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THE IMMORALIST POSITION

The text of the *Republic* begins with Socrates interrogating Cephalus and his son Polemachus about the nature of justice. Neither is capable of providing Socrates with an adequate definition of justice. Just when we begin to think that there is no one in the dialogue who is capable of intellectually standing up to Socrates, Thrasymachus boisterously bursts onto the scene. Who is this Thrasymachus guy anyway?

He is a well-known Sophist, a teacher of Rhetoric. Rhetoric is the art and science of persuasion; and since oratory was extremely useful in negotiating trade opportunities or for suing or defending oneself before the juries in Democratic Athens, rhetoric was a sought-after skill. Socrates' own students went on to make great fortunes in the polis, which was something Xanthippe, his wife, resented because Socrates remained poor and took no fees for his instruction. He distinguished philosophy from sophistry because the philosopher sacrificed everything, including eloquence, for the truth; whereas, he charged, the sophist sacrificed the truth for eloquence and for persuasive effectiveness. This charge is often leveled against the legal and the advertising professions (both involved in persuasion) and sophistry has a negative connotation today.

Thrasymachus presents himself as annoyed with the give and take inconclusiveness of the dialogue between Socrates and Polemarchus. He demands an answer from Socrates and a grandiloquently persuasive speech in favor of the answer.

JUSTICE AS THE ADVANTAGE OF THE STRONGEST [338C-343A]

Socrates turns over the floor to Thrasymachus who professes that justice is

the advantage of the strongest (338c). By this he means that, from place to place, different political regimes rule: tyranny, aristocracy, and democracy, for example. Whoever is in power (the strongest) makes the laws and invariably they make the laws to their own financial and political advantage. Thus just rulers rule to the benefit of the strongest, namely themselves.

Socrates first tries to use the same tactics with Thrasymachus' definition of justice that he used against Polemarchus and Cephalus. He suggests that the definition is too broad. If justice is what the strongest want then what happens when the ruler makes a mistake and orders something that is not really in his interest? If justice is doing what pleases the ruler then how can it be just when he inadvertently pleases others to his own detriment? Unlike Polemarchus and Cephalus who give up their arguments after the Socratic critique, Thrasymachus is a professional rhetorician who is used to theoretical debates.

Dismissing one of the suggestions from the audience that justice is really the raw power of the ruler to enforce his will whether the ruler occasionally errs or not, Thrasymachus insists on a technical definition of rule; namely, that rulers rule to their own advantage, but, if they act inadvertently against their own interest, they cease thereby to be a ruler. This is like saying that a cobbler who puts the heel of a shoe on backwards is not a true cobbler. Since there is no clear winner yet, Socrates tries a different tack using the Craft analogy.

Socrates counters that Statecraft or rule is like any other craft and the practitioners of any craft conduct that craft in the interest of and to the benefit of the weakest, namely their clients or customers. Physicians rule over and have authority over medicine. Between the physician and the patient, the physician is the stronger, since she has expertise and is not sick and the patient is the weaker, since he is both ignorant and sick. But the *telos* of the physician is to dispense medicine and the good of the art is the cure. The benefit, however, goes to the weaker since the patient is cured, not the physician. So in medicine the authority rules for the benefit of the weaker.

So too, if Statecraft is a craft, what is proper for the ruler is to act in the interest and to the advantage of the weakest, namely the citizens. Out of the need and the desire of the people for law and order, coordination and leadership, so that they might achieve the *telos* of their specific crafts, the ruler emerges with the expertise, strength and authority to act in the interests of each and every citizen. If rule is like any craft, then this is ideal rule. Justice is rule in the interest of the citizens.

Thrasymachus then proceeds to insult Socrates, claiming that Socrates' wet-nurse never taught him the difference between a shepherd and a sheep. Shepherds watch their flocks not for the sake of the sheep but so the sheep can be fleeced and slaughtered for his profit. So too, the relation of Ruler and citizens is that of shepherd and sheep. The citizens are like sheep to

be fleeced and slaughtered for the benefit and profit of the ruler. Socrates counters by dividing the crafts of the profit-maker from that of other craft-persons like the physician. The craft of profit-making is indeed self-interested. But that craft must not be confused with that of the physician. The physician is a physician only if she cures patients. The benefit goes to the patient. Indeed the physician would only be paid if she effectively cured patients, that is, only if she achieved the advantage of the weakest. Similarly, the shepherd as shepherd must seek the advantage of the sheep, must watch them carefully, keep them from wolves, search for the stray and bring it back to the fold. If and only if the shepherd is a good shepherd does he deserve his pay. Thus the just ruler is to be compensated only if none of the advantage of the rule goes to him and all of the ruling efforts are to the advantage of the people. (Socrates need not point out that the patients or citizens have higher values than sheep.)

Socrates asks if Rulers rule ambitiously or reluctantly. Thrasymachus, contemplating the spoils of tyranny, suggests that rulers rule avidly. Socrates, in keeping with his notion of just rule, suggests that since none of the advantage of rule goes to the rulers, people would have to be given incentives to take on the burden of the public trust. However, the best rulers would be those who find the incentives of pay or honors distasteful. The best could be enticed to rule only to avoid the penalty of being ruled by people who are worse than they, that is, to avoid being ruled by unjust people, people who are worse in character than they.

JUSTICE AS ANOTHER'S GOOD [343B-344D]

At this point, Thrasymachus drops the pretense of seeking to define justice, and now claims that, although justice is virtuous and beneficial to others, no intelligent person would adopt it because of the superior advantages of the unjust life, especially in the political arena. This position is called “immoralism,” the forthright defense of immorality as the most prudent course for a life to take. Note that Socrates is able to get Thrasymachus to admit that in accord with the ordinary conventions of the day, justice is categorized among the virtues and not the vices. This admission will come back to haunt Thrasymachus later in Book I.

Thrasymachus, in a speech demonstrative of his rhetorical prowess, praises the tyrant who is unjust in a grand way. Such a man will pay far fewer taxes than the just man, receive far more benefits from contracts than the honest dupes who enter into them with him and will profit from influence peddling and the lavish gifts he is able to provide to his family and to the gods in the form of burnt offerings. Yes, the unjust man is the happiest of men.

SOCRATES: FINAL OBJECTIONS (344D-354C)

Socrates, telling Thrasymachus that he has challenged the whole conduct of living, takes up a defense of the just life:

The first argument against immoralism is a bit technical. We will follow our commentary with a more intuitively understandable version.

The just man is unwilling to get the better of another just man. The just man is willing to get the better of the unjust man. The unjust man is willing to get the better of the just man. However, the unjust man is willing to get the better of the unjust man as well. The just man does not get the better of the like, but of the unlike; whereas the unjust man gets the better of the like and the unlike.

Now Socrates shows Thrasymachus that the latter (trying to get the better of the like and the unlike) is identifiable with imprudence and ignorance. A musician doesn't try to be better than another musician but only like them. To understand this one has to realize that Plato (and classical Greece in general) believes in an Ideal Form of musicianship to which all aspire. The idea of playing in an individualistic, unique or idiosyncratic manner would not be valued by Plato or his culture. The physician would not try to take advantage of the physician who is mentoring him (his like), but would only try to get the better of quacks, amateurs or inexperienced and opinionated patients. Anyone who tries to get the better of his own mentor as well as with the unlike (for example, non-musicians or non-physicians) would truly be unwise and ignorant. So the just man is like the wise and the good, but the unjust man is bad and ignorant.

The validity of this argument rests on the very loose and ambiguous definition of "like" and "unlike." It could easily fall to the objection that the terms are used in an equivocal fashion. Although Thrasymachus is caught blushing over his inability to counter Socrates' line of reasoning, this only shows his ineptitude as a debater.

A simpler version of the first argument might run as follows: To achieve knowledge of a *techné* or craft and to master the requisite skills, one must follow the direction and instruction of a mentor. One must imitate the behavior of one who has the excellence of the craft. This is the way to become like him to gain the specific excellence (*arête*) of the craft. One doesn't take short cuts, deceive, cheat or lie to the instructor. The attempt to take advantage of the like results in abject failing to learn the art. The unjust are terrible learners and this cannot be advantageous to them.

The just man does not try to get the better of other just men, but rather of unjust men who are his opposites in character. By contrast, unjust men try to get the better of both just and unjust men. The just person then follows the pattern of all craftpersons. The excellent craftperson does not try to take advantage of those who are members of his or her craft or guild but

tries only to excel over amateurs.

Thrasymachus is embarrassed to find himself agreeing that justice is a human virtue. In fact, the just person's reluctance to cheat or dissemble and her willingness to cooperate with mentors allows the just person to achieve excellence in a chosen craft; whereas the consistent cheater wallows in ignorance and can only pretend at mastery.

Against Thrasymachus's contention that the most powerful city will be the most completely unjust, Socrates argues that any common course of action requires those who are engaged in it to observe justice to some degree in their dealings among themselves, for otherwise there will be dissension among them and they will accomplish nothing. Only the just cooperate, and only those who cooperate accomplish anything. Even to pull off a bank robbery, thieves must cooperate. There must be honor among thieves. But thieves tear down the accomplishments of others; and rival gangs of thieves tear each other down. Only those who are both honest and cooperate produce the accomplishments that are ample and long lasting. "For surely Thrasymachus, it's injustice that produces factions, hatreds, and quarrels among themselves, and justice that produces unanimity and friendship. Isn't it so?" (251d)?

Unjust rulers will rule a city that is unjust to its allies and neighboring nations. These will seek advantage over the citizens who will form factions; then intrigue and civil war will prevent the city from accomplishing anything. The unjust ruler will be deceitful and calculating with his closest advisors. They will turn on each other. Even within a person, when discord breaks out between one's passions and one's practical reason, a person won't stick to his or her craft and won't be able to act productively; he/she will accomplish nothing. Thus injustice is not mighty in a productive sense; it is mightily destructive. It undermines all collective enterprises, all friendship and partnerships; and injustice within a person, that is, when reason is overcome by passions such as lust, greed, or hatred, leads to a situation in which the person is either unable to accomplish anything or is destroyed.

Since Thrasymachus has admitted that justice is virtue, Socrates uses that admission to crown his argument. A virtue is the specific excellence of a craft. It is the power to achieve the purpose or goal of a craft, its *telos*. Justice is the virtue (*arête*) of the craft of life. The human soul has the goal or *telos* of flourishing life and the management of things. The *arête* or virtue of justice is the specific excellence of the human soul; it is that which allows each life to flourish, to manage well oneself and social life. Justice allows practical reason to guide human appetites and passions. It allows us to remain loyal and faithful to friends. It allows us to keep the public promises we make as craftpersons and professionals to provide a service or product to our customers and clients. A city with just rulers who serve

in the interests of the citizens accomplishes greatness as a city. Moreover a city that keeps faith with its allies accomplishes greatness as a city. The human soul cannot flourish without justice any more than the body can flourish without health. Thus a person cannot be happy without justice. The unjust person will be wretched (the opposite of flourishing humanity, perhaps “withered,” “lacking maturity,” “unruly”). It is not profitable to be wretched, or to become wretched as a human being; but it is profitable to be happy and to flourish humanly. Therefore, injustice is never more profitable than justice.

CONCLUSION

Socrates is pleased that Thrasymachus has been tamed and quieted by his arguments, but ultimately he has to admit dissatisfaction with the discussion. In his zeal to defend the advantages of the just life, he plumb forgot to find a definition for justice. How can he recommend the just life if he doesn't know what justice is? So ends, inconclusively, Book I of the *Republic*.

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REPUBLIC 1.336B-354C

INTRODUCING TRASYMACHUS [336B-338C]

336 Several times in the course of the discussion Thrasymachus had
 b made an attempt to get the argument into his own hands, and had
 been put down by the rest of the company, who wanted to hear the
 end. But when Polemarchus and I had done speaking and there was a
 pause, he could no longer hold his peace; and, gathering himself up,
 he came at us like a wild beast, seeking to devour us. We were quite
 panic-stricken at the sight of him.

c He roared out to the whole company: What folly, Socrates, has
 taken possession of you all? And why, sillybillies, do you knock
 under to one another? I say that if you want really to know what jus-
 tice is, you should not only ask but answer, and you should not seek
 honour to yourself from the refutation of an opponent, but have your
 own answer; for there is many a one who can ask and cannot answer.
 d And now I will not have you say that justice is duty or advantage or
 profit or gain or interest, for this sort of nonsense will not do for me;
 I must have clearness and accuracy.

I was panic-stricken at his words, and could not look at him with-
 out trembling. Indeed I believe that if I had not fixed my eye upon
 him, I should have been struck dumb: but when I saw his fury rising,
 I looked at him first, and was therefore able to reply to him.

e Thrasymachus, I said, with a quiver, don't be hard upon us. Po-
 lemarchus and I may have been guilty of a little mistake in the argu-
 ment, but I can assure you that the error was not intentional. If we
 were seeking for a piece of gold, you would not imagine that we
 were 'knocking under to one another,' and so losing our chance of
 finding it. And why, when we are seeking for justice, a thing more
 precious than many pieces of gold, do you say that we are weakly
 yielding to one another and not doing our utmost to get at the truth?
 Nay, my good friend, we are most willing and anxious to do so, but
 the fact is that we cannot. And if so, you people who know all things
 should pity us and not be angry with us.

337 How characteristic of Socrates! he replied, with a bitter laugh;—
 that's your ironical style! Did I not foresee—have I not already told
 you, that whatever he was asked he would refuse to answer, and try
 irony or any other shuffle, in order that he might avoid answering?

You are a philosopher, Thrasymachus, I replied, and well know
 that if you ask a person what numbers make up twelve, taking care

to prohibit him whom you ask from answering twice six, or three times four, or six times two, or four times three, ‘for this sort of nonsense will not do for me,’—then obviously, if that is your way of putting the question, no one can answer you. But suppose that he were to retort, ‘Thrasymachus, what do you mean? If one of these numbers which you interdict be the true answer to the question, am I falsely to say some other number which is not the right one?—is that your meaning?’—How would you answer him?

Just as if the two cases were at all alike! he said.

Why should they not be? I replied; and even if they are not, but only appear to be so to the person who is asked, ought he not to say what he thinks, whether you and I forbid him or not?

I presume then that you are going to make one of the interdicted answers?

I dare say that I may, notwithstanding the danger, if upon reflection I approve of any of them.

But what if I give you an answer about justice other and better, he said, than any of these? What do you deserve to have done to you?

Done to me!—as becomes the ignorant, I must learn from the wise—that is what I deserve to have done to me.

What, and no payment! a pleasant notion!

I will pay when I have the money, I replied.

But you have, Socrates, said Glaucon: and you, Thrasymachus, need be under no anxiety about money, for we will all make a contribution for Socrates.

Yes, he replied, and then Socrates will do as he always does—refuse to answer himself, but take and pull to pieces the answer of some one else.

Why, my good friend, I said, how can any one answer who knows, and says that he knows, just nothing; and who, even if he has some faint notions of his own, is told by a man of authority not to utter them? The natural thing is, that the speaker should be some one like yourself who professes to know and can tell what he knows. Will you then kindly answer, for the edification of the company and of myself?

Glaucon and the rest of the company joined in my request, and Thrasymachus, as any one might see, was in reality eager to speak; for he thought that he had an excellent answer, and would distinguish himself. But at first he affected to insist on my answering; at length he consented to begin. Behold, he said, the wisdom of Socrates; he refuses to teach himself, and goes about learning of others, to whom he never even says Thank you.

That I learn of others, I replied, is quite true; but that I am ungrateful I wholly deny. Money I have none, and therefore I pay in praise, which is all I have; and how ready I am to praise any one

who appears to me to speak well you will very soon find out when you answer; for I expect that you will answer well.

JUSTICE AS THE ADVANTAGE OF THE STRONGER [338C-343A]

c Listen, then, he said; I proclaim that justice is nothing else than the interest of the stronger. And now why do you not praise me? But of course you won't.

Let me first understand you, I replied. Justice, as you say, is the interest of the stronger. What, Thrasymachus, is the meaning of this? You cannot mean to say that because Polydamas, the pancratiast, is stronger than we are, and finds the eating of beef conducive to his bodily strength, that to eat beef is therefore equally for our good who are weaker than he is, and right and just for us?

d That's abominable of you, Socrates; you take the words in the sense which is most damaging to the argument.

Not at all, my good sir, I said; I am trying to understand them; and I wish that you would be a little clearer.

Well, he said, have you never heard that forms of government differ; there are tyrannies, and there are democracies, and there are aristocracies?

Yes, I know.

And the government is the ruling power in each state?

Certainly.

e And the different forms of government make laws democratical, aristocratical, tyrannical, with a view to their several interests; and these laws, which are made by them for their own interests, are the justice which they deliver to their subjects, and him who transgresses them they punish as a breaker of the law, and unjust. And that is what I mean when I say that in all states there is the same principle of justice, which is the interest of the government; and as
339 the government must be supposed to have power, the only reasonable conclusion is, that everywhere there is one principle of justice, which is the interest of the stronger.

OBJECTION: RULER'S ERRORS [339A-341A]

Now I understand you, I said; and whether you are right or not I will try to discover. But let me remark, that in defining justice you have yourself used the word 'interest' which you forbade me to use. It is true, however, that in your definition the words 'of the stronger' are added.

b A small addition, you must allow, he said.

Great or small, never mind about that: we must first enquire whether what you are saying is the truth. Now we are both agreed

that justice is interest of some sort, but you go on to say ‘of the stronger’; about this addition I am not so sure, and must therefore consider further.

Proceed.

I will; and first tell me, Do you admit that it is just for subjects to obey their rulers?

I do.

But are the rulers of states absolutely infallible, or are they sometimes liable to err? c

To be sure, he replied, they are liable to err.

Then in making their laws they may sometimes make them rightly, and sometimes not?

True.

When they make them rightly, they make them agreeably to their interest; when they are mistaken, contrary to their interest; you admit that?

Yes.

And the laws which they make must be obeyed by their subjects,—and that is what you call justice?

Doubtless.

Then justice, according to your argument, is not only obedience to the interest of the stronger but the reverse? d

What is that you are saying? he asked.

I am only repeating what you are saying, I believe. But let us consider: Have we not admitted that the rulers may be mistaken about their own interest in what they command, and also that to obey them is justice? Has not that been admitted?

Yes.

Then you must also have acknowledged justice not to be for the interest of the stronger, when the rulers unintentionally command things to be done which are to their own injury. For if, as you say, justice is the obedience which the subject renders to their commands, in that case, O wisest of men, is there any escape from the conclusion that the weaker are commanded to do, not what is for the interest, but what is for the injury of the stronger? e

Nothing can be clearer, Socrates, said Polemarchus. 340

Yes, said Cleitophon, interposing, if you are allowed to be his witness.

But there is no need of any witness, said Polemarchus, for Thrasymachus himself acknowledges that rulers may sometimes command what is not for their own interest, and that for subjects to obey them is justice.

Yes, Polemarchus,—Thrasymachus said that for subjects to do what was commanded by their rulers is just.

Yes, Cleitophon, but he also said that justice is the interest of the stronger, and, while admitting both these propositions, he further b

acknowledged that the stronger may command the weaker who are his subjects to do what is not for his own interest; whence follows that justice is the injury quite as much as the interest of the stronger.

But, said Cleitophon, he meant by the interest of the stronger what the stronger thought to be his interest,—this was what the weaker had to do; and this was affirmed by him to be justice.

Those were not his words, rejoined Polemarchus.

Never mind, I replied, if he now says that they are, let us accept his statement. Tell me, Thrasymachus, I said, did you mean by justice what the stronger thought to be his interest, whether really so or not?

Certainly not, he said. Do you suppose that I call him who is mistaken the stronger at the time when he is mistaken?

Yes, I said, my impression was that you did so, when you admitted that the ruler was not infallible but might be sometimes mistaken.

You argue like an informer, Socrates. Do you mean, for example, that he who is mistaken about the sick is a physician in that he is mistaken? or that he who errs in arithmetic or grammar is an arithmetician or grammarian at the time when he is making the mistake, in respect of the mistake? True, we say that the physician or arithmetician or grammarian has made a mistake, but this is only a way of speaking; for the fact is that neither the grammarian nor any other person of skill ever makes a mistake in so far as he is what his name implies; they none of them err unless their skill fails them, and then they cease to be skilled artists. No artist or sage or ruler errs at the time when he is what his name implies; though he is commonly said to err, and I adopted the common mode of speaking. But to be perfectly accurate, since you are such a lover of accuracy, we should say that the ruler, in so far as he is a ruler, is unerring, and, being unerring, always commands that which is for his own interest; and the subject is required to execute his commands; and therefore, as I said at first and now repeat, justice is the interest of the stronger.

OBJECTION: THE OBJECT OF RULE [341A-342D]

Indeed, Thrasymachus, and do I really appear to you to argue like an informer?

Certainly, he replied.

And do you suppose that I ask these questions with any design of injuring you in the argument?

No, he replied, 'suppose' is not the word—I know it; but you will be found out, and by sheer force of argument you will never prevail.

I shall not make the attempt, my dear man; but to avoid any

misunderstanding occurring between us in future, let me ask, in what sense do you speak of a ruler or stronger whose interest, as you were saying, he being the superior, it is just that the inferior should execute—is he a ruler in the popular or in the strict sense of the term?

In the strictest of all senses, he said. And now cheat and play the informer if you can; I ask no quarter at your hands. But you never will be able, never.

And do you imagine, I said, that I am such a madman as to try and cheat, Thrasy-machus? I might as well shave a lion. c

Why, he said, you made the attempt a minute ago, and you failed.

Enough, I said, of these civilities. It will be better that I should ask you a question: Is the physician, taken in that strict sense of which you are speaking, a healer of the sick or a maker of money? And remember that I am now speaking of the true physician.

A healer of the sick, he replied.

And the pilot—that is to say, the true pilot—is he a captain of sailors or a mere sailor?

A captain of sailors.

The circumstance that he sails in the ship is not to be taken into account; neither is he to be called a sailor; the name pilot by which he is distinguished has nothing to do with sailing, but is significant of his skill and of his authority over the sailors. d

Very true, he said.

Now, I said, every art has an interest?

Certainly.

For which the art has to consider and provide?

Yes, that is the aim of art.

And the interest of any art is the perfection of it—this and nothing else?

What do you mean? e

I mean what I may illustrate negatively by the example of the body. Suppose you were to ask me whether the body is self-sufficient or has wants, I should reply: Certainly the body has wants; for the body may be ill and require to be cured, and has therefore interests to which the art of medicine ministers; and this is the origin and intention of medicine, as you will acknowledge. Am I not right?

Quite right, he replied.

But is the art of medicine or any other art faulty or deficient in any quality in the same way that the eye may be deficient in sight or the ear fail of hearing, and therefore requires another art to provide for the interests of seeing and hearing—has art in itself, I say, any similar liability to fault or defect, and does every art require another supplementary art to provide for its interests, and that another and another without end? Or have the arts to look only after 342

b their own interests? Or have they no need either of themselves or of another?—having no faults or defects, they have no need to correct them, either by the exercise of their own art or of any other; they have only to consider the interest of their subject-matter. For every art remains pure and faultless while remaining true—that is to say, while perfect and unimpaired. Take the words in your precise sense, and tell me whether I am not right.

Yes, clearly.

c Then medicine does not consider the interest of medicine, but the interest of the body?

True, he said.

Nor does the art of horsemanship consider the interests of the art of horsemanship, but the interests of the horse; neither do any other arts care for themselves, for they have no needs; they care only for that which is the subject of their art?

True, he said.

But surely, Thrasymachus, the arts are the superiors and rulers of their own subjects?

To this he assented with a good deal of reluctance.

Then, I said, no science or art considers or enjoins the interest of the stronger or superior, but only the interest of the subject and weaker?

d He made an attempt to contest this proposition also, but finally acquiesced.

Then, I continued, no physician, in so far as he is a physician, considers his own good in what he prescribes, but the good of his patient; for the true physician is also a ruler having the human body as a subject, and is not a mere money-maker; that has been admitted?

Yes.

And the pilot likewise, in the strict sense of the term, is a ruler of sailors and not a mere sailor?

e That has been admitted.

And such a pilot and ruler will provide and prescribe for the interest of the sailor who is under him, and not for his own or the ruler's interest?

He gave a reluctant 'Yes.'

Then, I said, Thrasymachus, there is no one in any rule who, in so far as he is a ruler, considers or enjoins what is for his own interest, but always what is for the interest of his subject or suitable to his art; to that he looks, and that alone he considers in everything which he says and does.

JUSTICE AS ANOTHER'S GOOD [343A-344D]

343 When we had got to this point in the argument, and every one saw

that the definition of justice had been completely upset, Thrasymachus, instead of replying to me, said: Tell me, Socrates, have you got a nurse?

Why do you ask such a question, I said, when you ought rather to be answering?

Because she leaves you to snivel, and never wipes your nose: she has not even taught you to know the shepherd from the sheep.

What makes you say that? I replied.

Because you fancy that the shepherd or neatherd fattens or tends the sheep or oxen with a view to their own good and not to the good of himself or his master; and you further imagine that the rulers of states, if they are true rulers, never think of their subjects as sheep, and that they are not studying their own advantage day and night. Oh, no; and so entirely astray are you in your ideas about the just and unjust as not even to know that justice and the just are in reality another's good; that is to say, the interest of the ruler and stronger, and the loss of the subject and servant; and injustice the opposite; for the unjust is lord over the truly simple and just: he is the stronger, and his subjects do what is for his interest, and minister to his happiness, which is very far from being their own. Consider further, most foolish Socrates, that the just is always a loser in comparison with the unjust. First of all, in private contracts: wherever the unjust is the partner of the just you will find that, when the partnership is dissolved, the unjust man has always more and the just less. Secondly, in their dealings with the State: when there is an income-tax, the just man will pay more and the unjust less on the same amount of income; and when there is anything to be received the one gains nothing and the other much. Observe also what happens when they take an office; there is the just man neglecting his affairs and perhaps suffering other losses, and getting nothing out of the public, because he is just; moreover he is hated by his friends and acquaintance for refusing to serve them in unlawful ways. But all this is reversed in the case of the unjust man. I am speaking, as before, of injustice on a large scale in which the advantage of the unjust is most apparent; and my meaning will be most clearly seen if we turn to that highest form of injustice in which the criminal is the happiest of men, and the sufferers or those who refuse to do injustice are the most miserable—that is to say tyranny, which by fraud and force takes away the property of others, not little by little but wholesale; comprehending in one, things sacred as well as profane, private and public; for which acts of wrong, if he were detected perpetrating any one of them singly, he would be punished and incur great disgrace—they who do such wrong in particular cases are called robbers of temples, and man-stealers and burglars and swindlers and thieves. But when a man besides taking away the money of the citizens has made slaves of them, then, instead of

c these names of reproach, he is termed happy and blessed, not only by the citizens but by all who hear of his having achieved the consummation of injustice. For mankind censure injustice, fearing that they may be the victims of it and not because they shrink from committing it. And thus, as I have shown, Socrates, injustice, when on a sufficient scale, has more strength and freedom and mastery than justice; and, as I said at first, justice is the interest of the stronger, whereas injustice is a man's own profit and interest.

OBJECTION: THE OBJECT OF RULING RECONSIDERED [344D-348B]

d Thrasymachus, when he had thus spoken, having, like a bath-man, deluged our ears with his words, had a mind to go away. But the company would not let him; they insisted that he should remain and defend his position; and I myself added my own humble request that he would not leave us. Thrasymachus, I said to him, excellent man, how suggestive are your remarks! And are you going to run away before you have fairly taught or learned whether they are true or not? Is the attempt to determine the way of man's life so small a matter in your eyes—to determine how life may be passed by each
e one of us to the greatest advantage?

And do I differ from you, he said, as to the importance of the enquiry?

You appear rather, I replied, to have no care or thought about us, Thrasymachus—whether we live better or worse from not knowing
345 what you say you know, is to you a matter of indifference. Please, friend, do not keep your knowledge to yourself; we are a large party; and any benefit which you confer upon us will be amply rewarded. For my own part I openly declare that I am not convinced, and that I do not believe injustice to be more gainful than justice, even if uncontrolled and allowed to have free play. For, granting that there may be an unjust man who is able to commit injustice either by fraud or force, still this does not convince me of the superior advantage of injustice, and there may be others who are in the same predicament with myself. Perhaps we may be wrong; if so, you in
b your wisdom should convince us that we are mistaken in preferring justice to injustice.

And how am I to convince you, he said, if you are not already convinced by what I have just said; what more can I do for you? Would you have me put the proof bodily into your souls?

Heaven forbid! I said; I would only ask you to be consistent; or, if you change, change openly and let there be no deception. For I
c must remark, Thrasymachus, if you will recall what was previously said, that although you began by defining the true physician in an exact sense, you did not observe a like exactness when speaking of

the shepherd; you thought that the shepherd as a shepherd tends the sheep not with a view to their own good, but like a mere diner or banquetter with a view to the pleasures of the table; or, again, as a trader for sale in the market, and not as a shepherd. Yet surely the art of the shepherd is concerned only with the good of his subjects; he has only to provide the best for them, since the perfection of the art is already ensured whenever all the requirements of it are satisfied. And that was what I was saying just now about the ruler. I conceived that the art of the ruler, considered as ruler, whether in a state or in private life, could only regard the good of his flock or subjects; whereas you seem to think that the rulers in states, that is to say, the true rulers, like being in authority.

Think! Nay, I am sure of it.

Then why in the case of lesser offices do men never take them willingly without payment, unless under the idea that they govern for the advantage not of themselves but of others? Let me ask you a question: Are not the several arts different, by reason of their each having a separate function? And, my dear illustrious friend, do say what you think, that we may make a little progress.

Yes, that is the difference, he replied.

And each art gives us a particular good and not merely a general one—medicine, for example, gives us health; navigation, safety at sea, and so on?

Yes, he said.

And the art of payment has the special function of giving pay: but we do not confuse this with other arts, any more than the art of the pilot is to be confused with the art of medicine, because the health of the pilot may be improved by a sea voyage. You would not be inclined to say, would you, that navigation is the art of medicine, at least if we are to adopt your exact use of language?

Certainly not.

Or because a man is in good health when he receives pay you would not say that the art of payment is medicine?

I should not.

Nor would you say that medicine is the art of receiving pay because a man takes fees when he is engaged in healing?

Certainly not.

And we have admitted, I said, that the good of each art is specially confined to the art?

Yes.

Then, if there be any good which all artists have in common, that is to be attributed to something of which they all have the common use?

True, he replied.

And when the artist is benefited by receiving pay the advantage is gained by an additional use of the art of pay, which is not the art

professed by him?

He gave a reluctant assent to this.

d Then the pay is not derived by the several artists from their respective arts. But the truth is, that while the art of medicine gives health, and the art of the builder builds a house, another art attends them which is the art of pay. The various arts may be doing their own business and benefiting that over which they preside, but would the artist receive any benefit from his art unless he were paid as well?

I suppose not.

e But does he therefore confer no benefit when he works for nothing?

Certainly, he confers a benefit.

Then now, Thrasymachus, there is no longer any doubt that neither arts nor governments provide for their own interests; but, as we were before saying, they rule and provide for the interests of their subjects who are the weaker and not the stronger—to their good they attend and not to the good of the superior. And this is the reason, my dear Thrasymachus, why, as I was just now saying, no one is willing to govern; because no one likes to take in hand the reformation of evils which are not his concern without remuneration. For, in the execution of his work, and in giving his orders to another, the true artist does not regard his own interest, but always that of his subjects; and therefore in order that rulers may be willing to rule, they must be paid in one of three modes of payment, money, or honour, or a penalty for refusing.

347

What do you mean, Socrates? said Glaucon. The first two modes of payment are intelligible enough, but what the penalty is I do not understand, or how a penalty can be a payment.

b You mean that you do not understand the nature of this payment which to the best men is the great inducement to rule? Of course you know that ambition and avarice are held to be, as indeed they are, a disgrace?

Very true.

And for this reason, I said, money and honour have no attraction for them; good men do not wish to be openly demanding payment for governing and so to get the name of hirelings, nor by secretly helping themselves out of the public revenues to get the name of thieves. And not being ambitious they do not care about honour. Wherefore necessity must be laid upon them, and they must be induced to serve from the fear of punishment. And this, as I imagine, is the reason why the forwardness to take office, instead of waiting to be compelled, has been deemed dishonourable. Now the worst part of the punishment is that he who refuses to rule is liable to be ruled by one who is worse than himself. And the fear of this, as I conceive, induces the good to take office, not because they would, but because they cannot help—not under the idea that they are go-

c

ing to have any benefit or enjoyment themselves, but as a necessity, and because they are not able to commit the task of ruling to any one who is better than themselves, or indeed as good. For there is reason to think that if a city were composed entirely of good men, then to avoid office would be as much an object of contention as to obtain office is at present; then we should have plain proof that the true ruler is not meant by nature to regard his own interest, but that of his subjects; and every one who knew this would choose rather to receive a benefit from another than to have the trouble of conferring one. So far am I from agreeing with Thrasymachus that justice is the interest of the stronger. This latter question need not be further discussed at present; but when Thrasymachus says that the life of the unjust is more advantageous than that of the just, his new statement appears to me to be of a far more serious character. Which of us has spoken truly? And which sort of life, Glaucon, do you prefer?

I for my part deem the life of the just to be the more advantageous, he answered.

Did you hear all the advantages of the unjust which Thrasymachus was rehearsing?

Yes, I heard him, he replied, but he has not convinced me.

Then shall we try to find some way of convincing him, if we can, that he is saying what is not true?

Most certainly, he replied.

OBJECTION: INJUSTICE AS IGNORANCE [348A-350D]

If, I said, he makes a set speech and we make another recounting all the advantages of being just, and he answers and we rejoin, there must be a numbering and measuring of the goods which are claimed on either side, and in the end we shall want judges to decide; but if we proceed in our enquiry as we lately did, by making admissions to one another, we shall unite the offices of judge and advocate in our own persons.

Very good, he said.

And which method do I understand you to prefer? I said.

That which you propose.

Well, then, Thrasymachus, I said, suppose you begin at the beginning and answer me. You say that perfect injustice is more gainful than perfect justice?

Yes, that is what I say, and I have given you my reasons.

And what is your view about them? Would you call one of them virtue and the other vice?

Certainly.

I suppose that you would call justice virtue and injustice vice?

What a charming notion! So likely too, seeing that I affirm in-

justice to be profitable and justice not.

What else then would you say?

The opposite, he replied.

And would you call justice vice?

No, I would rather say sublime simplicity.

d Then would you call injustice malignity?

No; I would rather say discretion.

And do the unjust appear to you to be wise and good?

Yes, he said; at any rate those of them who are able to be perfectly unjust, and who have the power of subduing states and nations; but perhaps you imagine me to be talking of cutpurses. Even this profession if undetected has advantages, though they are not to be compared with those of which I was just now speaking.

e I do not think that I misapprehend your meaning, Thrasymachus, I replied; but still I cannot hear without amazement that you class injustice with wisdom and virtue, and justice with the opposite.

Certainly I do so class them.

Now, I said, you are on more substantial and almost unanswerable ground; for if the injustice which you were maintaining to be profitable had been admitted by you as by others to be vice and deformity, an answer might have been given to you on received principles; but now I perceive that you will call injustice honourable and strong, and to the unjust you will attribute all the qualities which were attributed by us before to the just, seeing that you do not hesitate to rank injustice with wisdom and virtue.

You have guessed most infallibly, he replied.

Then I certainly ought not to shrink from going through with the argument so long as I have reason to think that you, Thrasymachus, are speaking your real mind; for I do believe that you are now in earnest and are not amusing yourself at our expense.

I may be in earnest or not, but what is that to you?—to refute the argument is your business.

b Very true, I said; that is what I have to do: But will you be so good as answer yet one more question? Does the just man try to gain any advantage over the just?

Far otherwise; if he did he would not be the simple amusing creature which he is.

And would he try to go beyond just action?

He would not.

And how would he regard the attempt to gain an advantage over the unjust; would that be considered by him as just or unjust?

He would think it just, and would try to gain the advantage; but he would not be able.

c Whether he would or would not be able, I said, is not to the point. My question is only whether the just man, while refusing to have more than another just man, would wish and claim to have

more than the unjust?

Yes, he would.

And what of the unjust—does he claim to have more than the just man and to do more than is just?

Of course, he said, for he claims to have more than all men.

And the unjust man will strive and struggle to obtain more than the unjust man or action, in order that he may have more than all?

True.

We may put the matter thus, I said—the just does not desire more than his like but more than his unlike, whereas the unjust desires more than both his like and his unlike? d

Nothing, he said, can be better than that statement.

And the unjust is good and wise, and the just is neither?

Good again, he said.

And is not the unjust like the wise and good and the just unlike them?

Of course, he said, he who is of a certain nature, is like those who are of a certain nature; he who is not, not.

Each of them, I said, is such as his like is?

Certainly, he replied.

Very good, Thrasymachus, I said; and now to take the case of the arts: you would admit that one man is a musician and another not a musician? e

Yes.

And which is wise and which is foolish?

Clearly the musician is wise, and he who is not a musician is foolish.

And he is good in as far as he is wise, and bad in as far as he is foolish?

Yes.

And you would say the same sort of thing of the physician?

Yes.

And do you think, my excellent friend, that a musician when he adjusts the lyre would desire or claim to exceed or go beyond a musician in the tightening and loosening the strings?

I do not think that he would.

But he would claim to exceed the non-musician?

Of course.

And what would you say of the physician? In prescribing meats and drinks would he wish to go beyond another physician or beyond the practice of medicine? 350

He would not.

But he would wish to go beyond the non-physician?

Yes.

And about knowledge and ignorance in general; see whether you think that any man who has knowledge ever would wish to

have the choice of saying or doing more than another man who has knowledge. Would he not rather say or do the same as his like in the same case?

That, I suppose, can hardly be denied.

And what of the ignorant? would he not desire to have more than either the knowing or the ignorant?

I dare say.

And the knowing is wise?

Yes.

And the wise is good?

True.

Then the wise and good will not desire to gain more than his like, but more than his unlike and opposite?

I suppose so.

Whereas the bad and ignorant will desire to gain more than both?

Yes.

But did we not say, Thrasymachus, that the unjust goes beyond both his like and unlike? Were not these your words?

They were.

And you also said that the just will not go beyond his like but his unlike?

Yes.

Then the just is like the wise and good, and the unjust like the evil and ignorant?

That is the inference.

And each of them is such as his like is?

That was admitted.

Then the just has turned out to be wise and good and the unjust evil and ignorant.

OBJECTION: JUSTICE AS COOPERATION [350D-352B]

Thrasymachus made all these admissions, not fluently, as I repeat them, but with extreme reluctance; it was a hot summer's day, and the perspiration poured from him in torrents; and then I saw what I had never seen before, Thrasymachus blushing. As we were now agreed that justice was virtue and wisdom, and injustice vice and ignorance, I proceeded to another point:

Well, I said, Thrasymachus, that matter is now settled; but were we not also saying that injustice had strength; do you remember?

Yes, I remember, he said, but do not suppose that I approve of what you are saying or have no answer; if however I were to answer, you would be quite certain to accuse me of haranguing; therefore either permit me to have my say out, or if you would rather ask, do so, and I will answer 'Very good,' as they say to story-telling old

women, and will nod 'Yes' and 'No.'

Certainly not, I said, if contrary to your real opinion.

Yes, he said, I will, to please you, since you will not let me speak. What else would you have?

Nothing in the world, I said; and if you are so disposed I will ask and you shall answer.

Proceed.

Then I will repeat the question which I asked before, in order that our examination of the relative nature of justice and injustice may be carried on regularly. A statement was made that injustice is stronger and more powerful than justice, but now justice, having been identified with wisdom and virtue, is easily shown to be stronger than injustice, if injustice is ignorance; this can no longer be questioned by any one. But I want to view the matter, Thrasymachus, in a different way: You would not deny that a state may be unjust and may be unjustly attempting to enslave other states, or may have already enslaved them, and may be holding many of them in subjection?

True, he replied; and I will add that the best and most perfectly unjust state will be most likely to do so.

I know, I said, that such was your position; but what I would further consider is, whether this power which is possessed by the superior state can exist or be exercised without justice or only with justice.

If you are right in your view, and justice is wisdom, then only with justice; but if I am right, then without justice.

I am delighted, Thrasymachus, to see you not only nodding assent and dissent, but making answers which are quite excellent.

That is out of civility to you, he replied.

You are very kind, I said; and would you have the goodness also to inform me, whether you think that a state, or an army, or a band of robbers and thieves, or any other gang of evil-doers could act at all if they injured one another?

No indeed, he said, they could not.

But if they abstained from injuring one another, then they might act together better?

Yes.

And this is because injustice creates divisions and hatreds and fighting, and justice imparts harmony and friendship; is not that true, Thrasymachus?

I agree, he said, because I do not wish to quarrel with you.

How good of you, I said; but I should like to know also whether injustice, having this tendency to arouse hatred, wherever existing, among slaves or among freemen, will not make them hate one another and set them at variance and render them incapable of common action?

Certainly.

And even if injustice be found in two only, will they not quarrel and fight, and become enemies to one another and to the just?

They will.

And suppose injustice abiding in a single person, would your wisdom say that she loses or that she retains her natural power?

Let us assume that she retains her power.

352 Yet is not the power which injustice exercises of such a nature that wherever she takes up her abode, whether in a city, in an army, in a family, or in any other body, that body is, to begin with, rendered incapable of united action by reason of sedition and distraction; and does it not become its own enemy and at variance with all that opposes it, and with the just? Is not this the case?

Yes, certainly.

And is not injustice equally fatal when existing in a single person; in the first place rendering him incapable of action because he is not at unity with himself, and in the second place making him an enemy to himself and the just? Is not that true, Thrasymachus?

Yes.

And O my friend, I said, surely the gods are just?

Granted that they are.

b But if so, the unjust will be the enemy of the gods, and the just will be their friend?

Feast away in triumph, and take your fill of the argument; I will not oppose you, lest I should displease the company.

OBJECTION: JUSTICE AS HAPPINESS [352B-354C]

c Well then, proceed with your answers, and let me have the remainder of my repast. For we have already shown that the just are clearly wiser and better and abler than the unjust, and that the unjust are incapable of common action; nay more, that to speak as we did of men who are evil acting at any time vigorously together, is not strictly true, for if they had been perfectly evil, they would have laid hands upon one another; but it is evident that there must have been some remnant of justice in them, which enabled them to combine; if there had not been they would have injured one another as well as their victims; they were but half-villains in their enterprises; for had they been whole villains, and utterly unjust, they would have been utterly incapable of action. That, as I believe, is the truth of the matter, and not what you said at first. But whether the just have a better and happier life than the unjust is a further question which we also proposed to consider. I think that they have, and for the reasons which I have given; but still I should like to examine further, for no light matter is at stake, nothing less than the rule of human life.

Proceed.

I will proceed by asking a question: Would you not say that a horse has some end?

I should. e

And the end or use of a horse or of anything would be that which could not be accomplished, or not so well accomplished, by any other thing?

I do not understand, he said.

Let me explain: Can you see, except with the eye?

Certainly not.

Or hear, except with the ear?

No.

These then may be truly said to be the ends of these organs?

They may.

But you can cut off a vine-branch with a dagger or with a chisel, 353
and in many other ways?

Of course.

And yet not so well as with a pruning-hook made for the purpose?

True.

May we not say that this is the end of a pruning-hook?

We may.

Then now I think you will have no difficulty in understanding my meaning when I asked the question whether the end of anything would be that which could not be accomplished, or not so well accomplished, by any other thing?

I understand your meaning, he said, and assent. b

And that to which an end is appointed has also an excellence? Need I ask again whether the eye has an end?

It has.

And has not the eye an excellence?

Yes.

And the ear has an end and an excellence also?

True.

And the same is true of all other things; they have each of them an end and a special excellence?

That is so.

Well, and can the eyes fulfil their end if they are wanting in their own proper excellence and have a defect instead? c

How can they, he said, if they are blind and cannot see?

You mean to say, if they have lost their proper excellence, which is sight; but I have not arrived at that point yet. I would rather ask the question more generally, and only enquire whether the things which fulfil their ends fulfil them by their own proper excellence, and fail of fulfilling them by their own defect?

Certainly, he replied.

I might say the same of the ears; when deprived of their own

proper excellence they cannot fulfil their end?

True.

d And the same observation will apply to all other things?

I agree.

Well; and has not the soul an end which nothing else can fulfil? for example, to superintend and command and deliberate and the like. Are not these functions proper to the soul, and can they rightly be assigned to any other?

To no other.

And is not life to be reckoned among the ends of the soul?

Assuredly, he said.

And has not the soul an excellence also?

Yes.

e And can she or can she not fulfil her own ends when deprived of that excellence?

She cannot.

Then an evil soul must necessarily be an evil ruler and superintendent, and the good soul a good ruler?

Yes, necessarily.

And we have admitted that justice is the excellence of the soul, and injustice the defect of the soul?

That has been admitted.

Then the just soul and the just man will live well, and the unjust man will live ill?

That is what your argument proves.

And he who lives well is blessed and happy, and he who lives ill the reverse of happy?

Certainly.

354 Then the just is happy, and the unjust miserable?

So be it.

But happiness and not misery is profitable.

Of course.

Then, my blessed Thrasymachus, injustice can never be more profitable than justice.

Let this, Socrates, he said, be your entertainment at the Bendideia.

b For which I am indeb'ted to you, I said, now that you have grown gentle towards me and have left off scolding. Nevertheless, I have not been well entertained; but that was my own fault and not yours. As an epicure snatches a taste of every dish which is successively brought to table, he not having allowed himself time to enjoy the one before, so have I gone from one subject to another without having discovered what I sought at first, the nature of justice. I left that enquiry and turned away to consider whether justice is virtue and wisdom or evil and folly; and when there arose a further question about the comparative advantages of justice and injustice,

I could not refrain from passing on to that. And the result of the whole discussion has been that I know nothing at all. For I know not what justice is, and therefore I am not likely to know whether it is or is not a virtue, nor can I say whether the just man is happy or unhappy. c