

Socrates versus Polemarchus (*Rep.* I.331d–336a)

Polemarchus's view: justice is "to give to each man what is proper to him" or "what is due" = "to benefit one's friends and harm one's enemies" (332d).

Socrates advances four arguments against this view.

Argument One: on this view justice is trivial (332c-333e):

1. Justice is a *technē* (art, craft, skill) (332d).
2. But it is a *technē* with no sphere in which it is active.
3. Justice is at most the passive skill of guarding property.
4. But guarding property is different from using it.
5. And using property is more important than guarding it.
6. Therefore, justice is trivial.

Argument Two: on this view justice is as much a vice as a virtue (333e-334b):

1. Justice is the *technē* of guarding property.
2. Thus, one who is just is good at guarding property.
3. But one who is good at *x* is also good at the opposite of *x*.
4. So one who is good at guarding property is also good at stealing it.
5. One who is good at stealing money is a thief.
6. Therefore, the just man is a thief.

Argument Three: by Polemarchus's view of friend and foe it will sometimes be just to harm one's friends and to benefit one's enemies (334b-e):

1. A friend is a person who *seems* to be helpful; an enemy, a person who *seems* to be harmful.
2. But people make mistakes; they sometimes regard helpful persons as harmful and harmful persons as helpful.
3. A helpful person is good; a harmful person bad.
4. It is just to benefit the good and to harm the bad.
5. Therefore, it is sometimes just to harm one's friends and to benefit one's enemies.

Argument Four: by Polemarchus's view justice will sometimes produce injustice (334e-335e):

1. A friend is a person who both seems to be and is helpful; an enemy, a person who both seems to be and is harmful.
2. Thus, it is just to harm a person who is harmful (= bad).
3. To harm something is to damage its virtue (*aretē*).
4. Justice is human virtue.
5. Therefore, to harm a person is to make him more unjust.
6. So it is sometimes just to make a person more unjust.
7. (But the practice of a virtue cannot damage that very virtue.)
8. Hence, a just person can never harm another person.)