Justice and Reward – On the Art of Wage-earning in Book 1 of the *Republic*

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In the *Republic,* Socrates questions justice as a virtue, focusing not only on a political constitution, but also on our way of living. In Book 1, justice is considered in terms of rewards or wage-earning, for earning rewards is an inevitable factor of a person's weighing advantage and harm, given that anyone's choice of actions that weave their life depends upon their anticipated advantage or harm. If we believe that all our actions have a purpose, we readily come to understand that our action is determined by rewards. This issue follows the Socratic inquiry that focuses on agents of actions. The aim of this study is to explain that Book 1 deals with this problem through a thorough teleological understanding of the arts. To begin with, we will specify how arts are understood in the dialogue with Thrasymachus, where we will meet a strange art, 'the art of wage-earning'. Next, we will explain the structure of this art of wage-earning and describe how the problem of its reward is handled. Finally, we will confirm the significance of the argument regarding the arts in Book 1 with a rough sketch of the issues concerning justice and rewards in the *Republic*.

1. Art (Τέχνη)-Theory in Book 1

In the dialogue with Polemarchus, justice is argued on the same plane as arts (*R.* 332d), and the inquiry falls into an aporia. In reaction to this course of argument, Thrasymachus urges that justice is nothing other than 'the advantage'. According to him, justice is 'the advantage of the stronger[1]' (*R.* 339a3-4, 341a3-4), that is, 'the good of another, the advantage of the stronger and the ruler, and harmful to the one who obeys and serves' (*R.* 343c3-5), because he believes that the rulers prescribe what is to their advantage as justice.

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[1] My translations of the *Republic* are chiefly based on G. M. A. Grube, *Plato: Republic*, 2nd ed. revised by C. D. C. Reeve, Indianapolis/Cambridge 1992. However, I choose 'art' as a translation of τέχνη and depart from Grube at some points, for example, 341d8-9.

Thrasymachus appeals to some 'facts[2]' to support his claim of 'the advantage'. However, actual rulers may make mistakes when they provide laws. Thrasymachus responds that our expressions, such as 'a doctor is in error, or an accountant, or a grammarian' (*R*. 340d6-8), should be 'taken literally (τῷ ῥήματι)' (*R*. 340d6), but 'each of these, insofar as he is what we call him, never errs' (*R*. 340d8-e1). Then, Socrates applies an example of experts and confirms our grasp of what 'for something' means in actions. He says that 'a doctor in the precise sense' is not 'a money-maker' (*R*. 341c5-6) but one 'who treats the sick' (*R*. 341c7), and that 'it isn't because of his sailing that he is called a ship's captain' 'but because of his art and his rule over sailors' (*R*. 341d3-4). Thrasymachus agrees, and the inquiry of justice returns to the arena of the arts.

First, Socrates poses a series of questions on the arts and their advantages.

(A) 'And is there something advantageous (τι συμφέρον) to each of these (ἑκάστῳ)?' (*R*. 341d6)

(B) 'And isn't art by nature set for that (ἐπὶ τούτῳ), that is, to (ἐπὶ) seek and provide what is to the advantage of each of these (ἑκάστῳ)?' (*R*. 341d8-9)

(C) 'And is there any advantage for each of the arts themselves except to be as perfect as possible?' (*R*. 341d11-12)

On (A) and (B), Thrasymachus has no objection at all. Since there is something advantageous in the arts, people who are 'professional, expert, or stronger' (cf. *R*. 340e4-5) use their arts, and it is natural that the arts are directed toward their advantage. However, for Thrasymachus, (C) is an incomprehensible question because he understands the advantage of experts to be that of arts. He does not understand how being 'as perfect as possible' provides anything advantageous for

[2] When Thrasymachus asserts 'the advantage of the stronger', the present indicatives, whose subjects or equivalents are 'the ruler', are used, as in 'what has power … is the ruler' (*R*. 338d9) or 'each [the ruler] makes laws' (*R*. 338e1), and such expressions as 'I suppose' or 'I think' are not used. (Thrasymachus begins to use expressions like 'I suppose (Οἶμαι ἔγωγε)' (*R*. 339c6) when the examination by Socrates begins.) At *R*. 338e3, 'declare (ἀπέφηναν)' is expressed only in the aorist, but it is a gnomic aorist and so a description of a general fact. This contrasts with Cephalus and Polemarchus who use expressions such as 'I'd say (ἔγωγε τίθημι)' (*R*. 331a9-10), 'I'd say (ἔγωγε θείην)' (*R*. 331b6), 'in my view (δοκεῖ ἔμοιγε)' (*R*. 331e4), 'in my view (οἶμαι)' (*R*. 332b7), etc. However, when he explains the grounds of 'facts', Thrasymachus also uses such expressions as 'I think (οἶμαι)' (*R*. 340d6, 8). Later when he talks about 'facts' again, using an example of 'shepherds and sheep' (*R*. 343a7ff.), his arguments are based not on 'what he thinks' of facts (cf. *R*. 345e3), but on his certainty, as in 'I [Thrasymachus] know it (εὖ οἶδα)' (*R*. 345e4).

experts and the stronger. So, Thrasymachus asks back, 'What are you asking?' (*R*. 341e1)

In my interpretation, Thrasymachus and Socrates have different objects in mind for 'each of these (ἑκάστῳ)' in (A) and (B)[3]. Thrasymachus thinks of the advantage of a doctor or a ship's captain, whereas Socrates considers that of the sick or sailors. For Socrates, 'it isn't appropriate for any art to seek what is to the advantage of anything except that of which it is the art' (*R*. 342b4-5). A doctor is not a money-maker, but he should be called 'the one who treats the sick'. Since 'the art of medicine was developed (ὅπως …, ἐπὶ τοῦτο) to provide what is advantageous for a body' (*R*. 341e6-7), 'medicine doesn't seek its own advantage, but that of the body' (*R*. 342c1-2). In short, no doctor, 'insofar as he is a doctor, seeks or orders what is advantageous to himself, but what is advantageous to his patient' (*R*. 342d5-6). Thus, the person who enjoys the advantage of an art, namely the indicated objects of 'each of these' in (A) and (B), is to be 'the weaker, which is subject to it [an art]' (*R*. 342d1-2), the object of an art. Thus,

> Soc: So, then, Thrasymachus, no one in any position of rule, insofar as he is a ruler, seeks or orders what is advantageous to himself, but what is advantageous to his subject; the one of whom he is himself the craftsman (δημιουργῇ). It is to his subject and what is advantageous and proper to that [his subject] that he looks (πρὸς ἐκεῖνο βλέπων), and everything he says and does he says and does for them (Pl. *R*. 342e7-11)

Based on Socrates' argument, the justice of Thrasymachus 'had turned into its opposite' (*R*. 343a2).

Naturally, Thrasymachus does not accept Socrates' argument. Based on Socrates' argument, 'shepherds and cowherds seek the good of their sheep and cattle, and fatten them and take care of them, looking to something other than (πρὸς ἄλλο τι βλέποντας) their master's good and their own' (*R*. 343b1-4). However, from Thrasymachus' viewpoint, 'night and day' the rulers consider nothing other than 'their own advantage' (*R*. 343b7-c1). Shepherds keep their sheep not only 'for something' of the shepherd's art, but also 'for something' of the shepherds themselves, that is, for something higher in a series of purposes. For example, shepherds may ply their art for wages from their master, used for maintaining their

[3] E. Warren, 'The Craft Argument: An Analogy?' in J.P. Anton & A. Preus (ed.) *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy* III, Albany 1989, 104-105.

families and themselves. Thus, the aims of shepherds form an infinite series or fall into cycle, or perhaps terminate in final 'something'. Thrasymachus says that those lower ends or purposes serve to 'make the one [the ruler] they serve happy' (*R*. 343c8). An art's end is to be slotted into a chain of the purposes of experts who use it and is understood by them.

Exactly this issue of wages or rewards becomes a deathblow to the notion of justice propounded by Thrasymachus. Socrates pursues the argument with Thrasymachus by introducing the art of wage-earning.

> Soc: And each art benefits (ὠφελίαν … παρέχεται) us in its own peculiar way, different from the others. For example, medicine gives us health, navigation gives us safety while sailing, and so on with the others?
> Thras: Certainly.
> Soc: And wage-earning (μισθωτικὴ) gives us wages, for this is its function?
> …
> Soc: Nor would you call medicine wage-earning, even if someone earns pay while healing?
> Thras: No. (Pl. *R*. 346a6-c1)

Socrates' intention for introducing the art of wage-earning is clear. In discussing the art of wage-earning, he explains that 'this benefit (ἡ ὠφελία), receiving wages, doesn't result from their own art' (*R*. 346d1-2). Thus explained, it is denied that there is a consideration or a direct relationship between an outcome (health) and rewards that experts (doctors) receive. 'Medicine provides health and wage-earning (μισθαρνητικὴ) provides wages; house-building provides a house, and wage-earning, which accompanies it, provides a wage' (*R*. 346d2-5). Consequently, it follows that 'no art or rule provides for its own benefit, but, as we've been saying for some time, it provides and orders for its subject and aims at its advantage, that of the weaker, not of the stronger' (*R*. 346e3-7); thus, Socrates refutes Thrasymachus' notion of justice.

Through this argument, Socrates distinguishes medicine from the art of wage-earning simply by that of results, health or rewards. Accordingly, if it is agreed that there is something beneficial, whether health or rewards, these are understood alike as being 'for something', per the nature of the arts, because, when Socrates and Thrasymachus find that (A) 'there is something advantageous,' it follows that (B) 'the art' is 'set for that (= (A))'. Moreover, (C) there is no 'advantage for each of the

arts themselves except to be as perfect as possible'. The art forms 'a whole' whose end (τέλος) is (A) 'something advantageous'. In other words, if they find that (A) 'there is something advantageous', then they are going to ascend from 'something advantageous', explore any mass of various actions, and find some relationship there. Based on Socrates' argument, once the advantage of rewards is found, there is no way to avoid choosing some phenomena which procure the rewards, finding any relationship among them, and naming some art that provides those rewards.

This move, in which Socrates links an art with its end (τέλος) of advantage, deals with the aporia in the dialogue with Polemarchus, which suggests that an art could not be properly treated with considering its function or power (δύναμις), for, insofar as we grasp an art with its function, we cannot deny that 'the one who is most able to guard against disease is also most able to produce it unnoticed' (*R*. 333e6-7). Thus, the function of stealing is indistinguishable from that of protecting, and follows the paradox that justice is 'some sort of art of stealing' (*R*. 334b4). The dialogue with Thrasymachus reaches the point of describing an art in a manner that replaces strategy of defining an art with by function[4].

2. The Art of Wage-earning

'Art of Wage-earning' is not an ordinary term. In Book 1, two terms, μισθωτική and μισθαρνητική, are used[5]. The former is used only here, and the latter is used twice in the *Sophist*[6] as well as in this dialogue with Thrasymachus. Actually, the art of wage-earning is seemingly similar to other arts, but might give an impression that it is not a true art[7]. It remains a sound argument that a doctor is not primarily defined as a money-maker, but as one who treats the sick, because we

[4] I argue the structure of Book 1 of the *Republic* in detail in chapter 5 of *Dialectic and Aporia: the Logic of Socrates' Inquiry* (in Japanese), Tokyo 2006.

[5] The former is used in three places, *R*. 346b1, 8, c10, and the latter also at three places, *R*. 346b11, d3, 4.

[6] *Soph*. 222d7, e5: first definition of the Sophist's art (σοφιστική).

[7] On the strangeness of discussing the art of wage-earning, e.g. K. Dorter, 'Socrates' Refutation of Thrasymachus and Treatment of Virtue' *Philosophy and Rhetoric* vol. 7 No. 1 (1974), 33-34, K. Lycos, *Plato on Justice and Power: Reading Book I of Plato's Republic*, London 1987, 116-117, P. Woodruff, 'Plato's Early Theory of Knowledge' in Benson (ed.) *Essays on the Philosophy of Socrates*, New York/Oxford 1992 (originally in S. Everson (ed.), *Epistemology*, Cambridge 1990), 98. D. Roochnik, *Of Art and Wisdom: Plato's Understanding of Techne*, University Park, Pennsylvania 1996, 143-144 says 'wage-earning is conceptually alluring'. However, he concludes Plato does not 'believe a wage-earner's techne is possible'. In contrast, A. Bloom ('Interpretive Essay' in his *The Republic of Plato*, 2nd ed., New York 1968, 333) regards it as 'architectonic art', and 'a kind of political substitute for philosophy'. Also, H. Arendt (*The Human Condition*, Chicago/London 1958, 1989 (paperback edition), 128-129, 143) points out that the art of wage-earning is completely different from medicine, navigation, and architecture.

never ‘call medicine wage-earning, even if someone earns pay while healing’ (*R*. 346b11-12). This sound argument leads to the understanding that an art by its nature intends its proper purpose, and this understanding compels us to consider the independent art whose proper purpose is precisely the advantage of reward.

However, the art of wage-earning is a strange art. First, the art of wage-earning is used in accompanying their primary art by various experts[8], and it cannot show any determinate function of its own. The art of wage-earning provides wages by accompanying the other arts. Since rewards are to be just what is ‘added’ (*R*. 346d7), we need the other art’s function to get the rewards. In other words, the art of wage-earning always presupposes the other art’s function and essentially shadows those arts, for it does not add any action to what the primary art has performed, but merely reorganizes such already-performed actions for the sake of ‘receiving wages’ (*R*. 346d2) as its proper advantage. For example, while medicine targets the purpose of health and directs a series of actions, the art of wage-earning reorganizes the relationship of those actions into a new relationship in order to receive wages. The definitions of medical treatments given ‘for nothing’ (*R*. 346e1) or accompanied by ‘asking for wages’ (cf. *R*. 347a1) are quite different, although both function as medicine. Insofar as we admit that wage-earning is an art, we must accept two different levels of knowledge[9] of the same performance. Since the difference of levels is not explained with the aspect of the function (δύναμις) of the arts, the art of wage-earning should be regarded as a peculiar art.

Second, since its object is ‘the advantage’ itself and ‘it isn’t appropriate for any art to seek what is to the advantage of anything except that of which it is the art’ (*R*. 342b4-5), then, the art of wage-earning is mysterious in that it strives for ‘the advantage of the advantage’. Or, if one persists in saying that it is set for the benefit of experts, the art of wage-earning must be a self-reflexive art. In other words, experts or users of the art of wage-earning must coincide with the object of their art. Consequently, it becomes a notable exception in Socrates’ ‘precise account’ that draws a clear distinction between experts and objects of an art, especially as regards advantage.

Moreover, it is not the art of wage-earning which provides rewards for ‘the best people’, who should rule their city. Unexpectedly, in closing his explanation of the

[8] Cf. ‘whatever benefit all craftsmen receive in common (κοινῇ) must clearly result from their joint practice of some additional art’ (*R.* 346c5-6).

[9] Bloom regards the art of wage-earning as a ‘second-order’ one. Cf. also Roochnik, 143.

art of wage-earning, Socrates begins to identify a penalty as 'the best people's kind of wages' (*R*. 347a10).

> Soc: Then, it is clear now, Thrasymachus, no art or rule provides for its own advantage, but, as we've been saying for some time, it provides for and orders for its subject … That's why … no one willingly chooses to rule … but each asks for wages; for anyone who intends to practice his art well never does or orders what is best for himself—at least not when he orders as his art prescribes —but what is best for his subject. It is because of this, it seems, that wages must be provided to a person if he's to be willing to rule, whether in the form of money or honor or a penalty if he refuses. (Pl. *R*. 346e3-347a5)

Here the argument enters into a new and important phase, clarifying the contents of Socrates' remark through a brief exchange with Glaucon (*R*. 347a6-348b6)[10]. In responding to Glaucon's question, 'I know the first two kinds of wages, but I don't understand what penalty you mean or how you can call it a wage' (*R*. 347a6-8), Socrates claims that the reward of 'a penalty' is 'the best people's kind of wages' (*R*. 347b1), and that is, 'if one isn't willing to rule, to be ruled by someone worse than oneself' (*R*. 347c4-5). Although the art of wage-earning art seems to be used accompanying their primary art by various experts and added to all kinds of activities, the best people do not use the art of wage-earning as part of their ruling. There is no room for adding the art of wage-earning by the best people, because their reward becomes a penalty when they do not use the art of ruling, and so there is no function to be presupposed or phenomena to be reorganized by the art of wage-earning. Moreover, following the line quoted above, Socrates speaks as follows, as if Plato suggests the compulsory ruling over the ideal city (*R*. 519c8-521b11).

[10] The dialogue with Thrasymachus, especially after the intervention of Glaucon, is noted as just a report of its outline, as shown in the lines of Socrates. For example, Socrates says that 'Thrasymachus agreed to all this, not easily as I'm telling it, but reluctantly, with toil, trouble' (*R*. 350c12-d1). These words inform us, the readers, that the detailed process of the arguments is omitted in this inquiry as reported. It is suggested through the lines directed toward the audience at the key points in the dialogue that the entire dialogue with Thrasymachus is of this nature. For example, 'he agreed in the end' (*R*. 338b1), 'Very reluctantly, he conceded this as well' (*R*. 342c9), 'He tried to fight this conclusion, but he conceded it in the end' (*R*. 342d3-4) and 'He reluctantly agreed' (*R*. 342e6). Also, the words of people who listened to the dialogue are usually missing. Refer to *R*. 336b1-6, 338a4-5, and 344d3-4. Therefore, it is noteworthy that this exchange with Glaucon is present in the dialogue.

> Soc: In a city of good men, if it came into being, the citizens would fight in order not to rule, just as they do now in order to rule. There it would be quite clear that anyone who is really a true ruler doesn't by nature seek his own advantage but that of his subjects. (Pl. *R*.347d2-6)

These words of Socrates explain why the art of wage-earning does not provide rewards for the best people. According to Socrates, it is because ruling is, by nature, an action done for the sake of subjects, and because there is no reward for the best people or good men who are true rulers (except the penalty mentioned above and food for maintaining their lives[11]). Thus, through introducing the art of wage-earning , Book 1 ensures the understanding that arts are set for their proper ends and, at the same time, detaches the action of ruling over a city from the art of wage-earning. In other words, Book 1 of the *Republic* presents ruling as an action without rewards such as money or honor, through introducing the art of wage-earning whose end is rewards.

Is the wage-earning art really possible? If it is a real art, the art of wage-earning ought to be 'as perfect as possible' in providing rewards or wages, as confirmed above. So, as to the amount of rewards, the art of wage-earning is to provide as reasonable a reward as possible for any work, or as much reward as possible to satisfy the desires of individuals who 'ask for wages' (cf. *R*. 347a1). Taking the later argument in the *Republic* into account, knowledge of 'the limit (ὅρον) of their necessities' (*R*. 373e1) is indispensable in order to request reasonable rewards. 'The limit' is not determined by the art of wage-earning but by 'education and upbringing' (*R*. 423e5), as explained in the following books (cf. *R*. 424e6-425c9, 431a3-d3). Rewards will be provided proportionate to needs from the viewpoint of 'happiness in the city as a whole' (*R*.421b7), although in Book 1 rewards are the returns for the exercise of arts (consequently the wage-earning appears a private art). So, if 'by being well educated … [we] become reasonable men' (*R*. 423e5-6), the art of wage-earning will be unnecessary for our private use. Alternatively, if we lack this knowledge of the limit, the art of wage-earning is, as it were, a pseudo-art which serves our desires in the cause of πλεονεξία (getting more, cf. *R*. 343d6).

3. Arguments Concerning 'Justice and Its Rewards'

Book 1 is called as 'a prelude' (*R*. 357a2). Not only is Thrasymachus's objection a prelude to Glaucon's challenge, but also Socrates' argument on arts in

[11] Cf. *R*. 416e, 420a.

Book 1 can be considered a prelude or preparation[12] for the principle regarding arts developed from Book 2 onward, that is the principle that 'one person does a better job if he practices one art' (*R*. 370b5-6, cf. 395b9) in 'constructing a city in speech' (cf. *R*. 369c9). Socrates has questioned the ends of arts through arguing about the art of wage-earning, explored the meaning of our work and ruled out earning money from the purposes of ordinary arts. In fact, in introducing the principle 'one art for one person' in Book 2, while our natural bent is made much of[13], the aspect of earning money (reward or benefit) is not taken into account. Moreover, in the 'purified city' (cf. *R*. 399e4), any element of money-making has been purged from the lives of guardians or rulers. Consequently, Socrates and his interlocutors agree that 'the work of the guardians … requires most freedom from other things and the greatest skill and devotion' (*R*.374e1-2), and the division of labor in that city is discussed without referring to earning money[14]. Thus, it follows that 'it's only in such a city that we'll find a cobbler who is a cobbler and not also a captain along with his cobbling, and a farmer who is a farmer and not also a juror along with his farming, and a soldier who is a soldier and not a money-maker in addition to his soldiering, and so with them all' (*R*. 397e4-8). In other words, by using the art of wage-earning as a prelude in Book 1, the division of labor without any reference to rewards can be readily accepted by Socrates, his interlocutors and us, the readers of the *Republic*. Thus, by constructing the governmental constitution in terms of the division of labor, Plato succeeds in excluding the (Thrasymachean) view that guardians must rule for their own interests.

However, the reason why the dialogue with Thrasymachus cannot help being only a prelude is that the question 'What do we work for?' cannot be resolved in Book 1. That question can only be explored properly where justice is examined through bridging an individual life (soul) and a city.

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[12] Cf. *R*. 532d6-7

[13] 'More plentiful and better-quality goods are more easily produced if each person does one thing for which he is naturally suited, does it at the right time, and is released from having to do any of the others' (*R*. 370c4-6).

[14] In the *Republic*, trade is understood not as a means of money-making, and a currency is understood as 'for such [of trade] exchange' (*R*. 371b9-10).