

Plato – Republic – Reading Questions

1. What 2 themes is Book I concerned with?
2. Why did Socrates go to the home of Polemarchos and Cephalos?
3. Why does Socrates enjoy talking to older people?
4. How does Cephalos describe old age?
5. Why does Cephalos think that old age is troublesome?
6. What does Cephalos think is the benefit of money?
7. What definition of justice does Socrates infer from Cephalos' view?
8. Why does Socrates suggest that this is not a good definition of justice? (What method of argument does Socrates use?)
9. What would be some contemporary examples of the same point?
10. What makes a definition a good definition?
11. Why does Polemarchos take up the discussion?
12. What is Polemarchos' definition? (Where does he get this definition from?)
13. What is Socrates's first response?
14. What is Polemarchos' explanation?
15. What questions /analogies does Socrates raise in response?
16. What point are these analogies supposed to show? justice is a matter of doing
17. On Polemarchos' view, when is justice useful?
18. What leads S to suggest that, if Polemarchos is right, then justice is USELESS?
19. Socrates lists a number of analogies – to the boxer, the physician, the soldier, etc. What point is Socrates trying to establish about the nature of justice?
20. Polemarchos insists that 'justice' is to help our friends. What does he understand by 'friends' and 'enemies'?
21. How does this change the definition of justice?
22. What objection does Socrates make to this revised definition?
23. What is Polemarchos's response?
24. Socrates raises a question: Should a just person harm anyone at all? How does s show Polemarchos that a just person should not? What analogies does he use? What argument form does he employ?
25. When Socrates is asking what justice DOES, what assumption is he making about the nature of justice?]
26. What is the reaction of Thrasymachos? What does he ask S. to do?
27. What is Socrates's response?
28. How does this show Socratic irony?
29. What is Thrasymachos' definition?
30. What is Socrates's first response? What is Socrates's first question?

31. WHO does Thrasymachos say is the stronger?
32. What Socrates does here is show that this definition leads to problems--in fact, it contradicts itself. So, suppose (T's definition) that JUSTICE is the advantage of the rulers. How does Socrates show that it leads to a contradiction?
33. According to Thrasymachos are rulers always right?.
34. What is Thrasymachos' revised view about what a 'ruler' is? What analogies does he use to defend his claim?
35. What does Socrates say is the purpose of an activity (or a craft)? What illustrations does he use? How does this show a problem in Thrasymachos' account?
36. What is Thrasymachos's 'second' definition?
37. What do the examples of shepherds and cowherds show about rulers?
38. How does this affect the definition of justice?
39. How does Thrasymachos show that injustice is more powerful AND profitable than justice?
40. Why do some people give injustice a bad name?

41. S states that each skill/craft has a distinctive effect. What examples does he give?
42. Who benefits from the exercise of a skill or craft? What does this prove about the aim of a rule or craft?
43. If ruling justly does not make the doer better off, why would anyone do it?
44. Thrasymachos then argues that injustice is more powerful / profitable than justice. In what way is injustice a skill according to Thrasymachos?
45. According to Socrates, who does the just person want to get the better of? How does this differ from the unjust person?
46. What are the examples that Socrates uses to show that a knowledgeable person always observes some rules?
47. What can we infer from this about which kind of person the unjust person resembles?
48. What is Socrates' argument to show that the unjust are not more powerful?
49. What effect does injustice have, according to Socrates?
50. Socrates says that all things have a function/purpose and an excellence/virtue. What exactly does this mean? What are some of the examples Socrates gives to show this?
51. What is the function of our spirits/souls? What is the virtue/excellence of the soul?
52. Who, according to Socrates, is happy?
53. In the discussion with Glaucon and Adeimantus, it is stated that there are three classes / categories of good things. What are these three classes?
54. According to most people, in which class do we put justice? In which class does Socrates put justice?
55. According to Glaucon, what is justice?
56. Why do we aim at this 'middle point'?
57. How is justice a compromise? On this view, why are people just?
58. How does Glaucon show that people are just only unwillingly?
59. What is the story of Gyges ring? What does Glaucon think this proves?
60. Glaucon says: Suppose we compare the two lives in themselves: i.e., compare the perfectly unjust life and the perfectly just. What consequences would we expect to see?
61. (According to Glaucon) What reasons do our parents give when they say that we should be good (when we are children)?
62. What do poets (i.e., intellectuals) say about justice?
63. Should a person appear to be just, but be unjust? Why?