The problem

The nature of justice

- Is justice like a chair,
- or like love or poetry?
The Ring of Gyges
Glaucon’s story

- Once upon a time, Gyges the peasant finds a magic ring,
- seduces the queen, kills the king.
The Ring of Gyges

Glaucon’s challenge

“Let us suppose that the just and unjust have two rings, like that of Gyges in the well-known story, which make them invisible, and then no difference will appear in them, for every one will do evil if he can.”

- Being just is one’s desire to maintain his reputation for virtue
- When sanction is removed, being just and being unjust have no difference
- Injustice is far more profitable so it would be stupid not to be unjust
The Ring of Gyges
Socrates replies

“...justice in her own nature has been shown to be best for the soul in her own nature. Let a man do what is just, whether he have the ring of Gyges or not, and even if in addition to the ring of Gyges he put on the helmet of Hades.“

▶ Justice is not derived from a social construct
▶ Justice is best for the soul,
▶ regardless of whether it possesses the ring or not
Discussion

- Social contract
- Psychological egoism
- Empirical evidence