

C.D.C. Reeve

Blindness and Reorientation: Problems in Plato's Republic.

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C.D.C. Reeve has not only published widely on Plato, but has also contributed his own translations of several dialogues. The present book identifies a series of puzzles associated with, but not limited to, the *Republic*. Chapter 1 examines the *Apology* and Chapters 2 and 6 the *Symposium*. The book contains nine chapters, all previously published. There is no overarching thesis to the book, and so each chapter can be read independently.

Something must be said of Reeve's perplexing approach. The book is very low on citations and seldom contextualizes an argument by referencing other scholarly positions. According to Reeve, he is aiming less at other specialists and more at "all those readers of Plato who have been inspired enough by the *Republic* to want to understand it better" (xii). A valid hope, but for this reviewer, misguided in its application. In addition to the arguments not being contextualized, it is sometimes difficult to identify what Reeve takes for granted and where he is making argumentative strides. This is more of a complaint of form than substance, since Reeve demonstrates a real sensitivity to Plato's language.

In Chapter 1, Reeve examines the familiar but beguiling puzzle: the nature of Socratic wisdom and its relation to the divine. Reeve argues that Socrates' divine sign (*daimonion*) must be interpreted as either Apollo himself, or a child of Apollo. This presupposes an account of how Socrates conceptualizes Apollo and the degree to which this conceptualization diverges from Greek tradition. One attractive direction is Delphi, whose Oracle is universally recognized as Apollo's medium. In fact, Reeve makes the astute connection between Socratic ethics and the moral inscriptions on the temple walls. Both admonish *hubris*. In Socrates' case, specifically, he admonishes those who think they have divine wisdom, but as humans, can only ever hope for limited wisdom, best exemplified in the notion of craft knowledge (*techne*).

In Chapter 2, Reeve examines the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades, specifically the latter's inability to develop virtue. How has he erred? For Alcibiades, Socrates is a *silenus* with *agalmata* of virtue in him. *Agalmata* means figurative statues. In other words, Socrates is pregnant with virtue, and for Reeve, this is how we should understand Socrates' claim that he only knows the craft of love (*ta erotika*). In fact, *agalmata* connects with the idea of the intermediary, which emerges in Diotima's claim that *Eros* is a *daimon*. Alcibiades characterizes Socrates as a "genuine *daimon*" (219c7-b1), thereby shifting the emphasis from what is inside Socrates to the man himself. Indeed, despite all that is wrong with Alcibiades' speech—his focus on Socrates as opposed to philosophy proper—Reeve argues that in a sense Alcibiades depicts Socrates correctly. Socrates, the man, as well as his accounts, have "*agalmata* of virtue in them" (34).

Reeve turns to the *Republic* in Chapter 3. He is interested in the role of experience as depicted by Cephalus at the beginning of the dialogue, and Odysseus at the end. According to Reeve, Cephalus is depicted ambivalently. He abandons the conversation with Socrates and although he values virtue more than wealth, he seems to do so instrumentally, as a means to prevent divine censure. Nevertheless, experience has made Cephalus temperate and Socrates seems to like him (*Republic* 1,

330c1-331c8). For Reeve, whereas Socrates clearly embodies the theoretical component of the ethical craft, Cephalus and Odysseus embody the experiential component.

In Chapter 4, Reeve sketches the connection between Glaucon's perfectly unjust man and Thrasymachus' account of the tyrant. The challenge, for Socrates, is to show how justice is good in itself, distinct from its consequences. The dilemma can be taken to the extreme: in what senses is the just person with a reputation for injustice superior to the unjust person with a just reputation? Note that the simulation of justice combines the advantages of seeming just without the predicament of actually being just. Part of the answer to this question is seeing how Thrasymachus' tyrant embodies perfect injustice. The laws of the tyrant are mere simulations of justice.

Chapter 5 investigates the relationship between the soul's tripartition and the status of the rational part. It is axiomatic that Plato thinks reason deserves to rule the soul. This is so because it is wise, enjoys foresight, and among other things considers the interests of the soul's other parts. When a soul is genuinely governed by reason, the soul becomes harmonious. One of Reeve's more astute observations is that "what makes available a belief's content is always a rational part" (85). By contrast, the attitude we have toward that belief is whatever is ruling the soul. In other words, if appetite governs, it is still reason that gives content to beliefs. The agent's attitude toward that belief—either assent or dissent—is determined by appetite. But since a full belief requires both attitude and content, only the rational part develops beliefs by itself. In fact, Reeve goes on to conclude that given this unique ability to autonomously form beliefs, the "rational element alone is a soul" (86). This is actually confirmed elsewhere (*Phaedo* 80b1-5).

In Chapter 6, Reeve interrogates the transition from beauty to goodness. He begins by showing how beauty is unique compared to other things valuable to the soul: beauty is incandescent. This means that our eyes can directly apprehend it. This kind of access is crucial and provides a gateway to everything else beneficial to us (*Phaedrus* 250b1-e1). How does love relate to this account? Love, according to the *Symposium*, is the desire to possess good things forever. To possess good things is to beget them in beauty. The language of reproduction permeates Diotima's account and Reeve ably sketches out its puzzles. There are three. First, how does having children posthumously remember you constitute "possessing good things permanently"? Second, it seems that Diotima's account only applies to those who love immortal virtue and honor. What about lower people? Finally, there seems to be no guarantee as to the successful "transmission of values" (121) in reproduction. What is so crucial then is the step-by-step development of proper love—from the incandescent beauty of a boy upward and onward to the potentially achievable end of seeing the Form of Beauty. What guides the lover is his reason, which is after all the most divine element in him.

Education is analyzed in Chapter 7; Socrates reminds us that it must turn the whole soul, not merely reason. The mathematical sciences aim in the right direction, but dialectic is needed in order to develop further. This is so not because of a naïve distinction between theory and practice, but because dialectic grasps a thing in itself (*Republic* 7, 533b1), which will enable its practitioner to form "a reliable paradigm for judging particular cases and explains why they are such cases" (143). Of course, the training of philosophers must encompass the development of the spirit and appetite, hence the need for the traditional Greek education of poetry, music and dance.

Chapter 8 begins with a question: "What did Socrates and his fellow Greeks take crafts to be?" (152). First, each craft is explanatory in that it can offer an account of its subject matter. Second,

each craft has a form, or essence. No ontology is presupposed here. The idea is that in order to understand the health of humankind, one must know what is the form of humankind. Reeve proceeds to distinguish between perception-based and hypothesis-based crafts. Whereas the products of the former are perceptible (e.g., a house or a healthy body), the latter regard their first principles as hypotheses. Reeve transitions from hypothesis-based crafts to dialectic, and finally proceeds to the relationship between pleasure and knowledge. Echoing the *Philebus*, Reeve argues that the best human life is one that includes both knowledge and pleasure.

In the final chapter, Reeve first interrogates the ship of state analogy in *Republic* 6. Then he moves on to contrast the life of the philosopher in both the Kallipolis and imperfect cities like Athens. We are reminded of Socrates and his success at never committing injustice. But what is it about the Kallipolis that enables the person with the philosophic nature to flourish? The answer, according to Reeve, is that this is the only city wherein reason rules from beginning to end. In the final section, Reeve clarifies the difficult relationship between compulsion, persuading and voluntariness, as it affects the philosopher's rule of the Kallipolis.

One virtue of Reeve's analysis is the nuance he gives to Socrates' interlocutors. It is all too common to dismiss their arguments. But in figures like Cephalus and Alcibiades, Reeve carves out space wherein they are much more sympathetic than usual. This sensitivity arises repeatedly as Reeve navigates Plato's conceptual landscape and one cannot but be impressed by the erudition. Nevertheless, as stated earlier, the delivery is unnecessarily oblique. It is often difficult to identify the meat of Reeve's thesis.

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