

Plato. *The Republic*. Translated by Tom Griffith. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Plato (428-348 B.C.) studied under Socrates, and instructed Aristotle. His philosophical system based on ideal forms supported a potent ethical structure. Plato's system proved seminal to all subsequent Western philosophy. Plato founded the Academy in Athens, where he taught until his death. *The Republic* may be history's most influential book in political philosophy. Some point to *The Republic* as commencing the discipline of political philosophy itself.

[The Just Individual] (327a-367e). **BOOK 1.** A friend persuades Socrates, who was in Piraeus to watch a religious parade, then to stay the evening in Pireaus at his house. Nine friends join Socrates on the promise of conversation and watching some of the festival.

1. *[Justice and Wealth]* Socrates asks the eldest, Cephalus, how he experiences old age, since Socrates loves to learn from elders. The old man responds that some elderly friends complain of what they can no longer do. But the best find their character sustains them, and raging desires wane in old age, which is a relief. Socrates prods Cephalus, asking him if it is not instead that Cephalus is rich. There might be consolation in wealth. Cephalus reiterates that good temperament makes old age bearable, which money alone can never do. Socrates notes that self-made men love their money, and make poor companions as a result of that affection. Cephalus says that old age makes one worry about Hades, whether one has done wrong. Money helps keep one from doing wrong, which is its greatest value. Where the conscience is clear, old age can be relatively comfortable.
2. *[Fair Dealing, Truth-Telling]* Socrates diverts the conversation to the idea of justice. Definition #1: Socrates asks if justice is nothing more than truth-telling conjoined with fair dealing, then worries over a counterexample of returning weapons to a friend gone mad.
3. *[Paying Others What They Have Earned]* Definition #2: Polemarchus cites Simonides for the proposition that justice is paying each what he is owed. Socrates pulls this definition apart, pointing out several shortcomings. Polemarchus insists that justice is doing well for friends and ill to enemies. Socrates questions our ability to adequately recognize good and bad people, and so some friends may be bad and enemies good. Polemarchus amends his definition to accommodate such errors. Socrates asks if it is human nature to treat anyone badly, even enemies. Ill treatment makes anything worse, including enemies. Just men harm none. Socrates seeks a different definition of justice. Thrasymachus accuses Socrates of mere rhetorical jockeying. He demands Socrates' definition of justice. Socrates claims his skills are meager. Thrasymachus accuses Socrates of false modesty. Thrasymachus alleges that Socrates lets others teach him without thanking them. Socrates says he thanks with praise, since he has no money.
4. *[Benefit to the Strong]* Definition #3: Thrasymachus argues that justice is whatever may be good for those who are stronger. Rulers make laws to benefit themselves. Socrates points out that sometimes rulers misconstrue their self interest, and so make laws that hurt themselves. Thrasymachus objects that a ruler, as ruler, exercises a skill, and never errs so long as he uses that skill. Socrates rejoins that every art works for the benefit not of the art, but its object. Socrates concludes that leaders act for the benefit of their charges, which idea defeats Thrasymachus's definition of justice.

Thrasymachus ridicules Socrates. Leaders act to aggrandize themselves; they may inadvertently benefit citizens, as shepherds fatten sheep before slaughter. Simple-minded persons do as their rulers demand, making the ruler happy, but making themselves unhappy. Just men always get the short end of the stick with the unjust, who free-ride and self-deal. The tyrant seizes not only things, but the people themselves. He is called blessed.

Socrates objects to Thrasymachus's attempt to leave. The issue of justice defines how best to live to profit oneself. Socrates asserts that justice is preferable to injustice. Socrates asks Thrasymachus to convince him otherwise. Socrates argues that

making a living from an art or skill does not negate the art or skill. Good men do not seek to rule; they are compelled to do so by the outcomes that would follow were they to decline.

Socrates takes Thrasymachus to task for his assertion that the unjust life is more profitable. Thrasymachus styles injustice a virtue. Socrates argues that there are fundamental differences between the just and unjust. He distinguishes the just, who is wise and good, from the unjust, who is ignorant and bad. Thrasymachus blushes and is flustered.

Socrates returns to the question of justice and injustice. Socrates argues that injustice breeds factions and hatreds, whereas justice induces friendship and collaboration. The unjust and the semi-just accomplish little or nothing. They are at war with themselves and all other. But are just people better off than the unjust? Socrates argues that everything has its special excellence, and the special excellence of the soul is living well. Where the soul is defective, as when it is unjust, human misery ensues. Thrasymachus gives in.

Socrates castigates himself for taking matters out of order. He has rushed off into the goodness of justice before he has determined what justice really is.

BOOK 2. Glaucon takes up defense of Thrasymachus's positions. Glaucon argues that some goods are valued for their own sake (pleasure), others for themselves and their consequences (thinking or health), and yet a third group for the consequences only (exercise, doctors). Socrates argues that justice is valued for itself and for its consequences.

5. *[Justice as Stealthy Injustice]* Glaucon counters that the unjust life is best. Glaucon argues that justice is what law provides, and law is a compromise among people to give up doing wrong (which is for them good) and being wronged (which necessitates retaliation). Good men are merely unjust men too weak to impose their wills. Everyman is Gyges, who upon discovering his ring of invisibility, immediately seduced the queen and killed the king, seizing the throne. If two such rings existed, one on a just man and the other on an unjust man, the results would be identical. All men do whatever wrong they please, provided they do not get caught. In comparing the lives of just and unjust men, one must conceive the perfectly just and unjust man. The perfectly unjust man gets away with his self-dealing, and so has a reputation for justice; he becomes king, marries well, reward friends and punishes enemies, worships well, and is beloved of the gods. The perfect just man proves he does not love justice for any reason other than itself by enduring an unwarranted reputation for utter injustice; he is prosecuted for his supposed crimes, tortured, crucified, and dies without complaint, since he has his reward, his inner sense of justice. Adeimantus adds that the rewards of the gods are substantial, including perpetual drunkenness and the avoidance of Hades. All poets agree; will we take the poets seriously? Gods heed just and unjust alike. So, the appearance of justice controls happiness, regardless whether the possessor is just or unjust. *Definition #4: To prosper, one acts with stealthy injustice, gains wealth, pays for sacrifices to the gods, and so gains divine favor.* If people really believed that justice was good, all would quake at the possibility that injustice might dwell in them.

[The Just Town] (368a-372d) The debate turns to Socrates, who praises the brothers for their potent arguments. Socrates argues that justice in individuals is writ small. One needs larger text, and for that one must consider justice in towns. Towns exist because people need services from one another. Socrates proposes to construct a hypothetical town. Such a place provides for human needs: food housing, clothing. Providers specialize in their various products, and rely on others for what they themselves do not produce. For producers are variously gifted, as compared to one another. The party discusses all the various trades needed for a workable town and for trade with surrounding towns. Socrates portrays a harmonious life of ascetic simplicity, one in which there is no overpopulation or poverty or war. Justice is apparent to all. [This is Plato's *Callipolis* (527c), the beautiful town, though at several points in the text, Plato equivocates whether the pustulous city may not be called good as well.]

[The Pustulous City] (372e-412a)

Glaucon objects that he wants more than simple fare. He calls Socrates' Callipolis the "city of pigs." Glaucon wants rich meals and luxury. Socrates styles Glaucon's preference the "swollen and inflamed" city [which I have called "pustulous"], not the just town Socrates described. In the pustulous city, injustice may be easier to identify. Citizens lust after luxuries

and seek opportunities to indulge their bad habits. Such cities require a larger population to sate citizens' aberrant desires. This expansion of scope will eventually necessitate war to steal from neighbors their prosperity. The town will metastasize into a pustulous city after including the multitude of its soldiers and their support people. Soldiers should be a standing army, specializing in war only (just as other citizens specialize in their trades). The soldiers shall (for the moment) be called guardians. In character, guardians defend the pustulous town fiercely against aggressors, and love wisdom (philosophy). In education, guardians first study legends and history and music as youngsters.

1. [*Censorship*] The stories of story tellers must be vetted, and only those approved should be told to children. Some stories, such as the tales of Ouranos and Kronos doing battle, should be excluded. Guardians, and indeed all children, should hear tales against quarreling, if we want adults who avoid senseless disputes. Poets must be forced to tell only approved stories. When children learn these errant stories of Greek mythology, they form opinions that cannot be changed. Every poet should present god as good and doing good. A good god cannot be responsible for evils. Man bears that guilt. Poets should also be forbidden to tell stories about gods changing form or lying. God is perfect, his form unchanging, his words reliable. The education children who may become guardians receive must be heavily guided, if they are to become godlike and god-fearing. **BOOK 3.** Storytellers must also tell tales that inculcate courage. These stories must diminish fear of death, and so should not make the underworld a place to be feared. The founders must edit the works of Homer and the poets to exclude passages depicting Hades as a pestilential location. Guardians should seldom laugh. Raucous guffawing diminishes a serious person. No god should be portrayed laughing. Only guardians should be allowed to lie for the benefit of the town. No others should lie on pain of punishment. Self-discipline should be praised, and cynicism and insolence punished. Poets should not portray gods in lust or copulation. All should learn endurance and to avoid corruption and avarice. No poet should portray gods doing evil or behaving badly. Such stories create in young men a casual attitude toward evil-doing. Socrates argues that, concerning men, no poet should portray the just as other than happy, and the unjust as other than miserable. All agree that they really cannot decide what sorts of stories poets may tell about men until they know what justice is and that justice profits the man who possesses it, even if others view him as unjust.
2. [*Imitate Only What Is Simple and Good.*] Socrates explores imitation in poetry, and argues that guardians should not use imitation in their speech. It is a form of dissembling, and also a distraction. People become like that which they imitate. Guardians might imitate persons who are evil or mad. Guardians, if they imitate, should imitate only good men in their best moments. Socrates and Glaucon agree that only simple storytellers should be permitted, because those more skilled, using mixed media, may entertain, but also confuse, the town's soldiers, leading them toward moral evil. In songs and music, music expressing mourning, partying, or luxurious entertainment should be avoided. Choose musical modes of brave soldiers facing martial dangers, or that appropriate to peaceful voluntary actions. Multi-modal instruments should be banned, in favor of the lute or pan pipe. Rhythmically, martial marches are preferred, but the topic is complex and should be left to future determination. Music imitates spoken language. People of intelligence speak in a particular manner. Things that are bad share a style; so too good things. All craftsmen should seek the good, so soldiers grow up in a good environment. They should be led from infancy by experiences that incline them to value friendship and social harmony, as well as beautiful speech and thought. Music and poetry penetrate the deepest parts of the soul. Those versed in beauty recognize ugliness readily. Socrates argues that strong pleasures disrupt self-discipline, and no pleasure exceeds sex. So, pedophilia must be constrained to chaste interactions.
3. [*Physical Training*] The physical training of guardians depends upon mental goodness. A good mind disciplines its body. Avoid drunkenness. Food should be simple and unseasoned. Fancy foods breed disease.
4. [*Eugenics by Law and Medicine*] Where education is poor, one needs many laws and judges and doctors. People lack an inner sense for justice, and fail to care for their own

bodies. As to illness, many become enslaved to being a patient. They should rather get up off their beds, do their jobs, and recover or die as the case may be. Life as a patient is not worth living. The rich should practice goodness as their job. Do not worry about your body, or do excessive things to find health. Obsession with one's body is an illness itself. Greek medicine helps good men return to their duties. It does not help the addled or useless live on to breed and complain. No, it lets such die without issue, being worthless to themselves and their town. The good doctor knows illness, both theoretically and personally, and uses this knowledge to treat others. The good judge knows no evil personally, and so blooms late, after long experience with evil in others, but not himself. A bad man can never become wise. Good doctors let physically defective persons die. Good judges execute men with defective souls.

5. *[Balance]* Overall, an education balanced between music-and-poetry and physical education is best, harmonizing the soul. The pattern for dances, hunting, athletic events, and horse races follows the same pattern already established.

[Rulers in Pustulous Cities] (412b-427d). Rulers of a pustulous city must be the best of the guardians. Rulers act in the city's best interests, and refuse other alternatives. They must resist distractions and erosion of their convictions. We [who is the "we"?] must tempt candidate rulers to abandon beliefs, and test their tolerance of pain and hardship. The military trainee who survives testing with a pure soul becomes ruler, and should be honored. Such rulers are the true guardians; the other soldiers are auxiliaries, defending the ruler and his decisions.

1. *[Myth of Metals]* Socrates proposes that, to tweak a pustulous city toward becoming a beautiful town, all citizens should adopt a grand lie: all men were formed within the earth with their tools and weapons, and Mother Earth released them to defend, as brothers, the land in which they live. Guardians have god-given admixtures of gold in their souls. Auxiliaries have silver. Craftsmen and farmers have bronze and iron. The pre-eminent duty of guardians is to supervise the mixture of metals in children's souls. Dross children of guardians should be demoted to the fields. Fine children of craftsmen should have a chance to rule. [A classist meritocracy.] Any town will perish when a bronze soul becomes ruler.
2. *[Auxiliary Communes]* Auxiliaries should be housed separately and well-provided for, so they do not come to view their own people as a source of their problems. They should individually own nothing and live communally. They should have no gold or silver, touch none, and own no land or houses. For then, the soldiers would become embroiled in town life, and might become enemies of those whom they should be defending. **BOOK 4.** Adeimantus objects that the rulers and auxiliaries will be unhappy, denied the usual fruits of good labor. Socrates responds that the system aims to create a luxurious town as happy as possible, not just happy guardians. The guardians, even if unhappy themselves, are building the happiest unjust town possible for most citizens. [Consequential theory of ethics] We must take care that guardians guard; if they do otherwise, the city is doomed.
3. *[City Conditions]*
 - a. *[Wealth and Poverty]* Guardians must take care that both wealth and poverty do not grow in the pustulous city. Each causes revolution, leads people to fail to perform their appointed duties. Socrates explains why a beautiful town, though small, can weather the attacks of larger, richer cities. Those enemies are weaker in character and skills.
 - b. *[Size and Unity]* The pustulous city should be allowed to grow so long as its size does not impair the citizens' unity. The city should be a single entity, dwelling in the unity of its citizens.
 - c. *[Education]* All depends on the education and character building of the guardians. They, in turn, manage citizen education. Better people beget yet better people. All depends on education. Above all, guardians should be wary of changes in music. Musical innovation is necessarily revolutionary. One dismisses musical changes as insignificant. But breaking musical rules changes peoples' character. They grow prepared to dismiss other changes, more significant changes. Soon, people ignore contracts, then laws, then institutions.

In the end, a little musical innovation destroys everything. The seeds of chaos are sown in the minds of children in the form of undisciplined entertainment. Laws are, for the most part, superfluous. Where good character exists, it self-governs. Where good character is lacking, only hostility waits for the truth-teller. Majorities of voters will beguile sycophant leaders into bad acts, claiming majority mandate. They tell the dwarf he is tall. Poof—he’s “tall.”

- d. *[Theology]* In religious and sacrificial matters, we know nothing, and should follow the traditions of Delphi.
And, so, the pustulous city is founded.

[Justice in Pustulous Cities and Men] (427d-449a) Where lies justice and injustice in the pustulous city? How do justice and injustice differ? Who is happy: just men or unjust men?

1. *[Greek Virtues]* To the extent the pustulous city is good, it is wise, courageous, self-disciplined, and just. Of wisdom, one recognizes that it consists in good judgment. In a city, however, what makes the city wise is the prudence of its guardian rulers. Of courage, Socrates takes that to be preserving in one’s mind, no matter what obstacles or pains one meets, right beliefs about what is to be feared and what is the law of the city. Such courage emerges in the education soldiers (auxiliaries) receive. Of self-discipline, men have better and worse psychological parts. In a self-disciplined person, the better parts rule. Self-discipline emerges where one entertains only simple pleasures, moderates desires, and employs rational deliberation and correct beliefs, acquired during the course of a good education in a man of good stock, to guide himself. Wisdom resides in the rulers. Courage resides in soldiers. Unlike these, self-discipline permeates the whole city. Self-discipline consists in the agreement of the members of the city as to who should rule. Of justice, it lies in each member and class of the city performing its assigned task. Injustice emerges when one class or some members attempt to interfere with the operations of other classes or members. In a just city, the economy, the soldiery, and the rulers each mind their own business.
2. *[Virtue in Individuals]* Socrates analogizes human individuals to the class- and virtue-structure of cities. Socrates explores how one will identify the elements of justice, wisdom, courage, and self-discipline in the human soul. Humans have multiple psychological parts, which may work together or may conflict. Rationality may conflict with desire. The spirit or courage of an individual plays the same role as the auxiliaries do in relation to the rulers of a city. So, the just individual mirrors the just city. His rationality, spirit, and desires perform their functions, do not interfere with one another, and the rational, aided by the spirit, subdues desire. The just man emerges as a perfectly reliable ruler of himself, oozing harmony and self-possession.
3. *[Injustice Examined]* Injustice, then, exists when a city’s (or a man’s) parts conflict or refuse to perform their allotted role. Evils of every sort proliferate. Injustice is a species of disease. The just man lives harmoniously with himself. The unjust man, even if he has every benefit, lives a life of disease that cannot be enjoyed. We have settled that question; stealthy vice does not bring happiness. Virtue is unitary, but vice diverse. Four vices predominate. There are, then, five types of soul, just as there are five types of pustulous cities. The first pustulous city type is monarchy or aristocracy; it is well-ordered and just. A man of this character is good. Unjust pustulous cities fall into four categories...

[The Pustulous City Revisited] (449b-502c). **BOOK 5.** The others attending Socrates interrupt with an objection. All have been waiting to hear Socrates tell them how women and children will be “held in common” in the pustulous city. What will be the social arrangements with women and young children?

1. *[Gender Parity.]* The men agree that women should share the tasks of men, and they are not disabled by the rearing of children. Socrates argues that women, then, must be educated as are men. Some will object that women cannot exercise naked in the gym with men. One asks why, since men and women differ in nature, should they share tasks equally? Socrates takes this as a common, but misguided, objection. As individuals,

women may exceed some men in any particular skill or ability. So, none may be excluded, by the fact of being women, from any task. Women with appropriate skills should become auxiliaries, even guardian rulers. They should exercise naked with other guardian candidates. Where strength is the issue, women should be given the lighter duties. Those who laugh at this proposal are fools.

2. [*Sexual Liberties and Eugenics*] Considering sexual relations, all guardian women shall be the wives of all the guardian men. Children shall be in common, with none knowing who is their parent. Even parents shall not know their own children. Some participants object, wanting further clarification of the feasibility of this approach and specific arrangements that might govern the practice. Socrates argues that since the guardian women will live in proximity with the guardian men, sex is inevitable. But one cannot have sexual intercourse willy-nilly. The best should have sex with the best, to produce the best children. The offspring of the worst should not be reared at all. In all this, the rulers will have to be excellent liars, to bring the auxiliaries to accept this approach as natural and best without destructive dissension. The rulers will promote good marriages. Overall, population should be controlled by having rulers determine how many marriages to permit. They will foist this fact by a rigged lottery, one that lets the best men have many sexual encounters with the best women, and the others little or none. Good children will be communally nursed. Others will be killed, without the knowledge of their parents. Only adults in their prime should bear children: women twenty to forty years, and men twenty-five to fifty-five years. All children born to parents outside these ranges shall be deemed unholy. After child-bearing years, any person may have sex with another, except for incest taboos. Only abortion or infanticide await babies born of parents from post-prime unions. But the incest taboos will extend to all children born in the relevant time period of prime breeding for each person, since none knows who among them is their own biological child.
3. [*Benefits of Communal Sexuality*] Now Socrates considers whether this breeding arrangement is good for the pustulous city. Every city needs unity; that is essential. All should share griefs and joys, and so avoid divisions. Regarding one another as family members creates harmony, as familial emotions bind all. Sexual communality will quash greed and anger and violence, and promote generalized peace. So, all guardians will live at public expense, be honored, and receive respectful burial. The guardian children will accompany their parents to war, to watch, learn, and assist. To reduce the risks to children, fathers should take children only on the less-hazardous ventures. Every guardian child will be given a swift and compliant horse, by which to effect escape if necessary, and an experienced guide. When a hero arises, none he wishes to kiss may refuse. This builds motivation to courage. Those who die well in battle shall be honored a demi-gods, as shall those who are otherwise excellent. In war, Greeks should not enslave other Greeks or lay waste and burn Greek territories (civil war, since all Greeks are family), but rather focus on outsiders (which is real war). Plundering the dead should be forbidden. Civil war is a dispute among friends; it should be settled in the most gentle manner possible. Glaucon adds that such Greek cities and their armies would be invincible.
4. [*The Possibility of Socrates' Scheme Coming to Pass*] Glaucon challenges Socrates to defend how such changes to Greek culture might be possible. Socrates clarifies that they have been creating a theoretical model of a good city, and that any practicum will prove less exact than the theory. Socrates sets himself to find the shortcomings of existing cities, and to suggest the smallest number of fundamental changes that would bring about the city he imagines. The core change is: kings must become philosophers, and philosophers kings. A philosopher is a person who welcomes all learning, gladly, hungrily. The philosopher, in distinction from the generalized spectator, sees in the world the forms that underlie experience. He sees the world's true fundamental structure. Socrates distinguishes belief from knowledge and ignorance. Knowledge is seeing what endures beneath the appearance. Philosophers have knowledge; they avoid ignorance and beliefs. **BOOK 6.** Philosophers should rule the pustulous city. But do they have the practical experience and other excellences of character requisite to such rule? In his

character, the philosopher loves learning about everything that exists, and tells truth fastidiously. He will be personally disciplined, and have little affection for possessions. The philosopher has a great spirit and remains open to many possibilities. He does not fear death. He honors his contracts and lives justly. With people, the philosopher is gentle. The philosopher has a good memory and the courage to undertake daunting tasks.

Adiemantus objects that the sort of life Socrates proposes for philosophers makes them useless to cities. Socrates agrees. Socrates spins the analogy of the ship of state seeking a captain. Every politician claims the right to the tiller; all ignore the stargazer on board, whom they regard as useless. Yet, it is only the stargazer who has any possibility of reasonably guiding the ship of state. In their dire necessity, the crew will turn to the stargazer for rescue. But the stargazer will be so different in his way of life that normal people will deem him daft. Most philosophers are villains, but do not blame philosophy. The true philosopher cares nothing for the rabble's opinion. He just plows onward toward truth. True philosophers are rare birds. Corrupt philosophers, when they suffer a poor education, fall prey to the very virtues that characterize the true philosopher. Sophists bleat and roar, whipping up crowds. Some, even those with a good education, cannot resist the social tide. They become like the crowd. Worst are the sophists. They are people who keep a giant dangerous animal, the people. They learn its moods and fawn over it, to keep it from eating them. What the animal likes, the sophist calls good. What annoys it, they call bad. Though these things are necessary, they are not good or bad. The masses can never be philosophical. They skitter about on gusts of opinion; knowledge utterly eludes them. The masses will ever be hostile toward true philosophers.

If a would-be philosopher has the misfortune to suffer wealth, good looks, a tall stature, and important friends, he will be afflicted by pride, and imagine himself a ruler. If he somehow acquires a taste for real philosophy, the masses will abandon him. It will be philosophy that may drive him from philosophy. And so, hangers-on stumble upon philosophy, now abandoned. They take her up and spew sophistries. The true philosopher, who seldom exists, sees the gist of things, keeps quiet, and minds his own business. Philosophy has gotten its bad name from mental midgets who claim philosophy without any creditable claim to her. So, no city merits a philosopher king, except that city we have described. Philosophy should be practiced in its purest form by aged men, whose lives are behind them. Philosophy is no mistress for young men. People reject these views because they have never seen a just man rule a just city. Most likely, some unlikely conjunction of events will conspire to compel a philosopher to take up rule of a city, or a sitting king will himself become a real philosopher. These things are not impossible. Such a king would wipe the social slate clean. There he would nurture a new and better sort of men, who would live under the constitution and in the institutions the philosopher king creates. Such is unlikely and undoubtedly difficult, but not impossible.

[Education of Philosopher Kings] (502d-588b). The philosopher king will be rare, since the traits that define him cut against one another. He is smart but also very conservative. He leads a sober life, but remains open to diverse experiences. The philosopher king must study the essence of goodness, for from goodness derives all other virtue. Pleasure appears good, but, since there are evil pleasures, it cannot be the good. Glaucon presses Socrates to state his view of the good. Socrates complains that he would only humiliate himself. Socrates offers instead to describe the child of the good as a down payment on the definition of goodness itself.

1. *[Education in the Good]* The Good, like the sun lighting images for the eye, illuminates knowledge and truth, so we can see them. The Good gives not only goodness to what exists, but also their very existence itself. The Good stands above being. Reason interacting with itself can bootstrap itself to pure understanding, as in geometry. Sciences get muddled by being forced to cope with innumerable sense impressions. The highest understanding is pure reason grasping universal forms. **BOOK 7.**

[The Allegory of the Cave Captives] An allegory may help: Humans are bound at the bottom of a cave, chained immovable, eyes toward the back wall of the cave.

Behind them, a short wall spans the cave's width, with a fire behind that. Cut-outs of animals and objects are carried along the wall, projecting shadows on the cave end where the chained people can see. Those wan semblances the chained ones call reality. Nature conspires to release one captive, who turns and is blinded by the fire. He complains, but is compelled not only to see the fire, but is also dragged into the sunlight outside the cave. He slowly acclimates to the light and begins looking around. He eventually recognizes that all that occurs is driven by the sun. He is dazzled by color and brilliance and seeing the world as it is. On returning to the cave, he feels sorrow for the captives. He retakes his seat, but, having become accustomed to bright light, he can barely see the shadows that were once all he knew. His mates scoff at him, and deride his journey to the surface as a danger to eyesight.

The cave is the world people live in. The philosopher climbs out of that cave to see things as they are, including the Good, which is the source of all. The captives hate the philosopher for his incompetence in things of the cave, and for offering a broader view of cave life. This changes one's view of education. Education does not pour knowledge into an empty vessel. Education turns the mind from changeable, vapid matters to the ultimate source of all things. Reason differs from other virtues, being an original divine power, not merely a good habit. When directed at the changeable world, reason empowers its misguided users to great evils. Directed to higher things, it makes of the perceiver a philosopher. Glaucon objects that making philosophers rule diminishes their lives. Socrates reminds him that the pustulous city aims to create justice by making the parts work smoothly with one another in unity. When reluctant philosophers rule, a better city will emerge in Greece.

2. *[The Core Subject]* Mathematics forms the backbone of a philosopher's subject matter. Socrates distinguishes observation of attributes of objects that are "becoming" from the sort of comprehension mathematics offers, which comprehension leads one past appearances. The former confuses, the latter clarifies. Socrates wants philosophers to contemplate "number" in itself, not indulge applied mathematics. Math is difficult and sorts people for native intelligence.
3. *[The Second Subject]* Geometry is the guardians' second subject, to the extent it compels its student to contemplate being, rather than becoming. It is a subject essential to the citizens of Callipolis, the beautiful city, which our pustulous city may become with the guidance of the guardian rulers.
4. *[The Third and Fourth Subjects]* Astronomy is the guardians' third subject. Socrates changes his mind, arguing that the geometry of three-dimensional solids should come next, though the subject stands in its infancy. Astronomy should be the fourth subject, to the extent it describes perfect motions (not those actually observed in the night sky).
5. *[The Fifth Subject]* Musical harmony is the guardians' fifth subject.
6. *[Dialectics]* So, we see the commonalities of the educational subjects. In fact, all are expressions of the good. One speaks with himself dialectically, without sense experience, to grasp the good by means of thought alone, and so comes to touch true intelligence. Dialectic reveals the good by a systematic inquiry into what each thing is by itself. Dialectic examines its assumptions until it leaves standing only the first principle. Dialectic leads one toward knowledge. Conjecture gives way to belief, which gives way to thinking, which becomes knowledge. Dialectics is the lynchpin of the guardians' education.

Guardians should be selected for perseverance, courage, and good looks. But above all, they should be selected for their natural ability in this sort of education. They are inured to the special pain study inflicts. They have great memory, resilience, and energy. They love learning as much as exercising. Guardians should hate every lie. Previously, Socrates argued that old men should be rulers. But now he argues for young men, who are more fleet in learning and energy. Use no compulsion in teaching the young, but rather games that reveal their aptitudes. Choose those who learn dialectic, to give up their eyes in favor of truth.

Everyone grows up sharing their parent's convictions. Young men learn argumentation, and revel in it like puppies at a shoe. Older men seek balance, and so are greatly respected. Students should learn physical training for three years, and argumentation for at least five. Then

all should enter military command for fifteen years. At age fifty, the best of the guardians shall be set aside for rule. They can philosophize when not needed, but when called, they must endure politics and rule. These must educate the young guardians coming up behind them. When dead, each ruler should be worshipped as demi-gods. The men and women who rule in this manner are true philosophers.

To bring this regime into effect, remove everyone aged ten and older into the country away from their children. Indoctrinate the remaining children into the better regime. This will be quick and effective.

[Unjust Towns] (543a-588b). BOOK 8. Socrates and Glaucon sum the characteristics of the relatively just pustulous city as their conversation developed it [as a way of returning to the train of the argument abandoned at the beginning of Book 5]. Glaucon again tips his hat to the possibility that Socrates asserts there exists a finer city than the relatively just pustulous city of luxuries described in their argument. Socrates had been saying, when he was interrupted, that unjust pustulous cities fall into four categories, and the ways in which those cities and their denizens express injustice merits attention.

Socrates takes up the conversation where he left off. The government they have been describing, a good and just government of a pustulous city, is an *aristocracy*. There are four degenerate types of government, of increasing degrees of evil: *timocracy* (as in Sparta or Crete, where only property owners participate and honor predominates among sentiments), *oligarchy*, *democracy*, and *tyranny* (which is the most diseased of these types). These four are degenerations from good aristocracies; their cause is civil strife within the ruling group.

Glaucon offers a speculative account of city degeneration. By neglecting the Muses and certain musical and mathematical characteristics of individuals, a city chooses its leaders poorly. These ill-equipped leaders first neglect education, then physical training, then the character of citizens. War and enmity invariably emerge from such conditions.

1. [*Timocracy*] In a timocracy, the civil war results in compromise. Guardians will own land and houses, and they will enslave the commoners, though they will still have some traditional values. Guardians will grow greedy and self-concerned. They will hoard money, and seek to spend that of others, rather than their own. People become obsessed with honor and victories. The correlatively unjust timocratic individual is selfish, a spectator, harsh with slaves, deferential to authorities, a money-lover, and not all that reasonable. The timocratic individual's wife drives him toward bad habits by her complaining about his withdrawal from society, and thereby influences the children. Servants also bad-mouth the timocrat, corrupting his sons. The son is torn between his father's rationality and the license of the servants, and settles on his spirited self. So, the timocrat's children become arrogant and personally ambitious.
2. [*Oligarchy*] Oligarchies make property yet more important. They invent luxuries, and pass laws they have no intention of obeying. Oligarchs live to make and spend money. Wealth drives out goodness in cities. The poor are despised. Only wealth guarantees civic participation. Oligarchies make of one city two, the poor and the rich, ever jockeying for position. Such a city is ineffective in war, and so weak. Citizens of oligarchies are forced to become jacks of all trades, since cooperation degenerates. The freeloading poor emerge within oligarchies because the rulers keep all the wealth. The rich grow very rich indeed; the poor experience complete poverty. Among the poor dwell many criminals, made ready for crime by poor education, bad parenting, and society's structure. As a personality type, oligarchs fall to those who inform on their crimes. The oligarch's son is impoverished, but grows avaricious and desperate. He aggregates funds, and learns to value only money. His reason becomes a money-getter; so too his spirit. He becomes the sort of person inclined to secretly abuse trust in caring for orphans. He loves spending others' money, but hoards his own. The oligarch may appear honorable, but rots within. When the rubber hits the road, he cares only for wealth.
3. [*Democracy*] Some among the oligarchy's poor are formerly-wealthy men cheated by the oligarchs. They rankle and perpetrate revolutions. The children of oligarchs are weaklings, and so ripe for the picking. Peace is imperiled in oligarchies by wealth

maldistribution. When the poor prevail, democracy is born. Rulers are chosen by lot. The democratic individual, then, is free, free to undertake whatever fancy drifts into his mind. Democracy feels free and attractive, in the short term. But war, criminals, and moral corruption are not taken seriously. That would fetter freedom! The democratic individual began as an oligarch's son, with some good habits. He eats well, for example. But he spends time in bad company. Slowly, the young man's soul empties of good sense. He views shame as a form of retardation. Vices are deemed virtues. In the end, such young men spend their lives on unworthy desires. They lack a guiding principle. All live according to whatever jumps into his or her head. This is what happens to those who view equality as life's most important value.

4. *[Tyranny]* As wealth ultimately transformed oligarchy into democracy, so freedom makes of democracy a tyranny. When freedom becomes extreme, children fail to respect parents, immigrants and foreigners fail to respect citizens, Anarchy takes hold. The old ape the young, and teachers fear their pupils. Slaves think themselves free as their masters. Even domestic animals are given "freedom," wandering the streets. Ultimately, no law or custom binds anyone. None shall be master of any. A contrary reaction ensues, leading to slavery where there was once excessive freedom. In democracies, criminals become politicians. They are like beehive drones, consuming much, producing nothing. Civil strife ensues. Parties find their champions. Some one prevails, becoming the tyrant. The tyrant makes civil war against people of wealth, seizing most for himself. The tyrant pretends to be a man of the people. He makes war, cementing his position as leader. When the tyrant's allies criticize him, they suffer the same fate as his enemies. So, friend and foe alike become irritants to remove from the city. The tyrant leaves only the worthless mob to abide him. Socrates accuses tragic poets of writing propaganda for tyrants, since their plays make tyrants and democracies seem appealing. So the slaves remain, possibly throwing off the tyrant, only to once again descend into democracy, or themselves being defeated and killed. **BOOK 9.** The individual fashioned by tyrannies must be described, but first Socrates detours to address the scope of human desires. Among unnecessary desires, some are violent. In reasonable men, these are suppressed. In less self-controlled men, they are not. Especially during sleep, desires drive dreams, indulging, in licentious men all manner of bestiality and forbidden sexual encounters, murder, and folly. The rational man calms himself before sleep, taming the beast within. The dark and light compete in the human mind for dominance. In the oligarch, desire for money, a darkness, prevails. In the democrat, desire for freedom, another darkness, overcomes all. In the tyrant, fed on every manner of indulgence, he comes to hate all good passions. So, the man in love, the drunkard, the madman are each tyrants. The tyrant burns through all available money, and then starts commandeering the resources of others. No relationship will remain sacred. The tyrant will throw over each in favor of his lusts. So the tyrant succumbs to the tyrant of his own desires. In the end, a tyrant will invite in foreigners who sate his lusts. The tyrant personally has no friends and knows no freedom. He is the most unhappy of men, his city the most degenerate. We are inquiring about the good life and the evil life. The tyrant is a bad man. He is imprisoned by his many slaves and desires. Considered as a whole person, the tyrant is enslaved and poverty-stricken. He is everyone's sycophant.

[The Verdict] Among people and cities, the kingdom and king are happiest, then timocracy and timocrat, the oligarchy and oligarch, the democracy and democrat, and last and least, the tyranny and tyrant. This last is an abject figure.

A second proof also demonstrates this result. Man is rational, spirited, and desirous (this last often takes the form of money-mania). So man in desire seeks money. Spirited man seeks power and reputation. Thinking, learning man wants to know truth and wisdom. A man who focuses on any one part neglects or eschews the others. Yet only the wise man is in a position to adequately judge among men. He has the broad experience. Pleasures other than wisdom are mere shadows of happiness. People judge without perspective, thinking their myopic point of view covers the field of possibilities. They are wrong. Such people wander in mediocre states, never knowing the breadth of human possibilities. Only philosophers bother to learn the spectrum of possibilities. When the desiring and spirited parts of man follow the wisdom of the thinking

part, happiness ensues. Where they do not, happiness proves elusive. Socrates indulges a numerical calculation of the relative happiness and unhappiness of aristocratic kings versus degenerate tyrants. Man lives as though he contained a very large beast of desire, a smaller warrior of honor, and a diminutive philosopher. The just, and therefore happy, man lets his philosopher control and nurture the beast and warrior. Any person who wants true happiness will seek self-discipline leading to a just life. This prize is worth a lifetime of effort. The philosopher will guard it jealously from people and events that might perturb inner harmony. He might find a city within himself, such as the one Socrates has been describing. The pattern of that city exists in heaven, if he wishes to see it. It matters little if any such city actually exists on earth.

[Banning Poetry] (595a-608a). **BOOK 10.** The pustulous city (and perhaps Callipolis as well) should ban imitative poetry. All tragedies, even Homeric epics, destroy the minds of those who hear them. As craftsmen produce images of the forms of their creations, so every man fashions a world from what he sees. That fashioned world of perception is shadowy, as compared to the forms from which it takes its cues. The painter or poet is yet one more step removed. He makes an image of an image of a form. God himself makes the form of things. Each form is singular. Where two copies of it exist, they exist by participating in the one form. The tragedian is twice removed from reality; he deals in images of images. Playwrights and poets claim to know all things, when in fact they make only facsimiles of images. All men desire to leave good acts behind, rather than images of good acts. Homer was a great poet. But he improved the government of no city, won no wars, created no ingenious inventions, and shaped no coherent group of followers. Readers of poetry are bewitched by poetical language. In all things, those who use objects tell makers how to make them better. Imitators then capture the surface appearance of the use or making. Visual perception can trick men. But when one measures, one uses rationality to dispel such illusions. Poetic imitators create illusions. When one is injured, howling helps not at all. One copes with the loss and plans a path to healing. And the healed do not howl. Those who fret their losses succumb to a part of themselves susceptible to imitation. Poets prey upon that sub-rational part of men. So, ban the poets. They rot the city by misdirecting its citizens, even those who are good. Poets enliven human impulses every man ought to restrain. Callipolis should have some poetry, but only that which consists in praise of the gods and good men. The poets can argue the contrary, and we should listen, since we love poetry. But that love of tragedy is star-crossed. We should just stay away from poetry, despite our affection, like lovers who are bad for one another.

[Ultimate Rewards and Reincarnation] (608b-621d). Goodness and badness are the great test of mankind. One's soul is immortal. The bad for any existing thing whatsoever corrupts it, ultimately destroying it. But not so the soul. Corrupt souls destroy others, and grow yet stronger by their savagery. Therefore, nothing destroys the soul. It goes on forever. Souls are crippled by their association with the human body. If one wishes to know what the soul is like, it must be viewed with the inner vision of rationality alone.

To describe the eternal soul, Socrates wants now to unwind the concession he made to Glaucon earlier in the argument, to the effect that just men may suffer, and unjust men be praised and rewarded. Gods know justice from injustice. Gods reward the just and punish the unjust, either now or in the afterlife. Generally, just people are rewarded in life. And the unjust, even if they fooled people for a while, are eventually found out.

Socrates tells the tales of Er, who died, saw the afterlife, but returned to life with his memories intact. After death, the reward of the just and punishments of the unjust multiply. After death, judgment directs good men heavenward, and unjust men downward. The damned pay for their slights and sins during life tenfold. Hades holds deeply evil people until they have paid for their sins in full. Hell is full of lingering tyrants. Socrates describes the function of the cosmos, revolving around heaven's chains and the spindle of necessity. At the right time, both heaven and Hades release those who have received their rewards or punishments. The wheel of reincarnation gives new lives to bodiless souls, and new responsibility for that fresh existence. So, it is critical, when the gods lay out the lives to be chosen, that one be able to distinguish good from bad, and choose a better life. The greatest happiness lies in choosing the median, avoiding extremes of every sort. Perhaps the happiest life is that of the private citizen who minds his own business.

Souls being reincarnated drink of the river Lost Cares, forgetting everything of life and the afterlife before being reborn. Only Er did not drink, and so remembered.

So, Socrates urges: cling to justice, avoid evils, practice wisdom. Thus one is a friend to himself and the gods.