

WHAT IS RIGHT CONDUCT? PLATO

BY GINGER SANDS

WHAT IS JUSTICE?

3 THEORIES:

- 1. Relativism: many moral theories and no one is better than another**
- 2. Nihilism: no such thing as morality**
- 3. Objectivism: one way of doing things**

CEPHALUS

- He says that if you owe someone something you should repay them
- Closest to relativism

SOCRATES RESPONSE TO CEPHALUS

- **He responds with an example of a friend who lent you a weapon**
- **The friend goes crazy and wants the weapon back**
- **Socrates argues that it would be wrong to give back what one owes here**

**WHAT IS THE PROBLEM WITH
GIVING BACK WHAT YOU OWE?**

THRASYMACHUS

- **He makes the argument at the dinner party that nothing is moral**
- **He is a classic Nihilist**
- **He argues that morality/justice is doing whatever the people in charge want**
- **Wrong—there has to be something that clearly says something is wrong: murder example**

SOCRATES RESPONSE TO THRASYMACHUS

- **Argues that rulers rule for the benefit of the subjects, not themselves**

SOCRATES

- “This then, my good man, is what I say justice is, the same in all cities, the advantage of the established government, and correct reasoning will conclude that the just is the same everywhere, the advantage of the stronger” (8).
- **Socrates is getting into a theory of objectivism: one way of doing things**
- **Plato’s opinions are shown through Socrates**

JUST VS. UNJUST

- **Socrates and Thrasymachus compare just and unjust people**
- **Thrasymachus argues:**
 - people in power are thieves and people obey them in order to protect themselves
 - What we think of morality is learned through reward and punishment
- **Socrates argues:**
 - Rulers rule for the benefit of the subjects, not for themselves (no personal benefits): sheep example
- **They agree that the just man wants advantage over the unjust (but not over other just people); the unjust man wants advantage over everyone**

- **Socrates: the just man is wise and good, the unjust man is not wise and good**
- **Thrasymachus: injustice is more powerful than justice**
 - Socrates argues with his example of a city (must be in order to rule other cities)
 - By the end of Book I, Thrasymachus still doesn't believe Socrates' views

**WHAT MAKES A PERSON JUST?
UNJUST?**

CONCLUSION

- **Plato supported the theory of objectivism (through Socrates) that there is one way of doing things**
- **He tries to argue with Thrasymachus that people in charge are just, and not trying to benefit themselves**
- **Relativism and Nihilism seem crazy—a society cannot function without a set of rules planned out: there cannot be multiple right ways of doing something**
- **Objectivism is right**