

## A PERSPECTIVE ON THE DEBATE ABOUT JUSTICE BETWEEN SOCRATES AND CALLICLES: IMPLICATIONS FROM AL-FARABI

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### Abstract

The debate on justice between Socrates and Callicles in Plato's Gorgias presents a clash of perspectives. Callicles contends that justice arises naturally from the dominance of the stronger over the weaker, reflecting the primal order of nature. In contrast, Socrates advocates for a conception of justice grounded in virtue, emphasizing harmony and self-discipline as the foundation of a just society. Al-Farabi, a later interpreter of Plato's works, offers a synthesis of these seemingly opposing views in his Ideal State, where he defines justice in two distinct senses. The first, natural sense of justice, aligns with Callicles' perspective, while the second, civil sense of justice, corresponds to Socrates' vision of justice as a product of societal conventions. This paper explores whether Al-Farabi reconciles these dual definitions of justice and examines the implications of his interpretation for understanding Plato's evolving philosophical viewpoint.

### Key words

• Plato • Socrates • Callicles • Al-Farabi • Justice

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## SOKRATES İLE KALLİKLES ARASINDAKİ ADALET TARTIŞMASINA DAİR BİR PERSPEKTİF: FARABİ'DEN ÇIKARIMLAR

### Öz

Platon'un Gorgias eserinde, Sokrates ve Kallikles arasında adalet üzerine yapılan tartışma, farklı bakış açılarının bir çatışmasını sunar. Kallikles, adaletin doğanın ilkel düzenini yansıtarak güçlülerin zayıflar üzerindeki hakimiyetinden doğal olarak ortaya çıktığını savunur. Buna karşılık, Sokrates, erdeme dayalı bir adalet anlayışını savunarak, uyum ve özdisiplini adil bir toplumun temeli olarak vurgular. Platon'un eserlerinin daha sonraki asırlarca yorumlayan Farabi, İdeal Devlet adlı eserinde, görünüşte zıt olan bu görüşleri uzlaştıran bir sentez sunar. Farabi, adaleti iki farklı anlamda tanımlar: Doğal anlamda adalet, Kallikles'in görüşüyle uyumlu iken; medeni anlamda adalet, Sokrates'in, adaletin toplumsal kurallardan kaynaklanan bir kavram olduğu yönündeki anlayışıyla örtüşür. Bu çalışma, Farabi'nin bu iki farklı adalet tanımını uzlaştırıp uzlaştırmadığını ve onun yorumunun, Platon'un değişen felsefi bakış açısını anlamak üzerindeki etkilerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

### Anahtar Kelimeler

• Platon • Sokrates • Kallikles • Farabi • Adalet

### INTRODUCTION

The concluding section of Plato's *Gorgias* features an extensive debate on justice between Socrates and Callicles. This dialogue is one of Plato's most detailed explorations of the concept of justice<sup>1</sup> and is comparable in significance to the discussion between Socrates and Thrasymachus in *The Republic*. However, there is a crucial difference between the two dialogues: while Thrasymachus in *The Republic* is known as a prominent sophist from Chalcedon (modern-day Kadıköy)<sup>2</sup>, the identity of Callicles in *Gorgias* remains entirely mysterious.<sup>3</sup> This enigma surrounding Callicles extends beyond the dialogue itself, as no historical records of a significant figure bearing this name exist from Plato's time or

<sup>1</sup> STAUFFER, Devin: "The Confrontation between Socrates and Callicles", *The Unity of Plato's "Gorgias": Rhetoric, Justice, and the Philosophic Life*, Cambridge 2006, p. 82-122.

<sup>2</sup> WHITE, Stephen A: "Thrasymachus the Diplomat", *Classical Philology*, Volume 90 Issue 4, 1995, p. 307-308.

<sup>3</sup> HANSEN, Peter J: *Plato's Tough Guys and Their Attachment to Justice*, United States, 2019, p. xiv-xv.

earlier. Despite references to Callicles' social circle, status, and personal connections within the dialogue<sup>4</sup>, many scholars argue that Plato created this character solely to serve the rhetorical and philosophical needs of the dialogue.<sup>5</sup>

In *Gorgias*, Plato presents a clash of ideas about justice through a fictional dialogue purportedly held between Socrates and this enigmatic Callicles. Callicles begins the debate with bold claims, arguing that justice is rooted in the natural superiority of the strong.<sup>6</sup> This perspective aligns with certain early natural philosophers' conceptions of power and dominance. Socrates, on the other hand, offers a contrasting view of justice, associating it with virtue, order, and the well-being of the soul.<sup>7</sup> As the debate progresses, Callicles becomes increasingly evasive and eventually refrains from answering Socrates' questions, leaving the dialogue inconclusive.<sup>8</sup> While Socrates presents counterarguments to Callicles' claims, Callicles refuses to concede that Socrates has prevailed. This dialogue highlights conflicting conceptions of justice while offering Plato an opportunity to examine the concept from different perspectives.

Al-Farabi, who studied Plato's works extensively<sup>9</sup>, offers two distinct definitions of justice in his *Ideal State*.<sup>10</sup> The first corresponds to Callicles' nature-based understanding of justice, while the second aligns with Socrates' virtue-based perspective. This paper aims to examine how Al-Farabi engages with these conflicting views of justice and whether he successfully reconciles them. Additionally, it seeks to explore how Al-Farabi

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<sup>4</sup> **TARRANT**, Harold: "The Dramatic Background of the Arguments with Callicles, Euripides' Antiope, and an Athenian Anti-Intellectual Argument", *Journal of the Australian Society for Classical Studies*, *Antichthon* Volume 42, 2008, p. 22-24.

<sup>5</sup> **KNOLL**, Manuel: "Sophistic Criticisms of the Rule of Law. A Comparison of Callicles and Thrasymachus", *Filosofickýčasopis Special Issue 2021/2*, p. 68-69.

<sup>6</sup> **PLATO** (Translated by Mehmet Rifat, Sema Rifat): *Gorgias*, 11<sup>th</sup> Edition, Istanbul 2020, p. 61-66, 482b-486e.

<sup>7</sup> **PLATO**, p. 66-72, 487-490d.

<sup>8</sup> **STAUFFER**, Devin, "Socrates and Callicles: A Reading of Plato's *Gorgias*", *The Review of Politics*, 2002, Volume 64 Issue 4, p. 655.

<sup>9</sup> **FAKHRY**, Majid: "Al-Farabi and the Reconciliation of Plato and Aristotle", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 1965. 26(4): p. 470-471.

<sup>10</sup> **AL-FARABI** (Translated by Ahmet Arslan): *İdeal Devlet*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Istanbul 2017, p. 137-139.

interprets Plato's conception of justice and to offer a new dimension to Plato's philosophy of justice as seen through Al-Farabi's viewpoint.

## I. PLATO'S CONCEPTION OF JUSTICE AND HIS DIALOGUES

Plato's exploration of justice is a cornerstone of his philosophy, as he uses his dialogues to grapple with its nature, implications and relationship to power and morality. In *The Republic* and *Gorgias*, the concept of justice is presented through dynamic debates between Socrates and his interlocutors, Thrasymachus and Calicles. These figures articulate provocative, often contentious definitions of justice, each rooted in a specific worldview: Thrasymachus associates justice with the advantage of the stronger<sup>11</sup>, while Calicles advocates for a naturalistic hierarchy in which the strong dominate the weak.<sup>12</sup> Across these dialogues, Socrates counters these positions by reframing justice as a harmonious force integral to individual and societal well-being. This section examines these debates, situating them within Plato's broader philosophical vision and exploring the possibility that Calicles reflects an earlier stage in Plato's own thinking about justice.

### A. Justice as the Advantage of the Stronger: Thrasymachus in Plato's *The Republic*

In *The Republic* (Book I), Thrasymachus provocatively asserts that "justice is nothing other than the advantage of the stronger".<sup>13</sup> His argument highlights the relativism of justice in political regimes, observing that rulers craft laws and moral codes to serve their own interests. For instance, monarchs, oligarchs, and democratic assemblies each establish definitions of justice designed to perpetuate their respective forms of rule. Thus, according to Thrasymachus, justice becomes synonymous with obedience to these self-serving laws, which ultimately sustain the regime's dominance.

Socrates' counterargument exposes a critical flaw in Thrasymachus' reasoning: the assumption that rulers, as "the stronger," are infallible in their pursuit of advantage. Socrates points out that rulers often err in crafting laws or issuing orders, which can lead to outcomes contrary to

<sup>11</sup> PLATO (Translated by Sabahattin Eyüboğlu and M. Ali Cimcoz): Devlet, 39<sup>th</sup> Edition, Istanbul 2019, p. 17, 338d.

<sup>12</sup> AL-FARABI, p. 137.

<sup>13</sup> PLATO, Devlet, p. 17, 338d.

their intended interests. If justice entails obedience to such flawed laws, it might not always align with the advantage of the stronger. This creates a paradox in Thrasymachus' definition, undermining its coherence and challenging the reduction of justice to a mere tool of political power.

Moreover, Socrates introduces a broader critique by shifting the focus from power to the inherent harmony justice creates within individuals and society. He begins to build a vision of justice as a virtue that ensures the proper functioning of both the state and the soul, contrasting sharply with Thrasymachus' cynical pragmatism.<sup>14</sup>

### **B. Justice and Natural Superiority: Callicles in Gorgias**

In Gorgias, the justice debate shifts focus as Callicles defends a naturalistic and hierarchical conception of justice. He argues that nature dictates the stronger should dominate the weaker, stating that "the more powerful control the less so by means of force and the better rule over the worse". For Callicles, societal conventions of equality and fairness are artificial constructs devised by the weak to restrain the strong. In his view, true justice aligns with the natural order, where the superior rightfully assert their dominance over the inferior.<sup>15</sup>

Socrates, however, critiques this perspective by highlighting the dangers of unchecked dominance. He compares the life of a person driven by uncontrolled desires to a "leaky jar", perpetually unfulfilled and dissatisfied. Socrates argues that true happiness and justice arise from self-discipline and the harmony of the soul, rather than the relentless pursuit of power. Justice, in this sense, becomes a force for balance and well-being, both within individuals and within society. For Socrates, Callicles' model of natural justice, where might makes right, ultimately leads to chaos and disharmony, undermining the very stability justice is supposed to secure.<sup>16</sup>

### **C. Comparing the Justice Debates in The Republic and Gorgias**

While Thrasymachus and Callicles both associate justice with power, Callicles' argument in Gorgias takes on a more personal and provocative tone, reflecting his aristocratic values and disdain for societal norms. Thrasymachus frames justice as a political tool crafted by rulers to

<sup>14</sup> PLATO, *Devlet*, p. 17-21, 338d-341c.

<sup>15</sup> PLATO, *Gorgias*, p. 61-66, 482d-486d.

<sup>16</sup> PLATO, *Gorgias*, p. 66-72, 486d-490d.

serve their interests, remaining largely theoretical in his approach. Callicles, however, passionately defends a naturalistic view, claiming that the strong should dominate the weak as a matter of natural justice. His rhetoric is charged with conviction, revealing a character, who not only theorizes about domination but also embodies the ethos of privilege and superiority.

Socrates' engagement with Callicles is correspondingly more personal than his critique of Thrasymachus. While he exposes logical inconsistencies in Thrasymachus' argument, his dialogue with Callicles targets the existential emptiness of a life driven by unchecked desires. Through the metaphor of the "leaky jar", Socrates critiques the endless pursuit of power as a path to dissatisfaction and discord, contrasting it with his vision of justice as inner harmony and balance.

Callicles' bold personality and aristocratic ideals make him a far more consequential figure than Thrasymachus in Plato's exploration of justice. Unlike Thrasymachus' abstract relativism, Callicles' stance brings to light the emotional and moral struggles of reconciling individual ambition with collective order. Socrates' refutation of Callicles thus not only challenges his ideas but also points to a broader conception of justice as a transcendent force that integrates virtue, harmony and the well-being of society.

#### **D. Hypothesis: Callicles as a Reflection of Plato's Earlier Views on Justice**

A compelling hypothesis suggests that Callicles in *Gorgias* may represent an earlier stage in Plato's own philosophical development, acting as a mouthpiece for ideas Plato himself might have entertained before evolving toward the mature views expressed in *The Republic*.<sup>17</sup> This hypothesis can be grounded in both textual and historical clues, as well as a deeper analysis of the character's connections and the themes he addresses.

First, Socrates mentions that Callicles is deeply attached to Demos, the son of Pyrilampes, a notable figure in Athenian aristocracy.<sup>18</sup> Intriguingly, Demos was Plato's maternal stepbrother, tying Callicles to

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<sup>17</sup> DODDS, E.R, *Plato Gorgias; A Revised Text with Introduction And Commentary*, London 1959, p. 14.

<sup>18</sup> PLATO, *Gorgias*, p. 60, 481d.

Plato's own familial and social milieu.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, Socrates lists Callicles as part of a circle of aristocratic companions, including Tisander of Aphidna, Andron, and Nausikydos, figures that resonate with Plato's aristocratic background.<sup>20</sup> These details suggest that Callicles' worldview could reflect the values of an elite Athenian upbringing, much like Plato's.<sup>21</sup>

Second, the names "Aristocles" (Plato's birth name) and "Callicles" share a symbolic resonance. While "Aristocles" means "best fame/glory"<sup>22</sup>, "Callicles" translates to "beautiful glory"<sup>23</sup>. Given Plato's philosophical emphasis on to kalon (the beautiful) and to agathon (the good) as interconnected ideals<sup>24</sup>, this shared etymological thread suggests a possible allegorical relationship between the two figures. Callicles' musings on the relationship between the good and the beautiful in *Gorgias* may reflect philosophical questions Plato grappled with during his formative years.

This hypothesis, if pursued further, raises intriguing questions about whether Plato used Callicles to explore and ultimately critique a youthful fascination with aristocratic power and natural justice. The exploration of these connections will be taken up in the next section, delving deeper into the philosophical and historical implications of this interpretation.

## II. AL-FARABI'S INTERPRETATION OF JUSTICE AND DIALOGUE ANALYSIS

Al-Farabi's *Ideal State* is a seminal work in legal philosophy<sup>25</sup>, offering a nuanced framework for understanding justice by proposing two distinct meanings of the term, each corresponding to different stages of human development and societal organization. This dual approach allows

<sup>19</sup> NAILS, Debra, *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics*, Indianapolis 2002, p. 15.

<sup>20</sup> PLATO, *Gorgias*, p. 67, 487c.

<sup>21</sup> TARRANT, p. 24-25.

<sup>22</sup> SEDLEY, David, *Plato's Cratylus*, Cambridge 2003, p. 22.

<sup>23</sup> Kallos (κάλλος) means "beauty" or "beautiful" in ancient Greek and Kleos (κλέος) means "glory" or "fame" in ancient Greek. When combined, Καλλικλής (Callicles) can be interpreted as "beautiful glory".

<sup>24</sup> PLATO, *Gorgias*, p. 84-85, 497e.

<sup>25</sup> MAHDI, Muhsin: "Al-Fārābī's Imperfect State", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Volume 110 Issue 4, 1990, p.691-692.

him to reconcile the seemingly opposing views of Callicles and Socrates as presented in Plato's *Gorgias*, positioning them as complementary rather than contradictory perspectives on justice. Scholars have recognized Al-Farabi as the earliest Muslim philosopher to systematically outline his theories on state governance, emphasizing a virtuous state where justice and peace prevail among the populace.

### **A. The Two Meanings of Justice in Al-Farabi's Ideal State**

According to Al-Farabi, the first meaning of justice aligns with what he describes as natural justice, where "might makes right". In this view, the stronger dominate the weaker because it is in their nature to do so. This concept of justice reflects the world as it exists in a state of nature, free from the constraints of societal or moral norms.<sup>26</sup> It resonates directly with Callicles' argument in *Gorgias*, where he asserts that natural superiority justifies the domination of the strong over the weak and critiques the egalitarian conventions of civil society as artificial constructs.

Al-Farabi's second meaning of justice, however, introduces a fundamentally different perspective. This is the concept of civil or conventional justice, which arises only within a civilization. Conventional justice, as Al-Farabi explains, is the collective adherence to societal conventions designed to ensure peace and harmony among individuals. Unlike natural justice, which is driven by power dynamics, conventional justice is rooted in mutual respect and the recognition of each person's rights within a social framework.<sup>27</sup> This understanding aligns with Socrates' arguments in *Gorgias*, where he critiques Callicles' naturalistic approach and emphasizes the role of self-discipline and virtue in achieving harmony within the soul and society.

### **B. Reconciling Callicles and Socrates: Al-Farabi's Synthesis**

Al-Farabi's philosophical innovation lies in his ability to synthesize these two definitions of justice. By acknowledging natural justice, he validates Callicles' perspective that power and domination are fundamental to the natural order. At the same time, he upholds Socratic conventional justice as an ideal that transcends the natural state and serves as the foundation for a stable and virtuous society. This synthesis reflects Al-Farabi's broader philosophical project of harmonizing opposing viewpoints to

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<sup>26</sup> AL-FARABI, p. 137-138.

<sup>27</sup> AL-FARABI, p. 138-139.



build a comprehensive framework for understanding the human condition.

For Al-Farabi, the stronger who refrain from dominating the weaker do so only because they have been influenced by the teachings of conventional justice. Civilization introduces norms and ethical principles that temper the raw instincts of natural justice. Those who adhere to these norms, even when they have the power to dominate, are, in Al-Farabi's view, shaped by societal education and the pursuit of a higher moral ideal.<sup>28</sup> This perspective allows Al-Farabi to justify both Callicles and Socrates: natural justice explains domination in the absence of societal constraints, while conventional justice provides the ethical framework necessary for coexistence within a community.

### **C. Aligning Al-Farabi's Synthesis with Plato's Philosophical Evolution**

Al-Farabi's dual definitions of justice also provide a lens through which to revisit Plato's treatment of Callicles and Socrates. If, as hypothesized, Callicles represents an earlier stage in Plato's philosophical development, then Al-Farabi's framework bridges the gap between the youthful naturalism of Callicles and the mature ethical vision of Socrates. By accommodating both perspectives within a unified concept of justice, Al-Farabi's synthesis offers a philosophical reconciliation that mirrors Plato's own evolving views.

This reconciliation reinforces the idea that the justice debate in *Gorgias* is not merely a conflict between two opposing views but a dynamic exploration of justice as a concept that evolves with the progression from nature to civilization. Al-Farabi's insights suggest that Callicles' naturalistic justice and Socratic conventional justice are not mutually exclusive but instead represent complementary dimensions of justice that reflect different contexts and stages of human society.

### **D. The Broader Implications of Al-Farabi's Reconciliation**

By synthesizing Callicles' and Socrates' views on justice, Al-Farabi deepens our understanding of the concept as both a natural and social phenomenon. His distinction between natural and conventional justice highlights the interplay between power and morality, suggesting that while domination may be natural, the ideal state requires the cultivation

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<sup>28</sup> AL-FARABI, p. 139.

of virtue and mutual respect. This duality not only affirms the validity of Callicles' and Socrates' arguments but also emphasizes the transformative potential of civilization in shaping human behavior and ethics.

Al-Farabi's reconciliation ultimately serves as a bridge between ancient Greek and Islamic philosophical traditions, illustrating how universal concepts like justice can be interpreted and integrated across cultures and eras. By validating both natural and conventional justice, Al-Farabi's Ideal State offers a profound contribution to the ongoing dialogue on the nature of justice, power, and morality. This synthesis echoes the depth of Plato's exploration of justice in the Republic, where he delves into the economic, political, and social dimensions of an ideal polity. Plato emphasizes that the goal of the ideal state is the well-being of all its estates, advocating for moderation and balance to avoid the moral and practical pitfalls of extreme wealth and poverty. Justice, in Plato's vision, is the foundational principle that harmonizes these disparate elements into a cohesive whole, ensuring the state embodies wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice. For both philosophers, the realization of these virtues hinges on the presence of individuals capable of embodying and actualizing them. Thus, Al-Farabi's reconciliation aligns with and builds upon the Platonic ideal, demonstrating how the notion of justice transcends individual cultures and contributes to a shared philosophical heritage.<sup>29</sup>

### III. THE SOCRATIC-CALLICLEAN DEBATE REVISITED: AN ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVE

The dialogue between Socrates and Callicles in Plato's Gorgias is not simply a clash of opposing ideas about justice but a pedagogical tool designed to illuminate the complexity of the concept. Plato's use of dialogue, rather than plain exposition, underscores his belief that learning is a process of recollection, akin to giving birth to knowledge through dialectical engagement. In this context, neither Socrates nor Callicles should be considered the definitive spokesperson for Plato's personal views. Instead, both characters serve as instruments for exploring different dimensions of justice, each valid within its own framework.

#### A. The Dialectical Method: Plato's Dual Exploration of Justice

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<sup>29</sup> DOSKOZHANOVA, Aizhan/NURYSHEVA, Gulzhikhan/ TULEUBEKOV, Assyl: "State Policy As Virtue in Doctrines of Plato and Al-Farabi", Man India, Volume 96 Issue 7, 2016, p. 1989-1991.

Plato's dialogical method resists the notion of a single authoritative voice. Socrates, while a leading figure, does not necessarily represent Plato's final position. If Plato intended to present an unequivocal argument, he could have employed plain text rather than dramatized debates. The process of dialogue allows for the clash of perspectives, enabling readers to grapple with the tensions and nuances of complex ideas.<sup>30</sup> This is evident in the *Gorgias*, where Calicles passionately defends natural justice—rooted in the domination of the strong over the weak—while Socrates advances an ideal of conventional justice grounded in self-discipline and harmony.

Calicles' refusal to concede defeat in the face of Socrates' questioning is significant. Despite Socrates' incisive critiques, Calicles does not retract his stance, nor does Socrates conclusively dismantle it. This unresolved tension suggests that both perspectives hold validity in their own contexts. Natural justice, as articulated by Calicles, reflects the realities of power dynamics in the absence of societal conventions, while conventional justice, championed by Socrates, represents the aspirational ideals of a harmonious society.

### **B. Al-Farabi's Reconciliation: Justice as Duality**

Al-Farabi's interpretation of justice in *The Ideal State* provides a framework that synthesizes the positions of Calicles and Socrates. By defining justice in two ways—natural justice and conventional justice—Al-Farabi bridges the divide between their arguments. Natural justice corresponds to Calicles' assertion that the strong dominate the weak, reflecting the primal order of nature. Conventional justice, on the other hand, aligns with Socrates' vision of a society governed by ethical norms and mutual respect, which Al-Farabi considers achievable only in a civilized state.<sup>31</sup>

This dual approach suggests that Al-Farabi understood the *Gorgias* not as a contest with a clear winner but as an exploration of two complementary dimensions of justice. He does not reject Plato's conception of conventional justice but situates it alongside natural justice, recognizing that both are valid depending on the context. Al-Farabi's stance lends

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<sup>30</sup> BENSON, Hugh H, "Plato's Method of Dialectic", *A Companion to Plato*, Germany 2006, p. 98.

<sup>31</sup> AL-FARABI, p. 138-139.

credibility to the hypothesis that Callicles, like Socrates, represents an aspect of Plato's philosophical exploration. In this reading, Callicles embodies an earlier, more naturalistic perspective on justice, while Socrates articulates a more mature and aspirational ideal.

### C. Plato's Philosophical Evolution and Al-Farabi's Validation

If Callicles and Socrates both represent facets of Plato's thinking, then the dialogue in *Gorgias* becomes a microcosm of Plato's philosophical evolution. Callicles may reflect the young Plato grappling with the harsh realities of power and domination before Plato met Socrates, while the character Socrates embodies the older Plato's vision of justice as a unifying principle for society and the soul, the opinion that he obtained after being a student of Socrates. Al-Farabi's recognition of both natural and conventional justice aligns with this interpretation, as he refrains from privileging one over the other in his writings on Plato's works.<sup>32</sup> His silence on rejecting either view suggests he saw them as part of a larger, integrated framework.

Al-Farabi's nuanced reading of Plato highlights the enduring relevance of the *Gorgias*. By validating both Callicles' and Socrates' positions, he reinforces the idea that justice is not a monolithic concept but a multifaceted one, encompassing both the realities of human nature and the aspirations of human society. This duality allows for a deeper understanding of Plato's work, one that acknowledges the coexistence of competing truths within his dialogues.<sup>33</sup>

### D. Implications for the Concept of Justice

The Socratic-Calliclean debate, as revisited through Al-Farabi's lens, challenges the notion of a single, definitive conception of justice. Instead, it reveals justice as a dynamic and context-dependent concept, one that evolves with the progression from nature to civilization. Al-Farabi's synthesis underscores the possibility that Plato, too, grappled with these dualities, using his characters to explore the tensions between power, morality, and societal harmony.

This perspective enriches our understanding of Plato's philosophy and its reception in later traditions. By recognizing the validity of both

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<sup>32</sup> AL-FARABI, *Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, New York 2001, p. 53-70.

<sup>33</sup> BENSON, p. 96-98.

natural and conventional justice, Al-Farabi not only bridges the gap between Callicles and Socrates but also offers a model for reconciling seemingly opposing views in philosophical inquiry.

### CONCLUSION

Plato's exploration of justice in *The Republic* and *Gorgias* is a profound inquiry into the nature of morality, power, and human society. Through the debates between Socrates and his interlocutors—most notably Callicles and Thrasymachus—Plato constructs a dialectical framework that allows for the examination of conflicting perspectives. While Socrates champions conventional justice as an ideal of virtue and harmony, Callicles defends natural justice as the domination of the strong over the weak. Rather than resolving the debate in favor of one position, Plato employs these characters as instruments for teaching, presenting justice as a multifaceted concept that evolves with the progression from nature to civilization.

Al-Farabi's interpretation in *The Ideal State* enriches this discussion by offering a dual definition of justice, reconciling the views of both Socrates and Callicles. His concept of natural justice affirms the validity of Callicles' arguments, while his notion of conventional justice upholds Socrates' vision of a virtuous society. This synthesis reflects Al-Farabi's understanding of Plato's dialogues as philosophical exercises that embrace complexity and tension rather than impose a singular doctrine.

By situating Callicles as a potential representation of Plato's earlier thinking, this article has argued that both Callicles and Socrates can be seen as reflections of Plato's evolving views on justice. Al-Farabi's work further validates this interpretation, as he acknowledges the legitimacy of both natural and conventional justice in different contexts. This perspective highlights the depth of Plato's philosophical project and its capacity to address the dualities inherent in human life.

In conclusion, the dialogue between Socrates and Callicles, as interpreted through Al-Farabi's framework, transcends the boundaries of Plato's time and resonates with universal questions about power, morality, and societal order. It demonstrates that justice is not a fixed or monolithic concept but a dynamic interplay of competing truths, offering enduring lessons for philosophy and governance.

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