

## Plato on Moderation and Justice

### 1 External sources of moderation

“Take a look at our new city ... You will say that it is rightly called self-controlled, if indeed something in which the better rules the worse is properly called moderate and self-controlled. ... Now, one finds all kinds of diverse desires, pleasures, and pains, mostly in children, women, household slaves, and in those of the inferior majority who are called free. ... But you meet with the desires that are simple, measured, and directed by calculation in accordance with understanding and correct belief only in the few people who are born with the best natures and receive the best education. ... Then, don’t you see that in your city, too, the desires of the inferior many are controlled by the wisdom and desires of the superior few?” (431b-d, p. 106)

### 2 Internal sources of moderation

“unlike courage and wisdom, each of which resides in one part, making the city brave and wise respectively, moderation spreads throughout the whole. It makes the weakest, the strongest, and those in between ... all sing the same song together. And this unanimity, this agreement between the naturally worse and the naturally better as to which of the two is to rule both in the city and in each one, is rightly called moderation” (432a, p. 107).

### 3 Justice

“We stated ... that everyone must practice one of the occupations in the city for which he is naturally best suited. ... Moreover, we have heard many people say ... that justice is doing one’s own work and not meddling with what is not one’s own. ... Then, it turns out that this doing one’s own work — provided that it comes to be in a certain way — is justice” (433b, p. 108).

“The power that consists in everyone’s doing his own work rivals wisdom, moderation, and courage in its contribution to the virtue of the city. ... And wouldn’t you call this rival to the others in its contribution to the city’s virtue justice? Absolutely” (433e, p. 109).

“the city was thought to be just when each of the three natural classes within it did its own work” (435b, p. 110).

“the principle that it is right for someone who is by nature a cobbler to practice cobblery and nothing else, for the carpenter to practice carpentry, and the same for the others is a sort of image of justice — that’s why it’s beneficial” (443c, p. 119).

#### 4 Sources

Plato. 1992. *Republic*. Translated by G.M.A. Grube and C.D.C. Reeve. Indianapolis: Hackett.