

1. Lawful and lawless unnecessary appetites

Now that we know how the tyrannical city comes into being, how about the tyrannical soul? Socrates says that to discuss this, we need to first sort out the difference between the various kinds of appetites. We know the necessary appetites-- what we need to stay alive. The unnecessary appetites are also easy to spot: appetites for power, fine foods, luxury goods, etc. Of the unnecessary appetites, some are lawful (thank goodness because it is nice to eat something other than beans and rice all the time) and some are lawless. What are the lawless ones?

They are "the ones that wake up when we are asleep, whenever the rest of the soul-- the rational, gentle, and ruling element-- slumbers."¹ (571c). We get some examples here at 571d-- but another example we might think of is *bloodlust*: this appetite is *always lawless*. (The just person would never kill *for the sake of killing*).

2. How does the tyrannical soul develop?

Recall that the democratic soul comes into existence because it is pulled in two directions: on the one hand, parents and relation (who have an oligarchic soul) pull in one direction towards thrift and holding on to wealth; on the other hand the offspring of the oligarch has many new "friends" that show them just what money is actually good for: fine living, pleasures, etc. So the offspring of the oligarchs ends up in a kind of middle path, not completely bad, because they still have some sense of shame (about, for example losing everything, etc.) but not completely buying into the "thrift and savings" approach of their parents. (this was at 559d *et seq.*)

What about the offspring of the person with the democratic soul? Unfortunately they have even less of a counter-weight against being pulled into satisfying all appetites (of whatever kind) at the expense of everything else. Since the democratic soul (and city) values *freedom* more than all else, any kind of "restriction" or "order" (as happened in the democratic city) will be seen as a limit on this freedom. Eventually the tyrant of Passion (*eros*) sets up shop in the soul and comes slowly to take over:

"I think someone in whom the tyrant of Passion dwells, and in whom it serves as captain of everything in the soul, next goes in for festivals, revelries, luxuries, girlfriends, and all that sort of thing." (573d)

But, Passion is never satisfied (i.e. it never says: "well, that was fun, now time to let reason come to rule again.") Instead, "lots of terrible appetites sprout up each day and night beside it, creating needs for all sorts of things" (573d).

But of course "all sorts of things" costs money. Lots of it. In fact, more than someone might have.

¹ Maybe these are the desires of the Freudian *id*.

Do the appetites, having caused the soul to spend everything it has, release their hold on the person (which would be the *reasonable* thing to do)? Of course not. Instead:

“the violent crowd of appetites that have nested within [them] inevitably shout in protest? And when people of this sort are driven by the stings of these other appetites, but particularly of Passion itself, which leads all the others as if they were its bodyguard, stung to frenzy, don’t they look to see who possesses anything that can be taken from him by deceit or force?” (573e)

“Come on, there has to be some money somewhere!” the now developing tyrannical soul will “think” (but not really think-- you can see how reason is now a prisoner) to itself-- and it realizes where there is money: their parents.² The appetites have so come to dominate the soul that now nothing is shameful, not even stealing from one’s own parents by deceit or even force. The descent into the tyrannical constitution of soul is complete: if one can steal from their own parents, sure there is nothing else that one would not do (steal from the temple, accept bribes, agree to give false testimony for money, etc.) (575b).

3. What is it like to be a tyrant?

Let’s return to the tyrannical city and consider what it is like. Well, first of all, it isn’t a very great place to live (577c) as most of the city is enslaved. Is the tyrant at least happy? After all, can’t they have “everything they want?”

The answer to this question will close the case against the challenge of Thrasymachus from Book I (see for example 344c)-- namely that it is better to be unjust than just. Socrates points out:

“If a [person] and [their] city are similar, then mustn’t the same structure exist in [them], too? Mustn’t [their] soul be full of slavery and illiberality, with those same parts of it enslaved, while a small part, the most wicked and most insane, is master?” (577d)

The tyrannical soul is poor-- because it *never gets what it wants*. (We suggested that part of the reason for this is that it *doesn’t know what it wants!*) Is the person ruled by lawless unnecessary appetites (for power at all costs, for example) happy or free? No. Glaucon observes that this sort of person “is by far the most wretched of them all.” (578b).

But not only is the tyrant’s soul most imprisoned, so too is the tyrant an *actual prisoner*: they can never leave the realm of their tyranny and even their own subjects would be them to death if they were able to (although you can throw some propaganda at this problem!).

And the tyrant will never have any friends: not real ones anyway (579c)-- having to go through life either flattering “the worst kind of people” when this is required on the rise to

² Recall the parable of the Prodigal Son (found in Luke 15)-- apparently the prodigal son had enough of a good upbringing to both try to get whatever work he could when he ran out of money, and enough sense to return home-- *reasoning* that his father would at least hire him on to work (and thereby he’d at least have *enough to eat*.) Plato’s story is, well, a little different!

power, or listening to the empty praise and admiration from people who want something from them. As a result the tyrant: "is so far from satisfying [their] appetites in any way that [they are] in the greatest need of most things and truly poor." (579c).

4. The kinds of goods

Plato has yet another proof that it is better to be just than unjust-- that the three parts of the soul each have objects of enjoyment particular to them. Reason's object of enjoyment is *truth*; the Spirit's object of enjoyment is *honor*; and the Appetites' objects of enjoyment are "multiform" but are all in the sensible world-- including food/drink, etc. Now, Socrates says, which one of these is *best*? Our natural reaction might be to say something like: "depends on who you ask."

However, Plato won't be satisfied to just ask people *what they think is good*, rather we want to know what is *actually good*. Who would know this? Well, Plato thinks we should ask those *who have experienced all the goods* and see what they say. Who will that be? The guardians. (581c). What will they tell us? That *truth* is the best good. Why should we listen to them? Well I gave an example in which you are trying to pick between two restaurants you've never been to. Now suppose you have a friend that claims that one is definitely better and another friend that claims that the other is better. When you ask though, it turns out that the first friend has only been to one place, but the second friend has been to both places. Well, who is in a better position to judge? Clearly the second friend.

Similarly, while the oligarchic or democratically constituted soul might praise the objects of the necessary or unnecessary appetites as being the best kind of good, if they have never received the proper education, they have never actually *experienced* the goods of say honor or truth.³

So the life of the just person is best, because it seeks the *best good*, and gets the *best kind of enjoyment*, especially considering the fact the good that is the truth cannot be taken away (586a), unlike the goods of the sensible world: using them to fill the soul is like trying to fill a leaky bucket: you will never succeed.

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³ We might compare their situation to someone who has only had Chips Ahoy or Oreos and that no one has ever baked cookies for (very sad indeed!). Now suppose that they adamantly maintain that Chips Ahoy are much better than your mom or dad or grandma or friend's chocolate chip cookies (suppose that one of these people is good at making cookies!) and when you try to suggest to them that they lack the experience to judge this they reply: "Well / say the Chips Ahoy are better! You can't tell me what's better!" But in this case, you clearly can.