

Plato, *Republic*

1. What is justice?
2. Why should we be just?

What is Justice?

Thrasymachus—338c:

“Justice is nothing other than the advantage
of the stronger”

What is Justice?

“Justice is the advantage of the stronger”

Socrates' reply: Sometimes rulers are wrong about what is in their best interest. They make laws that actually don't appeal to their advantage. Complying with these laws is just, but is *not* the interest of the stronger.

Thrasymachus: When rulers make mistakes, they're not really rulers at the moment of the mistake. Whenever I *properly* ('precisely' in the text) rule, I make no mistakes. So justice is the advantage of the stronger after all.
-this is a more sophisticated position, and requires a more sophisticated response

Socrates: 342e "No one in any position of rule, insofar as he is a ruler, seeks or orders what is advantageous to himself, but what is advantageous to his subjects; the ones of whom he is himself the craftsman. It is to his subjects and what is advantageous and proper to them that he looks"

Why be just?

Thrasymachus: 344d [20] "Those who reproach injustice do so because they are afraid not of doing it but of suffering it"

Are we better off being completely just or completely unjust?

"There is no honor among thieves."

Why be just?

Glaucon—359 a:

“This, they say, is the origin and essence of justice. It is intermediate between the best and the worst. The best is to do injustice without paying the penalty; the worst is to suffer it without being able to take revenge. Justice is a mean between these two extremes. People value it not as a good but because they are too weak to do injustice with impunity.”

The Challenge from Prudence:

Why should we bother doing the right thing if it usually leaves us worse off?

Next time: Read Nietzsche
Preface sections 1,2,3,5 and 6
First essay sections 1-4