

# Ring of Gyges

1. Objectives
2. Administrivia
3. Ring of Gyges

Objectives:

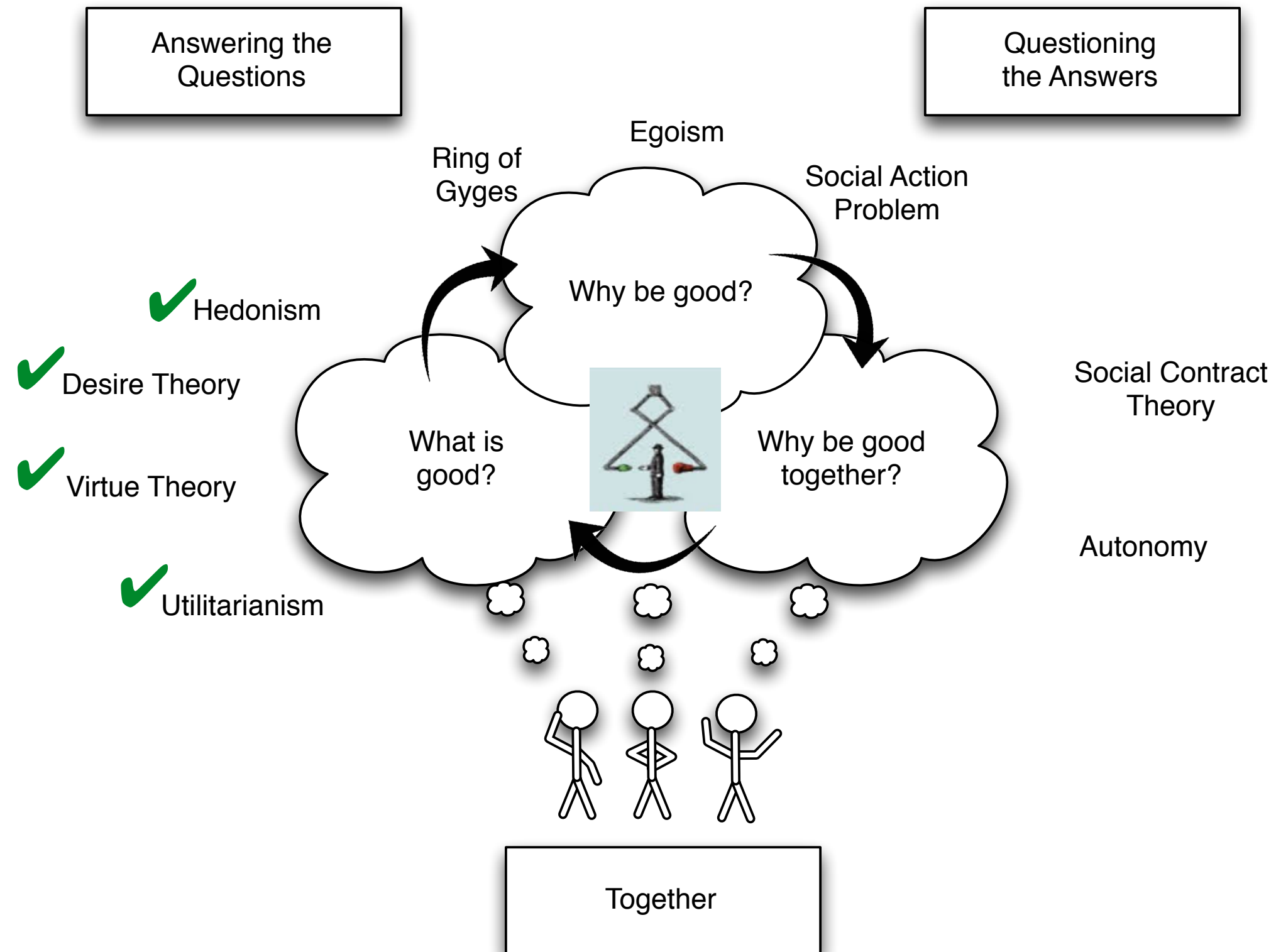
By the end of this lecture you should be able to:

1. Recount the story of the Ring of Gyges
2. Analyze different arguments for why we should be good
3. Describe psychological egoism

1. Argument Outline due Wednesday
2. Rubric Discussion Wednesday

Anything Else? Anyone?

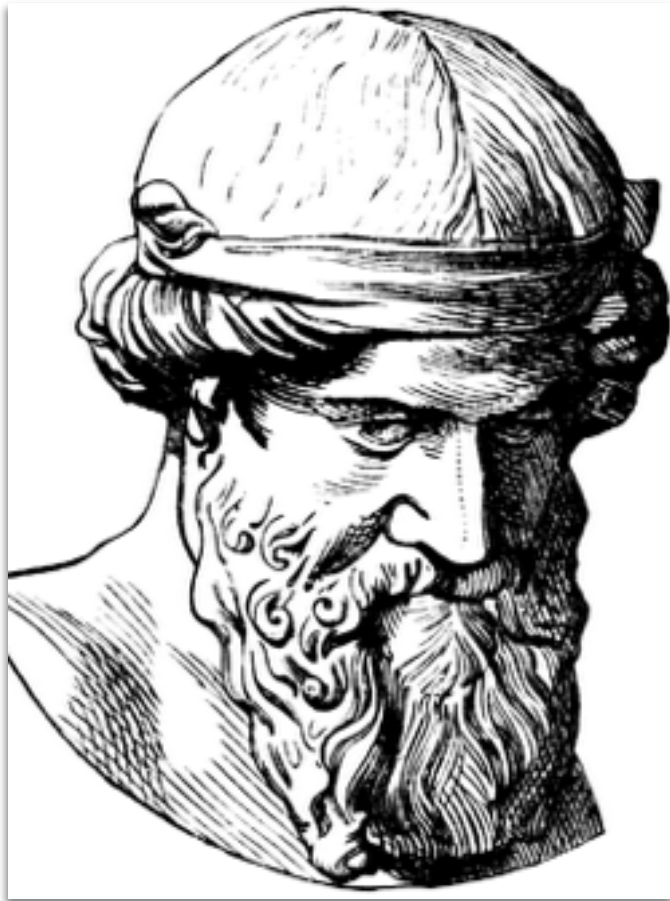




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## 1 minute essay

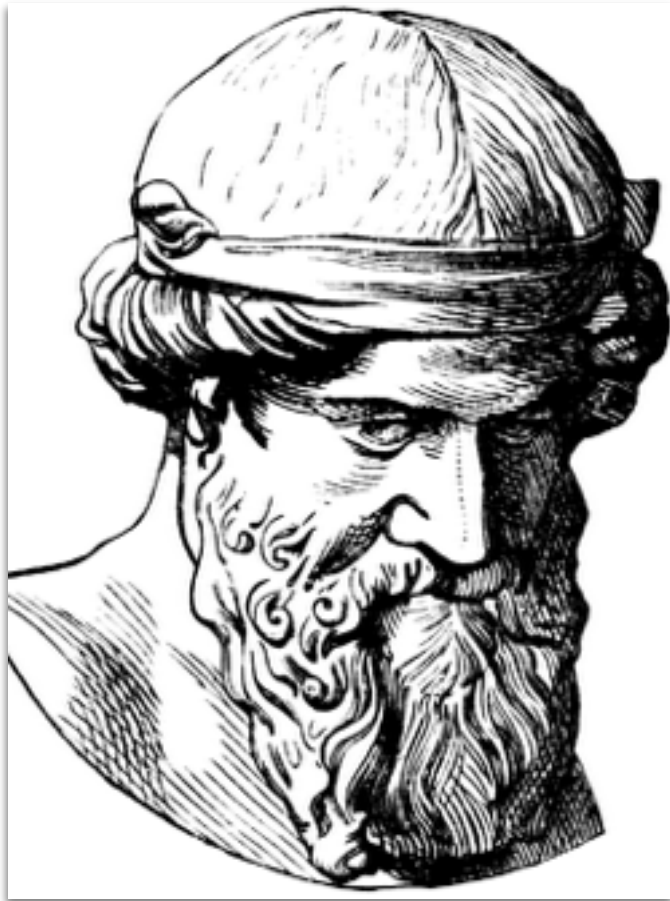
Is it in our self-interest to be good?



Plato (424-347 BCE)

- Student of Socrates
- Teacher of Aristotle
- System builder



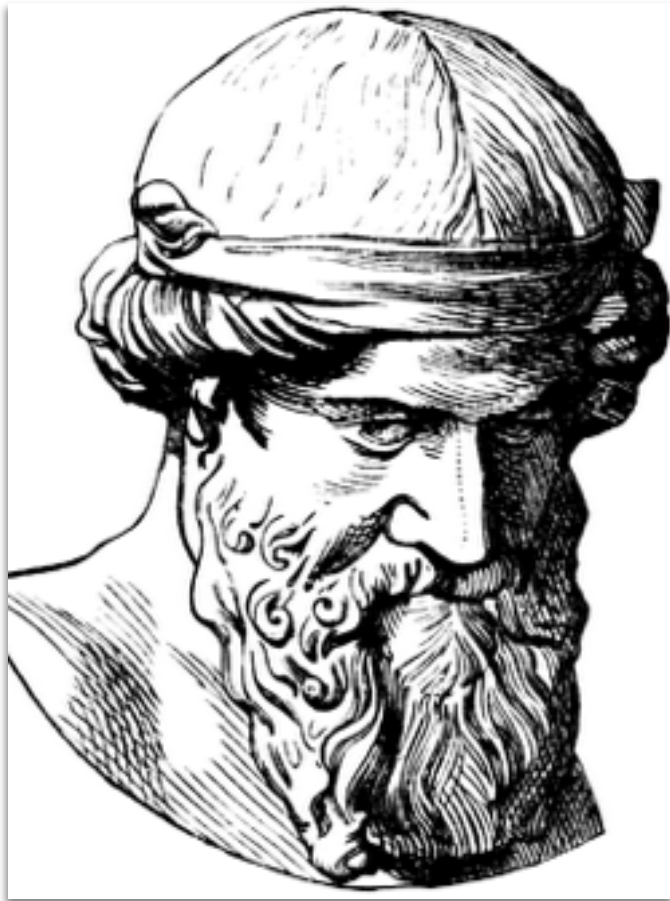


Plato (424-347 BCE)

“...footnote to Plato”

How is progress made in the sciences?

How is progress made in philosophy?



Plato (424-347 BCE)

- There are no writings of Socrates
- Always took place in the public sphere
- Always with a self-described expert
- Question, Answer format

Soc. What do you say of him, Meno? Were not all these answers given out of his own head?

Men. Yes, they were all his own.

Soc. And yet, as we were just now saying, he did not know?

Men. True.

Soc. But still he had in him those notions of his-had he not?

Men. Yes.

Soc. Then he who does not know may still have true notions of that which he does not know?

Men. He has.

Soc. And at present these notions have just been stirred up in him, as in a dream; but if he were frequently asked the same questions, in different forms, he would know as well as any one at last?

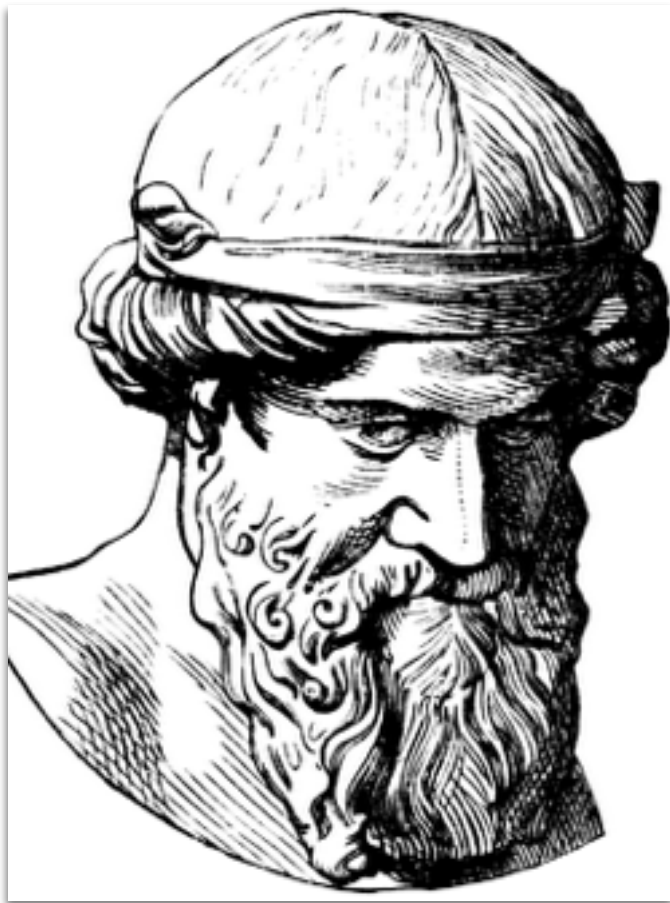
Men. I dare say.

Soc. Without any one teaching him he will recover his knowledge for himself, if he is only asked questions?

Men. Yes.

Soc. And this spontaneous recovery of knowledge in him is recollection?

Men. True.



Plato (424-347 BCE)





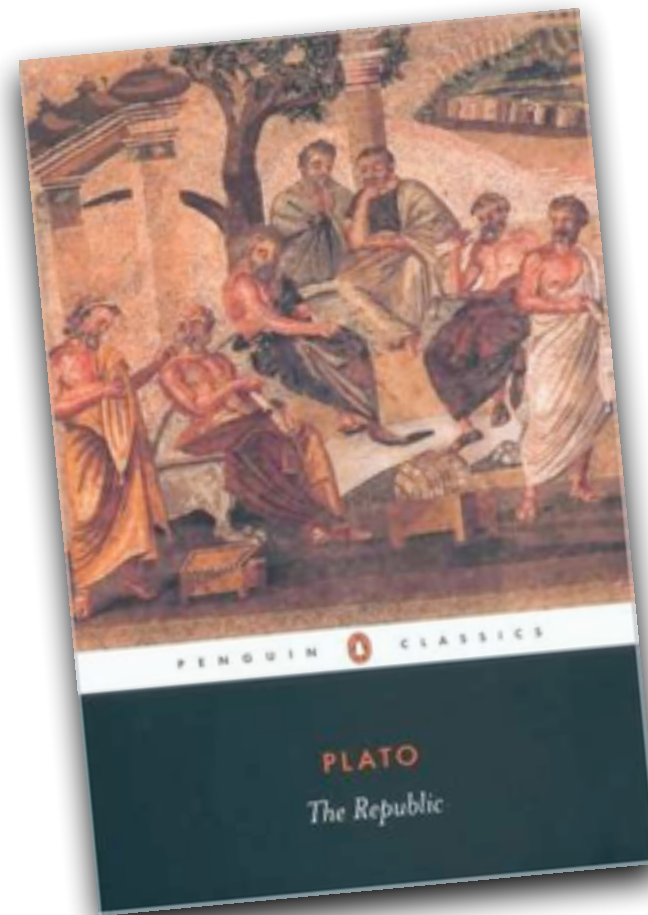




How is progress made in philosophy?

Four Characters:

1. Cephalus
2. Polemarchus
3. Thrasymachus
4. Glaucon

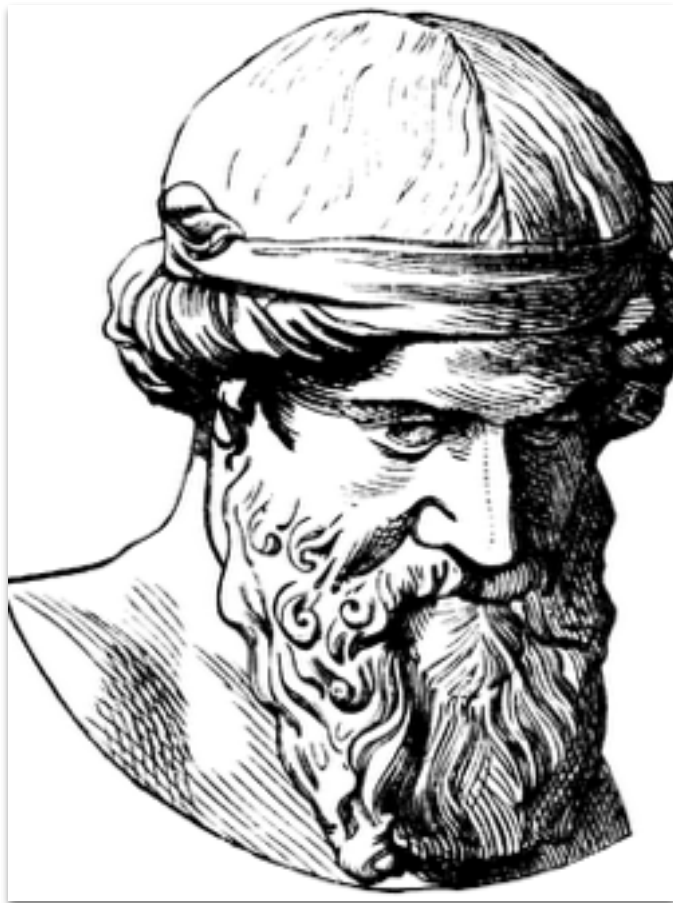


Why are we good?

To avoid punishment

What is justice?

Following rules



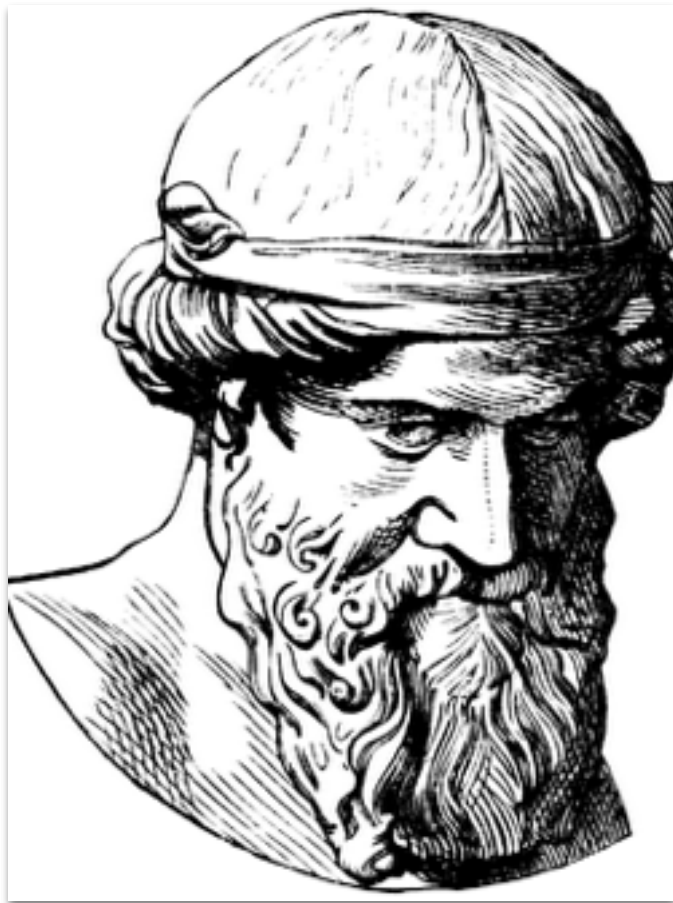
Plato (424-347 BCE)

“

...when thoughts of death start to impinge on a person's mind, he entertains fears and worries about things which never occurred to him before. In the past he used to laugh at the stories that are told about what goes on in Hades...

- Plato's Republic, 330d

”



Plato (424-347 BCE)

“

...about how someone who has done wrong here is bound to be punished there...the result is that he becomes filled with anxiety and fear, and starts to make calculations and to see if he has wronged anyone in any way.

- Plato's Republic, 330e

”

What rules?

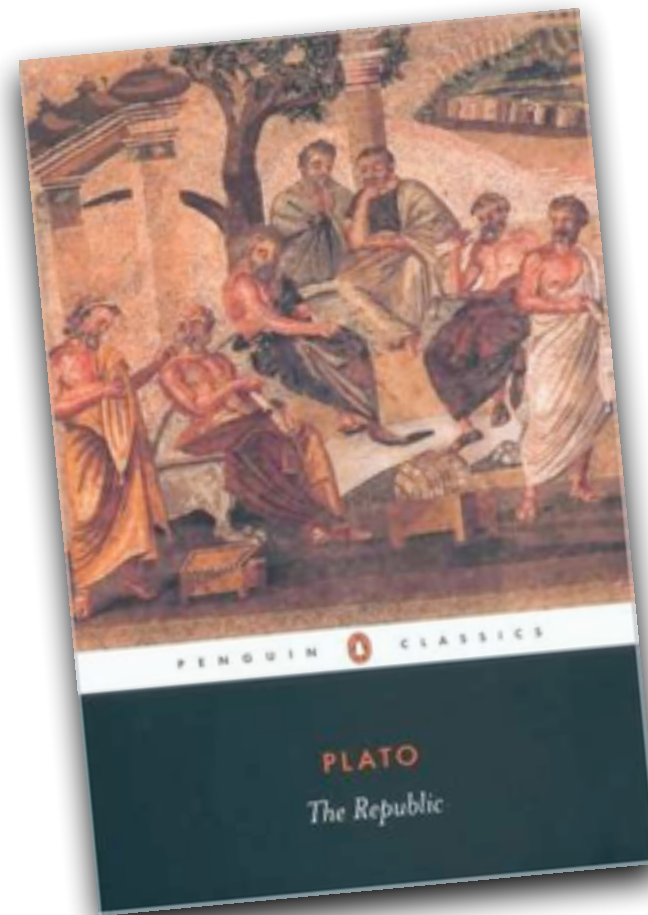
- Truthfulness
- Giving people what is owed to them





Four Characters:

1. Cephalus ✓
2. Polemarchus
3. Thrasymachus
4. Glaucon





What rules?

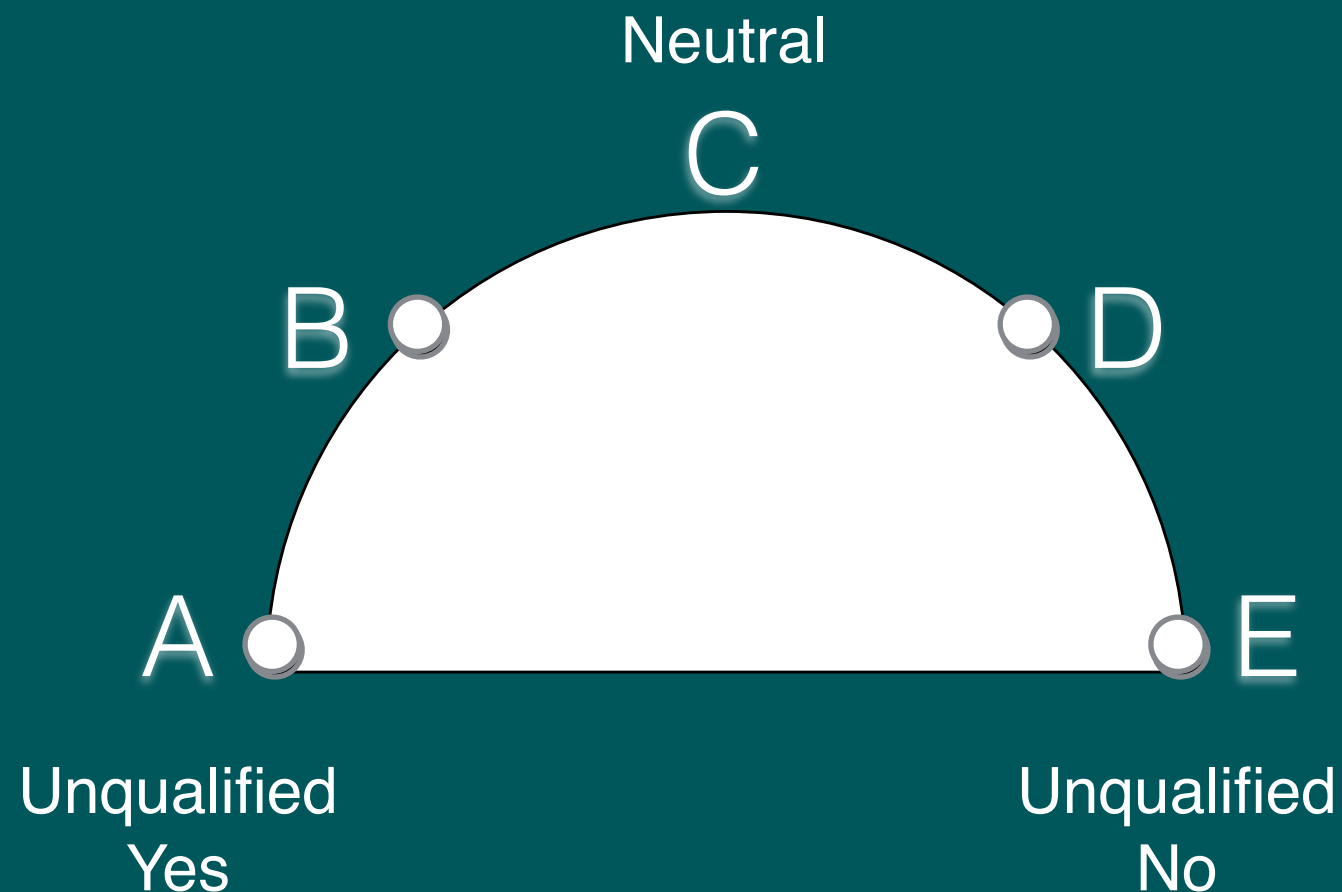
- Helping your friends,  
harming your enemies



# Poll

## Question

Can a moral person harm another person...and still be moral?



And instead of saying simply as we did at first, that it is just to do good to our friends and harm to our enemies, we should further say: It is just to do good to our friends when they are good and harm to our enemies when they are evil?

Yes, that appears to me to be the truth.

But ought the just to injure any one at all?

Undoubtedly he ought to injure those who are both wicked and his enemies.

When horses are injured, are they improved or deteriorated?

The latter.

Deteriorated, that is to say, in the good qualities of horses, not of dogs?

Yes, of horses.

And dogs are deteriorated in the good qualities of dogs, and not of horses?

Of course.

And will not men who are injured be deteriorated in that which is the proper virtue of man?

Certainly.

And that human virtue is justice?

To be sure.

Then men who are injured are of necessity made unjust?

That is the result.

But can the musician by his art make men unmusical?

Certainly not.

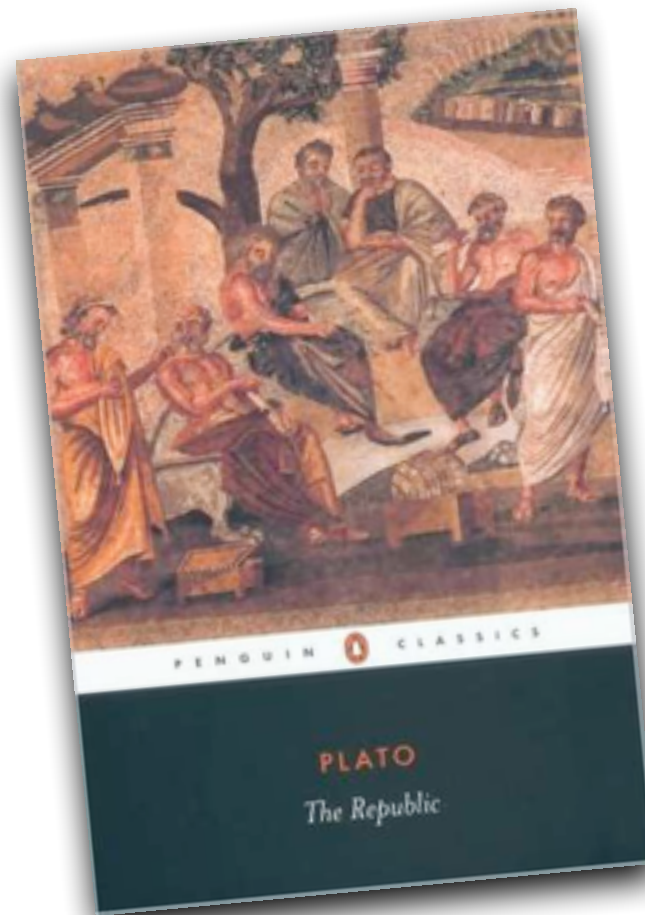
Or the horseman by his art make them bad horsemen?

Impossible.

And can the just by justice make men unjust, or speaking general can the good by virtue make them bad?

Four Characters:

1. Cephalus ✓
2. Polemarchus ✓
3. Thrasymachus
4. Glaucon



What is Justice?

- It's a mug's game
- The moral person is a sucker



When do we tell a dog that it's been bad?

A. When it's done something wrong.

B. When it's done something that the we don't like.



A good dog is one that acts in accordance with its owner's wishes, not its own.



For Thrasymachus there are only two reasons to be good:

1. The threat of punishment (or promise of reward)
2. Internalization of the owner's rules



Sucker



Victim

What is true of dogs is true of  
human children

What is true of human children  
is true of human adults





“

The extent to which you refrain from “bad” acts (ie things that you want to do but others do not want you to do) is the extent to which you are either a fool (if you do not see what is going on) or a victim (of conditioning or simply a power imbalance).

- Duncan Richter, *Why Be Good?* p. 11

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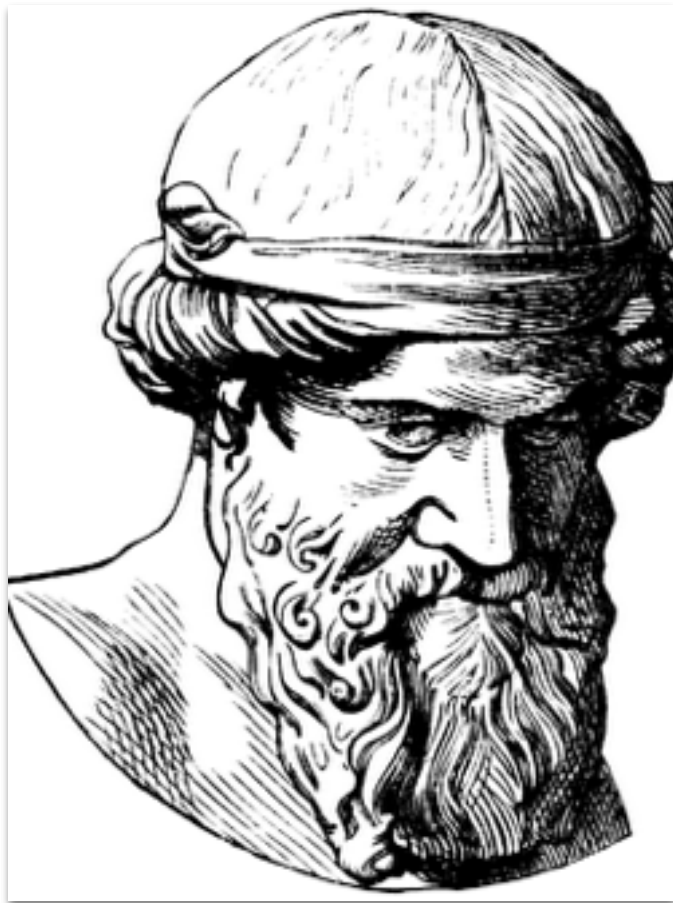
Plato (424-347 BCE)

“

You fool, Socrates, don't you see? In any and every situation, a moral person is worse off than an immoral one.

- Plato's Republic, 343d

”



Plato (424-347 BCE)

“

The point is that immorality has a bad name because people are afraid of being at the receiving end of it, not of doing it.

- Plato's Republic, 344c

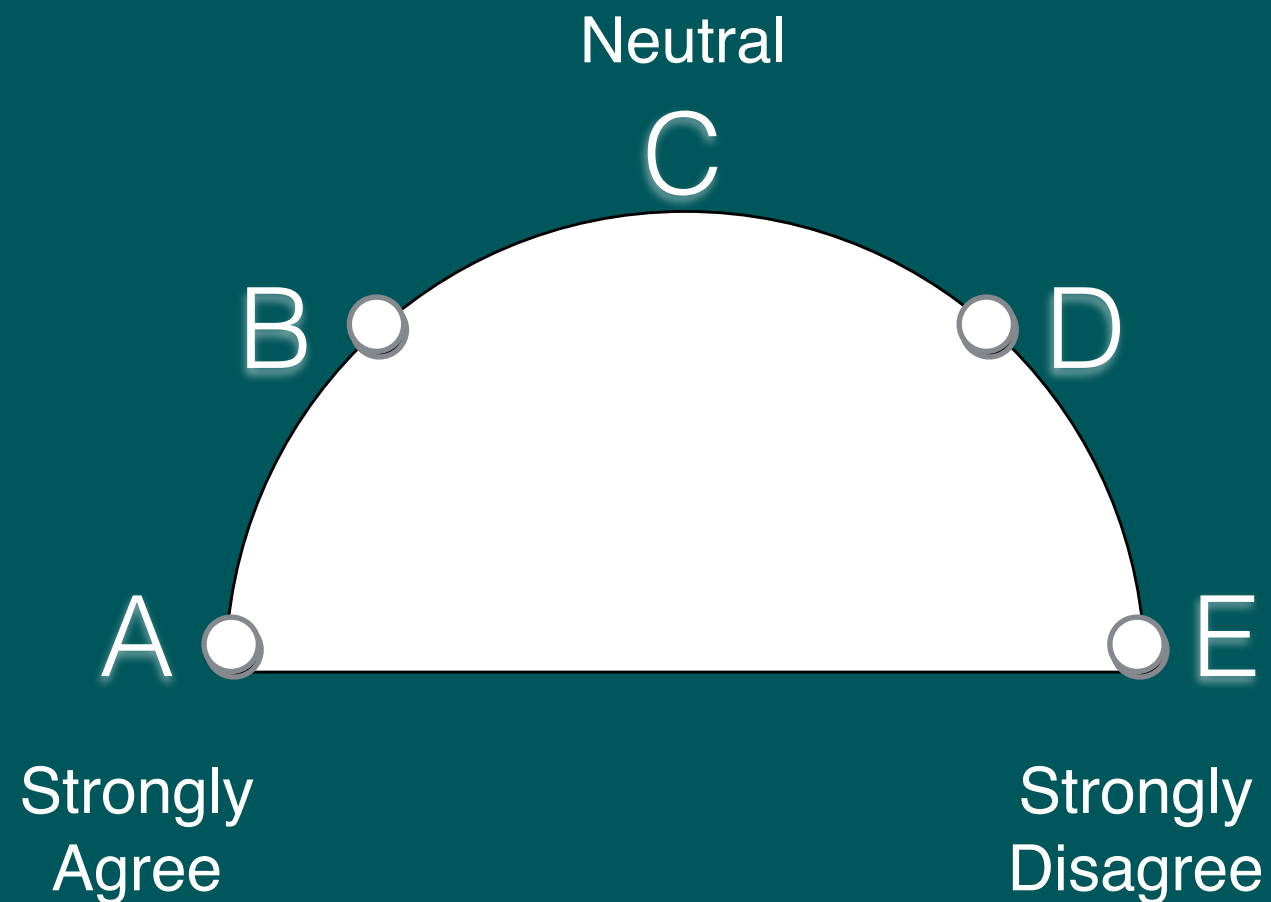
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# Poll

## Question

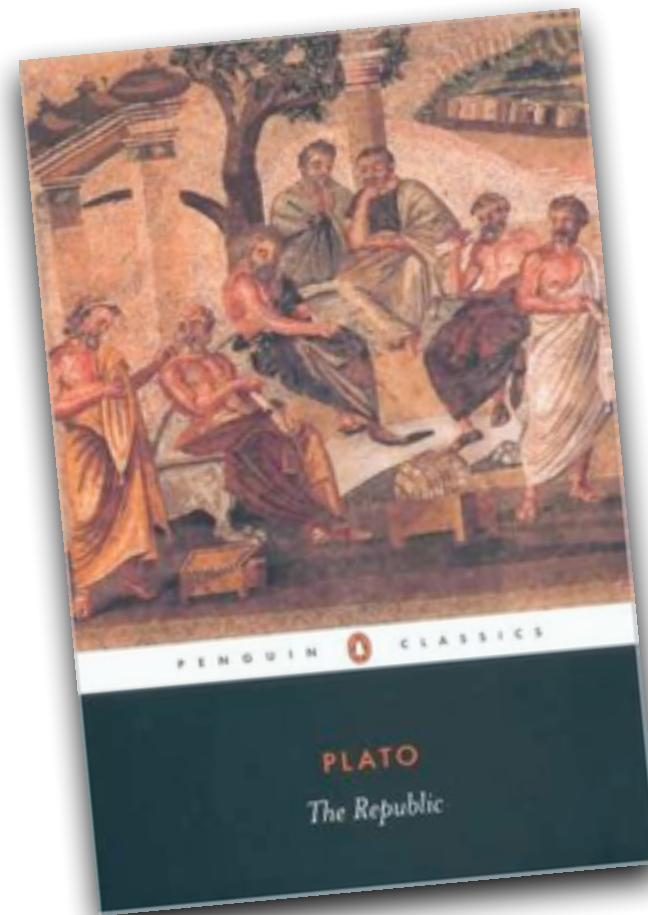
Do you agree with Thrasymachus?





Four Characters:

1. Cephalus ✓
2. Polemarchus ✓
3. Thrasymachus ✓
4. Glaucon



What is Justice?

- It's an agreement
- Acting justly is a compromise
- Its value is instrumental



Suppose now that there were two such magic rings, and the just put on one of them and the unjust the other; no man can be imagined to be of such an iron nature that he would stand fast in justice. No man would keep his hands off what was not his own when he could safely take what he liked out of the market, or go into houses and lie with any one at his pleasure, or kill or release from prison whom he would, and in all respects be like a God among men. Then the actions of the just would be as the actions of the unjust; they would both come at last to the same point. And this we may truly affirm to be a great proof that a man is just, not willingly or because he thinks that justice is any good to him individually, but of necessity, for wherever any one thinks that he can safely be unjust, there he is unjust. For all men believe in their hearts that injustice is far more profitable to the individual than justice, and he who argues as I have been supposing, will say that they are right.

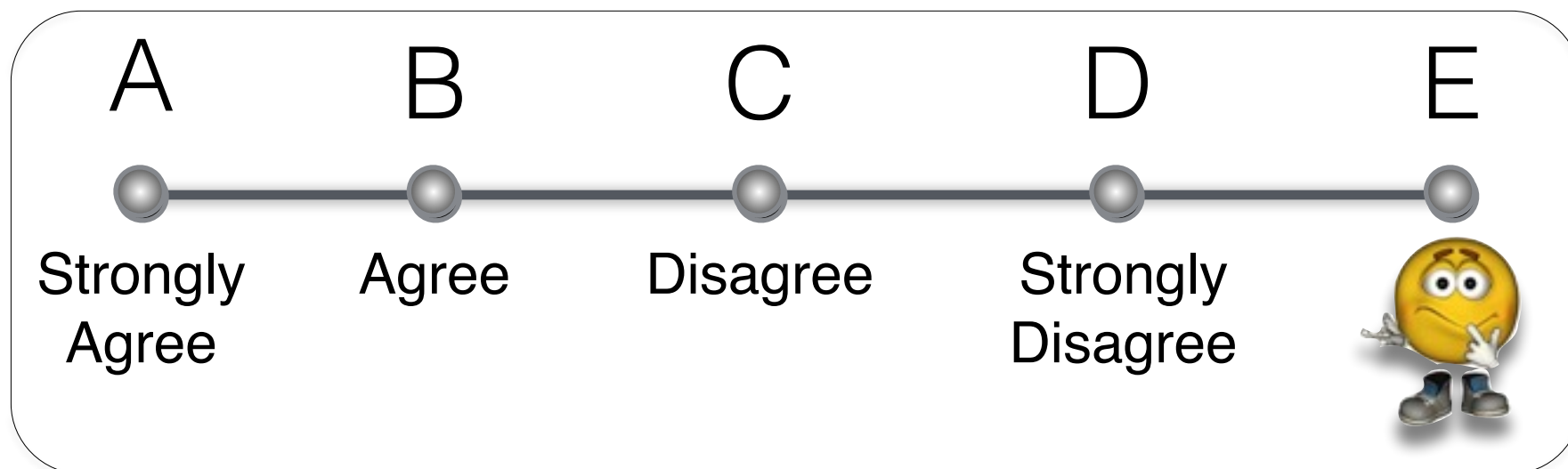




# Poll

## Claim

The only reason we are good is out of necessity.  
No one is ever good for the sake of being good.





I can do whatever I want, wherever I want,  
whenever I want, for as long as I want



		Me	
		Act Freely	Be Moral
You	(A) Act Freely	-1 , -1	8 , 0
	(B) Be Moral	0 , 8	10 , 10

## Preference Ordering

10 Peaceful

8 Unfettered Freedom

0 Miserable

-1 Nasty &amp; Brutish





Russ Shafer-Landau

“

In civilized society, no one is all-powerful. But this doesn't change our basic motivation. We do best for ourselves by sometimes helping others. We keep our word so that we gain the trust of those who can help us.

- Text, p. 91

”



Russ Shafer-Landau

“

We don't kill our enemies for fear that we will be the next target. But no matter our position in the world, we all want the very same thing: to make ourselves as well off as we can be.

- Text, p. 91

”

“



Russ Shafer-Landau

This is the view of psychological egoism, which tells us that there is only one thing that motivates human beings: self interest.

- Text, p. 91

”

Psychological egoism is a psychological thesis...not an ethical thesis. It is a description...not a prescription

So why does it matter?

- P1 If psychological egoism is true, then we cannot be altruistic.
- P2 If we can't be altruistic, then it can't be our duty to be altruistic.
- P3 Therefore, if psychological egoism is true, then it can't be our duty to be altruistic.
- P4 Psychological egoism is true
- 
- C Therefore, it can't be our duty to be altruistic

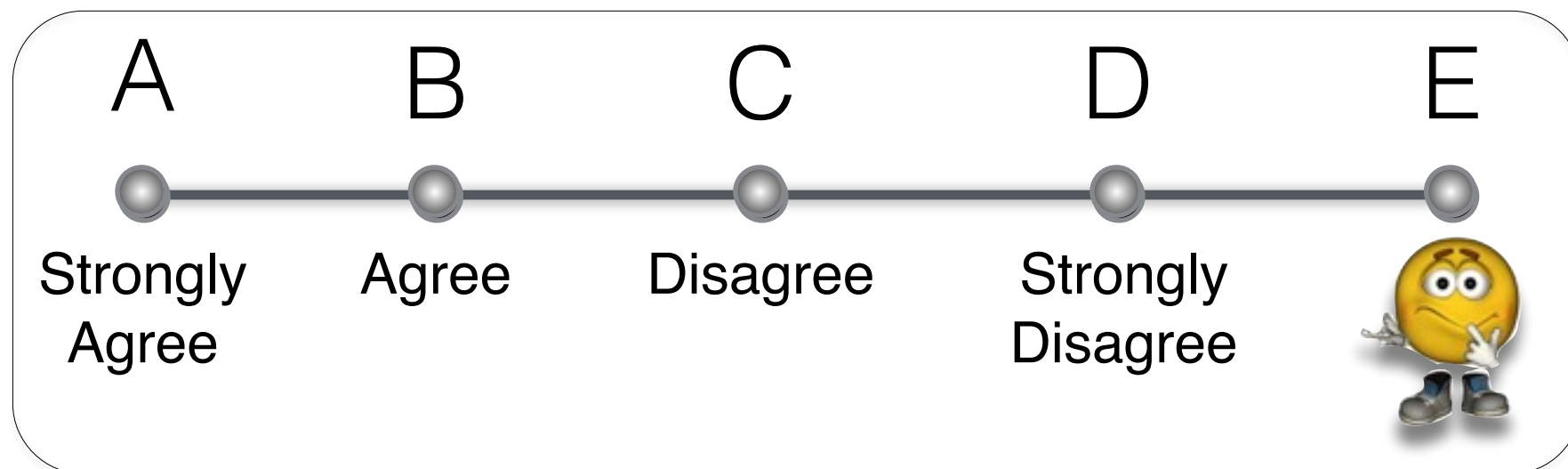




# Poll

## Claim

Psychological egoism is true.





Russ Shafer-Landau

“

Suppose [P4] is true, and that altruism is a myth. Then we have no duty to be compassionate, considerate, kind, or generous. We would have to radically change our moral ideals...

- Text, p. 95

”

Think of:

- an act of compassion
- an act of kindness
- an act of generosity

58

## 1 minute essay

Do you think psychological egoism is true?

Ask me anything!