

## Comparing Translations

This is part of the scene when Thrasymachus enters the discussion (336b–d):<sup>1</sup>

Καὶ ἐγὼ τε καὶ ὁ Πολέμαρχος δέισαντες διεπτοήθημεν· ὁ δ' εἰς τὸ μέσον φθεγξάμενος Τίς, ἔφη, C ὑμᾶς πάλαι φλυαρία ἔχει, ὦ Σώκρατες; καὶ τί εὐηθίζεσθε πρὸς ἀλλήλους ὑποκατακλιόμενοι ὑμῖν αὐτοῖς; ἀλλ' εἴπερ ὡς ἀληθῶς βούλει εἰδέναι τὸ δίκαιον ὅ τι ἔστι, μὴ μόνον ἐρώτα μηδὲ φιλοτιμοῦ ἐλέγχων, ἐπειδάν τίς τι ἀποκρίνηται, ἐγνωκῶς τοῦτο, ὅτι ῥᾶον ἐρωτᾶν ἢ ἀποκρίνεσθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸς ἀπόκρινα καὶ εἰπέ D τί φῆς εἶναι τὸ δίκαιον· καὶ ὅπως μοι μὴ ἐρείς, ὅτι τὸ δέον ἔστι μηδ' ὅτι τὸ ἀφέλιμον μηδ' ὅτι τὸ λυσiteloῦν μηδ' ὅτι τὸ κερδαλέον μηδ' ὅτι τὸ ξυμφέρον· ἀλλὰ σαφῶς μοι καὶ ἀκριβῶς λέγε ὅ τι ἂν λέγῃς·

*Jowett, 1888.* We were quite panic-stricken at the sight of him. He roared out to the whole company: What folly, Socrates, has taken possession of you all? And why, sillybillies, do you knock under to one another? I say that if you want really to know what justice is, you should not only ask but answer, and you should not seek honour to yourself from the refutation of an opponent, but have your own answer. And now I will not have you say that justice is duty or advantage or profit or gain or interest, for this sort of nonsense will not do for me; I must have clearness and accuracy.<sup>2</sup>

*Lee, 1974.* Polemarchus and I were panic-stricken, as Thrasymachus burst out and said, ‘What is all this nonsense, Socrates? Why do you go on in this childish way being so polite about each other’s opinions? If you really want to know what justice is, stop asking questions and then playing to the gallery by refuting anyone who answers you. You know perfectly well that it’s easier to ask questions than to answer them. Give us an answer yourself, and tell us what you think justice is. And don’t tell me that it’s duty, or expediency, or advantage, or profit, or interest. I won’t put up with nonsense of that sort; give me a clear and precise definition.’<sup>3</sup>

*Grube/Reeve, 1992.* Polemarchus and I were frightened and flustered as he roared into our midst: What nonsense have you two been talking, Socrates? Why do you act like idiots by giving way to one another? If you truly want to know what justice is, don’t just ask questions and then refute answers simply to satisfy your competitiveness or love of honor. You know very well that it is easier to ask

1 Plato’s Republic. The Greek Text, ed. B. Jowett & L. Campbell, 1894. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

2 Jowett, B. (1888). The Republic of Plato (Third Edition). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

3 Plato (1974). *The Republic*, Transl. D. Lee, Second Edition (p. 16). London: Penguin.

questions than answer them. Give an answer yourself, and tell us what you say the just is. And don't tell me it's the right, the beneficial, the profitable, the gainful, or the advantageous, but tell me clearly and exactly what you mean; for I won't accept such nonsense from you.<sup>4</sup>

*Waterfield, 1993.* Polemarchus and I were terrified and panic-stricken, but Thrasymachus bellowed out for all to hear, 'What a lot of drivel, Socrates! Why are you deferentially bowing and scraping to each other like simpletons? If you really want to know what morality is, then don't just ask questions and look for applause by refuting any and every answer you get, because you've realised that it's easier to ask questions than it is to answer them. No, state an opinion yourself: say what you think morality is. And make sure you state your view clearly and precisely, without saying that it is duty or benefit or profit or gain or advantage; I won't let you get away with any rubbish like that.'<sup>5</sup>

*Griffith, 2000.* Polemarchus and I were alarmed and dismayed. Speaking up loud and clear, Thrasymachus said: 'What's this nonsense that has got into you two, Socrates? Why be so obliging? Why keep giving way to one other? If you really want to know what justice is, then stop simply asking questions, and scoring points by proving that an answer given by anyone else is wrong. You know perfectly well it's easier to ask questions than to give answers. Come on, why don't you give some answers yourself? Tell us what *you* say justice is. And don't go telling us that it's what's necessary, or what's beneficial, or what's advantageous, or what's profitable, or what's good for you. I won't take any of that stuff. No. Tell us please, quite clearly, exactly what you mean.'<sup>6</sup>

#### *Study Questions.*

1. Which of these translations is your favourite? Why?
2. Do you find any striking differences?

*Background.* The second last word on line six in the Greek text is 'ἐλέγχων' (i.e. elenchon). An *elenchus* is an examination or refutation of something. This is a typical Socratic method: in the course of a interlocution Socrates manages to reveal that someone else's beliefs or opinions are inconsistent or perhaps even incoherent. This often leads to a state of *aporia*, i.e. puzzlement. This is not just destructive (or negative), but may lead to further inquiry and hence conceptual clarification.

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4 Plato (1992). *Republic*. Transl. G. M. A. Grube, revised C. D. C. Reeve (p. 12). Indianapolis: Hackett.

5 Plato (1993). *Republic*. Transl. R. Waterfield (p. 16). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

6 Plato (2000). *The Republic*. Transl. T. Griffith, ed. G. R. F. Ferrari (p. 13). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

