

Reading Guide

The Ring of Gyges: Morality and Hypocrisy

Readings for 13 January 2011

REQUIRED READINGS

- [A] David Reeve, Summaries of *Republic* Books I and II (Grube/Reeve, pp. 1 & 32-33)
- [B] Plato, *Republic*, Book II, 357b-368c (Grube/Reeve, pp. 32-43)
- [C] Batson, C. Daniel. "Moral Masquerades: Experimental Exploration of the Nature of Moral Motivation." *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Science* s(2008) 7, pp. 51-66. (V*2)

RECOMMENDED OPTIONAL READINGS

- [D] Plato, *Republic* Book I, 327a-354c (Grube/Reeve, pp. 1-31)

ABOUT THE READING GUIDE

For each of the required readings, you will find the following materials below:

Background: Basic information about the author and/or work, and general guidance about strategies for approaching the text.

Terms, Concepts, and Examples: A list of terms, concepts and examples from the text you should be sure you understand.

Reading Questions: Specific questions about the text to help you focus your reading.

[A] Plato, Introductory Materials (Grube/Reeve, pp. 1, 32&33)

Background

Plato's life & The Republic

Plato (c. 428-347BCE) -- along with his student Aristotle (384-322BCE) -- was one of the two most important philosophers of Western antiquity, and is among the most important figures in the entire Western intellectual tradition. His wide-ranging discussions address nearly every philosophical topic imaginable, and set the stage for philosophical exploration for the next two millennia.

Plato's *Republic* was written in Athens in Ancient Greek some 2500 years ago (ca.380 BCE) The text is divided into ten "books" (chapters) which go by the unimaginative names Book I, Book II, Book III, etc.

Like most of Plato's works, the text is written in dialogue form. The main character and first-person narrator of the dialogue is Plato's teacher Socrates (469-399 BCE), who, in the course of the dialogue converses with a number of interlocutors. Though there is much to be learned from keeping careful track of the roles and remarks of the various interlocutors, for our purposes we will only need to attend to two -- Glaucon and Adeimantus -- two young gentlemen of Athens who happen to be Plato's two brothers.

Translation

There are many translations of *The Republic* available in print and on-line. The edition we are using was chosen for its accessibility (it is a modern translation, produced with the needs of students in mind) and its accuracy (it is a revised version of one a classic mid-century translation by the scholar G.M.A. Grube.) The volume also has an extremely thorough and helpful index.

Most editions of *The Republic* include small numbers that appear in the margins of the text. These are called "Stephanus numbers," and they refer to the page numbers of a canonical edition of Plato's work prepared by Henricus Stephanus in 1578. Reference to these numbers enables coordination among readers who make use of different translations or editions.

Organization of the book

The opening pages of our edition were written by its editor and translator, David Reeve. They provide information about the translation process (vi-vii) and about Plato's life (viii-xiii.) Feel free to read these pages if their topics interest you.

The next section of the Introduction (xiv-xviii) provides a useful overview of the work as a whole. As Reeve notes in his footnote 6, this may be a bit hard to follow unless you have already looked at the text itself.

The brief italicized introductions at the beginning of each Book (e.g. on pages 1, 32-33, 60, etc.) provide an accessible and useful overview of the contents that follow. Since we are beginning our reading of the dialogue with Book II, I strongly encourage you to read the summary of Book I that appears on page 1, and then turn to the summary of Book II on pages 32-33 before beginning your reading of the actual text.

[B] Plato *Republic*, Book II 357b- 368c (Grube/Reeve, pp. 32-43)

Background

The selections that we are reading for today come from the beginning of *Republic* Book II.

In Book I, Plato's teacher Socrates has engaged in a conversation with a number of characters – among them a wealthy old man named Cephalus, his son Polemarchus, and the lively and provocative orator Thrasymachus – about the nature and value of justice. Each of the characters defends a view of justice that Socrates finds unsatisfying. Book I concludes with Socrates claiming that it is better to live justly than unjustly, but his audience remains unconvinced.

Book II, from which our selection is excerpted, begins with a conversation between Socrates, and Plato's older brother Glaucon, who takes over the argument where Thrasymachus had left off. (For a summary, see Grube/Reeve page 1.) Later in our selection, Plato's other brother Adeimantus takes over his their brother Glaucon's part.

Tip: As you read through the text, it may be helpful to write a small "S" where Socrates is speaking, and a small "G" or "A" where Glaucon or Adeimantus is speaking. (This can be a bit tricky, so don't worry if you can't do this in all cases. Note also that you won't need to do this for the later parts of our selection, since both Glaucon and Adeimantus have rather long monologues.) That is, you might notate as follows:

S: "When I said this, I thought I had done with the discussion, but it turned out to have been only a prelude. Glaucon showed his characteristic courage on this occasion too and refused to accept Thrasymachus' abandonment of the argument."

G: "Socrates," he said, "do you want to seem to have persuaded us that it is better in every way to be just than unjust, or do you want truly to convince of this?"

S: "I want truly to convince you," I said, "if I can."

Terms, Concepts, and Examples

Be sure that you understand and are able to distinguish among the following terms, concepts and examples:

Terms and Concepts: goods valued for their own sake; goods valued for their consequences; goods valued for both

Examples: The Ring of Gyges

Reading Questions

As you read, pay special attention to the following issues and questions:

- (1) What are the three kinds of goods that Socrates distinguishes beginning at 357b? What type of good is justice, according to Socrates?

- (2) What is the argument that Glaucon proposes to make at 358b? How does the subsequent discussion (358b-362c) map onto this outline? Try to identify the points at which each of the three issues – the nature and origins of justice, the unwillingness of people to practice justice, and the superiority of the unjust life – are discussed in the remainder of the selection.
- (3) What are the three additional arguments that Adeimantus offers beginning at 362d? (The first argument can be found at 363a-e; the second argument can be found at 364a; the third can be found at 364b-365a.) How does he go on (at 365b-c; 366b-367a) to connect these to the arguments that Glaucon had made earlier?
- (4) What are the objections to his view that Adeimantus considers at 365c-366b? How does he reply to these objections?
- (5) What is the task that Adeimantus sets for Socrates at 367b-d?
- (6) What sorts of responses do you think could be offered to the challenge that Glaucon and Adeimantus pose?

[C] Batson, C. Daniel. “Moral Masquerades: Experimental Exploration of the Nature of Moral Motivation.” *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* (2008) 7, 51-66.

Background

Daniel Batson (1943-) is an American social psychologist who teaches at the University of Kansas. He is best known for his work on the social psychology of altruism, on the sources and roles of empathic concern, and on the psychology of religion.

The paper that we are reading provides an overview of more than two decades of research done by Batson and his collaborators on a phenomenon that he calls *moral hypocrisy*. In the paper’s opening pages, Batson poses a question: “What is the nature of moral motivation – hypocrisy, integrity, both or neither?” The remainder of the paper offers some tentative answers to this question by describing a number of experiments from his research program. As you read through the paper, make sure that you understand the logical structure of this series of experiments, and how they relate to the original motivating question.

Terms, Concepts, and Examples

Be sure that you understand and are able to distinguish among the following terms, concepts and examples:

Terms and Concepts: moral hypocrisy; moral integrity; intrinsic moral motivation; altruistic motivation; self-deception; Golden Rule; imagine-self-perspective; imagine-other perspective

Examples: Coin-flip experiments

Reading Questions

As you read, pay special attention to the following issues and questions:

- (1) What does Batson mean by the expression “moral hypocrisy”? What reasons does he suggest people might have for acting in morally hypocritical ways?
- (2) What does Batson mean by the terms “moral philosophy” and “moral psychology” (52)? What role does he think abstract moral principles play in each of these domains?
- (3) Making use of the chart on page 55, be sure that you can answer the following questions:
 - (a) *Cases 2&3*: What do the numbers in column 2 (“Assign self”) for Cases 2&3 reveal? What about the numbers in column 4?
 - (b) *Cases 4/5 & 6/7*: How do the studies summarized in these rows (4-7) provide evidence regarding the role of self-deception in moral hypocrisy?
 - (c) *Cases 8-11*: What role did introducing a mirror have on participants’ behavior?
- (4) What is the difference between an “imagine-self” perspective and an “imagine-other” perspective? What effects does each have on stimulating altruistic behavior and moral integrity? What explanation does Batson offer for these effects?
- (5) Why do you think this reading was paired with the reading from *Republic* Book II?

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