The Republic

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF PLATO

Plato's father Ariston descended from Codrus, the last King of Athens, and his mother Perictione had ties to Solon, one of the creators of the Athenian Constitution. Plato's brothers Glaucon and Adeimantus briefly appear in the *Republic*. Plato planned a political career until 404 BC, when Athens became controlled by an Oligarchy of wealthy men. After Athens was restored to democracy in 403 BC, Plato again considered politics until Socrates, Plato's mentor, was accused of heresy and put to death in 399 BC. Plato subsequently abandoned politics for philosophy. He eventually founded the Academy, a philosophy school.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Peloponnesian war between Sparta and Athens took place from 431–408 BC. Plato probably saw military service during the course of the war. Athens lost, and the war had a profound affect on politics and philosophy. The rise of democracy as a form of government made the ability to speak and debate more important. The Sophists, nomadic teachers who taught the arts of rhetoric to anyone who could pay them, became influential. The Sophists were particularly popular during Athens' brief democracy when the ability to persuade large groups of people became more important than speaking the truth.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Plato wrote a number of other works in the form of dialogues, including *The Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and *Crito*. The *Republic* is from the latter part of Plato's career. Plato's ideas regarding the ideal city influenced More's *Utopia*, in which More describes the mythical "perfect place," (Utopia literally means "no place") based on the recollections of a traveler. Utopia's customs and government were partly inspired by Plato's ideal city in the *Republic*.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Republic*
- **When Published:** First transcribed circa fourth century BC.
- **Literary Period:** Classical
- **Genre:** Philosophical dialogues
- **Setting:** The house of Cephalus, in the Piraeus, or port section of Athens, Greece, around the 5th century BC.
- **Antagonist:** Thrasymachus and other debaters
- **Point of View:** First Person (Socrates is the narrator)

EXTRA CREDIT

The Socratic Method. The method Plato has Socrates use in Republic, that is, asking leading questions that provoke discussion and encourage his audience to follow his train of thought until they arrive at the solution he favors, is called in Greek *elenchus*, and in English the "Socratic method." You can see the Socratic method particularly clearly in Book I of Republic, but Plato also uses it in many of his earlier works.

Aristotle's Teacher. Just as Plato is the most famous follower of Socrates, Aristotle is the most famous of Plato's students. Other followers include the Neo-Platonists, philosophers like Plotinus and Proclus who took Plato's ideas about the nature of reality and his theory of forms and developed them even further. The Neo-Platonists influenced Saint Augustine, one of the fathers of the early Christian Church.

PLOT SUMMARY

After a religious festival, Socrates is invited to the house of a wealthy merchant named Cephalus. There, Socrates joins a discussion with Cephalus, Polemarchus, Glaucon, Adeimantus, and the Sophist Thrasymachus about the nature of justice. Socrates soon proves that Cephalus and Polemarchus' conception of justice as telling the truth and paying what is owed is insufficient, and he likewise disproves Thrasymachus's belief that justice is simply whatever is of most advantage to the stronger person or people. But Socrates does not state what his own idea of justice is. Instead, he proposes to "create" an ideal **city** that will show justice on a large scale. Once they have defined a just city, Socrates believes, they'll be able to examine justice in an individual.

Socrates' ideal city depends on education, specialization, and social structures that define family, behavior, and loyalty to the city. Each person will specialize in a specific occupation, an occupation that is chosen for them by the city based on their aptitudes and abilities as children. Education, especially of the guardians who will function as guards or soldiers as well as rulers, is the key to the success of the city. Imitative literature in which the author creates the voices of different characters, "imitating" human behavior, is forbidden. Literature must reflect only good behavior. Those who will be laborers or craftsmen will form the "producer" class. The best of the guardians are given special education to prepare them to rule. The others from the initial group of guardians will become the warriors for the city. Wives and children of the guardians are held in common. The rulers will lead very simple lives, forbidden to touch gold or silver or to own property. Their daily

needs will be met by the other residents of the city so that guardians can rule without distraction.

Socrates turns to the question of who should rule the city. In support of his claim that the philosopher is the best ruler Socrates explains that the soul is made of three parts, the rational, the appetitive and the spirit. In the just man, each part of the soul performs its function, directed by reason, so that the appetites and spirit are controlled. Just as the rational part of the soul should rule over the others, the rational part of the city residents, the philosopher, should rule over the warriors and producers. This will require that philosophers become kings, or kings become philosophers. Only philosophers are able to truly love knowledge and truth, and only they recognize truth. Socrates presents the allegory of the **cave**. Imagine, he says, a cave, where men are chained in the dark and think that the shadows they see on the wall are reality, until one of them escapes into the sunlight and sees the physical world. The freed prisoner later returns and tries to teach the others about the nature of truth.

The philosopher is the best ruler because he understands that the objects of the physical world are copies, imitations, of the ideal Forms in the world of Ideas. The philosopher, because he understands the Forms, has greater understanding of everything. Consequently, the guardians must be educated in philosophy, as well as mathematics and logic. When the guardians are mature, their education includes the study of dialectic, the art of debate. Then, just as the prisoner returns to the cave, the guardians begin public service in preparation for later rule. Only the best of the guardians will become philosopher-kings. Socrates describes four kinds of cities, and the four kinds of people equivalent to the cities, ending with the worst, the tyrant. He ends with an examination of the tyrant, showing that the tyrant is neither just nor happy.

Socrates concludes with the myth of Er, a soldier who dies, but is returned to life and reports on the after life. He sees souls sorted out into those who were unjust, who must then suffer, and those who were just, who spend the afterlife in pleasure. At the end of their allotted time, souls are allowed to choose a new life. Socrates argues that the soul, since it can not be destroyed by death, or by evil, is immortal.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Socrates – The main speaker, a philosopher who leads his audience and dialogue partners to conclusions by carefully structured questions. Sometimes Socrates' verbal agility makes it difficult to see that he is avoiding answering the question he is asked and is instead addressing something else entirely in his responses. Socrates strongly influenced Plato. In the *Republic* Socrates is usually acting as Plato's stand-in.

Thrasymachus – A Sophist, or professional tutor and philosopher. Thrasymachus is the only real opposition to Socrates. Thrasymachus believes firmly that "justice is to the advantage of the stronger." Sophists as a group tended to emphasize personal benefit as more important than moral issues of right and wrong, and Thrasymachus does as well. Thrasymachus' depiction in *Republic* is unfavorable in the extreme. He appears conceited, given to boasts and bluster, and his frustration with Socrates and Socrates' method of approaching knowledge through questioning is evident. He leaves at the end of Book I, but his exit suggests he is frustrated and is aware that he has not successfully debated Socrates. Although the choice of name may be inspired by the historical Sophist Thrasymachus, the name literally means "schemer."

Hesiod – A Greek poet who probably lived during the 700 B.C. era. His works included tales about the creation of the world according to Greek mythology, and a number of stories about the gods that show them in an unfavorable light. Because Hesiod's poems are imitative and imaginative, Socrates would censor his works in his ideal city for both moral and stylistic reasons.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Cephalus – An elderly but wealthy merchant, it is in his house that the dialogues occur. He is perhaps too satisfied with his own life and status. His name literally means "head," as in "head of the family," which fits him.

Polemarchus – Cephalus' son. His name literally means "leader in battle," a good description of his role as one of the more aggressive of Socrates' opponents, second only to Thrasymachus.

Glaucon – Plato's brother, he walks with Socrates to the Piraeus and participates in the entire debate. Glaucon questions Socrates carefully, and is interested in determining what justice truly means and what defines the good life.

Adeimantus – Another of Plato's brothers. At first he doesn't agree that justice is better than injustice, but Socrates succeeds in convincing him.

Er – A soldier in a myth Socrates tells about the immortality of the soul. Er dies but comes back to life and is able to tell about what he saw in the after life.

Homer – The Greek poet believed to have written the *Illiad* and the *Odyssey*, two of the greatest works of Greek literature, and of literature in general. Socrates objects to parts of Homer's works for moral reasons, since the gods are not always shown behaving morally or even believably.

Simonides – A poet that Polemarchus quotes in support of his definition of justice. Simonides wrote that justice is "giving to each what is owed."

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

EDUCATION

Socrates believes that the good of the **city** outweighs the good of the individual. Consequently, the object of his educational system is to produce citizens who are loyal to the city and who best fill the city's needs. The city's educational system identifies particularly talented individuals so they may be trained as auxiliaries (warriors), guardians, or even philosopher-kings. All children are educated identically until the age of eighteen when those destined to be producers (laborers and craftsmen) end their education. The remaining students are trained physically and militarily. Those destined to be warriors are separated from the guardians, the future rulers. The guardians are educated for several more years, until the very best, the most loyal to the city, are given further education as potential philosopher-kings.

The education system is rigidly controlled. Although literature and arts are important parts of education, only moral literature is allowed. Literature must not imitate life or be dramatic because such literature will confuse citizens and make them less useful in their particular roles. Education, especially for the guardians and warriors, is designed to encourage the good of the city as a whole, rather than the good of the family or the individual.

JUSTICE

Socrates' purpose in the *Republic* is to determine the nature of justice, or "right behavior." Socrates examines the nature of justice in both the individual and in the **city**. Socrates associates justice with structures in the human soul and social structures in the city. Justice in the individual is a state in which the rational soul controls both the spirit (the emotions) and the appetitive soul (the part associated with desires and appetites). Such a person is just, and will behave justly. Socrates states that if each citizen specifically practices his occupation, and allows others to practice theirs without interference, the city will be a just city. Each individual, by engaging in his specialized occupation, is behaving justly. Just as the rational part of the soul governs the others in a just person, the rational part of the city, that is the philosopher-king and the guardians, should govern the producers and the warriors.

SPECIALIZATION

One of the founding principles of the ideal **city** is that each person should specialize in an occupation that he is specifically suited for. Education encourages specialization and determines each individual's natural aptitudes. Those with talents suitable for a specific craft specialize in that craft. Those with an ability for warfare become warriors, those with the gifts needed to rule are educated as guardians. The very best of the guardians are selected to become philosopher-kings. Each citizen engages only in the occupation he is suited for by nature and training. Plato's emphasis on specialization extends even to the human soul, whose three parts specialize in terms of appetites, emotions, and reason. Since only warriors and guardians are taught to use arms, specialization makes armed rebellion on the part of producers unlikely. Since the guardians are not allowed to own property, they are less likely to become greedy.

PHILOSOPHER-KING

Since only a philosopher can truly know the Forms, the ideal abstracts of objects and ideas, only the philosopher has true knowledge. All other knowledge is based on the physical and impermanent. For instance, we can see particular beauty in the physical world, but it is subject to change. The ideal Form of Beauty, in the world of Ideas, is abstract and never changes. The philosopher, because he understands the Forms, understands truth and true knowledge. The philosopher-king, since he has knowledge of the Forms, and he understands how to rule, is best suited to lead.

SOUL

The soul is immortal, and has three parts. The appetitive soul is driven by lusts and appetites (for food, for wealth, for sex), the rational soul is able to think, measure, and calculate, and the spirit or will is the emotional aspect of the soul. In a just man the rational part dominates, moderating and controlling the other two parts. If either the appetite or the spirit dominate, then the man is neither just nor happy. The three parts of the soul correspond to the three classes of people in the just **city**. The guardians are analogous to the rational soul, the warriors to spirit, and the producers to the appetitive soul. If reason rules, with the assistance of spirit, and appetite obeys, then the individual is just. A city in which each class obeys the philosopher-king and fulfills its occupational role is a just city.

TRUTH

Truth is a core virtue of the **city** and of the philosopher-king. Literature that shows gods and men behaving untruthfully is forbidden. Deceit is

forbidden, except for the guardians who may tell falsehoods for the good of the city. True knowledge, and true philosophy, says Socrates, require an understanding of the Forms, since everything else is simply a shadowy reflection of the Forms. For instance, the Form of Beauty is the abstract, ideal, perfect, changeless Idea of Beauty. Beauty in the physical world is affected by time and change. But the Form of Beauty, in the world of ideas, is unchanging, and perfect, and true. Only the Form of Beauty is truly beautiful, since individual examples of beauty are poor copies of the Form, lacking the perfection of the Form.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

THE CITY

The just city is a larger version of the just man, with the three social classes (producers, warriors and guardians) working together as the three parts of the soul work together in the just man. Two key concepts for the city are the emphasis on specialization, so that each person is trained for a particular occupation, and the emphasis on education, which encourages specialization and trains the guardians and the philosopher-king to properly rule. The ultimate failure of the city is tied to the failure of the education system, when someone whose aptitudes and nature are not suited to being a guardian, is selected in childhood and educated as a guardian.

THE CAVE

The allegory of the cave is about education, about leading the soul from darkness into light, by stages. The allegory begins with a prisoner chained in the cave, able only to see the shadows of people moving. He thinks that the shadows are reality. This is the stage of Imagination. When the prisoner is free and sees the people whose shadows he saw in the cave, he thinks they are real. He takes the objects of the physical world, like trees and chairs, as the ultimate reality, instead of poor copies of the ideal Forms of trees and chairs. This is the second stage, of Belief. When the prisoner sees the world outside the cave he enters the third state, that of Thought. He is aware of the world of Forms. He realizes that objects we perceive with our senses are but copies of the ideal abstract Forms. The fourth and final stage, the stage of the philosopher-king, is the recognition of the Form of Goodness, which, like the **sun** giving the prisoner light to see all things, leads to understanding all Forms. This is the stage of Understanding, the ultimate goal of Plato's philosophy.

THE SUN

The sun, which provides the light in the mouth of the **cave** in the allegory of the cave, is recognized by the escaped prisoner as the source of the light that allows him to see the objects around him. The sun is like the Form of the Good, which is the source of all other Forms. If you know and understand the Form of the Good, then you will understand all the other forms. The sun, which leads the prisoner out of darkness, is like education, which leads the individual out of ignorance to understanding.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Dover Publications edition of *The Republic* published in 2000.

Book 2 Quotes

Then the first thing will be to establish a censorship of the writers of fiction, and let the censors receive any tale of fiction which is good, and reject the bad; and we will desire mothers and nurses to tell their children the authorized ones only.

Related Characters: Socrates (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 49

Explanation and Analysis

In order to clarify his definition of justice, Socrates describes the conditions of the ideal city. One aspect of such a city, the so-called “kallipolis," is a harsh restriction of certain forms of art.

This section of *The Republic* is surprising to many contemporary readers because it not only permits censorship, but actually argues that the practice is necessary in a just city. According to Socrates, fictional stories determine the way that members of the kallipolis will act, for these tales dictate their moral sensibilities and give them behavioral models. He therefore reasons that a just populace must be nourished with fictions that themselves cultivate a sense of justice.

That Socrates fixates on the interactions between mothers and children is worth noting here. He sees art as serving a pedagogical role not only for young kids, but also, presumably, for older members of society. In this way, Socrates is using the children as an analogy for the paternalistic way he conceives of all Greek citizens. Sanctioning censorship is thus predicated on an image of a

relatively infantile population—one whose behavior can and should be strictly controlled through certain fictions.

If we mean our future guardians to regard the habit of quarrelling among themselves as of all things the basest, should any word be said to them of the wars in heaven, and of the plots and fightings of the gods against one another, for they are not true. No, we shall never mention the battles of the giants, or let them be embroidered on garments; and we shall be silent about the innumerable other quarrels of gods and heroes with their friends and relatives. If they would only believe us we would tell them that quarrelling is unholy, and that never up to this time has there been any quarrel between citizens.

Related Characters: Socrates (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 50

Explanation and Analysis

Socrates continues to discuss the importance of censoring artworks. He explains that excluding stories that recount negative behaviors will prevent Greek citizens from repeating those undesirable actions.

This passage defines a causal relationship between the plot events of a story and the actions of those reading that story. For instance, reading of "plots and fightings of the gods" is presumed to encourage a similar "habit of quarreling" in future generations. From this point, Socrates extrapolates that "we shall never mention the battles of the giants": He relies on a logical link between reading material and personal action as a rational grounding for the necessity of censorship. Here, we have a sense of the way that he builds up his argument—based on a few moral principles that are extended to justify seemingly severe actions. The key claim here is that there is a correspondence between material read and actions performed—a link that continues to be featured today, in spirited debates about video game and movie censorship.

Socrates is relying, notably, less on an argument of intrinsic morality and more on the effects of a given moral system. That is to say, he is not so much concerned with the inherent ethics of censorship and far more with the pragmatic benefits that censorship could bring to the ideal city. This is an important distinction, as Socrates' philosophy is generally *not* thought of in these utilitarian terms. Yet by bringing up the concrete dynamics of the ideal city, he transitions into a relatively pragmatic argumentative style.

God is not the author of all things, but of good only.

Related Characters: Socrates (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 51

Explanation and Analysis

Socrates furthers his argument that fiction in the ideal city should be censored. He adds that only good artworks could be attributed to God.

This line makes a poignant and contentious theological comment. In denying the fact that a God would be capable of producing negative things, he justifies the idea that certain things—people, objects, fictions, etc.—could be excluded from the ideal city. If Gods were indeed responsible for "all things," then presumably "all things" would have to be included in the city out of deference to the divine. But if the divine is responsible for "good only," then bad things are ungodly and can be rejected. This statement is particularly evocative since the Greek Gods were often considered to possess negative characteristics—to themselves embody human follies. Socrates rejects such a model to offer a more idealist image of both Gods and humans.

We also see, here, the importance of religion to Greek philosophy. It is common, today, to consider these two fields to be separate, or even sharply opposed, but during Socrates' time they were fully integrated. Philosophical arguments were expected to interweave with the Greek Pantheon—and to apply logical formulations to a pre-existing religious structure. Thus the way that Socrates' work relies on religious tenets should not be taken as a philosophical weakness — but rather a reflection of Greek society at the time.

And if so, we must infer that all things are produced more plentifully and easily and of a better quality when one man does one thing which is natural to him, and does it at the right time, and leaves other things.

Related Characters: Socrates (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 41

Explanation and Analysis

Socrates continues to spell out the conditions for his ideal city. He explains that each citizen should be tasked with a specific duty based on his or her inherent aptitude.

This passage corroborates the way that Socrates envisions a highly authoritarian state. Instead of allowing people to pursue their interests or passions, he focuses on what will maximize utility: what will allow "better quality" in society produced at faster rates and "more easily." His model does not allow for the presence of human free will, but rather slots each citizen into a specific, almost mechanical, positions to optimize the larger entity.

His model also posits the *existence* of inherent aptitude for each person. To assume there is a single thing "which is natural to him" is to presume that each person possesses this natural affiliation for a certain form of work. Indeed, such assumptions are typical of Socrates' philosophy, which tends to rely on essential virtues and essential qualities in people. Here, the model is that each person has such an essence that when manifested perfectly will result in the optimal functioning of the self and the city. Thus Socrates defines his model of justice as combination of inherent skill and a rigid social system that would maximize that skill.

Book 3 Quotes

❝ Can any man be courageous who has the fear of death in him?

Related Characters: Socrates (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 56

Explanation and Analysis

Socrates describes the conditions necessary to form the warrior or guardian class of a city. He explains that they must only hear stories that encourage heroic behavior.

This line furthers Socrates' earlier claim that the literature a person reads has a direct effect on that person's personality and behavior. He argues that certain stories will cause children to fear death for they will present the afterlife in a negative or frightening way. As a result, those who read these stories will come to fear death more than those who did not — so such stories should be censored from the guardians. Socrates goes further, here, than giving general terms for censorship and instead begins to dictate specific texts that should be read by people of different classes. He thus sees the optimal functioning of society as achieved by a fusion of inherent nature and effective pedagogy: Exposure to certain stories will allow that nature to best manifest.

Instead of relying on pure logic, Socrates opts to use the device of a rhetorical question. This might seem to be a moot point, but this technique shows that his philosophical strategy includes the use of oratorical skills. Excessive emphasis on rhetoric was criticized at Socrates' time, and Socrates generally cast his philosophy to be purely rational as compared to the more rhetorical Sophists. Here, however, he borrows some of their exact techniques to argue his point, indicating that rational arguments can not be entirely severed from linguistic devices.

❝ And we must beg Homer and the other poets not to be angry if we strike out these and similar passages, not because they are unpoetical, or unattractive to the popular ear, but because the greater the poetical charm in them, the less are they meet for the ears of boys and men who are meant to be free, and who should fear slavery more than death.

Related Characters: Socrates (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 57

Explanation and Analysis

Socrates continues to delineate which texts that should be read by the warrior class. He notes that even stories of great literary and popular merit will need to be excluded.

This passages demonstrates that Socrates is willing to censor even highly celebrated artworks in order to achieve his ideal city. He does so, through a somewhat circuitous and quite clever way: by asking forgiveness from the (deceased) poets themselves. The reference to Homer is particularly provocative, as Homer's epics were the foundation and center of Greek culture. That Socrates believes that even these works must be removed from the ideal city shows just how radically he wished to break with the sensibilities of his contemporaries. He was not proposing small modifications to the cultural norm but rather a complete revolution of its most central principles.

Yet this passages goes further than simply claiming that the

aesthetic value of these texts should not prevent their censorship. In fact, Socrates argues that this is precisely why they *must* be expelled from the ideal city: Their "poetical charm" will cause undue attraction and obscure the detrimental effects of the text. Socrates thus casts the very artistic devices that bring meaning to literary works as inherent negative: Not only do they not fulfill the pedagogical role he prefers from these works, but they in fact prevent one from focusing on that educational content.

Again, truth should be highly valued; if, as we were saying, a lie is useless to the gods, and useful only as a medicine to men, then the use of such medicines should be restricted to physicians; private individuals have no business with them.

Related Characters: Socrates (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 59

Explanation and Analysis

While describing why stories should be excluded from the ideal city, Socrates argues that a key drawback is their inclusion of lies. He condemns lying except to certain professions who can make use of mendacity for the general populace.

Once more, Socrates subdivides the citizens into various groups, allotting greater privileges to certain subsets of the population. He revises his earlier condemnation of lying to admit that it could be potentially "useful" in certain situations: That it can be a "medicine to men" means that it can ease the struggles of human nature and make life more palatable. But since Socrates believes that hardship must be administered to many men, he also believes that "medicine" cannot be given out freely.

He uses the analogy of "physicians" here to argue why rulers should be privy to techniques and behaviors that others are not—for they have specialized training based on their inherent qualities. In contrast, he offers the category of "private individuals" who are deemed too inferior to make the proper use of lies. (Despite his general respect for the Greek gods, Socrates notably approves of the use of lies for humans but not for gods—for he deems lies to be "useless" for deities.) Thus Socrates continues to attribute more and more rights to the elect ruling class, here even exempting them from a core tenet of the city: truth.

Beauty of style and harmony and grace and good rhythm depend on simplicity – I mean the true simplicity of a rightly and nobly ordered mind and character, not that other simplicity which is only a euphemism for folly.

Related Characters: Socrates (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 72

Explanation and Analysis

Having described the general types of stories that are useful to have circulating in the ideal city, Socrates begins to identify specific desirable features. He argues that beneficial stories are simple and unadorned.

This passage makes a very specific claim on what type of artworks are desirable for Socrates: He contrasts the ornate, lyrical styles of Homer and other poets with "true simplicity." Whereas the first can distract a reader from the pedagogical value of a text, the second allows a text's ethical meaning to ring through without disruption. Socrates seems to revise his earlier harsh sanctions on all literature to admit that "beauty of style" is indeed desirable in certain cases. Aesthetic merit is thus not inherently negative but only becomes so when it is paired with and thus hides the presence of undesirable content. Indeed, Socrates shows himself to be heavily invested in the specific aesthetics that make a fiction desirable or not, to the extent that he dictates the need for formal simplicity.

Though valuing simplicity might seem to select for texts of an unintellectual or reductive nature, Socrates subdivides the types of simplicity into two categories: False simplicity is just another term for "folly" or idiocy, whereas valuable simplicity actually reflects balance and harmony. Notably, Socrates sees the distinction as steming not from the artwork but rather from the "mind and character" of the person who creates it. He thus believes that good stories will be created by inherently good people—and will reflect their natural character.

Book 4 Quotes

Wealth is the parent of luxury and indolence, and poverty of meanness and viciousness, and both of discontent.

Related Characters: Socrates (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 91

Explanation and Analysis

While specifying the types of behaviors permitted by the guardian and warrior classes, Socrates touches on financial matters. He notes that the rulers are responsible for ensuring citizens stay in a state of economic well-being.

This passage once again argues that certain people in the idea city should engage in behaviors limited only to them. Instead of permitting free economic control, as would have been typical of the contemporary Greek polis, Socrates argues that financial matters should be tightly controlled. Indeed, people of certain subgroups, such as the guardians, should not even be permitted to handle currency, such that their economic status will always remain unchanged. Two extremes are possible—both "wealth" and "poverty" are condemned in a quick phrase—and thus optimizing one's existence demands a careful calibration between those two poles.

That calibration reaffirms the importance of harmony and balance to Socrates' ideal world. Much like an artwork is supposed to be simple, or a soul should hold its three parts in equal measure—financial status should remain centered. Optimization, in the kallipolis, is not a question of reaching a pinnacle or extreme, but rather of ensuring that the citizens remain in a constant equilibrium.

> The direction in which education starts a man will determine his future life.

Related Characters: Socrates (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 94

Explanation and Analysis

In delineating the duties of the guardians, Socrates touches on how they must manage education for the populace. He believes that school has an immense effect on one's personal development.

This model of education confirms that Socrates believes life in the ideal city should be firmly controlled. The stakes, he explains, are that the education someone receives "will determine his future life"—or entirely dictate someone's destiny. For Socrates, "Education" refers both to the specific schooling one receives and also more broadly to the types of stories and ethics that a child encounters as he matures. Socrates justifies his highly censored world and tightly controlled education based on the idea that negative content will lead to a negative "direction." A deterministic model of human development, in which a citizen's character depends largely on what that person experiences, thus requires an equally deterministic social system that strongly controls exactly those experiences. Thus the pivotal role of education is used to justify the need for tight control of pedagogy by the guardian class.

Book 5 Quotes

> And he who, having a sense of beautiful things has no sense of absolute beauty, or who, if another lead him to a knowledge of that beauty is unable to follow—of such an one I ask, Is he awake or in a dream only? Reflect: is not the dreamer, sleeping or waking, one who likens dissimilar things, who puts the copy in the place of the real object?

Related Characters: Socrates (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 144

Explanation and Analysis

While outlining the concept of the philosopher king, Socrates distinguishes between those who love individual beautiful objects and the abstract idea of beauty. He says that people who equate the two are making a fundamental mistake.

The difference between examples and essential forms is one of the most important features of Socrates and Plato's philosophies. In this model, objects in the human world are only imperfect examples or instances of ideal qualities that exist purely in a world of forms. To believe only "in beautiful things," then, would be to only comprehend the examples existing in the human world and to lack "knowledge" of the more important dimension of the forms. As a result, one jumbles "a likeliness" with "the thing itself." Socrates brings up this point to define a hierarchy of humans, in which some can better perceive the forms; thus he makes use of his philosophical model in order to further the social model that sanctions better privileges for the ruling class, made up of those who can perceive the forms.

To make this point, Socrates uses the metaphor of a dream, an analogical device that recurs often in his philosophy. The dreaming world, by this account, is the physical human one, whereas the "wakened state" would grant one access to the ideal forms or essences. This has nothing to do with

whether one is actually asleep or awake, as both states can leave one stuck in the world of likenesses. But the metaphor allows Socrates to articulate the way that two forms of perception may co-mingle, one of which is less accurate than the other.

Until philosophers are kings, or the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, and those commoner natures who pursue either to the exclusion of the other are compelled to stand aside, cities will never have rest from their evils—no, nor the human race, as I believe—and then only will this our State have a possibility of life and behold the light of day.

Related Characters: Socrates (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 141

Explanation and Analysis

When asked about the feasibility of his ideal city, Socrates claims that it depends on the identities of the rulers. To successfully create this society, there must exist a class of philosopher kings.

Two directions are possible to lead to the development of this class: either, Socrates explains, philosophers may take on the roles of rulers, or the current rulers must immerse themselves in the study and life of a philosopher. Both roles are significant in their own ways. A king holds "political greatness" while a philosopher holds "wisdom," but only in their fusion are they truly competent. Pursued alone, each end reflects only the "commoner natures." Thus Socrates' model of political rule returns once more to the question of balance, here between intellect and political control. The proper relationship between these two things, he believes, can be found in the role of the philosopher king, who in his inherently just nature will bring a city into a similarly just existence.

Much has been written and debated about the efficacy of Socrates' rulership model, and a few of the criticisms of it are worth pointing out here. For instance, why must a ruler necessarily be intellectual or philosophical? Other qualities like charisma and diplomacy are perhaps more essential—while intellectual questions could be left to a team of specialized advisors. Or consider, for instance, that the just nature of a ruler may not necessarily lead to a just society: Socrates tends to a assume a one-to-one relationship between internal identity and external results, but a ruler must navigate complex social systems and bureaucracies. These endeavors may take skills like cunning and compromise not attributed to the philosopher king. Finally, we should note that Socrates chooses to elevate his own profession over those of all other citizens. Though he argues that this is a just practice that will benefit all, it also smacks of self-aggrandizement and power-seeking. Thus while his model may be appealing, the merits of its idealism should be treated with skepticism.

Book 6 Quotes

But that the true pilot must pay attention to the year and seasons and sky and stars and winds, and whatever else be longs to his art, if he intends to be really qualified for the command of a ship, and that he must and will be the steerer, whether other people like or not—the possibility of this union of authority with the steerer's art has never seriously entered into their thoughts or been made part of their calling. Now in vessels which are in a state of mutiny and by sailors who are mutineers, how will the true pilot be regarded? W ill he not be called by them a prater, a star-gazer, a good-for-nothing?

Related Characters: Socrates (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 153-154

Explanation and Analysis

Adeimantus challenges Socrates on how much philosophers actually benefit society. Socrates responds that this criticism only reflects the flawed viewpoint of that society, rather than any issue with philosophers themselves.

His argument makes use of yet another well-composed allegory. Here, a society is a ship and its ruler a captain or pilot, in which case the philosopher king would be a "true pilot." Socrates explains that while an ordinary captain is overly attentive to the voices around him and does not pay sufficient attention to environmental factors, a "true pilot" observes all the forces surrounding the ship as well. He considers his "steerer's art" not just to be the narrow question of naval mobility, but rather a process that demands constant and careful attention to "the year and seasons and sky and stars and winds." This is an analogy for how the philosopher king must be deeply concerned with knowledge in and of itself—carefully understanding the natural and human worlds before proceeding in his undertakings.

The crux of this metaphor is that external, normal observers would likely consider this "true pilot" to be mad for investing too much of his time in learning knowledge that seems unrelated to the actual job of piloting. The pilot would seem overly distracted by the natural world and insufficiently attentive to the desires of the ship's inhabitants. Yet Socrates believes this behavior is precisely what is required by a just ruler: the ability to stand apart from the crowd and attune one's thoughts more directly to rational reality. Socrates thus brilliantly turns Adeimantus' criticism on its head—considering the unconventional views of philosophers not only acceptable, but also the very grounds for their merit.

Book 7 Quotes

❝ But, whether true or false, my opinion is that in the world of knowledge the idea of good appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort; and, when seen, is also inferred to be the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light and of the lord of light in this visible world, and the immediate source of reason and truth in the intellectual; and that this is the power upon which he who would act rationally either in public or private life must have his eye fixed.

Related Characters: Socrates (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 179-180

Explanation and Analysis

Education, Socrates explains, is essential to develop the sensibilities of the philosopher king. He explains that Truth must be illuminated through education, just as physical objects are lit by the sun.

Despite finding rigor and structure to be necessary in education, Socrates argues that truth will be essentially self-evident when revealed to someone. To substantiate this point, he uses the metaphor of light shining onto physical objects: those objects are entirely obscure at first, but as soon as they are revealed, no question remains of their existence. The phenomenon of light therefore allows Socrates to articulate how something could be both obvious and obscured—and thus corroborates the critical role of education. For while a philosopher king may have a set of naturally just qualities within himself, these characteristics will not be able to manifest without the proper education.

Socrates also implies that there is a normative weight to any truth once it is glimpsed. Put another way, when someone comes into contact with what is "beautiful and right," he will not be able to deny its efficacy and must conform his behavior to it. Other models of knowledge would argue that truth is more or less appealing based on one's character or on the way in which one experiences it, but Socrates believes that truth carries an inherent significance that will be felt no matter how it is perceived.

❝ Bodily exercise, when compulsory, does no harm to the body; but knowledge which is acquired under compulsion obtains no hold on the mind.

Related Characters: Socrates (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 198

Explanation and Analysis

After outlining the allegory of the cave, Socrates reaffirms the importance of education. He contrasts the benefits of forced physical endeavors with the drawbacks of a similarly strict pedagogy.

This comparison responds to the potential criticism that Socrates' model of education is limiting and authoritarian. He argues, instead, that "compulsion" is only beneficial to certain classes and that it will have detrimental effects on those seeking real truth. Beginning with the point that "bodily exercise" benefits someone even when it is forced upon them, Socrates extrapolates that a similar exercise of the mind will *not* aid the person educated. In particular, that it "obtains no hold on the mind" implies that an overly tyrannical pedagogy will not allow knowledge to be fixed in the learner's mind.

Socrates seeks to mediate, then, between two educational models. On one hand, he desires a strict and specified curriculum that only makes use of certain texts and ideas. While at the same time, he believes that "compulsion" will not best cultivate the minds of the philosopher kings. He thus differentiates once more between the types of existences desirable for members of various subsets of the population, further granting freedom of inquiry only to the philosopher kings.

Book 9 Quotes

But now that he is under the dominion of Love, he becomes always and in waking reality what he was then very rarely and in a dream only.

Related Characters: Socrates (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 233

Explanation and Analysis

While delineating between different forms of flawed governments, Socrates describes the character of the tyrant. He explains how passions such as love occlude the vision and mental acuity of a tyrant.

Socrates returns to the metaphor of dreams and sleep in order to draw clear lines between relative states of awareness. He believes that erotic love causes one's perceptions to warp as they normally would while asleep. They become increasingly distant from the world of forms and are only able to invest in or connect with the superficial occurrences of the perceivable world.

More broadly, this condemnation of the "dominion of love" speaks to the way that Socrates demands that one resist his appetites and adopt a stoic relationship to the world. Denying the value of pleasure, Socrates contends that the passions prevent one from behaving rationally and justly: they cause one to focus on illusory and temporary desires instead of more significant questions of justice. As a result, they are associated with tyranny, for the tyrant will similarly seek only to further his own pleasure. A just society, therefore, must be ordered by those who are emancipated from personal pleasure and who will therefore be motivated by rational thought rather than narrow desires.

Book 10 Quotes

Then the imitator, I said, is a long way off the truth, and can do all things because he lightly touches on a small part of them, and that part an image.

Related Characters: Socrates (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 255

Explanation and Analysis

In *The Republic*'s final book, Socrates returns to the question that opened the text: the value of the arts. He argues that art is a type of imitation and therefore less valuable than both the Forms and human reality.

Having outlined his theory of the Forms, Socrates can now offer a more complete condemnation of art. Whereas before he simply noted that certain works of fiction could have a negative pedagogical effect on people, here he takes issue with the inherent nature of poetry. He argues that if our physical reality is an imitation of the world of Forms, then art is an imitation of our reality. It is therefore two steps removed from the Forms, so those who produce art are proceeding in the opposite direction of philosophy—further away from truth and closer to an "image," to non-reality.

This argument turns on the way that Socrates defines "imitation." He believes that whereas a form comprises a complete totality, an imitation only "touches on a small part" of that totality. For instance, the form of a bed includes the existences and qualities of all potential beds, whereas a specific example of a bed is only one small part of that totality. By extension, a painting of the bed only gives one physical angle and one artist's perspective of the bed, so it is an even smaller subset of the totality held by the Form of the bed. This passage not only offers a full condemnation of art, then, but also verifies the central role that completeness plays in Socrates' philosophy.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

BOOK 1

Socrates walks to the Athens harbor, the Piraeus, with Glaucon, Plato's brother. Socrates and Glaucon are invited to Polemarchus' house by Polemarchus and Adeimantus. They join Thrasymachus and Polemarchus' father, Cephalus. Socrates asks Cephalus if age is as much a hardship as people say. Cephalus says old age brings peace from appetites and passions and is not much harder to bear than youth. Socrates says Cephalus may bear old age well, not because of the way he lives, but because Cephalus is wealthy. Cephalus says that wealth lets one live a just life since a wealthy man does not need to fear owing money or not having enough to sacrifice to a god.

Cephalus is using the traditional definition of a just life—paying what one owes to gods and men, and being honest. This definition is used in Greek religious works of earlier writers like Hesiod. Historically, the wealth of people like Cephalus did not protect them when Athens changed rulers, something that Plato's original audience would know.

Socrates asks if one can always say that doing right is just speaking truth and paying back what is owed? For instance, if a friend loans us a weapon, but then becomes insane and asks for it back—ought we to return the weapon? Surely that is not a right action. Cephalus agrees that would not be the right action, then excuses himself because he has to attend to the sacrifice.

Socrates wants to find a definition for justice or the just life, and so he tests the current definition to see if it always holds true. If it does, it's a good definition; if it fails, he needs a new one. Cephalus's definition fails (and Cephalus himself hurriedly leaves the scene).

Polemarchus disagrees with Socrates and cites the poet Simonides who said that it is just to give to each what is owed to him. Simonides, says Polemarchus, meant that friends owe it to their friends to do well by them, and never harm them, and enemies are owed harm. Socrates observes that people make mistakes, thinking an enemy a friend and vice versa, thus the just man could unintentionally help enemies and harm friends. Polemarchus redefines a friend as one who is truly useful. The just man must harm those who are both bad and enemies.

Polemarchus' definition is more general than Cephalus'. Polemarchus seems to think the previous version failed because it was too specific. Socrates encourages Polemarchus to make his definition more specific, and by defining "friends."

Socrates points out that when humans are harmed they become worse in terms of human virtues, just as the behavior of a horse who is harmed becomes worse. Socrates' example leads Polemarchus to agree that it is not the proper function of justice to harm anyone, friend or foe. It is the function of an unjust man to cause harm.

Polemarchus thinks of justice in terms of actions a person performs or does not perform. Each time Polemarchus offers a definition Socrates tests it against specific examples, usually by analogy, as here, comparing horses and humans.

Thrasymachus, unwillingly quiet, interrupts, loudly. He says instead of asking foolish questions and refuting each answer, Socrates should tell them what he thinks justice is. Thrasymachus offers to define justice if they will pay him. Since Socrates has no money, the others pay his share. Thrasymachus says justice is nothing more than whatever gives advantage to "the stronger."

Thrasymachus' definition is the central challenge of the rest of the Republic, as Socrates tries to prove him wrong. Plato means for Thrasymachus to seem foolish and unpleasant, and his demand for pay, customary for Sophists, is a deliberate blot on his character.

Socrates says the crafts rule over and are stronger than the things which they are crafts of—medicine over the body, horse breeding over the horse, a captain over his sailors. Socrates concludes that no knowledge seeks what is advantageous to itself, it seeks what is best for the weaker object that is subject to it. A sea captain seeks whatever is beneficial to his sailors, and a ruler seeks what is beneficial for his subjects.

Socrates' argues that the purpose of practicing medicine is to benefit patients and the purpose of ruling is to benefit subjects. Socrates' arguments often use this sort of comparison. These are arguments through analogy, or comparison of similar aspects of different things.

Thrasymachus angrily asserts that a just man always gets less than an unjust man. Justice, says Thrasymachus, benefits the strong. He adds that tyrants, the most unjust, are the happiest and richest because of their tyranny. Victims of tyranny, those most unwilling to do injustice, are the most wretched. Men oppose injustice because they are afraid of being harmed by it, not because they fear engaging in it. Thrasymachus tries to leave, but is stopped by the others.

Thrasymachus' emotional outburst shows his frustration. His basic assumption is that justice is an unnatural constraint forced upon those too weak to behave unjustly.

Socrates points out that the "ruler," in various professions, like a doctor and his patients, does what is best for his subjects and is given wages. Yet political rulers earn no wages and so do not benefit themselves. Socrates concludes that good men rule out of fear of having a worse ruler forced upon them. This leads Socrates to consider Thrasymachus' assertion that the life of an unjust man is better than that of a just man.

Socrates' point is that the ruler's purpose is to rule, just as a doctor's purpose is to care for his patients. The ruler likely is not even paid for his craft, while the physician is.

Thrasymachus says that injustice is not only more profitable, but that injustice is virtuous and wise. Socrates says that it is the ignorant man who thinks he knows better than the doctor, the non musical person who thinks he knows more than the musician. Even thieves have a degree of just behavior, else they would always rob each other. Thrasymachus unwillingly agrees.

Notice that Socrates uses Thrasymachus' assumption that justice is a skill in order to compare justice via a series of analogies with other skills. Thrasymachus is arguing that injustice is better for the individual who practices it.

Thrasymachus asserts that an unjust **city** would enslave other cities. Socrates responds that in an unjust city, everyone is unjust. Soldiers in an unjust army are unhappy and unable to unite against an enemy, as just men could. An unjust individual is in a constant state of unrest, always dissatisfied, and his own enemy.

Socrates introduces the topic of the city and changes the terms of the debate from individuals to groups of people. Within a group, injustice creates chaos and disharmony, even among thieves, so Socrates argues it cannot be a virtue.

Socrates considers whether the just have a happier life than the unjust. Since the gods are just, the unjust are enemies of the gods. Anything with a function also has a virtue. Eyes perform their function by the virtue of sight and ears by the virtue of hearing. The specific function of the soul is life, and it can not perform that function without its accompanying virtue of justice.

A "virtue" in Socrates' sense is a quality that allows something to perform its function well. Since injustice leads to disharmony, it must be the opposite of a virtue, so that the opposite of injustice, justice, must be a virtue.

Socrates adds that a person with a bad soul will rule poorly, while one with a good soul will rule well. Consequently the just man is happy, the unjust unhappy. Injustice is always inferior and less profitable than justice since injustice creates misery. Socrates says although he knows justice is wisdom and virtue, he still doesn't know what justice is. Thrasymachus leaves, still insisting that his definition of justice is the correct one.

This conclusion is really preparation for the Book II. Book I, which more than any other shows the Socratic method at work, is in some ways an overview of the other nine.

BOOK 2

Glaucon asks Socrates whether justice belongs 1) in the class of good things we choose to have for themselves, like joy, or 2) those we value for their consequences though they themselves are hard, like physical training, or 3) the things we value for themselves and their consequences, like knowledge. Socrates says justice is in the third and best group. Glaucon says that most people would say justice is valued not for itself but for its consequences, for justice is difficult, and thus often avoided.

Remember that Glaucon wants to be convinced that justice is a virtue, and that it is valued for itself as much as for its consequences—he is merely playing "devil's advocate" here.

Glaucon reviews Thrasymachus' arguments about justice. First, it is generally agreed that to do injustice is naturally good, but to suffer it, bad. Consequently men make laws, and what the laws require, they call just. The origin of justice is a compromise between right and wrong.

This is justice as a social contract, an agreement between people to avoid being unjust to each other so they may avoid being the victims of other people's injustice.

People value justice because they lack the power to do injustice. Justice is practiced only by compulsion, and for the good of others, since injustice is more rewarding than justice. Human nature inclines us towards injustice, but the law forces us to behave justly.

Justice lies in following the laws, whatever they may be; this is similar to the original definition given by Cephalus in Book I.

Glaucon tells the story of Gyges ring. A shepherd discovers a ring that makes its wearer invisible. The shepherd uses the ring to seduce the queen, murder the king and take the throne. If the power to do injustice were given to those who are usually too powerless to practice injustice, then, like the shepherd with the ring, they would be as unjust as others.

Through his story of Gyges' Ring, Glaucon contradicts the idea that laws equal justice. He argues that if a person could get away with injustice, as the shepherd does, he would behave unjustly.

Glaucon's brother Adeimantus says that it is merely the appearance of justice that is praised. An unjust person who has a reputation for justice leads a life of pleasure. The gods perceive truth and punish the unjust, but gods can be persuaded by prayers and sacrifices purchased by the unjust who have profited from their crimes.

Here the appearance of justice is seen as enough even for the gods, since they may be placated by other means.

Glaucon asks Socrates to describe what justice and injustice each do in themselves, how justice benefits those who have justice and how injustice harms them.

Glaucon and Adeimantus want Socrates to describe the pure qualities of justice and injustice.

Socrates proposes first to examine the justice of the **city**, because it is easier to determine what is just for the group then for the individual. He begins by specifying what the ideal city, the kallipolis, needs.

Socrates is proposing to argue from the general, the justice of the city or group, to the particular, the concept of justice and the individual.

A **city** needs people, food, shelter, and goods, with each person specializing in a particular occupation. The city needs merchants to trade with other cities, a marketplace, currency, local retailers, and people who perform manual labor for a wage. Luxury goods and services require a larger city, which leads to war to acquire more land. War requires an army, and soldiers require special skills.

One of the most important aspects of the ideal city is the idea that each individual specializes in a particular occupation.

Socrates examines the requirements of soldiers or "guardians." A guardian needs to be gentle to his own people, but harsh to others. Therefore the guardian must be a lover of learning, a philosopher, educated from childhood in music and poetry, then given physical training.

Notice that already Socrates emphasizes the importance of education and philosophy.

Poets, like Hesiod and Homer, tell inappropriate stories about gods committing impious actions, stories which might influence the citizens to act badly. Therefore, the **city** must only use stories depicting good behavior so as to influence the citizens of the city in positive ways.

Socrates, and hence Socrates' puppet-master Plato, have very specific ideas about the function of literature, (to teach) and the importance of censorship.

BOOK 3

Socrates describes stories for educating the **city's** guardians. They should include heroic stories, omitting any passages that might cause children to fear death or the afterlife, since guardians should fear slavery more than death. Lying and falsehood are forbidden, though rulers may lie if they need to. Moderation in sex, food and drink are required. Above all, gods and heroes should not be shown engaging in anything unflattering.

The underlying assumption is that since gods, because they are gods, can do no wrong, stories that describe them engaging in wrong doing (and injustice) must of course be false. These stories are omitted so that children are not harmed or wrongly taught by falsehoods.

The stories should be simple narration, not imitative dramatic works in which the poet might present evil characters, since to imitate evil is to become evil. Dramatic style is forbidden since it puts dishonorable words and thoughts into the mouths of gods and heroes who should only be uttering noble, virtuous words. Because the future guardians must specialize, learning only those skills required for their occupation, literature that shows one person being many things, or changing, would confuse them.

The idea that imitative literature, or fiction and drama, is evil and full of falsehoods is a core concept in Platonic thought. In this section, he is still discussing only those stories about gods and heroes, not those about mortal men. The emphasis on specialization in occupation even applies to literature.

Children should only be exposed to the good and the pure, so that they will become good and pure by following positive models. Their teachers should love the good and pure nature of the boys. Sexual contact between the men and boys is forbidden. The future guardians train for war. Their diet is simple and moderate. Those suffering from an incurable disease should be allowed to die. The seriously mentally ill should be killed.

The assumption is that non-sexual love fosters a love of knowledge, since both are good. Socrates' medical advice emphasizes the ability of the patient to contribute to the good of the city—someone who can't contribute should be eliminated.

Just as a judge needs experience in life and the nature of evil, though he himself must be virtuous, the ruler must be a man of experience and virtue. The rulers must love the **city's** welfare above all else. The guardians must be carefully tested to determine those most suited to rule. The best must be separated from the rest as potential rulers and further educated. Only the best are to be called guardians, the rest are warriors or "auxiliaries."

The good of the city is more important than the individual's good. Socrates would argue that individuals are happy because they are doing what they are best suited to do, but they have no choice.

To avoid questions about those chosen to rule from the others in the **city**, Socrates invents a myth that says all people were born from the earth. Thus there are three sorts of people. Those with gold in their nature are suited to rule. Those with silver are warriors, and those with iron and bronze, farmers and craftsmen, "producers." Sometimes a child is born to parents of a different metal; such children will be raised with those like themselves. Those who are gold will become rulers. If the city is led by someone who is not gold, prophecy says it will be destroyed. Socrates says children will learn this myth as a truth.

Although there is no class system in terms of whose children are rulers, whose are warriors, and whose are producers, once a child is associated with a particular role, it is permanent. Notice too that while he insists on "truth" in terms of literature, Socrates creates a state that is founded on an artificial myth.

The guardians and warriors are responsible for the defense of the **city**. The guardians may not own anything beyond what is necessary. By law all they need is supplied by the city. They will dine in mess halls and are forbidden to touch gold or silver, since it is sacrilege to mix the pure gold of their soul with earthly metal.

Socrates' concern is that if rulers are allowed to own property they will eventually abuse their power, ruling and accumulating wealth for personal gain, not the good of the city.

BOOK 4

Adeimantus says the guardians' simple lifestyle won't make them happy, given the luxuries enjoyed by rulers elsewhere. Socrates says despite Thrasymachus's view, the goal of the **city** is not to make one group happy at the expense of another.

Socrates assumes each person will be happy engaging in the occupation that suits him best. If the city as a whole is happy, then individuals are happy.

Since the goal is happiness for the **city** as a whole, the guardians must ensure that the residents of the city live neither in extreme wealth nor in poverty. Wealth leads to laziness, and poverty to rebellion.

The emphasis here, as in the physical education and diet of the guardians, is on moderation, neither too much nor too little.

The guardians must protect the education system since it determines the quality of the citizens and the **city**. Wives and children of guardians are held in common. With properly educated citizens, and the guardians to make decisions, the city won't need many laws. Religion may be left to Apollo.

Without controlling their education, the city can't control the future rulers. The absence of laws makes running the city simpler, but it places all the power with the guardians. Apollo is the god of the sun, prophecy, and music.

Having established the **city**, Socrates turns to the question of virtue. Since it is the best city possible, it contains all the virtues. Wisdom is the virtue of the guardians because of their education, courage is the virtue of the warriors who fight for the city, and the virtue of moderation is in each residents' happiness with his occupation. Justice lies in each person performing his own role properly, and not interfering with others performing theirs. Injustice is the opposite, people interfering with others' ability to perform their role.

Finally Socrates defines justice. Cephalus defined justice as being honest and paying what is owed, Polemarchus as legal obligations and helping friends and harming foes. Both emphasize giving what is owed as appropriate. For Plato and Socrates, justice is fulfilling one's appropriate role, and consequently giving to the city what is owed.

Socrates turns from justice on a large scale in the **city**, to justice in the individual. Just as the city has in its residents the virtues of wisdom, courage and moderation, the individual soul has three parts. That which measures, calculates and thinks is the rational part. That which lusts and hungers is the irrational or appetitive part. The third part is the spirit, which should control the appetites. Balance between the three results in the just man.

Socrates' argument rests on the existence of the three parts, which he supports by suggesting that there are three kinds of human "appetite" or desire. Socrates, in giving the soul three parts, created a concept of justice that works for all people in the city regardless of their role.

Balance or moderation in the individual occurs when the rational part of the soul rules the appetite and the spirit, just as moderation in the **city** results when the guardians rule. Such a ruler is a just man, and such a city is a just city. Injustice is the disorder and imbalance that occurs when the appetites and spirit rebel against the rational soul.

Socrates creates an analogy between the just city and the just man—both are defined by their different parts each performing its specific function.

BOOK 5

Polemarchus asks Socrates to explain what he meant when he said that wives and children, like the possessions of friends, should be held in common. Glaucon and Thrasymachus support Polemarchus. Socrates concludes that both sexes possess the qualities required to rule. There will be female guardians as well as male, with the same education and duties, including the defense of the **city**.

Socrates' instructions about women and education do not mean that he thinks women and men are equal. Socrates says that women are inferior in every respect.

Traditional marriages and families encourage emotional ties between individuals. For guardians, the traditional family will be abolished. Guardians of both sexes will live and train together. To avoid immorality men and women will be secretly matched at marriage festivals, by means of a rigged lottery. The matches are designed to produce the best children. The "best" men and women have more opportunities to mate than those who are inferior.

When Plato refers to "guardians" in terms of marriage and family, he is also referring to the warriors, who are educated with guardians for the first part of their lives. He wants to ensure loyalty to the city, rather than loyalty to a family.

The goal is to maintain the population, so that it neither increases nor decreases. Guardian marriages will be purely for procreation, and children will not know who their parents are. Guardian children will call all other children brothers and sisters, and all adults father and mother. At birth, children are given to nurses, and inferior children exposed to the elements to die. The guardians determine who may have children, and who they may have them with, and when, based on age rules to avoid incest.

In crude terms, Socrates is engaging in eugenics. The exposure of unwanted children to the elements had a long history in ancient Greece. Again, the producers are not included in these restrictions, because they have neither political power, like guardians, or military power, like warriors.

When all of the **city** is "family," and goods are owned equally, there is no discord. When the city's guardians war against outsiders, both men and women fight. Older children will watch from a safe place. Wars will be conducted as civilly as possible against fellow Greeks.

Although Socrates desires warfare against other Greeks to be civil in the sense of as non-violent and "friendly" as possible, he makes no restrictions about warfare with non-Greeks, all of whom were seen as barbarians.

Glaucon asks if this ideal **city** is even possible? Socrates' answer is yes, but only if "either philosophers become kings in our states or those whom we now call our kings and rulers take to the pursuit of philosophy seriously" (437c-d). Glaucon asks Socrates to explain what he means by a philosopher. Socrates says a philosopher loves truth, not just the appearance of truth, or the appearance of beauty.

The concept of the philosopher-king dominates the remainder of the Republic. Socrates is careful to distinguish true philosophers from those philosophers that are familiar to his audience, whom he describes as aesthetes, mere lovers of physical beauty, rather than philosophers.

All of existence is divided into three classes. What is completely, what is in no way, and what both is and is not. What is completely, can be completely known. What both is and is not is opinion or conjecture; everything else is ignorance. True philosophers seek the real, unchanging knowledge of truth in the Forms, the ideal abstracts ideas of Truth, Beauty and Justice, and other concepts, which we experience only in pale copies of the ideal Form. The philosopher alone has knowledge of the Idea of Absolute Beauty, or the Idea of Absolute Truth, that is, the Forms.

Forms are a key concept in Plato. The idea is that beyond the individual instances of beauty or the individual instances of sweet, is an ideal abstract form of the perfect beauty, the Idea of Beauty, and the perfectly sweet, the Idea of Sweet. Only philosophers understand the Forms. Others either exist in ignorance, or are dealing with physical subjective data, leading to opinion and conjecture, not knowledge.

BOOK 6

Socrates attempts to prove that the philosopher is best suited to rule. The philosopher as a lover of learning and truth is disinclined to attend to physical pleasures. Adeimantus interrupts to point out that most people think philosophers are vicious cranks, and the few good ones are useless to society. Socrates replies that this view is the result of faults in society, not in philosophers. Even a truly good man can not function well in a bad society.

Socrates' argument is that in a proper society, like that of his city, a true philosopher with understanding of the Forms is the ideal ruler, because the city residents will be able to work together, instead of competing against each other.

Socrates criticizes the Sophists, the paid tutors whom he says teach conventional wisdom without considering whether it is true or not. The Sophists call what is pleasant "good," without really considering the truth of the matter.

The Sophists are not, according to Socrates, "real" philosophers since they are interested in earning their income by teaching what is easiest, rather than in truth.

The philosopher-king must be intelligent, reliable, and willing to lead a simple life. These qualities are rarely found in one person, and must be encouraged by education and the study of the Good. Just as visible objects must be illuminated in order to be seen, so objects of knowledge must be true. Just as light comes from the **sun**, so Truth comes from Goodness. Goodness as the source of truth makes it possible for the mind to know, just as light from the sun makes eyes able to see.

Socrates never actually defines Goodness. He creates an elaborate metaphor, using the sun as an analogy, and then builds on that analogy in the following metaphors of the Line, and the Cave.

Socrates introduces the metaphor of the Line. Think of a straight line divided into four sections or stages. The lowest stage on the line is Imagination, where images and reflections are thought real. The next stage is Belief, which deals with physical objects rather than reflections or images of them. The last two stages, Thought and Understanding, are both forms of knowledge. Thought uses the Forms, but it also relies on images, sense data, and hypotheses. Understanding relies only on the ideal Forms, beginning with the Form of the Good. The philosopher progresses through all four stages on the line, until he reaches Understanding. Only the philosopher reaches the last stage, where he understands the Form of the Good. Once he arrives at the form of the Good, all the other forms follow.

The line is a metaphor for the way the philosopher must ascend a series of levels from reality to knowledge, from immediate and passing sensation to the divine vision of the ideal forms. The philosopher moves from the impressions of objects perceived by the senses, to the ideal abstract forms of those objects.

BOOK 7

Imagine, Socrates says, humans living in a **cave**, whose entrance is above them and open to the light. They've been there since childhood, with their necks and legs chained, so that they can only see in front of them. There is a fire, above and behind them, which provides a little light. There is also a path behind them, a little higher than they are. Along the path there is a low wall, like a puppeteer's screen. People move along the wall, carrying models of objects and people. Some of those carrying the models are talking.

Socrates uses an allegory about prisoners in a cave to demonstrate the effects and importance of education for the philosopher.

The prisoners can see the shadows moving along the wall, and hear the people talking. From the prisoners' perspective, truth is the movement of the shadows along the wall, shadows they assume are real.

The shadows are "copies" or reflections of the models, which themselves are copies of the Ideal Forms of the objects.

One day a prisoner escapes. He looks towards the **cave's** mouth. Initially dazzled by the **sun**'s light, he realizes that the objects he sees in the light are the real versions of the shadows he saw on the walls of the cave.

It is education that allows the philosopher to move through the stages of the Line. It is education, leading to knowledge, that truly frees the prisoner from the cave.

Socrates compares the visible realm of the world, the world of Belief, to the **cave**. The prisoner's upward journey to freedom and the things above is like the journey of the soul to the world of Ideas, the world of Forms, including the Form of Goodness.

The purpose of philosophy is to lead the soul to understanding the Form of the Good, because the form of the Good encompasses all other forms.

Education is the process of turning the soul around (much as the prisoner in the **cave** turned around to the light) and enticing people to look in the right place for knowledge. The philosopher must be taught to recognize the Form of Goodness. Then he must return to the cave, that is to the world of Belief, in order to teach others.

The goal of the city is to provide happiness to all, thus the philosopher-king is returning the education the city gave him by educating others.

The philosopher-king, with all the other children, studies music and poetry. At eighteen the best students are chosen for advanced classes in physical training and warfare for several years. At twenty, the best are again selected for more education as future guardians. The rest will become the warriors. The future guardians will study mathematics, logic and dialectic, with the goal of reaching truth, not arguing for the sake of arguing. Only the right sort of people, at about thirty, should be taught dialectic. Then they must spend fifteen years in the real world of politics, from the age of 35 to 50.

Because mathematics moves from the real to the abstract, it is good preparation for dialectic, which emphasizes abstract reasoning and logic. Notice the emphasis is on abstract reasoning, not the empirical evidence of the senses that is favored by modern science. The real world education is the equivalent of "returning to the cave."

BOOK 8

Socrates summarizes the decisions they have made about the **city**. Wives, children and their education must all be in common. The philosopher-kings are to be drawn from the best among them, live in common buildings, and excel in warfare and education. The other citizens will provide what the philosopher-kings need to live, so that they may rule.

This basic description of the city omits the importance of specialization into producers, auxiliaries, and guardians. It also omits the details regarding education, covered earlier.

Socrates describes the four types of government— Timocracy, Oligarchy, Democracy, and Tyranny. All are failures. He adds that there are equivalent kinds of human soul for each government. Socrates imagines a gradual failure of the **city** as it passes through each government. Because the city is human, it is imperfect and thus destined to fail. The future leaders are chosen based on human perceptions. Eventually, errors in selecting future guardians will result in someone who is not fit to rule being selected.

Socrates describes the failure of his ideal city as it passes through the four forms of government. Notice too that the failure begins in the first stage of the education process, because children who should not have been chosen as guardians were chosen.

Rulers, selected in error, will desire property. Eventually the rulers will own all the property. They will emphasize military training in order to control the producers. This will lead to Timocracy, in which the military rules, and honor and victory are valued above all else. Leaders will be chosen not for wisdom, but for their abilities in war. The Timocratic man's soul is controlled not by reason, but by his spirit.

In modern terms, the Timocratic man is controlled by his emotions.

In an Oligarchy all political power is in the hands of the wealthy. The wealthy and the poor are at war with each other, so that there are really two cities. The Oligarchic man is motivated only by greed. Eventually the Oligarchy increases poverty until the poor rebel.

The flaw of Oligarchy is an emphasis on wealth as the virtue, which Socrates thinks is really a vice. Because of extreme wealth and extreme poverty the city is essentially divided into two cites.

When the poor rebel against the wealthy minority the **city** becomes a democracy. In a Democratic city no one is forced to take public office, no one enforces law, and no one serves in the military. Eventually a leader rises because he panders to the people. As his popularity rises so does his power. Eventually those who lost wealth start a civil war. The Democratic man moves from momentary whim to momentary whim, without moderation or order in his life, and thus accomplishes little.

The flaws of the Oligarchy lead directly to Democracy. You will note that it is almost the worst form of government, in Socrates' view, surpassed in its flaws only by tyranny. The central flaw in democracy, in his view, is an uncontrolled desire for freedom, which evolves into anarchy, thus leading to tyranny an attempt to control the anarchy. During Plato's life, Athens was briefly controlled by an Oligarchy, which rapidly decayed into a democracy, which executed Socrates.

BOOK 9

Socrates says the tyrant indulges in pleasures in his youth. The tyrant can't control his desires and indulges them shamefully. All of his appetites are unrestrained, and he sees enemies everywhere. All relationships are seen in terms of a master and a slave, and he himself is a slave to his appetites and passions.

The anarchy of democracy causes people to desire control; at first the tyrant is supported because he controls the anarchy, but soon he wants more, and takes more, including exercising more control over others, and less over himself.

The just man governs his appetites, and his reason and true knowledge are in control. He can choose his actions and is therefore happier than the tyrant.

Socrates see the tyrant as unhappy because he can't control his desires.

Just as there are three parts to the soul, there are three types of men. The just man is governed by reason and seeks knowledge. The Timocratic man is governed by his spirit and seeks honor. The third type, governed by his desires, seeks profit and satisfaction. He is a combination of the Democratic, the Oligarchic and the Tyrant. Each of these would describe himself as the happiest of men, because there are three sorts of pleasure, the pleasure of knowledge, the pleasure of honor and success and the pleasure of profit.

In Book VII Socrates argues that justice involves searching for understanding of the Forms, and imitating them, thus making justice itself good since the Forms are the source of all good. Now he prepares to argue that a just life is a happy one.

The just man, who has experienced all three forms of pleasure, knows the pleasures of knowledge to be best because others are physical, illusory pleasures that do not last. The pleasure of food is only pleasurable because of the absence of hunger. The objects of knowledge are ideas and hence true and real, whereas physical objects are illusory.

Earlier, Socrates related justice to moderation, as he does here, when he describes reason ruling spirit and appetite in the just man, so that all three portions of the soul are functioning properly.

The unjust man, by ignoring reason, makes himself miserable. He starves his reason, his best and most human aspect, and feeds his appetites and desires. A man who wishes to lead a good and happy life must be led by reason. If his own reason is not enough to guide him, he must be led by the reason of others, as the producers are led by the philosopher-kings.

Reason exercises control, so neither appetite nor spirit dominate in the just and happy man. The just man is a version in miniature of the just city. In the city, the philosopher-king rules the auxiliaries and the producers, just as the rational soul governs will and spirit (the emotions), and the appetites.

BOOK 10

Socrates returns to the subject of poetry and imitative art. Imitation is three steps from the Forms and truth. Artists seem to create things, but they really only create poor copies of the Ideas. Art imitates the specifics, but not the universal and ideal. An artist who paints a picture of a bed only makes a copy of a copy of the Idea or Form of a bed. The painter's knowledge is less than that of the person who want to use the thing he paints. The user of a harness knows more about its use than even the harness maker. Socrates bans imitative poets from the city because they tend to tell immoral stories and falsehoods.

An artist's painting of a bed is a copy, a specific instance of a bed, not an ideal Bed, and not the abstract Idea of the perfect Bed. Thus the painting is three moves from the ideal Form of a bed. A carpenter creates a bed that is two moves from the Form of a Bed.

Socrates says a just life's chief reward comes in the after life. Glaucon asks if Socrates believes the soul lives on after the body. Socrates argues that the soul cannot be destroyed by its particular evil, as other things are, since death does not make one more unjust. Death is not an evil, so it cannot destroy the soul. The soul then is immortal.

Even Tyrants do not destroy their soul, though they are nothing but unjust.

Socrates turns to the rewards of a just life. Since the gods know everything, they won't leave the just man unrewarded. Socrates tells a myth about a soldier named Er who is on the funeral pyre when he comes back to life.

It seems somewhat contradictory to use a story, a myth, as evidence, but the myth is presented as truth.

Er describes his experience in the afterlife. His soul and others traveled to a place where there were two chasms in the earth and two above in the sky. Judges sat in between the chasms. Just souls were sent to a chasm in the sky, to heaven, while the unjust went to a chasm in the earth. Souls from the two chasms were constantly moving. Those from the earth were dirty and worn, those from the sky, bright and shining. Er learned that souls in heaven are happy and content for a thousand years, while those in the earth suffer for a thousand years to atone for their crimes. Eventually the souls are summoned to the Fates who allow them to choose new lives. The souls are given a drink to make them forget their past lives. Er was about to choose a new life when he awoke and found himself on the pyre.

Socrates presents the myth of Er as proof not only of the immortality of the soul, but that the just man is rewarded in the afterlife.

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