

## Plato's *Republic*

### WEEK 2 –Building and Educating the Political Community—Books II-V

*Is there some kind of good we ought to strive for, not because we expect to bring about profitable results but simply because we value the good for its own sake?*

—Plato, *Republic* (357b)

#### I. II – SEARCH FOR JUSTICE & CITY IN SPEECH

- A. **Glaucon (Gyges):** Wants to know why justice is good. Why is it a kind of good that we would choose for its own sake. (357b “Is there some kind of good...?”). Why would we all not do as Gyges? (359d – 360c)
- B. **Adeimantus:** Justice is only for the benefit of the weak (Nietzsche – slave morality): “Tell us how justice benefits a man intrinsically and in the same way how injustice harms him (367d)
- C. **City/Soul Analogy:** Socrates proposes the “city in speech” let’s view it in a magnifying glass. (368e)
- D. **Evolution of the City in Speech**
  - 1. **Simple City** – Adeimantus (Necessity) 369c)
  - 2. **BUT Glaucon (Thumos)** says it's a city for pigs, need luxury, relishes, so moderate city is rejected (372d)
  - 3. **Spiritedness/Thumos** – seeks distinction, honor, desire to be first – an alpha personality
  - 4. **Critique of/Importance of Poetry and Music:** They shape us in meaningful ways for the rest of our lives, - Homeric epics were similar to the Bible; Achilles, Priam and Ajax are as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Jesus.
- E. **Censorship (377c):** Is there content that should be eliminated? Subject matter, form? Don't we inevitably do this? For Socrates, what would permissible music and art look like? Is the Republic itself an answer? Must Philosophy replace poetry?

#### II. BOOK III – EDUCATION

- A. **Medicine:** Unnecessary – illness and weakness – lingering death (405a-d)
- B. **Education:** (410c – 411e) Music and gymnastics – what do you make of this, or, should universities have PE (U. Chicago)
- C. **The Noble Lie (414c)** Can culture change nature?
- D. **No Private Property (416e)** Possessions make the guardians householders and farmers (417b) What does this mean for your soul?

### III. BOOK IV – SEARCH FOR JUSTICE & CITY IN SPEECH

- A. **Most Won't Be Just?** Moreover, isn't it true that even in the vast majority of citizens in the just city, they won't have just souls? (419a – Adeimantus queries that you're hardly making these men just)
- B. **Socrates defines justice –**
  - 1. **Justice** is *the state in which each part of the whole only performs its work and doesn't meddle* (p. 128, 433)
  - 2. **Moving to the Soul:** "Justice is not a matter of external behavior" (443d)
- C. **Leontius (439e):** This is not reason controlling passion, but intense inner conflict. He wants to see and not see. Rubbernecking; Socrates would say mind your own business.
- D. **Back to the City/Soul (443(d)):** "Justice is not a matter of external behavior but the way a man privately and truly governs his inner self." (443d)
- E. **Back to Justice:** Justice is Harmony in the City and Harmony in the Soul – something like division of labor – each part of the city works together and minds their own business.

### IV. BOOK V – REFORM, THREE WAVES OF ATTACK

- A. Begins with a Digression (449b)
- B. Three waves of reform in the city in speech
  - 1. **Common education for men and women** (449a – 457c)
  - 2. **All things held in common/Abolition of the family** (457c-471c)
  - 3. **Establishment of philosopher kings** (471c – 543c) "Unless philosophers become kings in our cities, or unless those who are now kings and rulers become true philosophers, so that political power and philosophic intelligence converge, and unless those lesser natures who run after one without the other are excluded from governing, I believe there can be no end to troubles, my dear Glaucon, in our cities or for all mankind." (473d)
- C. **Question:** Can philosophy and politics be united? Aren't they terribly distinct? Legislation is not speculation. What do eternal forms have to do with political life?
  - 1. **What keeps philosopher kings from abusing power?** Is there a failure in Plato's account of human nature?
  - 2. Maybe Plato's really talking about the soul, not the city?
  - 3. Maybe what Plato is really saying is get your own house in order before you attempt to reform others?

*Justice is not a matter of external behavior but the way a man privately and truly governs his inner self.*

—Plato, Republic (443d)