

Questions on Plato's *Republic**

Book II, pages 32-43 (357a-368c):

1. Glaucon distinguishes three kinds of goodness. What are they and what are some examples of each? (357a-d)
2. What is Glaucon's challenge to Socrates?
3. Is injustice really more profitable than justice?
4. Glaucon offers an account of the origin and nature of justice (359a-b). How does it go?
5. Do people who practice justice do so only because they lack the power to be unjust? How does Glaucon try to show that they do? (359c-360d)
6. What does this show about what people *believe* about the value of justice? What does this show about the *actual* value of justice?
7. Adeimantus notes that people always praise justice by appeal to its consequences. Why is this relevant? (362e-363e)
8. Adeimantus mentions the 'profits of injustice' and the 'benefits of sins and transgressions' (366a). What are these profits and benefits and how might they contribute to the happiness of human beings?
9. Adeimantus considers two objections to the position he and Glaucon are defending. One is that being unjust while retaining a reputation for justice is not easy; the other is that the Gods will detect and punish an unjust person's treachery. How does he counter these objections? (365c-366c) What single problem plagues both objections?

Book II, pages 43-51 (368c-376c), 88-93 (412b-417b):

1. Why look for justice in the state? (368d-369b)
2. Why does the state come into existence?
3. Notice how Socrates expands on Glaucon's explanation of the origin of the state. Why do you think he does this?
4. How does Socrates argue for the principle of the division of labor?
5. With the change from a city to a 'luxurious city' comes war -- why? (373a-373e)
6. Socrates draws an analogy between pedigree dogs and human beings; which required trait for the guardians prompts the comparison? (By the way, in what sense are dogs lovers of wisdom?)

Note, Although 376c-412b is not assigned reading, you should know that it contains an elaborate and elegant defense of totalitarianism -- a defense that has served (often with disastrous results) as a model for totalitarianism ever since.

7. Is it true that "one loves something most when one believes that what is good for it is good for oneself"? (412d)

8. In 413a-414a Socrates argues that potential Guardians must be subjected to rigorous testing -- for what are the tests testing?

9. How might Socrates justify the noble fiction of 414d-415d? Would this justification be convincing?

10. Why, according to Socrates, should the Guardians be deprived of private property?

11. Socrates ends up defending a vision of society that has three classes. In virtue of what is it that one becomes a member of one or the other of these classes?

Book IV, pages 94-121 (419-445e):

1. Why aim at happiness for the whole city? Why not aim for the happiness of each member of the city?

2. What does Socrates say about the role of legislation in the just city?

3. What is the difference between moderation and justice? Can the city be unjust even though its people are moderate? Can the city be just when its people are immoderate?

4. What 'proof' does Socrates offer for his claim that justice is "doing one's own work and not meddling with what isn't one's own." (433b)

5. Why think that the soul has separate parts? Exactly how do Socrates' arguments go?

6. Even thirsty people sometimes wish not to drink. What does this show about the human soul? Why?

7. Is justice (or morality) an internal state of individuals? What is its relation to action? Will a just (or moral) person always perform just (or moral) actions?

8. Which part of the soul (and the city) discovers what is right and what is wrong? How is the judgment of this part of the soul related to the other parts when we act justly? How is it related to them when we act unjustly?

9. Is justice like health in being good for its own sake? Would only a fool or a lunatic not want to be healthy? Would only a fool or a lunatic not want to be just?

10. Is Socrates' analogy between justice in the state and justice in the individual adequate? Is it necessary that the just man be a master of himself, put things in order, be his own friend?

Book VIII, pages 213-240 (543-569c):

1. What argument does Socrates offer for thinking there are just as many types of people as there are types of cities? (544e) [see 435e-436]. What is wrong with the argument?

2. What are the five types of cities, and the corresponding five types of people?

3. Metaphor aside, why will even the ideal state deteriorate?

Passage 546b-d is extremely obscure; don't worry about it too much.

4. "when wealth and the wealthy are valued or honoured in a city, virtue and good people are valued less." (551) What arguments might be offered in defense of this claim?

5. What is the difference between necessary and unnecessary desires? What is the significance of this distinction?

6. Pay close attention to the differences between the five types of soul (and the five types of government) and how each devolves from the other.

7. Socrates admits that democracy is attractive because of the variety of lives it makes possible. Nonetheless, he associates democracy with a lack of moderation and a desire for unnecessary things. He also accuses democracies of touting as freedom what is truly anarchy. How might a defender of democracy respond to Socrates?

* Gratefully adapted from materials from Geoff Sayre-McCord.