

In Plato's *Republic*, the sophist, Thrasymachus, describes 'justice' as "nothing other than the advantage of the stronger" (Republic 338c), as the "obedience to laws" (Republic 339b), and "nothing but the advantage of another" (Republic 343c). His first response that justice is nothing other than the advantage of the stronger is more of a conclusion rather than a definition of 'justice,' in that he also provides premises for his conclusion. His first premise is that a government is the master of each city, meaning the rulers are stronger than the ruled as a matter of political fact. Secondly, every government has laws for its advantage such as a democracy has democratic laws and a tyrannical government has tyrannical laws. In a democracy, the majority is the stronger, while in a tyrannical government the tyrant is the stronger. Thirdly, he states that these clearly given laws have consequences when broken, so obeying the laws of the stronger is 'justice.' This third premise is more of a literal legalistic definition of 'justice' as a person who is 'just' follows the laws. His conclusion is that justice is the same in every city-state in that it is justice in the form of what is most advantageous to the stronger because they will naturally decide what is best for them and their type of government as both a social and psychological fact. By the mere fact of staying in power as the governing power requires keeping the ruled subordinate to the ruling, they will continue to do so ongoing and their laws will tend towards the financial benefit and hierarchical status of the rulers themselves.

To further explain his position of 'justice' as always being the advantage of the stronger, Thrasymachus likens the sovereign power to that of a craftsman. The craftsman works for perfection and to his own advantage. When a so-called craftsman makes a

mistake, this is because he is not a true craftsman, per se, because an actual craftsman is not ignorant to his craft. So, in this analogy, a true governing leader or body will not make mistakes in serving their purpose because Thrasymachus believes they are infallible in this sense, as they know how to govern for their natural best interest and they are intending to serve their best interest while benefiting from such dominance (Republic 340e-341a). Furthermore, this means that the sovereign must not only be superior in force as to enforce or coerce the laws, but like a craftsman the sovereign must also be superior in knowledge and implementation.

Thrasymachus' third statement describing 'justice' as being "the good of another" is to say that it may not necessarily benefit the ruled to follow the laws of the ruler, or to do what is 'just.' This is where he delves into the idea that 'injustice' is profitable or advantageous for one's self-interests, while 'justice' is serving the purpose of the governing power as through obeying their laws (Republic 344c). Thrasymachus proposes that if one can commit commonly held unjust acts, such as stealing, and get away with it forever through impunity, it is to this individual's advantage to continue doing so. Therefore, it behooves individuals to commit unjust acts to their own advantage, making them happier people than those that simply follow the laws of the society.

It is also key to point out that Thrasymachus suggests that kings have always benefited more greatly than their ruled people have, as seen in an example of a shepherd. Typically, when people think of a shepherd like that of Jesus in today's 'shepherd' analogies, they think the Shepherd tends His flock. Whereas, historically speaking, according to Thrasymachus, they have used the people for their own personal gain beyond

their fair share similar to a shepherd shearing and butchering his sheep. This is to say that 'justice' is what this shepherd, or government, says it is, while they live and profit from 'injustice' gaining more than they should as it is not equal. Accordingly, Thrasymachus' position is that 'justice,' 'honesty,' and 'fairness' are less valuable than 'injustice,' because 'injustice' has greater gains, thus greater happiness for those that gain (Republic 343). Thrasymachus, simply put, thinks 'happiness,' or 'well-being,' consists in getting more than one's fair share of what many call the "good things" of life, power, wealth, pleasure, prestige, and more. For Thrasymachus, the happiness and well-being as an end, 'virtue' is one's ability of attaining those ends, while 'knowledge' in this case is one's know-how in matters of 'injustice' (Republic 347e).

Work Cited

*Plato. Plato's The Republic. New York :Books, Inc., 1943. Print.*