

# The socratic definition of justice as doing one's own work essay samples

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In book 4, at about 433B (p. 119) Socrates defines justice as "doing one's work." What does he mean by that? His meaning on to state the word was that this definition in a way was "laid down and often repeated" in the course of their discussion?

## **Introduction**

The paper aims at explaining what Socrates meant by "doing one's work" and why the definition was laid down and often repeated.

Socrates says that a justice is doing one's own work. By stating these facts he meant everyone in the town has something that he or she can do.

Through this everyone gets what is not his and no one is deprived of what he should have (Vlastos 665). In addition, he highlights the justice as the missing thing in the flourishing of the town. Socrates says that this definition of justice was laid down and often repeated because every person in the city is encouraged to identify their task and pursue it. The fact that this was not happening makes the definition repeated. Socrates identified this as a stumbling block to the success of the town (Vlastos 665).

During the foundation of the city, they were ingredients for success of the town that were identified. These ingredients included temperance, courage and wisdom. However, one very crucial thing was missing, and that was justice. People had to do each their job and stop wasting the handiwork of others. The town provides everyone with an opportunity to pursue something and be successful in it as long as the city lasts (Vlastos 666).

In addition, the Socrates definition of justice would mean that meddling with what one has, not worked for or doing another person's work is injustice.

Therefore, to ensure justice everyone should work and get what they

deserve. Socrates sees injustice as the enemy of the town (Vlastos 666). He suggests that facilitating justice in the town will make everyone in the town successful. People will not have to take what they have not worked for and everyone who has worked hard will get the reward they deserve. However, in as much as people may be doing their work, doing the work that one does not fit into is seen as incorrect. Moreover, the process of meddling will lead to the destruction of the city (Vlastos 667). Therefore, Socrates argues that everyone has to do their work, but not try to interchange roles. Like he says, everyone should stick to what they are good at handling. The soldier should do his own work, the guardian, the judge, and the craftsman should all do their work and not interchange roles. If people interchange, their roles, this will not be justice and it will lead to the destruction of the town (Vlastos 665). The meaning of this is that a judge may not do the work of a craftsman effectively. People have different classes in society and it is only if everyone just sticks to his or her class (Vlastos 667).

The process becomes meddling when people try to move from their class to another in pursuit of wealth or something else of interest (Vlastos 667).

Socrates believes that the city is doing relatively well with temperance, wisdom and courage, however, justice is lacking since people are meddling with what is not. There is injustice in the city because people do not understand the importance of doing the own work and the dangers of interchanging roles (Vlastos 667).

The city is not making the progress that Socrates thinks it is capable of making. It is because without justice, it is like standing still and moving your hand and head and expecting to move to the next step (Vlastos 667).

## **Work cited**

Vlastos, Gregory. "The Argument in the Republic that Justice Pays." *The Journal of Philosophy* (1968): 665-674.