

***How does Polymarchus get into trouble?***

- 1) Polymarchus original thesis: *Justice is rendering to each person that person's due* (i.e., what you in some sense owe them)
- 2) Socrates question: what is it to render to a person what is due to him or her?
- 3) Polymarchus answer (*perhaps* based on the Greek poet Simonides): *you owe help and benefit to your friends and harm to your enemies*
- 4) What becomes apparent in the discussion that follows is that Polymarchus is unable to square this interpretation of what justice is with conventional ideas about the value of justice

### ***Reconstruction of Thrasymachus' view***

Thrasymachus slogan that *justice is the interest of the stronger party* can be unpacked or understood in terms of the following argument:

- 1) An action is called 'right' or 'wrong' depending on whether or not it is accord with prevailing social rules
- 2) The content of prevailing social rules is determined by those who hold social power
- 3) When those who hold prevailing social power shape prevailing social rules, they make rules which promote their own advantage at the expense of those who do not hold social power.

#### Conclusion from (1)-(3):

If you are not a member of the group that holds social power and you do what is right, you promote someone else's advantage at the expense of your own.

### ***How does Thrasymachus get into trouble?***

- 1) Socrates question: Can those in power – the “stronger party” – make a mistake and promulgate rules which in fact don’t promote their own interest at the advantage of others?
- 2) Thrasymachus answer: by definition someone who is making a mistake is not the “stronger party” because qua making a mistake he lacks skill (*techne* – a Greek word that can also be translated “art”)
  - He gives this answer because he doesn’t want to have to revise or qualify premiss (3) of the preceding argument
- 3) Consequence of Thrasymachus answer: by introducing the idea that those who rule do so by virtue of skill or art, Thrasymachus opens the door to a line of critical questions that proves his undoing
- 4) Thrasymachus *could* have answered Socrates’ question differently, and avoided “defeat”
  - He could have conceded that those in power occasionally make mistakes and create rules that don’t promote their interests
  - If he had qualified premiss (3) with “usually”, he would have to qualify his conclusion with “usually” – but that would leave him with a much stronger position that still challenges conventional views of the value of justice

## Reformulating the questions about justice

### A. The value of justice (*Republic*, ch. 5)

- 1) Three kinds of goods
  - valued for their own sake but not for their consequences
  - valued for their consequences but not for their own sake
  - valued for its own sake and for its consequences
- 2) Glaucon's story – justice as a compromise
  - Those who lack the power to seize the advantage and escape harm make a compact with one another neither to inflict harm nor to suffer it
  - They “make laws and covenants” with one another, and they call whatever the law prescribes right or just
  - Justice is accepted as a compromise and valued not as good in itself but for lack of power to do wrong
- 3) The ring of Gyges as illustrating the idea that justice is valued only for its rewards

### B. Varieties of justice (*Republic*, ch. 6)

- Just and unjust *actions* or *conduct*
- Just and unjust *persons*
- Just and unjust societies (or *poloi* - the plural of *polis*)

### C. The strategy of the *Republic*

- First try to understand justice “writ large” in the polis.
- Use justice in the polis as a clue to what it is for an individual to be just
- Finally, define just conduct as conduct that produces justice in individual persons (*Republic* iv, 444; Cornford, p. 128)

## The principles of social organization according to Plato

A. Socrates account of the *purpose* of human states or societies (*poloi*) – *Republic*, ch 6.

- 1) A state comes into existence “because no individual is self-sufficing; we all have many needs”
  - The idea is that by co-operating in the attainment of goals, we stand a better chance of satisfying our individual needs.
- 2) Compare this with the accounts given by Hobbes and by John Locke
  - For Hobbes, the purpose of “civil society” is to end the war of all against all – an account not unlike that of Glaucon’s
  - For Locke, its purpose is the protection of property against infringement by others

B. The division of labor

- 1) The principle of the division of labor: each person is “set free from all other occupations to do, at the right time, the one thing for which he (or she) is naturally fitted” (Cornford p. 57)
- 2) Socrates claim is that “more will be produced and the work will be more easily and better done” if the division of labor is followed than if it is not
- 3) From this, Socrates wants to infer that in a well-ordered society the principle of the division of labor will be followed

C. Two arguments for Socrates' claim about the fruits of the division of labor are very briefly sketched

- There are innate differences between human individuals which make them fit for different occupations. An individual who is innately fit for a given occupation will produce more products and better products than one who is not innately fit for that occupation.
- Those who are to perform certain work must be available at the time that the work needs to be done (e.g., harvest time). Time-sensitive availability is more readily achieved under the division of labor.

D. Consequences of applying the principle of the division of labor to an emerging society

- 1) Since there will be a need for the emerging polis to protect itself against enemies, division of labor dictates that there must be, in addition to artisans and trades-people, a special class of Guardians whose job is to protect the polis against those who would attack it
- 2) Within the class of Guardians, a further division will have to take place between those who oversee the guardian function and those who carry out the directions of the overseers: in other words, Rulers and Auxiliaries
- 3) The result will be a society with three principle classes
  - Guardians proper, or Rulers
  - Auxiliaries (or Enforcers)
  - Artisans and trades-people

## Creating and maintaining the class system in Plato's ideal polis

### A. Maintaining such a class system

- 1) Individuals are to be assigned to classes, not on the basis of parentage, but on the basis of innate talents and temperament
- 2) Individuals are to be "streamed" into the appropriate classes and occupations on the basis of their success at various stages in the educational system.

### B. How could such an arrangement ever be set up in the first place?

Only if philosophers become kings, or the kings of this world become philosophers! (See *Republic*, ch. 13)