

Title	Goodfellas
Director	Martin Scorsese
Date	1990
Area	Moral Philosophy
Theme	Why be Moral?
Plot Summary	<p>The film follows the rise and fall of Henry Hill (Ray Liotta). He grows up idolising the ‘wise guys’ in his Brooklyn neighbourhood and comes to the attention of local chieftain Paulie (Paul Sorvino) who take him in as a surrogate son. Along with the psychotic Tommy (Joe Pesci) he rises through the ranks, and becomes Paulie’s lieutenant. However like his mentor Jimmy (Robert de Niro) his ethnicity (half Irish, half-Sicilian) prevents him from becoming a ‘made guy’, an actual member of the crime family. He becomes the target of both the police and the mobsters who think he has become a threat to their security with his reckless dealings. Can be used to talk about Plato’s view of why one should be moral. For Plato the immoral or unjust person suffers from inner disharmony, being enslaved by their desires and appetites. The criminal life is intoxicating and pleasurable, but underneath there is inner slavery. The unjust person lacks psychological peace. We should we live ethical lives not because of God’s or society’s punishment, or honor from our peers, but inner peace.</p>
Key Scenes	
Relevant Text	<p>“The Republic builds up a narrative of how one becomes an unjust person--it uses a developmental “psyche” analysis to show how and why people sell their souls (submitting to both political tyranny and the psychological tyranny of their own cravings). Scorsese's Goodfellas can be read in this same way. Rather than abstractly moralizing about right and wrong, both film and text admit (with refreshing honesty) the incredible attractiveness of a gangster life. And after parading the intoxicating pleasures and almost limitless powers of such a criminal life, both the Republic and Goodfellas reverse the picture to reveal the inner-slavery beneath the flashy appearances. Goodfellas illustrates Plato's two central arguments beautifully; The unjust person lacks psychological peace, and no true friendship exists for such people. The reason, according to Plato, why we should live ethical lives has nothing to do with God's punishment and reward, or the police's punishment, or honor from your peers. It has everything to do with inner peace and the power of real friendships.” Stephen T. Asma, "Philosophy Meets Hollywood: Descartes Among the Androids" http://www.annhetzelgunkel.com/film/asma.htm</p>