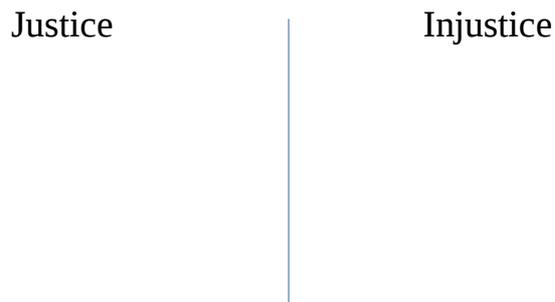


Socrates (fragment of a first lesson of Xenophon)

‘Look, I’ll draw a vertical line on the ground, and write *justice* on one side, and *injustice* on the other and we’ll put whatever seems to us to be a work of justice or a work of injustice under the correct heading’, said Socrates.

‘That sounds fine,’ I said, a little nervously. What had I let myself in for? Socrates then drew the words in the sand, and put a line between them.



Then he looked at me and asked, ‘Does lying exist among mankind?’

That was easy. ‘Indeed it does.’

‘Under which heading should we put lying?’

‘Under injustice, certainly,’ I said.

He wrote it down. ‘Does deceit also exist?’

‘Of course, I replied.

‘And under what heading?’

‘Injustice again,’ I said.

He wrote that down. ‘And does piracy exist?’

‘Yes.’

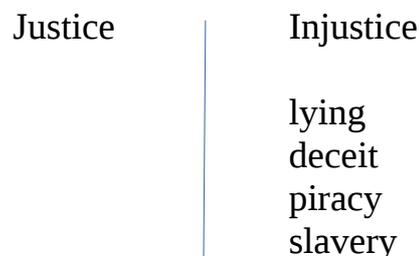
‘And slavery?’

‘Yes.’

‘And should we place either of these under justice, Xenophon?’

‘Not at all,’ I said.

Socrates wrote them down, and when he finished we both looked at the drawing:



He looked over at me, and said, ‘So all of these things: lying, deceit, piracy and slavery are all unjust acts?’

‘That’s right,’ I agreed. This wasn’t so bad. I began to relax a little.

He continued to look at me, but a little more intently.

‘So if the commander of an army should make slaves of an unjust and hostile population, we would have to say that he committed an act of injustice.’

I hesitated. ‘I don’t think we can.’

‘Do you think we should say instead that he acted justly?’

This was getting a little tricky. ‘I would have to say so.’

But even as I said it, I wondered in my own mind if that could really be correct?

Socrates continued, ‘And if in the course of this war, he has to practise deceit?’

‘I suppose that would also have to be just.’

‘So if he steals and carries off their property, would he not be doing a just thing?’

I started to get flustered and blurted out, ‘Certainly it’s just against our enemies, but I thought you were asking questions only about our allies.’

‘I understand. But do you still agree that everything that we originally placed under the heading of injustice: lying, deceit, piracy, and slavery, we are now obliged to place under the heading of justice?’

‘It looks like it,’ I quietly admitted.

He now wrote them down under justice, so that the drawing in the sand looked like this:

Justice	Injustice
lying	lying
deceit	deceit
piracy	piracy
slavery	slavery

We both looked at the drawing, and he turned to me, with a slightly amused look on his face.

‘Interesting,’ isn’t it? We now see that the idea of justice is not so simple or easy.’