

Plato's *Republic*

WEEK 3 –*Plato's Cave: The Turn Toward the Good—Books VI and VII*

Once seen, however, the conclusion becomes irresistible that [the idea of the good] is the cause of all things right and good, that in the visible world it gives birth to light and its sovereign source, that in the intelligible world it is itself sovereign and the author of truth and reason, and that the man who will act wisely in private and public life must have seen it.

—Plato, *Republic* (517c)

I. 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.

II. 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?

III. BOOK VI – QUALITIES OF A PHILOSOPHER

- A. **Love of Knowledge (485a):** "Not the kind caught up in the never-ending round of birth and death, but the knowledge that discloses something of the eternal."
- B. **Truthfulness (485c):** "An unwillingness to countenance falsehood of any kind, a hatred of untruth, a love of truth."
- C. **Not Stingy (486a):** "Nothing can be more contrary to a soul seeking integrity and completeness in all things."
- D. **Gentle and Just (486c):** Not quarrelsome and savage.
- E. **Quick to Learn (486c):** "Do you suppose anyone could really love a task that he found painfully difficult..."
- F. **Proportion, Measure and Grace (486d):** "And truth, in turn, is it not linked to measure and proportion, or is it rather akin to disproportion?"

IV. BOOK VII – THE CAVE

- A. "Imagine men living in a cave with a long passageway stretching between them and the cave's mouth...." (514a)
 1. Compulsion
 2. Ascent and Descent
 3. Light, Shadows and Darkness
 4. Responsibility of the Enlightened...
- B. **Education:** "Education is not what some professors say it is...this power is in the soul of everyone..." (518b)
- C. **Goal:** "Our duty as founders is to compel the best natures to achieve that sovereign knowledge . . . to scale the heights in order to reach the vision of the good." (519d)
- D. **Philosophers Cannot "Remain Above":** (519d) Down you must go (520c)
- E. **Visible versus Real (532b):** "Shunning reliance on sense perceptions and seeking understanding solely by means of rational discourse. He strives to know each thing in its essence and does not desist until he is led by pure intelligence to know goodness itself."
- F. **Another Controversial Proposition (540d)—How will true philosophers "reform, serve and maintain the city [where] justice will be its chief quality?"** "By sending out all those over ten years of age into the country. They will take over the children, taking care that they are far removed from the dispositions and habits of their parents." (541a)