

Plato, The Republic

Book I: On Justice

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I. Republic 1 (336b-354c) Thrasymachus: The Immoralist Position

Contents:

- Introduction
 - Justice as the Advantage of the Strongest (336b-343a)
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A. Introduction

1. Who is this Thrasymachus guy anyway?
 - a. He is a well-known Sophist, a teacher of Rhetoric.
 - b. He distinguished philosophy from sophistry because the philosopher sacrificed everything, including eloquence, for the truth, whereas, he charged, the sophist sacrificed the truth for eloquence and for persuasive effectiveness.

B. Justice as the Advantage of the Strongest (336b-343a)

1. Thrasymachus: Justice is the advantage of the strongest. (338c)

- a. "By this he means that from place to place different political regimes rule: tyranny, aristocracy, democracy, for example".
- b. "Whomever is in power (the strongest) makes the laws and invariably they make the laws to their own financial and political advantage."
- c. "Thus just rulers rule to the benefit of the strongest, namely themselves."

2. Socrates: Statecraft like any other craft is for the benefit of the weak or for their customers.

- a. Physicians practice medicine to benefit the patient.
- b. Statecraft is for the benefit of the citizens.

3. Thrasymachus: Distinction between the shepherd and the sheep

- a. Shepherd takes care of the sheep to benefit the shepherd.
- b. Rulers also take care of the citizens so that the rulers will profit from them in the end.
 - i. Government needs popular consensus to carry out policies
 - ii. Government revenue from taxes

4. Socrates: Distinction between profit-makers and other crafts

- a. The craftpersons like the physician is a physician only if he/she cures patients.
- b. The craftpersons can make money, but only if he/she is a good craftperson (e.g., a physician who is good at curing his/her patients).
- c. Shepherds will profit only if he/she takes care of the flock well.
- d. The just ruler will benefit if he/she takes care of his/her citizens well.

5. Do rulers rule ambitiously or reluctantly?

- a. Thrasymachus states that they rule ambitiously to benefit themselves.
- b. Socrates states that they rule reluctantly.
 - 1. "However, the best rulers would be those who find the incentives of pay or honors distasteful."
 - 2. "The best could be enticed to rule only to avoid the penalty of being ruled by people who are worse than they, that is, to avoid being ruled by unjust people, people who are worse in character than they."

C. Justice as Another's Good/ The Unjust Life is Better (343b-344d)

1. Thrasymachus: The unjust life is more beneficial than the just life.

a. Example of a tyrant

1. Pays less taxes
2. Wins more contracts

D. Socrates: Final Objections (344d-354c)

1. Defense of the just life:

a. "The just man does not try to get the better of other just men, but rather of unjust men who are his opposites in character."

1. "Unjust men try to get the better of both just and unjust men."
2. "The excellent craftsperson does not try to take advantage of those who are members of his or her craft or guild but tries only to excel over amateurs."

b. A powerful city will require justice

1. Cooperation needed to get things done
2. Injustice creates conflict of interest and factions
3. "Unjust rulers will rule a city that is unjust to its allies and neighboring nations. These will seek advantage over the citizens who will form factions; then intrigue and civil war will prevent the city from accomplishing anything."

c. Justice is a virtue

1. "A virtue is the specific excellence of a craft. It is the power to achieve the purpose or goal of a craft, its *telos*."
2. Justice is the virtue of the craft of life.
3. The goal or *telos* of the human soul is to manage life.
4. "The *arete* or virtue of justice is the specific excellence of the human soul; it is that which allows each life to flourish, to manage well oneself and social life."

5. The benefits of justice

- a. Guides human passion
- b. Allows us to be loyal and faithful to friends
- c. Allows us to keep promises to our customers and clients
- d. A just ruler will accomplish greatness for the city.

6. The human soul requires justice to flourish.

II. Republic, Book III (367e--375a): Justice in the City

Contents:

- Socrates' Response: Justice in the City (367e-369b)
 - Rise of the Minimal City (369b-373a)
 - The Luxurious City (373a-375a)
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A. Socrates' Response: Justice in the City (367e-369b)

1. Socrates defends the life of justice. He first exams justice in the city and then he will later examine justice in the soul.

B. Rise of the Minimal City (369b-373a)

1. Definition of a city: An association of people based upon need (369b).
 - a. A city comes into being because individuals cannot fulfill their needs on their own. They need the help of others to do so.
 - b. The rise of the city leads to the division of skills.
 1. E.g., farming, shoe making, building, weaving.
2. Principle of specialization: one should do one job
 1. "Leads to cooperation: everyone works on specific tasks to meet the needs of the community."
 2. "Specialization is natural: every person has different talents and abilities" (370a).

C. The Luxurious City (373a-375a)

1. People will not be content with the minimal city
 - a. People will desire more civilized pleasures (e.g., jewelry, luxurious furniture, fancy clothes, fine cuisine, and entertainment).
 - b. More specialized skills will be needed (e.g., performers, barbers, prostitutes, pastry makers, etc.).
 - c. More citizens require more food.
 - d. More food requires more land.
 - e. This requires warfare to acquire more territory (373d-e)
 - f. A permanent professional army will be needed. This is the role of the Auxiliary Guardians.
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II. Republic Book II (375a-383d): Education of the Guardians I

Contents:

- The Education of the Guardians (375a-376d)
 - Censorship of Poetry (376e-383c)
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A. The Education of the Guardians (375a-376d)

1. Guardians will serve as the army and also as the rulers of the city.
2. To prevent the military from becoming a tyranny, the guardians must be education to be:
 - a. Gentle towards their own citizens
 - b. Fierce towards their enemies
3. Plato's Philosophy of Education
 - a. Total training of character to develop moral individuals
 - b. Proper balance of intellectual and physical training
 1. "The over-emphasis on physical training would produce a brute, the over-emphasis on the intellectual, a wimp."
4. Authoritarian in nature.
 - a. Guardians are not encouraged to question their beliefs.

B. Censorship of Poetry (376d-383c)

1. Two aspects of education
 - a. Music and the liberal arts for the soul
 - b. Gymnastics for the body
2. Censorship of Poetry
 - a. Poetry at that time was recited and not read silently.
 - b. Vicious or illicit stories should be censored from children.
 - c. False poetry should be censored

Republic Book II: Education of the Guardians

1. Any stories that gives a bad representation about gods or heroes, including stories that portray them of indecent and immoral acts.

d. Immoral stories should be censored

1. Stories portraying any sort of vices should be censored otherwise children may grow up pursuing these vices, such as that of the tyrant.

III. Republic, Book III (412b-417b): The Lifestyle of the Guardians I

Contents:

- Division of the Polis (412b-417b)
 - The Noble Lie (414b-415d)
 - The Lifestyle of the Guardians (415d-417b)
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A. Division of the Polis (412b-417b)

1. Who should rule
 - a. The rulers should be the best of the best.
 - b. The guardians are the best members of society
 - c. An elite class from the guardians should rule the city (412a-c)
2. Characteristics of the Guardians
 - a. The ruler must sacrifice himself/herself for the sake of the city.
 - b. Rulers must maintain their convictions in the face of corruption.
 - c. This requires the stability of character.

B. The Noble Lie (414b-415d)

1. Three classes of citizens in his ideal *polis*:
 - a. Guardians: rulers of the polis
 - b. Auxiliaries: guardians who remain warriors
 - c. Craftsmen: rest of the citizens
2. The noble lie to justify each class
 - a. “All citizens they will be told from very early on were born of the same mother, the earth. Some have gold in their souls (the Guardians), some have silver (the auxiliaries) and some have iron or bronze (the craftsmen). The type of metal that each person is made of determines the role that they will play in the society.”
 - b. Only the guardian class knows that it is a lie.
 - c. The purpose is to achieve the absolute loyalty to the city.

C. The Lifestyle of the Guardians (415d-417b)

1. Guardians must not possess private property nor have any dealings with money (416d-417b).

a. If they are not devoted to making money, they can be more devoted to the good of the city.

b. No material distractions will also enable them to commit themselves to the good of the city.

IV. Republic IV (427d-445b): Justice in the City and Individual

Contents:

- Justice in the City (427d-434d)
 - The Three Parts of the Soul (434d-441c)
 - Justice in the Individual (441c-445b)
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A. Justice in the City (427d-434d)

1. Four Elements of a Good City

i. Wisdom

- a. The city is wise by virtue of the Guardians.
- b. The knowledge of statecraft is found exclusively in the Guardians.
- c. Good decisions are the result of knowledge and not of ignorance (428b / pg. 121).

ii. Courage

- a. The Guardians learn what is fearful and not fearful through their education.
- b. “Thus they are able to defend the life, honor and glory of the city without cowardice or resort to excessive violence. They combine in themselves both viciousness and gentleness.”

iii. Moderation/Self-Discipline

- a. Self-discipline is the mastery over pleasures and desires.
- b. Self mastery is when the better part of the soul in control of the worse (431a).
- c. It extends throughout the city:

“It extends literally throughout the entire city, over the whole scale, causing those who are weakest – in intelligence, if you like, or in strength, or again in numbers, wealth or anything like that – together with those who are strongest and those in between, to sing in unison. So we would be quite justified in saying that self-discipline is this agreement about which of them should rule – a natural harmony of worse and better, both in the city and in each individual” (432a / pg. 126).

- d. The artisans do not pursue moderation
 - 1. They desire economic and material wealth.
 - 2. Their desires must be curbed by the Rulers and enforced by the Auxiliaries.
- e. The source of moderation is rule of the just over the unjust; the ruler of the Guardians over the rest of society.
- f. The populace does not envy the Guardians
 - 1. Private ownership is guaranteed to the citizens
 - 2. The Guardians live an austerely (they do not own private property; they are not compensated much for their work).
 - 3. They keep their hands off of the people and the people keep their hands off of the Guardians.

iv. Justice

a. Justice is when each class does fulfill his/her role – “the one for which his natural character best fitted him” (433 / ps. 127).

b. The worst crime: interfering with other classes. Example: when a money-maker enters the class of the rulers.

B. The Three Parts of the Soul (434d-441c)

1. Desire / Appetitive

i. Desires sensual satisfaction, e.g., food, drink and sex.

2. Rational

i. The calculating part of the soul

3. Spiritual

i. Responsible for the feelings of anger, assertion, and aggression.

ii. It is also responsible for feelings of shame, guilt, and honor.

C. Justice in the Individual

1. Justice in the individual is when the rational part of the soul rules over the appetitive and the spiritual part.

V. Republic, Book V: The Philosophy Kings

A. Contents

Philosopher Kings (471c-474b)

Definition of the Philosopher (474b-480a)

B. Philosopher Kings

- a. The just city would be possible only if philosophers were allowed to rule.

C. Definition of the Philosopher

- a. Philosophers are lovers of wisdom
- b. They love learning and wisdom in general
- c. A philosopher is a true lover of knowledge (475e-467d.
- d. True knowledge is knowledge of the Forms.
- e. The philosopher versus the sight lover
 - i. Philosophers are lovers of knowledge
 - ii. The object of knowledge is the Forms
 - iii. Non-philosophers love opinion
 - iv. The object of knowledge is the sensible world

V. Republic, Book V: Women, Eugenics, the Life of the Guardian, War and Peace (449a-471c)

A. Contents

The Equality of Women (450c-457b)
The Guardian's Family Life (457b-466d)
War and Peace (466d-471c)

B. The Equality of Women (450c-457b)

1. Women are equal to men in all ways except strength (451d)
 - i. They should have the same responsibilities as men
 - ii. They should receive the same education as men to become Guardians
 - a. Music
 - b. Gymnastics
 1. Some would object seeing the sight of women exercising naked.
 2. This doesn't matter as long as it is advantageous to the city.
 - c. Warfare
2. Differences are accidental not essential
 - i. The difference between men and women when it comes to ruling and protecting the city is accidental, not essential.
 - ii. Gender is irrelevant when it comes to the demands of being a Guardian.

C. The Guardian's Family Life / Eugenics (457b-466d)

1. Males and females will live together
 - a. This will result in interbreeding.
 - b. The problem is that the best will reproduce with the less desirable.
 - c. Solution: Another lie
 - i. The rulers will tell the Guardians that their partners will be selected by lottery when in fact they are not (459c-460a).

2. Care of the Children
 - a. Children are placed in a nursery and cared by nurses
 - b. Parents will not know who their own children are (460d)
 - c. Careful management of the rulers will prevent incest (461d-e)
 - d. Defected children and products of unsanctioned unions will be left to die by exposing them to the elements (460c, 461c)
 - i. The children of good parents will be taken, I think, and transferred to the nursing-pen, where there will be special nurses living separately, in a special part of the city. The children of inferior parents, on the other hand, or any deformed specimen born to the other group, will be removed from sight into some secret and hidden place, as is right. (460c)

3. Purpose of raising children communally
 - a. The purpose is to keep the city unified
 - b. The city will be unified when people experience the same pleasures and pains
 - c. There will be no dissent since everything is held in common.
 - d. "Because they think of everyone as their brother/sister, father/mother there will be no lawsuits or violence among them, nor will they be included to split off into factions (464d-465b)" (M. Russo).

D. War and Peace (466d-471c)

1. Women will share in the task of waging warfare
2. Children will gain experience in battle through observation (467a-d)
3. Soldiers will be tested on the battlefield
 - a. Soldiers who show cowardice will be demoted to the class of the craftsman or farmer.
 - b. “Anyone who falls alive into the hands of the enemy can be handed over as a gift to those who capture him. They can do what they like with their catch” (468b).
 - c. Those that show courage will be promoted.
4. Treatment of Greeks and non-Greeks
 - a. Other Greeks will be treated as potential friends. Hostilities of this kind are called civil war.
 - b. Non-Greeks (barbarians) will be treated as potential enemies. Hostilities of this kind are called war.

VII. Republic, Book VII: Education of the Philosophy Kings (521c-541b)

A. The Education of the Guardian Rulers

- a. Subjects of study
 - i. Music
 - ii. Gymnastic
 - iii. The Arts
 - iv. Humanities
 - v. Mathematics (draw people toward being; toward the Forms)
 - vi. Geometry
 - vii. Astronomy
- b. On Studying
 - i. “The free man should not study slavishly” (538d).
- c. Interdisciplinary
- d. Dialectic at the age of 30
 - i. Dialectic can destroy conventional norms and religious myths
- e. Military at the age of 35. They server for 15 years.
- f. The best can rule at the age of 50

VIII. Republic, Book VIII: Types of Political Systems

- a. Aristocracy – Rule of the few; rule by philosophers
- b. Timocracy – Rule by warriors
- c. Oligarchy – Rule by the Few; Plutocracy – Rule of wealth
- d. Democracy – Rule of the many
- e. Tyranny – Rule of the tyrant

VIII. Republic, Book VIII: Democracy and Tyranny

a. Problem with Oligarchy

- i. Aim: Oligarchy desires wealth
- ii. Cause of downfall: Excessive desire for wealth and neglect of other things

b. Problem with Democracy

- i. Aim: Promotion of liberty
- ii. Problems of Excessive Liberty
 - 1. Public against leader
 - a. If leader does not provide sufficient liberty, they will accuse him of being an oligarch.
 - 2. Son against father
 - 3. Student against teacher
 - 4. Leads to equality of
 - a. Slaves and owners
 - b. Men and women
 - 5. Animals roam the streets and resembles their owners
 - 6. Extreme liberty leads to extreme reactions against subjection

c. Three Groups in Democratic Society

- i. The Leaders
- ii. The Rich
- iii. The Masses