Thrasymachus’ immoralist answer to (JQ2) [347e ff.].

Some important background issues

• This definition brings us to the heart of sophism.
  • Thrasymachus belongs to the group known as the sophists. (In fact, he is one of the most famous of the sophists.)
    • The sophists were a group of traveling teachers who instructed persons in the practice of rhetoric (the art of debate).
    • They were especially sought after by young men who had political aspirations. Why? The most important tool for being a successful politician is being able to convince people you are right (even if you aren’t!). As such, what we see in Thrasymachus’ discussion is the idea that the only way that such a notion of justice can have credibility is if people believe it, that they can be persuaded that it is correct view of justice.

• Socrates, Plato, Aristotle despised the sophists. Why?
  • The sophists only cared about power, money and fame, i.e., being wealthy and winning debates simply for the sake of winning, not because the positions for which they argued were true.
  • Yet, recall Socrates’ two most famous proverbs:
    
    The unexamined life is not worth living,
    
    and

    The truly wise person knows their level of ignorance.

    The sophists were individuals who lived contrary to these two proverbs.

• One more thing: by having Thrasymachus tease out justice in political terms, Plato is drawing our attention to the fact that he thinks that the political and moral realms are not sharply distinguished from one another. In other words, justice according to Plato is both an individual and a civic virtue.

Thrasymachus’ answer to (JQ2)

• Thrasymachus is committed to immoralism, namely, the view that
  
  (I) It is better to be unjust than just.

  Why does Thrasymachus espouse (I). According to Thrasymachus, whatever justice is, it’s not worth much and is for the weak person. For justice is not self-interested and the strong person is self-interested. So, according to Thrasymachus, justice serves the rulers and injustice serves the self.

• Says Thrasymachus, one can be happiest through a life of injustice.

• Socrates’ reply:
Socrates attacks (I) via an attack against the idea just stated, namely, one can be happiest through a life of injustice.

Rather, argues Socrates, one will be happiest through a life of justice. He argues for this via The Jones-is Happy-Implies-Jones-is-Just Argument

(1) Jones is happy iff Jones lives well.
(2) The function of the soul is living.
(3) The soul functions well in proportion to its virtue.
(4) The virtue of a soul is justice.
Therefore,
(5) Jones is happy in proportion as Jones is just.

This argument gives us a good overview of Socrates’ and Plato’s answers to The Justice Questions.

Note: the word ‘soul’ used in (2), (3) and (4) is the English word for the Greek term ψυχή; it is the root word from which we get the term ‘psychology’. A ψυχή is simply that which makes a rational animal alive. As such (2) is trivially true, it is an analytic truth.

I discuss what the term ‘virtue’ means in (3) and (4) below.

Book II & Socrates’ “construction” project

Glaucon, the three kinds good & The Ring of Gyges Myth

The discussion begins with Glaucon (Plato’s half-brother in real life) stating that he is not satisfied with Socrates’ purported refutation of Thrasyhyamus’ view. In fact, he insinuates that Socrates hasn’t acted much different than the sophists, which is a real dig (really given by Plato, Socrates most important student)! [see 357a-b].

Glaucon asks if Socrates wants to seem to have provided the right answers to The Justice Questions or actually provide the right answers. Socrates says he wants actually to do it. Notice Glaucon’s reply: “Well…you certainly aren’t doing what you want” [357b]

To spur Socrates to do that, Glaucon argues that he is going to take up Thrasyhyamus’ case for immoralism. What is important to note, however, is that Glaucon does it not because he espouses immoralism, but rather he wants to know whether or not it really is false as Socrates claims. He is essentially playing “devil’s advocate.”

Glaucon’s division of goods into three classes [357b-d]

Glaucon starts his case by dividing all goods into three classes:

- Intrinsic goods: things that are good for their own sake, i.e., a kind of thing that we welcome “in itself,” and not for what comes from it.

- Merely instrumental goods: things that are good only for the sake of their consequences, i.e., a kind of thing we choose only for the sake of the benefits that come from it.

- Complex goods: things that are good for their own sake and for what comes from them.

Glaucon asks Socrates to which of the three classes of good does justice belong?
• Answers Socrates, justice is a complex good.

• Yet, asserts Glaucon, according to The Standard View, the view that most people believe, justice belongs to the second class, those that are merely instrumental goods.

• Of course, as Glaucon recognizes, the fact that most people believe The Standard View does not imply it is true. As such, he tries to defend The Standard View and does so with The Ring of Gyges Myth [see 358e-361d].

• Glaucon argues that, were it not for external constraints (e.g., the rule of law), every rational person would choose injustice and personal gain over the life of justice. This is a fact of psychological egoism. What is more, according to Glaucon, The Ring of Gyges Myth shows us that if there is a way to guarantee that such external constraints are rendered incapable of functioning, then there are no rational grounds for being just.

• Glaucon’s argument – The Gyges’ Argument:

  (1) When unjust action held benefits for Gyges and he thought he could so act with impunity, he so acted.
  
  So,
  
  (2) Gyges values acting justly only for the sake of its consequences. [Does (2) follow from (1)?]
  
  (3) We all are like Gyges. [A representative example?]
  
  Hence,
  
  (4) We all value acting justly only for the sake of its consequences, and not at all for its own sake.
  
  Therefore,
  
  (5) Being just is a merely instrumental good: it is good only for the sake of its consequences. [(5) is the advertised conclusion. Does it follow?]

• The Gyges’ Argument (Generalized):

  (1) All anyone ever really pursues is their own interest, or what is best for them; people are fundamentally selfish. [psychological egoism]
  
  (2) Justice is in someone’s interest only insofar as injustice creates the threat of punishment.
  
  So,
  
  (3) Except through ignorance, people pursue justice only out of fear of punishment.
  
  (4) If people should do something (e.g. care about justice for its own sake), it must be psychologically possible for them to do it (without being tricked or deceived).
  
  Thus,
  
  (5) It is not true that people should care about justice for its own sake.

Socrates’ burden: proving that justice belongs in the complex good class

Having given The Gyges’ Argument, Glaucon has successfully created a challenge for Socrates. He has challenged Socrates to show us why it’s better to be just than unjust, even if one has a ring of Gyges.
On the concept of virtue and happiness

- On the concept of a virtue. We can understand the concept according to the following principle:
  \[(V) \text{ The virtue of a thing } T \text{ is that set of properties which makes } T \text{ good.} \]

  **Note well:** recall premises (3) & (4) of The Jones-is Happy-Implies-Jones-is-Just Argument in relation to (V).

To understand this, we need to understand that the value term 'good' is teased out in terms of properly functioning, e.g., the virtue of a heart is to pump blood, the virtue of the visual cortex is to accurately represent the world in the visual creature’s direct environment, the virtue of a pencil is to write, etc.

- On Socrates’ functionalist theory of happiness. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle are all committed what we will call a functionalist theory of happiness, i.e., the view that
  \[(FH) \text{ The happy life is the life of a thing that functions well or properly according to the kind of thing it is.} \]

  He defends (FH) with the following argument:

  (1) The happy life is the virtuous life
  (2) The virtuous life is the life well-lived
  (3) The life well-lived is the flourishing life.
  (4) The flourishing life is the life of a thing that functions well or properly according to the kind of thing it is.

  Therefore,

  (5) The happy life is the life of a thing that functions well or properly according to the kind of thing it is.

- Socrates uses The City-Soul Analogy to answer The Justice Questions.

  - Before we talk about The City-Soul Analogy, let us first give Socrates’ and Plato’s answer to The Justice Questions.

    - Socrates’ and Plato’s answer to (JQ1):
     \[(SJ) \text{ A person } S \text{ is just (hence, the virtuous person) iff } S \text{ is a properly functioning person.} \]

      What is it, according to Socrates and Plato, for a person to be a properly functioning person (hence, happy)? The answer is this:

      \[(SJ^*) \text{ S is a properly functioning person iff } S \text{ is a flourishing person, i.e., } S\text{’s soul (i.e., psyche) is well-organized and harmonious.} \]

    - Socrates’ and Plato’s answer to (JQ2):
     \[(SR) \text{ A person } S \text{ has good reason to be just (hence, virtuous) given that it is necessarily true that it is in } S\text{’s best interest to flourish.} \]

    - How does Socrates defend (SJ*) and (SR)? With The City-Soul Analogy.
The City-Soul Analogy is a macroscopic-to-microscopic method of investigation, i.e., he investigates a “large-scale” entity as a means of investigating a “small-scale” entity [see Republic 368c].

On the nature of his macroscopic-to-microscopic method of investigation.

- The macroscopic entity he studies is the city-state; the microscopic entity he learns about by way of analogy with the city is the person (more importantly, their soul (psychē) [see Republic 419e-445e].

- **Note:** the word ‘city-state’ is the English word for the Greek term polis; it is the root word from which we get the term ‘politics. A polis is a society that includes a government.

- Recall how arguments by analogy work (see Thomson handout)

Socrates’ argument – The City-Soul Analogy Argument:

1. The just city and the just person/soul are relevantly analogous.
2. The just city is just because its parts are well-organized and function harmoniously, hence, it flourishes.

Therefore,

3. The just person/soul is just because its parts are well-organized and function harmoniously, hence, it flourishes.

An overview of The City-Soul Analogy

- According to Socrates and Plato, the soul (psychē) and the city (polis) are relevantly analogous in part because (i) each are tripartite in nature, i.e., each has three main parts and (ii) each part has a similar function (i.e., does the same “job”).

- Regarding the tripartite nature of the city and soul:
  - The three parts of the city are: the rulers, the auxiliaries (i.e., soldiers) and the artisans (the producers of goods)
  - The three parts of the soul are: reason, spirit/will and the appetites.
  - Let us use the following chart to help clarify what I’ve just stated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City (polis)</th>
<th>Soul (psychē)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rulers</td>
<td>Reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliaries/soldiers</td>
<td>Spirit / will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artisans</td>
<td>Appetites</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Regarding the similar function of the three parts of the city and soul:
  - The function/job of the rulers is to govern and direct the affairs of the city (what happens in and to the city); similarly, the function of reason is to govern and direct the affairs of the soul (what happens in and to the soul).
• The function/job of the auxiliaries (i.e., soldiers) to enforce the laws and directives of issued by the rulers; similarly, the function of spirit/will is to enforce the commands and directives of issued by reason.

• The function/job of the artisans is to be governed and obey the laws and directives of issued by the rulers; similarly, the function of appetites is to be governed and obey the laws and directives of issued by reason.

• Using the chart from above, we can now include the functions of the parts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City (polis)</th>
<th>Soul (psyche)</th>
<th>Function/Job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rulers</td>
<td>Reason</td>
<td>Govern &amp; direct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliaries/soldiers</td>
<td>Spirit/will</td>
<td>Enforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artisans</td>
<td>Appetites</td>
<td>Be governed &amp; obey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Two more details to bring the theory together:

• According to Plato and Socrates, there are four cardinal virtues.
  - The term ‘cardinal’ here is used to denote that they are the basic or primary virtues; it is upon these that every other virtue is based. Consider an analogue: north, south, east and west are the cardinal directions; they are the basic or primary directions upon which every other direction is based.
  - The four cardinal virtues are justice, wisdom, courage and moderation/temperance.

• The Doctrine of the Unity of the Virtues.
  - The Doctrine:
    
    (DUV) Having the four cardinal virtues is both necessary and sufficient for having any one of the four cardinal virtues.

    According to (DUV), unless a person has all four of the cardinal virtues, he cannot have any of the four cardinal virtues. Thus, given (DUV), it is theoretically impossible for the just person to struggle with or lack courage, being wise, etc.

    - Of course, that probably seems odd to us. Consider the following quote:

    [Today] we accept, indeed regard as a platitude, an idea that Aristotle rejected, that someone can have one virtue while lacking others. For Aristotle, as for Socrates, practical reason required the dispositions of action and feeling to be harmonized; if any disposition was properly to count as a virtue, it had to be part of a rational structure that included all the virtues. This is quite different from our assumption [in the modern world] that these kinds of virtuous disposition are enough like other psychological characteristics to explain how one person can, so to speak, do better in one area than another…. [today] we do not believe in the unity of the virtues.

    — Bernard Williams

• With those two details in mind, we can now complete view that Socrates and Plato are espousing.
Given the definition of ‘virtue’ as that set of features which makes a thing good, i.e., function properly, we learn that

- The virtue of both the rulers and reason is wisdom; for each properly functions when it has wisdom
- The virtue of both the auxiliaries and spirit/will is courage; for each properly functions when it has courage
- The virtue of both the artisans and the appetites is moderation/temperance; for each properly functions when it is moderate/tempered

Using the chart from above, we can now include the virtues of each part:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City (polis)</th>
<th>Soul (psychē)</th>
<th>Function/Job</th>
<th>Virtue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rulers</td>
<td>Reason</td>
<td>Govern &amp; direct</td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliaries/soldiers</td>
<td>Spirit/will</td>
<td>Enforce</td>
<td>Courage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artisans</td>
<td>Appetites</td>
<td>Be governed &amp; obey</td>
<td>Moderation / Temperance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What about the virtue of justice? To answer this, consider two principles that were stated earlier, namely,

(SJ) A person $S$ is just (hence, the virtuous person) iff $S$ is a properly functioning person, and

(SJ*) $S$ is a properly functioning person iff $S$ is a flourishing person, i.e., $S$’s soul (i.e., psychē) is well-organized and harmonious.

(SJ) and (SJ*) reveal that Socrates and Plato take the virtue of justice to be a state of proper functioning and the properly function person is a flourishing person, i.e., their soul (i.e., psychē) is well-organized and harmonious. Moreover, given that a psychē and a polis are relevantly analogous, a properly functioning city-state is a flourishing city-state, i.e., the polis is well-organized and harmonious.

Using the chart from above, we can now include the virtue of justice:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City (polis)</th>
<th>Soul (psychē)</th>
<th>Function/Job</th>
<th>Virtue</th>
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</tr>
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</table>

*note: ‘}’ symbolizes that each part has its respective virtue; hence the whole is just.