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THE MARKET IN PLATO'S *REPUBLIC*

JOSHUA I. WEINSTEIN

WHEN SOCRATES REFOCUSSES the *Republic*'s discussion of justice from individual life to the character and functioning of cities, he begins from the fact that individuals are not self-sufficient but instead must rely on one another to provide for their many needs. His interlocutor Adeimantus soon agrees that it will be best if the various citizens each focus on one craft—such as weaving or building—and that the goods they each produce should then be shared among them all (ἅπασιν κοινὸν κατατιθέναι, 369e).¹ The *Republic*'s city is at first organized communally, much as a single household might be. Barely a page later, however, the city under discussion has become much larger and more complex, with the addition of a variety of craftsmen—smiths, carpenters—as well as tradesmen and shippers. At this point, the communal policy is overturned and replaced with one quite different; the citizens are to exchange their products in the marketplace through buying and selling (πωλοῦντες καὶ ὠνούμενοι, 371b). The new arrangement, like the first, distributes among the citizens the various goods they each produce. But now many institutions that are associated with trade and the market are introduced as well: merchants and sailors, services and retail, even fiat currency and wage labor. To the modern eye, a veritable revolution has been instituted. Plato's interlocutors, by contrast, are unruffled, sketching the reasoning in a forthright tone and taking the shifts smoothly in stride.

This passage (369b–371e), oddly enough, seems to have been largely overlooked by our scholarship. In the early twentieth century, A. A. Trever emphasized the *Republic*'s approach to mutual interdependence through division of labor and subsequent exchange, but seems not to have noticed that a variety of different arrangements for achieving this end are considered in the course of the dialogue. Still, Trever was at least willing to call Plato “the first great economic thinker of Greece.”² In more recent decades, however, Plato scholars have been largely engaged in other matters, while scholars of

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1. Unless otherwise stated, all references are to Slings 2003, though Burnet 1902 has also been consulted. Translations are my own, though I have referred to that of Grube 1974.

2. Trever [1916] 1978, 22. Though limited in important respects, his discussions of production, exchange, and the market in the *Republic* remain useful (34–37, 40–43).

the classical economy have either gone so far as to deny that there could have been economic thought in classical Greece—since, strictly speaking, there was then no independent thing known as the economy to think about—or else have tried to salvage something worthy of attention from the Aristotelian corpus, leaving Plato with “honourable mentions” at best.³

The significance of the *Republic*’s transition from communalism to the market will emerge only with analysis. Still, in a preliminary fashion we can suggest that Plato understood the specific character of activities we would call economic—his own terminology will be discussed below—while reasoning about how these activities could be unified on a citywide basis, and about the advantages and limitations of different approaches for achieving this unification. Furthermore, the role of the market in particular is articulated through analysis, explication, and even a certain kind of justification. The market is not taken for granted, but rather Plato brings out the reasons for which it comes into being, what Malcolm Schofield has called “a sort of transcendental deduction of the very existence of the market.”⁴ This deduction, I will suggest, hinges on the flexibility that the market introduces and on its more realistic approach to quantities.

This essay is structured as follows. Section I discusses the context of the market passage and the difficulties it presents. Section II outlines a nuance of terminology introduced here, the distinction between citizens who produce a good (δημιουργοί, 370d) and those who provide a service (διάκονοι, 371d). Section III examines the main impact of the introduction of services: the overall flexibility that comes from providing for needs whose characteristics have not yet been specified. Section IV considers the impact of this flexibility on the rest of the dialogue, including the various ways it is controlled and regulated. What emerges is an explication of the market’s capacity to unify certain aspects of the city. The market integrates a variety of needs into a single framework that is capable of satisfying them, while avoiding the pitfalls of less sophisticated approaches.

I

The *Republic*’s discussion of the market is only a small part of the founding and assessment of a thought-experiment city. Our passage sits within a

3. Meikle 1995, 1 n. 2. Perhaps the clearest dismissal of Plato’s economic thought, still not overcome, is Finley 1970: “The key for antiquity rests not with Xenophon or Plato but with Aristotle” (3–4).

4. Schofield 1999, 76. This essay is the most extensive engagement with our passage of which I am aware. Schofield correctly describes its goals and achievements, and concludes, *pace* Finley and others, that this constitutes “the invention of the concept of an economy” (75). Schofield’s presentation, however, does not delve into the logical underpinnings of the passage. He describes correctly a fifth step in the argument, that “the exporters/importers generate (5) a further need for many more farmers and other craftsmen to supply home and overseas consumers.” But what he takes for the sixth step of the deduction is unexplained: “and (5) in turn will generate the need for (6) coinage and the market, which require (7) middlemen to operate the market, and provide the conditions for (8) labourers offering the use of their bodies for pay” (75). As an outline of the argument, this is quite fine. But step six is left here as a bald assertion, lacking explanation or justification. Just which need is generated, and how? Given the context, in which every little addition to the city is carefully justified, such a construal seems out of place. Moreover, a “transcendental deduction” of the market ought to say more about how and why the production of a surplus for foreign trade leads to the rejection of communal sharing and generates the need for buying and selling. My suggestions on these matters follow.

crucial segment of this larger matter, in which Socrates first founds this city “with speech”: beginning with the farmer and weaver who provide food and clothing; through the broader world of crafts and trade; eventually up to the arts and the military (368c–376c). Within a few pages, the outlines of the dialogue’s tripartite city are sketched; it produces necessities and luxuries, while its guardians are both spirited and “philosophical.” Many of the key ideas of the dialogue are presented here in compressed, preliminary form.⁵ Since the economy is not the center of gravity of the *Republic*’s concerns, it is addressed principally in these pages.⁶

The logic of this entire section is the search for collective self-sufficiency. Though Glaucon previously suggested that society arises from a compact neither to commit injustice nor to be subjected to it (358e–359a), Socrates and Adeimantus instead found their city on the many needs we each and all have. No one is self-sufficient, and so we come together in a city, seeking a collective route to the satisfaction of our needs (369b–c):

“Now then,” I said, “a city comes into being, I think, since each of us happens not to be self-sufficient, but rather in need of much. Or are you thinking of some other beginning that founds the city?” —“None,” he said.

“So then, each takes on one person for one need, and another for another, and since they need much, they gather many into one settlement as partners and helpers. It is to this settlement that we gave the name city. Or what?” —“Very much so.”

“They give shares [μεταδίδωσι] to each other, if they do, and take shares [μεταλαμβάνει] thinking this is better for themselves?” —“Indeed.”

“Come then,” I said, “let us with speech make a city from the beginning; our needs, apparently, will make it.”⁷

Community and cooperation in the face of need found the city. Interconnected mutuality is both the spirit and the syntax here, and men are partners and helpers to one another before they are fellow citizens in any other sense. Without too much exaggeration, the rest of the dialogue can be characterized as an examination of the various modalities of this cooperation, later to be identified with justice. Self-sufficiency through cooperation hinges from the very outset on some notion of give-and-take. Indeed, giving and taking of shares (or however we shall translate the pair μεταδίδωσι and μεταλαμβάνει)

5. The *Republic*’s tripartition of the city, even without delving into further details, can already be said to identify the economy as an independent thing with its own specific definition. It is the activity of the lowest of the city’s three parts, that aspect of the city’s functioning that is, on the one hand, distinct from the activities of the military and philosophical guardians, and, on the other hand, parallel to that of the appetites in the soul. To the degree that this activity is not preoccupied with luxuries, it will be guided, like the oligarchy and oligarchic man, by the love of profit and money, as distinct from the love of wisdom or of honor (550c–555b). Oddly, this straightforward identification seems to have been largely overlooked.

6. Though the dialogue does not return to the internal workings of the market, much of the rest of the *Republic* is colored by the open-ended flexibility that I will suggest the market introduces into the city. In particular, the corruption of the city in Books 8 and 9 is mostly a consequence of the endless search for wealth. This matter is discussed further in section IV below.

7. Γίνεται τοίνυν, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ, πόλις, ὡς ἐγῶμαι, ἐπειδὴ τυγχάνει ἡμῶν ἕκαστος οὐκ αὐτάρκης, ἀλλὰ πολλῶν ἐνδεής, ἢ τίν’ οἶτι ἀρχὴν ἄλλῃν πόλιν οἰκίζειν; Οὐδεμίαν, ἦ δ’ ὅς. Οὕτω δὴ ἄρα παραλαμβάνον ἄλλος ἄλλον, ἐπ’ ἄλλου, τὸν δ’ ἐπ’ ἄλλου χρεῖα, πολλῶν δεόμενοι, πολλοὺς εἰς μίαν οἰκῆσιν ἀγειράντες κοινωνοὺς τε καὶ βοηθοὺς, ταύτῃ τῇ συνοικίᾳ ἐθέμεθα πόλιν ὄνομα. ἢ γάρ; Πάνυ μὲν οὖν. Μεταδίδωσι δὴ ἄλλος ἄλλῳ, εἴ τι μεταδίδωσιν, ἢ μεταλαμβάνει, οἴομενος αὐτῷ ἄμεινον εἶναι; Πάνυ γε. Ἰὸι δὴ, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ, τῷ λόγῳ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ποιοῦμεν πόλιν. ποιήσεις δὲ αὐτὴν, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἢ ἡμετέρα χρεῖα.

is an embryonic version of the distribution of products through exchange—though “exchange” as such will not be mentioned until after the market is established—and leads ultimately to the later definition of justice as “doing one’s own” (τὸ τὰ αὐτοῦ πράττειν, 433a).

This give-and-take in search of autarky is implemented in various ways through the course of the dialogue, the first of which is the simple sharing that characterizes the communal city of craftsmen.⁸ Even if there were only four basic needs—food, shelter, clothes, and shoes—the question would still arise whether the strategy based on cooperation and sharing is really better than that based on taking care of oneself (369e–370a):

“What next? Must each one of them put down his own products as common for all? Like the farmer, though one, providing food for four, devoting fourfold time and effort to the provision of food and sharing with the others? Or, not caring for this, must he make for himself only a fourth part of this food in a fourth part of the time, and spend the other three on providing a house, clothes, and shoes? Not bothering to share with the others, will he do by himself that which is his own?”

And Adeimantus said, “But perhaps Socrates this way will be easier than that.”⁹

Three things should be noted about this passage. First, in context it comes as a slight surprise. Individual self-sufficiency has already been set aside as an impossible goal; this impossibility, after all, underwrites the very origin of cities and Socrates’ main strategy of argument. Nevertheless, the option of taking care of all of one’s needs by and for oneself is reconsidered here, again to be rejected. Only this time the reasons for the rejection—and the advantages of cooperation—are elaborated explicitly.

Cooperation grows out of a division of labor, and the conditions and advantages of such a division are analyzed in the passage immediately following. Their summary: “From this it follows that more of each product comes about finer and easier whenever one practices a single task, according to nature, at the right time, and free of other tasks” (370c).¹⁰ Much has been made of the role of nature in this division of labor. Now, from the perspective of the dialogue as a whole and Plato’s philosophical agenda more broadly, this cannot but be appropriate. But from the perspective of the immediate context and its more specific concerns, we need to emphasize that nature is

8. Long after the economy and the market are no longer the center of the dialogue’s attention we find other versions of this give-and-take, using similar tone and language. One later example is the minimal “wage for guardianship” (μισθὸν τῆς φυλακῆς, 416e), which the economic classes provide the guardians as part of their serving as “gracious allies” (συνμάχων εὐμενῶν, 416b). Another version is the demand that the fully-trained philosopher-kings should descend back into the cave of the city, even against their will, and assist their fellow citizens by ruling them properly. Here, again, the goal is to “make them give shares [μεταδιδόναι] to one another of whatever benefit they are capable of providing to the community” (519e–520a).

9. Τί δὴ οὖν; ἓνα ἕκαστον τούτων δεῖ τὸ αὐτοῦ ἔργον ἅπασιν κοινὸν κατατιθέναι, οἷον τὸν γεωργὸν ἓνα ὄντα παρασκευάζειν σίτια τέτταρσιν καὶ τετραπλάσιον χρόνον τε καὶ πόνον ἀναλίσκειν ἐπὶ σίτου παρασκευῇ καὶ ἄλλοις κοινωνεῖν, ἢ ἀμελήσαντα ἑαυτῷ μόνον τέταρτον μέρος ποιεῖν τούτου τοῦ σίτου ἐν τετάρτῳ μέρει τοῦ χρόνου, τὰ δὲ τρία, τὸ μὲν ἐπὶ τῇ τῆς οἰκίας παρασκευῇ διατρίβειν, τὸ δὲ ἱματίου, τὸ δὲ ὑποδημάτων, καὶ μὴ ἄλλοις κοινωνοῦντα πράγματα ἔχειν, ἀλλ’ αὐτὸν δι’ αὐτὸν τὰ αὐτοῦ πράττειν; Καὶ ὁ Ἀδείμαντος ἔφη· Ἄλλ’ ἴσως, ὦ Σώκρατες, οὕτω ῥᾶον ἢ κείνως.

10. Ἐκ δὴ τούτων πλεῖον τε ἕκαστα γίνεσθαι καὶ κάλλιον καὶ ῥᾶον, ὅταν εἷς ἐν κατὰ φύσιν καὶ ἐν καιρῷ, σχολὴν τῶν ἄλλων ἄγων, πράττῃ.

not the whole or even the main point here. Indeed, for the specific kind of division of labor here under discussion—the aptitudes of various craftsmen—the overall significance of natural differences is later reconsidered and summarily dismissed.¹¹ So it is important to recall that other issues are also invoked here; benefits in ease, quantity, and quality also emerge from professionalism alone, that is, from concentration on a single task without distraction. Professionalism, we will note, is significantly different from nature as a criterion in the productive sphere. Nature is rather difficult to divide and redistribute at will, while professional time and undivided attention, even if not utterly malleable, are nevertheless far more flexible.

The second thing to be noted about this discussion is that only two options are on the table at this stage, what we might call individualism and communalism. Only the latter option can make any progress beyond the initial insufficiency of the isolated individual, and so for now it is the preferred approach. The option that will soon replace communalism—buying and selling in the market—is not even considered yet. It will only emerge as communalism encounters new challenges.

Third, the issue of quantities is explicitly raised here, though in a rather limited fashion. One man should do one task, not four (μῖαν εἶς, 370b). But there can be real benefit in this kind of specialization only if, by putting four-fold time and effort into farming, the farmer produces more than four times as much food as he would otherwise, or else derives some other advantage. The possibility set aside here—that devoting a fourth part of the time to making a fourth part of the food might actually have advantages of its own—will lurk in the background of later developments.¹²

At this point in the dialogue, communal sharing among professionals is accepted as the principle of the city's organization, and the search for self-sufficiency next proceeds in iterated stages. The farmer may produce food for the hungry man, but the farmer himself, in his professional capacity, is also not self-sufficient; he must have his tools. The city is then expanded to include the smith who can provide these. But again, the smith has additional needs of his own; he must acquire the relevant raw materials, which may not be available locally, and so he depends on the merchants and sailors who can provide them. Satisfying each need leads to new needs, which must in turn be satisfied if self-sufficiency is to be achieved. The city arises tier by tier through cyclical applications of the logic of autarky.¹³

11. From the perspective of the city as a whole, the specialization by nature that really matters is that related to guardianship and political rule (434a–c). By contrast, violations of specialization by nature, when restricted to the technical or economic level—Socrates' examples are a cobbler meddling in carpentry and vice versa—do not “greatly hinder the city” (μέγα βλάψαι πόλιν, 434a). In the economic sphere proper, division of labor makes use of the nature criterion, but it is also driven by other concerns.

12. The key issue here is that the parts into which one divides one's time and effort need not be equal in quantity, but can be fitted to the varied needs at hand; see section III below.

13. The various stages of the city's founding thus should be understood as expressing the logic of human needs—“our needs, apparently, will make it” (369c)—and of the means for satisfying them, and not as some imagined causal or historical development. Despite Schofield's (1999, 73) optimistic sense that this passage is generally understood not to “indicate any *a priori* historical reconstruction or genetic analysis of the origins of civilization or the state,” it nevertheless is, alas, frequently so (mis)taken; see, e.g., Finley 1970, 16; or, more recently, Harris 2001, 72.

This iterated procedure brings the dialogue to the point where the crafts reach their limits and the communal city begins to break down—a breakdown that requires careful elucidation. A fundamental limitation of any craft is that technique requires raw materials on which to work. In some cases, the crafts can provide for one another; the shoemaker, for his part, can acquire hides for leather from the herdsman (370e). But this is not always feasible; no degree of skill in prospecting, mining, smelting, or smithing will make bronze if there is simply no tin to be had. There is no way to assure in general that the city will find all its material requirements near at hand, and import trade is thus necessary if needs are to be satisfied (370e):

“Furthermore,” I said, “it is nearly impossible to settle the city itself in such a locale that imports will not be needed.” —“Impossible indeed.”

“So now it will need still others, who will bring to it from other cities that which it needs.”¹⁴

So far the reasoning of the passage is clear. Next, the introduction of traders leads logically to the need for the production of a surplus, and then for sailors and the related nautical crafts.

At this point, however, something unexpected occurs in the text. The overall principle of the city’s organization is brought up for consideration yet again, and this time an approach is chosen that previously had not even been mentioned (317b):

“What about within the city itself? How will they give shares to one another [ἀλλήλοις μεταδώσουσιν] of whatever they have each produced? After all, it was for the sake of these that we made a community and founded a city.” —“Clearly,” he said, “by buying and selling.”

“From this there will arise for us a marketplace and a currency for the purpose of exchange.”¹⁵

Both the explicit sense and the repetition of language make it clear that the very foundations of the city—the give-and-take that ultimately blossoms into justice—are once again up for consideration. What is unstated, however, is why communal sharing will no longer suffice as an approach to distributing the city’s various products, and why buying and selling must be instituted in its place. How does such a shift in the city’s organization contribute to collective self-sufficiency? What newly identified need is now being filled? The further implications of the shift from sharing to market exchange—such as the introduction of retailers (καπηλούς, 371d) and wage earners (μισθωτοί, 371e)—are next carried through with explicit reasoning (which will be discussed below), but the fundamental shift itself seems unexplained.¹⁶

14. Ἀλλὰ μήν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, κατοικίσαι γε αὐτὴν τὴν πόλιν εἰς τοιοῦτον τόπον οὐ ἐπισαγωγίμων μὴ δεήσεται, σχεδὸν αὐδύνατον. Ἀδύνατον γάρ. Προσδεήσει ἄρα ἔτι καὶ ἄλλων, οἱ ἐξ ἄλλης πόλεως αὐτῇ κομιούσιν ὧν δεῖται.

15. Τί δὲ δὴ ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ πόλει; πῶς ἀλλήλοις μεταδώσουσιν ὧν ἂν ἕκαστοι ἐργάζωνται; ὧν δὴ ἕνεκα καὶ κοινωνίαν ποιησάμενοι πόλιν ᾠκίσσαμεν. Δῆλον δὴ, ἦ δ' ὅς, ὅτι πωλοῦντες καὶ ὠνούμενοι. Ἀγορὰ δὴ ἡμῖν καὶ νόμισμα σύμβολον τῆς ἀλλαγῆς ἕνεκα γενήσεται ἐκ τούτου;

16. The extent of the shift to the market also deserves noting, since the social role attributed to the market here and in the rest of the passage is surprisingly extensive. Just as in the communal arrangement all products

This is the primary riddle of the market in the *Republic*: communalism is summarily replaced by market exchange, but the rationale for this transformation is not explicitly stated. Just as individual self-sufficiency was rejected in favor of communalism, but for reasons that are described and analyzed, so we would expect that communalism would only be replaced, if at all, for similarly articulated reasons. If we take a clue from the other stages of the argument, we may surmise that precisely those who fill the lacunae of raw materials—the importing and exporting merchants—are themselves the cause of the new need for which the market is, in turn, meant to provide. But this need is nowhere stated. What do these new citizens require, beyond transport and a surplus, that necessitates recasting the city's communalism? Or, put differently, what does the market provide that is missing from the communal city and denies it self-sufficiency once there are merchants in the picture?

Any attempt to answer these questions will be of necessity speculative to some degree and will risk reading in what Plato “should have said” in place of what the text actually offers. Caution here is salutary, but in itself unsatisfactory in a number of ways. First, the logic of the dialogue depends on there being a good answer to this question. We could insist on concluding that Socrates here simply asks an unmotivated and mostly irrelevant question (“How will they give shares to one another of whatever they have each produced?”) and that in response to this non sequitur Adeimantus does not insist that the proper approach has already been discussed (“But Socrates, did we not just now agree that they must each share their products with one another?”), but instead makes some unconnected and possibly prejudiced suggestions. Unfortunately, this kind of interpretation would not only lead to new difficulties of its own, it would also run contrary to the tone and style of the passage itself. This is not to deny that Plato's lead characters sometimes give their interlocutors enough rope with which to hang themselves. But Adeimantus does not seem a good candidate for such toying, and this passage overall does not seem to be one of those cases.

Moreover, it is not as if we have nothing but speculation to go on. The logic of the overall section already indicates a specific line of approach. In addition, many of the details of our passage point to the shifts and changes that presage the transition to the market and suggest the reasoning that seems to be at work here in an implicit fashion. These signs and the hypotheses to which they have led me will be discussed below. Admittedly, suggestions, indications, and hypotheses are not the same as explicit statements. Still, this would not be the only case in which Plato forces us to do some creative thinking on our own.

were shared, now it seems that simply all products are to be bought and sold. Everyone but the farmers must buy food. Conversely, since the farmer engages in no other pursuit but farming, he must go to the market to purchase (with money) his tools, his clothes, and even the use of his plow ox. The notion of a self-sufficient household is nowhere to be seen, nor does barter play any role. If we take Socrates and Adeimantus strictly at their word, it appears that at this stage of the dialogue they have concocted a city in which the market is not only the dominant, it is almost the only institution (families still seem in evidence, 372b). The market plays an even greater role in this city than it does in what is ordinarily called a “market economy.” Of course, this market dominance will not last as the analysis and conversation continue.

With these caveats, we can look at the importing and exporting city and suggest that what is missing is some nexus, some way of interconnecting and harmonizing imports with exports. Put another way, some means must be found within the city for reconciling its own needs with those of other cities.¹⁷ This demand is by no means trivial, since even domestic needs may be difficult to ascertain and the foreign needs, with which they must be somehow integrated, are in general quite unknown. Using modern economic terminology, we might say that the market is a solution to the problem of maintaining a balance of trade under conditions of uncertainty.

This invocation of modern economics may tempt us to speak in terms of the theory of exchange and the concept of price. Indeed, Adeimantus' easy conclusion that the city should move to buying and selling means precisely that products will now have prices attached to them. But we must be particularly wary here. First, we may be guilty of a vicious anachronism, attributing to Plato terms of analysis that simply are not his. The *Republic's* market clearly describes a situation in which prices exist, but the interlocutors nowhere explain what they are thinking by an appeal to the notion of price, and certainly not of a price mechanism.

Even worse, we need to be wary of simply begging the question. Price and exchange are only meaningful after communalism has already been replaced; the reasons necessitating that replacement cannot therefore be explained by relying on these very concepts. Sensitivity to this logical conundrum is also visible in the dialogue's language: explicit terms for exchange appear only after the market is instituted. Before the market is in place, however, what we have is this (370e–371a):

“And if the service provider should go empty-handed—without bringing what is required by those, whoever they are, from whom they will acquire whatever it is that they need—he will return empty-handed.”¹⁸

This sentence seems almost deliberately convoluted so as to avoid terms for price or exchange. All we have is an initial bringing followed by some kind of acquiring, but without any explicit name for the connection between them (other features of this awkward sentence will be discussed below). Only after currency and the market have been instituted are these very same merchants said to be buying and selling (371d).

Modern economic concepts, as thought provoking as they may be, cannot in themselves provide an explanation for the move to the market. Rather, it seems that what we are seeking is the logical ground of what modern economics deems to be the role of prices and money in market exchange; that

17. This kind of reconciliation is related to, but different from, the equalization discussed in the *Statesman* (289e) and by Aristotle—e.g., *Eth. Nic.* 1133a16–22, 1133b16—as well as the related notion of commensurability. Individual needs, and the goods and services that fulfill them, can be equalized or made commensurable (or not) on a piecemeal basis, pair by pair. But the reconciliation of the needs of the city as a whole with those of another city can only occur on a large-scale, systematic basis, not by any one exchange. A useful analysis of Aristotle's problem of commensurability is Meikle 1979, 59–61.

18. Καὶ μὴν κενὸς ἂν ἦν ὁ διάκονος, μὴδὲν ἄγων ὃν ἐκεῖνοι δεόνται παρ' ὧν ἂν κομίζωνται ὃν ἂν αὐτοῖς χρεῖα, κενὸς ἄπεισιν.

is, the reasons for which such things are needed in the first place. This is precisely what a “transcendental deduction” is supposed to provide. Some clues about how this all works out can be found in the terminological shifts that parallel the stages of the city’s development.

II

Plato’s lead characters occasionally remind their interlocutors (and us) not to quibble over the details of terminology or word choice. Nevertheless, the dialogues themselves often display careful and systematic use of specific terms and phrases, to the point that the language itself reveals some of the dialogue’s sense and structure. In our case, a new term is introduced to mark the transition from the communal city of crafts to that of the market. While the smith and the carpenter are called δημιουργοί—a perhaps familiar Platonic term—the merchants, retailers, and laborers working in the marketplace are consistently distinguished as διάκονοι. At the risk of importing too much modern baggage, let us translate this latter, as in the preceding quote, by the term “service providers.”

Throughout our passage, these two terms are consistently used to mark the distinction between two kinds of citizens. The first kind of διάκονος is the not-yet-identified trader mentioned in the preceding quotation who serves by visiting other cities, acquiring the things his city needs in “exchange” for what these other cities need. But this means that the city must produce a surplus of goods for export, and so needs more farmers and other δημιουργοί (371a7).¹⁹ The focus then shifts back to the service providers, who are now identified as traders (ἔμποροι, 371a11). After market institutions are introduced, the impact of the new services on the producers of goods is assessed. Farmers and other δημιουργοί will not necessarily come to the market to exchange at the same time as one another (371c), but instead of sitting idly, they will avail themselves of the services of other διάκονοι, the retailers (καπήλους, 371d). Throughout this discussion, the producers of goods and the providers of services are kept clearly distinct from one another; they are consistently called δημιουργοί and διάκονοι, respectively. Furthermore, since the varieties of the former class have already been distinguished, they are

19. This usage, which counts the farmers as craftsmen, is itself an interesting shift in terminology. The citizens who produce “end-use” goods—food, shelter, clothing, and shoes—are originally described not as craftsmen but as those who take care of the body (τῶν περὶ τὸ σῶμα θεραπευτῶν, 369d). The term δημιουργοί initially applies only to those who deal in tools and technology, the carpenters and smiths (370d). However, in the context of the market passage, the distinction between caretakers and craftsmen is unimportant, since both deal in goods (as opposed to services). Later, the various elements of the economy—caretakers, craftsmen, service providers, and also artists—will all be grouped together under the label of craftsmen, which thus becomes the generic term (e.g., 415a). In a sense, Plato is reminding us to make careful terminological distinctions only when the context calls for such. Though the method and approach used in the *Statesman* are rather different, the same terms are used there to mark basically the same distinctions. There we read of those citizens whose craft deals with food and those things that “mixed with the body . . . acquire the power to care for it” (εἰς τὸ σῶμα συγκαταμειγνύμενα . . . εἰς τὸ θεραπεῦσαι τινα δύναμιν εἴληχε, 288e–289a); of those who “work as craftsmen in as many crafts as we’ve now mentioned” (δημιουργοῦσιν ὅποσαι τῶν τεχνῶν νῦν εἴρηγται, 288d); and of those who work in trade, retail, finance, and clerical work and are devoted to “assisting” or “providing service” (ὀπηρετοῦντας, διακονοῦντας, 290a); references are to Duke et al. 1995.

treated as an undifferentiated group, with farmers as the paradigm example. The service providers, on the other hand, are identified one by one and distinguished from one another: traders, seamen, retailers, wage laborers.

As long as the economy remains the focus of discussion, this distinction is maintained. The next stage in the city's development introduces luxuries and the various decorative, culinary, and performing artists (μυηταί, 373b). This stage also brings with it a great expansion of the other economic activities, an expansion in which craftsmen and service providers continue to be distinguished. There must be more δημιουργοί to produce wares of various kinds, including especially those for the adornment of women. Similarly, there must be many more δάκονοι, including especially those needed for freeing (some) women from the duties of cooking and child rearing (373b–c).

Later, as the focus of the dialogue shifts, these distinctions are mostly dropped. Once the articulation of the various economic activities has been laid out, the discussions of the economy focus on its relations, taken as a whole, to the main noneconomic pursuits: warfare, education, and rulership. Thus the moment that warriors are introduced, they are contrasted simply with the various craftsmen; the very existence of service providers and artists (374b) is ignored. Similarly, the myth of the metals contrasts the gold and silver guardians with the citizens of iron and bronze. If the distinction between goods and services retained any significance in this context, it would be easy to express this through the pair of base metals. But iron and bronze together simply designate a single group: “the farmers and the other craftsmen” (415a, c). From the perspective of the polis as a whole, the economy can be treated as a single undifferentiated thing and its internal structure ignored.

Returning to the term δάκονος, we can perhaps learn more about it from a linguistic comparison within the Platonic corpus. The noun, verb, and related derivatives appear in the dialogues a total of thirty-three times, all but two of which are in major “political” dialogues—*Republic*, *Gorgias*, *Statesman*, and *Laws*. These usages can be divided roughly into four categories. The simplest of these is merely pejorative, taking the name of δάκονος as equivalent to the name of slave or the opposite of a free man (eight times).²⁰ A somewhat more complex usage retains the subordinate character of the slave, but adds and sometimes emphasizes the positive aspect of providing service—that it is truly useful (thirteen times).²¹ This includes the sense in which the art of cooking is properly subordinate to, but also useful to, the art of medicine; and the sense in which children assist their parents in various crafts. A third usage, perhaps a variant of the preceding one, applies specifically to those who discharge public functions, either as politicians who “serve” their constituencies or as some other kind of public functionary (six times).²² Here, one might see a reflection of the *Republic*'s argument that rulers in the strict sense seek only the good of the ruled, and are thus in a sense actually subordinate to them. They are truly, not ironically, public servants (342a–347a).

20. *Tht.* 175e (twice); *Leg.* 633c, 763a (thrice), 805e, 919d.

21. *Plt.* 290a, c, d (twice); *Grg.* 517d, 518a, c, 521a (twice); *Resp.* 467a (twice); *Leg.* 782b, 831e.

22. *Grg.* 517b (twice); *Resp.* 493d; *Leg.* 955c (twice), d.

Lastly, there is the specifically market-oriented use in the *Republic*: the δῆλκονος provides a service (six times).²³ Here, the usefulness of the service is emphasized, as in the second and third usages above, while the subordinate character of its provider is pretty much elided. The absence of condescension or irony in this passage is particularly noticeable, since the main exemplars of service providers, the merchant and the retailer, also each appear in the *Statesman*, the *Gorgias*, and the *Laws*. In these other dialogues, traders are presented in immediate proximity to the term δῆλκονος, and in a distinctly pejorative light.²⁴ For many of Plato's characters, it seems hard to imagine that someone who is not shameless or lacking in free spirit would be willing, or would even allow himself to be compelled, constantly to do what is asked of him by another—any other who should come by—merely for money. The provision of a service seems to be inherently linked to the ongoing subordination of oneself to wishes and whims not one's own. Even if such a one is not actually bought and owned, and is technically free, he seems to have accepted upon himself the very essence of slavery. A δῆλκονος, it would seem, is essentially a servant.

But in the context of the *Republic*'s growing city, all of this is absent. The service of going to some other city, bringing to its inhabitants what they need and taking back what is needed at home, has no demeaning character. Such service is necessary, makes up for an inherent weakness of the various crafts, and brings the city closer to self-sufficiency. There is no servitude here. The *Republic*'s δῆλκονος is merely a service provider.²⁵

III

Where useful and necessary, the provision of a service is apparently not contemptible. But regardless of how it is evaluated, the essential characteristic of service remains unchanged. Service means doing what others ask of one, without knowing in advance precisely what their needs and demands will turn out to be. The *Republic*'s transition from communalism to the market, I suggest, begins precisely because this servile activity—relating not just to goods and technique, but to the not-yet-known requirements of other people—is identified as necessary. The full consequences of this identification are then drawn.

The service orientation of the merchants is required for dealing with a need that is unnamed in the text, but seems implicitly understood: a lack, not merely of goods, but of what may be termed knowledge. One cannot know in advance all the raw materials that will be available or unavailable to any given city, nor how easy or difficult they will be to obtain. This applies not only to one's own city, but a fortiori to other cities, one's potential trading partners. One cannot, therefore, know in advance exactly how much of

23. *Resp.* 370e, 371a, c, d, e, 373c.

24. E.g., *Plt.* 289c–290a; *Grg.* 517d; *Leg.* 831c–e, 919c–e.

25. A related conclusion is also suggested in the *Laws* (918d–e). If ever a virtuous man or woman were to go into the business of service—as impossible and ridiculous as that thought must be—we would then see that such business is neither contemptible nor corrupt, but lovable and as worthy of honor as a mother or other provider.

which goods one's city will need to produce to give in return for which other goods.

But this lack of foreknowledge is itself a particular need which can be addressed; it is parallel to that which characterizes a *διάκονος* in the servile sense. Such a servant may not know from moment to moment what his master will require of him, but if he is good at what he does, he will be able to provide what is needed, whatever that might be. The gap between the abstraction "whatever is required" and the fulfillment of the concrete need is a gap of missing knowledge. The competent service provider must be able to work successfully under such conditions of uncertainty.

Though expressions like "missing knowledge" and "the gap between an abstractly stated need and its concrete fulfillment" do not appear in the text, we can see an example of the relation of services to needs and knowledge in the role played by retailers in the marketplace (371c–d):

"Now should a farmer, or some other craftsman, bringing some produce to the market, not arrive at the same time as those who need what he has to exchange, will he neglect his craft, sitting in the market?"

"Surely not," he said, "for there are those who, seeing this, take this service upon themselves. . . . They must wait about in the market, exchanging goods for money with those who need to sell something, and, also for money, exchanging when others need to buy something."²⁶

If it were possible for the farmer to know exactly when the persons with whom he needed to trade would arrive in the market, he would have no need of retail services. But this knowledge of timing is missing, and since its absence leads to inefficiency and losses, providing for it can be seen as a new need. Indeed, on a higher level of abstraction, this need itself must become known and identified as such. Retailers, "seeing" this situation, acquire knowledge of what needs to be done and also know what to do about it. Precisely this is the service they provide. Put generally, the job of the service provider can be understood as finding out what needs doing, including what knowledge may be lacking, and making it one's business to take care of it. (Let us also note that efficiency is here identified as a need in its own right. Simply losing time away from productive activity is apparently detrimental to the city's self-sufficiency. More on this shortly.)

This orientation to missing knowledge already seems to be at work when services are first introduced into the city, even before the market is set up, as seen through the introduction of abstract locutions. For example, the imports needed by the city are not named specifically but only generically. Prior to this point in the text, each of the city's needs is concretely specified, as is the particular citizen charged with providing for that need: smith, shepherd, cobbler. But with the advent of trade, neither Socrates nor

26. Ἄν οὖν κομίσας ὁ γεωργὸς εἰς τὴν ἀγορὰν τι ὄν ποιεῖ, ἢ τις ἄλλος τῶν δημιουργῶν, μὴ εἰς τὸν αὐτὸν χρόνον ἦκη τοῖς δεομένοις τὰ παρ' αὐτοῦ ἀλλάξασθαι, ἀργήσῃ τῆς αὐτοῦ δημιουργίας καθήμενος ἐν ἀγορᾷ; Οὐδ' αὖτως, ἢ δ' ὅς, ἀλλὰ εἰσιν οἱ τοῦτο ὄρῶντες ἑαυτοὺς ἐπὶ τὴν διακονίαν τάττουσιν ταύτην. . . . αὐτοῦ γὰρ δεῖ μένοντας αὐτοὺς περὶ τὴν ἀγορὰν τὰ μὲν ἀντ' ἀργυρίου ἀλλάξασθαι τοῖς τι δεομένοις ἀποδόσθαι, τοῖς δὲ ἀντὶ αὐτ' ἀργυρίου διαλλάττειν ὅσοι τι δεόνται πρίασθαι.

Adeimantus claims to know which specific items will need to be imported or which craftsman will be “served” first. All that the first service provider seeks is the generic “that which is needed” (ὃν δεῖται, 370e).²⁷

Even more abstract are the city's exports. For a given city at a given time, it should be possible to determine the imports that it needs, even if Socrates and company can't do it in the course of their conversation. But even if these needs were determined, one could not know in advance what their “price” would be. The commodities one's own city needs will only be available if one brings something their suppliers in turn need. But the abstract definition—“whatever they need”—is as far as one can go in specifying the necessary exports until one actually goes abroad. One cannot even specify in advance who these “others” are. This indefiniteness, pointing to the missing information the service provider will have to accommodate, is directly reflected in the language of the passage through the repeated use of the general conditional relative. These service providers, as mentioned above, need to “bring what is required by those, whoever they are, from whom they will acquire whatever it is that they need” (ἄγων ὃν ἐκεῖνοι δέονται παρ' ὃν ἂν κομίζονται ὃν ἂν αὐτοῖς χρεῖα, 370e–371a). This construction brings out the indefinite character not only of the needs of one's own city, but also of the identity of appropriate trading partners and their unknown needs. The language here thus points to the additional knowledge that the service provider will require in order to turn these abstractions into actual goods.

The indefinite character of imports and exports, together with the knowledge gap thus incurred, is itself finally imported back home, where it reshapes the city's overall makeup. Additional goods for export obviously must be produced by someone, but by whom? Hitherto in the dialogue one could count the citizens of the city by counting the number of its crafts. If the city must farm, build homes, weave, and cobble, it must have four citizens; adding crafts adds people on a one-to-one basis (one craft, one man). But this is no longer possible, since one must have “more” farmers and other craftsmen in the city to produce goods for export. How many more? The number is unspecified, and indeed, at this level of discourse there is no way to know in other than an abstract fashion: as many as are needed. But how is anyone to know how many that may be?

The city as a whole may be said to have come to serve the other cities from which it imports goods. That which others need, this the city must now find a way to provide—limited, of course, by the degree to which the city is itself in need of imports from others. The city as a whole has become, to some degree, at the disposal of others. It needs to match its “supply” to others'

27. The power entailed by the service providers' abstract goals is easy to miss. But let us imagine that it were defensible to begin the city with its first citizens as service providers rather than craftsmen. If they could actually somehow provide for the abstraction “that which is needed,” self-sufficiency would already be achieved and the entire founding of the city would be completed in one brief step. But this shortcut is impossible, and the reason for this is the limitation of service provision in the absence of the production of goods. Without goods being produced at home, any such service provider will go out “empty-handed,” and thus he cannot but return the same way. Put another way, the abstractions inherent in services are of no use if they cannot be concretized through specific goods.

“demands.” The not-yet-defined character of these demands, unspecified in both quantity and quality, is again explicit in the language of the passage, employing the general conditional relative (371a):

“So they must make at home not only enough for themselves, but in kind and quantity for those, whoever they are, of whom they have need [οἷα καὶ ὅσα ἐκείνοις ὧν ἂν δέωνται].” —“Indeed they must.”

“So we need in the city more farmers and other craftsmen.” —“More indeed.”²⁸

This is the biggest change that the introduction of services has worked in the city. The qualities and quantities of its exports have an abstract, not-yet-definite character, concretized by the dual constraints of the city’s needs and those of its trading partners. This means that the overall number of its citizens and the number in any given specialty can no longer be fixed in advance.

This is a crucial, and one can only say positive, deviation from the artificial equality of crafts from which the city has hitherto suffered. In the earlier discussion of the advantages of specialization (369e–370c), Socrates elided one of the disadvantages of this communalism in comparison with the “jack-of-all-trades” scheme. If a single man were to provide for himself food, clothing, shelter, and shoes, he would surely divide his time and effort into four parts, as Socrates suggests. But not necessarily into four equal parts. Presumably, such a one would apply himself to each task in some proportion determined by how important or pressing the need was and how easy or difficult it was to fulfill. Such flexibility would be essential if all needs were really to be fulfilled. By contrast, the minimal city of four specialists devotes the same amount of man-hours to each of its four tasks without regard to which need is greater or more difficult to fulfill. This means that, depending on circumstances, the city could suffer from a shortage of food and an overabundance of shoes, or vice versa; in either case, self-sufficiency is impossible, even if all the relevant crafts are represented. The problem is one of quantity and proportion, which somehow must be addressed. But in a city of natural specialists, who is there to specialize in the art of accurately trading off against one another the difficulty of the various tasks and their degree of urgency?

The problem of finding the right proportions between the various crafts is exacerbated with the introduction of foreign trade. If one’s trading partner needs food, then the city must add farmers in order to produce this food, as is clear from the text. But let us take the next analytical steps ourselves. At some point, adding more farmers will mean adding more smiths to make tools. Adding more smiths means adding more weavers to clothe them—and, in turn, more farmers so that these smiths and weavers may also be fed. Not only does the city as a whole need to reach an overall integrated balance, trading off its various needs against one another, but it must be able to remake this very balance in response to the not-yet-defined needs of its not-yet-identified trading partners. Indeed, the same transformation is presumably occurring inside the other city as well.

28. Δεῖ δὴ τὰ οἴκοι μὴ μόνον ἑαυτοῖς ποιεῖν ἱκανά, ἀλλὰ καὶ οἷα καὶ ὅσα ἐκείνοις ὧν ἂν δέωνται. Δεῖ γάρ. Πλείονων δὲ γεωργῶν τε καὶ τῶν ἄλλων δημιουργῶν δεῖ ἡμῖν τῇ πόλει. Πλείονων γάρ.

Let me suggest that we have now identified the role of the market, the unstated need that it is meant to fill. The right quantities of the right kinds of surplus must be available to the traders, but they themselves do not have the power to make these products come into being. The most that they can contribute to solving this conundrum is the knowledge that their taking away and bringing back entails about the degrees and kinds of needs that exist at home and abroad. This knowledge—which is essentially the province of the service provider—needs to be converted into an answer about how many of which kinds of products the city must produce, that is, which crafts its citizens should pursue and in what quantity. The market is the single locus where all this disparate knowledge is integrated, converted into useful concretes, distributed, and made effective for the city as a whole.

Now the *Republic* provides no explanation as to how the market is to achieve this. The responsiveness of the various inputs of production to the market prices of their products is discussed in a famous passage of Adam Smith.²⁹ But there is no explication in the *Republic* of how or by what mechanism buying and selling, which presumably generate market prices, are supposed to effect a balance among domestic needs, exports, and imports, nor of how the actual number of specialists engaged in each of the various crafts can depend on the need for them as reflected in market prices. All that Socrates and Adeimantus feel needs to be said is that the pre-market city of communalized services will “clearly” give way to a city of buying and selling—and hence of currency, retailers, and wage labor. How the market will provide the overall coordination of knowledge and needs, imports and exports, goods and services, the *Republic* does not describe. But its interlocutors seem satisfied that the unification and integration their city lacks will be adequately provided by the introduction of market institutions.

Perhaps the most urgent need of the communal city is for a more realistic approach to quantities, and this is treated in the market to a surprising level of detail. As discussed above, parceling out the city's efforts to a variety of specialists may have advantages, but it also has a salient disadvantage in the realm of quantities: it blindly applies the same amount of manpower to each craft, regardless of how important or trivial its products may be. Now, after the introduction of exports, there are to be “more” farmers and other craftsmen. In a sense, this already alleviates the main problem, allowing more manpower to be applied to the more important or difficult jobs. But there is still a residual inefficiency in the system, since some jobs may need to be done but still be so easy or trivial as not to justify the devotion of even one person full-time. Does the farmer really need a full-time professional cowherd to provide him with traction at plowing time? Granted that the ox has other uses (transport, hides), does even this mean that it would not be better for the farmer to give up the advantages of specialization and “moonlight” as a cowherd as well, rather than waste the man-hours of a full-time specialist on a possibly trivial job (cf. 370d–e)? Let us not forget that precisely such a waste of man-hours is the need for which retailers are introduced.

29. Smith [1776] 1976, 73–75 (1.7.8–14).

This specific problem of quantitative inefficiency is not addressed directly, but a parallel problem arises in the market, precisely with these retailers. The retailer who serves by exchanging goods for money and money for goods needs to devote all of his time and attention to this job. But since it consists of little physical activity, merely sitting and waiting in the market, his physical strength, if he has any, will simply go to waste. Adeimantus therefore suggests that in a rightly founded city such retailers will be the sickly of body, so that they do not have any bodily power to waste (371c). Conversely, those who serve by selling the use of their bodily strength, do not really need the powers of reason; they are told what to do and receive a wage in exchange (371e). In a sense, these services could be performed effectively by only half of a person, either the soul or the body. It would be a waste and inefficiency to assign them to a whole person in full possession of all faculties. This division of services down to the level of “half a person” seems the closest one can come to solving the problem of quantitative inefficiency created by the principle of specialization without actually reneging on it.

We have now assembled an account, an hypothesis concerning the reasoning that underlies the *Republic's* transition from the communal economy to the market. The need for raw materials leads to the need for imports, and hence to exports and the nautical trades; all well and good. But the specialized city of crafts already suffered from an unrealistic approach to quantities according to which each distinguishable craft is equally represented, or equivalently, equally important to the city. This imbalance is an unavoidable side effect of the *Republic's* principle of division of labor, one that becomes even more intractable once it is interlinked, through import and export trade, to the unknown needs of other unknown cities. The quantities in which the various crafts will need to be represented depends on a large body of knowledge, not all of which is known to any one person (not even Socrates and Adeimantus, the city's “founders,” who never seek to determine how many more farmers are needed). But the movement in and out of the various goods in particular quantities, that is, the result of the service provided by the merchants, contains embedded within it the relevant quantitative information (either implicitly or explicitly). Knowledge of this kind can be relevant for the city as a whole only when there is a single meeting point where all the information and all the citizens come together, and a single “language” in which it is to be conveyed. This is the market in which currency is the medium of exchange between goods.³⁰ The *Republic* does not even hint how the knowledge con-

30. The thought of barter or of coin specie is never raised in the *Republic*, only fiat currency (νόμισμα σύμβολον τῆς ἀλλαγῆς ἕνεκα, 371b). No explanation for this is given, as if a marketplace without such money is unworthy of mention (unlike the explicit but for our purposes irrelevant reasoning given for a similar conclusion in the *Laws*, 742a–b). But in the absence of direct textual evidence, the present analysis does point to a possible, if speculative, explanation. The coordinative function of the market can only succeed where the knowledge embedded in a large number of exchanges can be integrated, providing a single, synoptic view that effectively unifies the city. This is only possible if there is a single unit of measurement underlying all the various quantitative trade-offs being made in the marketplace, and for this almost theoretical purpose only a conventional unit will do. In any event, Hayek 1948 is an illuminating discussion of prices and their role as “translators” and conveyors of a certain kind of knowledge.

veyed by the service providers, now translated into the terms of price and market exchange, can shape or reshape the balance of the city. But such a detail, though of great theoretical interest, is not relevant for the heart of the matter. What is essential is that just as the city of crafts was lacking without services, so too is the city of services in need of a marketplace and currency to knit together its disparate parts into a single, more self-sufficient whole.

IV

After the introduction of the market and its various institutions, Socrates asks where justice is in the city, and Adeimantus suggests that it may be related to the mutual need of its citizens (372a). Indeed, it is precisely with respect to needs that the market provides a clearinghouse for integrating and coordinating the city's knowledge and efforts. Socrates raises here for the first time the possibility that the city is now complete—which of course it is not, since human life is not only economic. Still, the market is the capstone institution of the city that Socrates calls "true" and like a person who is "healthy" (372e). In producing a single unified economy, the market effectively creates a single city for the first time, and thus constitutes its unity.

In a certain sense, however, the market has done its job too well. Once any craft or service can be integrated into the economy, and full-time service providers specialize precisely in filling not-yet-determined demands, needs that may arise anew every morning, what is to set the bounds? Can there be any? If the citizens follow Socrates' advice, that is, if they drink moderately, bear only the number of children they can support, avoid poverty and war—all well and good (372b). But how is this regulation to be achieved, and who is to draw the limits of the necessary? Glaucon soon demands a better diet for the citizens, and Socrates acquiesces (372c). Glaucon then goes for more, demanding up-to-date furniture and cuisine (372d–e); Socrates again accepts the demand, issuing caveats as he goes.³¹ But the most important factor in this expansion—which will soon be described as swelling and fever, and which points to the systematic weakness of the market-oriented economic city—is merely the absence of any countervailing tendency (*οὐδὲν ἀποκωλύει*, 372e). The market is built to "supply" any "demand." Left alone, the market is not truly self-regulating and sets no limits for itself.

Some kinds of limits will need to be set, as soon emerges in the continuation of the dialogue, or the quest for self-sufficiency will fail. The decorative, culinary, and performing arts that supply the various new luxuries will swell the city's population and thus its need for land. Having overstepped the bounds of necessity, the city of luxury, in search of territory, will need to go to war with its neighbors (373d–e). Its soldiers, if they are not themselves to destroy the city, will have to be trained in a fashion that effectively "purifies" the city (399e). Glaucon is eventually persuaded that his warriors must give up the dainties on which he himself had previously insisted (404c–d). Doctors

31. To obtain a real understanding of the dialogue's approach to luxury we must analyze carefully the meaning of these demands. Such analysis is beyond the scope of the present essay.

and judges are introduced to correct failures, in body and soul respectively, especially those that arise from excess (405a–410a). Eventually, the guardians must even renounce silver and gold altogether and limit themselves to only the most necessary private property (416d–417a).³²

These restrictions are all direct or indirect consequences of the openness and flexibility introduced into the city by services and the market. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to see the whole guardian apparatus—military auxiliaries, philosopher-kings, and their education—as guarding, more than anything else, against the excesses that arise from the unbounded quest for money, possessions, and the pleasures they can buy. The introduction of the market has made this quest possible, and as the bonds of education and virtue weaken, it becomes the leading culprit in the corruption of the city as described in Books 8 and 9.³³ The market and its internal logic are not revisited in the later parts of the *Republic*, but the main ethical and political conclusions of the dialogue are profoundly conditioned by their consequences.³⁴

Still, it is unclear what impact the guardians and their limitations actually have on the economy and the market. The most prominent of these restrictions are aimed, after all, at the silver and gold guardian classes, who play no active role in the economy. The bronze and iron economic classes are not included in the guardians' education and training (456d) and in the restrictions on precious metals and private property.³⁵ The main thrust of the city's self-limitations is moral and political, and it is not clear that the "policy levers" used to implement these restrictions—primarily education and law—have any direct impact on the economic classes or are meant to do so.

In fact, the specific issue of market regulations does come up for consideration, and it is explicitly set aside as a minor by-product of the real issues (425c–e):

32. Not only do the guardians own almost no private property, but the first consequence of corruption in the best city is that its land and houses are divided up by the guardians as private property (547b–c). Though such statements stand out so distinctly that they might be taken as a return to the city's original across-the-boards communalism, they are really not so remarkable. Even today a military pilot does not own his fighter jet as private property, and it would indeed be a sign of great corruption if he (or some other member of the defense establishment) were to take it home as if it were his own. What is more alien to us is that the *Republic's* guardians, unlike our soldiers and statesmen, are never "off duty" and, thus, having no private lives to speak of, have almost no legitimate use for private property at all.

33. The best city becomes a timocracy because of the temptation to acquire money and land (547b). The timocracy deteriorates into oligarchy because of private treasuries (550d–e). The transition of the oligarchy into a democracy and of the democracy into a tyranny each begin from the striving for wealth, though they do not end there (555b, 564e–565d).

34. Perhaps a faint echo of our market passage can be heard in Book 9, where injustice is compared to a man's strengthening the multiheaded monster within himself (acquisitive appetites), as well as the lion (*thumos*), at the expense of weakening the man within (reason). This will bring it about that the man is "dragged whithersoever one of them should lead" (ὥστε ἄλκεσθαι ὅπῃ ἂν ἐκείνων πότερον ἄγῃ, 589a). The language that earlier expressed the flexibility and abstraction that made service providers so useful to the city is here used to describe similarly open-ended tendencies, but now uncoupled from the guidance and moderation of reason and turned into a perverse form of impulsive aimlessness.

35. Of course, Aristotle claims that it is unclear whether or not the *Republic's* abolition of private families and property applies not only to the guardians but also to the economic classes (*Pol.* 1264a11–40). For present purposes, there is no need to enter the vexed question of how one can be charitable to both Plato and Aristotle on this matter. However, it seems clear that the more convincing the present discussion, the less likely we are to expect serious ambiguities in the *Republic's* presentation of economic matters.

"Then, by the gods, what about market affairs, the deals they make with one another in the marketplace, add if you wish those with manual laborers, and cases of insult or assault, the bringing of lawsuits, the establishment of juries, and any tolls that may need collection or imposition on the markets or harbors, and all the regulations of the market, the city or the harbor, and other such—shall we venture to legislate for any of these?"

"It is not worthwhile," he said, "to dictate to fine and good men; most of those that need legislation they will easily discover themselves."

"Yes, my friend," I said, "at least if a god grants them the preservation of the laws that we have previously described."³⁶

The instruments of regulation that directly affect the market and the economic life of the city are certainly not absent, but they are minor addenda, which on the level of the *Republic's* entire discussion do not matter much. The important thing is the overall ethical and political character of the city and its leading citizens, who are not economically active. Men cannot be made good in the market, but neither are they really corrupted there (cf. 427a). The workplace is not the site of human education.

The *Republic's* economy is still subject to one overall regulation. Though the economic classes enjoy substantial freedom of operation, the main restriction imposed on them is that they should not be allowed to become either rich or poor. In either case, they will become unable to perform well their allotted tasks, since wealth leads to idleness (at least) and poverty to poor workmanship (421d–422a). This is surely a profound restriction whose deeper implications are belied by the brevity with which it is presented. Even if there is a substantial degree of economic laissez-faire in the *Republic's* market, there is certainly no broader ideal of liberalism. However, there is no discussion of the mechanism through which the extremes of wealth and poverty are to be prevented—be it taxation, transfer payments, expropriation, or anything else—so it is difficult to assess the economic impact of this restriction. But the middle path is presented precisely as a way to preserve the effective functioning of the economic life already outlined, not as a means to correct or "improve" it. It is hard to imagine that this restriction is meant to effect any fundamental change in the workings of the market.

In sum then, we should avoid anachronism and remember that the *Republic's* economy does not operate in a liberal, laissez-faire regime. On the contrary, the dominant theme of the dialogue, the tripartition of the city and the soul, points precisely to the subordination of the lower to the higher, of the appetitive, acquisitive, and economic tendencies to the guardians of the city and soul. By contrast, the restriction of these desires under the guidance of reason, enforced with the power of *thumos*, is, in a nutshell, the essence of the *Republic's* ethics. It is in this sense that the harmonious man "puts his

36. Τί δέ, ὃ πρὸς θεῶν, ἔφην, τὰδε τὰ ἀγοραῖα, συμβολαίων τε περί κατ' ἀγορὰν ἕκαστοι ἂ πρὸς ἀλλήλους συμβάλλουσι, εἰ δὲ βούλει, καὶ χειροτεχνικῶν περί συμβολαίων καὶ λοιδοριῶν καὶ αἰκίας καὶ δικῶν λήξεως καὶ δικαστῶν καταστάσεως, καὶ εἴ που τελῶν τινες ἢ πράξεις ἢ θέσεις ἀναγκαῖοι εἰσιν ἢ κατ' ἀγορὰς ἢ λιμένας, ἢ καὶ τὸ πᾶμπαν ἀγορανομικὰ ἅττα ἢ ἀστυνομικὰ ἢ ἐλλιμενικὰ ἢ ὅσα ἄλλα τοιαῦτα, τούτων τολμήσομεν τι νομοθετεῖν; Ἄλλ' οὐκ ἄξιον, ἔφη, ἀνδράσι καλοῖς καγαθοῖς ἐπιτάττειν· τὰ πολλὰ γὰρ αὐτῶν, ὅσα δεῖ νομοθετῆσθαι, ῥαδίως που εὐρήσουσιν. Ναί, ὃ φίλε, εἶπον, ἐάν γε θεὸς αὐτοῖς διδῷ σωτηρίαν τῶν νόμων ὧν ἔμπροσθεν διήλθομεν.

own things in order" (443d), and it is this hierarchy of functioning that is "a model in heaven for him who wants to order his soul" (592b).

The *Republic's* economy is thus politically subordinated, but it seems to remain economically unfettered. The rigidity of the communal city has been replaced by the open-ended production of goods and services in quantities and qualities that are not and, indeed, cannot be stipulated in advance; without this flexibility, even the most immediate of the citizen's needs may not be adequately met. The market, moreover, is a site of coordination, integration, and unification for the city—though it is decisively not, once integrated, self-regulating. The guardians still fill a necessary role, overseeing the economic classes and defending them from threats external and especially internal. The major economic restriction the guardians must enforce is that wealth and poverty should not reach the point at which they become themselves impediments to effective economic functioning. Indeed, the very definition of justice in the city—that each class properly fulfill its natural function (434c)—requires that the economy and the market actually succeed in operating as they have been constituted, while remaining within the limits of their original mandate: contributing to the self-sufficiency of the city.

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