

**Self-Constitution: Action, Identity, and Integrity**  
**Lecture Five: The Constitutional Model of the Soul, and Bad Action**  
**Christine M. Korsgaard**

**I. Two Models of the Soul**

The Combat Model:

Version one: reason and passion battle for control of the soul.

Problem: no agent

Version two: agent chooses between reason and passion, identifying with one

Problem: agent has no essence, and no reason to identify with either

The Constitutional Model:

Reason and Passion/Inclination play different functional roles in a person's constitution

Agent identifies with her constitution; if she is ruled by reason this is not because she identifies with reason, but because she identifies with her constitution, which assigns reason the function of ruling.

**II. Plato's Constitutional Model**

*Socrates's argument:*

In order to achieve a common purpose, even a band of thieves must be just to each other.

Injustice causes civil war and makes a group incapable of achieving anything.

Justice and Injustice have the same effects wherever we find them.

Injustice makes an individual incapable of achieving anything. (*Republic I*, 351-352)

Classes in the City

Rulers

Auxiliaries

Craftspeople, Merchants, etc.

Function

To rule for the good of the whole

To carry out the orders of the rulers

To provide for the needs of the city

Virtues of the City

Wisdom = wisdom of the rulers, who rule for the good of the whole

Courage = courage of the auxiliaries = capacity to retain beliefs about what is to be feared in the face of temptation, pleasure, pain, and fear

Sophrosyne = agreement among all classes about who should rule and be ruled

Justice = each class doing its own work and not meddling in the work of anybody else

Parts of the Soul

Reason

Spirit

Appetite

Function

To rule for the good of the whole

To carry out the orders of reason

To provide for the needs of the person

Deliberation:

appetite makes a proposal

reason decides whether to act on it or not

Spirit carries reason's decision out

Constitution: determines the roles and offices that constitute a procedure for deliberation, and so allows the city/soul to operate as a unified agent.

Procedural Justice: the just outcome is one that follows from the carrying out of certain procedures

Substantive Justice (or rightness or goodness): independent ideas about what should follow from procedures

Why the unjust city cannot act: civil war is a breakdown in the deliberative procedures that unify the city into a single agent.

Platonic Justice:

“One who is just does not allow any part of himself to do the work of another part or allow the various classes within him to meddle with each other. He regulates well what is really his own and rules himself. He puts himself in order, is his own friend, and harmonizes the three parts of himself like three limiting notes in a musical scale - high, low, and middle. He binds together those parts and any others there may be in between, and from having been many things he becomes entirely one, moderate and harmonious. Only then does he act.” (*Republic IV*, 443d-e)

### III. Kant's Constitutional Model

Insofar as you are a rational being, you must act under the idea of freedom.

A free will is not determined by any alien causes (= is not heteronomous).

A free will must act on some law or other (argument against particularist willing, lecture two).

A free will must be autonomous, act on laws it gives to itself.

Free Deliberation:

1. Inclination makes a proposal: How about End-E? End-E would be a very pleasant thing to pursue.

2. Instrumental reason completes the proposal: Do Act-A in order to bring about pleasant End-E.

3. The free will decides whether to act on it or not.

Can I will the maxim of doing Act-A in order to bring about End-E as a law?

### IV. How bad action is possible: One may have a constitution, yet be governed by the wrong law

Kant:

Bad action is governed by the principle of self-love, the principle of treating one's inclinations, without further reflection, as reasons. This is defectively autonomous because the agent allows herself to be governed by nature's suggestions.

Plato:

I. The Incompletely unified agent (the privative conception of evil):

Timocracy – governed by the principle of honor

Turned against himself in non-ideal circumstances

Oligarchy – governed by the principle of prudence

Turned against himself when objective and subjective satisfaction come apart

Democracy – governed by the principle of wantonness

Turned against himself when a new desire undercuts the satisfaction of the last one.

II. The Tyrant (explains why we are drawn to the positive conception of evil):

Tyranny: bad “action” is governed by a single dominating obsession

Why it isn't action: the agent doesn't choose an act for the sake of an end, since the

end is set – there is something that for him is worth doing *anything* for.

Since the agent doesn't choose an act for the sake of an end, he doesn't choose a maxim.

Since he doesn't choose a maxim, he doesn't choose a law.

Since he doesn't choose a law, he isn't autonomous.

Since he isn't autonomous, he isn't free.

**To Note: Professor Christine Korsgaard will give a seminar on Thursday 13 June, at 2.15 p.m. in the Ryle Room, 10 Merton Street. The purpose of the seminar is to discuss questions raised by her Locke Lectures on 'Action, identity and integrity'. Everyone is welcome, and welcome to ask questions.**