

Plato's Republic

Republic: 387-367 B.C.

THE QUEST FOR A JUST, MORAL SOCIETY:
"for it is better in every way to be just than unjust."

Aristotle: 427-347 B.C.

I. What is Justice?

Book One:

A. Introduction,
327a-328b

B. Cephalus,
328b-331d:

Intuitive justice:
*Self-examination; fear of
retribution.*

C. Polemarchus
331e-335e:

*retributive justice: return
what is owed is just.*

D. Thrasymachus,
336b-354c:

*The advantage of the stronger
whereby justice is the good of
another.*

II. Justice in the City & in the Soul: Books 2-4

A. The Problem:
357a-367e:

*Justice is practiced for the sake of
rewards (e.g., noble reputation) but not
pursued for its own sake because
people are naturally selfish; if given
the opportunity will commit injustice;
better life for unjust appears to be better
than for the just; injustice has not been
adequately argued as the worst thing a
soul can have & that justice is the
greatest good.*

*3 types of good: (1) good for its own sake, (2)
good for what flows from it (seeing the need to
be healthy); (3) good for the sake of rewards.*

B. Justice in the City,
368a-434d:

*Method used to investigate what justice & injustice is to
examine the justice of a city, then move to the individual
(368-369).*

*City: farmers/craftsmen (369e-370d), guardians (373e-
381, & ruler guardians (428d-429).*

*4 Temperaments: wisdom, courage, moderation, & justice
(429-430).*

*JUSTICE IS REALIZED IN ACTIVELY
SUBMITTING & PARTICIPATING IN THE
COLLECTIVE ORGANIZATION ACCORDING TO
ONE'S DISTINCTIVENESS*

C. Justice in the Soul
(Character), 445-448.

III. Plato's Politics: Books 5-7

Women, Family, &
Warfare:
449-471c:

*Equality of sexes because women are the same kind, thus
share in men's work, education, & warfare. Only the
characteristics that define a person's performance of a
task should determine what tasks the citizens are set to
(454c-d) though women are weaker than men (455c;
456a).*

*Family life is to be the city;
no single family units; no child rearing by parents (457c-
d); selective breeding among the best guardians; if
children are inferior, then infanticide or abortion (460-
461); Unity offers the greatest good a city can possess
(462a-464b), thus the city is to be a single family. (462b;
463c; 464b).*

*City-state rewards victors while the coward are to suffer
at hands of enemy; distinguishes between civil war and
war (hostility with strangers); they will show constraint
with no enslavement nor destruction (471); only quarrel
only to the point of penalty to both Greeks & non-Greeks
(471 b)*

The Philosopher-King,
471c-541b:

*Fitted to engage in philosophy & to rule (474c), a
lover of every kind of learning (474c-475d-e) who
love truth (475e; 485c) (learning produces virtue &
expertise; 485a-486e; 487), & will know the form of
the good (cause of knowledge & truth), the object of
knowledge (508b-e; 517b-d), and will be a product of
the pedagogical system of the city (521c-541b)
that begins with physical training (521e), music &
poetry (522), mathematics & geometry (522c),
astronomy (528d-e), argumentation (539b-c), &
then philosophy (540-541).*

IV. Injustice in the City & in the Soul: Books 8-9

A. Four Imperfect Cities
& Souls:
543a-576b:

*Socrates contrasts justice with four forms of
injustice in order to show that each of them
will generate less happiness than justice does:
timocratic, the oligarchic, democratic, &
tyrannical.*

*Timocratic: emerges from aristocracy whereby
their is a compromise between ruling and
working class; then oligarchy rules whereby the
wrong children enter into ruling class (546b-
547a), living off assets (552a, 564b);
oligarchy lacks harmony that characterizes true
virtue & lacks self-evaluation; democracy
emerges where by it promotes disunity to its
logical extreme because it presupposes
disagreement, unable to discern necessary from
unnecessary desires; it has not a guide to its
steps (561b-558d-559c); tyranny emerges from
democracy (563e) due to greediness, power, the
will to dominate (565e), and pleasure (lack of
self-control (573)).*

B. Just and Unjust Lives,
576b-592b:

*This portion compares the harmonious philosopher to the
disorganized tyrant. The person with the tyrannical soul
lives in confusion, regret, and fear (577-578b). A man
with a tyrannical soul who has the bad luck to rule an
actual city comes off the worst of all (678b-580a). The
just pursues harmony which involves both physical &
abstract knowledge pursued as pleasure (582c), self-
control, and magnanimous" (591d-e).*

V. Poetry & Rewards of Justice: Book 10

A. Critique of Poetry,
595a-608b

B. Rewards of Justice,
608c-621d

2 major views regarding Plato's purpose: (1) to refute the moral skepticism of the Sophists by demonstrating that there are objective moral truths and that, therefore, moral standard are not meaningless; these moral skeptics taught that there was no objective right or wrong and that morality was merely a matter of convention. Thus books 2-10 lay a foundation for conventional moral values; (2) revolutionary work to challenge us to contemplate an ideal society whereby the "good life" is decidedly authoritarian and totalized in a communistic form [J. Annas, An Introduction to Plato's Republic]. The main topic of discussion of "dikaiosune" defined as either (1) a quest for the right way to live in its broad sense of this word or; (2) in a narrow sense it may be simply be "justice."