule, since they must obey the just law that orders them to rule. Thus it is not justice that causes them to accept an inferior life, since, if it were not for the law directing them to rule, they would refuse to rule.

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper, I will use 'philosophers' to refer to those people educated to rule Kallipolis. I will refer to the guardians who are not promoted to be rulers as 'auxiliaries', and the class of philosophers and auxiliaries, before being distinguished (i.e., during the first stage of their common education in music and gymnastics) as 'guardians'. All citations of Plato are to Burnet's edition of the *Republic* (1903) unless otherwise specified, and translations are my own, though I often follow the Grube-Reeve translation in Cooper 1997.

<sup>2</sup> Brown, Eric, 2004, "Minding the Gap in Plato's *Republic*," *Philosophical Studies* 117: 275-302.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Vasiliou, Iakovos, 2008, *Aiming at Virtue in Plato*, Cambridge, 247-259.

<sup>4</sup> For more on this, see below. I agree with much of Brown 2000, "Justice and Compulsion for Plato's Philosopher-Rulers," *Ancient Philosophy* 20: 1-17. He writes that he is not attempting to give an account of "how the philosopher's obedience gives her a more just soul and how the refusal to obey the law would be detrimental to her psychic condition" (11). This is in line with what I will show: 1) *why* the psychically just philosophers will do just acts such as obey the legal requirement to rule, and 2) exactly *how* these philosophers are benefited by their decision to obey the law. Brown 2004 appears to be in part an attempt to cover these points, but I will show in the remainder of this section why this attempt is inadequate.

Rather the law forces them to sacrifice some time philosophizing in order to rule, since this will make the city maximally happy, and since the city spent the time, effort, and resources to educate them in the first place. Brown's account still leaves open, however, the question of *why* the philosopher will accede to the demands of justice, why, that is, he obeys the command to rule, and *how* this obedience benefits him. My account addresses these open questions.

That first open question—*why* will philosophers obey the just law commanding their rule?—is a more specific version of the question David Sachs asks: Why will someone with a just soul consistently act as justice requires?<sup>5</sup> What reason do we have for thinking that practical justice always comes along with psychic justice?

Brown 2004 tries to show that there is no gap between the two by suggesting that Plato believes:<sup>6</sup>

(Sufficiency) Those who are raised well help others as [practical] justice requires.

(Necessity) Those who are not raised well cannot become [psychically] just.<sup>7</sup>

According to Brown, Plato believes a good upbringing and education is sufficient for practical justice and necessary for psychic justice. Since any psychically just person must have completed a good education, and any well educated person is practically just, it follows that anyone who is psychically just is also practically just. The guardians—both philosophers and auxiliaries—will thus meet the necessary condition for psychic justice and the sufficient condition for practical justice, since, per Books II and III, they are well educated, i.e., they have both gone through the *initial*, i.e., musical and gymnastic, stage of the educational plan laid out in the *Republic*.<sup>8</sup>

Brown 2004 himself seems to recognize that a good education is not strictly necessary for psychic justice when he admits that good fortune can take the place of good education (290). Socrates discusses five cases of people who, though brought up without the benefit of Kallipolis' educational system, nonetheless "consort with philosophy in a way that's worthy of her" (496a11-e2). Socrates himself is one of these cases by virtue of his divine sign. Brown writes that "we do not have to assume that there are some nearly perfect philosophers who lack the motivation to help others as justice requires," allowing that Socrates will act as practical justice requires (290). Brown does not say that these philosophers will have just souls (i.e., psychic justice), but it seems that an orderly, harmonious soul is a prerequisite to doing philosophy worthily. Socrates also suggests that the exceptions he mentions—himself included—have just souls, since they "keep quiet and do their own work," (496d6) a claim that recalls the definition of justice as doing one's own work at 443c4-d1 (Cf. 441d12-e2, 433a8-b5). Socrates also says that each "is pleased if he can somehow live his life here free from injustice and impious acts and depart from it with good hope, gracious and content" (496d9-e2). Thus we can assume that Socrates (and each of the other cases) has a just soul. According to Brown, the reason that Socrates and these other exceptional philosophers will act justly is that "it seems as though especially good fortune does for them what careful training does for

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<sup>5</sup> See Sachs in Vlastos, Gregory, ed., 1978, *Plato: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Volume 2, Notre Dame, 35-51.

<sup>6</sup> Brown 2004, 283-290. At 277-283 he also discusses previous attempts to "fill the gap" but dismisses them, in part because they fail to account for why the philosopher must be compelled to rule (i.e., they allege that the philosopher rules willingly).

<sup>7</sup> Brown 2004, 283.

<sup>8</sup> Brown is concerned with this "first stage" of education rather than the "second stage" that the ruling philosophers-in-training receive in Book VII. See Brown 2004, 284-288.

those in the ideal city. Hence, whether we see their good fortune as good education or as the mere absence of corruption that allows their philosophical nature to flourish, the results of the good fortune would seem to approximate those of the careful training in the ideal city” (290). So, it seems, according to Brown, good fortune takes the place of a proper upbringing in these exceptional cases, and a good education is necessary *except* when good fortune renders it unnecessary. A good education, then, cannot be strictly necessary for psychic justice.<sup>9</sup>

Even though Kallipolis’ education is not necessary for psychic justice, one might still think that a good education suffices to make one practically just. Unfortunately, this condition fails as well, since Socrates worries that not all those who graduate from the preliminary education of music and gymnastics will continue to hold on to their convictions about virtue when they are introduced to argumentation. In a situation where young people are able to argue about what is best, eristic debate may come to the fore. One may start refuting another who argues that justice is best, and “by refuting him often and in many ways, the argument undermines his conventional convictions and makes him believe that the fine is no more fine than shameful, and the same with the just, the good, and the things he honored most” (538d8-e1). Socrates tells Glaucon that we should pity this person, who will abandon his convictions and become lawless. “Therefore, lest your thirty-year-olds be subject to such pity, you’ll have to be very cautious about the way you introduce them to arguments” (539a8-9). Although these thirty-year-olds have already been through an education in music and gymnastics along with the auxiliaries, as well as through ten years of study in subjects such as math and geometry, Socrates still worries that they may lose their traditional beliefs about justice. Implicit in this worry is that if students lose their conviction that virtue is best, they will also lose their motivation for always behaving virtuously, thereby abandoning the virtuous habits instilled by their education.

Even later in the training of philosophers, when they are put “back in the cave” for fifteen years to gain experience in matters of war and politics, “they must be put to the test to see whether they will remain steadfast when they’re dragged in every direction or whether they will shift their ground” (539e5-540a2). Until the prospective rulers are fifty, even until they are led to the Good itself, there is some doubt about whether they will always act as practical justice requires; they may not hold on to their belief that justice is “the most important and most necessary thing” (540e1-2) as “true philosophers” do. If they cannot preserve the basic belief that justice is most important, then they will not always act according to practical justice, and thus the basic education (i.e. the education

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<sup>9</sup> One might attempt to save Brown’s necessity thesis, however, by revising it, holding that those who are not raised well cannot become *perfectly* psychically just. If this is what Brown means, then his case for the claim is better (Brown, in personal correspondence, expressed preference for this reading). Speaking of these exceptional philosophers, Socrates does qualify their greatness by saying of each that under a better constitution “his own growth will be fuller, and he’ll save the community along with himself” (497a4-5). Though this is a bit vague—does Socrates mean that the growth of justice in his soul would be fuller, as Brown might have it, or his philosophical growth—I can grant that a *perfectly* just soul requires being raised under the best constitution and the best educational system. This does not appear to damage my case that being well raised is not necessary for psychic justice, though, because Socrates never clearly indicates that he is discussing only perfectly just souls. In fact, at 472c4-5 Socrates says that the notion of a “perfectly just man” is only a model, for such a man would “in no way differ from the just itself” (472b8-9). Socrates and his interlocutors also agree about themselves that “the one who was most like the just men would have a fate most like theirs” (472c9-d1), showing that their primary concern is still about tying justice to happiness for all people—anyone who acts more justly, and thus increases justice and order in his soul, is happier.

they share with the auxiliaries) which produces these prospective rulers is not sufficient for their always acting as practical justice requires.<sup>10</sup>

## II. Psychic Justice and Practical Justice

If Brown's theses are not what Plato employs to close the gap between psychic justice and practical justice, then what does he employ? Or, perhaps, is Plato unaware of a gap and, thus, of a problem? The gap problem arises, according to many commentators, because Plato moves from practical justice to psychic justice in Book IV, where Socrates seems to stop discussing just actions in favor of discussing just and harmonious souls.<sup>11</sup> If Plato does indeed move illicitly from practical justice to psychic justice, then we are left with Sachs' problem: Glaucon asks why one should do just acts, and in response Socrates explains why one should have a just soul.

Even at the point where Socrates is supposed to make the shift from discussing just action to discussing justice in the soul (443c9 ff.), however, he continues to speak of justice (i.e. psychic justice) as the product of just acts (practical justice). Socrates declares that the just person "thinks (*hēgoumenon*) that the action that would preserve (*sōzē*) and help to produce (*sunapergazētai*) this state [psychic justice] is just and noble, and he names that action just and noble, ... and he thinks that the action that always destroys this [psychic justice] is unjust, and he names it unjust" (443e4 - 444a1).<sup>12</sup>

While the claim that just actions "preserve and help to produce" psychic justice seems definitional, Vasiliou 2008 offers this clarification:

just actions will have the property of preserving and helping to produce psychic health in the agent who performs them, but that property is not what *makes* the action just, rather it is the fact that the action is truly just (the ultimate explanation of which will be that it participates in the Form of Justice) that causes it to have the property of preserving and helping to produce psychic health.<sup>13</sup>

In other words, any given just action is just through its participation in the form of Justice, and it is because of its justice—i.e., because of its participation in the form of

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<sup>10</sup> We may change Brown's sufficiency thesis slightly and say that the basic education and later testing—a fifty year process—are together sufficient for practical justice (Brown indicated via personal correspondence that he now has some sympathy with this revised view, and he offered further examples of how the auxiliaries are not guaranteed to act as practical justice requires, e.g., 417a). Taking the two revised theses together (i.e., the revised sufficiency thesis along with the revised necessity thesis that a good education is necessary for *perfect* psychic justice), it can be said that being raised well is necessary for perfect psychic justice, and being raised well, along with a long period of further education and testing, is sufficient for one to act as practical justice requires. This does in fact guarantee that the ruling philosophers are both psychically just and practically just, but it leaves no hope for anyone short of a perfect philosopher. It also leaves us wondering *why* Plato thinks this long period of education leads to psychic justice and practical justice.

<sup>11</sup> E.g., Annas 1981, 160; cf. Vasiliou 2008, 247-251. In contrast, Reeve 2007 thinks that Glaucon requires a theory of psychic justice from the beginning in 367b-d: "Socrates' focus is required to be not primarily on just *actions*, but on justice as a psychological *state*, or state of character" (203). I do not have space to argue against this claim, but it seems implausible, given that psychic justice is not introduced explicitly until 443c9. In other words, though Glaucon and Adeimantus are certainly concerned about the effects of just action *on the soul* in Book II (cf. Vasiliou 2008, 195 ff.), they are not asking about justice *in the soul*, but rather about justice as it is normally conceived, i.e., in actions.

<sup>12</sup> For inspiration on this point and many of the other ideas in the rest of this section, I am greatly indebted to a graduate seminar on the *Republic* led by Iakovos Vasiliou at the City University of New York Graduate Center in Spring 2006. Cf. Vasiliou 2008, 247-259. Irwin 1977, 210, touches on the possibility of this reading but rejects it in favor of the "more promising" claim that the just man expresses his psychic justice through his actions, rather than insisting that just actions are necessary to produce psychic justice.

<sup>13</sup> Vasiliou 2008, 250-51. Vasiliou's emphasis.

Justice—that it produces and sustains a just soul. Thus actions are *called* just because they preserve and produce just souls, but actions *are* just because they participate in the Form of Justice.<sup>14</sup>

Let's take a closer look at *why* just acts cause a just soul. In other words, why should we think that practical justice has any causal effect on the ordering of one's soul? To begin to answer this, we must see that if the ordering of one's soul is an instance of justice and thus participates in the form of Justice, and if just actions are just through their participation in the form of Justice, then perhaps practical justice produces psychic justice because of their common link to Justice. We might say, loosely, that 'connecting' oneself to Justice through practical justice (i.e., partaking in Justice through one's actions) has an effect on one's soul, namely that justice is cultivated in that soul. To question this link, then, would just be to question the causal efficacy of forms.

While this final question may prove intractable, some of the earlier difficulties are soon cleared up with an analogy to bodily health:

Then, Socrates said, acting unjustly, being unjust, and, in turn, acting justly, don't all these finally turn out to be [...] no different than health and sickness; as these are in the body, so are justice and injustice in the soul.

Socrates goes on to say that, as "Wholesome things produce (*empoiei*) health, and harmful things sickness," so do "just actions produce (*empoiei*) justice, and unjust actions injustice." Just as health, in turn, causes a natural, orderly relation in the body, so justice: produces (*empoiein*) in the soul a natural relation of controlling and being controlled one part by another, while injustice produces a relation of ruling and being ruled that is contrary to nature (444c1-d12).

Here it is clear that just action—practical justice—produces justice in the soul—psychic justice. Just as health is produced by healthful things, the order in the soul called psychic justice is produced by just acts. Likewise, unjust acts destroy the harmony in one's soul, producing what might be termed psychic injustice, just as harmful things destroy the health in one's body. The claim that just acts produce (*empoiei*) psychic justice strengthens the claim in the previous passage, that just acts help to produce (*sunapergazētai*) psychic justice.<sup>15</sup> Recalling the claim that just acts preserve psychic justice, we can see that just as one cannot expect to remain healthy while ceasing to exercise and beginning to eat junk food—to be healthy, one must maintain a healthy diet and exercise one's body—in exactly the same way, one cannot hope to remain psychically just if one does any of the things Socrates lists at 442e4-443a1: embezzlement, temple robbery, theft, or betrayal. These things are like psychic junk food (or worse), destroying the harmony of one's soul, while a healthy diet of just actions harmonizes and orders the soul. Psychic justice, then, is produced by practical justice, since just acts produce and sustain just souls.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Cf., e.g., *Phaedo* 100c3-e3.

<sup>15</sup> What along with just acts must one do, if they only "help to produce" psychic justice? Before this, Socrates says that the just man will put himself in order and rule himself (443d4-e2), which might be seen as the other necessary condition for a just soul. But this too is not completely clear, since the just soul seems to be that soul which is put in order and self ruled—Socrates might as well say that one must make one's soul just in order to have a just soul.

<sup>16</sup> Since just souls are produced by just actions, philosophers may not be the only ones in Kallipolis with just souls, because the ruling philosophers will designate just actions for the rest of the city. As long as the citizens obey the philosophers, the citizens will act as practical justice requires, which means, in turn, that they would be psychically just. Wisdom is still set over just actions in this case (as is demanded at 443e6-7), but wisdom does not have to be *in* the person with the just soul, as Socrates says at 590c8-d6: if one is not ruled by one's own wisdom, it is next best to be ruled by the wisdom of another. All the citizens of Kallipolis, then, could have just souls without knowledge of which

We can find support for this conclusion in *Republic* book IX as well. At 588b1-592a4, Socrates constructs an image of a man with a human, a lion, and a multiform beast in his soul, analogous to the rational, honor-loving, and appetitive parts of the soul, respectively. Doing injustice feeds the beast and starves the human being, making one's soul disordered. Doing just things (practical justice), on the contrary, puts the human being in control and tames the beast, putting the soul in order (psychic justice), the rational part directing the others. This is straightforward support for a causal connection between practical justice and psychic justice; practical justice produces psychic justice, while unjust actions lead to psychic disharmony.

Before we move on to putting all these pieces together and thus resolving our initial problems, let me make clear how this solution to the supposed gap between psychic and practical justice differs from Brown's solution. For Brown, it is the fact that one as been well educated that makes one act justly (the sufficiency thesis) and allows one to have a just soul (the necessity thesis). I do not deny that Plato engineers the *Republic's* educational plan in order to make the philosophers (and auxiliaries) act justly, though it is apparent that the education is not foolproof in doing so, and I do not deny that the education prepares the Kallipolis' philosophers to have just souls, though, again, it is not the only way to attain a just soul. What I am suggesting is a mechanism by which just actions and just souls are connected. Why is it that an education that fosters just action ends up preparing its students to have just souls? Because just actions produce just souls. The best students, the ones who have successfully been habituated to act justly, attain psychic justice by means of their practical justice.

### III. Philosophers' Descent into the Cave

We now have the premises required to argue an affirmative answer to the third question posed at the opening of the paper: will a philosopher, a psychically just person, necessarily have practical justice and thereby obey the requirement to rule Kallipolis? We get our first premise from *Republic* 443e5-6:

1. Just actions are ones that preserve and help to produce a harmony in the soul. We discussed this premise at length above. Our next premise is a staple of Platonic metaphysics, also discussed above:

2. Just actions are actions that participate in Justice.

We can then pull from Platonic epistemology, particularly from the central books of the *Republic*:

3. Philosophers have knowledge of the forms, including Justice.<sup>17</sup>

Premise (3) suggests the following:

4. Philosophers know which actions participate in Justice.

While not uncontroversial, this premise is licensed by the *Republic*, especially at *Republic* 520c3-6. There Socrates tells the philosophical rulers of Kallipolis that they will be able to see much better in the darkness of the cave than the non-philosophers and that they will "know what each image is and of what it is an image, because they have seen

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actions are just, because they would have true belief as to which actions are just, courtesy of the philosopher. Defending this claim sufficiently would, of course, require another paper. Cf. *Meno* 98c1 ff., where it is noted that true belief is not inferior to knowledge in guiding action. The citizens of Kallipolis would be like the statesmen in the *Meno* who are virtuous without knowledge, but the citizens would have a better tie-down for their true beliefs, namely the ruling philosopher who *does* have knowledge.

<sup>17</sup> Cf., e.g., *Republic* 517a8-c5, 519c8-d2, 532a1-b2.

the truth about beautiful and just and good things.” Since philosophers have seen Justice itself, they can recognize images of Justice, i.e., just actions. Thus they will know which actions partake of Justice, since they know that each action is an image and, moreover, that it is an image of Justice.<sup>18</sup> From (2) and (4) it follows that:

5. Philosophers know which actions are just.

We may note here that, since philosophers know which actions are just, they also know, by (1), which actions preserve and help to produce a harmony in the soul. This is not only because they know Justice itself, and thus know the effects of justice in the soul, but also because a philosopher, as a just person, “names that action just and noble that would preserve and help to produce” psychic justice (443e5-6). To the foregoing steps we add an axiom of Platonic psychology:

6. Philosophers always act so as to have harmonized souls.

While this is familiar from the *Phaedo*, where philosophy is care for the soul, Socrates and Glaucon also assume in the *Republic* that to care for the soul is much more important than to care for the body.<sup>19</sup> By (1), acting so as to have a harmonized soul is to act justly, and by (5) philosophers know how to act justly, so premises (1), (5), and (6) yield our desired conclusion:

7. Philosophers always act justly.

We now have a straightforward proof showing that philosophers will obey the requirements of justice, no matter what they may prescribe, since to act justly is to act so as to harmonize one’s soul, and philosophers always act so as to harmonize their souls.<sup>20</sup>

#### IV. The Best Life

One may grant my argument resolving the third problem set out at the beginning of the paper and still raise the second problem. Given that philosophers act justly, and justice requires that they obey the legal requirement to rule Kallipolis, *and* that the life of ruling is inferior to the life of philosophy, doesn’t justice compel philosophers to accept worse lives when they are capable of better?<sup>21</sup> In other words, philosophers *will* act justly, but *should* they act justly? There are three complementary answers to this question, and I will entertain them in order of strength: first, we can mitigate the inferiority of the life of

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<sup>18</sup> Justifying the more from premise 3 to 4 is another project entirely, a project on which I am currently working. In the meantime, it might suffice to note, as I do in the text, that the ideal state depends on the validity of this move.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Republic* 445a5-b4, 618e1-2, *Phaedo* 64c10 ff., 80d5 ff.

<sup>20</sup> So there is no fallacy (Sachs 35) in Plato’s defense of practical justice by way of extolling the virtues of psychic justice. As mentioned in the previous section, however, one may still question why we should think that practical justice has any causal effect on the ordering of one’s soul (premise 1). This ‘new’ Sachs problem would just be to question the causal efficacy of forms, as was mentioned above. My thanks to John Malcolm for discussion of this problem.

One may object that the just actions mentioned above may bear little or no resemblance to what are normally thought to be just actions, since what determines an action’s being just is its participation in Justice, which need not, it seems, track our normal intuitions about which actions are just. If we bring in the Theory of Recollection, though, we have good reason to think that what really are just actions will at least approximate what we normally think to be just actions, since we all have had some prenatal experience of Justice against which we measure just actions. Though Recollection is not explicitly mentioned in the *Republic*, it is present in dialogues that are generally agreed to frame it chronologically, namely the *Meno* and *Phaedo* beforehand and the *Phaedrus* afterward. The doctrine is also implied when Socrates, at *Republic* 518b6-c5, says that education is not putting knowledge into souls, since knowledge, which is here called a power (*dunamis*), as in Book V at 477d7-9, is already present in everyone’s soul. The reason knowledge is already present in everyone’s soul is, of course, because we have experienced the Forms before birth. Cf. *Phaedo* 74a9 – 75d5. Cf. Ferejohn, Michael T., 2006, “Knowledge, Recollection, and the Forms in *Republic* VII,” in *The Blackwell Guide to Plato’s Republic*, Ed. Santas, Gerasimos, Malden.

<sup>21</sup> This question is, of course, asked by Glaucon as well: “But will we do them injustice then and make their lives worse although it is possible for them to live better?” (519d8-9).

ruling; second, we can deny that justice is directly responsible for philosophers having to accept an inferior life; and, third, we can deny that the life of ruling is actually inferior for the rulers of Kallipolis.

As a preface to our response, we must remember that explaining why philosophers are benefited by a certain course of action is not the same as explaining why they choose a certain course of action; one can choose the just course of action for its own sake, even though the same course of action offers some benefit to the actor. In other words, choosing action *x qua* just is not identical to choosing action *x qua* beneficial to oneself, even if all just acts are beneficial to the actor, as Plato hopes to show. So while philosophers choose to act justly for the sake of justice itself, they are also benefited—as we will see—by their just actions.

First, we can mitigate the inferiority of the life of ruling by recalling that just acts harmonize the soul. Since this harmony is a great good, philosophers are greatly benefited by their just acts. Thus ruling Kallipolis does benefit philosophers, even though they do not really want to rule. They choose to act justly, and just acts are intrinsically beneficial, so they are benefited. Of course this answer is not satisfactory alone, since one may easily point out that philosophers would be benefited more by their always philosophizing and never ruling. But is this possible inferiority really the fault of justice?

As a second answer, we can deny that justice is directly responsible for the inferiority of the life of ruling, if that life is indeed inferior.<sup>22</sup> This would allow Socrates' defense of justice to remain eudaimonistic, even if philosophers were compelled to accept an inferior life, since it would not be justice that does the compelling. We begin by reaffirming that it is a just law that compels philosophers to rule. On the hypothesis that justice demands that one obey just laws, philosophers must rule Kallipolis since a just law demands it. It is not *justice* that compels the philosopher to accept an inferior life, but the law. The founders need not make the law, since it is perfectly in accordance with justice to offer a philosophical education to every student without expectation of repayment. However, since philosophers in Kallipolis are groomed to rule and thereby also provided with an opportunity to live a much better life than other citizens, namely the life of philosophy, it is just for the city to demand that they give up some of their life on the Isle of the Blessed to rule. So the law is just, but it is not *required by* justice.<sup>23</sup>

Since this is an important point, let us discuss this distinction in more detail. The distinction is between a general requirement of justice and the specific requirement of the just law in Kallipolis. If we accept that it is a general requirement of justice that philosophers rule the city, then 1) they would be reluctant to do that which justice itself requires, and 2) justice itself would require them to accept an inferior life. The alternative to this general requirement of justice (and its two attendant consequences) is that a law—contingently justified by the founders, not required by justice itself—requires philosophers to accept an inferior life and is thus the cause of their dismay. Since Socrates says that it is not the law's concern to make any one class happy but to make the whole city happy (519e1-520a4), it makes sense that the requirement to rule is the requirement of a just law, not a general requirement of justice. Though the law does not aim to make philosophers happy, it is still a just law, so obedience to it—i.e., a just

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Brown 2000, 10: "Justice alone does not force the philosophers to opt for the lesser happiness of ruling".

<sup>23</sup> Because the law is not required by justice, the philosophers are under no obligation to institute the law were it to be lacking, contrary to what Reeve 2007, 205 suggests.

action—will still benefit philosophers, in the same way that all just actions benefit the ones who do them. But then, one may object, isn't justice at least *indirectly* at fault for the rulers' inferior lives?

While the first two answers together may save Plato's eudaimonism, if they are unconvincing we can fall back on a third answer, denying that the lives of the ruling philosophers are actually inferior by denying the very possibility of a better life for them. Once they are commanded to rule they have only 2 choices: obey or disobey. Disobedience, as an unjust act, would corrupt their souls. Since choosing to philosophize would be disobedience, choosing to philosophize instead of ruling would corrupt their souls, and a philosopher will never voluntarily choose a course of action which would corrupt his soul. Furthermore such a course of action would certainly not be beneficial. A philosopher realizes that his soul is the most important part of himself and that it is more important to cultivate its health than anything else, as is finally shown in the myth of Er, when in picking one's next life one will "call worse the life which leads the soul to become more unjust, and better that which leads it to become more just" (618e1-2).<sup>24</sup> This choice would also likely lead to an inability to philosophize and so would be self-defeating. Thus the philosopher is compelled to obey, a fact confirmed by Glaucon, who, when asked if they will disobey, answers:

Impossible, for we will be giving just orders to just people, yet each of them will surely go to rule as to something compulsory (*anagkaion*), which is opposite to those now ruling in every city (520e1-3).

Obedience, as pointed out above, carries with it certain benefits, including, most importantly, the harmonization of one's soul, while disobedience carries with it only harm. Of course it would be better, philosophers may think, if they had not been ordered to rule, since they could then philosophize freely and still maintain the harmony of their souls, but once the command has been given, this is not an option. So, given the just law requiring that philosophers rule, the best life for a philosopher in Kallipolis is in fact to rule. Besides the intrinsic benefit of an orderly soul, the philosophers also get the opportunity to philosophize in between periods of rule. As Socrates says, "philosophers will spend much of their time doing philosophy, but whenever his turn comes, each will labor in politics and rule for the city's sake" (540b2-4). And philosophers will not begrudge the city their labor, either, since they owe their very ability to philosophize to the city and its educational system. The law is just, and they are just people, so they will obey.

## V. Rulers' Reluctance

Finally we may answer the initial question posed in this paper: why doesn't Kallipolis' educational system produce philosophers who are motivated to rule without having to be compelled? We must recall Socrates' claim that "if you can discover a better life than ruling for the prospective rulers, your well-governed city will become a possibility" (520e4-521a2). The education given in Kallipolis does precisely this: it gives its students a better way of life than ruling, namely the life of philosophy. If Kallipolis produced rulers who wanted to rule, it would be a disaster, because these rulers would be

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<sup>24</sup> Those who, unlike the philosophers, do just actions but do not know the Form of Justice, such as citizens in Kallipolis who have true belief as to what actions are just but do not know which actions are just, may not be able to correctly select the best life, as is made clear at 619b7-d3: souls who "participated in virtue through habit and without philosophy" may go wrong in choosing their next life. My thanks to Eric Brown for directing me to this passage.

pursuing power or honor or some such thing. Instead, the rulers pursue wisdom; they “look down on (*kataphronounta*) political rule,” longing for the better life of philosophy (521b1-2). They go to rule as to something necessary (*anagkaios*), not as to something fine (*kalos*, 540b4). Since, then, the best rulers are those who must be compelled to rule, these philosophers, who chafe at the yoke of their rule, wanting desperately to step down and leave the task of ruling to another, are in fact the best rulers. The tension between ruling and philosophizing, which seems to be such a problem, was engineered exactly so by Plato; it is not a problem, but a solution.

Let us recap our answers to the three questions with which we began. First we asked whether philosophers would act as practical justice appears to require, ruling the city, or whether they would refuse and be compelled to rule. In response, we showed that philosophers will always act justly, since they always act to harmonize their souls and since just acts—which they alone can accurately and precisely identify—harmonize the soul. Our second question asked what benefit justice has for philosophers. Since Socrates is arguing that justice benefits the agent, how does justice benefit philosophers? Keeping in mind that practical justice produces psychic justice, we can see that philosophers are benefited by obeying the just law, since that obedience—as a just act—produces and maintains order in their souls, something that is essential to their *eudaimonia*. We also denied that there is in fact a better life for philosophers, given the just command to rule. Finally, we can answer our first question, that of the purpose of Kallipolis’ education, since it apparently produces rulers who are unmotivated to rule. This is, we found, by design, because only reluctant rulers can be the best rulers.<sup>25</sup>

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