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Paper #1

**Justice in the view of a Republic: Socrates vs. Thrasymachus**

Socrates in the dialogues of the *Plato’s Republic* explores various aspects of justice through unraveling the opinions of his counterparts. While Socrates inquires much about the beliefs of others, he never attempts to prove his answer right. Instead, Socrates attempts to prove the answers of others wrong. In particular, the character Thrasymachus displays much resistance towards the philosophy of Socrates. He argues Justice is defined as the interest of the stronger. Formulating a belief in that the stronger make no mistakes, allowing them to rule over others. As we explore the meaning of justice through the eyes of Thrasymachus, we discover he is blinded by ignorance and his inability to see beyond the corruption of power and money. When examining the degree of contradiction in his argument and comparing it with Socrates’s view of a republic, we see that Thrasymachus is not only illogical, but also not ready to learn.

Socrates’s most powerful form of persuasion is through Thrasymachus’s own self-contradiction. An example of such a contradiction is when Thrasymachus explains to Socrates the correlation between strength and justice:

People condemn injustice because they fear that they may be its victims, not because they shrink from committing it. I tell you, Socrates, injustice-when practiced on a large enough scale-has more strength, freedom, and mastery than justice. As I said from the beginning, justice is the interest of the stronger, while injustice is our own profit and interest. (Anderson 26)

Thrasymachus suggests injustice can have more strength than justice itself. He continues to reinforce justice as the interest of the stronger when he even argues how injustice is our own profit and interest. Not only does Thrasymachus prove to have an invalid argument, but also none of what he says makes logical sense. How can justice be the interest of the stronger, when Thrasymachus implies that the most effective way to pursue one’s interest and become stronger is through the practice of unjust behavior? By acknowledging a connection between profit and interest, Thrasymachus exemplifies his inability to look beyond the influence of money. Thrasymachus is unable to comprehend or even investigate the meaning of justice, because the perceived power of money clouds his judgment. His argument is most ineffectual because he clearly contradicts himself when asserting justice is the interest of the stronger followed by claiming injustice can have more strength than justice.

In book two, Socrates makes a convincing argument on what a Republic needs. He describes the occupations that contribute to a flourishing republic when he says, “Then our original republic is too small, so we must create a larger one. We must fill it with a multitude of occupations which go far beyond basic needs, such as hunters; and imitators (both visual artists who work with shape and color and musicians), poets and the rhapsodists who cling to them, actors, dancers, contractors . . .” (Anderson 62). While this does not inherently define what constitutes justice, Socrates brings up an aspect of justice revealing Thrasymachus’s view as narrow-minded. He reveals a republic must have a diversity of people with specific skillsets in order to fill the roles in society. He also discusses earlier on in book two; how these occupations require people to focus on their occupation. In a clearer sense, a person must be passionate and interested about their job. To debate Thrasymachus, I ask how can justice be the interest of only the stronger when there are so many different interests that make up a society. Being stronger is inexistent if people are not stronger in the same passion. For example the MVP baseball player is no better nor stronger than the author Roald Dahl. One is a stronger baseball player and one is a stronger writer. Both individuals display strength, but in different fields of interest. In book one, Thrasymachus argues: “just always lose to the unjust” (Anderson 25). This shows how Thrasymachus ignorantly views justice in black and white, someone either wins or someone either loses. By considering both the view of Scorates’s vision of a republic and Thrasymachus’s view of justice, we see there is a conflict of interests. Socrates believes in a symbiosis between everyone in society, hoping everyone’s occupation complements each other in building a better Republic. While in the case of Thrasymachus, he believes the stronger make the decisions for the weaker, in building an effective republic. Thrasymachus’s view of a republic is too narrow, to give credibility to his definition of justice.

As I examine both sides of the argument, I still believe that Thrasymachus is illogical in his claims, but I do not necessarily feel that one definition of justice according to a successful republic is truer than the other. Both characters shed light on what they believe is just, but on a deeper level, they reveal their moral compass. Their ideas conflict with what is believed to be right or wrong. After reviewing evidence from only Book one and two, my initial position would stand between the assertions of Socrates and Thrasymachus. I believe there are characteristics of both mentalities that contribute to a well-managed republic.

Works Cited

Plato, and Albert A. Anderson. *Plato's Republic*. Mills, MA: Agora Publications, 2001. Print.

***“I pledge my honor that I have neither received nor provided unauthorized assistance during the completion of this work.”***