

LECTURE 3.3: Thrasymachus:

- In **Plato's Republic, Books 1-2**, Thrasymachus (late 5th c. BCE) is portrayed as the **Sophist** who asserted that injustice is to be preferred to the life of justice; that the just person does not do the just thing because it is just but only because of fear of being caught doing the unjust thing; and that between the just person and the unjust person, the really happy person is the unjust person.
- Thrasymachus did not look upon injustice as a defect of character. Rather, Thrasymachus considered the unjust person as positively superior in character and intelligence. Indeed, Thrasymachus says that "injustice pays," not only at the meager level of the pick-pocket (although there is profit in that too), but especially for those who carry injustice to perfection and make themselves masters of whole cities and nations.
- For Thrasymachus, justice is pursued by simpletons and leads to a weakness. For Thrasymachus, people should aggressively pursue their own interests in virtually unlimited form of self-assertion.
- Thsymachus regarded **justice as being in the interest of the stronger** and believed that "**might is right**." For Thrasymachus, laws are made by the ruling party for its own interests. These laws define what is right. In all countries alike, the notion of "right" means the same thing, since "right" is simply the interest of the party established in power. So, for Thrasymachus, "the sound conclusion is that what is 'right' is the same everywhere: **the interest of the stronger party**."
- Here, then, is the reduction of morality to power. This is an inevitable consequence of the skepticism of the sophists, which led them to **a relativistic attitude toward truth and ethics**.
- It was **SOCRATES'** chief concern to unravel the logical inconsistencies of the Sophists, to rebuild some notion of truth, and to establish some firm foundation for moral judgment.