

CHAPTER 1

Craft of Ruling in Republic I and Gorgias

One of the most intriguing themes in the early dialogues is that of craft (*technē*).¹ Plato easily uses craft as a way of explicating several kinds of endeavor, especially virtue. For instance, in Book I of the *Republic* Socrates introduces, in his conversation with Polemarchus, the notion of craft to explicate the way in which justice—in Polemarchus' sense of the latter term—is useful (332e). Although he invokes the notion without any explanation, neither Polemarchus nor the other listeners finds anything strange about explicating justice by citing ship's pilots, farmers, and cobblers. In turn, when Thrasymachus enters into the dialogue it is Thrasymachus himself who uses craft to explicate his notion of justice, although his use is significantly different from Socrates' (340d). Again, the interlocutors find it natural to compare the ruler to the physician, the calculator, and the schoolmaster, even when Thrasymachus characterizes these occupations with the general term *craftsman* (*dēmiourgos*).

Plato's use of craft to illustrate various aspects of virtue is frequently called the "craft analogy." Usually an analogy compares two things—in this case activities—on some points of similarity, even though the two are actually different kinds of activities—for example, an analogy between stock trading and football. We turn to the craft analogy properly speaking in the next chapter when we will consider Plato's craft of justice. As preparation, in this chapter, we investigate a use of the notion of craft that is clearly not an analogy.

At the beginning of this chapter we referred to two instances in *Republic I* where craft was used to explicate justice—Socrates' conversation with Polemarchus and then his conversation with Thrasymachus. In fact, only the former is the craft analogy in the sense in which commentators usually use the phrase. The latter is not an analogy at all but the investigation of the concept of ruling

as a craft. This distinction between the craft of ruling and the craft analogy is central to our major thesis. It depends on some obvious differences between the way Socrates talks about the craft analogy and the craft of ruling. The most important difference is in the objects of the two crafts—that is, what they work on. As we shall see, when virtue is compared to craft its object is the person who practices the craft. The craft analogy depends on one's management of one's assets in order to become happy. However, in *Republic I*—and in the *Gorgias*—Socrates holds that the ruling craft looks after others, not the one who practices the craft. Indeed, that difference is the bone of contention with Thrasymachus—as it is with Callicles in the *Gorgias*. This craft of ruling is built upon the notion of a craft that takes care of the souls or virtue of others. In the *Apology* (20a) Socrates presents Evenus of Paros as making such claims about virtue. In the *Crito*, Socrates, assuming there to be expert knowledge of the just and unjust, the honorable and dishonorable, and the good and the bad, says that he and Crito should listen to that expert rather than the multitude lest they harm their souls (47d). In the *Laches* Socrates hypothesizes a craft knowledge that looks after the souls of the young (185e).²

We will begin our consideration of Plato's moral theory, therefore, by investigating the craft of ruling. In this chapter, first of all, we will explore Socrates' account of the craft of ruling in *Republic I* and *Gorgias*, as well as some of the problems generated by this account, especially the claim that ruling seeks the welfare of the ruled. Then part of our goal in the next chapter will be to investigate the craft analogy as that phrase is usually understood, that is, the way that, in the early dialogues, Socrates uses craft to explicate virtues—for example, wisdom in the *Euthydemus* and justice in his conversation with Polemarchus in *Republic I*. We call this use of craft the "craft of virtue." As with the craft of ruling, we will consider some of the problems with the craft of virtue. This investigation of the craft of ruling and the craft of virtue will set the stage for our consideration of Plato's theory of justice in *Republic II–IV*. Finally, we will be in the position to see that in the latter books Plato brings together these two uses of the notion of craft into his mature theory of justice and in so doing addresses some of the problems our investigation will have uncovered. What we find in this chapter is that there is in *Republic I* and in the *Gorgias* a craft of ruling, although its nature is not uncontroversial.³

Using *Republic I* and *Gorgias* we will outline Plato's account of this craft; it is a rich account with many interesting details. The salient feature of this account is the claim that the ruling craft seeks the welfare of the ruled. In our exposition we first consider it in *Republic I*. In the *Gorgias* the claim is more elaborate; there we find that the welfare sought for the ruled is the perfection of their souls.⁴ More significant still, Socrates says that perfection is defined as order and harmony among the desires.

Since this order and harmony is also said to be virtue, what we see here is the extremely important notion that virtue is an order among the desires of the soul. Of course, in Greek the word that we translate as "virtue" also means "excellence." Socrates is introducing the fruitful idea that excellence for a human being is a certain order within the soul, an order that includes the desires. Of course, that order is also connected, in unspecified ways, to what we call "moral virtue." But the idea that excellence—human perfection—is, or at least includes, some sort of order among the desires is intrinsically interesting. It is a psychological account of the good for human beings. Instead of the good being the possession of certain goods, or a certain standing within the city, or the ability to accomplish certain goals, it is shown to be fundamentally a state of the soul. Plato's account of this order and harmony among the desires is somewhat elusive. Using recent scholarship we attempt to reconstruct it. Although this reconstructed account is necessarily somewhat speculative, it does give us an idea of the kind of thing Plato had in mind when he talked about order and harmony among the desires of the soul. Order and harmony in the soul is a notion that will be seen again in *Republic IV*, although there Plato's moral psychology will have become more complex. Nevertheless, the notion of order and harmony in the soul will remain paramount. It is important then to attempt to understand this psychic harmony, and the way the ruling craft promotes it, in its first appearance in the *Gorgias*. We will then be better able to understand how the craft of ruling becomes the craft of justice.

I

In the early dialogues Socrates talks about all kinds of crafts (*technai*). He uses them, of course, to illustrate various philosophical points.⁵ What I wish to do here is to dwell on the notion of craft

as it occurs in these illustrations without concentrating on the philosophical points for which these occurrences are illustrations. In the early dialogues, then, Socrates mentions, among others, horse training, medicine, physical training, huntsmanship, farming, shepherding, building, geometry, calculation, and even shoemaking, working in brass, wood and wool.⁶ In fact, once we see this profusion, we might be tempted to think that not all of these activities are crafts. Part of our problem has to do with translation. The Greek word *technē* can be translated as craft, or skill, or art; each word shows a different emphasis. To us, contemporary English speakers, craft seems to mean largely handicraft—a practice that has a material product. In this sense of craft we would include building, shoemaking, and working in brass, wood, and wool. On the other hand, we might call geometry and calculation “skills,” hoping to mark the distinction that these have no material product. Of course, we should recall that building and shoemaking, working in brass, wood, and wool can also be called “skills.” Again, we might call medicine and horse training “arts,” perhaps in an attempt to distinguish their greater finesse. In doing so, perhaps we would be trading on a notion of fine art in which finesse is most often seen. However, fine art is not a notion held by the ancient Greeks. It is not that they lacked painting, music, and poetry; rather, they did not have a separate word, or phrase, to distinguish them from the other *technai*. In what follows we will continue to translate *technē* as “craft”; but we will stipulate that craft has the following features, found in Plato’s early and middle dialogues.

First of all, there is the end of the craft, what the craft provides. The Greek word *ergon* is used to indicate the end of the craft; literally meaning “work,” *ergon* harbors the ambiguity between function and result. In the *Euthydemus* (291e), medicine provides health and farming provides food from the earth. Health is the *ergon* of medicine in the sense that providing health is its function; of course, the health of the patient is the *ergon* in the sense of result. Food is the *ergon* of farming in the sense that producing food is its function while the food is its product. In the *Charmides*, Critias denies that computation has an *ergon* in the way in which a house is the product of the activity of building. But the transitional dialogue *Gorgias* shows that computation has an *ergon* in some other sense (453e). Indeed, it would be impossible

to conceive of a craft without some goal since craft is a systematic and reasoned way of achieving a goal.

In contrast to crafts like calculation, the crafts Plato most frequently used are ones that have objects on which they work, on which they carry out their function. The objects can be either inanimate or animate (*Gor.* 503e1–504b10). This distinction among objects allows a distinction among crafts and their functions and goals. When objects are inanimate, the function of the craft is to produce them and its goal is a separate material object (cf. *Charm.* 165e5–166a1, 170b12–c4; *Prot.* 319b5–c1; *Euthyd.* 281a1–4). When the objects are animate, the function of the craft is not to produce them but to improve or perfect them; the goal, then, is the improved state of the object (cf. *Apo.* 20a6–b2; *Gor.* 464b3 ff.). Thus, while the goal of farming is food, the goal of medicine is health; food, as a material object, is clearly a different kind of result from health. We shall call the former crafts “productive” and the latter “therapeutic.” The therapeutic crafts care for or tend an object; they provide *therapeia*, as the following examples illustrate. The physician, of course, provides care for the body (*Rep.* 341c). The shepherd tends the sheep (*Rep.* 345c). The horseman tends the horses and the huntsman tends the dogs (*Euthyphro* 13a). *Epi*—a preposition meaning “over,” “for,” or “having to do with”—is used to indicate the objects of such crafts. In the *Gorgias* (464b), the four crafts of legislating, judging, physical training, and medicine, are divided into pairs, “the first pair has to do with (is *epi*) the soul . . . the other pair has to do with (is *epi*) the body.” In the *Republic* (345d) reference is made to shepherding, whose job is to provide the best for that over (*epi*) which it is set.

In the early dialogues, Plato tends to use craft (*technē*) interchangeably with knowledge (*epistēmē*).⁷ The interchangeability implies that craft, like all knowledge, reliably produces results. Moreover, knowledge in the context of craft does not mean just knowing how to accomplish the goal of the craft, but includes a theoretical component as well. In the *Apology* (22d), craftsmen are said to know what they do because they can explain their craft; presumably they can explain why they do what they do. In the *Gorgias* (465a; 501a), Socrates says that craft can give a rational account of the nature of what it prescribes. We get an insight into this explanation in the *Charmides* (165c4–e1), where it is said that each craft has knowledge (*epistēmē*) of the goal of the craft. Craft can explain its procedure because it knows what its goal is

and how to go about accomplishing it. This theoretical component may explain what, for Plato, is perhaps the most significant feature of craft—its ability to produce results with a high degree of reliability. Indeed, in *Republic* I, Socrates' argument at 342a seems to imply that craft never fails, only the craftsman. This infallibility of craft is echoed in other dialogues. Craft knowledge has such a high degree of reliability presumably because it has established a theoretical connection between its goal and its procedure.⁸ Of course, even Plato knew that a craft does not always produce the expected results. Physicians do not always obtain a cure. However, one way to explain this failure is to say that the theory of the craft is correct and that its failure is due to the vicissitudes of applying the theory to cases.⁹ To the usual crafts of medicine, horse training, shepherding, farming, and building, Socrates adds that of ruling. In some ways this addition seems to be surprising. It is not clear that ruling has the characteristics of a craft. In *Republic* I, Socrates and Thrasymachus are at odds precisely over what the goal of ruling is, for instance. Indeed, it is not obvious who the practitioners of the craft of ruling might be or where one might go to learn the craft. Nevertheless, Socrates, in *Republic* I and in *Gorgias*, treats ruling as a craft, not just as an analogue for craft.

When Thrasymachus introduces the precise notion of a ruler (*Rep.* 340e) he uses the general concept of a craftsman and deduces from that general concept a conclusion about the ruler. In this case ruling seems to be at least a species of craft. However, in a subsequent passage, craft seems to be a species of ruling. When Socrates argues that the ruler, precisely speaking, does not seek his own advantage but the advantage of the ruled, he uses an elaborate and rather full argument in which he makes the generalization that all crafts rule (*archousi*) and are stronger than that over which they rule. Then he says that no craft seeks the advantage of the stronger but that of the weaker over which it exercises rule (342c). He then applies that generalization successively to a series of craftsmen, ending with the ruler (341c–342e). Finally, the general account of craft in the *Gorgias* does not treat ruling—that is, judging and legislating—as analogous to craft but as a craft (*Gor.* 464b–465e).

The claim in *Republic* that all crafts rule is a little puzzling. Indeed, in the *Euthydemus* (291e), Socrates says that the physician is a ruler; but he also says that the farmer is a ruler. Such an odd

statement seems to presuppose that all crafts rule. Of course, the Greek word for ruling, *archein*, means to begin something; Aristotle says that rulers are origins of movement and change (*Metaphysics* Book V, 1013a10). But Plato seems to be using a sense of ruler that includes more than being the origin of change. Of course, since, in the *Republic*, all of his examples are of therapeutic crafts, perhaps his meaning there is that all therapeutic crafts rule; that certainly is all that is needed for his argument to work. Now, it seems natural to think of therapeutic crafts as exercising rule over their objects. After all, physicians, horse trainers, and sea captains issue orders and commands, as do kings, aristocrats, and oligarchs. Moreover, the objects of these crafts are animate beings over whose lives the craftsmen exercise some control. His use of therapeutic crafts in this context does show a preoccupation of Plato's. He wishes to assimilate the craft of ruling to therapeutic craft, in order to make what he takes to be a vital point about ruling—that it, like therapeutic craft, cares for its object. He wishes to make the claim that ruling, like therapeutic craft, looks out after the welfare of its object.

II

Having said this much by way of introduction, we can turn to the second part of our task. We can begin investigating what appears to be a highly implausible claim about the ruling craft. In *Republic* I Socrates argues that craft, because of its perfection, never seeks its own advantage but always the advantage (*sympheron*) of that over which it is set (342b). In the terminology of the previous section, we could say that, according to Socrates, ruling has as its object the ruled—those over whom it is set—and as its end, their welfare. The argument depends on the assumption that a craft never seeks its own advantage because it does not have any defect (342a). To contemporary ears, the assumption sounds strange, especially when Plato illustrates it with the example of medicine—the craft of the physician. To us, medicine is always in need of improvement; indeed, scientific experimentation is the established method for medicine to improve its principles and practice. For Plato, however, it is as though the craft of medicine were perfect and all fault lies with the practitioner (cf. *Euthyd.* 280a). As we have just seen, the reason for this view is that, at this point, Plato

takes craft to be a knowledge (*epistēmē*); as knowledge it cannot be mistaken. Thus, as a craft, medicine's theory is correct; any failure comes in the application of the theory. In any event, it is not necessary for our purposes to go into the intricacies of this somewhat obscure argument.¹⁰ Rather, we will concentrate on the claim, made in the argument, that craft seeks always the advantage of that over which it is set. It is this claim to which Thrasymachus objects in his answer to Socrates, while he ignores the argument that leads to it. This claim is, of course, at the very heart of Socrates' disagreement with Thrasymachus; with this conclusion, Socrates will maintain that Thrasymachus is wrong when he asserts that justice is the advantage of the stronger.¹¹ And yet, it seems like such a slender reed.

Thrasymachus has just offered a view that holds that the craft of ruling is completely self-serving. It is a view that can be compared to views of our own contemporaries—for example, the Marxist thesis that class rule is simply the rule that works only for the advantage of the class in power. In dividing up scarce resources the ruling class always gets more than its share; moreover, it contrives to write the laws and promulgate the morality that sanction and mystify this advantageous position.¹² Some feminists, using Marxist categories, have substituted gender rule for class rule; in their analysis, men have created the laws and morality to mask, as legal and right, what is really nothing more than male domination. Thrasymachus' position is just a generalization: whoever is in power—men, women, capitalists, or proletarians—defines justice in terms of its own advantage. Unlike Marxists, who see the proletarian revolution as the prelude to a classless (and repressionless) society, Thrasymachus seems to see no end to repression and exploitation.¹³

One may share Socrates' abhorrence for Thrasymachus' idea of justice as a moral and legal system that aims only at the advantage of those in power; but one tends to sympathize with Thrasymachus' impatient objection to Socrates' counterclaim that the craft of ruling always looks out after the advantage of the ruled:

. . . you think that the shepherds and the cattle herders look out after the good of the sheep and cattle and fatten them and care for them with any other good in view than their own good and their masters'. (343b)

Here, Thrasymachus is making the welfare of the rulers the end of the craft, while the object of the craft seems to remain the ruled. While this view of the craft of ruling goes counter to the way craft has so far been presented in the dialogues, it does have the ring of empirical truth to it. On the other hand, Socrates seems to be using a somewhat sentimental definition of the craft of ruling in order to read out of court Thrasymachus' realistic, perhaps even empirical, claim that rulers are self-seeking and venal. One is sympathetic with Thrasymachus because Socrates seems oblivious to all of the political chicanery surrounding him. Socrates sounds like a civics teacher who has no grasp of the reality of democratic politics; he might be on the verge even of claiming that those people who hold power in order to aggrandize themselves and their cohorts are not really rulers at all.¹⁴ To Thrasymachus, such a claim would sound hopelessly naive.

The trouble with Thrasymachus' objection, however, is that it seems not to get to the heart of the disagreement between himself and Socrates. And it is Socrates' answer to this objection that gives us this impression:

. . . but you think that one who shepherds the sheep, insofar as he is a shepherd, does not look out after what is best for the sheep; but it is as though he were a banqueter and was looking forward to a good feast; or again to selling them, as though he were a businessman and not a shepherd. But there belongs to the shepherding craft no other concern than the way in which it can provide the best for that over which it is set. (345c-d)

As an answer to Thrasymachus' objection, this argument might seem to be only a reiteration of Socrates' original position, as though he were trying to get Thrasymachus to see what he had failed to see before. Yet Socrates' answer is not a reiteration. There has occurred a shift between Socrates' original claim and this one. The original claim said that a craft seeks the advantage (*to sympheron*) of that over which it is set; the present claim says that a craft seeks what is best (*to beltiston*) for the thing over which it is set. Although there is a clear shift in the text from *to sympheron* to *to beltiston*, that fact alone does not mean that Plato recognized a shift in meaning. However, intended or not, the shift does strengthen Socrates' argument with Thrasymachus, as we shall see. Moreover, as we shall see, in the *Gorgias* where these matters are taken up again, *to beltiston* plays an important role in

the argument. For now, let us see what difference the shift makes in this argument. I will show that there can be a distinction between *to sympheron*—which is translated in these passages as “advantage”—and *to beltiston*—which is translated in these passages as “what is best.”¹⁵

Socrates might be referring to something like the following when he introduces *to beltiston* in place of *to sympheron*. The shepherd who sought the advantage or the welfare of the sheep could do so by seeking their contentment. He would see that they led long and languid lives, in pastures with plenty of clover bordered by clear cool water. The goal for this shepherd would be to raise fat sheep who mated with whomever they desired and when they desired. For whatever reason, these sheep would become something like outdoor house pets. On the other hand, the shepherd who sought what is best for the sheep would seek to make the sheep the best sheep according to standards for sheep raising. And, as we all know, what makes them content will not always be what is best for the sheep. Put another way, the shepherd would be seeking the perfection of the sheep as agricultural specimens. Accordingly, these sheep would be subject to a certain regimen. There might be some kinds of greenery they should not eat if their fleece is to shine in the preferred way; certainly their breeding habits would have to be controlled so the lambs would have certain bodily characteristics the judges would find outstanding.

In using this notion of perfection, Socrates seems to be pointing out an important aspect of craftsmanship. There is among craftsmen a kind of liking for the perfection of their objects that is a part of their attitude toward their craft. Craftsmen take satisfaction in and admire a job well done; they take satisfaction, then, in the object of the craft being put in its best possible shape by the craft.¹⁶ This attitude is sometimes called the “pride of craftsmanship.” This pride is personal since it is pride over one’s own performance. But there is a nonpersonal element in the craft. This nonpersonal element is seen in a craftsman’s admiration of another craftsman’s job well done. There is a love of the well-wrought work. This love of the well-wrought work determines the goal of the craft since it is by seeking the perfection of the object that the object becomes the well-wrought work. Perhaps the limiting case of this seeking the perfection of the object is given in the account of Hephaestus’ making Achilles’ armor at *Iliad* XVIII, line 462 ff. One of the important consequences of seeking the per-

fection of the object is a disinterested attitude towards the personal gain of the craftsman; it precludes the craftsman from turning out an inferior product just because doing so, for instance, would speed-up his work and bring in more money from an unsuspecting public. The love of the well-wrought work is not disinterested, of course, when it comes to the success of the craft itself. But the craftsman's pursuing the success of the craft, or even pursuing his own success as a craftsman, just is his pursuing the perfection of the object. Moreover, the person who does not have this pride of craftsmanship is said not to have that craft at all: "He's not a surgeon; he's a butcher."

In the passage from *Republic I* (346e) we have been considering, Socrates gives a negative characterization of this attitude of disinterestedness. Socrates says that the craft of ruling is so disinterested that people have to be paid to do it:

For these reasons, beloved Thrasymachus, as I was just now saying, no one willingly chooses to rule and to take into hand others' problems to set them aright. Rather he demands a reward, because the one intending to practice a craft well never does so for his own improvement (*to beltiston*); nor when taking charge by means of the craft, does he take charge for his own improvement but for that of the one who is ruled. (346 e)

In fact, it is this disinterested attitude that makes it necessary to have another craft to deal with the welfare of the craftsman, that is, the wage-earning craft. The ruler is so intent on what is best (*to beltiston*) for his subjects that he would get no reward for himself if he did not get paid.

While Socrates does not in this passage invoke the positive sense of the pride of craftsmanship, I believe that notion sheds light on the attitude of self-disinterest that he does invoke. If we see the self-disinterest as a result of the craftsman's seeking the perfection of his object, we can understand the motivation of the craftsman much better. He is motivated by a desire to see the object of his craft put in the best possible shape as defined by his craft. This account makes the self-disinterested ruler seem less like a saint who sacrifices himself for the welfare of his subjects and more like a carpenter or horse-trainer. Thus, it makes Socrates' claim somewhat more plausible.

Moreover, if this disinterested pursuit of perfection is a defining feature of craft, it is harder for Thrasymachus to argue that

ruling is self-seeking in the way he means for it to be. Even if ruling were a craft of looking out for one's own welfare, the welfare would have to be understood to be one's own perfection according to some standard of the craft. Given Thrasymachus' ideas of the value of ruling for the ruler, it hardly seems likely that that value would include anything that might be thought of as perfection of oneself.¹⁷ Still, using this notion of craft it might not be impossible for Thrasymachus to argue that the ruling craft is self-seeking, even in his sense—for example, that perfection of self entails having power and wealth—but it would be a good deal more difficult than his previous argument. As well, understood according to the present interpretation, the second claim—that the craftsman seeks the perfection of his object—stands up to Thrasymachus' objection in a way that the first does not. Using an analogy with shepherds, Thrasymachus objected that the shepherds and neatherds had *only* their own good and that of their masters in view. But if a craft seeks the perfection of an object, the shepherd, as a practitioner of the craft of the shepherd, does not seek *only* his own good and that of his master. He seeks the perfection of the sheep according to the rules of shepherding. That is a craft and talent all its own. The motivation to pursue it is his pride in the quality of his sheep; and a shepherd imbued with the love of his craft would seek this quality in his sheep at considerable sacrifice to himself, if necessary. Such a craftsman does not seek *only* his own good but the goals of his craft, which can be different from his own in some important cases. For instance, such a craftsman would find immobilizing sheep in feed pens abhorrent, even if it maximized profits.¹⁸ Similarly, rulers who seek only their own welfare ignore the dynamic of the craft of ruling, which seeks to make the subjects better in some sense.

Perhaps we can see this latter point if we use the contemporary notion of legitimacy. When self-seeking is seen to be the only goal of a group of rulers, they lose legitimacy. To lose legitimacy is to lose the position of being a ruler in anything but name only; such rulers are not *really* rulers. Indeed, the point of much Marxist and Marxist-inspired analysis is to show that the entire goal of class or gender rule is simple self-aggrandizement for the class or gender in power. Such an exposé automatically robs that form of rule of legitimacy—at least in the eyes of those who are not in power. Legitimate rule must seek more than the advantage of the rulers; it must improve—in some sense—those who are ruled. In contem-

porary parlance, we might say that Socrates is raising the issue of the legitimacy of a ruler. While Thrasymachus is saying that the only goal of a ruler is self-advantage, if he had had the concept, Socrates could have said that the legitimacy of a ruler is based on his ability to exercise the craft of ruling. In turn, the craft of ruling is based on the ability to improve the objects of the craft, that is, those who are ruled. Of course, the contemporary notion of legitimacy implies something about the obligation of the ruled to accept rule—and the loss of obligation with loss of legitimacy; such a notion seems foreign to Socrates. Nevertheless, with his account of the craft of ruling, he does seem to be raising the possibility that some people who call themselves rulers are not *really* rulers. Like our contemporaries, Socrates is saying that if the rulers do not seek to improve the ruled in some way, they are not *really* rulers—not so much because the ruled no longer have an obligation to accept their rule but because the rulers are no longer true practitioners of the craft of ruling.

However, having argued that there is a shift in Socrates' argument from saying that the ruling craft seeks welfare to saying that it seeks perfection, we should not be taken to mean that the shift is total. Socrates means only a shift in emphasis because he does not mean to abandon the claim that the ruling craft seeks the welfare of the ruled. Surely, Socrates means that ruling seeks the welfare of the ruled by seeking their perfection, that the perfection sought is also the welfare of the ruled. In fact, whether Socrates has made such a shift in his argument, and what is the nature of the relation between perfection and welfare, is unclear, in part, because we do not have any sense of what the perfection (*to beltiston*) sought by craft means in *Republic* I. If we turn to the *Gorgias*, we get a better picture of that perfection brought about by craft, especially if the craft is therapeutic. In the *Gorgias* the craft of ruling is presented in greater detail.¹⁹ Of importance for our project in this chapter, the presentation adds content to the notion of *to beltiston* because it develops a full account of the way in which a craft seeks to improve its object and thereby provide for its welfare. At this point, we will leave aside the dispute between Socrates and Thrasymachus. We do not have to decide whether Socrates is correct in his claim that the ruling craft seeks the welfare of the ruled for our purposes. In the following sections we will concentrate on the way, in Socrates' account, the craft of ruling provides for that welfare by perfecting the ruled. In partic-

ular, we will develop the account of the improvement or perfection that the ruling craft confers on the ruled. What we will see is how this perfection is aimed at the soul and its desires. It is at this point that Plato's account begins to be a moral theory—an explanation of that perfection conferred by the ruling craft, both as the good for human beings and the source of moral action.

III

In the *Gorgias*, Socrates holds conversations with the sophist Gorgias and two of his pupils, Polus and Callicles. One of the overarching themes of the dialogue is the contrast between the rhetoric of Gorgias and the philosophy of Socrates. Plato wishes to convey how deleterious the first is and how salutary the second. In his conversation with Polus, Socrates argues that rhetoric is deleterious because it is not a craft (*technē*). In this argument, he presents an elaborate taxonomy of therapeutic crafts designed to show why rhetoric is not a craft.

At 464c in the *Gorgias*, Socrates gives his first account in the dialogue of these therapeutic crafts, an account that he will repeat in his conversation with Callicles later in the dialogue. First there are crafts that care for the body and crafts that care for the soul. Each of these divisions is subdivided into a craft that cares for the healthy and one that cares for the diseased. Thus, we obtain the four therapeutic crafts—physical training, medicine, law making, and judging. Just as physical training has as its object the healthy body and medicine the sick body, law making has as its object the healthy soul and judging as its object the sick soul. These four are characterized as “always providing the best (*aei pros to beltiston therapeuousōn* [464c4]) for the body, on the one hand, and the soul, on the other.” It is this seeking *to beltiston* of its objects that sets craft apart from routine (*empeiria*). The latter is a practical technique for achieving an end, without thought for the good of the object. There are four routines—cooking, cosmetic, sophistry, and rhetoric—which are parallel to the four crafts of medicine, gymnastic, judging, and law making. These routines seek after pleasure, always without any thought for *to beltiston* of their objects. As an example, cooking provides pleasantly tasty dishes that can actually ruin the health, while medicine can prescribe a strict diet to make the body healthy. So seeking *to beltiston* is a

very important characteristic; it distinguishes craft from routine. The second contrast between craft and routine is that the former has an account (*logon*) to give of the nature of what it prescribes and thus the reasons for prescribing it (465a). This account presumably includes the goal of the craft as well as the means to achieve it—that is, it includes a notion of what the perfection of the object is.

The division of crafts into those directed toward the body and those directed toward the soul is Socrates' way of introducing the issue of the ruling craft, since the crafts directed toward the soul are identified with the ruling craft—or at least the ruling craft as it is found in a democracy—law making and judging. Clearly Socrates has in mind the political functions of his contemporary Athenian citizens. The background of these distinctions is Socrates' concern about the way that sophists and their pupils use rhetoric in the assembly and law courts. He is contrasting their use of rhetoric with the true craft of statesmanship. Sophistic rhetoricians do not seek *to beltiston* for the citizens but only what pleases them—what they want to hear. In the sequel we will trace the development of this account of the craft of ruling through the dialogue, concentrating (for reasons soon to be apparent) on the conversation with Callicles. Obviously, the dialogue is, like all the dialogues of this period, a complex tapestry of themes; the theme of craft is only one strand of the fabric. However, this particular strand can be followed consistently throughout the dialogue. As we shall see, this somewhat theoretical account (at 464a ff. and repeated in an abbreviated form at 501a) is applied and illustrated at important junctures in the dialogue. This account of therapeutic craft is especially illuminating in Socrates' and Callicles' discourse on the role of desires in what we would call "moral psychology."

So first of all we can note that Socrates connects *to beltiston* with the soul. By contrast with the usual rhetorician, the true statesman who speaks in the assembly seeks *to beltiston* of his hearers; the way of accomplishing this goal is to seek to make the souls of his fellow citizens the best they can be. The introduction of the soul as the object of the ruling craft is an important difference between this account of ruling in the *Gorgias* and that in *Republic I*. In the latter dialogue, Socrates said that rulers seek the perfection of those over whom they rule, but that which was to be perfected about the ruled was passed over in silence. Presumably, they were to be perfected as citizens, but what that kind of perfec-

tion entailed was not further disclosed. In the *Gorgias*, this lacuna is filled in; it is the soul that is the focus of the political craft. However if making the soul the focus of ruling is an important development in Socrates' account, it also raises to a new level the conflict between him and his opponents. We have already noted, in considering *Republic I*, that Thrasymachus' view of ruling seems overly cynical while Socrates' view seems overly idealistic. In the *Gorgias* the contrast between Polus and Callicles, on the one hand, and Socrates, on the other, seems even greater. Although they do not explicitly articulate it, Polus and Callicles seem to agree with Thrasymachus' view of politics as a highly "realistic" game of power. In the city, there are those who wield power for their own advantage and there are those who are victims of this power. The only important question—the only "real" question—is: who gets the power? By contrast, Socrates in the *Gorgias* sees ruling as a craft whereby the rulers seek to perfect the souls of the ruled. We will learn later that such perfection actually imparts moral virtue. Legislating, which is analogous to gymnastic, builds up virtue in healthy souls; judging, which is analogous to medicine, cures sick souls by restoring virtue. The contrast between the two views could hardly be greater. Socrates' view of ruling as perfecting souls is, to these characters, at best naive.

If Socrates' view is eccentric and naive to his hearers, to us it seems slightly sinister. In our culture, the office of building up virtue we give to ethical and religious teachers; the office of curing sick souls we give to counselors, confessors, psychologists, and psychiatrists. All are professionals we consult voluntarily—in most cases at least. According to Plato, however, it is those who pass the laws who are supposed to be aiming at the perfection of the souls of the citizens; it is the judges who are aiming at the healing of sick souls. Such a theory of politics runs counter to much liberal democratic theory. Modern democratic societies usually aim at regulating behavior that might harm other people. The status of the soul behind the behavior is part of the private life of the citizen and—theoretically at least—is no business of the state. For instance, in modern liberal theory, the state has no interest in psychological conditions of even a self-destructive nature as long as the person with the condition harms no one else. A person may drink himself to death; the state's only interest is to see that he does not harm other people by, for example, driving, brawling, or stealing to support his habit. Plato, on the other hand, would have

the state change the drunken soul whether it harmed anyone else or not.

However, in its first appearance in the conversation with Polus, Socrates' use of the craft of ruling does not seem so sinister. In that conversation, Socrates refers to judicial punishment as a way of curing the soul of vice (477e ff.). Judicial punishment is compared to medical treatment—following the account of therapeutic craft; the former removes the ills of the soul while the latter, also painful, removes the ills of the body.²⁰ Indeed, even in our positivistic culture, there is some sentiment that judicial punishment has some moral purpose. At least, it should convince the criminal not to engage in crime in the future. Insofar as the springs of action are in the soul, the judge can claim to remove evil from the soul. Still, Socrates' use of the account of therapeutic craft in the conversation with Polus leaves many questions unanswered. In particular, if the therapeutic craft of judging removes evil from the soul, we do not know how it does so. We do not know what in the soul constitutes evil, what in the soul is comparable to sickness in the body. As we shall see in the sequel, Socrates eventually locates the sickness of the soul within the desires. Disorder of the desires is that which makes the soul evil; thus, the therapeutic craft of sick souls must concentrate its efforts toward such desires. However, before the dialogue arrives at that important conclusion, it goes through a rather slow and careful preparation. First, in the conversation with Callicles, Socrates introduces the desires as morally problematic, as pathological. Then, in a reprise of the account of therapeutic craft, Socrates makes pathological desires the object of the craft of ruling. So, before we can see how the therapeutic craft of the soul improves the soul, we must see that which in the soul is to be improved—that is, the desires—and their pathological state.

At this point, we can already appreciate that Socrates has set the stage for answering the question about the relation between the perfection and the welfare of those who are ruled. His argument could be something like the following: perfection is, or includes, one's desires being in a certain condition (to be reported in the next section), and this condition of one's desires is also in one's best interest, is one's welfare. Finally, the ruling craft brings that condition of one's desires into the soul. Obviously, then, the concept of desires and their possible good or bad conditions is vitally important for this account of the ruling craft. In the first

place, what Plato says about these desires has implications for our understanding of the goal of the craft. As well, this preliminary assessment of desires in the moral life gives us some insight into his ideas about the good human life and happiness. Next, it gives us some insight into the relation between one's desires and virtue. In what follows we will be concentrating on the way Socrates presents, in his sketch of a moral psychology, the role of the desires. In the next three sections we will concentrate on the exchange between Socrates and Callicles and its approach to desires as the source of both moral perfection and personal welfare. We will try to come to closer grips with the way that desires form the basis of Plato's account of the perfection that the ruling craft confers. The account has roughly three stages, all devoted to different aspects of desires and their treatment. First Socrates introduces, with the image of the leaky jars, the notion that desires can be morally problematic; the image portrays desires that have grown insatiable. Next, he gives another view of morally problematic desires and a hint about their treatment in what we call the "medical analogy." Here he says for the first time that treatment of problematic desires should bring about order among the desires. Finally, he turns to the craft of ruling proper—the craft that treats desires—judging, presumably in order to tell us how it brings order to the desires. While his account of the way that judging brings about harmony of desires is disappointingly thin, it has a surprising outcome. In talking about the ruling craft, Socrates betrays his conviction that his own question-and-answer technique—called "elenchus"—is a type of the ruling craft. This fascinating claim gives us yet another view of the way that desires and their harmony contribute to the perfection of human life.

IV

While Socrates does make the desires the focus of his investigation into perfection and welfare, he accomplishes this important departure in his investigation in a somewhat indirect way. First of all, he provokes Callicles in a typically Socratic move. After Callicles has given a measured account of the kind of life that he believes worthy of pursuit—a life of political power—Socrates asks him if he would also include self-rule (491d). In explaining his meaning, Socrates asks whether a political ruler should be temperate (*sōph-*

rona onta), ruling over his own pleasures and desires (*tōn hēdonōn kai epithumiōn archonta tōn en heautōi* [491d11–e1]). The question seems calculated to provoke Callicles to a passionate outburst because Callicles virtually leaps out of his seat, to denounce all such nonsense. Rather, he says,

the one leading the right sort of life allows his desires to grow as great as possible and does not restrain them (*mē koladzein*); and then he should be up to the task, through courage and wisdom, of supplying these desires, having grown as great as possible, and of filling each of them with whatever it wants. (491e–492a)

Finally, it is luxury, unrestraint (*akolasia*), and freedom of action, backed up by force, which are virtue and happiness (492c).

This outburst gives Socrates leave to make desires the focus of their discussion—and ultimately the focus of the craft of ruling. It is worth noting that making desires the focus in its consideration is an important development in Plato's moral theory. It may be commonplace for us to think that moral well being includes desires that are themselves well disposed. However, it is significant that the earlier dialogues that deal with the ruling craft (and—as we shall see—those that deal with the analogy between craft and virtue) do not see the desires as the ingredients of virtue. Neither the soul nor its desires are the object of these crafts. It is the genius of the *Gorgias* and the *Protagoras* to have located the discourse about moral perfection at the level of desires.

Socrates adopts Callicles' notion of unrestrained desires (*akolastos*), but he makes them out to be insatiable and tiresome instead of good. In replying to Callicles' notion of the good life, Socrates draws an analogy between desires and jars. Some people's desires are like sound jars: although the liquids needed to fill them, for example, honey and wine, are difficult to acquire, once filled up, these jars remain that way. Other people's desires are like leaky jars: they can never be filled and one must labor day and night to keep liquid in them. It is clear that Socrates means to identify the latter kinds of desires with Callicles' notion of unrestrained desire and that he means to recommend the life in which desires are like the sound jars. Callicles does not object to the image of the leaky jars probably because he believes that pleasure comes from filling up, that is, satisfying, the desires. Callicles is claiming that his hero does not seek satisfaction as the natural goal of desire. It is not satisfied desire that he seeks but the expe-

rience of satisfying desire. It is not that desires do not reach a point of satisfaction but that the point of satisfaction is not the end or goal.²¹ Rather, satisfaction is but a pause in the endless process of filling the desires. Treated in this way, desires become the vehicles for attaining pleasure. The point of satisfying desires is not satiety—the state of a satisfied desire—but the pleasure inherent in the process of satisfying desires. If this reading is correct, the insatiable desires are basically the normal desires for food, drink, and sex. In normal life, one satisfies them while observing the usual limits. One stops eating when one is full, for instance. In the Calliclean life, one does not observe the usual limits. Thus, insatiable desires are normal desires that are being used in a certain way. Moreover, this distinction allows that, left on their own, these desires are basically good—that is, desires for things that contribute to or constitute one's welfare. However, when these basically good desires become vehicles for pleasure only, they become problematic. They are desires for good things that have been made to function in a way that is not for the good.

In this reading, Callicles is recommending an idealized sensual state in which the pleasure of replenishing is the goal of existence.²² The cogency and seductiveness of Callicles' hero of the appetites reaches us over the intervening centuries. Plato has not fashioned a straw man but a still-attractive alternative to conventional wisdom. Conventional wisdom says that one cannot spend all of one's days attending to one's appetites, devoting his total efforts to finding new and more exotic experiences. The business of life is not devising more intense or grander pleasures; it is making a living, attending to one's family, being a good citizen. Of course, one satisfies one's desires, but only as a means to achieving these other goals; and the best evidence that this relation is the right one is that the level at which satisfaction of these desires naturally occurs is related to their function as means to these other goals. For example, one eats in order to have the energy to make a living; the desire is naturally satisfied when one has eaten enough food to restore one's energy. Desires are naturally calibrated to just these goals; satisfying one's hunger for food and sex, up to the natural and practical point of satisfaction, is aptly fitted to achieving these goals. Callicles' exhortation hints at another picture altogether: the life of a sensualist. From the fact that desires do have this natural, practical limit we should not derive any normative principles about how to live our lives or about how