

# Plato the republic perfect immorality philosophy essay

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According to Thrasymachus, immorality in its most perfect form, practiced on a grand scale proves to be more rewarding and personally advantageous than morality (Plato Republic, 344c). Thrasymachus further elaborates on his view that morality is simply the advantage of the stronger, while immorality is the wrongdoer attaining obedience from its subjects to do what is to his advantage (343c). Socrates refutes the notion that rulers in the strict sense aim to serve their own interest against those of its subjects, he states in reality it is the exact opposite that occurs (345a). Secondly, Socrates aims to show that it is morality that is more profitable than immorality.(352d)

Socrates claims Thrasymachus view, that immorality is more effective and powerful than morality is utterly incorrect and seeks to provide the correct answer(350d). Socrates believes that morality leads to a more rewarding life while immorality leads to the opposite (352d). Personally, I oppose the view that immorality on a grand scale is more rewarding than morality, my disagreement being based on the grounds of examining the benefits of morality against immortality.

Firstly, it is important to note the context that morality is being used in. Prior dialogue has concluded that morality is the advantage of the stronger, and immorality is the advantage of oneself (Beillard, Julien. 2011). Thrasymachus takes an attack at Socrates claim that no one, any and all authority, in his capacity as a ruler commands for his own advantage, but the advantage of his subjects (342e). To counter this claim, Thrasymachus examines shepherds and cowherds and the nature of the care provided to their subjects. His view is that a shepherd considers what is good for his sheep only to the extent that it serves to his advantage (343b). It seems to show

that Thrasymachus is evaluating the shepherd as an occupation for profit making where the sheep are sold. In this sense it would seem that what Thrasymachus is saying is true. However I disagree with this view, that the shepherd's interest is solely his own. The shepherd's interests lie within personal reasons as well as interest of the sheep for feeding and nurturing. The herder wants to provide food for his subjects to ensure that they are as healthy as possible. He also claims that in partnerships, the moral person always lags behind the immoral person. From this he means to say that when entering into business contracts, once completed the moral person becomes worse off (a little confusing.. at least for me )In comparison to the immoral. This argument does not seem to be true since when entering into business contracts whether temporary or permanent, the parties usually have a goal in mind. As a result of the goal being completed, the parties are satisfied and part ways. From this point of view the partners would be in the same position having attained their goal and discontinuing their partnership due to their needs equally being met. Furthermore, Thrasymachus now begins to discuss immorality. He does this by stating the benefit that immorality grants the person practicing it. The wrongdoers that possess the will to act immorally have their subjects act in a manner to their advantage, making him happy by doing the required task (343c). What he means by this can be shown by using slaves as examples. Considering that being forced against your will to perform a task surely satisfies the slave owners but it does not satisfy the slave's happiness in the slightest way. I feel this statement is quite accurate in regards to slavery, however examining this from a different perspective can lead to a different conclusion. When working

a job that has key performance measure indicators such as a call center with 108 seconds of standard talk time, management may pressure workers to meet or beat the standard talk time in order to attain bonuses from their senior managers. A work environment that is organized around performance usually has performance prizes and recognition, although management may be acting immoral by looking out for their own interest. Workers performing to the management's advantage are actually gaining advantage for themselves by winning prizes and earning recognition. As a result they are actually furthering their happiness. To ensure that Socrates assesses the extent to which immorality rather than morality is advantageous, he advises Socrates to look at immorality in its most perfect form (344a). With that said, Immorality in its most perfect form is where the wrongdoer's life is enhanced by unprecedented measures while the lives of his victims are ruined. This is the perfect form being discussed, such as a dictatorship, which imposes ones will upon a population in a grand scale and ruin the lives of others (344a). A classic example of this would be Hitler and execution of the Jewish people in the holocaust. It was a mass execution of the Jewish branch of the population. The reason he gives this example is to show what he means by practicing immorality on a grand scale by exterminating the Jews. Hitler was able to get his way and use his army in a way that was advantageous to him. His army succumbed to his wishes as he possessed the ruling power. According to Thrasymachus, Immorality practiced on a large enough scale is more powerful and has more license and authority than morality does (344c). The reason he says immorality is looked down upon is because people fear being the victims of it, not actually committing it (344c). From

this statement we conclude that Thrasymachus view is that injustice is stronger than justice. An interesting observation is that after this point, there seems to be a new context added in the meaning of morality. At first morality was defined as the advantage of the stronger, and the weak acting in the interest of the stronger. After it seems a new definition is available in the form of the strong getting the weak to do as they will (Beillard, Julien. 2011). Personally I think adding this new dimension to morality creates some confusion since he still uses the new dimension to describe immorality. Perhaps the reason he does this is because he realizes that most people would recognize acting in that manner, a form of immorality or a form of not being moral (Beillard, Julien. 2011). In conclusion of Thrasymachus's view immorality is more beneficial and rewarding in comparison to morality, this being because the immoral person has more power and is always in the better position.

Socrates outright contests Thrasymachus claim that rulers act in the interest of their own while neglecting the interest of their subjects (346e). Therefore he does not agree that injustice is more profitable than justice. Earlier in the dialogue, Thrasymachus advised Socrates that he is examining rulers in the strict sense. The ruler in strict sense also means the ruler who has authority and power over its subjects of interest. This means that the rulers must be infallible, if they do commit a mistake then, in that moment they are not acting in their interest and are not the stronger party (Beillard, Julien. 2011). This deviation from rulers to strict rulers seems to be a maneuver, to rid of the possibility of Socrates attaining the upper hand in the discussion. It is

sometimes true that rulers and those in powers do make mistakes and unintentionally go against their own interest. Socrates however has no problem tackling a more narrow definition, transitioning from ruler to a ruler in the strict sense. Furthermore Socrates begins to examine profession. He has an ongoing conversation with Thrasymachus which leads to the conclusion that every profession has its own particular benefit to bestow (346d). Also, examining this view of expertise in the sense of authority over its subject, seems as a plausible view due to the fact that professional's with accredited backing, usually do have authority in terms of knowledge over their patients such as Doctors. In bestowing the benefit, practitioners of that particular expertise benefit by making money by the use of moneymaking skill (346c). This seems to be a bit ambiguous, since Socrates defined in earlier sections, that making money is made from the skill of money making (346c). In order to make money, these practitioners need to use that skill or craft, so in return the practitioner are not benefiting in earning money from his practice but instead from the money making skill. This leads Socrates to point out that a practitioner gains no benefit from the practice of expertise, however their subjects gain all the benefits (346e). This response from Socrates signals the disagreement with Thrasymachus's assertion that morality is the advantage of the stronger party. With that said Rulers, Socrates says consider the advantage of its subject the weaker party and not the stronger party (345e).

Socrates now continues the dismantlement of Thrasymachus view, by attacking his view that perfect immorality is more profitable than perfect

morality. (347e) Profitable is not meant to mean making money, it is merely meant to provide more benefit. Socrates comes to the conclusion that an immoral person sets himself up as superior to others who are like him, as well as to people that are unlike him (349c). Socrates now looks to dissect Thrasymachus view that an immoral person is clever and good while the moral person is neither clever nor good (347e). Once again Socrates turns to examining professions, he inquires about whether each professional in their branch of expertise would want to set himself up as superior to another individual with the same expertise (349b). Attaining Thrasymachus's agreement at all levels, Socrates proves that a clever and knowledgeable person such as a musician, would not want to set himself up as superior to those who are like him, rather to people who lack the expertise and are unlike him (349c). However this interesting point needs some critical examination. This point seems to be a simple assumption or hypothesis that has no backing, there is no real proof and it seems a little doubtful that an immoral person would set himself up against people who are like him as well as people who are unlike him. A doctor for example would not try to set himself apart from other doctors, but maybe those who do not possess the expertise he has. To try to out-do someone of the same profession does not seem like a plausible thing for a practitioner of a certain profession to do (Beillard, Julien. 2011). The previous view by Thrasymachus was that an immoral person was clever and good. However through conversation Socrates has now got him to agree that instead it is a moral person who resembles a clever, good person, and an immoral person who resembles a bad, ignorant person (350c). From these statements, it was agreed upon that

morality is a good state and is knowledge, while immorality is a bad state and is ignorance. In other words, Immorality leads to no profit.

Socrates now leans towards opposing the claim that immorality is more effective and more powerful than morality. To begin his argument, Socrates questions that in a community or an army of pirates and thieves; could they function as a cohesive unit if they wronged each other (351c)?

Thrasymachus replies that the community could not function if they were to wrong one another, and if they did not wrong one another, the community as a whole would have a greater chance of success (351d). With this in mind, Socrates explains the reasoning why the community cannot function while acting immorally. Acting immorally causes conflict and disintegration of the community, while moral behavior creates peace and friendship (351d). This is a reasonable point, from this we can see that immoral behavior causes the collapse of the unit as a whole, while moral behavior fosters relationships and creates synergy. Therefore, The function of immorality generates hatred and dysfunction (352a), so if a partnership were to be created between two immoral people, that relationship would cease to exist. This point shows that clearly immorality is not effective. This point of view is definitely one that I agree with, since if one has the immoral behavior causing conflict, there is no way the community will be able to complete a goal or task due to the fact that the immoral behavior of the individuals internally would cause a downfall of the task at hand. The hostility generated internally will also turn to hostility between him and moral people (352a). From this it is clear to see that moral people, good people, are more effective and therefore moral



people are more capable at getting things done. As a result, The evidence starts to pile against Thrasymachus. He agrees with Socrates that the gods are moral beings (352a). This shows that an immoral person will be an enemy of gods, and a moral person will be in their favor. The reason this may be is because the gods are seen as good and moral beings, and it is known that each type of person is of the same type as people he is like.((?? You need to f ix this wording) Therefore the gods are unlike the immoral people, so the immoral people would fall out of favor with god, as would the dictator Thrasymachus was describing. The reason I think this is true, is because if the gods are good as people who believe in good, believe them to be. Acting bad or being immoral would definitely make someone fall out of favor with god. (You need to fix this entire sentence. I think you just need to switch around your periods and stuff) Socrates seems to have Thrasymachus stuck, agreeing with every question Socrates poses. They come to another conclusion that immoral people would never have been effective and performed in coordination, considering that if this was the case then it would be evident that there was obviously a degree of morality in them that allowed them to reach that state (352c). Socrates through and through discovers that people who are perfectly immoral are incapable of doing anything, causing them to be ineffective and proving Thrasymachus claim wrong (352b). In the beginning of the discussion, Thrasymachus advised Socrates to examine the issue while looking at perfect immorality (344a). By doing this we can see that perfect immorality would cause nothing but angst among the immoral and moral community. The moral person clearly has an advantage against an immoral person after examining these arguments.

Now that all of this has been said, the last point that Socrates wants to dispute is the fact that immorality is more rewarding in comparison to morality. As described earlier, every profession has a benefit, also everything has a particular job to accomplish (Beillard, Julien. 2011). The good state of anything is what makes it possible for the job to be accomplished well. The good state of anything is the function of the eyes, the good state of the eyes meaning to have vision enables us to perform the job accordingly, whereas the bad state such as being blind would restrict the ability to perform the job well (353c). This is a notion that is correct, since everything has a function and in order to fulfill the tasks, job or duty it must be in a good state or otherwise known as in working condition or good condition. If morality is a good state, as agreed upon, then it is morality that enables one to do a good job (353e). Another example he uses is the function of the mind. With this He examines the use of authority, to exercise authority using management skills. This would be a function of the mind and only the mind. The mind as all other functions has a good state. Socrates points out the fact that the mind will never perform its function without the presence of its good state (353e). What he means by this statement, is that everything has a function, a light bulb has the function to provide light, although without the presence of its good state, being powered, the light bulb will not be able to provide its function without being in a good state. These examples lead to the conclusion that any function will be performed well with a good state, and as agreed upon morality is a good mental state and immorality a bad mental state (353e). What this example points out is that morality is more rewarding than immorality, a good mental state will lead to a good life while a bad

mental state will lead to a bad life (353e). The reason for this is clear because if every part of our body, such as ears and eyes and mouth are in a bad state, it is highly unlikely we will be able to lead a good life in comparison to someone in a good state, being a moral state. Clearly we can see that the greater reward lies within the good state of morality and not immorality. A person who lives a good life is a happy person, and a person who does not is a sad person. Evidently, a pleased (you can use this word if you want? I just think you should use a diff word other than happy since you used it before) person is a moral person who lives a good life, and a sad person is an immoral person who lives a bad life (354a). Based on this line of reasoning, the claims seem to be true. Although it is plausible for someone to be immoral and still enjoy the life they have in their own line of reasoning, in regards to this reasoning to live a rewarding and happy life one must display moral behavior. In analyzing the arguments provided by Socrates leads us to believe that morality is a virtue, a special good state as he claims, however this claim seems to be a little controversial. As we have discussed above, a wise man is knowledgeable and this is a virtue, if this wise man is skilled at some art, he will not try to beat another person with the same art expertise as him (Beillard, Julien. 2011)

In conclusion, it is clear that Thrasymachus initial claim is incorrect and it is actually morality practiced on a large scale that proves rewarding and advantageous. Morality is not the advantage of the stronger or the stronger party getting the weak to succumb to their demands as Thrasymachus stated. Rulers in the strict sense, who have authority over a subordinate

have interest in the weaker party (345e). Thrasymachus states that immorality is more profitable however Socrates disagrees with this view and intends to prove that the statement is incorrect. The underlying belief that morality is more powerful and effective is a belief held by Thrasymachus that Socrates seeks to disprove. The last point that Socrates wants to refute, is that immorality leads to a rewarding life. As my opinions and defense have been presented, I believe that morality leads a more prosperous and advantageous life.