

Submission for a 20-minute (shorter) presentation  
**Abstract for: “Thrasymachus: Diagnosis and Treatment”**  
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What’s *wrong* with Thrasymachus? In all of Plato’s dialogues, only Callicles in the *Gorgias* comes close to Thrasymachus’s level of belligerence. Thrasymachus enters the conversation, Plato has Socrates recall for us, having had to be restrained “many times” from taking over the discussion as Socrates conversed with Cephalus and then Polemarchus, and is said eventually to be unable to keep quiet any longer.

He coiled himself up *like a wild beast about to spring*, and he *hurled himself* at us as if to *tear us to pieces*. Polemarchus and I were frightened 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? (336b4-c2; trans. Grube/Reeve, our emphasis).

Book I provides several bestial and aggressive descriptions of Thrasymachus’s behavior, as well as harassed reactions from the other characters. Thrasymachus complains that Socrates is ironical (337a4) by which he means that Socrates is being deceptive, and later he calls Socrates a “false witness” and a trickster (341a5-b2). Later, he becomes outraged and belittles Socrates, asking, “Do you still have a wet nurse? [...] Because she’s letting you run around with a snotty nose, and doesn’t wipe it when she needs to!” (343a2-8). At 350c12-d2, Thrasymachus sweats and blushes, betraying his humiliation after his defeat in argument by Socrates. From this brief sketch, it is apparent that Thrasymachus is a belligerent interlocutor, characterized by anger, combativeness, and anxiety about disgrace.

Most scholarly studies of Socrates’ exchange with Thrasymachus have focused on whether or not Thrasymachus provides a consistent position. In this paper, I focus instead on the way Thrasymachus is characterized, arguing that Thrasymachus’s behavior in Plato’s *Republic* should be understood in light of Plato’s moral psychology. I apply this moral psychology in such a way as to explain how effectively Socrates chastises and shames Thrasymachus into becoming more able to consider good reasoning. Although Thrasymachus is perhaps not fully cured in the *Republic*, Socrates sets him towards this end. (333 words)

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