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A Philosophical Approach to Drug Addiction:

Plato and Stoicism

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Abstract

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The presence of unjust acts has persisted throughout history, including acts such as aggravated assault, robbery, and homicide. Drug addiction has become exponentially more common, and while its complexities have been largely unaddressed, drug addiction has recently become the subject of increased scrutiny. The growing evidence of the unique nature of drug addiction continues to foster a social debate on how to best address this epidemic, including questions of prevention and appropriate consequences. This paper will look at modern analyses of the distinctive psychobiological bases of drug addiction and its cyclical process. It will conduct an in-depth investigation of drug addiction by delving into the nuances of Ancient Philosophy, specifically Platonic philosophy and Stoicism, and their relationship with contemporary thought pertaining to drug addiction. I argue that drug addiction is unique in the context of unjust acts, and thereby requires a unique approach in regards to consequences. The foundational concepts that distinguish drug addiction from other unjust acts include freedom, power, human nature, and ignorance. Because of drug addiction's distinct attributes, investigating these concepts is integral in assessing how to best address the issue of drug addiction. Through its synthesis of Platonic and Stoic philosophies with the contemporary shift in understanding of the unique psychobiological aspects of drug addiction, this paper advocates for an increased focus on empathetic education in regards to preventative measures and alternative/concurrent consequences for drug addiction.

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I. Introduction

While drug addiction has impacted humans for centuries, there has only been a recent effort to understand its biosocial complexities. This lack of understanding has allowed for a skewed development of both education pertaining to drug addiction and appropriate consequences assigned to drug addiction. The prevalence of drug addiction has exponentially increased throughout past decades. Due to this increase, the consequences of drug addiction have been recently brought to the forefront of collective thought, with many claims that the current legal repercussions are not reflective of the nature of drug addiction. The current legal repercussions of drug addiction are similar to the punishments for other unjust acts, ranging from heavy fines to time in prison. For a first-time possession charge, a person may face a prison term of only a year or less. But because of the addictive nature of drugs, multiple offenses are more common for drug addicts compared to other criminals. For subsequent offenses of drug possession, felony charges and additional years of jail time may apply. Another common consequence of drug possession is a fine: at the federal level, a person will be charged a fine of at least \$1000 for a possession charge (Patterson).

In recent decades, contemporary scholars have attempted to better understand drug addiction's genetic, biological, and psychological factors. Drug addiction is unique in that it can begin in multiple ways, ranging from a teenager trying a drug for the first time at a party to an adult that was prescribed a narcotic due to intense back pain from an injury. Genetically, some individuals are much more predisposed to drug addiction than others. Psychologically, the cognitive processes of the addict become skewed as the addiction cycle continues. Biologically, the brain changes over time as the addiction cycle rages on. Once the addiction cycle begins, it

becomes stronger over time and continues feeding into itself, and features negative impacts such as cravings and withdrawal to induce the addict to continue taking the drug.

With continued research on drug addiction processes, causes, and effects, there has been a social push for changing how drug addiction is addressed. Because drug addiction is unique genetically, biologically, and psychologically, many have argued for a distinct approach to the issue. They advocate for more emphasis on education and appropriate rehabilitation programs rather than a sole focus on punishment and incarceration. For drug addiction, education is important for both preventative measures against developing drug addiction and as an alternative/concurrent method for addressing drug addicts.

This paper seeks to connect contemporary thought pertaining to drug addiction with world-renowned ancient philosophies. The impact of ancient philosophy on contemporary thought is evident in the context of drug addiction, specifically in characterizing drug addiction as a unique unjust act and highlighting the importance of empathy and education. This paper will focus on the overlap between Platonic Philosophy and Stoicism in the foundational concepts that make drug addiction distinct from other unjust acts. Because of drug addiction's distinctive nature, the consequences of this unjust act must be distinctly analyzed as well.

While the philosophies of ancient times varied in many ways, there is significant overlap in many concepts, including ignorance, freedom, and education. Because drug addiction has only become a focal point of attention in recent years, the philosophical application of these timeless concepts has remained limited. Contemporary understanding of the biological, psychological, and genetic aspects of drug addiction is asserting drug addiction as a distinct and unique topic; thereby, it is necessary to examine drug addiction through a distinct and unique

lens. This paper not only analyzes the connections between ancient philosophies, but also applies these connections to modern thought pertaining to drug addiction. With growing social emphasis on the questions of preventative measures for drug addiction and appropriate punishment for drug addicts, this paper seeks to provide a philosophical basis to these questions of prevention and consequences.

I will begin this paper with an analysis of contemporary thought. This section will look at the scientific basis of drug addiction, the biological, genetic, and psychological aspects of drug addiction, how the cycle of addiction works, and current scholars' thoughts on the best manner in which to prevent drug addiction and the best course of action in addressing drug addicts.

This paper's next section analyzes Platonic philosophy to create a philosophical foundation of unjust acts and to begin to show why drug addiction is unique. First, I utilize *The Republic* to answer foundational questions about what justice is and why people should strive for justice. I continue this idea further by analyzing *Gorgias*, in which Plato continues to examine why humans act the way they do and the role of power; this allows further extrapolation on Platonic ideas of power in relation to freedom.

The third section of this paper investigates Stoicism, primarily through an analysis of *The Meditations* by Marcus Aurelius. This section begins with connecting the nature of humans and bad acts to showcase the distinct nature of drug addiction. In *The Meditations*, Aurelius studies the state of the human being and the impact of ignorance on perceptions of good and evil. He further examines the relationship between power, freedom, and unjust acts. *The Enchiridion* by Epictetus, another Stoic philosopher, is also useful in analyzing the human condition, power, and the dichotomy of control. This section then looks further at the change of opinion which

besets the drug addict and how essential the role of freedom and control are in understanding drug addiction.

After establishing the unique nature of drug addiction, the fourth section of this paper combines Platonic and Stoic philosophies to illustrate the best way to deal with drug addiction in terms of both preventative measures and alternative consequences. It highlights the Stoic emphasis on empathy towards the nature of man, which is applicable to questions of punishment and education in the context of drug addiction. This paper also analyzes *Protagoras* to demonstrate Platonic philosophies on punishment, education, and virtue. In *Protagoras*, Plato focuses on ignorance and vice within the framework of human nature. In addressing the consequences of drug addiction, this paper combines Stoic discussions on the importance of empathy with Platonic philosophies on punishment and education. This synthesis is important in philosophically analyzing the best preventative measures for drug addiction as well as alternative consequences for drug addiction.

This paper concludes by reiterating that Stoic and Platonic ancient philosophies on abstract concepts like freedom, justice, and education sufficiently operate as a foundation for contemporary ideas on drug addiction as a unique ailment that must be addressed in a unique manner. These ancient philosophies offer a substantial philosophical basis for the modern-day emphasis on a two-pronged approach to drug addiction: education as a preventative measure for drug addiction and educative rehabilitation as an appropriate consequence for drug addicts.

II. Contemporary Thought

Until recent decades, the dominant public view characterized drug addiction “as a disorder of self-control, not a disease” (Dackis & O’Brien, 1431). However, contemporary researchers have garnered increased scientific evidence showcasing addiction as a disease “based on neuronal mechanisms, heritability, treatment responses and a characteristic progressive clinical course” (Dackis & O’Brien, 1431). While some unjust acts can be labeled as disorders of self-control, the lines are blurred for drug addiction. Because of its cyclical nature and varied bases, drug addiction cannot be pigeonholed as a disorder resulting from lack of self-control, even if the choice to take a drug the first time is deemed a free choice. This cyclical nature of drug addiction increasingly hampers an individual’s freedom to a point far beyond a mere disorder of self-control. In this sense, drug addiction presents itself as a unique unjust act and, as such, individually tailored treatments should address the specific context of the drug addiction. Thus, this paper advocates for a two-pronged approach in ameliorating the epidemic of drug addiction: prevention and alternative/concurrent consequences, highlighting education as an essential tool for both preventing drug addiction and leading to better rehabilitation practices for drug addicts.

The Characteristics and Process of Drug Addiction

The biological, social, and clinical bases associated with drug addiction are compellingly different from those associated with other physical and mental illnesses. A 1995 article by J. Altman surveys four main domains involving these bases: “psychological and pharmacological factors; neurobiological substrates; risk factors; and clinical treatment”

(Altman, 286) and discusses topics central to drug dependence, including sensitization, withdrawal, cravings, and relapse. Altman defines addiction as “the extreme or psychopathological state where control over drug use is lost” (Altman, 287). Therefore, the positive reinforcement received from taking a drug is an essential component of the drug addict’s cycle: persistent drug-seeking and drug-taking. This, in turn, impacts both the biological structure of the individual, due to the interactions between the drug and neurobiological mechanisms, as well as the psychological state of the individual, as evinced through symptoms related to withdrawals and cravings. Because of the strong interaction between drug exposure and neurobiological mechanisms, Altman describes the confluence of several factors that make an individual more vulnerable to drug addiction, and thus exacerbate the drug’s positive reinforcement for an individual.

This article asserts that, along with other factors, “many environmental and genetic influences can be seen to modify the effects of drugs as reinforcers” (Altman, 333). Environmental risk factors include economic cost/benefit, schedules, prior history, and social context. Genetic factors include an individual’s temperament/trait and existence of a co-morbidity (Altman, 333). Epidemiological studies have also shown that “genetic factors operate at all steps of addiction, including vulnerability to initiation, continued use, and propensity to become dependent” (Li & Burmeister, 2). Twin studies have shown that “the genetic influence on addiction has proved to be substantial, and heritability’s for most addictive disorders are moderate to high” (Li & Burmeister, 2). With heritability for addictive disorders as moderate to high, genetics are important to consider when discussing drug addiction. Genetic factors are especially important in investigating drug addiction and philosophical concepts because of their

relationship with an individual's ability to control; while human beings cannot choose the body they are born with, their propensity to develop and continue a drug addiction is heavily influenced by their genes.

The cyclical nature of drug addiction is of utmost importance when discussing the impact drug addiction has on freedom and is an impetus for investigating addiction in a novel way. When a person who may be at risk of drug addiction because of environmental and genetic factors consumes a drug, they receive a large amount of positive reinforcement. This positive reinforcement leads to drug-seeking, and eventually persistent drug-taking, and thus the cycle of drug addiction ensues. Persistent drug-taking leads to neural adaptations; this includes changes to sensitization, tolerance, and withdrawal. As a person continues to use a drug, their tolerance for this drug increases, so they find themselves taking increasing amounts in order to achieve the same desired effects as before. Because the body has begun to crave the drug, not receiving it will result in withdrawal: an addict's unpleasant sensations that directly result from the lack of the drug. These neural adaptations have a direct effect on the brain reinforcement system; the addict craves the drug in order to receive their desired positive reinforcement. The positive reinforcements that addicts seek include withdrawal relief, euphoria, functional enhancement, and anxiety relief. Taking the drug allows the addict to experience positive reinforcement, which results in drug-seeking so they can once again find their desired positive reinforcement. Thus, the addict continues their drug use (Altman, 333).

The cyclical process of drug addiction described is what distinguishes it from other unjust acts. The cycle feeds upon itself and becomes increasingly stronger with each drug use and has both biological and psychological effects on the brain. One review study, based on

twenty-one studies, found evidence that heroin use has “a direct and damaging effect on certain brain functions and that these changes may be associated with impulsive and unhealthy decision making” (Fareed, 2017) They also found that “a longer duration of heroin use may be associated with more damaging effects on brain functions” (Fareed, 2017). This review study not only highlights the biological impacts of drug addiction on the individual, but also reveals that these negative impacts increase as the cycle of drug addiction continues. These effects on brain functions help to strengthen the cycle of addiction, and the cycle thus becomes stronger the longer the individual continues taking the drug. Since the brain changes as the drug is continually taken, the effect that the drug has on decision making hinders the individual’s independent capabilities of using their cognitive processes to fullest capacity. Thereby, the addict’s control over their decision-making faculties is impeded, and addiction has hampered the addict’s ability to make decisions freely.

An article by Björn Frank showcases the peculiarities of the process of drug addiction, and Frank states that unlike other phenomena, drug addiction “appears unlikely to be the outcome of utility maximization” (Frank, 651). In this context, utility can be defined as the positive reinforcements discussed in Altman’s article. He attempts to develop a new model that can account for the effects of tolerance in the process of drug addiction and lists “the most important ‘stylized facts’ which characterize addiction” (Frank, 652). One of these stylized facts is increased tolerance to the drug. An addict’s tolerance increases as “the repeated use of the drug causes its effectiveness to decrease,” so an addict requires a higher dose in order to produce the same effect as before (Frank, 652). Another relevant stylized fact claims that individuals who are becoming addicted take increasing amounts of the drug with each sequential drug use. Thus,

increased tolerance results in decreased utility. Because drug consumption in one time period leads to a lower marginal utility of the drug in the following time period, “the choice of consumption bundles into a problem of dynamic optimization” (Frank, 653). Committing most unjust act gives equal utility in each time period. However, a model for drug addiction must deal with alternating utility levels.

Frank develops a new model for drug addiction through the ‘internal game’ approach, and he elaborates on the complex and often-misunderstood process of drug addiction. His article is based on “addiction, and the process of becoming addicted, [modeled] as the outcome of an internal game” (Frank, 652). Frank uses terminology directly from Plato to define his players. In *The Republic*, Plato claims that there are three parts of a person’s soul: reason, appetite, and spirit. The players that Frank focuses on in this strategic game are reason and appetite. Reason has two strategies: suppress Appetite (costing ‘effort of will’) or resign. Appetite can either remain abstinent or consume the drug. If Appetite plays abstinence, Reason’s best play is resignation, since suppression has the higher cost of ‘effort of will.’ However, if appetite plays drug consumption, Reason prefers suppression. Frank asserts that since past drug consumption makes suppression of Appetite harder, a new model is needed. This new model states that each time the drug is taken, the ‘costs’ for Reason to suppress Appetite increase and net benefits decrease by a specific amount. Thus, addiction becomes more powerful as a person continues their use of drugs.

These articles and studies are helpful in providing background as to why drug addiction must be approached in a unique manner. Drug addiction is not entirely dependent on the weakness of will of an individual; there are multiple risk factors, both genetic and

psychological, that heavily influence an individual's vulnerability to drug addiction. Unlike other unjust acts, addiction is of a cyclical nature that becomes stronger with continued drug use. Drug addiction's direct effects on the brain's reinforcement system and the individual's decision-making faculties showcase multiple reasons why the cycle of drug addiction continues.

The numerous ways that drug addiction can begin also differentiate it in the context of unjust acts. For example, if a patient has astounding back pain to the point of being unable to work, their doctor could prescribe an opioid to help the person function. While the patient originally takes the opioid because of physical pain, this can quickly develop into a habit that spirals out of control into an addiction. While the patient did not choose to develop back pain that resulted in having to take opioids to properly function, they still developed a drug addiction.

This example offers a first glimpse into the significance of freedom and choice for a drug addict. However, philosophies on freedom also apply to a person that appears to freely choose to consume a drug and thus begin the addiction cycle for a non-medical reason. Even if the initial act of taking the drug was freely chosen, the cyclical nature of drug addiction results in the loss of the individual's freedom. Because of the distinct characteristics of drug addiction that manipulate a person into starting and continuing the addiction cycle, an investigation of an individual's degree of freedom in unjust acts must be investigated, as well as their ability to control. This paper looks at Platonic and Stoic philosophies on unjust acts as a whole, and how the respective roles of freedom, power, and human nature characterize drug addiction as a unique unjust act.

Approach to Prevention and Consequences

It is due to drug addiction's distinctiveness that educative rehabilitation is especially important for drug addicts. The two-pronged approach to the drug addiction epidemic focuses on prevention and alternative methods in terms of consequences. In terms of prevention, the role of education is especially important. A 2012 study compared two training methods used to prevent drug addiction in high school students — teenage years often mark the beginning of consumption of drugs. The researchers asserted that “training to prevent addiction in the schools is especially important” (Baraz et al., 1305). The scholars found that “only 6.9% of the students were highly informed about the harmful effects of the drugs...[and] 28.1% believed that the effects of drugs were less than the effects of psychotropic pills” (Baraz et al., 1306). In comparing students' knowledge levels to their drug abuse, they found that “30.4% of the total students who smoked and consumed drug had low knowledge, 52.2% had a medium knowledge, and 6.4% had a high knowledge” (Baraz et al., 1306). When comparing the pretest scores and posttest scores (after training method of teaching about drug addiction took place), they found a significant difference in the average scores; thereby, the “training methods were statistically significant in enhancing the levels of knowledge” (Baraz et al., 1306).

This study highlights that “the threats of addiction are not known to people and high tendency of people to addiction shows the necessity to make the society aware to prevent from addiction” (Baraz et al., 1306). While this study was focused on comparing whether training from peers or from a physician was the better training method, the results also showcase that training via education increases the knowledge of the students with only 6.9% having a high knowledge of drugs before the training took place. Approximately a third of students who

consumed drugs have low knowledge, and this study shows the issue of ignorance of these teenagers who consume drugs while having low knowledge of it. Due to this problem of ignorance, education is shown to be an important preventative measure against the development of drug addiction.

Education is not only essential in alleviating ignorance to help prevent drug addiction but also an important part in the aftermath and consequences of drug addiction. As previously discussed, the legal consequences of drug addiction — including fines and jail time — are currently similar to the repercussions of other unjust acts. Liu and Chui's conducted research on drug addicts in China's prisons where there is a lack of specific drug treatment and rehabilitation programs. They characterize drug use as "a relapse-prone behavior requiring sufficient and appropriate treatment, continuous intervention, as well as social support" (Liu & Chui, 195). Many offenders "do not recognize the harmful effect which continued drug use has on their health" and do not believe "the close connection between criminal behavior and drug use" (Liu & Chui, 195). Due to this, "pure criminal punishment and offender rehabilitation with no regard for drug-dependency problems end up failing to prevent drug relapses" which increases the likelihood of repeat offenses (Liu & Chui, 195). "Rehabilitation and education should...be provided" and it is essential for rehabilitative policies and practices to consider both criminal behaviors and drug dependency to best prevent relapse and recidivism (Liu & Chui, 195). This is one example of the importance of education in the context of alternative consequences for drug addiction; addicts often fail to recognize just how harmful their drug dependency is and the inherent connection between criminal behavior and drug use. These scholars suggest "specific treatment regarding drug abstinence" and rehabilitative programs, including educational

programs, community-based programs, and professional counseling services. They use the example of educational programs that “may help those who commit minor offenses to understand how their criminal behaviors negatively affect the victims, the victim’s and their own families, and society” (Liu & Chui, 197).

Thus, because of the unique nature of drug addiction as an unjust act, the prevention and consequences for drug addiction must be distinctly analyzed. Due to general ignorance of drugs and the impacts of addiction, the role of education is important in preventing the cycle of drug addiction from beginning. In addressing the legal consequences of drug addiction, rehabilitative programs, including educational programs, should be provided for drug addicts in order to decrease likelihood of relapse.

III. Platonic Philosophy

As one of the most famous ancient philosophers, Plato is widely known for the dialogues he wrote in the fourth century B.C.E in ancient Greece. Plato was known for his rejection of materialism and investigations of metaphysics. He searched for fundamental truths, including the foundations of human nature and the definition of justice. The Socratic dialogues discussed in this paper are *The Republic*, *Gorgias*, and *Protagoras*. *The Republic* is useful in creating a framework for unjust acts, human nature, and the definition of justice; this is important for establishing why people commit unjust acts and what motivates people to pursue justice. This paper analyzes Book 2 of *The Republic* to initially investigate the nature of justice as a good and why an individual should strive to commit just actions, and then looks at Book 9 to expand on this analysis and offer proof that it pays to be just. *Gorgias* is important in my investigation of drug addiction as a unique unjust act with its in-depth analysis of power, vice, and freedom; it shows why people act the way they do and how freedom is different for drug addicts. In a later portion of this paper, I analyze *Protagoras* to define human nature and its relationship with ignorance and education, which is essential when considering appropriate consequences and prevention for drug addiction.

A Basis for Unjust Acts

Plato's famous text *The Republic* is important in connecting human nature and justice/injustice. To properly analyze drug addiction as a unique unjust act, investigating why people pursue justice and finding a foundation of unjust acts is essential. In Book 2 of *The Republic*, the problem of justice as a good is initially posed to Socrates, and he is challenged to prove that

justice is not a necessary evil but something to strive for both due to its consequences and for the sake of itself. In Book 9 of *The Republic*, Socrates investigates the nature of the tyrannical man to prove that it does actually pay to be just. Establishing this basis for unjust acts is important in the context of drug addiction because it provides a foundation for why individuals should strive for the just and avoid unjust actions. To properly discuss drug addiction as an unjust act that should be avoided, this paper first must prove that justice is a virtue that promotes happiness, and people should strive to commit just acts rather than unjust acts.

In Book 2 of *The Republic*, Glaucon, a young companion of Socrates, outlines the three categories that all goods can be placed within: “some which we welcome for their own sakes...[some which] do us good but we regard them as disagreeable...[and] those goods which are desirable not only in themselves, but also for their results” (Plato, *The Republic* Book 2). Glaucon asks Socrates to prove that justice belongs to the third category as a good that is desired for its own sake and for the sake of its results. Glaucon initially places justice in the category of a good that does us good, whether that be in terms of rewards and reputation, but is regarded as disagreeable in of themselves, such as the care of the sick. Glaucon defends his assertion of justice as a necessary evil and plans to argue that “all men who practice justice do so against their will, of necessity, but not as a good...[and] the life of the unjust is after all better far than the life of the just” (Plato, *The Republic* Book 2). Glaucon continues to explain the nature and origin of justice. He claims that when people have both done and suffered injustice, for they are “not being able to avoid the one and obtain the other,” they make an agreement among themselves, and thus they create “laws and mutual covenants; and that which is ordained by law is termed by them lawful and just” (Plato, *The Republic* Book 2).

To best illustrate his argument that justice is not practiced for its own sake, but merely a burden that must be carried because individuals would suffer worse in the absence of it, Glaucon tells the legend of the ring of Gyges. In this legend, a just man is given a gold ring which grants him the power to turn invisible. The man was able to commit unjust acts and could indulge in all of his unjust desires, “for whenever any one thinks that he can safely be unjust, there he is unjust” (Plato, *The Republic* Book 2). If there were two magic rings, one worn by a just man and one worn by an unjust man, “no man can be imagined to be of such an iron nature that he would stand fast in justice” (Plato, *The Republic* Book 2). Thereby, man is only just because he is afraid of punishment, and no individual is just because justice itself is desirable.

Glaucon next focuses on judging the life of the just and unjust to decide which leads the happier life. He asserts that the perfectly unjust life is a happier life than the perfectly just one. The entirely unjust man “is thought just, and therefore bears rule in the city; he can marry whom he will...trade and deal where he likes, and always to his own advantage, because he has no misgivings about injustice...[and] he gets the better of his antagonists” (Plato, *The Republic* Book 2). While the completely unjust man is honored and rewarded, the completely just man leads a wretched life filled with scorn. And thus, Glaucon asserts that “the life of the unjust [is] better than the life of the just” (Plato, *The Republic* Book 2). This argument results in Socrates starting his quest to find the nature of justice, which he does by formulating a perfect city that is analogous to the individual.

In Book 9 of *The Republic*, Socrates is finally able to offer proof that justice is also good for the sake of itself. He does this by analyzing the life of the tyrannical man, who is the most unjust man. The tyrannical man is completely at the mercy of his impulses and desires, and

he has “purged away temperance and brought in madness to the full” (Plato, *The Republic* Book 9). In describing the type of life the tyrannical man leads, Plato imagines “there will be feasts and carousals and reveling and courtesans” (Plato, *The Republic* Book 9). However, the tyrannical man will soon spend too much money on luxuries and impulses, and will begin borrowing until lenders begin to refuse him. The tyrannical man has no choice but to use thievery and force; he commits unjust actions in an attempt to sate his unquenchable thirst for his desires. He will take his parents’ property and money, “use force and plunder” and “commit the foulest murder, or eat forbidden food, or be guilty of any other horrid act” (Plato, *The Republic* Book 9). Since he will do anything to feed his desires, he will live in lawlessness and chaos, unable to trust anyone.

The only one who is more miserable than the tyrant leading a private life is a person of tyrannical nature that “has been cursed with the further misfortune of being a public tyrant” (Plato, *The Republic* Book 9). As the public tyrant, he is “everywhere surrounded and watched by enemies” and thereby “he is never allowed to go on a journey, or to see the things which other freemen desire to see, but he lives in his hole like a woman hidden in the house, and is jealous of any other citizen who goes into foreign parts and sees anything of interest” (Plato, *The Republic* Book 9). Socrates asserts that the tyrant is actually a slave, with “desires which he is utterly unable to satisfy... beset with fear and is full of convulsions and distractions” (Plato, *The Republic* Book 9). And so, through his investigation of the tyrannical man, Socrates concludes that as the most unjust man, he is the most “supremely miserable” who grows worse from having power (Plato, *The Republic* Book 9).

Drug addiction is unique in this discussion of the tyrannical man. The tyrannical man is controlled by erotic love, which overpowers any virtuous parts of him. The tyrannical man is “under the dominion of erotic love” which produces his desires that he would do anything to fulfill, including committing unjust acts (Plato, *The Republic* Book 9). Drug addiction is distinct in that it is both the controlling force — like the erotic love in the example of the tyrannical man — as well as the unjust act that is committed. Drug addiction acts as a controlling force on a biological and psychological level. Drug addiction changes the addicts’ cognitive processes and biological structures as it becomes stronger through the addiction cycle. This makes the addict continue to commit unjust acts — such as taking the drug — as well as commit other unjust acts in their quest to fulfill their desire. As an individual that is under the control of drug addiction and fueled by an unquenchable desire for the drug, a drug addict is miserable and a slave, similar to the tyrannical man. Because the drug addict is a slave to his desires, which are produced by the controlling addiction cycle, there must be further investigations into how drug addiction is unique in the context of freedom and power.

Establishing justice as a virtue that is both wanted for the consequences it brings and for its own sake is important for creating a basis for just/unjust acts in the context of drug addiction. In *The Republic* Book 2, the Platonic Dialogue questions the nature of justice and why people should pursue justice and choose just actions. Since Glaucon argues that justice is only wanted because of its rewards, Socrates is driven to assert justice as a good also wanted for the sake of itself. In *The Republic* Book 9, Socrates proves that justice is a good that is desired for both its consequences and for its own sake. Through his analysis of the tyrannical man, he shows that the unjust man is the most miserable, and is a slave. With this foundation, the next step is to

specifically investigate why people commit unjust acts. Looking at Plato's *Gorgias*, this paper situates drug addiction as a unique unjust action in which freedom plays a distinct role.

Good Actions and Freedom

The Republic offers a framework of human nature and establishes why pursuing justice and virtue is of the utmost importance; it shows that justice is pursued both for the sake of the rewards that being just brings and for justice itself. While *The Republic* focuses on what justice is and why humans should act justly, *Gorgias* looks directly at why humans act the way that they do; the differences between a person doing what they want (the good) and doing what they opine to be best. In *Gorgias*, Socrates expands on why people act the way that they do through an analysis of the power of tyrants and orators. Socrates and Polus operate under the definition that having power is "something that's good for the one who has power," which is significant in the context of drug addicts (Plato, *Gorgias*, 810). Freedom, an important concept for examining drug addicts' decisions, adequately fits under this definition of having power, so correlations can be extracted between freedom and power.

Polus claims that the tyrant and orator have the most power in the city because they can "put to death anyone they want, and confiscate the property and banish from their cities anyone they see fit" (Plato, *Gorgias*, 810). However, Socrates disagrees with this claim; Socrates actually believes that "both orators and tyrants have the least power in their cities" (Plato, *Gorgias*, 810). Socrates defends his assertion by asking Polus if it is good for a person to do "whatever he sees most fit" when he lacks intelligence (Plato, *Gorgias*, 810). When Polus agrees that this would be bad, Socrates furthers his argument by saying that tyrants do not do what they

see fit because of the reasons for their actions. He asks Polus if “when people do something, they want the thing they’re doing at the time, or the thing for the sake of which they do what they’re doing” (Plato, *Gorgias*, 811). Socrates proves that people actually want “that thing for the sake of which we do them” instead of the thing itself (Plato, *Gorgias*, 812). He uses an example of an individual taking medicine not because they want to take the medicine itself, but because they want to be healthy. The example of drug addiction works well within this framework. Addicts do not take drugs for the sake of taking drugs, but for the effects of taking the drug; this could range from wanting to dispel withdrawal symptoms to simply wanting a ‘high.’

Thus, Socrates shows that tyrants do not do what they do for the sake of the action, but because the effects of these actions are deemed beneficial. People “want the things that are good...and don’t want the things that are bad” (Plato, *Gorgias*, 812). So, when a tyrant does what he sees fit, like put a person to death, it is because “he supposes that doing so is better for himself when it’s actually worse” (Plato, *Gorgias*, 812). Socrates and Polus then agree that the tyrant cannot be “doing what he actually wants, if these things are actually bad” (Plato, *Gorgias*, 812). Someone that is not acting in the way that they truly want to be acting cannot be said to have great power, and thus no great freedom either. This text showcases the relationship between what is actually good and what an individual opines to be good, an important aspect of drug addiction. When addicts give into their addiction, they do so because they think it would be better for them, whether this be fighting withdrawal symptoms or craving stress relief through a drug. However, this action of taking the drug, which they opine to be good, is actually bad. So, drug addicts do not have power in this context, and so they have no freedom.

Drawing connections between abstract concepts like accountability, freedom, virtue, and vice is a difficult task that allows room for some controversy. One side of this debate is shown in an article by Mark Moes; he examined Plato's conception of the relations between moral philosophy and medicine and the implications of such a model. Moes compared health and illness with virtue and vice. Part of Plato's model is that "physical health can be enhanced by moral virtue" but physical health cannot make someone virtuous (Moes, 358). While Socrates implied that "physical health is neither sufficient nor necessary for health of body," he still believed that "righteousness is a matter of the nature of the human soul" (Moes, 359). This is similar to how the human health is a matter of the nature of the human body. Socrates uses the term 'phusis' to refer to both the order of the body ruined by bad health or disease and the order of the soul ruined by injustice. This Platonic model exemplifies the similarities between health versus illness and virtue versus vice.

Moes discussed the possible objections to Plato's model, and these objections help make a foundation for the idea of placing fault fully on the drug addict. Someone could say that making immorality synonymous with ill-health "not only assumes that immoral behavior is bad for the agent...but also tempts us to exempt the agent from responsibility for his bad actions or crimes, and to treat him as a victim-patient rather than as a true agent" (Moes, 359). For drug addiction, this implies that it would be wrong to treat the addict as a victim. Moes asserts that just because likening injustice to ill health means "that there is something wrong with the unjust man that is bad for him," it does not mean that the unjust man is a victim instead of an agent or that unjust people are "not at all responsible for their condition" (Moes, 359). This leads to the

claim that “it is central to Plato’s view that freely chosen unjust acts...make their agents unjust” (Moes, 360).

According to Moes, Plato’s model implies that an addict would be completely at fault if their choice to continue their use of drugs was a freely chosen action. However, because of the complex nuances of drug addiction, a discussion of what constitutes a freely chosen action is necessary. An essay by R.F. Stalley investigates the paradoxical relationship between Plato and freedom. He also looks at different types of freedom, the use of force, and the connection between moral freedom and the ability to do as one pleases: desires versus strong evaluations of what is right and wrong. Stalley showcases the “connections between Plato’s account of freedom and those given by some recent philosophers, who have pointed to difficulties in the traditional account of moral freedom as the ability to do what one wants” (Stalley, 151). Stalley expounds on why people, such as drug addicts, appear to do what they want, but “would not usually be regarded as free” (Stalley, 151). He uses the example of drug addicts because they “may wish that he did not have his desire and struggle to get rid of it” (Stalley, 151).

Stalley addresses the nuances of moral freedom as the ability to do what one wants by describing these situations through ‘second order’ desires and ‘first order’ desires. The drug addict may have a first order desire for heroin and “also have a second order desire not to desire heroin” (Stalley, 151). It is because of the disconnect between the first order desire and second order desire that “we do not regard the addict as free” (Stalley, 151). Plato believes that “since all of us have some inclination to the good, those with mistaken values must be in a state of inner conflict” (Stalley, 153). The unjust person “cannot do what he or she really wants,” and “such people cannot therefore be truly free” (Stalley, 153). People can “act freely only in so far as we

are rational” (Stalley, 153). So, Moes’s idea that freely chosen unjust acts make the agent unjust is not very applicable in the drug addiction.

Because of the disorder of the drug addict and the irrational disconnect between their desires, drug addicts cannot act freely, according to Platonic philosophy. And if drug addicts cannot commit freely chosen unjust acts as it pertains to their addiction, they cannot hold the full responsibility for the actions which pertain to their addiction. However, theories such as these struggle with “providing a satisfactory account of responsibility” because “if no one who acts wrongly is genuinely free, it seems that no one really deserves blame or punishment” (Stalley, 153). But considering the unique characteristics of drug addicts, including genetic risk factors, the high level of positive reinforcement, the neural adaptations, and neurobiological bases of drug addiction, drug addicts have arguably less freedom compared to other acts of injustice.

IV. Stoicism

Modern-day scholars assert that drug addiction “reminds us that desire and pleasure can be impervious to rational thought, clashing with deeply engrained cultural values placed on stoicism and self-control” (Dackis & O’Brien, 1432). In modern times, the word ‘stoic’ is usually considered synonymous to not showing emotion and a high degree of self control. However, the philosophical application of the ancient school of thought of Stoicism is much more complex than contemporary discourse often entails, and can actually be used to distinguish drug addiction from other unjust acts. Stoicism is not about being emotionless, but “the trick is to get our values right, so that the things we react strongly to are the ones that truly matter for a human being” (Graver). Thus, it is important to look at the nature of humans, emotions, and bad acts in order to situate drug addiction into this philosophy. In *The Meditations*, famous Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius analyzes the state of the human being, empathy, bad acts, and control. Throughout the text, he emphasizes the importance of empathy for his fellow human beings. By analyzing Stoic thought, this paper further characterizes drug addiction as a unique unjust act and draws connections between drug addiction and resulting changes of opinion, as well as the roles of freedom and control for the drug addict.

Bad Acts and the State of the Human Being

Early in *The Meditations*, Aurelius describes the state of the human being and investigates why humans are the way they are. He admits that every day he will meet “the busy-body, the ungrateful, arrogant, deceitful, envious, unsocial” (Aurelius, *The Meditations* Book 2). He claims that this cannot be helped. However, he also asserts that “these things happen to them

by reason of their ignorance of what is good and evil” (Aurelius, *The Meditations* Book 2). This is in accordance with the findings of ancient philosophers previously discussed. Aurelius immediately shows that it is ignorance at the root of the human confusion of what is good and evil. This ability to discern between good and evil is directly impacted by the cyclical nature of drug addiction. As the addiction cycle takes root in an individual, their ability to make accurate assumptions is impeded upon by the drug’s physiological impacts.

Aurelius’ ideas are important in showing the distinctive nature of drug addiction in the context of bad and unjust acts. In Book 2, Aurelius analyzes bad acts and discusses Theophrastus’ comparison of bad acts. Theophrastus claimed that “the offences which are committed through desire are more blameable than those which are committed through anger” (Aurelius, *The Meditations* Book 2). He attributed this to the fact that those induced by anger seem to disregard reason “with a certain pain and unconscious contraction” (Aurelius, *The Meditations* Book 2). On the other hand, the person who acts through desire is “overpowered by pleasure” (Aurelius, *The Meditations* Book 2). and this is more blamable than an act that is committed with pain. Aurelius extrapolated on this by saying that “the one is more like a person who has been first wronged and through pain is compelled to be angry; but the other is moved by his own impulse to do wrong, being carried towards doing something by desire” (Aurelius, *The Meditations* Book 2). He defines the worst of the two — lust — as an inward urging, while anger is caused by the external, or injury from an outside party.

This analysis of Theophrastus’ comparison of bad acts is effective in revealing the nature of drug addiction. As a bad act, drug addiction fits into both categories laid out by Theophrastus. In the context of lust driving a bad act, the drug addict does seek out the drug as a

means of obtaining pleasure. The drug addict is committing the bad act because of their own impulse towards pleasure; the addict is driven by internal forces. However, drug addiction also belongs in the same category as anger driving a bad act. Aurelius emphasizes the disregard of reason in this case as more painful and more of an unconscious decision, since anger is driven by an external force. Drug addiction has a component of this external urging as well. As stated previously, no person who uses a drug has an intention of becoming addicted. Returning to the previously mentioned example of someone affected by the ever-growing opioid epidemic; they required the opioid for a legitimate medical concern, but began the process of drug addiction due to this. The actions of a drug addict to seek more drugs is a product of the cyclical nature of drug addiction. This cyclical process is originally caused by an external force — the beginning dose of the drug itself — which impacts both the body and mind. The addictive characteristics of the drug are external forces acting on the individual, and the cyclical process is strengthened by these external forces.

While Book 2 of *The Meditations* is useful in looking at the state of the human being and dissecting different causes of bad acts, Book 4 is also important; here, Aurelius expands upon the essential role of the mind in analyzing the state of the human being. Aurelius begins Book 4 by asserting that all people seek retreats, and for many, these retreats manifest as vacations to the sea shores or prolonged stays in the mountains or countryside. However, Aurelius finds this common practice of physical retreat to be unnecessary. He emphasizes that “it is in thy power whenever thou shalt choose to retire into thyself” (Aurelius, *The Meditations* Book 4). He asserts the soul as a peaceful place that one can escape to at any time. He believes that “tranquility is nothing else than the good ordering of the mind” (Aurelius, *The Meditations*

Book 4). This is yet another example of the singular application in the context of drug addiction. Drug addiction affects the biological and psychological aspects of the drug addict and is a two-pronged obstacle; with addiction acting as an impediment on both mind and body, the good ordering of the mind proves most difficult to ensure. Drug addiction is affected by the ordering of the mind and also simultaneously affects the ordering of the mind. Because there are genetic components which predispose individuals to drug addiction, the ordering of the mind of these individuals has been weakened from the start when it concerns drug addiction. Because of its cyclical nature, drug addiction affects the ordering of the mind; it causes psychological effects on an addict's thought processes and the biological changes caused by drug addiction. Drug addiction provides extra obstacles to hinder the good ordering of the mind and thereby makes this tranquility more difficult to achieve.

This idea of hindering the good ordering of the mind is connected to the integral connection between freedom and the ability to see things clearly. Aurelius urges people to, above all, “not distract or strain thyself, but be free, and look at things as a man, as a human being, as a citizen, as a mortal” (Aurelius, *The Meditations* Book 4). This relationship between freedom and your own perceptions means that without your freedom, your perceptions are necessarily skewed. To look at things as a man, as a human being, as a citizen, and as a mortal proves itself a difficult task for drug addicts. With a genetic disposition towards drug addiction and the multitude of ways a drug addiction can begin, addicts have a greater struggle with not distracting or straining themselves and being free instead. Due to the nature of drug addiction, there is an inherent lack of freedom; it acts as chains on both mind and body in a repeating pattern that feeds upon itself.

Under Stoic philosophy, drug addiction can be seen as a unique unjust act. With ignorance at the core, the drug acts as an impediment on rational thought processes. Drug addiction is in part unique because it is driven by both internal forces — the increasing cyclical process of addiction, accompanied by withdrawals and cravings — and external forces — taking the drug. Aurelius emphasizes the importance of the good ordering of the mind, and due to the nature of drug addiction, drug addiction both impacts the ordering of the mind and is impacted by the ordering of the mind. In short, drug addiction disrupts cognitive processes, which is further explained in the next section. Because of this disruption, the individual enjoys less cognitive freedom, which makes it harder to order the mind well and perceive clearly. And so, the addiction cycle continues and becomes increasingly strong.

Changes in Opinion

Aurelius' ideas on the causes of changes in opinion can be used to further support labelling drug addiction as unique in the context of bad acts. Aurelius specifically emphasizes two rules he believes men should always have “in readiness; the one, to do only whatever the reason of the ruling and legislating faculty may suggest for the use of men; the other, to change thy opinion, if there is any one at hand who sets thee right and moves thee from any opinion.” (Aurelius, *The Meditations* Book 4). He believes that changes in opinion must only proceed from “a certain persuasion, as of what is just or of common advantage, and the like, not because it appears pleasant or brings reputation” (Aurelius, *The Meditations* Book 4). Aurelius is correct in his assumption that the changes of opinion which accompany many unjust acts are rooted in this

desire for reputation or pleasure. However, the change of opinion sprouting from drug addiction is distinct from this.

Drug addicts clearly suffer from a change of opinion; before using the drug, they did not value the drug as they do after the addiction takes hold. Drug addicts' change of opinion are also clearly not persuaded by ideas of what is just or of common advantage. However, drug addiction cannot be so simply defined as an unjust act from a change in opinion that is rooted in pleasure or desire for reputation. Drug addiction is an impediment on mind and body that, due to its cyclical nature, feeds upon itself. Even for a person who became addicted because they wanted to try a drug for pleasure cannot be confined under the category characterized as a change in opinion due to pleasure. While the first time was in search of this pleasure, the chains of addiction grow heavier as the cycle continues its course. An addict shifts from pleasure-seeking behavior to relief-seeking behavior as the cycle rages on. Because of drugs' increasing restraints on a person's freedom, the true change of opinion resulting from drug addiction cannot be labeled the same as other bad acts that result from changes in opinions truly founded in pleasure or reputation. This is yet another example of the unique nature of drug addiction as a bad act.

This change of opinion is perpetuated by cravings due to the multiple bases — including biological and psychological — impacted by drug addiction. Cravings are a part of the psychobiological aspect of drug addiction that drives the addict to seek out the drug. While withdrawal and tolerance are linked closely with the biological basis of drug addiction, cravings are often labeled as cognitive processing devoted to alleviating an intense and uncontrollable-like desire for the drug (Altman, 304). These cravings are caused by an external force: the drug's

addictive properties. Cravings directly impact an addict's thought process and fill their mind with an intense desire for the drug of dependence. Aurelius asserts that habitual thoughts "will be the character of thy mind" and "the soul is dyed by the thoughts" (Aurelius, *The Meditations* Book 5). With continuous good thoughts, a man's soul can thrive, and thereby a man can live well. Cravings can be adequately labeled habitual thoughts that are characterized by an uncontrollable and intense desire. The power that an addict has over their mind and the freedom that an addict has over their thoughts are both limited by these cravings. Thereby, these cravings which increasingly force themselves into the cognitive processing of an addict shape the character of an individual's mind, and these thoughts dye the soul.

Drug addiction is not only impacted by biological and psychological forces but genetics as well. Often referenced in the context of Stoicism, most specifically Epictetus, the dichotomy of control refers to the idea that there are some things that an individual can control, and there are some things that individuals cannot control. In *The Enchiridion*, Epictetus claims that there are "things which are within our power, and there are things which are beyond our power" (Epictetus, *The Enchiridion* Ch. 1). While the individual cannot control every situation, such as the weather, time, or politics, they can control some things, such as their perspectives, reactions, beliefs, and motivations. Epictetus specifies that "body, property, reputation, office, and, in one word, whatever are not properly our own affairs" are beyond our power (Epictetus, *The Enchiridion* Ch. 1). An individual cannot control the DNA and genes they are born with, and thus the body is categorized as something humans have limited control over. In the context of drug addiction, the body is particularly important. Drug addiction is a unique unjust act due to its

genetic component; genetics are directly correlated with the likelihood that a person will develop a drug addiction.

This idea of control is especially important when considering the many ways drug addiction can begin. While most do not take a drug to become addicted, there are varying levels of freedom in choosing to take the initial drug. Whether due to ignorance or necessity, a person's reaction after taking the drug for the first time relies on a genetic component that is out of their control; while one person may feel fine after taking prescribed painkillers and never develop an addiction, someone with a genetic predisposition towards drug addiction may be much more affected by this. Genetics are outside of an individual's realm of control, which only adds to the relevant role which freedom plays in the context of drug addiction.

A contemporary example of this Stoic idea of control comes from the founders of Alcoholic Anonymous. The First Step of the Alcoholics Anonymous program is to admit their powerlessness over alcohol. However, there is a common misconception of the AA notion of powerlessness. The nature of the addict's powerlessness is analogous to an allergy. Someone with a seafood allergy would say 'of course I am powerless over this allergy,' and this is similar to addiction. For drugs, "it is a bio-chemical process unfolding in your brain and body, interacting at the level of genes, organs, organism, and environment that the addicted - and non-addicted alike - have limited ability to control once drugs or alcohol enter their system" (Vecchiola). The Alcoholic Anonymous founders "identified that they had limited control over their bodies, but realized that there is freedom once they gave up attempting to control the uncontrollable" (Vecchiola). The characteristics of an individual's genetics — the body which Epictetus asserts as something that is beyond our control — adds another level to the role of

freedom and control for a drug addict. There is a varying ability, however limited, to control oneself once the drug enters the individual's system. With a variety of ways for necessity or experimentation to turn into addiction, whether that be a painkiller prescription or a teenager succumbing to peer pressure at a party, people are often ignorant of the actual nature of drugs and drug addiction. While an individual's body and genetics predetermine much of their ability to control themselves once the drug has been introduced to the system, this addiction cycle continues to wreak havoc both biologically and psychologically too.

The process of addiction shows a change in opinion in the addict that is perpetuated by psychobiological factors that disrupt cognitive processes and an individual's decision-making faculties. The Stoic idea of dichotomy of control asserts that there are some things beyond the power of the individual, including the 'body.' Unlike other unjust acts, there is a genetic component of drug addiction that situates addiction within the 'body' category, which thereby implies a lack of control and hindrance of freedom in respect to drug addiction.

V. Consequences

After creating a philosophical foundation for establishing drug addiction as a unique unjust act, it is essential to look at the consequences of drug addiction with a unique lens as well. This paper advocates for a two-pronged approach for addressing drug addiction with an emphasis on empathy and education as preventative measures and alternative/concurrent punishments. Marcus Aurelius' *The Meditations* underscores the Stoic emphasis on both empathy and education. In Plato's *Protagoras*, Socrates investigates the relationship between education and virtue to assert that virtue, and thereby justice, can be taught. *Gorgias* demonstrates Plato's philosophies on punishment and the importance of justice in punishments. These analyses of Stoic and Platonic philosophies further reiterate drug addiction as a unique unjust act, and empathetic education and just consequences are important in considering both preventative measures for drug addiction and alternative/concurrent methods of punishment for drug addicts.

Stoic Foundation in Empathetic Education

Stoic philosophy does not advocate for an abandonment of emotions but rather believes that "once a person learns to care intensely about honesty, courage, and compassion, and only provisionally about their income or their reputation or even how long they live, then the emotions, too, fall into line" (Graver). It is through education and learning to care about the correct values that an individual's emotions fall into line and help propagate a good ordering of the mind. Aurelius prioritizes an empathetic approach, as "every rational animal is his kinsman, and that to care for all men is according to man's nature" (Aurelius, *The Meditations* Book 3).

Aurelius emphasizes that philosophy helps to guide a person and accept what happens, showing the importance of education in living in accordance with the right principles.

Marcus Aurelius' *The Meditations* constructs an empathetic and educative outlook on life in part by emphasizing the social aspect of humanity. Aurelius argues that the "prime principle then in man's constitution is the social" (Aurelius, *The Meditations* Book 7). Aurelius looks at the social nature of humans by comparing their social system with a tree; "a branch cut off from the adjacent branch must of necessity be cut off from the whole tree also. So too a man when he is separated from another man has fallen off from the whole social community" (Aurelius, *The Meditations* Book 11). However, unlike a tree that can never re-graft the broken branch, man has it "in our power to grow again to that which is near to us, and be to come a part which helps to make up the whole" (Aurelius, *The Meditations* Book 11). It is through education and empathy that those who have fallen away are able to connect back with the social system.

Aurelius says to "be not disgusted, nor discouraged, nor dissatisfied, if thou dost not succeed in doing everything according to right principles; but when thou hast failed, return back again" (Aurelius, *The Meditations* Book 5). He thinks that when an individual has failed, they must try again; they must educate themselves when they make a mistake. Philosophy and education act as a medicine in helping an individual continue their quest in living by the right principles. Aurelius encourages that "[i]f thou art able, correct by teaching those who do wrong" (Aurelius, *The Meditations* Book 9). He urges that "[i]f a man is mistaken, instruct him kindly and show him his error" (Aurelius, *The Meditations* Book 10). Not only is learning and educating the best path to help those who do wrong, but Aurelius also places a strong emphasis on empathy.

This strong preference for empathetic education highlights Aurelius' opposition to anger-driven retribution, and he addresses the issue in Book 5 of the *Meditations*. He asks "Art thou angry with him whose armpits stink? Art thou angry with him whose mouth smells foul?" (Aurelius, *The Meditations* Book 5). Since the individual has reason, and "he is able, if he takes pain, to discover wherein he offends" and that "I wish thee well of thy discovery" (Aurelius, *The Meditations* Book 5). Instead of being angry with a person, an individual should instead use "thy rational faculty [to] stir up his rational faculty; show him his error, admonish him...there is no need of anger" (Aurelius, *The Meditations* Book 5). Instead of being angry with an offending individual, Aurelius emphasizes the importance of helping them use their rationality and reason and show them their error. By choosing to educate a person who is capable of reason, there is no need for anger. Due to drug addiction's genetic and psychological impacts, there is an interference in the addict's use of rational faculties. This necessitates an even greater emphasis on rehabilitative education for drug addiction.

As previously discussed, many people who use drugs are not completely aware of the negative impacts the addiction has on all aspects of their life, and education could help to restore the addict's free use of their rational faculties. Not only does education play a key role in bolstering rehabilitative measures for drug addicts, but it is also important as a preventative measure. As explored in the study previously discussed which compared training methods used to prevent drug addiction in high school students, there was a shockingly low number of high school students — both those who used drugs and those who did not use drugs — that believed they had strong knowledge about drugs. Drug addiction can be better prevented through education about impacts of addiction, specifically aimed at adolescents.

Aurelius writes more about punishment and consequences in Book 7. He encourages that “When a man has done thee any wrong, immediately consider with what opinion about good or evil he has done wrong. For when thou hast seen this, thou wilt pity him, and wilt neither wonder nor be angry” (Aurelius, *The Meditations* Book 7). Aurelius prioritizes considering the mind of the person who is wronging him and how their mind is judging good and evil. For drug addicts, the opinion of good or evil as determined by their rational faculties is skewed. Aurelius makes the claim that “if thou art pained by any external thing, it is not this thing that disturbs thee, but thy own judgment about it” (Aurelius, *The Meditations* Book 8). In order to no longer be pained about this thing, it is imperative that one must change their judgment about it, and it is through education that individuals are able to do so. Aurelius argues that “in all cases it is possible for thee to correct by teaching the man who is gone astray; for every man who errs misses his object and is gone astray” (Aurelius, *The Meditations* Book 9). Because of drug addiction’s unique nature, the addicts’ change in opinion is manipulated by genetic, psychological, and biological obstacles, and their judgment is faulty. Since drug addiction directly impedes on the ruling faculty of an individual, there is even more reason to take an empathetic and educative approach in dealing with drug addiction; considering the relationship between genetic, biological, and psychological factors and drug addiction, empathy is especially important in the context of drug addiction as an unjust act.

Aurelius asserts that “[m]en exist for the sake of one another. Teach them then or bear with them” (Aurelius, *The Meditations* Book 8). Humans are social beings who should show empathy for one another and prioritize educating one another to help each other stay on the right path. This is especially true in the context of drug addiction, since it is so unique as an unjust act;

specifically, drug addiction is an unjust act that is characterized by a general ignorance pertaining to its true impacts. Not only are the people who are at risk of developing a drug addiction ignorant, but drug addicts themselves are also often ignorant of the extensive impacts of drug addictions. Thereby, preventative measures against drug addiction and alternative/concurrent consequences for drug addicts should be framed by empathy and education.

Platonic Punishment and Education

A distinct part of drug addiction is the role of education because “education remains a crucial way to prevent people from becoming addicted” (Altman, 337). Within the context of all unjust acts, education is an important and effective part of preventing drug addiction. Since education is the best way to prevent the process of drug addiction from starting or continuing, the question of teaching virtue is significant. In *Protagoras*, Plato investigates whether virtue can be taught. While he is initially inclined to claim that virtue cannot be taught, but by the end of the text, he is “arguing the very opposite” (Plato, *Protagoras*, 789). Through his discussion of the cowardly and the courageous, Plato asserts that ignorance is vice.

Socrates argues that “no one goes willingly toward the bad or what he believes to be bad” (Plato, *Protagoras*, 787). It is not in human nature to go towards what an individual believes to be bad. A person that does something bad has allowed themselves to be misguided by temptation. For drug addiction, this means that the addicts choose to do something bad — take drugs — because they have been manipulated into believing that taking the drug is the good course of action.

There are many unjust acts that fit into the category of being misguided by temptation: for example, robbers becoming misguided by the temptation of getting money. However, for drug addiction, it is not merely an external temptation that manipulates the addict to continue the cycle of addiction and taking the drug. Because of the psychological, biological, and genetic bases of drug addiction, there is an internal component of this specific temptation that other unjust acts do not have. This misguidance by temptation emphasizes the general relationship of ignorance and vice. Socrates develops the relationship between ignorance and vice by examining the difference between the cowardly and the courageous. He claims that “what the cowardly go toward is completely opposite to what the courageous go toward” (Plato, *Protagoras*, 788). The courageous go toward the honorable, and “all honorable actions were good” (Plato, *Protagoras*, 788). Contrarily, the cowardly “are not willing to go toward the more honorable, the better, and more pleasant” (Plato, *Protagoras*, 788). So, the fear of the courageous is not disgraceful, while the fear of the cowardly is disgraceful. Socrates asserts that cowardice is not fearing what should be feared, and fearing other things that should not be feared. Cowards are “shown to be so through their ignorance of what is to be feared” (Plato, *Protagoras*, 789). Thus, the cowardly are not “disgraceful and bad for any reason other than ignorance and stupidity” (Plato, *Protagoras*, 789). Because an individual is ignorant of what is good, they act in ways that are bad. This final claim that the cause of an individual’s bad action is ignorance is significant to the ideas of both freedom and education in the realm of drug addiction.

Plato’s investigation of the courageous and cowardly is useful in the context of drug addiction by showing the basis of an unjust action — ignorance. The drug addict is ignorant of what the good is (not taking the drug). However, there is not only an ignorance which obfuscates

the addict's perceptions because of its unique nature. The drug addict is at the mercy of the ever stronger addiction cycle, genetic predispositions, and psychological interruptions. Thereby, the drug addict struggles not only with ignorance of the good, but also must deal with an impediment on their rational ability to make freely chosen actions. The drug addict is plagued by both an external temptation based in their ignorance of the good path, as well as an internal manipulation: the drug's effects on the use of their rational faculties.

He also concludes that knowledge is virtue, and that "everything is knowledge — justice, temperance, courage — in which case, virtue would appear to be eminently teachable" (Plato, *Protagoras*, 789). If virtue is knowledge, then it can be taught and discussed as a part of education. An article by Thomas Bobalik's helps showcase the role of education in Platonic philosophy. To show the relationship between education and virtue, Bobalik describes how Plato's *Republic* "places a great emphasis upon education...[and] hoped that if the educational system is correctly maintained, then the populace will then lead lives of virtue" (Bobalik, 13). The only path to virtue is the pursuit of knowledge, and with proper education, especially for those suffering from drug addiction, people can live virtuous lives.

Drug addiction is an involuntary act: people that use a drug for the first time are not trying to become addicted. Education is especially effective in preventing the process of drug addiction because of addiction's unique characteristics: a multitude of risk factors and misinformation about drug addiction combined with a cyclical process that becomes stronger with time. Education has crucial ties with the numerous timely concepts, and due to the importance of education in preventing the process of drug addiction, a discussion of the

relationship between education, knowledge, and justice is needed to determine the appropriate consequences for drug addiction.

One of the most controversial parts of drug addiction is deciding appropriate consequences. The addict “who is dominated by appetite does not act freely in Plato’s terms, but his condition still calls for treatment” (Stalley, 153). Each political entity offers different variations of consequences for drug addicts, but these consequences usually manifest as legal repercussions with little emphasis on rehabilitation. Consequences like jail time and heavy fines, which have no emphasis on education, are considered retributive. Rehabilitative treatments that emphasize education are the most appropriate course of action in the context of drug addiction. Plato “emphatically rejects retributive theories of punishment” and, because of the significance of education and the unique characteristics of addiction that emphasize a lack of freedom, this would be especially true in the case of drug addiction (Stalley, 153).

Plato’s philosophies on punishment can be seen in the conversation between Socrates and Polus in *Gorgias*. Between committing injustice and suffering from injustice, Socrates believes that “because it surpasses it in badness, doing what’s unjust would be worse than suffering it” (Plato, *Gorgias*, 819). For someone who has committed an injustice, they have two options: they can accept a just punishment for their injustice or they can escape this punishment. Socrates thinks that accepting the just punishment is better than escaping the punishment because “in whatever way the thing acting upon something acts upon it, the thing acted upon is acted upon in just that way” (Plato, *Gorgias*, 821). If the punishment for committing an unjust act is just, then it would be justice acting upon the criminal, and justice is always good. A just punishment will help the person who committed an unjust act to get rid of the ‘disease’ that the

unjust act left in that person; “paying what’s due [is] getting rid of the worst thing there is, corruption” (Plato, *Gorgias*, 823). The best way to get rid of corruption is to gain virtue, and virtue can be gained through education. One study found that “there is no statistically significant relationship between state drug offender imprisonment rates and three measures of state drug problems: rates of illicit drug use, drug overdose deaths, and drug arrests” (Gelb). Thus, incarceration with no foundation in education does not properly address the problems of drug addiction.

V. Conclusion

Drug addiction is scientifically and philosophically unique in the context of injustice and criminal acts. Drug addiction embodies multiple distinct characteristics, including genetic risk factors and psychological biological factors, such as neural adaptations and effects on the brain's reinforcement system. The process of drug addiction is not only cyclical but becomes stronger with continued use. Due to neural adaptations such as tolerance and withdrawal, an addict continues to use increasing amounts of the drug in order to achieve the same positive reinforcement as before. Drug addiction is also characterized by a general lack of public knowledge, with many individuals and drug addicts themselves remaining unaware of the actual impacts that drug addiction has on their lives.

To label drug addiction as a unique unjust act in the philosophical context, I investigate the nature of justice and just acts. Shown in my analysis of *The Republic*, Plato argues that justice is something that all people should strive for both for its own sake and for the sake of its consequences. He shows this by proving that the tyrannical man — the most unjust man — is also the most miserable and lives as a slave. Since people should strive to commit just acts, I analyze *Gorgias* to examine the role of freedom, human nature and the reasons people act the way they do and commit unjust acts; human nature dictates that people always choose what they deem is best, even if this opinion is not actually what is best. Drug addicts experience less freedom than other individuals because of their irrational disconnect between desires and the psychobiological impacts of the drug addiction cycle. Drug addiction is shown to be unique in the context of Platonic philosophies because of the drug addicts' limited freedom and power.

This paper's investigation of Stoic philosophy highlights the effects of ignorance on individuals, the nature of bad acts, and the relationship between human nature and bad acts. Aurelius' philosophies display drug addiction as unique as an unjust act through his analysis of acts committed due to internal reasons versus acts committed due to external reasons. Drug addiction motivates actions both through internal and external manipulation. Drug addiction also acts as a hinderance on the good ordering of the mind by inhibiting the freedom of the individual to use their rational faculties and skewing the addicts' perceptions, and it causes a change in opinion within the addict due to addiction's psychobiological aspects and ever strengthening cyclical processes. In terms of control, drug addicts experience less due to the impact of genetics; since the body is outside of the control of the individual, the genetic factors of drug addiction are out of the control of the individual.

This paper establishes drug addiction as a philosophically unique unjust act and compels us to reexamine the consequences of drug addiction in a unique manner. Education is an important tool both in terms of preventative measures for drug addiction and alternative/concurrent consequences for drug addicts. Aurelius' Stoic philosophies highlight ignorance as the core of unjust acts, prioritize the social aspect of humanity, and emphasize empathy towards other humans. Through analyzing *Protagoras*, Platonic philosophy highlights that ignorance is the source of all vice, with knowledge as the source of all virtue, and claims that knowledge, and thereby virtue, is capable of being taught. Plato's thoughts on punishment and justice are showcased in *Gorgias*, in which he further emphasizes the importance of justice even in punishment. He claims that the best way to get rid of corruption is to gain virtue, which can be

gained through education. These philosophies emphasize the importance of justice, empathy, and education, all of which are especially important in the context of drug addiction.

Thus, this paper connects contemporary thought and science on drug addiction with ancient philosophical concepts, such as freedom and justice, to establish drug addiction as a unique unjust act. Because of its distinctiveness, the epidemic of drug addiction should be addressed with an approach that is characterized by empathy and education. The philosophical basis offered in this paper provides a defense for the modern-day emphasis on a two-pronged approach to drug addiction: education as a preventative measure for drug addiction and educative rehabilitation as a necessary part of the consequences for drug addicts.

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