

# Plato and justice with today's perception essay

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Plato's Theory of Justice Plato's Justice for individuals and states, and the rule of law. In the Republic, Plato posits that justice is preferable to injustice.

Thrasymachus claims that injustice without recourse or consequence is the most rewarding experience. Glaucon adds the analogy of the ring of Gyges, and Adeimantus describes how appearance is often more important than reality.

Plato is then faced with the rebuttal of their arguments. To illuminate his logic, he utilizes several interrelated geometrical models that tie the virtue of the soul and the functions of individuals, classes, and states together.

Through these models he illustrates the organic conservative argument whereby the individual is the microcosm of the soul, and the state is a macrocosm of the soul.

Plato asserts that if justice is good for the state, and the individual is analogous to the state, then justice is good for the individual. Given that justice on the state level was a widely accepted concept in Athens, it was more efficient for Plato to utilize this particular syllogism to prove his point to Thrasymachus. Plato's argument is only valid if he can prove that justice is good for the society or state, and that the organic conservative argument is true. In type The Philosopher Kings hold the highest virtue in wisdom.

To become wise they must gain knowledge of the ultimate good through the Forms. The Forms are objects of knowledge, which sit atop a geometric progression which must be traversed in a linear fashion. The first level of knowledge contains images, shadows, pictures, desires, and emotions.

Belief exists in the visible realm, where perception of objects provides the basis for belief. Contemplation of simple mathematical Forms yields linear reasoning. The final stage is the comprehension of the Forms and the capacity within human nature to comprehend the true nature of reality. Here the philosopher kings become acquainted with the concepts of equality, beauty, truth, and the Form of the ultimate good. These rulers must apply their knowledge in best method of governing possible. In particular, they must promote utmost efficiency of every participating individual in the state, as well as maintaining justice.

Plato best describes his argument here: As in a well-organized state, the justice of an individual human being emerges only from the interrelationship among its separate components?? (Republic 443d). The application of Plato's model of government in the early Middle Ages was certainly lacking, The working of the separate components of the Christian state was far from fluid. The divine line of rulers rarely had any knowledge of the Form of the Good like Plato's philosopher kings.

Knowledge of the Form of the Good is essential to the application of Plato's republic. Thus the logical progression towards a rule of law method only leaves one asking why it took so long to make that change. Certainly the kings and the papacy were aware of the inflexibility of a Romanesque and Platonic rule of law, but this was still a vast improvement over the biases and inefficiencies of the early statesman like kings. I would argue that a tyrannical model of government offers the best true description of what was practiced by early Christian medieval governments in Europe. In early

medieval politics, the republic method of rule by statesman was the preferred Form of governance. The royal families constituted the effectual guardian class.

The power to rule was based on a perceived line of divinity, which often received validation from the Catholic Church and the Papacy. Pagan undertones and social structures in Germanic communities also contributed to an environment of superstition and strict adherence to the ideal of Christianity, particularly the divine lineage and rights to rule. This is evidenced in the reluctance in medieval times to look for a king outside of the divine line even when the line offered no suitable rule. It has been objected that hypothetical agreements cannot bind people; only actual contracts or agreements can impose obligations and commitments (Dworkin, 1977, 150ff). In response, Rawls says that the OP is to be used "to help us work out what we now think" (CP, 402); "it incorporates conditions...we do in fact accept," (TJ 587/514) and is a kind of "thought experiment.

for the purpose of public- and self-clarification" (JF, 17). Hypothetical agreement in the original position does not then bind anyone to duties or commitments he/she does not already have. Its point rather is to explicate the requirements of moral concepts of justice and enable us to draw the consequences of considered certain moral convictions that we all presumably share. Whether we in turn consciously accept or agree to these consequences and the principles and duties they implicate once brought to our awareness is irrelevant to their justification.

For surely it can matter little to the justification of moral principles whether or not existing people actually do accept or agree to them. The point rather of conjecturing the outcome of a hypothetical agreement is that, assuming that the premises underlying the original position correctly represent our most deeply held considered moral convictions, then we are committed to endorsing the resulting principles and duties whether or not we actually accept or agree to them. Not to do so implies a failure to live up to the consequences of our own moral convictions about justice. For example, suppose principles of justice were to impose a duty to practice impartial benevolence among all people, and thus a duty to show no greater concern for the welfare of ourselves and loved ones than we do towards billions of others. This principle demands too much of human nature and would not be feasible—people simply would reject its onerous demands. But Rawls's stability requirement implies more than just 'ought implies can.' It says that principles of justice and the scheme of social cooperation they describe should evince "stability for the right reasons" (PL, xliii; CP, 589). Recall here the higher-order interests of the parties in the exercise and development of their capacities for justice.

A just society should be able to endure not simply as a *modus vivendi*, by coercive enforcement of its provisions and its promoting the majority of peoples' interests. Stability "for the right reasons" requires that people support society for moral reasons of justice; society's basic principles must respond to reasonable persons' capacities for justice and engage their sense of justice. Rawls regards our moral capacities for justice as an integral part of our nature as sociable beings. He believes that one role of a conception of

justice is to accommodate human capacities for sociability, the capacities for justice that enable us to be cooperative social beings. So not only should a conception of justice advance human interests, but it should also answer to our moral psychology by enabling us to knowingly and willingly exercise our moral capacities and sensibilities, which are among the moral powers to be reasonable. This is one way that Rawls's conception of justice is "ideal-based" (CP 400-401 n. ): it is based in an ideal of human beings as free and equal moral persons and an ideal of their social relations as acceptable and justifiable to them (the ideal of a well-ordered society).

This relates to the second ground for the stability condition, which can only be mentioned here: it is that principles of justice should be compatible with, and even conducive to, the human good. It speaks strongly in favor of a conception of justice that it is compatible with and promotes the human good. First, if a conception of justice requires of many reasonable people that they give up their pursuit of the particular interests that constitute their conception of the good (as Rawls argues against utilitarianism), this conception could not gain their support and would not be stable over long periods of time. Moreover, assuming that the exercise and development of the moral powers are fundamental interests of citizens, a conception of justice should enable citizens to adequately exercise and fully develop these capacities.

It must then engage their sense of justice, and (ideally for Rawls) they should be able to find that acting on and from principles of justice is worth doing for its own sake.. For Rawls, it speaks strongly in favor of a conception of justice

if acting for the sake of its principles is experienced by citizens as an activity that is good in itself.

For then justice and exercise of the sense of justice are for those persons intrinsic goods and a precondition for their living a good life..