

Plato's republic book two: a study of the theme of injustice as depicted by gyges ...

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Why Should I be Moral?

Gyges was a shepherd under the eyes and rule of the king of Lydia. When Gyges was feeding his flock one night, an earthquake started to shake the earth. When this happened, the ground in front of him opened up, and Gyges looked in and he saw a dead body of stature that had a gold ring on its finger. Gyges took the ring off of his finger, and when Gyges went to turn the ring on his finger, he became invisible. When he turned the ring inwards he became invisible, but when he turned it outwards he became visible once again. He used this power to overthrow the kingdom and take it for himself. The story of the ring is supposed to show the relationship between an unjust person and a just person. Reading this story puts the question of debate between a just man and a man who is unjust.

“ They say that to do injustice is, by nature, good; to suffer injustice, evil; but that the evil is greater than the good.” “...To do injustice and not be punished, and the worst of all, which is to suffer injustice without the power of retaliation; and justice, being at a middle point between the two, is tolerated not as a good, but as the lesser evil, and honored by reason of the inability of men to do injustice.” This story raises the attention to the morals of a man. If a man was given an invisible ring and could get anything he wanted without being punished, what would stop him? “ No man would keep his hands off what was not his own when he could safely take what he liked out of the market ... and in all respects be like a God among men.” This statement here shows that even if a man was just in the eyes of others, he

still arrives at the same injustice point that the man who is out right injustice comes to. No one can safely be unjust.

This story is a great example to support a person who is an ethical egoist. An egoist is someone that believes that everyone should be selfish and do everything for themselves. Their attitude is to step on others to their way to the top. The story does a fantastic job of showing that everyone is looking out for themselves above anyone else. In the story, it states how, “ No man would keep his hands off what was not his own when he could safely get away with it.” This is where human flourishing comes into view. Human flourishing is a termed used to describe someone’s happiness and external good such as health and beauty. Egoists’ say that a man is going to do whatever he needs to do to flourish, even if it means that the man will have to do something unjust. He is ultimately looking out for himself and will do whatever he needs to do to reach the level of happiness that he thinks he needs or wants.

An egoist is all about pursuing self-interest over everyone else. No one comes before his or herself. This thought differs to that of Plato’s position. Plato disagrees with this. Plato believed that morality must be shown to be in the interest of the individual. Plato believed that human happiness could result only from the fulfillment of man’s real nature.

Plato argues that being able to do what you want will not make a person better off. Plato says, “... everyone is better off being ruled by the godlike and intelligent; preferably if he has it inside, but if not, it should be imposed on him from without so that we may all be friends and as nearly alike as

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possible, all steered by the same thing.” If a man were to do what he wanted would he ever be just? He argues that it is not morally right for a man to do such things that are unjust. If it is true that a man is only looking out for himself and is selfish, than the man would do everything in his power to make sure that he is happy. Plato states, “ ...How can we say that it pays for a man to be unjust or self-indulgent or to do something shameful to get more money or power if by doing so he makes himself worse?”

“ And how can it pay to commit injustice without getting caught and being punished? Doesn't getting away with it make a man even worse? Whereas if a man gets caught and punished, his beastlike part is taken in and tamed, his tame part is set free, and his whole should acquires justice and temperance and knowledge. Therefore his soul recovers its best nature and attains a state more honorable than the state the body attains when it acquires health and strength and beauty by as much as the should is more honorable than the body.” These are the quotes that Plato uses to get his point across that doing what you want will not make you better off. Plato then ends his argument by saying, “ Then won't a sensible man spend his life direction all his efforts to this end?” Plato believes that every man should strive to the goal of being a just person and do the things that are moral, and they will be better off than those who do not.