



The *Republic*

- ▶ Topic: Justice. This means “ethical uprightness.”
- ▶ 10 Books
- ▶ A middle writing of Plato- so Socrates functions mostly as *character* of Plato to express Plato’s ideas.

REPUBLIC BOOK I

Socrates visits the house of Polemarchus to spend the night. At the house is Polemarchus' father Cephalus.

Cephalus says that *justice* (being morally upright) is more important than wealth for a good life.

What is justice?

First Try- **“Telling the truth, paying your debts”**

This definition doesn't work, as it isn't always right to tell the truth or pay a debt.

(example: lying to protect Jewish people from the Nazis).

What is justice? 2nd try

Second try: **“To be just is to help your friends, and harm your enemies”**

This doesn't work- how do you know who is your friend or enemy?

Also, it doesn't look like harming people is just (unless it is for some good reason such as enforcing the law, medical treatment, etc.)

Discussion Question

- ▶ Plato claims that justice is more important than wealth for a good life.
- ▶ Do you agree, and if so, what is justice?

The Challenge of Thrasymachus

Thrasymachus (a *sophist*): “**Justice is to the advantage of the stronger.**”

According to Thrasymachus, the just person will follow the law, and whomever writes the laws will write them to their advantage.

Not really a definition of Justice.

Socrates Replies to Thrasymachus



The *craft* (or “art”) of *ruling* isn’t for the benefit of the ruler, it is for the benefit of the ruled.



Consider the craft of sheep herding. While the shepherd wants to make money, *making money* is a different “art” than *sheep herding* itself.



Another example: *medicine* benefits the patient, not the doctor.

The Challenge of Thrasymachus

Thrasymachus changes his point-
he says, fine, **then the best thing to
be is an *unjust ruler*: that is, to
benefit *yourself* as much as
possible.**

In fact, Thrasymachus says that the
**unjust always get more than the
just.** (example: business dealings,
etc.)