

# Justice in *Republic*: Books I-IV

The Classical World: Spring 2010

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# Sources

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# Sophists

Politics → oral communication

Primary political skill: rhetoric

Ability to persuade the assembly and the jury

Sophists taught rhetoric and related topics  
for a fee

# Sophists

**Central value in politics:**  
*effectiveness (not justice)*

**Goal in rhetoric:**  
*persuasion (not truth)*

# Sophists: Plato's *Gorgias*

*“This single art that cares for the body comprises two parts, gymnastics and medicine, and in the political art what corresponds to gymnastics is legislation, while the counterpart of medicine is justice. ... But flattery perceiving this ... has divided herself into four branches, and insinuating herself into the guise of each of these parts, pretends to be that which she impersonates. ... And having no thought for what is best, she regularly uses pleasure as a bait to catch folly and deceives it into thinking that she is of supreme worth. Thus it is that cookery has impersonated medicine....*

*Sophistic is to legislation what beautification is to gymnastics, and rhetoric to justice what cookery is to medicine” (Gorgias, 464b-465c).*

# Sophists: Plato's *Gorgias*

	Body	Polis
Maintenance	<p><i>Gymnastics</i>: Maintains bodily health <u>in truth</u></p> <p><i>Beautification</i>: Merely <u>appears</u> to maintain bodily health</p>	<p><i>Legislation</i>: Maintains the health of the polis <u>in truth</u></p> <p><i>Sophistic</i>: Merely <u>appears</u> to maintain the health of the polis</p>
Restorative	<p><i>Medicine</i>: Restores bodily health <u>in truth</u></p> <p><i>Cookery</i>: Merely <u>appears</u> to restore bodily health</p>	<p><i>Justice</i>: Restores the health of the polis <u>in truth</u></p> <p><i>Rhetoric</i>: Merely <u>appears</u> to restore the health of the polis</p>

# Dialogue

## *Elenchus*

Q: What is X?

A: X is F.

Q: ...?

A: ...

Q: ...?

A: ...

...

Q: So, by your own statements, it follows that X is not F.

*A's answers are A's own beliefs*

*A's answers are jointly contradictory*

# Dialogue, cont'd

What is the goal of *Elenchus*?

(1) It is *eristic* (a conflict): goal is to win the debate. Agonistic.

(2) Socratic *elenchus*: Goal is to reach that point where genuine inquiry can begin. Not agonistic but cooperative.



# Dialogue in the *Apology*

*“[Chaerephon] went to Delphi at one time and ventured to ask the oracle – as I say, gentlemen, do not create a disturbance – he asked if any man was wiser than I, and the Pythian replied that no one was wiser”*  
*(Apology, 21a).*

# Dialogue in the *Apology*

*“...I went to one of those reputed wise, thinking that there, if anywhere, I could refute the oracle.... Then, when I examined this man – there is no need to tell you his name, he was one of our public men – my experience was something like this: I thought that he appeared wise to many people and especially to himself, but he was not.... So I withdrew and thought to myself: ‘I am wiser than this man; it is likely that neither of us knows anything worthwhile, but he thinks he knows something when he does not, whereas when I do not know, neither do I think I know’” (Apology, 21b-d).*

# Dialogue in the *Apology*

*“What is probable, gentlemen, is that in fact the god is wise and that his oracular response mean that human wisdom is worth little or nothing, and that when he says this man, Socrates, he is using my name as an example, as if he said: ‘This man among you, mortals, is wisest who, like Socrates, understands that his wisdom is worthless’ (Apology, 2a-b).*

# Epistemological Crises

## People in an epistemological crisis:

*“What they took to be evidence pointing unambiguously in one direction now turns out to have been equally susceptible to rival interpretations. Such a discovery is often paralyzing...”* (MacIntyre, “Epistemological Crises...”).

# Athenian “Justice” during the War: the Athenians to the Melians

Athenians: “... we will neither use noble phrases ... about having the right to rule ... nor expect you to think that you can convince us ... that you have done us no injury... but to deal with the possibilities defined by what both parties really believe, understanding as well as we do that in human considerations justice is what is decided when equal forces are opposed, while possibilities are what superiors impose and the weak acquiesce to” (Thucydides, V.89).

# Athenian “Justice” during the War: the Melian Response

Melians: *“In our opinion, there is every advantage (a necessary term, because of the way you require us to speak of expediency apart from justice) in your not destroying a universal benefit, but that at all times there be fairness and justice for those in danger.... This is especially relevant in your case, to the degree that on your downfall you would set the example for the heaviest retribution”* (Thucydides, V.90).

# **Late Peloponnesian War and Aftermath**

411: Coup by “The Four Hundred”

Assembly cut out of any effective power

Replaced by rule by the oligarchy of 5,000

410: Democracy restored

404: Defeat – Spartans impose “The Thirty”

Secret arrests and killings – “spread the guilt”

403: Civil War – democrat base at Piraeus

403: General amnesty

# Characters in the *Republic*

<b>Socrates:</b>	Associate of many aristocrats, including Critias, one of “The Thirty.”
<b>Cephalus:</b>	Metic; arms manufacturer; supporter of the democratic faction.
<b>Polemarchus:</b>	Cephalus’ son, killed by “The Thirty” in 404.
<b>Glaucon:</b>	Plato’s brother; fought at Megara in 409; nephew of Critias.
<b>Adeimantus:</b>	Another brother of Plato; also fought at Megara; nephew of Critias.
<b>Thrasymachus:</b>	Sophist and speech-writer. Wrote a speech in favor of “The Four Hundred” in 411.
<b>Cleitophon:</b>	Associate of Thrasymachus; actions led to establishing the “Four Hundred.”
<b>Niceratus:</b>	Son of Nicias (general of the Sicilian campaign). Put to death as an enemy of “The Thirty” in 404.



# Thrasymachus in Book I

“Justice is the advantage of the stronger.”

Initial account (338c-339a)

S's action is *just* =df S's action conforms with the commands of the rulers of S's polis.

# Thrasymachus in Book I

“Justice is the advantage of the stronger.”

Revised account (340d-341a)

S's action is *just* =df S's action conforms with the commands of the rulers of S's polis, provided that those commands are themselves not in error and in accord with the rulers' self-interests.

# Socrates' Response to Thrasymachus

1. Justice is a kind of *craft* (= practical knowledge).
2. All crafts aim at the good of that which is their object.
3. Therefore, justice aims at the good of its object.
4. The object of justice is those who are ruled.
5. Therefore, justice aims at the good of those who are ruled.

# Why Socrates Fails

Socratic *elenchus* depends on Socrates and his interlocutor to agree upon premises in order to derive its conclusions.

Socrates and Thrasymachus do not agree on premises.

Instead, Thrasymachus treats Socrates as if he were telling “old wives’ tales.”

# Glaucon's Challenge

## Types of Goods

		Is it good in its effects?	
Is it good in itself?		Yes	No
	Yes	<u>"3rd Kind"</u> <b>"Most Noble"</b> Ex: Knowing	<u>"1st Kind"</u> Ex: Harmless Pleasures
	No	<u>"2nd Kind"</u> Ex: Medical Treatment	(empty)

**What type of good is justice?**

**Glaucon: Justice is 2<sup>nd</sup> kind**

**Socrates: Justice is 3<sup>rd</sup> kind**

# Glaucon on Justice

*“...to do injustice is naturally good and to suffer injustice bad, but that the badness of suffering it ... far exceeds the goodness of doing it.... As a result they begin to make laws and covenants, and what the law commands they call lawful and just. This, they say, is the origin and essence of justice. It is intermediate between the best and the worst” (358e-359a).*

# **Glaucou on Justice**

**Best:** *To do injustice without penalty*

**Intermediate:** *Neither to do nor to suffer  
injustice*

**Worst:** *To suffer injustice without recourse*

# Ring of Gyges

Allows anyone to do anything with impunity.

If justice is better than injustice, in itself, then the just man with the Ring of Gyges would be happier than the unjust man with it.

*“No one, it seems, would be so incorruptible that he would stay on the path of justice...”*  
(360b).





*The Ring of Gyges in popular culture*

# Adeimantus' Case

*“When fathers speak to their sons, they say that one must be just.... But they don’t praise justice itself, only the high reputation it leads to and the consequences of being thought to be just ...” (362e-363a).*

# Adeimantus' Challenge

*“So don't merely give a theoretical argument that justice is stronger than injustice, but tell us what each itself does, because of its own powers, to someone who possesses it, that makes injustice bad and justice good.”*

# Adeimantus' Challenge

*“... don't take reputations into account, for if you don't deprive justice and injustice of their true reputations and attach false ones to them, we'll say that you are not praising them but their reputations and that you're encouraging us to be unjust in secret” (367b-c).*

# Socrates' Response

## The Explicit Reason:

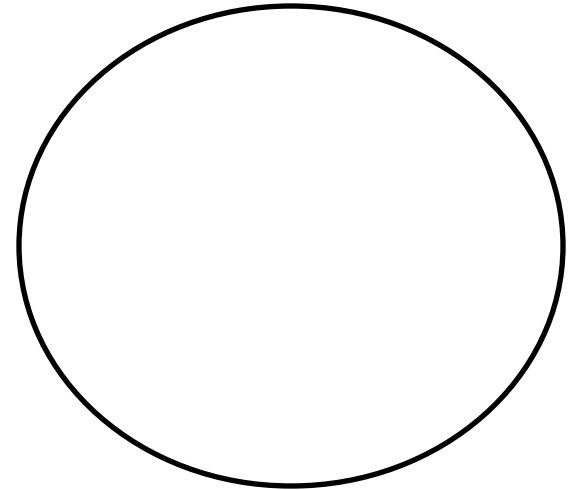
Justice in a man



small

hard to see

Justice in a polis



large

easier to see

# Socrates' Response

## The Implicit Reason:

Socrates' *Elenchus* with Thrasymachus failed.

S. and T. have incompatible premises.

S.: Justice is a *craft* (practical knowledge) that aims at some good external to the craftsman.

T.: Justice is a *political tool* that allows the stronger to manipulate the weaker, to serve the self-interests of the stronger.

# Socrates' Response

## The Implicit Reason, cont'd:

Socrates cannot conduct *elenchus* with

Thrasymachus – or anyone with premises contradictory to Socrates (Glaucou's and Adeimantus' "they").

***How to proceed?***

# Socrates' Response

## The Implicit Reason, cont'd:

Socrates must start with the place where people form their premises – the *polis*.

Thus, Socrates must first construct the ideal just *polis*, and only then can he discuss the just man.



# **Stages of A Polis**

## **Stage One: Minimal Polis**

Barest necessities met

Minimal specialization: farmer, builder, weaver, cobbler, physician.

“Four or five men” (369d).

# Stages of A Polis

## Stage Two: Healthy Polis

All needs met.

Greater specialization.

“Each of us differs somewhat in nature from the others, one being suited to one task, another to another” (370a-b).

“more plentiful and better-quality goods are more easily produced if each person does one thing for which he is naturally suited...” (370c).

“honest cakes and loaves” (372b)

“a city for pigs” (372d)

# Stages of A Polis

## Stage Three: Luxurious Polis

“a city with a fever” (372e)

“overstepped the limit of their necessities” (373d)

Luxuries, entertainment → need for more land → conflict

***Origins of war: “It comes from those same desires that are most of all responsible for the bad things that happens to cities and the individuals in them” (373e).***

# Stages of A Polis

## Stage Four: Armed Polis

Guardians: a professional army.

“to the degree that the work of the guardians is most important, it requires most freedom from other things and the greatest skill and devotion.”

“it also require[s] a person whose nature is suited to that way of life” (374e).

# Stages of A Polis

## Stage Five: “Purified” Polis (399e)

Guardians: properly educated

- No bad stories about the gods

- No bad stories about heroes.

- No bad form for stories (*mimesis*)

- No bad form for music

- No bad meter in poetry

- No improper love relations

- Proper physical training

  - no need for physicians to treat “flatulence” or “catarrh”

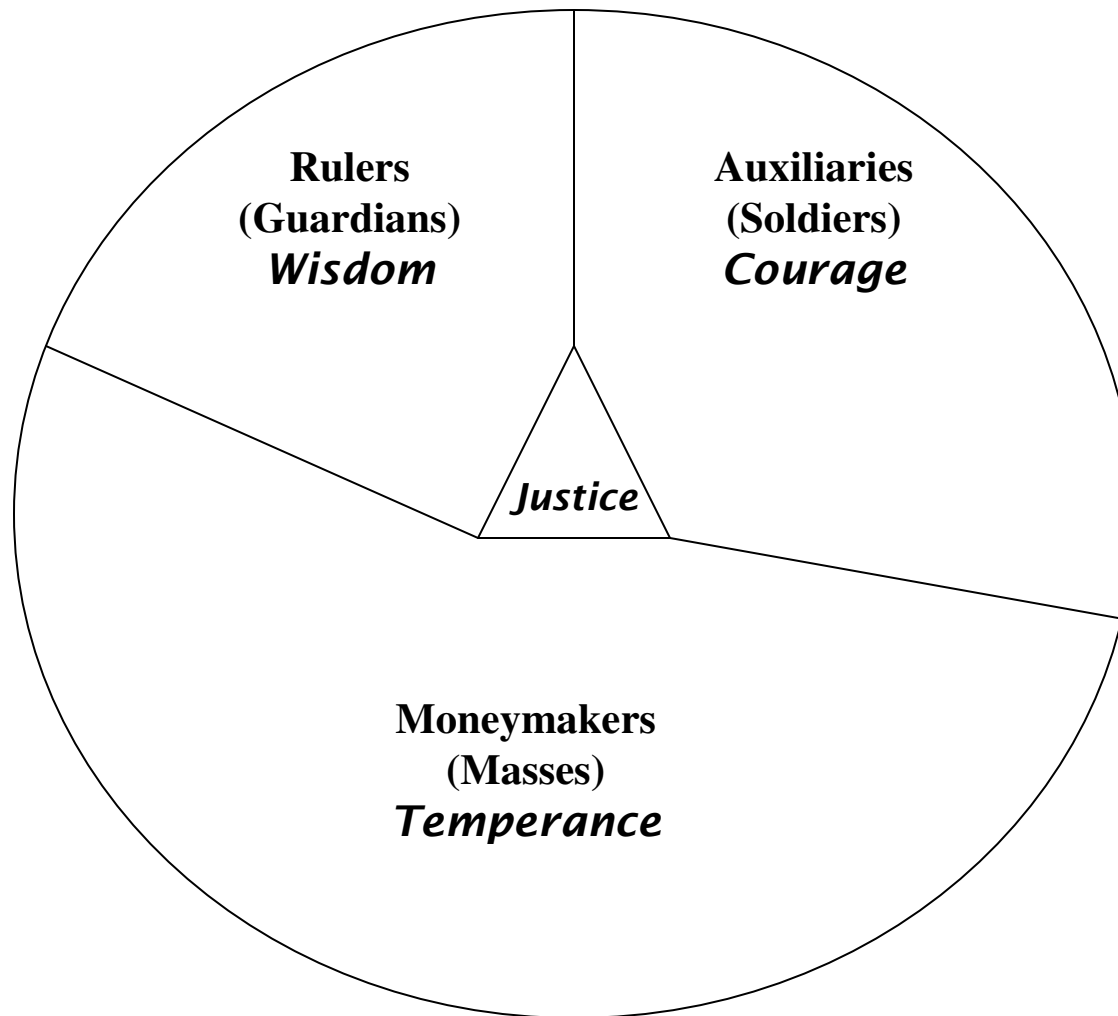
# Stages of A Polis

## **Stage Six: The ideal polis – *kallipolis***

Rulers – “complete guardians” – distinguished from others – “auxiliaries” (414b).

***“Useful falsehood” – myth of the metals***

# Classes and Virtues in Kallipolis



# Parts and Virtues of the Soul

analogical with  
the kallipolis

