Study Notes for Plato's *Republic* (Book 1,2,4,5,7,8)

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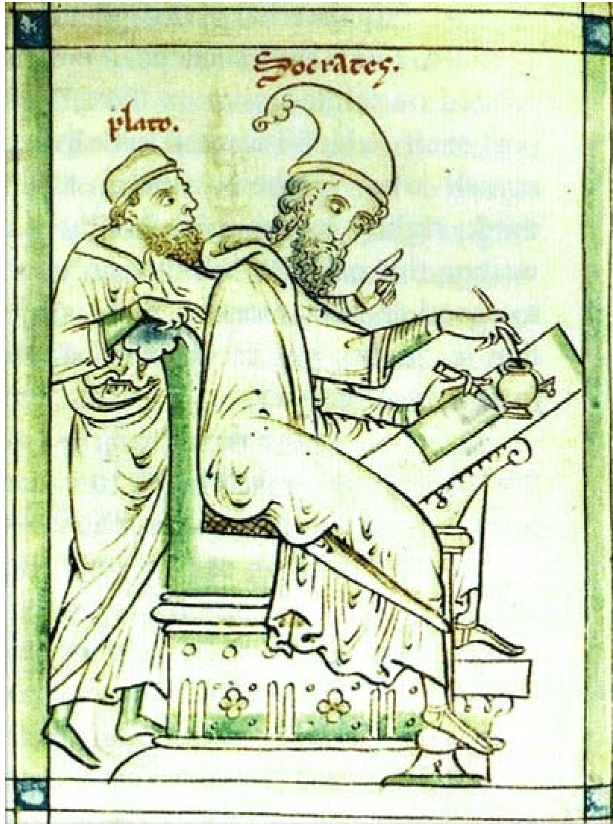


Matthew Paris, "Plato and Socrates," the frontispiece of *Prognostica. Socratis basilei*, a fortune-telling book (Oxford: Bodleian Library, thirteenth century, i.e., circulated 1,700 years after Plato wrote the *Republic*). --A very strange image because Plato is shown needling Socrates–who is wearing what looks like a fool's cap–to write. But Socrates did not write and that fact necessitated Plato's writings in which Socrates figures as a kind of dramatic character. The roles of the two thinkers appear here to be reversed. It was Socrates spoken words that activated Plato's love of wisdom and who inspired him to write. Why then reverse things in this image?

> We have not yet left Plato. Will we ever leave him?
> –Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*

These study notes for the *Republic* are designed to help you consolidate a working knowledge of the basic challenges and themes of Plato's dialogue, and to point you towards some of the fundamental questions that it raises regarding social and political life, questions that the rest of this course takes up. The notes are also designed to assist you in moving from generalizations about the text's themes to a more granular understanding of its arguments, a movement to which Elizabeth and I will be attentive in your essays and examination work for this course. A helpful study strategy for this course is to take up remarks made in lecture and hunt down, where, exactly in the *Republic* these questions and problems are explored, thereby linking the lectures to the text, the broader points to the specific details where those points live and breathe. (As I say, your midterms, essays, and final examination for this course test your understanding of the large questions and problems activating the assigned material but always *through* its granular details. So what I'm trying to do here is model for you what it means to pay attention to those details, always moving from large themes are arguments shaping the *Republic* to the fine-grained details and back again.) Don't forget that Allan Bloom, the translator and editor of the edition of the *Republic* available on Avenue, also provides a very useful summary and discussion of the *Republic*. (See "Interpretive Essay," which is keyed directly to the text, numbered section by numbered section, starting at p. 310.) As the course unfolds, I will periodically update these notes, adding materials here and there, revising the date at the top of this document to signal when.

Please remember that these notes are for the use of our class only and are not to be circulated or shared more widely.

Some important dates (all approximate) to help orient yourself:

431 BCE	Peloponnesian Wars begin.
430 BCE	Plague kills many in Athens, tearing up the fabric of the *polis* and contributing to the end of the Golden Age, the century of relative peace and prosperity and a time of enormous cultural achievement in art, literature, and architecture.

429 BCE	Plato born . . . into a world of war and disease.
421 BCE	Peace of Nicias. (Also the fictional time in which Plato sets the *Republic*.)
404 BCE	Peloponnesian Wars end; Athens defeated.
399 BCE	Socrates tried and executed. Plato leaves Athens.
387 BCE	Plato returns to Athens and founds The Academy, the precursor to the university.
375 BCE	Plato writes the *Republic*, "recovering" the voice of Socrates in the form of a fictional character bearing the same name in the dialogue. He backdates the story to a half a century earlier than his present-day, i.e., around the period of the Peace of Nicias.
348 BCE	Plato dies.

There is also a very good recording of an abridged version of the *Republic* that you might find helpful. Listening to the voices, I find, can be very clarifying.

Book 1

Plato's *Republic* captures the spirit of what Aristotle (who was Plato's brilliant student, just as Plato was Socrates's wonderful pupil) says in his text, the *Politics*: namely, that human beings don't create viable communities simply by building walls around themselves. After all, he says, winking at his readers, the Peloponnese could build a wall behind which they might hunker down but no one in their right mind would say that that meant they had created a city-state. (The Peloponnese were the enemies of the Athenians and had subjected them to a humiliating military defeat twenty years before Aristotle was born.) No, Aristotle suggests, a true city-state, a real community, is one that possesses a shared sense of justice–that's a lesson, one of many, he learned from his teacher and mentor, Plato. A true city-state isn't a particular place defined by the construction of a physical or psychological wall; it is instead a responsible frame of mind and a way of living well with others, whatever those things might mean. For the ancient Greeks, it is the alignment of a just soul with other just souls: acting justly and in the name of the Good *intensifies* the goodness and justness of the community just as the just and good community activates similar virtues in its citizens. (But who is "the citizen," i.e., who qualifies to be "worthy" of justice and tasked with responsibility? That's a problem haunting the entire history of social and political thought.) What is the best frame of mind and the best way to live well with others? These are the very questions that preoccupy Plato in the *Republic*, questions that will activate and trouble

individuals and communities for thousands of years, right up to our present day. That is why, for better or for worse, we begin this course with Plato's challenging text, the *Republic*. In ways that are obvious and subtle, the long history of social and political thought in the European tradition–which is far from the only important tradition in the world–wrestles with the questions and problems that Socrates explores in Plato's text.

How then does justice form the basis or "constitution" of a moral community? Those are Plato's chief concerns. (It may help to know that "the Republic" is the English translation of the Greek title for Plato's work, but in Greek the title means something closer to "the constitution of the city-state"–"constitution" here meaning not only the legal document to which a community is answerable, as in "the Canadian Constitution," but also "constitution" meaning the basic make-up of the city, its ordering principles, i.e., what makes a "regime" a "regime." "Constitution" thus means something a bit closer to what we are trying to say when we say that a healthy person has as a "strong constitution.")

Another way to think of the question of the good or just "constitution" in the *Republic* is this way: the text is an exploration of what constitutes–or goes into making of–the ideal Athenian. –Or what constitutes the most *human* human being, since Athenians proudly and mistakenly thought of themselves as exemplifying humanity. (As this course unfolds, we will repeatedly confront the very dangerous social and political consequences of one particular community claiming that it embodies the truly human–dangerous because the only way in which a particular community can claim to embody the "true" spirit of humanity is by claiming that all other communities are somehow less than human, only en route to becoming human, or worse, not human at all. Arguably, this sifting of humanity into the true humans and the less human is the basis of colonial domination, racism, sexism, among other forms of violence.) Of course, there never was nor will there ever have been an "ideal Athenian" much less an "ideal human," as such, but that doesn't at all keep it from being the implicit and explicit horizon before which the dialogue is unfurled. In myriad ways and from many different angles, Socrates explores what characterizes the just Athenian, what virtues that creature embodies, what the Athenians' strengths look like in social and political life, what difficulties or threats or impediments an Athenian will face in the labour of becoming a true citizen of the just city. It almost goes without question for Plato that the ideal Athenian is presumed to be a man–indeed, a literate, monied,

slave-holding man. –I say "almost" because, for a moment in the *Republic*, as we shall see, he welcomes women into the heart of the life of the city and goes so far as to suggest that a healthy city-state is one in which women labour side by side with men. (Look for this section of the text and don't forget to parse it carefully. Socrates openly admits that this argument will be scandalous for his audience, but strongly affirms it nonetheless. For Socrates, it is important to think scandalously, to think insurgently. Do you think in this dissenting and disruptive way? If not, what prevents you from doing so? These are queries that Socrates is asking you, the reader, to ask yourself and others.) In other words, he suggests, although only very fleetingly, a true Athens, a just Athens, led by true Athenians, wise and just Athenians, is a place in which men and women face similar expectations and bear similar burdens in protecting the city. As you read the text, route your understanding of the dozens of scenes and arguments through this question, then: how is the *Republic* an investigation into the problems *and* the possibilities of becoming a "true Athenian?" What challenges, distractions, impediments, errors in judgement, and misunderstandings of the nature of things does becoming this Athenian face? What sort of social and political life does an Athenian properly embody? Note that Socrates comes at this question *dialectically*, i.e., we come to understand what the ideal Athenian looks like by often looking at less than ideal versions of that same person. What a badly behaving Athenian looks like helps throw into relief what an ideal or more ideal one looks like. That's what is called dialectical thinking–engaging and wrestling with differences as the basis for a practice of knowledge. (Dialectical thinking is central to Socrates's practice of knowledge. As he says, *only the dialectical way of inquiry proceeds in . . . destroying the hypotheses, ... to make itself secure* [533c-d] And yet this is a curious way of describing *dialectical inquiry* since it doesn't really offer "security," i.e., stability or *the* answer. Perhaps Socrates is saying that *dialectical inquiry* secures *in*security, i.e., it helps affirm and shelter thinking that is open-ended rather than thinking that hungers after conclusions: thinking must first and foremost seek to secure its insecurity, seek to work in ways that avoids at all costs rushing too quickly too judgment. What a dialectical thought that is!).

As we shall see in this text, Socrates moves effortlessly between talking about *individuals*, on the one hand, and *communities*, on the other. The ideal Athenian and the ideal Athens are reflections of each other. What makes one wise and just is also true for the other. So you could just as easily say that Socrates explores the constitution of both Athenians and Athens, individuals

and communities. Does a just community help lead to just individuals? Or is it the other way around? First, the institutions and principles of justice, then individuals expected to embodies justice. Or perhaps in ancient Greece, individuals ideally were not thought to be at odds with the *polis* or city-state: an individual shone forth *as* an individual when working in the service of the life of the city-state. The great theorist of social and political thought, Michel Foucault (whose lectures, *'Society Must Be Defended,'* we take up in Term 2), points out that there are cultures in which attending closely and carefully to the relation that an individual has to herself doesn't also mean putting lots of value on private life or attributing much importance to that life. In those cultures, the individual is set against the larger community, as a private individual whose privacy has nothing to do with that community, but instead fulfills herself or himself *as an individual* in terms of her or his place in that community. But that idea can prove very difficult to conceive if you have been brought up on a tradition that values the privacy and sanctity of the individual as something wholly separate and apart from the community, as an interior world that that community must not violate or trespass. The liberal democratic tradition of which Canada is an heir would be a case in point.) Foucault's larger point, and one worth considering when we try to imagine what it was like to be an Athenian, is that there are wholly other ways to be a person--having a sense of oneself--than being an "individual."

A further question to consider: as I said, the Athenians were notorious for believing themselves to be the truest exemplar of *humanity*; i.e., for them, no creature on the planet was more legibly *human* than the citizen of Athens. To speak Greek meant exactly the same thing as speaking "correctly" and indeed speaking as a "human being," so sure the Greeks were of the superiority of their language as the only "true" language. Other language communities were expected to learn Greek, whereas Greeks were mostly uninterested in learning "foreign" tongues. That unsafe claim to a kind of linguistic and cultural purity proved to have a very long and authorized life in the so-called "West," the tradition that we take up in this course. In the 18th and 19th centuries, well more than 2000 years after Plato, for example, many literate Europeans believed that humanity had reached a kind of epitome or peak in the form of the classical Athenians (especially the Athenians of the century before Plato, which was a period of relative peacefulness and a time that had seen many remarkable achievements in literature, art, and architecture) making them the model against which to measure all other forms of human life. This idealization of ancient Greek life is called "Hellenism," as is the concomitant (but mistaken) belief

that Europeans were the natural inheritors of Greek wisdom, Greek "purity," and Greek civilization. Traces of "Hellenism" survive: for example, think of the dominance of what is called "neoclassical" architecture in the great buildings and monuments of Washington, D.C., all edifices that are imagined to quote or remember an ancient, noble, and exemplary past, and thus celebrate the survival and revival of the values associated with that past–stoic resolve, civic-mindedness, courage, and patriotism.

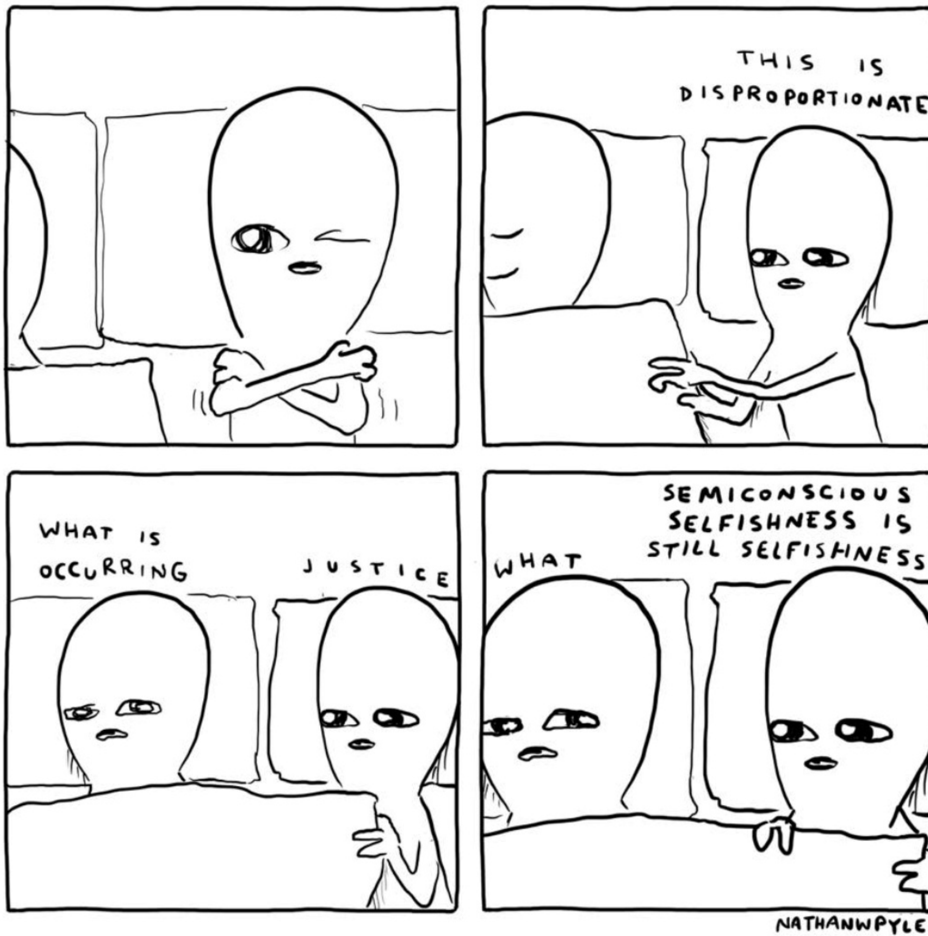
There's a revealing notion of human history at work in "Hellenism:" for many living in the 18th and 19th century, history was running down, as it were, a pale imitation of an ancient and glorious past. Contrast the notion of human history that is prevalent in social and political thought today: history is progressing, not regressing, and the world is along a path that leads naturally and inexorably towards liberal democracies. In 1992 the American political theorist, Francis Fukuyama, published *The End of History and the Last Man*, which made this very point. It was embraced by American politicians, who read it as a justification for the spreading of American values all over the world, the triumph of American consumerism over what were normatively dismissed as parochial and primitive–because illiberal and non-democratic–ways of life. In the 1600s, John Locke wrote that "all the world was America," meaning once upon a time the earth was unclaimed . . . but awaiting the arrival of Europeans to "make" something of it. –A horrible idea, but an idea that helps found colonialism and imperialism. Fukuyama in effect claims that "all the world will become America," at which point, he says, history will come to an end–meaning, not that everything stops, but that politically and socially human beings will have arrived at the condition they were always meant to inhabit, something resembling "America." But which "America" is that?

A good example of the force that Hellenism had on Europeans a very long time after ancient Greek civilization, is Jacques Louis David's painting, *The Death of Socrates* (1787), reproduced later in these Study Notes. There's a great deal going on in this painting. Note the highly stylized nature of the image, all those muscular Greek men adopting certain expressive poses that make them look more like timeless sculptures than flesh and blood human beings, that is, as creatures who are somehow immune to time. In the centre, under the light coming from outside the frame and above, Socrates is pictured not as poisoned to death–as he certainly was in real life–but as continuing to teach until his very last moments. Even in their evident sorrow at the

imminent demise of their beloved teacher, almost all of the various students of Socrates demonstrate stoic self-control: temperance and command over one's faculties were virtues that Socrates highly prized. They remain highly valued in a certain European tradition. Where in the *Republic*, then, does Socrates outline the virtues that become a just and good citizen? The painter, David, is hoping in 1787 to offer his French Revolutionary colleagues and fellow-citizens a model for how they should be proceeding, even in the face of death and cruel authority–i.e., with dignity, resolve, self-control, and civic-mindedness, all strengths that he saw or thought he saw exemplified by the ancient Athenians. Those who aren't in charge of themselves and overcome by grief are politely ushered out of the scene using the staircase in the darkened background on the left. (But why do we need to be in charge of ourselves? Who decided that on our behalf? Who profits from schooling individuals into an anxious condition of constantly monitoring themselves, making sure we are always in control? Why is there so much value placed on managing ourselves? How on earth did those ancient Greek virtues and values survive? These are questions that the French philosopher, Michel Foucault will ask.) Revealingly, in David's painting, women are absent since the ancient Greeks, like David's contemporaries in the 1700s, characterize women as poorly self-regulated and lacking rational control. This is a stupidity against which Mary Wollstonecraft pitches her *Vindications of the Rights of Woman* [1790]). White Europeans chose to believe that they were the shepherds or legatees of this ancient ideal, tasked with the "honourable" labour of remaking–by force–all of the world in their image of themselves as the "true" inheritors of Athenian values. That of course meant disposing of and subjugating all those communities and populations that were deemed not to "fit" that image or affirm that story of the manifest destiny of white Europeans. As I've said, the claim that certain communities are more human than others has dire social and political consequences–a problem that we will take up at various other points in this course. For now it is important to note that no such ideal life ever took place, of course, in Athens or anywhere, so the question for social and politic thought is why was it so important to look back on Athens and imagine it to capture the best of any possible human life?

Now, the first book of *Republic* is often characterized as a *prologue* or preface to the *Republic*, i.e., not part of the main body of the work. Because the opening book reads so differently from the remainder of the text (In what ways? Name two, for example), some German scholars have suggested that we treat it as a separate dialogue altogether, to which Plato

subsequently added another, later dialogue, this one made up of the remaining nine books. Perhaps. Or perhaps Plato was happy to write a long, involved dialogue with a conspicuously heterogeneous texture, and never meant for the thing to be consistent in tone, language, interlocutors, or even argument. Perhaps the text has had the influence that it has largely because it is weirdly mixed up about itself, beginning with the marked difference between how it begins (Book 1) and what happens next (the rest of the Books). What we do know is that in these introductory pages, Plato ensures that we observe his fictional but historically based character, Socrates, fully caught up in the intellectual rough and tumble of his Athenian world. Before we can proceed to the long and often serenely reasonable conversations with Adeimantus and Glaucon which take up most of the rest *Republic*, we are treated to a rapid series of exchanges between Socrates and several contemporaries–all friends and acquaintances--that lay out some of the text's central questions and problems. Where we begin the *Republic* is as important as where we end.



From the very beginning, the peculiar *form* of the *Republic* stands out–by "form" I mean the rather odd way in which it is written and presented. How so? The text is often characterized as a "dialogue" of the sort that resembles a dramatic play. That's not entirely true. In fact Plato gives us Socrates's lengthy *report* of a long series of conversations and debates that he–the fictional character, Socrates–had had on the previous day. We realize this form when we see all

the embedded phrases like "I [meaning Socrates] said" or "Cephalus said," phrases, of course, you would never see if you were reading a dramatized dialogue or a play. The *Republic* is a *narration* of a *dialogue*, i.e., the re-telling of Socrates's supposedly word-for-word recollection of what had earlier taken place during a long evening's discussion in the family home of Cephalus and his son, Polemarchus. So Plato "recalls" Socrates recalling conversations he had earlier with friends and acquaintances. There was a famous or rather infamous flesh and blood or historical philosopher called "Socrates," of course, who was Plato's beloved mentor and trusted teacher, and whose terrible and untimely loss Plato appears to have felt very keenly. When Socrates was executed in 399 BCE, Plato withdrew from public life for a time, walking away from a society that appeared to have abandoned him by demonstrating its fear and anxiety about having an insurgent thinker like Socrates in its midst. Plato asks: Who would want to be a part of a society that made such high claims for itself but that couldn't tolerate much less affirm a teacher teaching the virtues of an examined life? People seem to want to be told what to do rather than think for themselves. The trial and execution of Socrates was Athens' way of saying in a very public way– and in a way that had the full authority of the state behind it--that this was a *polis* of citizens who did not want to be bothered with thinking or by thinkers. You can imagine the "chill" that public trial had on intellectual life in Athens. (Here you might go back to what Cornel West says in *What is Democracy?* about the greatest challenge to just governance is the desire for people to be told what to do and how to think.) So Plato left the city behind for a time. But Plato returned to Athens and he returns "with" Socrates . . . or at least a fictional version of Socrates, as if returning him from the dead to haunt Athens forever. Insurgent thinkers you execute but insurgent ideas are much more difficult to stamp out: just look at the example of Jesus, who was, like Socrates, executed but whose ideas survived and thrived in a hostile world. So, the "Socrates" that we hear in the *Republic* is a fictional invention of Plato, no doubt echoing the original Socrates but also a character in his own right. He's smart and wily . . . but, like real human beings, far from perfect. He holds authority but not absolute authority because Plato goes out of his way to remind us that Socrates' voice–as insistent as it often is–is but one voice among others. And it isn't Plato's voice, not definitively so. Instead Plato speaks *through* an invented character, a character who goes by the name of a real thinker that Athens had thought it had liquidated. Speaking in the voice of an invented character is a move that puts distance between Plato's views and those of Socrates–and everyone else who has a say in the *Republic*.

–A curious chain of mediations or layerings characterizes the *Republic* in its very form, reminding us that it was never meant to be read as a straightforward political treatise, far from it, but something closer to how today we might read literature–a novel or play, for example, populated by different characters, including characters whose point of view dominates all others. In the *Republic,* Socrates relates what had happened to him to a listener whose name we are never told. Remember, Socrates never says to whom he is relaying, supposedly word-for-word, his enormous story. Not naming that listener is very significant. Why? Because you and I are that unnamed listener, the ones to whom he is relaying a long conversation with others: in that way we are folded into the dialogue and invited to become participants in its intellectual labour. Later in the *Republic*, Socrates will begrudgingly praise literature that adopts exactly this kind of form, i.e., the narration of dialogues, *over* pure dialogues or dramas, which he feels are too calculatingly seductive because of the way that they immerse their audiences in their fictional worlds. In effect, Socrates despises "cinema" and other over-whelming dramatic forms of representation: they are too immersive, too spell-binding, causing us, he suggests, to betray our truest selves. They stimulate and gratify our "appetitive" faculty, our cravings for enjoyments, at the expense of cultivating our thinking or our "rational" faculty. They make us *feel good* when for Socrates the much more important task is to *be good*. The great 20th-century German sociologist, Theodor Adorno, once said that every time he saw a Hollywood movie he left the theatre "stupider" than when he went in. Socrates would agree. Imagine that: imagine that the Marvel universe is a machine designed not only to entertain but to dull your wits, for example, by offering you very poor examples of social and political life, by affirming vengeance and violence over justice and peace. But the *Republic* is the equivalent of a *flashback* in film, not the dramatic events themselves in real-time but a particular person's recollection of those events. Should we trust Socrates's recollection, I wonder? Or should we be worried that we've been "Keyser Söse'd"? In the film, *The Usual Suspects*, Roger "Verbal" Kint recalls conversations he had had recently with the usual suspects–but as you know from the end of the film, if you've seen the film, his recollection turns out to be a complete and utter fabrication. (Sorry, spoiler alert.) Kint had manufactured his story on the spot based on various words and phrases he saw in the office of the policeman who was interviewing him. We cannot trust Kint's narration of events that had taken place but it isn't until he's finished telling the story that is the film that we shockingly discover that we've been deceived, along with the police who had held him for questioning. Can we trust Socrates, the one who, after all, is accused by Polemarchus in the opening pages of the *Republic*

of being the "ironic" one, i.e., the one who always and perversely says one thing but means another? Plato builds into his dialogue a clue about Socrates's trustworthiness. But do we pick up on it?

It's worth pausing for a moment to consider the emphasis that Plato places on *mediating* or *framing* his text, i.e., introducing layers of indirection between what he might mean and how he makes the text mean. Plato goes out of his way to write a text that is characterized through and through by different kinds of indirection.

First, Plato's *own* positions regarding the text's central themes, including justice, education, practices of knowledge, and social and political thought, remain mostly unknown because they are entirely filtered through the conversations that his invented character, "Socrates," has with his interlocutors. Socrates might be said to be a fictional persona that Plato adopts, but we can never be sure that the persona's understandings, ideas, arguments, language, worries and hopes are the same as Plato's. (The same could be said of William Shakespeare, who never appears as himself in his plays, but instead, like Plato, *abstains* from his own work, letting his characters speak for him–if they speak for him at all. Plato does not appear in any of his many dialogues.) Even those conversations don't happen in "real-time," but are instead recalled by Socrates after the fact. Does Socrates really remember those conversations word-for-word, or does he remember them at best imperfectly? What gets lost in the translation, as it were, in the gap between the conversations themselves and Socrates' later recollections of them? "I said this," Socrates tells us, then "Thrasymachus" or "Glaucon said that," but we will never know for sure if that is how it all went down. And even if Socrates has a perfect memory, which really would be astonishing, and what he says and what others say is accurate, we still don't know what Plato says or thinks. Plato absents himself from the *Republic*, thereby de-authorizing it, i.e., ensuring that we wrestle with it rather than listen for one unmediated and authoritative voice named "Plato." So Plato is modelling a practice of knowledge that is alien to "Western" ideas about single authorship, and about signing one's name to one's work as a way of guaranteeing that that work expresses the views and arguments of the signerr. I for one can't imagine writing out my own research results but in the voice of a character that I had invented! Now, Plato is said to have revised the *Republic* many times before his death, suggesting that in some way it was meant to be a work in progress, not so much unfinished as *in process*, a text that practices knowledge rather

than making a strong claim to possessing knowledge. Characters *inside* the *Republic* sometimes make strong, indeed, very strong claims to holding the truth. But the *Republic* as a whole does not. And it's important to remember that just because a character convinces another in the text doesn't mean that you must be convinced too. Quietly listening into the conversation, and agonizing over its twists and turns, you must make your own mind up.

Second, when he speaks, Socrates himself most often argues through indirection, and he is most fond of drawing arguments out of others rather than directly stating his own. Readers of Plato's dialogues have observed what they call "Socrates' 'silence'–Socrates says virtually nothing about himself and left no texts of his own" (Adam Phillips, *On Wanting To Change* 124). Several characters in the *Republic* express very strong frustration about Socrates's teaching strategy. Just tell us the answer!, they say. Who talks like that? And at what points in the text? The argument about "justice" is perhaps the most vivid case in point: Socrates much prefers to keep the definition or description of the term, as important as it is, and perhaps *precisely* because it is so important, mobile and on the move, as it were, and in an evolving relationship with others' understanding and experience of justice. Individual practices that are "just" often don't interest Socrates as much as a larger, more general idea of justice that we always presume whenever we say that this or that action is just. But that general idea proves quite difficult to bring out into the open. Some of Socrates's interlocutors are maddened by and impatient with Socrates's indirect method, but it is clearly his preferred teaching and learning practice. Why? (And when, on occasion, Socrates does make more straightforward statements resembling "justice *is* x" or "justice *is* y," those statements feel oddly flat and deflationary. Where and under what conditions does Socrates say something straightforward like "justice is x"?) You should know that my own teaching practice is partly influenced by Plato, i.e., it can be very useful to adopt a certain persona in class, become a kind of "character," rather than speak always and only in my own voice. The "Socratic" object here is to say things in ways that elicit responses from students by activating their own thinking. (Assuming of course that I "have" a voice that I can, in all rigour, call my own and mine alone. That's an assumption, an unarticulated presupposition, that the great French philosopher, Jacques Derrida, challenges."I have one language," Derrida often says, "but it is not mine," meaning, I "have" French, I speak and write it, but in all rigour it would be more accurate to say that the French language "has" me, i.e., it is the language into which I was thrown at birth. I speak French, Derrida might say, but it would be more accurate to say that French speaks

through me.) In the words of the Slovenian political philosopher, Mladen Dolar, Socrates "does not proffer advice or positive theories, he only dissuades his interlocutors from bad ways of thinking, from received opinion, not thrusting his own views upon them; the does not offer ready-made answers...His own function in relation to others is apotreptic [designed to dissuade others]: he simply wants to open the ways of philosophy to others" (*A Voice and Nothing More* 84).

A third mediating layer in the text is that the conversation making up the *Republic* is set back far in time from Plato's present-day, indeed, many years before the historical Socrates will be charged, tried and executed (in 399 BCE). In other words, Plato wrote the *Republic* around 375 BCE, but what we read in Plato's *Republic* is taking place a long time before Plato's time. It isn't possible to pin down the exact date that the fictional dialogue is imagined to take place, but this much is clear: it occurs *before* the civil war (or "strife," as Socrates might insist on calling it, not wanting to admit that the city can "war" in an auto-immune way against itself) in Athens in the months and years following the city's humiliating defeat at the hands of Sparta and its allies in 404 BCE. The fictional action of the dialogue probably takes place around 421 BCE, during a brief "peace" in the wars, a lull in the conflict that Plato's contemporaries knew, looking ruefully back, not to have been a "peace" at all but instead a time when Athens prepared itself for yet more war. In any case, Plato's contemporaries would have read the *Republic* as an account of a conversation taking place in a more peaceful past almost half a century earlier–but a precarious peace that did not last precisely because the forces of injustice won over justice. Knowing that injustice triumphs forms the sadly ironic context for Socrates's search for justice: historical events provide an important frame for what Socrates argues, not rendering what he says null and void but reminding us that what he says he says in the welter of the world.

The Death of Socrates, Jacques-Louis David (1787). Two thousand years after Socrates, European artists remained fascinated by the example of the philosopher, especially his steadfast affirmation of rational thought, intellectual curiosity, and the educability of human beings. In the face of his own death at the hands of a fearful state, Socrates continues to teach; several of his students are overcome with emotion, unable to meet his gaze.

So, then, contemporary readers of the *Republic* would right away notice that the conversations with Socrates are taking place in a momentarily peaceful time, before Athens became a disarrayed city, crowded with suffering refugees, still staggering under the effects of an untreatable plague that had unravelled the city about ten years earlier, in 430 BCE, and a scene of enormous political uncertainty and conflict. The *Republic* is imagined to take place in Plato's

childhood, when he was but 8 years of age. Plato's Socrates is famous–or infamous–for his deep suspicion of democracy, a position you and I might well find repellant. And yet it may help to put that suspicion in context. After all, he had lived in a city-state that had experimented with democracy for over a hundred years, since the radical reforms initiated by Cleisthenes (in 508/7 BCE). (Cleisthenes is the Greek law-giver evoked in Astra Taylor in *What is Democracy?* What specific radical change did he introduce into the Athenian political world, a revolutionary democratic practice that Dr. Efimia D. Karakantza, the professor of Greek literature with whom Taylor speaks, marvels at?) And where had that democracy got Athens? Each democratic reform seemed eventually to lead to factionalization, insurgencies, violence, and war, both war at home and abroad. The democratic Athens in which Plato had grown to be a young man became so self-divided that it was unable finally to succeed against the Spartans and their allies, who defeated and occupied Athens in 404 BCE, when Plato was 25 years old. Five years later, in 399 BCE, Socrates would be executed, and executed by those who claimed to be "democratic"! It was time for Plato to leave and leave he did, returning only many years later to found what would become the first "university" in the history of the so-called West. In Athens he saw that the people seemed always finally to crave being ruled by demagogues and tyrants, and to fall back on the supposed certainties of intolerance and xenophobia and scape-goating. Power and wealth seemed eventually to govern Athens, even as Thrasymachus says is the case in the *Republic*. Plato's Socrates begins with the assumption that Athenians are not capable of ruling themselves, and that the principle reason for that fault was that they were not educated to set aside their personal interests or examined their poorly considered assumptions and instead to think of the larger needs of the *polis*. Democracies may not be doomed to failure, but to someone on the ground in Plato's day, it probably felt like that was the case. In Socrates' hands, democracy is closer to a condition of lawlessness, a condition in which every person is allowed and encouraged to do and to say whatever they want, whatever the consequences: the "freedom-*to*" that we've already discussed in this course. So far as Socrates could see, that kind of *polis* was simply an aggregate of unchecked desires with no appreciation of or interest in anything like a commitment to reasonable thinking or the a public good, i.e., a shared set of goals that lifted up everyone and that were not for sale. In making a case for a just city that is not democratic, Plato–through Socrates–invites us to consider the problems and the possibilities of governance. After all, you and I live in a democracy that is a strange mix of things. We live in a democracy that is supported and enriched by non-democratic institutions–the Supreme Court of Canada, for example, one of whose basic tasks is to ensure that

the majority does not end up, by sheer force of numbers, trampling on the rights and needs of various minorities. Recall Cornel West's point in *What is Democracy?* that the landmark civil rights achievements in the U.S. would never have been democratically voted into effect; it took the non-democratic Supreme Court to impose that new legal framework on Americans with the expectation that they would eventually catch up and catch on. If it weren't for the dissenting opinions and wise guidance of the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg, it's hard to know where equal rights for women in the U.S. would be right now. But with her death in 2020, and with the appointment of radical right justices in recent years, the U.S. Supreme Court has made consequentially illiberal rulings–removing or curtailing women's rights over their own bodies while loosening restrictions around guns. There are anti-democratic forces at work in a democracy that are harmful and regressive–for example, fascist organizations or phobic ideologies that seek to sift the social body into individuals that matter and those that do not. And let us not forget–as Cornel West reminds us in *Examined Life*, a text we take up at the start of Term 2--that the United States, like ancient Athens, is a democracy founded upon slavery . . . and that isn't to mention how America could not exist without the destruction of Indigenous peoples, the patriarchal dominance of women, and the exclusion of gender and sexual non-conforming peoples. Democracy as Plato experienced it would have been analogously complex: it proved to be the spawning ground for terrible injustices, to which the *Republic* responds in detail. At the same time, it's hard to imagine how a historical figure like Socrates could have emerged in anything but a democracy. So Plato's terrific allergy to democracy, felt most strongly–as we shall see–in his insistence that a just city is a city in which the division of labour is strictly observed, each person doing the task they were destined to do–is a complicated allergy. There's a vivid moment in the *Republic* in which Socrates describes the life of the citizen in a democracy in which everyone says and does what they want, without restrictions or expectations of anything like a public good. That's in Book VIII (561c), not a book for which you are responsible but a book that harbours a passage well worth considering for a moment. Here Socrates describes a citizen who lives a life of unmitigated gratification and "freedom-to"--drinking, eating, listening to music, loafing about and neglecting everything, unable to focus on a single task, sometimes seeming to philosophize, sometimes leaping into political conversation, sometimes admiring soldiers, sometimes praising makers, all along calling this life *sweet, free, and blessed*. Is that the kind of deeply individualistic life, a *polis* that is only the sum of its fragmented and individual parts and

nothing more, that democracies today end up fostering? Is this a democracy worthy of the name? Plato asks us to ask this question, as does Astra Taylor in *What is Democracy?*

We might consider for a moment more historically recent cases of terrible failures of democracy. At the end of the 18th century, the French Revolution sought to create a democratic republic founded upon radically egalitarian principles. (--Although, as we will see, for Mary Wollstonecraft, not nearly egalitarian enough, since women were by and large excluded.) But within a very short period of time, the French Revolution devolved into the Terror, in which factions claiming to speak for the will of the people turned the democracy against itself, resulting instead in new forms of auto-immune tyranny and mass violence. Or, to take another example, consider the general election in Germany in 1932, when more than 14 million Germans democratically voted the Nazi Party into power, more than twice the number people who voted for the more moderate Social Democratic Party and almost three times those who voted for the Marxist Party. Non-democratic governments can be elected democratically.

Plato was born in or around 429 BCE, about a thousand years before the life of the prophet, Mohammed, and more than four hundred years before the birth of Christ. Plato was born just three years before the beginning of the Peloponnesian Wars, the extremely costly conflict between Athens and its allies and Sparta and its allies–a war that will not come to a close until the momentous defeat of Athens in 404 BCE. When Athens collapsed, and with it all the hopes and dreams of the city, Plato was therefore a young man, twenty-five years old. Growing into adulthood amid perpetual war, and seeing the wretched state into which Athens was thrown, left an enormous impact on him, traces of which we can see in the dialogue he wrote many years later, around 375 BCE, trying to imagine what would go into a thriving and just *polis* rather than defeated and warring *polis*. After the defeat of Athens, Plato devotes his life to the creation of the first university–which he treated as a protected place in which the leaders of today and tomorrow would be taught how to rule in a just fashion. The *Republic* offers an ambivalently reassuring glimpse of a peaceful Athens, a time in the city that may never have actually existed but which Athenians liked to imagine had existed, a bit like men and women of a certain generation who today are sure that life in the 1960s or 1950s was the "good old days." (Trust me, they were not; or rather, they were good for a few but not for many others.) Plato is very careful not to definitively date the fictional time of the dialogue (Why do you suppose that is? Why is it situated

in no time, i.e., time-less?), but the best guess by scholars is that it is, as I've said, imagined to take place in 421 BCE, the moment in Athenian history in which a peace, the Peace of Nicias, had been brokered with the Spartans. (Nicias was a wealthy Athenian political figure and general who had a son named Niceratus, and Niceratus is the name of one of the Athenians who listens in on the conversation making up the *Republic*. He is a kind of figure for us as readers, listening closely but lurking, holding back from saying anything that would interrupt the conversation.) The hostilities stop, and for a moment literate, male Athenian citizens can take a breath and think about other things than fighting for their lives and for the life of their beloved *polis*. The peace was planned to last fifty years but within eighteen months its basic terms were violated and war with Sparta and its allies resumed. So the Peace of Nicias was never really a time of peace at all, something Plato's contemporaries would have known when they read his dialogue–i.e., that the time of good conversation about justice and the good city and the just person is very fleeting, a brief pause amid a world otherwise wholly dominated by violence and war that would not cease for another 18 years. (In our course, Immanuel Kant will have a great deal to say in the 1790s about peace that turns out not to be peace at all, and about the difference between a mere "armistice," which is only a temporary cessation of armed conflict, and a true or what he calls "perpetual" peace, a peace not for some but for everyone.) In the wake of the defeat of Athens and the conclusion of the Pelepponesian Wars in 404 BCE, the differences between various factions within the city (factions that had undoubtedly always existed) sharpen and overtake the political and social life of Athens. (Socrates will describe four wounded kinds of cities in detail in Book VIII, each one of which suffers mostly self-inflicted wounds rather than enduring attacks from afar.) It is in the midst of that turmoil that the *real* Socrates was tried and executed. Readers of the *Republic* would have known how few of the text's characters would come through this violent and deranged post-war period unscathed. Athenians of Plato's own day would know, for example, that The Thirty, the cadre of tyrants, backed by Sparta, that ruled the city after its defeat, would execute Polemarchus, son of Cephalus, the real Cephalus, whose fictional voice we hear so vividly at the start of the dialogue. Polemarchus's older brother, Lysias, the real person named Lysias, would also be murdered. (The fictional character, Lysias, doesn't speak in the *Republic* but he is mentioned as being present; he prefers, like us, to be an interested lurker.) Cephalus would have his entire fortune seized by The Thirty, making his remarks to Socrates about living a kind of moderated life in his old age, having less money than his wealthy grandfather but more money than his spendthrift father, especially poignant. One day Cephalus

will have no money at all, and no status in a city in which he was always a stranger, in any case, not being Athenian born. And of course, no Greek could read the *Republic* and not feel the sting of knowing that the historical Socrates will himself face death at the hands of the state. Socrates is found guilty by the democrats who eventually overthrow The Thirty, reminding us that whether tyrants or democrats are in power, injustice thrives and the war against thought continues. Bad things happen to good people in cities ruled by tyrants and by loyal citizens alike. The man whose voice, by turns ironic, patient, forceful, passionate and obscure, rings throughout the dialogue will be silenced . . . and left to students like Plato to be revived and preserved in the form of texts like the *Republic*. (Socrates himself did not write. Neither did Christ. Or Muhammad. Isn't it curious how these founding planetary figures eschewed writing? Why do you suppose that is? Why is the spoken word sometimes valued over the written one? Why is it imagined to embody the truth but not writing? This normative insistence on the truth of spoken words and the slipperiness of the written word is called *logocentrism*, and, as Jacques Derrida argues, Western philosophy has never really shaken it off. For those of you who are interested, consider the last page of Plato's great dialogue on the nature of love, the *Phaedrus*; there you will see one of the places where the story of favouring the supposed immediacy of speech over the dangerous wiles of writing, the seemingly straightforward *presentation* of thoughts in speech over the *re-presentation* of thoughts in written signs, begins.)

So Greeks reading the *Republic* are invited to return to a time and a place that no longer exists, a capacious time of relative peacefulness in which men of privilege and wealth could discuss social, political and moral questions seemingly without fear of reprisal. Plato doesn't set the scene in the distant future but instead the past, as if to remind Athenians that he isn't dreaming but remembering, that what once was could be again. A just society would be the kind of society formed this long and chatty day in Cephalus's family home, a society for whom the question of justice and of what justice *is* is a lively concern. *A just society is one, in other words, that struggles in peace to do justice to justice.* That society, that affirming time and place, as I say, may never have existed but Plato is clearly drawn to the idea of it, the idea of being able to discuss justice and thus–and this is the important point--to do justice *to* justice. Justice too calls for justice, i.e., calls for a principled consideration and sometimes all that the world offers for such labour are imaginary spaces like Cephalus's home in the *Republic.* The city doesn't always offer conditions in which to do justice to justice. Yet Plato creates a fictional dialogue in which he

imagines those conditions in place. So we bear witness to an unusually civil scene in which men with different backgrounds and often sharply different ways of being in the world sit together and discuss subjects whose importance to social and political life and survival could hardly be over-emphasized. "No Athenians were harmed in the making of this conversation:" that would be one of Plato's points. And note that it is also a conversation that includes strangers, by which I mean resident aliens, non-belongers like Cephalus and his sons, or the fiery Thrasymachus, who is from Chalcedony (now part of Istanbul).

Why does Plato stage or unfurl his work in the dialogue form, whether dialogue as such or reported dialogue? Socrates would appear in some ways to be Plato's persona, his representative in the dialogue, but that doesn't mean for one moment that his point of view and Socrates's point of view are the same thing. (Writers of fiction and poetry and drama are of course well known for creating persona, i.e., characters; but it strikes me that every one of us are involved in forging versions of ourselves, curating images of ourselves that may sometimes bear little resemblance to how we actually think and feel. Is anyone as carefree and happy and confident and beautiful as they make themselves appear on Instagram? Curating yourself, creating versions of yourself, seems to be a very human pastime, suggesting that it serves deeply human needs. Are those persona simply about faking yourself? Clearly, sometimes. Or can they also be ways to experiment with versions of yourself, trying on persona that are not really you but not entirely *not* you either? Adopting persona may also sometimes be a way of surviving, getting through, and getting on with life.) It may be that through Socrates, and through the array of other characters in the dialogue, Plato gets to test out questions, worries, hopes and ideas without ever having fully to commit himself to them. The dialogue form ensures that Plato's intelligence is primarily searching and exploratory in nature. He can experiment with being confident about certain things (for example, that the Form of the Good is that to which all reasonable minds must turn) without stating outright that that is his final or authoritative position. And don't forget that *within* the dialogue we see an analogous or similar looseness between a thinker and the argument they are making. Consider Glaucon and Adeimantus's eloquent accounts of how and why injustice is superior to justice in the opening section of Book II. What they say is pretty persuasive. But neither of the two brothers actually *believes* what he is saying about the superiority of injustice to be true. But they *pretend* to do so, getting behind an argument they don't actually believe, this, in order to get Socrates to respond with a stronger counter-argument and to explain in more detail exactly why

justice is intrinsically better than injustice, i.e., what they actually believe or want to believe. As Glaucon points out, what he says "is not at all my own opinion" (358c). And as Adiemantus says a bit further on, *out of my desire to hear the opposite from you,* [*I*] *will speak as vehemently as I can*; i.e., so as to prompt or encourage or compel you to make your case, I will, *for the sake of argument*, commit myself to a position (367b). Glaucon says to Socrates: *I will restore Thrasymachus' argument*, even it is *not at all my own opinion* (358c). Don't forget, Glaucon points out, that it isn't *I who speak...but rather those who praise injustice ahead of justice* (361e). –An exemplary practice of knowledge, one that suggests the intellectual courage of the brothers, the willingness to set themselves aside and adopt persona in pursuit of a better understanding of social and political life.

Notice how deeply moved Socrates is listening to the two brothers, and by how they remain *unpersuaded that injustice is better than justice when [they] ... are able to speak that way on its behalf* (368 a and b). In other words, he especially admires how they inhabit an argument in order to explore and express its strengths without necessarily being convinced of it themselves. (Perhaps this is how good teaching works? As a professor, which means adopting the persona of the professor, the character of the professor, I try to inhabit the positions I am teaching, without necessarily agreeing with those positions.) Socrates admires the commitment of the brothers to knowledge, a commitment strong enough that they put their own views aside and saying things they don't believe with the objective of learning more from Socrates. Plato too does something similar, obscuring his own view and letting the character, "Socrates," speak. He thus effectively de-authorizes his work, making sure that Socrates's authority, which is considerable in the dialogue, is always open to being contested. We are invited as readers attending to the dialogue to do the same. Plato may also be reproducing the position that Socrates takes in another dialogue, the *Apology*--namely that he, Socrates, isn't as interested in a particular body of knowledge as he is in developing practices of knowing. *What* to think isn't as important as thinking itself. In the *Apology*, and as a response to the charge that he is putting wrong ideas into the heads of youth, that he is "corrupting them," Socrates insists that all he knows is that he doesn't know–i.e., he's certain about one thing only, namely that he isn't certain and is suspicious of those who too quickly make a claim to being certain. That's a position we will see again in this course. What he is teaching the youth of Athens is that thinking, true thinking, begins there, in an attitude of radical skepticism, an allergy towards anything that sounds or looks either like dogma (i.e.,

unargued certainty) or the thoughtless mouthing of other people's idea of truth or making claims without bringing out the unarticulated presuppositions of those claims. Socrates tries his best to turn Athenians from a lazily reflexive attachment to tradition (the old gods, the old stories, the handed-down wisdom, the "common-sensical" truisms, the thoughtless reactions and passions, the easy answers, etc.) for something new and radical–namely, *the love of wisdom*. Philosophy is, after all, the *philos* (love) of *sophia* (wisdom). Where exactly in the text do you discern specific allusions to that love and to Socrates' strong commitment to it? Plato's contemporaries were adherents to a complex polytheistic faith, although mostly in the form of empty gestures rather than real commitments. Plato invites those same people to experiment with the idea of having faith in reason, in wisdom, instead.

But Socrates accomplishes this work in ways that are deliberately slippery and sometimes frustratingly unconvincing–frustrating because his interlocutors seem more convinced than you or I might be. Plato puts various distances between himself and his text so that his characters–including Socrates--can, as it were, misbehave and sometimes misfire, in any case, think and speak in ways that are an odd mixture of strong and not-so-strong points, as if sometimes playing with arguments just to see if they stick, while other times speaking in more logically consistent and thus persuasive ways. –In other words, Plato seeks to make Socrates and the others *human*. Plato seems disinterested in modelling Socrates, much less his other characters, on the larger-than-life fabled heroes of Greek wisdom literature and much more on the imperfect men, some striving to be good, others not, among whom he actually circulated in Athens and with which he complexly identified. As a sign of his human, all-too-human qualities, Socrates thinks nothing of resorting to odd comparisons and loose rationales. He sometimes seems to try to dazzle his interlocutors with a strange kind of pretzel logic. Not for nothing is he called a kind of magician by those who meet him–and it was that magic that got him in so much trouble with the authorities–even if, in the *Republic*, he seems blithely unaware of the ultimate consequences of his practice of knowledge. At each step he does everything he can to urge us to question him and his positions--and thus to think *with* him, to use his words as an occasion to ponder some very important questions. If Socrates's provisional descriptions of justice and weird claims don't convince you, then what might? Even to ask the question is already to have come under the spell of Socrates, the one who used the powers of indirection to get you to think interrogatively, *beginning with thinking interrogatively about him, about his claims.* There's a huge difference

between *agreeing* with someone and *thinking with* them. Socrates often seems to go out of his way to prevent you from too quickly agreeing with him, even if, sometimes inexplicably, his interlocutors in the dialogue do. He often adopts extreme views, radical views whose exaggeration is designed to surprise and shock readers out of their complacency, out of their comfort-zone. After the catastrophic turn in Athenian social and political life, which had become so violently factionalized, Plato sometimes seems to think that experimenting with the idea of changing nothing less than everything is the way forward--assuming there is a way forward. The teaching strategy at work here is for us as the unnamed listeners to whom Socrates addresses the *Republic* to contrast and compare ourselves with the listeners in Cephalus's family compound. We are *not* expected to take whatever Socrates says at face-value. Far from it.

The Cambridge University philosopher, Nikhil Krishnan, sums up the ways in which Socrates challenges us at every turn.

> The Greek word often applied to him was *atopos*, literally, "out of place." His out-of-placeness consisted in what he scholar Martha Nussbaum [whose ideas we will come back to] has called a "deeper impenetrability of spirit." Socrates simply could not be counted on to say what one expected him to say.
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> He . . . managed to combine rationality with unreasonableness. No one can really desire what's bad, he said. It is worse to do wrong than be wronged. The just man is happier than the unjust man, even when he is being tortured on the rack. What is it like to be in the presence of someone who believed such things?

So, let's begin. Interestingly the report of the thinker who was often said to be "out of place," namely the *Republic*, *begins* by locating that thinker in a particular place, namely "out of the city." Socrates, who very much preferred to work within the city walls finds himself outside those walls, "out of place." And yet, as we shall see, that place is very much the place he needs to be. Socrates embraces speaking "out of place." Do you? Being "out of place" is conventionally said to be in the "wrong" place. But is that necessarily true? Who told you that that was true? Why did you accept this "truth" as true? After all, sometimes being and feeling and speaking "out of place" is exactly the right spot to find yourself.

I went down to the Piraeus.... The text begins so casually–and yet so much is compressed in those seemingly simple opening words. Try repeating them to yourselves and then aloud to your classmates, savouring their significance. Where is your Piraeus? So begins Plato's *Republic* in one of the most memorable opening lines of the texts making up the history of Western social and political thought. Right away then, Book One sets the scene for the dialogue, locating its

central characters in a particular place. Whatever ideas are developed in the *Republic*, including the idea that Ideas–i.e., the original shape of every thing that exists--are immune to the degradations of history and are to be affirmed for transcending time and place (Where does Socrates say that sort of thing?), nevertheless grow out of a particular setting. Socrates tells us that he was returning–in the company of Glaucon--from observing (not participating in . . . there's a big difference) a religious festival in the Piraeus, the portlands zone outside of Athens, then, as now. You will recall that several of the interviews in Astra Taylor's *What is Democracy?* take place in the Piraeus, now also a kind of refugee camp and borderland for people fleeing conflict in Afghanistan, Syria, and other warring locales. It is revealing that Socrates makes a first point of telling us that he *descends* to this busy world: *I went down to the Piraeus*. Later that descent is echoed by his account of the just teacher repeatedly going down into the Cave to help his otherwise chained-up students turn their bodies and souls upward to face the light of truth. There the teacher helps his students to labour to come *nearer to what is*; we are encouraged to *see the Good and to go up that ascent* (519c). But here at the start of the dialogue, Socrates is in effect looking in the other direction, down to the Piraeus, a threshold or borderlands space, across which goods, money, information and people–both residents and aliens–flow. It is where the otherness of the wide world meets Athens and where Athens meets the welter of the wide world. Like all threshold spaces, it is inherently unruly and unpredictable, a mixture of new an old, familiar and unfamiliar. For a cat like Socrates, who will go on to praise immutability and unchangeability, and who disparages the changeable and the contingent, it is telling that he begins his long conversation in such an rambunctious and unpredictable location. Socrates will finally declare his allegiance to the all but unreachable and unchangeable perfection of the Forms . . . but he makes that declaration in an imperfect place that will in fact become much more imperfect in the years that follow. In the end, the imperfections of that world will result in his trial and death. But it is also that strange world in which he unfurls all of his marvellous discussions, including his discussion of what it means to turn imperfect eyes towards perfection.

The dedication of a new temple to the goddess, Bendis, is what draws Socrates from the familiar world of the *polis* or city, something we are told in other dialogues that he rarely did. He seems to have preferred to work within the city-walls, especially in the *agora*, the public square where he could share his ideas and listen to those of others. "Landscapes and trees have nothing to teach me; only people in the city can do that," Socrates says in another dialogue, *Phaedrus.*

But in this instance he seems willing to make and listen to "speeches" outside of the city walls. You have to ask yourself: what is it about this goddess and this dedication that got Socrates' butt out of Athens? To begin, he must leave the familiarity of the city and immerse himself in the outside world--live and breath among others and among the conflict of the points of view of others, their understandings, perceptions, and opinions. Plato is putting to us that if there is such a thing as philosophy–and remember, then, as now, it isn't yet clear that there is or will be, that it will survive the political and social world of which it is a part and to which it is exposed– . . . if there is such a thing as philosophy, a love of wisdom, it must start here, addressing others and being addressed by others. Philosophy, which in the *Republic* means, literally, as I've said, "a love of wisdom or knowledge" (*philos* + *sophia*), begins on the ground, in the midst of something that is closer to unthought opinions and cliches and historical conventions rather than knowledge. Indeed, as the Allegory of the Cave later on will suggest, it begins *under* the ground and repeatedly *returns* to that underground place. (Note here that "philosophy" doesn't mean the academic discipline that we see in universities but is the name for a broader commitment to critical thinking and an examined life, i.e., to uncontainable reflection, to the labour of analysis that goes where it must go, to a life activated by that unimpeded work. Socrates tells us that he would sooner die than give up philosophy, give up on thinking critically. It will help you consolidate your knowledge of the text if you find exactly where he says this and determine for yourself why he says that there.)

Bendis is a Thracian goddess of the hunt and the moon (the moon is an ancient metaphor for changeableness), a foreigner to Athens and new to the Athenians. The location of the temple is telling: the Piraeus was the nerve centre of the democrats in Athens fighting to overthrow the tyranny of the Thirty. We might compare the Piraeus to these sections of the Syrian city of Aleppo (a far more ancient city than Athens), parts of which have been held by rebel forces at enormous risk to themselves and their families. In ancient Greek, I am told, the phrase "*men of the Piraeus*" came in fact to mean "resistance" or "democrat." In other words, the Piraeus spells trouble, insurgency. And Socrates is in many ways a model insurgent thinker. Why does Plato situate the dialogue about the importance of developing a principled body of social and political thought there or at least near there? Socrates is such a curious figure, brimming with contradictions. On the one hand, he can commit himself to uniformity and unchangeability in knowledge. Politically, to our eyes, he is a deeply conservative thinker who approves of a deeply

hierarchical *polis* and who never questions the legitimacy of slavery. On the other hand, he points his fellow Athenians to new ways of thinking about justice founded *not* upon violent revenge or selfish gain or merely settling one's debts or making nice with the gods (all definitions of justice evoked in the first book), but instead justice that attends to the public good, i.e., to needs of the city as a whole, a justice that puts the city's thriving ahead of the needs of any individual or individual group. (It is important when you are reading the *Republic* to tease out of it those sections of the dialogue in which Socrates makes these particular points.) Socrates isn't a reactionary or a progressive as we understand these terms today because he appears to be both at once. Or rather, he is a social and political creature that cannot reasonably be measured by our own notions of what constitutes reactionary and progressive social and political thought. The political spectrums of left and right that are familiar to us in social and political thought don't seem to apply very well to classical Athens.

Polemarchus, son of Cephalus, sends a slave boy ahead to waylay Socrates, inviting him to postpone his returning to the city. "Inviting" is a polite fiction: in truth, Polemarchus enters the dialogue as someone who is bossy, who insists on having his way. Later in Book 1, by contrast, he shows us another side of his character: he perhaps more than anyone in the dialogue demonstrates the capacity to change his mind, to be persuaded by Socrates when faced with powerful counter-arguments. Now, in the shape of the boy-messenger we glimpse, if only for a moment, the presence of slavery that was so central to the constitution of Athens. (Capitalism as it emerged in the 1600s relied on

chattel slavery, as did the founding of the United States. By many estimates, in fact, there are more slaves in the world today than at any previous point in human history. The enslavement of a person is not a criminal offense in many countries.) Socrates agrees to pause, and begins by having a brief conversation with the elderly Cephalus--brief, yes, but also telling because it inaugurates questions and problems that will surface in various ways later in the *Republic*. ("Cephalus" means "head" or "leader," reminding readers of his high status in the family.) And it is here that the question, "What is justice?," gets raised first. (Where? What triggers the question being asked for the first time?) The two men greet each other affectionately after a long absence. They meet in Polemarchus's home, where others have also gathered. Cephalus has just completed making sacrifices, i.e., honouring the family's ancestors and gods in ritual. Interestingly, this is the second time that the religious life of ancient Athens has been invoked . . . and the dialogue has only just begun! Cephalus notes that in old age, as he feels less beholden to his otherwise robust physical desires; he feels more able to reflect and discuss. The suggestion here is that philosophizing is a kind of retirement pastime or hobby for old men, something that comes only later in life and after the fact, after having actually lived one's life. Contrast this position to some of the things that Socrates says, in which a love of wisdom resembles something closer to a *calling* that *is* life, that makes life worth living. At one point in the *Republic*, Socrates in fact promises his friends that as long as he has breath he will wrestle with the truth. Socrates is sceptical, and gently probes Cephalus, asking if he finds his old age pleasant mostly because he can afford it. This is hardly the only place in the *Republic* in which money is the subject of discussion. (Where else does it come up?) Cephalus gives Socrates that point, but notes that money doesn't guarantee happiness: a person must also have the temperament or character for living well on the threshold of death. Old age, he notes, has given him the opportunity to think about the injustices he has committed against others during his life (one gets the sense that there have been many, that he is a bit of a hustler, and to reflect on how those injustices might affect his life after death. In Cephalus we see a confusion of terms that others in the *Republic* will share; i.e., he tends to identify justice with happiness or doing justice with ensuring favour with the gods. Is ensuring that a citizen can pursue happiness the sign of a just nation, a nation organized justly? We know that some nations today insist that this is the case, nations that insist that all other nations should model themselves similarly. Is a good *polis* a *polis* in which everyone is *free* to do what they want, or is a good *polis* one characterized not by freedom, by the ability to pursue one's dreams, but by justice? This was, after all, the point made by Abid Muhajir, the young

Afghani teacher and refugee in the Pireaus at the end of Astra Taylor's *What is Democracy?* Taylor asks Muhajir what democracy means to him and he responds by gently but firmly pointing out that it isn't freedom but justice, not the ability to gratify all of one's wishes but the command to treat others responsibly. The fact that being just or doing justice can sometimes mean great *un*happiness–for example, because it sometimes means sacrificing things you might otherwise take pleasure in having or doing--is something that others in the dialogue find immensely unpalatable, indeed, impossible to contemplate. Who on earth would make themselves unhappy in the name of justice?, some of Socrates' interlocutor's will ask incredulously. What Socrates is exploring flies in the face of what feels like straightforward common-sense. But his sense is so often uncommon. Take the example of the classroom. Is the job of the professor to make her students happy? Does a teacher do justice to education or to her students by making them happy? Or is there a way to separate out happiness from doing justice to teaching and learning and to students? Perhaps true teaching and learning makes students very *un*happy, i.e., disconcerted, at sea, uncertain, dissatisfied, and vexed because that education feels like it is getting in the way of achieving some goal rather than smoothing the way towards it. That is the position of Dr. Deborah Britzman, arguably Canada's most important theorist of education. As she has long argued, "difficult knowledge," knowledge that is very hard to take on board and that asks students to *un*learn what they already know, is an often painful process because it means giving up assumptions and tarrying with uncertainty. But it is where real education takes place. Cornel West will make a similar point in *Examined Life*: freeing yourself from old ideas and embracing new ones feels like nothing less *dying,* he says, echoing something Socrates says in another dialogue–i.e., that the love of wisdom, philosophy, is a preparation for death. Not all teachers are up to teaching classrooms brimming with unhappiness, by which I mean devoted to difficult and unresolved thinking rather than feeling good. Imagine attending a university whose motto was something like *Proudly Making Students Unhappy Since 1881*. That's a university I'd love to teach in! Contrast that motto with McMaster's actual motto, *All Things Cohere in Christ*. In Term 2 we will see the philosopher, Avital Ronell, make a case for "anxiety" as a central part of teaching and learning, meaning, not the dreadful darkness and agitation that unjustly disorders and immobilizes the lives of so many students (and certainly poisoned my own life as an undergraduate student), but another kind of "anxiety," one all about learning to live in a condition of open-ended inquiry, of tarrying with a productive rather than destructive uncertainty, and of enduring the free-fall experience of not-knowing.

Taking his cue from Plato, the German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, whose work we will study shortly, will develop a theory of goodness and justice precisely *against* the notion that happiness is the right and proper goal of human life. Happiness cannot be the measure of human life, he argues, because it is far too variable, too individualistic, too privative: there can be no common principle applicable to all. The goal of human life and of a good life is not happiness he insists, completely against the grain of the then dominant moral theory, but *respect*, i.e., an obligation to others regardless of who or what they are, or where they came from. It's lovely to be happy, Kant is happy to concede. (For a brief summary of what Kant says about happiness, see remarks I've posted on Avenue that I prepared for senior high school students in B.C. who were pursuing a project on what happiness meant to Kant.) But being the citizen of a republic is about larger things than that. In the 20th century, the French philosopher and Talmudic scholar, Emmanuel Levinas, who could be very critical of Kant and yet admired him as well, will make an analogous case. The final significance of human existence does not lie in what he calls "the happy ending." After the Holocaust, after the murder of most of the Jews of Europe at the hands of the Nazis, Levinas, like many thinkers worldwide, could not in good conscience blithely talk any more about "happy endings." To do so was a terrible injustice to all of those who had been murdered and for whom the question of happiness now meant nothing. After the killing of millions of European Jews it was no longer decent or even intelligible to talk about human history as if things were destined always to get "better." It was always possible that, in fact, they could get much, much worse, history disintegrating into mass murder, as was the case for the Jews of Europe and has been the case for any number of other communities throughout human history. The whole idea of human life running along a continuum towards progress had proved itself to be completely irrelevant when the Nazis began systematically murdering Jews. Levinas refused even the minimal satisfaction he might have felt for having survived the Holocaust, when most of his family were murdered. There was no "happy ending" there either, knowing that he survived only because of an accident of history. His very life, he pointed out, was "unjustified." He refused even to describe himself as a "survivor," because the word imported into his life a kind of "heroic" quality, i.e., as if he had "triumphed over adversity" and "lived to tell the tale." He had not triumphed over anything by living and the tale to be told was to be told truly only by those who had been murdered. So, *no happy ending*, meaning: stop putting so much faith in progress and in history having a marvellously affirming shape, instead focussing on doing justice to others *here and now*. How to do justice in a world that doesn't necessarily improve or progress? So Levinas looks for

other ways with which to assess the meaning of human existence, other than one predicated on the idea of a "happy ending." Our ending may or may not be "happy." What mattered instead to Levinas was that the suffering of others activated justice in us. Justice is the meaning of human life, by which he meant attending to the suffering of others, *not* happiness. Be happy, sure, Levinas says, not unlike Kant. But the meaning of human life, especially a life lived interdependently with others, lies elsewhere and otherwise than that. Look for those moments in the *Republic* in which happiness is subject to interrogation. Suss out those passages in which, for example, Socrates's interlocutors point out that practising injustice makes you happy, while living a just life is unhappy. Run to ground those passages in which we get a glimpse of the life of the "guardians," the class of citizens who are expected to put the life of the city ahead of their own satisfactions. (Study hint: You should be able to describe at least two specific ways in which the guardians are expected to live a rather sparse and ascetic life.) How can the "guardians," be happy, Socrates is repeatedly asked, when they live lives characterized by such austerity? Adiemantus asks Socrates this very question, for example, at the start of Book IV, after having heard his audacious account of the strict education of the guardians or warriors in Books II and III. How could such men and women possibly be happy with such a life?, he asks. Why on earth would that take on the burden of all of these public responsibilities but seen so few of the rewards a city might offer in return? Socrates mostly evades the question by saying that he isn't really talking about individuals but about the *polis* as a whole. That is to say, the happiness or unhappiness of individuals is not his focus and so it shouldn't be Adiemantus's. Adiemantus responds by saying, of course, you are right, Socrates, and lets him continue. But you and I are not Adiemantus, and we are expected to linger on and wrestle with the question rather than abandon it so quickly.

Wealth, we are told by the elderly Cephalus, helps men with good characters because it alleviates the pressure to rob others or treat them unfairly *and* it ensures that they can repay their debts before they die, and so die with a clean conscience. So a good character, a man that is *content with himself*, as Cephalus says (330a) is one who repays his debts, and who is prevented from robbing others not because it is intrinsically wrong or unjust to rob others but because he now has the cash to hand that makes robbing others and lying to others a non-starter, superfluous. The question is what it means to be *at peace with oneself*, and it turns out that there will be different ways of being at peace with oneself: the Socratic way, in which the various faculties or

parts of the soul coexist in harmony; and Cephalus's way, with debts paid and a clear path laid in for the afterlife. Cephalus makes a point of citing Sophocles and Pindar, famous Greek playwrights and poets (331a), respectively, to back up his position, relying on their authority and letting them in effect speak for him, warrant his position, rooting it in the conventional wisdom literature of the day. Socrates uses this opening to introduce the question of justice into the conversation: *But as to this very thing, justice, shall we so simply assert that it is the truth and giving back what a man has taken from another, or is to do these very things sometimes just and unjust?* (331b). He points out that Cephalus's definition of justice is, under certain circumstances, in-operative. What if you feel obliged to return a weapon to a friend who has gone mad? What if you create laws in which almost anyone has a right "to carry" or "to stand their ground," and to own a dangerous weapon? Meaning: What if you let others arm themselves even though public health studies repeatedly show overwhelmingly that arming the citizenry multiplies gun deaths? What if you find that you live in a country in which the majority of guns deaths are suicides (as is certainly the case in the United States)? To return the weapon to its "rightful" owner and thus to affirm that owner's right to possess that weapon is to do justice to the friend by paying off your debt, returning his property, acknowledging his rights . . . but this action would or could have catastrophic results. To give a person his weapon back meets a certain highly legalistic standard but it risks a terrible injustice taking place. Cephalus laughingly readily agrees that in that instance, doing justice would be doing an injustice. So justice and injustice are complicated! And he takes his leave (*he went away to the sacrifices* [331d]–Socrates would rather stay and talk than carry out religious offerings...why? In the final analysis, what is it that he honours and asks others to honour, *other* than the gods? What is he asking us to sacrifice?), giving the conversation over to younger men, preferring making pious observances over debate. It is revealing that his notion of justice collapses so easily and quickly, perhaps because it is so self-satisfied and thoughtless, the justice of moralizing cliches: "tell the truth" and "pay your debts" and "protect my property," and "observe the rules." But it is worth emphasizing that it is not so much that these maxims, these guidelines are, on their own terms, jettisoned by Socrates; it is more that they end up not having quite the explanatory power that a man like Cephalus usually gives them. They are enough for some men of privilege to get by, and Socrates must concede that just getting by and being comfortable is often what people look for in life. Still, Cephalus exits the conversation never to be heard from again. With that departure without return, Plato signals to us that whatever path

Socrates is going to take us next, and it is a long and winding one, it is a journey that has no need of the accepted and conventional wisdom of a man like Cephalus.

Not one second goes by before Polemarchus steps up and steps in, backing up his father by saying *that it is just to give to each what is owed* (331e). ("Polemarchus" means "warlord," his very name reminding us of his personal stake in military notions of honour, loyalty, and righteousness, and of being seen to do the right thing for one's own family and friends. Today we might know this notion of justice as "patriotism" or, across the border, as "America First." Polemarchus is a kind of Captain America, only much, much smarter than that inarticulate and clueless propagandist, whose very name says "All I am about and can ever be about is helping my kin and to hell with everyone else.") Justice seen this way characterizes the world as a kind of ledger-book, and life is a constant series of calculations to see if one is in the red or in the black. Doing justice is rooted in the protection of property–a model that will have a powerful afterlife: in the late 1600s, for example, the British philosopher, John Locke, will argue that government should be there primarily to protect the rights of property owners, to make sure that each hangs on to what is owed to them. In 1837, for example, the British government could not imagine the abolition of slavery and the of the slave trade without also compensating slaver-owners and slave traders, making payment of £20 million to make up for their "lost" "property." (That model of justice remains prevalent to this day. And it isn't, without extensive modifications, entirely without merit. How so? Consider, for example, the global movement towards "reparations," i.e., payments tendered to oppressed communities in compensation for the violence that they endured and endure. But others will query this notion, including Ta-Nehisi Coates, whose work we will consider: as he argues, reparations are not about balancing the books because there is not and could never be anything like compensation for the enormous crime of chattel slavery, for the cruel transport and death of millions of Africans. "Reparation" means for Coates embarking on the endless labour of understanding the nature, extent, and on-going effects of this crime. In this way, Coates would agree with other African-American scholars who treat slavery as "the irreparable," a harm for which the idea of restoration or compensation doesn't make any sense. As Stephen Best and Saidaya Hartman argue, "By 1787, it was already not too late to imagine an end to slavery, but it was too late to imagine the repair of its injury" ["Fugitive Justice"])

Defending what is one's own is Polemarchus's vision of justice. Yet Socrates will ask us to consider a new understanding of justice, an *additional* understanding of justice, one that is, in a

sense, "incalculable," i.e., something that cannot, strictly speaking, be measured in these sorts of conventional terms. (Two thousand years later, Immanuel Kant will wrestle with an analogous question, arguing in his own work that "respect," the elemental obligation we have to others, is the one thing in the universe whose worth cannot be calculated. It is "priceless," Kant famously says, i.e., not confined to those who can afford it, not something that can be bought and sold...and so bizarre and unique in a world in which, it otherwise appears, *everything* can be bought and sold.) Right away we see the Polemarchus is mostly happy to reproduce his father's position, reminding us that Cephalus's view of the world isn't so much aged as it is conventional, attractive to both young and old. Securing and keeping and protecting what is one's own and what one is owed is for Polemarchus what justice means.

Notice that the first words out of Polemarchus's mouth are not his, strictly speaking, but a paraphrase of the poet, Simonides. Simonides is an elegiac poet who is more contemporary, dying near the time of Socrates's birth–so, unlike Homer, who may have been writing around 750 BCE. So the wisdom literature, the tradition of great texts which the Greeks treated as authoritative guides to life, that Cephalus and others are fond of relying upon isn't only ancient but also closer to their present day. Socrates feigns not to understand in order to get Polemarchus to explain himself and to explain Simonides rather than mindlessly quoting or paraphrasing him. Socrates's tactic here is to urge Polemarchus–and, by implication, everyone else--to stop mouthing ready-made bits of moral advice drawn from the Greek wisdom literature and instead to think critically about that advice. Whatever justice is, it involves *judgment*, parsing the world with deliberation and discernment, for it is a world that, for example, simply isn't divided between friends who are self-evidently friends and enemies who are self-evidently enemies, no more than it is a world in which, in every case, giving back something that a person is owed is the just thing to do. To mindlessly accept Simonides' word, and to expect everyone else to accept it to, would be a bit like telling someone *The early bird gets the worm* only to have Socrates say to you, what, exactly, do you mean by that expression? Is it always the case that the first past the post is the one who should win? ("First past the post," or FPTP, is a democratic principle, after all, that today is subject some important criticism in political theory and policy making.) Polemarchus obliges Socrates: what Simonides means–at least to him--is that justice is *doing good to friends and harm to enemies* (332d). It means not just paying of a debt that is owed, which is more or less what his father, Cephalus, had claimed, but instead giving someone what is fitting: to Polemarchus, it is

only fitting that you support your friends and harm those who are not your friends. What's telling for the purposes of this course is how widely and deeply influential that particular model of justice will end up being down the centuries, up to and including our own. There will be several moments in this course in which we will encounter versions of Polemarchus's notion of political justice again. Indeed, the influential Italian political theorist, Giorgio Agamben, has, over the course of a nine volume study, made a strong case for the distinction between the friend and the enemy, for better or for worse, but mostly for the worse, lying at the root of all social and political life from classical antiquity to the present day. As Agamben argues, it makes no difference if a polity is democratic or tyrannical–all polities are deeply invested in determining the difference between friends and enemies of the state. Kant, the philosopher whose work we consider in Term 1, also grasps how important this distinction is to political life . . . and how destructive. That's why, against Polemarchus and all his successors, Kant offers a different model of political life, one based on the distinction between the host and the guest rather than the friend and the enemy. The question is: how differently do you look at political and social life if you centre your discussion of it on the distinction between the guest and the host as opposed to the friend and the enemy?

There are lots of moments in the *Republic* in which Socrates himself will fully embrace the friend/enemy distinction (especially when he is describing the task of the guardians protecting the city–look for these; it will help to write them down), although here in Book One he mounts several arguments against it. In other words, Socrates is critical of Polemarchus's friends/enemies vision of justice early in the *Republic* but he will very soon sound otherwise. After all, the just city that he goes on to imagine, *Kallipolis*, will be a city centred around the education of a warrior class, the Guardians, who are trained and expected to give up their own life to protect the *polis*, i.e., to remaining steadfastly loyal to one's own, no matter what the cost. War and marshalling the resources, including educational resources (for professors and teachers, like schools and universities, have never been immune to militarism and patriotism) to prosecute war is central to Socrates' notion of a just city–a sobering reminder of the world in which Socrates lives...and our own world as well. Another way to look at this question is to consider how Socrates envisions a just world to be a peaceful world *within* the city, led as it is by exemplary individuals whose various faculties are in harmony with each other, but who treats the world outside the city, the world between his city and other cities, as being in a constant state of war or waiting for war. In our course, Kant will wrestle with this very problem, i.e., how it is one thing to create and

practice justice within a nation, but another thing altogether to create and practice justice between nations. In other words, the notion that doing justice means protecting friends and harming enemies has a powerful afterlife in the *Republic*, surging back into the foreground, even as it has a powerful afterlife in social and political history leading right up to today.

You start to understand why Socrates sometimes drives his interlocutors crazy. Socrates proceeds, as he often does, by playing the devil's advocate, occupying a position with which he may have little sympathy but a position that affords him the opportunity to further and deepen the discussion. Socrates asks whether justice is for Polemarchus then mostly a matter of *skill*, i.e. a competence that is specific to an occasion and a line of work. Is doing justice analogous to the skill a physician demonstrates with regard to the healing the body, the chef with regard to preparing good food, the ship's captain with regard to navigating a ship, or a business person with regard to satisfying his customer? In the latter example, the knowledge that a businessman has about his product–the example Plato uses is knowledge of horses, the very knowledge with which Sir Philip Sidney will begin his *Apology for Poetry*, a text we look at shortly–is what most benefits his customers. Doing justice in this instance appears to resemble doing well by one's charges, the things or people to whom one is directly responsible. If that is the case, Socrates muses aloud (but knowing how intently Polemarchus is listening), perhaps there is no "skill of justice," only particular skills at doing good to one's friends and harm to one's enemies. And if that is the case, then justice would then be an entirely superfluous concept! In the background, but as yet unsaid, is an argument Socrates will make later in the *Republic*, i.e., that doing justice and being just in particular cases *presupposes* the larger and general *idea* of justice. All the various theories and practices of justice would seem to assume that there is something called "justice as such," although that something seems very hard to pin down. You couldn't say that this ship's captain acted justly and that businessperson acted justly, i.e., doing well by their charges, by the people to whom they are directly responsible, without appealing in some way to a more general idea of justice; the captain and the businessperson exemplify a justice, express it in individual cases, that is larger than those individual cases. That's how we know that they act justly when they skilfully take care of their charges. Justice seems to be more than a matter of skilfulness.

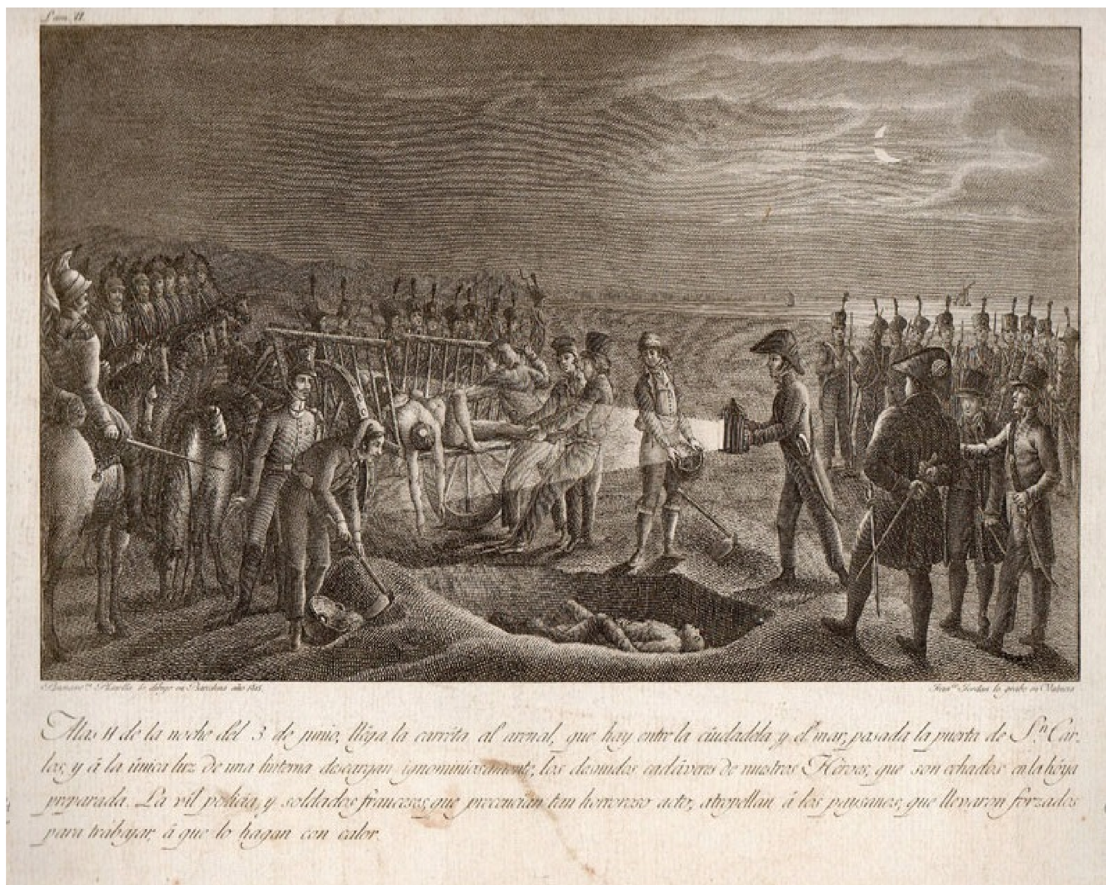
Socrates also points out that helping one's friends could mean and probably often does mean stealing from others to benefit one's own acquaintances and family–and that means that

justice is sometimes simply the skill of robbery. That's a suggestion that leaves Polemarchus reeling (334b). For a moment it appears as if justice is merely a skill that is vulnerable to being employed for both right and wrong ends–obviously an absurdity. What's missing from the discussion (but Socrates has yet to say this as such) is the idea of doing something *because it is good*, separate and apart from who it benefits and who it harms. What would it mean to do justice for its own sake, to do the right thing because it is the right thing to do, regardless of whether it directly benefits or harms you or another person? It is a question Kant too will ask, and indeed he will wager a great part of his entire philosophy on the fact that to be fully human you and I must embrace doing the right thing because it is right, regardless of the consequences, regardless of whether it makes us or another happy, regardless of whether you or I benefit personally from it. Is that kind of justice ever done? Are there instances you can think of in which someone acts justly without any concern for themselves, a purely selfless justice? Is "selfless justice" in fact what is called a *pleonasm*, meaning a redundant expression if all true justice is selfless? Do we witness justice when a soldier lays down her life for her country? When a loving parent gives up everything for the benefit of a child? When a person enters public service when remaining in the private sector would be much more profitable? Polemarchus senses trouble, in any case, and he admits that he is confused. Yet he remains confident that his notion of justice stands: *I know longer know what I did mean. However, it is still my opinion that justice is helping friends and harming enemies* (334b). In saying so, he has the enormous weight of history on his side. Socrates knows this. And any contemporary of Plato reading the *Republic* would realize that Socrates himself will eventually be declared an enemy of the state and murdered because of it. In the name of doing justice to Athens, he will be deemed to be an enemy, not a friend. Plato is asking Athenians to ask themselves whether Socrates's death was just. And what it means to do unjust things under the cover of "justice."

Socrates won't let Polemarchus rest for a moment. When you talk about friends and enemies, how do you actually *know* them to be friends and enemies, he asks? Protecting friends and harming enemies sounds simple enough and appealing enough and it no doubt appeals because it paints the world in black and white terms. "You are either with us or against us," President Bush confidently declared in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks and on the eve of inaugurating a war that the Americans are still fighting, still trying to determine who the enemy is and who the friend. But is the world that you and I live in, or the world that Athenians lived in, a

black and white world? *But don't human beings make mistakes about this?*, Socrates smartly points out (334c). There may be significant discrepancies between those who actually are good and those you *believe* to be good, hardly a stable basis upon which to rest something as important as justice and when the stakes–literally, life and death–are so very high. Polemarchus shifts his position on the fly, pointing out, okay, if someone seems to be good and actually is, then this is a true friend and if someone seems to be bad and actually is, then that will be the real enemy. --To which Socrates replies, but isn't your definition of justice still wanting, still lacking something, if it is being mobilized to harm others? Surely justice cannot be about wounding another person; it's one thing to disagree with them, and even perhaps to declare themselves the "enemy" (a process called "inimicalization," i.e., treating others not simply as others, as different, but as hostile, threatening). But to hurt them? Can that be just? *Isn't justice a human virtue?* Socrates asks (335c). Meaning: doing justice, and doing justice to justice, is caught up with what it means to be truly human. To degrade another denies that person their humanity; and it denies *yourself* of humanity as well. Being human and struggling with justice are fundamentally connected–a point the Socrates raises rather quickly here even though it underwrites so much of what gets said and done in the *Republic*. (Questions: If you are a pacifist, justice can never mean harming another. But, you might ask yourself, are there not "just wars," i.e., wars of extraordinary, killing violence that are justifiable–for example, the crushing of Nazism? "Is it okay to punch a Nazi?" is a meme you see in the wake of the rise of the alt-right in the U.S..) As we will soon see in this course, Kant for one hopes that one day no war will be justifiable. He worries that too often a belligerent nation will claim to be fighting in the name of justice when in fact the real reasons for prosecuting a war are much more self-interested–like supporting friends and harming enemies. What happens, for example, when a nation says that its objective is to spread justice around the world when in fact it is seeking to preserve its stake in oil reserves? For men and women of my generation, the turning point in the Vietnam War came when people started to realize that the fighting in Southeast Asia had nothing to do with promoting peace and justice and everything to do with trying to shore up American's geopolitical power in the world. Moreover, if the justification for the war in Vietnam was suspicious, unjust, it became increasingly evident that the U.S. forces were conducting themselves in battle in terribly unjust ways, slaughtering innocent civilians, for example, as was the case in a tiny hamlet called My Lai, where, on 16 March 1968, U.S. Army soldiers killed 500 unarmed civilians, including babies. Note, later in the text, the passage in which Socrates worries the conduct of soldiers in the field. If they are soldiers of a truly just polity, they

must conduct themselves in a just way on the battlefield. The hint is that an Athenian is perhaps never more pressed to demonstrate his or her goodness and justice than when on the battlefield. The battlefield becomes then a kind of test case for a nation.) Can justice remain justice but also create injustice? *It is not the work of the just man to harm either a friend or anyone else, Polemarchus, but of his opposite, the unjust man,* Socrates points out (335d). –A radical refashioning of justice, to be sure: if justice means anything, it means doing no harm. Justice, true justice, is not only blind to whether one is a friend or an enemy; it is also about refraining from violence. –A scandalous idea for an Athenian even to consider! A scandalous idea during Kant's day. And today as well. But scandalousness is Socrates's primary practice of knowledge.



Drawn by Buenaventura Planella in Barcelona in 1815; Engraved by Francisco Jordan in Valencia.

During the Peninsular War (1808-14), French soldiers occupying Barcelona buried Spanish insurgents in mass graves under the cover of night. Caption: "At 11 p.m. on the night of June 3rd

> the wagon arrives at the beach which lies between the citadel and the sea, beyond the San Carlos Gate, and under the light of a single a lantern they ignominiously deposit the naked corpses of our heroes, who are thrown in a pit. The despicable French soldiers and policemen who bear witness to such a horrible act abuse the countrymen whom they have forced to work and who make them do so with vigor." (Translation by Ralph Rodriguez and Mario Ortiz Robles.)

Polemarchus concedes that Socrates has made a convincing case and indeed says he will now help Socrates in his argument. Notice how Polemarchus has not divided the world cleanly into friends and enemies when it comes to Socrates. He can disagree with him without making him an existential foe, the sure sign of which is that he listens to Socrates and allows himself to learn from him. And what an argument it is, astonishing in its own day, something that would have sounded incredibly alien to many of Plato's readers. Why alien? Because for many of Plato's contemporaries, justice is *only* about sheltering familiars, people who look and sound similar to "you," and harming others. In a related way, justice is about putting one's own ahead of everyone else. Arguably today the most prevalent understanding of justice remains "exacting revenge," i.e., doing harm to another who has harmed you. Justice is about sifting the world with statements like: "You are either with us or you are against us." The question at hand is this: is "getting even" the same as doing justice? More: Is "getting even" the *antithesis* of justice, the sign of not only of the absence of justice but also its destruction? How did the injustice of revenge come to be synonymous with justice? (Consider the death-penalty. Opponents of the death-penalty argue in part that putting a criminal to death satisfies a desire for revenge more than the demands of justice. It mixes a barbaric injustice with justice. And so, across the globe, the death-penalty has been eradicated because it is viewed to be intrinsically unjust, unjust to the condemned but also unjust to justice because it reduces justice to a kind of violent and vengeful exchange, blood for blood. --Except in the United States and a very small handful of other nations. Even as Socrates suggests, justice cannot be the basis for doing harm to another, even another who has done extreme harm to you.) In some sense, a great part of Socrates' case for justice is directed against what the Athenians would have felt to be the most commonsensical notion of justice. Many would have simply been shocked and incredulous that there was any other understanding of justice at all. After all, the greatest hero of the Greek wisdom literature, Achilles, the model Greek, exemplified the power and authority of getting even and of meting out violence as a reaction to violence. Socrates has set himself a nearly impossible task by frankly telling his listeners that justice may never mean harming others when so many think otherwise. You might ask yourself how prevalent

this model of justice is to this day, more than two millennia after Plato. Why does popular culture–movies, television programs, and video games, for example–brim with revenge fantasies in which doing justice is precisely and only about harming others to the fullest extent? We are schooled into feeling wonderful satisfaction at the harming of the enemy. We "cherish corpses," the great feminist-pacifist poet, Suheir Hammad, says in her deeply moving spoken word poem, "(break) clustered." Call of duty? The call that duty makes is to punish others violently. But is that justice? Is that true dutifulness? --A very difficult question to ask if you live in a culture that has made doing justice and exacting revenge mean mostly the same thing. But Socrates is evoking an entirely different notion of what constitutes duty or dutifulness, de-synonymising (making two things that are said authoritatively to mean the same thing instead mean very different things) revenge from justice, the way of Achilles (and thus the way of Athenian society) from the way of the lover of wisdom. You begin to see why Socrates is allergic to so much that is in Greek wisdom literature, not because he is a fussy or prudish censor but because that literature is so empty when it comes to helping citizens learn how to think and act in just ways. To broadcast new understandings of justice, he must turn off and tune out the channels feeding Athenians the old understandings. That looks like censorship and, in a way, it is. But it can help to remember how in Canada the Supreme Court has consistently interpreted the constitution of the country as protecting minorities from hate speech, from people saying things that they believe to be true but that have the effect of harming others and of reducing the chance of justice being done.

There are, after all, important historical examples of refusing to let vengeance overtake the pursuit and practice of justice. Consider the actions of the Allied forces after the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945. The legal scholar and historian, John Q. Barrett, describes how the victorious nations sent representatives to weeks of meetings in Church House, on the grounds of Westminster Abbey in London, England, to discuss exactly how to ensure that Nazi leaders faced legal prosecution, judgment, and punishment rather than mere retribution. As Dr. Barrett writes:

> In the London Agreement, the Allies announced their decision to take a path of law and public accountability rather than to act summarily, with their unlimited military power and their high desire for vengeance, against their Nazi prisoners. The Allies chose, despite the absence of a peace treaty or any other legal or political constraint, to address the possible legal culpability of former Nazi leaders

> through a public, juridical process. To do so, the Allies created, in the London Agreement, an international criminal court, the International Military Tribunal. In a Charter annexed to the Agreement, they prescribed the IMT's constitution, jurisdiction, and functions.

Now, like his father, Polemarchus remains himself and attached to his notions but on friendly terms with Socrates. Contrast that fellowship with Thrasymachus, who rushes into the conversation brimming with anger at Socrates and, one suspects, with his fellows for not standing up to Socrates. He says flat out that they are *fools* for letting Socrates have his way with them. Thrasymachus has a little bit of Achilles, the warring hero of Greek wisdom literature, in him and we're meant to feel, as Socrates does, that his violent demeanour is out of place in Polemarchus's home . . . the irony being that his father, Cephalus, is a successful arms-manufacturer. You can almost hear Socrates saying to Thrasymachus, "You can't fight in here. This is the war room!" (That's a famous quip from Stanley Kubrick's 1964 dark comedy and political satire, *Dr. Strangelove*, a film that mercilessly mocks the machismo politics of the U.S., the sheer madness of its confident desire to separate the world into friends and enemies . . . and to annihilate its enemies, a desire so strong that it leads in the end to the annihilation of the entire world--the ultimate case of civil strife, and of the weapons of the guardians being turned against the city they are supposed to defend. In the last pages of *'Society Must Be Defended*,' Michel Foucault, who is taken up in Term 2, will point out how and why the Nazis were willing, in the end, to see themselves destroyed, in the name of "protecting" the idea of a "master race" in competition with a world of "enemies." The Nazi regime was so invested in Polemarchus's idea of justice that its last wish was to protect the idea of "Germany" regardless of whether that cost the lives of all Germans.) Thrasymachus is a formidable discussant, trained as a Sophist, i.e., a teacher educated in the art of rhetoric, often hired by fathers who were preparing their sons for the to and fro of public life . . . a life in which, it is assumed, persuasion matters more than telling the truth. In many ways the man is a kind of mirror-image of Socrates, an intelligent teacher who harnesses the power of language to persuade others, a man who who says that he knows what justice is. Thrasymachus comes onto the scene, Socrates recalls, *hunched up like a wild beast, he flung himself at us as if to tear us to pieces* (336b). He lambasts Socrates for his *nonsense*: *Why do you act like fools making way for one another? If you truly want to know what the just is, don't only ask and gratify your love of honor by refuting whatever someone answers–you know that is*

easier to ask than to answer–but answer yourself and say what you assert the just to be (336c). That Socrates will not do. But the suggestion is here, and throughout the *Republic*, that he will not *say what justice is* because there is something about it that resists simply being said. Thrasymachus acts like Socrates already knows what justice is but is stingily and perversely keeping that secret from others, and so fails to see what Socrates is actually about here. In other words, Socrates will not do what Thrasymachus wants not because he has the answer but is withholding it but because justice withholds *itself* from being said or spoken of straightforwardly. Some things, some elemental important things, are like that: i.e., it is in their very nature not to be known once and for all, or all at once. "Democracy," "justice," "the human," are three such phenomenon on this course that will fit that bill. Still, Socrates tells us, he trembled at the sound of Thrasymachus's angry and impatient voice. How afraid Socrates actually is is up for grabs, for if anything, he responds in ways that are guaranteed to rile Thrasymachus up even more. Note that this is not the first time in the *Republic* in which Socrates feels threatened; look back at the opening paragraphs of the text, in which Polemarchus says, playfully, either you stay and talk with me and my friends or you will have to fight your way past us. For Thrasymachus, Socrates is a dissembler, saying one thing but meaning another, i.e., a kind of deceiver and liar. But consider how weird that charge is. Thrasymachus is the man who will go on to argue that there is no justice, no principles at work in the world, only power, only the acquisition and application of brute force; yet he is also the man who charges Socrates with immorality, with lacking principles. Plato expects his readers to wince at that irony and to remember that in real life, Socrates will be found guilty of immorality, of acting unjustly, and put to death. Plato knows or at least hopes that his readers will know that Socrates wasn't immoral at all; he was charged with immorality when in fact, "all" he was to the Athenian authorities, was a worrisome critic. The unjust find the just man, the last just man, "unjust." He wasn't an enemy of the people but he was treated by those in power as one, and those in power won the day. --Exactly as Thrasymachus says is always the case. Is it naive to think otherwise? One thing that we do know is that Socrates is not Thrasymachus's only opponent here. He is also directing his sharp criticism against Polemarchus, the man with all the ideas about being loyal to one's friends, family, and community. For Thrasymachus, even that position too is naive. For him, both Socrates and Polemarchus fail to see that what we call "justice" is in the end all about *power and domination*. That idea will prove to have a very powerful and longlasting afterlife in the millennia following Plato.

Socrates suggests that he cannot and will not say what he doesn't know, a sceptical position that he affirms more strongly in another dialogue, the *Apology*. You first, he in effect says to Thrasymachus, since you seem to know, even if I don't. What then is Thrasymachus's position (unfolded starting around 338)? In a sense, nothing could be simpler: *I say that the just is nothing else than the advantage of the stronger* (338c). Justice is the "justice" of the strongest, wherever that may be. *In every city the same thing is just,* he says; always *the advantage of the established ruling body. . .* (338c). It doesn't matter if we are living in (momentarily) democratic Athens or highly militarized Sparta, it doesn't matter if you live in a liberal democracy or in a totalitarian regime, justice is everywhere a matter of power and authority. So far as it goes, Socrates would have to agree–the enormous difference being that he believes that certain individuals can be helped to turn away from that darkness. But Thrasymachus is compelling: All social and political thought boils down to power and authority too . . . and that means that there may be no social and political thought genuinely worthy of the name, i.e., a body of principled knowledge about governing and being governed. All that matters is who has power, relegating thoughtfulness or principles irrelevant. Justice is the justice that suits the best interests of those in command, those with the weapons, money, influence, family connections, etc.. Anyone who claims to be acting in the name of justice is just using the lovely word to cover for what is in fact a brute act of power. In the 21st century, have you seen similar moves, i.e., nations who say that only want to do right, make things right, act in the name of justice . . . but in fact are asserting their authority and asserting it because they can? In *'Society Must Be Defended'* Foucault will trace the strange ways in which the powerful work to obscure even the most extreme forms of social and political violence. Society, Foucault says, is in fact a sustained and bloody "war," even though for some it feels or is made to feel like peace, order, and good government.

This claim about the pervasiveness of power–made with such confidence--is important and affecting, not least because it sounds so utterly plausible, believable, and accurate. Arguably every one we study in this course is compelled to engage this claim in one way or another. In Thrasymachus's mouth, as I've said, justice is a pleasant word that serves only to obscure the reality of the brute workings of force. It is the word that the less powerful, the weak, use to make their weakness and powerlessness sound noble and imporant–that's a position, you will recall, that Nietzsche takes up in *Genealogy of Morals*. Socrates appears quite reluctant to face this claim head on, preferring to lever himself into it from the edges, as it were. After all, Athenians know

that he will one day perish at the hands of those for whom justice is indeed a matter of the strongest. Socrates suggests that the sovereigns or rulers *believe* that they act in their best interests, but that doesn't always mean that they actually do: they can be wholly mistaken about their best interests, i.e, exercizing power over others but not really in command of themselves. Sound familiar? We must be careful not to confuse power with knowledge, in this case, the sovereign's capacity to know himself or herself, know what and where his or her best interests lie. A ruler, a strong ruler, Socrates suggests, can't strictly speaking still be considered either strong or a ruler if he or she is mistaken about something as important as what his best interest are! Thrasymachus is compelled to concede the point, although he says that Socrates is merely being petty. He responds by reiterating his original point, in a slightly modified way: rulers are only rulers if and when they really do act in their best interests; to be a ruler means that they always should be acting in their best interests; if they don't, they are not really rulers; so, then, justice is the justice of the strongest and of the rulers (340d).

Once Socrates has stick-handled Thrasymachus towards making this modification to his argument, he, Socrates, presses the matter. Okay, so you are saying to me that ruling is a kind of skilfulness, Socrates says; it is the skill of determining and acting upon that which serves the best interests of the ruler: that's your definition of the ruler, yes? But let's think about other skilled people: physicians and ship captains, once again. Don't these people work their skills for others, their patients and crew, respectively? Aren't we talking here about people who are rulers whose interests lie not with themselves, as Thrasymachus insists is the case, but with those in their charge, those others, those charges, for whose well-being they are responsible? Socrates: *There isn't ever anyone who holds any position of rule, insofar as he is a ruler, who considers or commands his own advantage rather than that of what is ruled . . . and it is to this* [i.e., looking after those whom he governs] *and what is advantageous and fitting for it that he says everything he says and does everything he does* (342e). That is to say, no one can make a valid claim to being a leader if he puts his own interests before those he leads. Thrasymachus is pretty energized at this point, responding at length to Socrates with some examples of his own, especially the example of a shepherd and his flock. In zeroing in on the case of the shepherd and his flock, he takes an example, a metaphor, that would have been familiar to the agrarian-based Greeks and turn it on its head. Shepherds don't put the safety and well-being of their flock ahead of their own safety and well-being, Thrasymachus says. The only reason shepherds do what they do is to

prepare their flock for shearing and slaughter and thus profit! A shepherd has only one thing on his or her mind, i.e., getting his sheep to market. They don't care for the flock for the benefit of the sheep. People are sheep, he notes, and are viewed and treated by rulers as sheep. That's a sobering thought. Buried in Thrasymachus's claim is an even more sobering thought: namely, not only do rulers treat their people as sheep but also that people *like* being treated like sheep, like following the herd, like having someone else do the thinking for them, no matter what the cost. Have you seen this kind of "herd-instinct" in others in your own life? This is a question that Cornel West engages in *What is democracy?* That is why a constant in social and political thought, beginning with Plato, is that individuals and communities must be *educated* into justice. That is why for a thinker like Kant, no progress towards self-determination and equality and rationality can take place until we embrace the motto, *Think for yourself*.

To add to that claim, Thrasymachus points out, after all, that being just doesn't mean success or happiness in life. There's no evidence at all that being just gets rewarded: *And this must be considered, most simple Socrates: the just man everywhere has less than the unjust man* (343d). In other words, injustice is the chief source of happiness, as the self-satisfied and wealthy lives of the some of the worst political rulers and most craven corporate billionaires can attest. Injustice is what makes the strong, *strong*; justice is merely the consolation that the weak offer themselves to explain and idealize their weakness. As I've said, the 19th-century German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, will make a very similar claim two thousand years later: the weak make their weakness into "the good" in order to justify their weakness. But in fact is *injustice more profitable than justice*, Socrates asks? *I tell you I do not believe* it, he says (345a). Notice his language here. It is conspicuously hortative, i.e., earnestly imploring and a matter of belief rather than describing something to be true. He doesn't flatly and confidently say *Justice is more profitable than injustice* but instead *I do not believe that injustice is more profitable than justice.* There's a difference, an important difference, but it is as subtle as it is revealing. For a moment, we see Socrates waver; the best that he can do at this instant is *hope* or *wager* that injustice is not more profitable than justice, and encourage or entreat others to *believe* the same. We will see a similar move in Sidney's *Defence of Poetry*. (Question: what is the teaching strategy behind drawing attention to the fact that you are inviting someone to agree with you, rather than telling or commanding them to agree with you?) Perhaps sensing something in Socrates' voice, Thrasymachus indicates that he is done and wants to leave, but Socrates implores him to stay–he

cannot and will not command him, all he can do is plead with him, just as he seems only able to plead his case about justice here--because the stakes are very high: here we are deciding *on a whole way of living*, a way governed by living *the most profitable life* (344e). Notice here how Socrates is morphing the very meaning of "profitable," bending it away from a conventional understanding of the term meaning "having more stuff, more money, power, honour, or control." Perhaps there are other, more expansive ways of thinking about "profit" and *the most profitable life*? Is there another way to think of education other than training for a particular profession or job? Is there such a thing as a not-for-profit education? Training is important; after all, as we see in the *Republic*, Socrates is very interested in what, precisely, goes into the training of the guardians, how best to prepare them to help the *polis*. But here at 344e Socrates is trying to get Thrasymachus, who, after all, is an educator, and so by rights has intelligence and experience, to think more profoundly about what it means to teach and learn. Thrasymachus trained the sons of the wealthy slave-owners to prepare for a live governing the *polis*. A noble endeavour, to be sure. But it is one that he does for cash; and in case we forget that fact, Thrasymachus demands payment from everyone (337d) in exchange for refuting both Socrates and Polemarchus, both of whose positions he finds deeply unsatisfactory. But Socrates says he has *no money* (338b), meaning, literally, he hasn't got cash on hand and isn't interested in paying to debate with Thrasymachus, but also, metaphorically, that what is wants to explore is an educational practice that is divorced from the question of getting and spending, separated from the notion that education is reducible to a kind of for-profit vocational training–as it is for Thrasymachus. What about education that is for its own sake, meaning, for Socrates, an education about what it means to be human? Education, Socrates suggests, is about nurturing a broad-based learning in how to live one's life, which he contrasts to learning how to make a living. Do you see the difference between these terms? Is that difference something that implicates you here at McMaster? [*T*]*he way one should live*, is one way that Socrates will go on to describe the search for the meaning of justice (352d); to know justice and to do justice to justice is caught up in the *way* of how one *should* live. When Adiemantus later urges Socrates to hew closely to the labour of that search, he reminds him that, after all, he, Socrates, had *spent* [his]... *whole life considering nothing other than this* (367e). *For I'm afraid it might be impious to be here when justice is being spoken of badly and give up and not bring help while I am still breathing and able to make a sound. So the best thing is to succour her as I am able* ((368b). Note what links each of these different passages: each underlines the importance of living a life of education and of an education that is

about developing a full, flourishing life. What matters to the teacher, Socrates, is to explore what it means to be human (an education that is not without its problems, as I've said in these notes), and this process means taking one's life to be a work to be accomplished. As you can imagine, treating one's own life, or the life of others, as a work to be accomplished means becoming mindful, although this is not a term Socrates ever uses or perhaps would ever care to use, in part because mindfulness suggests today an activity that is mostly inward, whereas Socrates thinks of how what we do publically in life and as our public life is as important as what we think about it. The Greeks had a specific word for this "deep" form of education and for this unusually pressing kind of teaching and learning: *Paideia*. And as Socrates emphasizes time and again, *paideia*, the education that turns us body and soul from mere appearances and a worship of appearances, from thoughtless cliches and mindlessly accepted "wisdom" or "opinion" to the larger truths, to the things that truly matter, and therefore towards living what Socrates calls, in the *Apology* (another one of Plato's dialogues), the "examined life." Life is not worth living if it isn't labouriously caught up in *paideia*, both the teacher's life and the student's life. *Paideia*: a powerful word worth hanging onto. (See the American philosopher, Cornel West, talk about *paideia* and about the "examined life," here:

And here:

Cornel West, speaking on "examined life" in Astra Taylor's *Examined Life* (2008), a text and film we will take up in Term 2.

Returning to where we left off, is injustice, Socrates, asks, echoing Thrasymachus's words, *more powerful and stronger than justice*? Socrates turns the argument towards the *political* ramifications of this model, contrasting cities founded on justice with those founded on injustice. Doesn't injustice within communities lead to factions, as opposed to justice, which promotes cooperation and friendship? *For surely . . . it's injustice that produces factions and hatreds and quarrels among themselves, and justice produces unanimity and friendship. Isn't that so?* (351d) (The question is rhetorical, but we are free to treat it as an actual question: is it necessarily the case, for example, that injustice leads to fragmentation and disorganization? "Humanity must perforce prey upon itself," the Duke of Albany observes in Shakespeare's play, *King Lear*, meaning that the evil he sees in Lear's daughter, Goneril, will lead not to solidarity with her sister, Regan, but instead to the destruction of the entire world of the royal family, and with the family, the kingdom. But isn't it also possible for the most unjust individuals to unify communities around their injustice? Take the example of the members of the Nazi party who rallied around its manifestly criminal project.) The same principle that holds true for societies also holds for individuals, Socrates adds; justice fosters the harmony of the separate faculties or parts of the soul, whereas injustice does not. Injustice *makes that thing* [i.e., *a city, a clan, an army, or whatever else*] *unable to accomplish anything together with itself due to faction and difference,*

and then it makes that thing an enemy both to itself and to everything opposite and to the just (352a). That's an important move for Socrates to make, since one of the founding assumptions of his remarks in the *Republic* is that what is true for individuals must be true for communities and vice versa. (Study tip: point to those passages where Socrates says that the city and the individual in effect mirror each other: an virtuous person practices virtue with others and a virtuous community relies of the virtuousness of the individuals making it up.) Plato had seen injustice effloresce in Athens as it cannibalized itself, falling into warring factions; you start to see where his notion that a just polis is a polis that is in harmony with itself comes from.

Thrasymachus has exhausted himself and sarcastically encourages Socrates to celebrate winning the argument. But Socrates smartly points out that he's not going to celebrate since no definition of justice as such has emerged. Everyone–and Socrates includes himself--has been lost in the weeds of determining the qualities that do and do not characterize justice without actually determining what justice is *as such*. That enormously challenging task awaits. In some sense, the "Western" world for which Plato is partly responsible for shaping is still waiting. So Socrates responds to Thrasymachus by saying that *I have not had a fine banquet* (354b), implicitly contrasting his unhappy meal to the joyous one currently taking place at the temple of Bendis while these cats debate the question of justice in Cephalus's and Polemarchus's home.

Book Two

Book Two begins with the question of justice being recapitulated. (That's a useful summarizing passage in the dialogue well worth reviewing.) Now the discussion is between Socrates, Glaucon, and Adeimantus, the names, as it happens, of Plato's two brothers (he had two sisters too, one older, one younger, of whom we hear next to nothing in this work. Socrates will soon imagine women joining men in combat and participating fully in the city's social and political life. But Plato cannot and will not allow women to join Socrates in his dialogue.) An important part of reading the long stretches of the *Republic* in which the two men are interlocutors is to sensitize yourself to their differences. These brothers are very different from each other. How so? With these interlocutors, the entire tenor of the dialogue changes from one of a lively conversation to a setting in which the interlocutors now turn more obviously to Socrates for their

education. That's not to say that Glaucon or Adeimantus don't occasionally show flashes of real impatience and even humorous irony in the presence of Socrates. But the overall tone of the rest of the *Republic* is closer to an closely managed classroom than it is to a free-wheeling conversation. That makes a certain sense given how much of the rest of the dialogue worries the particular question of education and how much of the body of social and political thought that it develops is lensed through the question of education. The shift is important: in it, we are shown how the nature of the discussion changes with those who are participating in it.

Glaucon will act as the curious pupil going forward, but that doesn't prevent him from leading the way in these opening exchanges. For one thing, he won't let Thrasymachus's decision to give up stop the conversation, far from it. Choose, Socrates, he says, *do you want truly to convince us that it is better in every way to be just than unjust* or do you want it only to *appear* that you have done so? Glaucon knows how to grab Socrates' attention. Socrates is open to being goaded, just as other characters, like Thrasymachus, are. Glaucon is being his usual *bold* self, as Socrates notes. Glaucon goes so far as to suggest that it was Socrates who was acting as a kind of sophist, not Thrasymachus, inasmuch as it was Socrates who cast a spell, *as by a snake charmer* (358b). Glaucon says this about Socrates from a good place, i.e., playfully, but we can't help but remember that the real Socrates will eventually be described–twenty years later--in the same terms from a bad place, i.e., by authorities looking for an excuse to silence him, wipe out his "charms," and in particular stop him from charming youth, catching their ear before the weight of tradition has captured them. Glaucon helpfully suggests that everyone proceed first by thinking about the good of a particular thing as a way to clarify what's good about justice. And he notes that there are several different ways of thinking of the good of something:

–something we value for its own sake;
--something we value both for its own sake and for the good that comes of it;
--things that are good because of their consequences.

Justice, Socrates says, falls into the second category: it is welcomed *both for itself and for what comes of it* (358a). Interestingly, Glaucon ignores Socrates' suggestion here and instead says that he wants to hear about *what power* [justice] . . . *has all alone by itself when it is in the soul–dismissing its wages and its consequences* (358c). In other words, Glaucon wants to know what justice is in and of itself, and thus what it might mean to be just for the sake of being just as such, i.e., to do good and to act in the name of good without any regard whatsoever for how it

might benefit oneself and even without regard for whether it is effective or not in the world or whether it makes for a happy or unhappy life. In other words, to do good and to do justice without letting the fear that it might not make a difference get in the way of doing it, i.e., to do good and to do justice without saying to oneself: "what difference can I possibly make, I am only one person, perhaps I won't do anything at all." Or: "so far as I can see, the unjust are happy and those who pursue justice are unhappy or at least less happy, so why be just?"

There is a very great deal piled into these claims, which goes to the heart of a debate about justice that is still unfolding today. Socrates here embraces two very different conceptions of justice that each has their own history and trajectory:

a) Is being truly good a matter of doing the right thing because it is the right thing and only because it is the right thing?

b) Or is being truly good a matter of doing the things that have the best consequences? Is true goodness measured by good actions producing good consequences or is it good, truly good, because it is good? Socrates observes that goodness will often be a mixture of both things, but on this point a philosopher like Immanuel Kant would strongly disagree. As Kant often pointed out, if we rely on our actions and the consequences of our actions to determine whether we are being good, we can't escape the possibility that we are doing the things we do to shore up our reputation, either with others or with ourselves. Let's say I find $500 on the ground and return it to its owner. (That happened to me just last year.) Did I do that because it was the right thing to do . . . or because by doing it, I get to pat myself on the back and to tell myself that I was a good person, i.e., I shored up my reputation with myself and with others, you, for example, as you read this little story or allegory in which I pass myself off as a kind of moral hero? What matters, Kant insists, is a "good will" rather than a "good action." Good actions are great, to be sure, but they are greatest when a good will, indifferent to a good reputation, is behind them. Cephalus is among several people in the *Republic* for whom securing one's reputation with others, including the gods, is centrally important to living a good life. The much more difficult model of justice is one that is indifferent to reputation. But are there ever truly selfless acts, I wonder? I would like to believe so, but Plato's dialogue makes me question whether such a thing ever happens and whether it only *appears* to happen. Can you think of acts that both are and seem

to be good and only good?

Glaucon begins by pointing out that justice is one of those things not to be found in nature. That too is a claim that survives to this day, i.e., that outside the human world, i.e., in the natural world, there is only a universe of sheer chaotic lawlessness: "the law of the jungle" and "the survival of the fittest" are two ways in which even today we describe a world without justice. You wouldn't say, for example, that the hurricanes and fires ravaged the U.S. this fall are unjust since a deadly storm or fire isn't part of a world of justice or injustice. (On the other hand, how human beings handle such storms and fires is open to an analysis keyed by the question of justice. Think of Hurricane Katrina, which destroyed New Orleans. The storm itself wasn't unjust. But the manifestly unfair way in which its poor, Black population was treated in the aftermath of the storm is a matter of justice and injustice. A natural disaster became a human disaster. And consider this: if deadly weather events are themselves neither just nor unjust, what about the possibility that those events are the result of careless and selfish environmental degradation? If human beings are responsible for climate change and if climate change is responsible for deadly weather events, then those events necessarily get caught up in the question of justice. Consider, for example, how certain populations of the world, often desperately poor, while also, relatively speaking, very low producers of carbon, are disproportionately vulnerable to climate change.) The notion that humans–certain humans--are destined to "improve" an otherwise "primitive" and "lawless" world has rationalized the merciless exploitation of vast parts of the globe, those parts that, for example, Europeans arbitrarily treated as lawless realms in "need" of the "civilizing" touch of the law. Lands said arbitrarily to be lawless are then claimed to be in dire need of lawfulness, European lawfulness in particular, no matter what the cost. --Or so the colonial argument goes. As Socrates observes, human beings craft the *laws and compacts* that they do with an eye to lifting themselves out of the unjust or justice-less world of nature, where anything goes (359a). (We will see John Locke wrestle with this question: are we naturally just, or is justice something that becomes important only when human beings move from a state of nature to a state of culture? Locke says that in the state of nature, before human beings formed communities, there was still a form of morality, an understanding of what it meant to be good. Using his language, once upon a time, "all the world was America.") According to this model, human beings don't embrace justice for its own good, i.e., because it is the right thing to do. Instead, we form a lawful world, for example, a city ruled by laws, for reasons of sheer

expediency, mostly as a way to throttle back the destructive tendencies seemingly hard-wired into human beings because of our "animal" origins, each person seeking to meet their own interests and to satisfy their own needs. Like domesticated cats, we are wild at heart, and require the discipline of lawfulness to prevent us from slipping back into the feral state of nature from which we long ago emerged. That's an ignoble theory of social and political existence that will have a quite extraordinary life on this planet, lasting thousands of years, in fact, and is something we will see again in this course. As Glaucon points out, making himself sound like Thrasymachus, human beings wrong each other if it suits their interests and do everything they can to escape being wronged by others. (Study hint: closely review that passage. Prepare yourselves to discuss it.) Experiencing both drives human beings towards creating a lawful world, a regulated world, in which some sort of rational framework is imposed upon the chaos of exploiting others and being exploited by others. Justice, it seems to Glaucon, emerges from a lawless origin, and specifically out of people's experiences with having wrong done to them and doing wrong to others. Justice is essentially about mitigating social aggression and violence; it is nothing less and nothing more than the framework of laws, codes and regulations that compel us to stop hurting others and being hurt by others. But in such an instrumental and administrative theory and practice of justice, where is goodness?

Glaucon then returns to Thrasymachus's claim that justice is only for the weaker, a kind of illusion that the weak hide behind. He makes the point by telling a tale, a tactic that Socrates sometimes embraces (think of the extravagant Allegory of the Cave, or the completely made-up Egyptian story of Thamus and Theuth and the gift of writing with which Socrates concludes the dialogue called the *Phaedrus*) and sometimes rejects (think of his allergy to different sorts of stories told in the Greek wisdom literature). Glaucon's tale is the story of the Ring of Gyges (starting at 359c). The story? A shepherd (the self-interested creature Thrasymachus has just spoken so crudely about earlier as interested only in himself, not his flock) finds a magical ring that gives him the power of invisibility. He uses the ring to seduce the king's wife and to murder the king and take over the kingdom. Glaucon's point is that it wouldn't matter if you gave the ring to a just person and an unjust person; *both* would be seduced by its powers. Both kinds of people would do unjust things if they were given the opportunity to do those things unseen and with impunity. For Glaucon, the story supports his notion that justice is never something one does for its own sake or voluntarily, but only under compulsion. Without that law or compulsion in

place, without being observed and judged and limited by others, you and I, he suggests, would do just about anything . . . including committing adultery and murder. Glaucon also suggests that justice is more of a reputational phenomenon than anything substantial or even real: justice is mostly about being *seen* to be just rather than actually doing justice; it is a matter of securing the *reputation* for justice rather than actually being just, appearance rather than reality. (In the subsequent "Allegory of the Cave," Socrates will put a great deal of emphasis on the importance of turning from mere shadowy appearances to the bright light of things as they actually are.) Glaucon contrasts the fate of people who are unjust but *seem* to be just to those who are just but end up being characterized as unjust (361b). In doing so, he presciently anticipates the future life and death of Socrates, the mightily just man with a reputation for violating the city's laws, i.e. for being unjust. But the difference in Socrates' life is instructive: when asked this very question by his worried friends, when asked if it wouldn't have been better to lie and save his reputation, he says unequivocally *no*. Socrates is strangely indifferent to reputation and that is partly what makes him a terrible threat in a culture that puts so much emphasis on it.

(A question: in what ways does Glaucon's story speak to the phenomenon of internet bullying and trolling? Is the anonymity that the internet offers a 21st-century version of moral of the story of the Ring of Gyges, i.e., that unseen and unobserved, individuals feel free to behave in all sorts of unjust ways? Or consider something sorrowful and disturbing that I encounter each year in each of my courses, namely, a student who plagiarizes his or her work: are plagiarists students who wouldn't dare act unjustly in the open but who, believing that they can steal an other's work undetected, i.e., that they have the Ring of Gyges on, go ahead and act unjustly?)

Glaucon asks Socrates to imagine a scene of dreadful torture in which the just man comes to the realization, if it is a realization, that it is better to seem or appear to be just and escape torture than actually to be just and endure it: a just man *will be whipped; he'll be racked; he'll be bound; he'll have both eyes burned out; and at the end, when he has undergone every sort of evil, he'll be crucified and know that one shouldn't wish to be, but <u>to seem to be</u>, just* (361e). The burden of being just and doing justice can be enormous. Who on earth is willing to carry it? In classical antiquity, as today, torture does not yield the truth, only its appearance. Contrast the happy picture that Glaucon then paints of the person who lives primarily to secure the reputation of justice rather than actually being just: *He rules in the city because he seems to be just. Then he*

takes in marriage from whatever station he wants and gives in marriage to whom he wants; he contracts and has partnerships with whomever he wants, and, because benefiting himself in all this, he gains because he has no qualms about doing injustice. So then, when he enters contests . . . he wins and gets the better of his enemies. In getting the better, he is wealthy and does good to friends and harm to his enemies . . . Thus, they say, Socrates, with gods and with humans, a better life is provided for the unjust man than for the just man (362b). In other words, *Greed is good*. At the conclusion of Glaucon's extended lesson, you can be forgiven for believing that that is what he actually believes about justice and injustice. But it is all a performance, one designed as a prompt to thought for Socrates.

Socrates responds by admitting or at least *saying* that he is admitting to a kind of incompetence now: what Glaucon has said *is already enough to bring me to my knees and make it impossible to help out justice* (362d). We don't often see Socrates's so visibly affected by what others say, so it is important to mark where that sort of thing happens. Why is Glaucon's argument so disturbing to Socrates, I wonder? Why is this particular claim the one that stops him, body and soul? Socrates is struck by how *convincing* Glaucon has been, how, for an extended period of time, he has held the floor, making a strong case for injustice even though he doesn't believe it. Hearing Glaucon speak so eloquently has exactly the effect that Glaucon wanted, namely, to activate Socrates and to nudge him to speak more about justice, to come to "the help of justice." Coming to "the help of justice" is, recall, Socrates declared goal in life. It is his calling, his reason for being on the planet at all. At this precise point, as Socrates staggers under the weight of Glaucon's remarks, Glaucon's brother, Adeimantus, who has been conspicuously quiet so far, suddenly speaks up. Why, now? Like his brother, he considers the argument that appearing to be just is what one needs to thrive in this bad world and in the world to come. Fathers teach this wisdom to their sons (*Fathers say to their sons*, he says [362e]), after all, reminding us that for Plato education and miseducation takes place outside the classroom and between not only generations but between men: they say, he says, that *one must be just . . . they do not praise justice by itself but the good reputations that come from it; they exhort their charges to be just so that, as a result of the opinion, ruling offices and marriages will come to the one who seems to be just, and all the other things that Glaucon a moment ago attributed to the just man as a result of his having a good reputation* (362e). This is the lesson of fathers–in a culture in which the word for "father" can sometimes be the same word for "truth," i.e, *logos.* The idea that *appearing*

to be just is better than actually being just is the lesson of the land of the fathers. The gods, Adeimantus points out, can be appeased with the right amount and the right kind of sacrificial offerings, i.e., with the appearance of piety or devotion; and after all they are often mistaken or careless. Sometimes they affirm the lives of unjust men and *allot misfortune and a bad life to many good men too* (364b). In the land of the fathers, in the father land, father's teach their sons that faking it is how to make it. (Here we should recall Socrates' denunciation--in Books II and III of the *Republic*--of Greek stories of gods who are capricious; those stories have no place in the education of the guardians, he insists.) Consider *the young men*, he says (364a), and think about what it means for young people to grow up in such an environment, immersed in a world in which they are taught such things. It's an important question for the *Republic*, which indeed turns to the education of youth, and to the relationship between justice and schooling understood in the broadest, social sense of the term. You might recall how I pointed out how the question of justice and the question of what it means to teach and to learn are closely intertwined and will be so throughout the course. Socrates will soon outline what could be called a counter-pedagogy, an education designed specifically to resist the broader social education the privileged youth of Athens currently experience, imbibing the received "wisdom" about reputational justice rather than, as Adeimantus himself admits, actively considering "justice itself." In the background, Plato's readers know that the "real" Socrates will be executed for the crime of corrupting youth, youth which Adeimantus candidly suggests are already corrupted by those citizens Socrates resists. Seen in this light, Socrates' crime is not corrupting youth but, quite the opposite, trying to protect them from corruption, the corruption of their fathers and of a patriarchal culture that gives enormous credence to paternalism. It's an important question, important enough that both Adeimantus and Socrates grasp it right away--namely the extraordinary degree to which human beings are formed and deformed by their social environments. It is conversations like this one that, as it were, lay the ground work for social and political thought about education and political justice that extend right through to the present day. In the late 18th century, Mary Wollstonecraft (whose work we consider in Term 1) will try to convince British citizens that women are badly schooled by their social environments (they are prevented from having formal schooling, but that doesn't keep them from being forcefully and unjustly "schooled," i.e., socialized, into certain kinds of beings) to become who they are . . . and that they should be schooled entirely differently, not as "emotional" creatures best confined to the home but as rational agents fully involved in the political life of the nation at the very moment in history when the nation-state as we understand

the term is coming into existence. That emphasis on education and political justice continues here at McMaster, where, for example, Dr. Henry Giroux has staked his entire research career on the pointed analysis of the deleterious effects of certain kinds of education (for example, the enormous push to transform us into thoughtless consumers focussing on private fears rather than shared aspirations) and the affirmation of pedagogies designed to affirm social justice.

(A query: Adeimantus raises an intriguing point for us to consider. To what extent are you and I schooled into embracing *appearances* rather than struggling with reality? To what extent are we spell-bound adopting the *appearance* of being the good student, the good daughter or son, the good worker, the good parent? To what extend are we instructed to act our or "play" these scripted roles that are designed to smooth life out, and make others happy? For Socrates, that sort of life, which is made to feel common-sensically right and good, is fundamentally unjust.)

Adeimantus presses his case: *Then, by what further argument could we choose justice before the greatest injustice? For, if we possess it with a counterfeited seemly exterior, we'll fare as we are minded with gods and human beings both while we are living and when we are dead, so goes the speech of both the many and the eminent* (365b). If "the many" and "the eminent" teach us to be unjust but secure for ourselves "a reputation for justice," then who can say otherwise? The authorized lessons feel numerous, weighty, and compelling. If so many say something is true and if those in authority say it is true, then who am I to dissent? Socrates appears to be momentarily stymied by this line of argument. And yet he feels compelled to defend justice, even if he lacks the language to do so: *For I'm afraid it might be impious to be here when justice is being spoken badly of and give up and not bring help while I am still breathing and able to make a sound. So the best thing is to succour her* [i.e., to support and shelter and protect justice] *as I am able* (368b). Note how Socrates refers to justice metaphorically as female. He more often tells us in different places and in different ways that he is suspicious of the seductive effects of mythical, allegorical, and metaphorical language, language that resorts to fanciful comparisons and attractive analogies. Metaphors and stories threaten to contaminate the true Athenian's struggle to become wise and just; they thus threaten the formation of a just and wise city-state. (Where does Plato make that case? Zero in on a few precise examples as a way to consolidate your knowledge of the text and to prepare for your midterm and final examination.) But here is an example of Socrates resorting effortlessly to an analogy: justice is comparable to a

woman. She deserves respect and support. I will do this until my last breath, Socrates is saying, no matter what others say or do. Why does he do this? To what effect?

Now, it's hard not to wince reading Socrates's words for Athenians know that the real Socrates will be found guilty precisely of impiety . . . albeit not the impiety that he fears here. As long as he lives, Socrates declares, he will remain devoted to the question of justice, obliged by the task of offering her protection and succour. So justice is closely linked to the drive, as intimately a part of a person as their own breathing, to do justice to justice, to teach her, defend her, and to come to her assistance. –And to encourage others to join you in coming to her assistance. In Book IV, prompted by Glaucon, Socrates acknowledges that he is pledged or promised to help justice while also pointing out that *you too have to join in* (427e). The suggestion is that in this world, justice is never assured and in any case requires the supplement of human help to make it happen at all. It's fine to speak of the Form of the Good, as Socrates certainly can, i.e., to affirm the permanent and dazzling idea of justice in the abstract, but here on Earth, amid all the darknesses, that idea needs assistance and assistance from those deeply committed to the task–so committed that they are willing to stake their life on it. So Socrates begins–again–by praising the two men with whom he is in conversation. He tells us that he *had always been full of wonder at the nature of Glaucon and Adeimantus* (367e). He quotes some poetry of praise that Glaucon's lover had once written to him, in effect inhabiting the position of that lover to demonstrate that almost erotically charged admiration. Something interesting is going on here among the sexes: Socrates proclaims his love of (female) Justice; Glaucon's (male) lover declares his love for him; and Socrates declares his admiration for Glaucon using exactly the same words that Glaucon's lover uses to declare his love for him. How then to come at the problem anew? Socrates solution is to investigate the question of justice by considering the *polis* or city-state as a whole in the hopes that this will cast light on individuals and justice. Political justice and individual justice are consistently linked in the *Republic*, reminding us that in the world of classical Athens it was impossible not to think of these two spheres together. Socrates speaks as if scaling up the question will make justice more easily legible but his tactic also reflects a Greek sense that the good life is not only an individual matter but also a social question; among the literate Athenian elite, the personal *is* the political and the political *is* the personal, hence the ease with which Socrates moves from discussing individuals and the city-state: *If you want, first we'll investigate what justice is like in the cities. Then, we'll also go on to consider it in*

individuals, consider the likeness of the bigger in the idea of the littler (369a). Here, for all intents and purposes, Socrates lays out the plan of the rest of the *Republic*. And he reminds us that, notwithstanding the many intriguing and suggestive things he will go on to say about the just and unjust city, in the end his remarks about the *polis* are a means by which to explore the practice of justice and injustice in the individual soul. From this point going forward, the dialogue is *watching the coming into being of a city* *in speech*, as Socrates says (369a). That's an important opening description because it underlines for us that *Kallipolis*, the name that Socrates will give the just city, is entirely woven out of the fabric of the philosopher's thoughts and words, i.e., "speech." It is, in other words, not a political blueprint or plan but something much more notional and experimental, an ephemeral subject of discussion that evaporates as spoken words vanish into thin air. Throughout the rest of this long text, most of the discussion will revolve in implicit or explicit ways around the relationship between the soul and the city, the individual citizen and the community as a whole. Questions that remain centrally important to social and political life are born here: Does the character or make-up or constitution of an individual shape the community of which that individual is a part? Or do the institutions of the community or *polis* shape the individual?

Socrates asks his interlocutors to consider the origin of municipal existence. It may have been remarks that Glaucon made earlier in the dialogue that prompt Socrates to shift gears this way–Glaucon seems to have that stimulating effect on Socrates. Earlier in Book 2, Glaucon suggests that what we call "justice" is in fact the various laws and rules that fundamentally unjust people consent to in order to agree not to be unjust or overly unjust with each other (358e-359a). Socrates is a bit more hopeful and affirming. In the beginning and from the beginning, he suggests, human beings completely rely upon each other: *each of us isn't self-sufficient but is in need of much* (369b). To thrive, we depend on each other to meet our basic requirements for life, clothes, shelter, and food. That's a significant point to be making, i.e., that we are from the beginning *social, dependent, and interdependent* creatures, not isolated and self-sufficient individuals who happen, after the fact, to form communities. We are communal from the origin, never entirely self-sufficient or self-made, but instead thrive because we are part of a larger social fabric .(But in this course we will consider social and political theories that argue that the ideal human being is autonomous, self-sufficient, and self-reliant; and that government is there basically to protect the life and property of those sorts of human beings.) Massed in communities, Socrates

observes, different people are dedicated to perfecting their individual tasks, all contributing to the interdependent life of the *polis*. It's true, Socrates tends strongly to treat the interdependent life as primarily commercial in nature, but in the background is what will one day come to be called "an ethics of care," i.e. a theory of justice that treats the practice of mutual support as a central political virtue. As an experiment in thought, Socrates imagines a relatively simple city, supplying itself with what it needs and little more, and where it cannot supply itself, relying on other cities which have labour and goods to sell. The picture is a highly idealized one–a perfectly harmonious and peaceable city, producing and consuming just enough, a city devoid of extravagances, without consumption for the sake of consumption, a city without financial speculation: . . . *And when they have built houses, they will work in the summer, for the most part naked and without shoes, and in the winter adequately clothed and shod. For food they will prepare barley meal and wheat flour; the will cook it and knead it. . . Afterwards they will drink wine and, crowned with wreathes, sing of the gods. So they will have sweet intercourse with one another, and not produce children beyond their means, keeping an eye out against poverty and war* (372b). One of the things to consider about this idyllic, peaceful, low-consumption city is that it is appears to be vegan. (Study hint: if you were to discuss this ideal city in, say, a midterm, I'd be looking for your ability to point quickly to at least four specific characteristics of the just city.) Of course, no such city has ever actually existed. Why then is human history chock full of stories and myths about such buccolic, happy, and harmonious places and times? It's a very powerful dream. Why does it have such a hold on social and political thought and life? In case we haven't noticed how dreamy his account it is, Glaucon intervenes right away and breaks the spell by declaring Socrates's ideal city to be, in fact, nothing more than *a city of sows*, meaning that the city he has just described relegates human beings to the status of "dumb" animals who want nothing more than their basic needs met and have no ambition or interest in anything more. In his earthy terms, it is a city whose feasts are *without relishes*. (Side note: In the millennia following the *Republic*, European colonial powers will treat indigenous communities as the equivalent of cities of pigs, i.e. as collectivities that are on the surface idyllically happy . . . but finally inert, stupid, and non-human because lacking the determination and the ferocious, unquenchable acquisitive spirit that Europeans proudly imagine themselves to possess and that gives them a right to the world. –A very dangerous and completely unjust idea.) Glaucon suggests that a life without surplus or ornament, a life composed entirely of needs and without wants, a city of *mere necessities* (373a), might be a happy life but it is not a truly human life: hence a city of sows, of non-human animals.

Socrates immediately takes Glaucon's point, indeed, so quickly that we realize that Socrates knew all along that his perfect city was a mere fantasy. If we are to think of the city and to consider how injustice and justice play out in a city, it cannot be the city of pigs, but *a luxurious city* (372e). And yet a part of Socrates also hangs on to the fantasy, going so far as to suggest that for all its unreal qualities it is still *the true city . . . the healthy* city (372e). This city may in fact be the model for what Socrates has named a moment earlier the *rightly governed* city (371c). Perhaps he does so because the *luxurious city* is impossible to understand except in contrast to the ideal city. What does this *luxurious city* look and feel like? It is first of all *feverish*, i.e., ill or unwell, meaning that its various parts are somehow out of order. Living simply *won't satisfy some . . . couches, tables, and other furniture will be added, and of course, relishes, perfume, incense, courtesans and cakes–all sorts of them . . . . Painting and embroidery must also be set in motion; and gold, ivory, and everything of the sort must be obtained* (373a). One telling symptom of this particular city is that it features the consumption of meat (*fatted beasts* [373c]), a transformation that Socrates seems to associate with a *much greater need of doctors* (373d). Socrates then goes on to list all the other things this *feverish city* requires: poets, dancers, tutors, wet nurses, beauty parlours, chefs, and, as I've said, more physicians. Socrates' very language, the curious pell-mell list of the contents of the city, is itself cumulative and a bit feverish. We are given to understand that the list could go on and on, for there is potentially no limit to what goes into a city that exists primarily for the sake of accumulating and consuming stuff. Still, it is interesting to consider why, off the top if his head, Socrates calls for these particular luxuries. What story do they tell, I wonder? Note too how, in neither the City of Pigs or in the luxurious city does Socrates says anything about the presence of slaves or slave-labour. We will see this revealing elision, this telling blanking-out of slave labour again in this course–in, for example, Locke, who avoids the question. Wollstonecraft will remind late 18th-century Britons who would rather not think about the fundamental role of slavery in the growth if British global economic and political power that the sugar on their tables is soaked in the blood of slaves.

Notice how, immediately, Socrates says, this city is a warring *polis*, for it must conquer neighbouring lands to meet its insatiable appetites. And other, similar cities will have the same warring designs on this city. With war and the prospect of inevitable war (But why is war inevitable? Socrates proceeds here without questioning why war and the city emerge together.) comes the need for standing armies–albeit armies composed of selected individuals that Socrates

calls, for the first time, *guardians*. The guardians are special. The must be *high-spirited*, meaning *fearless*, unafraid of giving up their own lives for the protection of the city from cities that closely so resemble the voraciously acquisitive city they defend (375b). The guardians or soldiers demonstrate a strong indifference to their own lives that is as remarkable as their unwavering concern for the life of the city. As the great Plato scholar (and politically conservative thinker), Allan Bloom says, "The City may exist for the sake of life, but it needs men willing to die for it" (*The Republic of Plato* 348). *Spiritedness* (or, in Greek, *thymos*, pronounced "thoomos") is for Socrates perhaps the most significant part of the constitution or psychological makeup of individuals (and thus of the cities in which those individuals live and die). It is the force inside of each of us that for Socrates calls for constant negotiation, constant moderation and control. *Spiritedness* is different from *appetite*, which is the base desires for food and shelter and sex, for example. It is a higher order form of desire, the source of courage on the battlefield and "heart" in our lives, but it is also the source of less savoury qualities–the desire for honour and public recognition, for example, and thus also for domination over others. Socrates cannot imagine a human being without this energy or "heart" thrumming in them, but he does insist that the just soul is the soul in which spiritedness is tamed and moderated by the rational part of ourselves rather than given free reign or allowed to dominate the other faculties of rationality and appetite.

The guardians are tasked to protect the city and to protect it they must be able to discriminate clearly and decisively between the friend and the enemy, bringing violence to the enemy while being kindly to friends, allies, and fellow citizens. Right away Socrates notes how important it is that the guardians never turn their weapons on their own city. Even to raise the question is to acknowledge that there is, strictly speaking, no certain way to prevent this kind of auto-immune disorder from taking place and that what was once a friend–i.e., one's own people--could in fact turn out to be an enemy and so be subject to attack. Socrates says this must never happen but the fact that he feels the need to say it means that it is a threatening possibility. And after all, Plato's contemporaries knew first hand how Athenians could turn on themselves. (The great Italian political theorist, Roberto Esposito, argues that political life has always been founded on a worry about auto-immune violence, i.e., a concern about how to ward it off, how to make sure it doesn't happen, how to establish laws and practices that defend a city from its "internal" enemies.) If you arm part of the populace, there will always be the possibility that the city will end up preying on itself. Socrates treats this kind of auto-immune disorder as a rarity here, but later in

the *Republic*, in a section for which you are not responsible, when he describes the five kinds of cities that exist, almost all of them fall victim to civil strife. The possibility of mistaking one's own for one's enemy raises the stakes, making the power of making wise judgments about who the enemy is and who the friend is of tantamount importance. This competence, Socrates says, is something that we see naturally occurring in dogs: *it's a thing in the beast worthy of our wonder* (376a). Like the guardians, dogs are *truly philosophic*, i.e., wisdom-loving, *philo + sophia* (376b). It is a strange analogy for Socrates to make, comparing the guardians to animals. The city of sows is now replaced by a city protected by dogs. Socrates is being his usual ironic self here, couching an important point in self-deprecating and foolish sounding humour. Look, Glaucon, he in effect says, we're a city of animals after all . . . but what an animal, dogs, the creature who in fact evolved co-dependently with human beings and has been with human beings as long as there have been human beings on the planet. Dogs, he points out, growl at strangers even if they have not done the dog harm; and they protect familiars, even if they have been mistreated by them. Somehow they–dogs–"know" what is what in the world, selflessly ascertaining who are friends and who are enemies while also setting aside "personal" factors (i.e., whether the friend mistreats them, or whether the enemy does not).

How on earth to ensure that the soldiers behave in this discriminating and intelligent way, how to teach them to be this creature that combines spiritedness with wisdom? The education of the guardians preoccupies everyone for the rest of Book 2 (and, indeed, Book 3)–so, clearly it is a big concern and worry for Socrates. What is interesting is how Socrates focusses on the education specifically of the guardians but in a way that often suggests that he is speaking of the education of all citizens, with the guardians being the example at hand because of their mission-critical status in the *polis*. The emphasis on education is quite extraordinary in the *Republic*. As many Plato scholars point out, very little else stands in the way of injustice, since this isn't a city in which there are either human rights or a legislature that balances and mutes the power of the executive. There is no working police force. And the soldiers are specifically forbidden from attacking the city. So in that context education is the key to making sure that the city is administered justly. And, more radically, whatever one thinks of the actual education that Socrates maps out, his overall emphasis on teaching and learning puts to us that human beings are in fact educable, i.e., that they are not inherently and only unjust and that, under the right circumstances, they can transform, they can turn their eyes and their bodies towards the sunlight of the Good. As Socrates

points out, the goal is to nurture citizens who, once they are *old enough for rational thought* will see the *noble and good . . . because of its familiarity* (as Socrates says in Book Three). In speaking at length about the education and mis-education of citizens, Socrates puts unusual emphasis on the social settings in which we live. But he is also a thinker who insists that citizens contain certain noble and ethical strengths that are either dormant or overcome by our bad schooling but that another, different schooling can, in theory, reactivate. In this sense, learning resembles remembering in Plato's work; the Socratic dialogue is a process of activating in others what they in fact already know (but have forgotten). We are born with the capacity for goodness but require supplementary assistance to return us to that capacity. Socrates will return us to this principle of education later, in Book 7 and the Allegory of the Cave, when he points out that true education, the education of the soul, is not a matter of giving sight to someone who is blind; it is instead closer to nudging eyes that already have the ability to see *from* the darkness towards the light of the sun, away from the misleading world of surface appearances *to the sight of what is*, or what he calls *the Good* (518d). So the question at hand is this: do we bring something noble into this life? Are we "naturally" good creatures, or are we "naturally" wretched creatures, "crooked timber," as Kant famously says in 1784, "from which nothing straight can ever be fashioned"? Is Socrates an idealist about human beings, affirming our perfectibility, or is he a skeptic, deeply wary of any notion that we can be perfected? Or are we a blank slate upon which goodness and badness can be written? The Marxist thinker, Michael Hardt, for example, dismisses the notion that we are naturally anything, neither good nor bad. We learn how to be just or unjust in a culture that educates and miseducates us. A great deal of the history of social and political thought worries these questions, and worries them in part because Plato said they were important enough to warrant close and sustained attention.

--Learning as a special form of remembrance, of recalling or "turning" us back to the goodness that we already know and a relation with things as they actually are that we already have. Herein in lies a certain hopefulness in Plato's work (for if there is a goodness to which to "turn" and thus "re-turn," and a relation to things as they actually are, as he suggests in the Allegory of the Cave, then all of the different expressions and examples of injustice that fill up so many of the pages of the *Republic* do not have free reign over human life but must instead always contend with something that is wholly resistant to injustice and that is there resisting injustice from the start. As the great American historian of Judaism, Yosef Yerushalmi, once wrote, "The

opposite of forgetting is not remembering, but justice."

The education of the guardians falls into two categories, *a training in the arts,* attending to the soul or mind, and an education attending to the body (376e). The education in the arts comes first, an education involving literature, music, and history, among other kinds of knowledge and practices of knowing. Socrates turns to literature because he is living in an age in which literature was the chief source of a certain kind of traditional religious and moral wisdom. (Indeed, the ancient Greeks didn't in fact have a conception of literature they way we do today, since the great poems and plays and sculptures of their civilization where not treated as beautiful objects but instead as sources of instruction, as mirrors in which, for example, Athenians saw or thought they saw their most aspirational selves.) And Socrates doesn't hesitate to denounce a very great deal of that inherited body of work, revered by some, but, by the time Plato is writing, now mostly a storehouse of cliches and conventions to which people paid lip-service. His attack on literature happens, in other words, at an auspicious time in Greek antiquity, when a lot of what passes for wisdom looks and feels a bit exhausted, but without anything being offered up to replace it. Socrates rapidly points out what for him are the problems with Greek literature. For example, it brims with stories that misconstrue the lives and actions of the gods, making them out to be malicious, quarrelous, capricious and changeful. He objects in particular to stories–even stories with the authority of Homer behind them--that make human life seem like it is at best a game of chance at the hands of Zeus (379d), a story that not only reflects badly on the gods but also on human life, since it effectively frees us from taking responsibility for being just or unjust. (Study hint: circle back to these pages in the dialogue. Describe three particular examples of in Book 2–and in Book 3, if you are curious!--that Socrates finds reprehensible and explain what it is about them specifically that worries him.) As Socrates points out, telling these sorts of stories to children risks leading youth to believe that committing violent crimes is doing anything out of the ordinary. That is to say, narratives featuring unchecked aggression effectively risk desensitizing those who are exposed to those narratives, an argument that we sometimes see today regarding violent video-games and forms of pornography. You also see this argument at work in photography studies, where some scholars argue that globally circulated images of atrocities desensitize viewers in another way, i.e. by giving us the opportunities to be mere spectators of violence, watching it from afar, rather than transforming us into active agents involved in the struggle to mitigate violence and to do justice to those who suffer violence. What

is important here is not only the specific sorts of things that Socrates zeroes in on but also the larger point that Greek wisdom literature has for Socrates mostly exhausted itself. In some sense, Plato is counting on his readers to recognize that open secret about literature. The time is ripe to replace the gods, who can often be untrustworthy and murderous, quite oblivious to justice, with the Ideas, especially the Idea of the Good and the Idea of Justice. The time has come to replace conventional wisdom with actual wisdom, mechanically observed pieties and offerings with a love of thinking. The question Socrates asks is, in effect, who is up to that difficult project? But he might just as easily ask, given the enormously high stakes involved, who can afford not to try? Directly <u>against</u> Athenian wisdom and custom and practice, Socrates calls for the jettisoning of the arts–music and poetry in particular–that he worries are unworthy of our veneration or worship. Rather than falling back mindlessly on the stories that we've inherited and that we've been asked to model ourselves on, he calls for a new direction: let us instead focus our energies, our passions, even our <u>love</u> on *sophia*, on wisdom and knowledge. Let us become more like philosophers, not in the sense of becoming members of an academic discipline called "philosophy," but in the broader sense of becoming citizens who cherish and shelter the truth and the laborious struggle to apprehend the truth. That will mean making some hard choices in our lives, beginning with letting go of our immature attachments to thoughtless things, to media "junk." Why mindlessly follow the lead of popular figures (the gods, the heroes of Greek literature) who are often money-grubbing and cruel creatures, brimming with the desire to seek vengeance and willing to desecrate the bodies of the enemy dead? It is important, he suggests, to break the spell that these enchanters have over us–although much later in the dialogue, Socrates will admit that he himself has often felt like he was enchanted too. Perhaps a love of wisdom is the new enchantment? This first step in imagining the coming into being of a just city in speech is nothing if not provocative and audacious. That is Socrates' way. Books II and III of the *Republic* can feel authoritarian, even totalitarian. Are they, though? After all, strictly speaking, Socrates is discussing the education of the warriors and in time of war, in the emergency of war, the city needs a particularly focussed and trained army of fighters who cannot afford to be distracted and whose spiritedness must be carefully regulated. But even if, as I think is the case, we are expected to consider how Socrates' lesson could be applied more broadly to all citizens, is his proposal to expel the poets and musicians totalitarian? It's an open question, but it is worth remembering that every educational system has a say in what gets taught and what does not get taught, every educational practice is one involving administration and control. Is Socrates negatively making a

case for censoring the freedom of the individual or positively making a case for ways to shield ourselves from falling prey to our desires for injustice? Today, for example, teachers and educational policy makers strive to eliminate harmful myths and lies in the classroom. Strictly speaking, there should be no room, for example, for homophobic or Islamophobic rants in the curriculum, i.e., stories that induce thoughtlessness in students and harm the Socratic soul. For Socrates the question is: Do I create a classroom devoted to justice? Or do I support a retrograde classroom, one from the so-called "good old days" ("good" for whom, exactly?), where "common-sense" and "accepted ideas" ruled, no matter how hurtful or misleading? It might help to consider that, far from being censorious, Socrates' curriculum combats the censoriousness of the old-fashioned Athenian classrooms that he inherited, the classrooms where a very narrow band of thinking was encouraged and allowed, namely a thoughtless allegiance to conventional ideas and practices. –Allegiance, as Socrates is reminded elsewhere in Book II (it will help to seek that passage out and highlight it), that is mostly about maintaining only the *appearance* of being pious and upstanding.

Now, if there are to be fictions circulating in the ideal *polis*, Socrates suggests, they should be stories that encourage nobility and goodness not as exceptions to being human but as elemental to being human. Since the education of the guardians is the specific question at hand, Socrates affirms stories that don't instill a fear of death, or unseemly emotions (excessive grief and laughter are mentioned, and immediately associated with women). Stories that honour telling the truth are also praised. Here Socrates pauses over the question of lying, and notes that among all the lies that can be told, the worst kind of lie, *the true lie*, as he says, is the lie that comes from believing wrongly about the most important things in one's life. These are the compelling lies we end up telling ourselves, or what he calls the lie that rests in the soul (382a). These lies are hated by gods and humans alike. Most of all, the education of the guardians cannot involve stories about how injustice is more profitable than justice, which returns us to the point that Adeimantus had made earlier. Lies are not ruled entirely out of bounds, however. Elsewhere, Socrates will concede that there is a special class of lying, the *noble* fiction or untruth, into which the entire city can legitimately be folded (414c). I will come back to that in a moment.

You aren't responsible for Book Three of the *Republic*, but it might be useful to consider a few features of this section of the dialogue which speak directly to the Books for which you are responsible. In Book Three Socrates asks a loaded question: which *men will rule and who will be*

ruled? (412b). Here we see Socrates sifting out of the guardians those men who will be the rulers of both the remaining guardians and all the other citizens and non-citizens of the city. The rulers require their own special educations, with very strict expectations and requirements. The guardians are the spirited defenders of the *polis* and helpers or auxiliaries of the rulers. Like the helpers, the rulers are themselves ruled by a single principle: put the interests of the *polis* ahead of all individual interests. That reorientation of social and political life is, as I've said, never without enormous risks. Committing oneself to the furthering the public good (as, for example, public universities are expected to do) is entirely laudable. But history has shown that the call to sacrifice oneself to a larger whole–the needs and interests of the "Fatherland," for example--can also lead to extraordinary violence. In any case, right away, there is an interesting tension at work in the *Republic*: on the one hand, we are asked to envision a class of governors for whom the public good is paramount; on the other hand, we are asked to imagine an elite in charge that, to say the least, feels risky because totalitarian. There's a lot to worry about here, not least because the guardians of the city are soldiers and because the rulers are gleaned from the military class. Socrates concedes as much when he expresses concern that without the right education, the guardians might turn against their own city. In a sense, the entire emphasis in the *Republic* given to the selection and education of guardians and then the rulers condensed out of the guardians is an elaborate allegory or story about the sheer challenge of the public good and those who *care more for the city than one another* (415d)–i.e., the enormous difficulty of making something larger than oneself a guiding principle in life. Part of what makes this a difficult question is how being educated into caring for the whole can cut in exactly opposite directions: on the one hand, it is good to commit oneself to public goods–education, equality, security, to name but three; on the other hand, there are lots of historical examples in which individuals are taught or coerced into sacrificing everything for the larger whole, and being branded an enemy if you dissent from that goal. Atrocities of the worst sort have been perpetrated in the name of caring more for the city, nation, or community than one another. Social and political thought could be said to revolve around this question, especially once you start to break from thinking that a *polis* is simply an aggregate of individuals seeking to satisfy their own interests and the function of the state as minimally the means to ensure that those individual interests are served. Is a city exactly the sum of its separate parts or is it more than the sum of its parts? The question Socrates asks is the question we might well be expected to ask ourselves today: Is that all there is? Is there a such a thing as a "society" or are we only living in one place, each of us seeking our own advantage with

little or no regard for anything like the public good? It's a pressing question in particular for the universities in Canada, which, as you know, are overwhelmingly *public* in kind. What is a *public* university? What relationship does it have to the public good? Are universities collections of individual students and researchers and departments, each pursuing their own goals, or do universities have a larger role to play in fostering commonalities, and in particular commonalities (justice, democracy, health, education, to name four), that are not, strictly speaking, reducible to tradeable commodities, i.e., profitable or only profitable? Margaret Thatcher, the conservative British Prime Minister in 1980s, famously said that there "was no such thing as society," i.e., that "society" was a polite fiction when the reality was that Britain was completely atomized, a gathering of individuals each seeking their own version of happiness and success. For Thatcher (and for many powerful politicians who followed her), the state is not there to protect or foster the public good but, quite to the contrary, to ensure that private interests thrive and to remind citizens that there is no such thing as the public good and no substantive need to want one. According to this model, now in fact prevalent in the West, less government is the best government, and government is finally an administrative matter. (As Kant says in *Toward Perpetual Peace*, a text we take up this term, if governance is only a question of administering others well, then "a race of devils" could easily form a very good government. But nations call for more than devilishly skill administrators, Kant insists; they call for just leaders committed to the greatest of public goods, namely peaceableness. Plato had said so two thousand years earlier.)

Socrates points out to Glaucon and Adeimantus that the city requires a founding myth, a story or a kind of fiction that accounts for its emergence and explains its structure. (That claim invites us to ask about the founding myths of our some of our own cultures, and to ask what those myths say about social and political life. Once upon a time, for example, Canadians embraced the lovely story of "us" as "peacekeepers," but that myth eventually proved impossible to sustain amid the horrors of the battlespaces of Afghanistan. Others have pointed out how Canada emerged as a nation in the midst of the Victorian era, whereas the U.S. is a child of the French Revolution: two very different mythical settings. Canadians sometimes like to tell themselves that they are a "mosaic" not a "melting pot," although it remains important to interrogate the work that these sorts of stories do, the sorts of problems and histories of colonial oppression that they obscure or ignore.) The story that Socrates tells in Book 3, for those of you who are curious, is very strange, and he playfully remarks that he doesn't know if he has the

capacity to be so *daring* (414d). As is so often the case with Socrates, vivid stories are claimed to come from somewhere elsewhere. In this case the founding myth of the Athenian Greeks comes from the Phoenicians. He admits how improbable it is and how hard it would be to persuade anyone of it. (The Phoenicians were a contemporaneous group of city states extending far to the west of Greece, centred on Carthage, located in present day Tunis, on the northern coast of Africa.) In this story, the rulers and their protecting auxiliaries and indeed the whole city will be told that their complicated education is a dream or illusion, when in fact they were *fashioned* and *reared* under the *earth*, and then brought forth into the world: of the earth, they are expected to defend the land in which they emerged and to think of their fellow citizens as their *earth-born men* (415d). This *noble lie* teaches a vivid lesson: namely, that all the people of the city, but especially the soldiers, are share the same natality. If people believe this story, then they have a kind of blood tie to the land and to each other, i.e., they are connected to the land, to the country, to the city as closely as they might be tied to their own families. –A strange story, indeed. And, it should be said, a very mixed story. On the one hand, Socrates appears here to want to make the Athenians indigenous, i.e., to identify them as native to their place in the world, and as therefore having a natural and original relationship to the region that they inhabit. This is a very powerful idea, one that, for example, can be mobilized against those who would colonize and expropriate the land and its peoples by force. Kant, for example, vilifies his fellow Europeans for going to the New World and treating the aboriginal communities there as having no significant ties to the land. Without those ties, Europeans treat these communities as if they didn't exist at all, Kant remarks. On the other hand, history has shown that a myth of the sort that Socrates is contemplating can sometimes be put to terrible purposes. Consider twentieth-century Nazism, which taught Germans that they had a unique and binding relation to the land, captured in the slogan, *Blut und Boden*, "Blood and Soil." According to that myth, Germans had a binding relation to the land and a kind of sacred right to expropriate other lands to ensure that their people thrived. In the ferocious competition of a "Blood and Soil" world, the life blood of the German people depended on the demise of all those who were deemed not to be "truly" German. And you became truly German the way an acorn grows into an oak tree. So too the various classes of Athens once they learn that they have been born of the soil upon which the city is built.

One wonders why Socrates turns to the palpably kooky myth that he does. It certainly speaks to his deeply conservative and conserving side. The myth teaches that the gods fashion all

citizens, using particular metals for each: gold for the rulers, silver for the auxiliaries, iron and bronze for the farmers and other workers. Each person therefore has a kind of predestined place in the overall structure of the city, as hard-fast and immutable as the metals of the myth. This myth may not be a "lie" at all, but what Plato, through Socrates, thought of social and political life, i.e., as naturally hierarchical, each person locked into his or her place. Racism and sexism today are arguably examples of this kind of myth–the result of those in power believing that individuals are fated to be one thing and nothing more. Or perhaps because the story is characterized as a lie, Socrates tacitly acknowledges that social and political life is never "naturally" divided and policeable in this way. The myth is an imposition *on* the people of the city, not a description of the way a city ever naturally unfolds. The fact that Socrates shows conscious concern about how on earth to effectuate this myth, make it work, says to us that it doesn't describe an already existing reality but is instead a way of shaping the social life of the city by *pretending* that this shape is natural and normal, a given. If it is a lie, it is a lie that conveniently forgets itself to be a lie. And as the German philosopher, Nietzsche says, the lie that forgets itself to be a lie eventually becomes the truth.

But without question, Socrates remains peculiarly invested in the larger notion here, namely that citizens should do the work that they are supposed to do, each perfecting his or her craft or talent. (This is not as strange an idea as you might think. Dr. Stanley Fish, a widely influential humanist scholar and professor at Yeshiva University's Cordozo School of Law in Greenwich Village in NYC, has repeatedly argued that humanities professors should teach only narrowly prescribed topics, nothing more. English professors should teach English literature, the subject for which they were trained at length, with no branching out into other disciplines or bodies of knowledge. Social and political thought is the particular body of knowledge that Dr. Fish says should be kept out of the classrooms and research of English professors. *Save the World on Your Own Time* is the revealingly prescriptive title of one of his best-selling books, a book that criticizes English professors for failing to do the job for which he says they are paid, namely, teaching literature. Anything else that they are doing, his title suggests, is worthy only of mockery. But is teaching social and political thought so easily dismissed as "saving the world"? And why is literature and literary studies imagined to be entirely separate from social and political thought? And, as my students who are also climate change activists have taught me, is "saving the world" such an ignoble thing? This, after all, may be the only world we have. Isn't it worth

saving? For Dr. Fish, English professors do an injustice to their profession and to their students by teaching social and political thought . . . the enormous assumption, one of many, here being that literary studies has nothing to do with social and political thought and that the strategies of close and carefully attentive interpretation that forms the education of English professors can't and shouldn't be brought to bear on non-literary subjects. Like many conservative commentators on university education, Dr. Fish assumes, among many other things, that students cannot think for themselves, and so are easily swayed by these trickster professors, pretending to be something that they are not. One wonders if he even teaches undergraduate students any more, since he has such a low opinion of them.) We know the depth of Socrates' commitment to this principle because he can sometimes identify justice as a matter of doing one's particular line of work well. Where does he say this in the *Republic*? What is the immediate context for making this unusually straight-forward sounding claim for a definition of justice, a "working definition" of justice, so to speak? His position sounds and is very conservative, and hardly imagines citizens doing several different sorts of work well. It is a *Paw Patrol* approach to the *polis*: each critter is a specialist in their jobs, as seen by their different hats, and together they form a compelling, happy unity and an unstoppable force for good. That's an interestingly Platonic lesson to be teaching kids across the globe.

Elsewhere in the *Republic*, though, Socrates contradicts himself, suggesting that rulers and thinkers need to take on each other's work, fusing the two forms of labour to become the "philosopher-king." And his position about each person doing their job may not only be conservative and hierarchical. One way to think of Socrates's insistence on focussing on doing well in one's work is that it is only by everyone contributing, each in their own way, to the success of the whole city that the city can thrive. Is that what recent Nobel winner (and McMaster graduate in Engineering Physics) Dr. Donna Strickland means when she says "If we all do what we're really good at, it just helps the world." In Dr. Strickland's hands, Socrates's stricture sounds much less restrictive, and instead much more affirming. Another way to think of

Socrates's interest in doing well in work is to associate it with what we would today call "professionalism." To be a member of a profession is to hold oneself to ethical standards of labour practice that put others ahead of oneself and to work according to standards that a specific profession sets for itself and is deemed to know best for itself. To work according to scrupulous standards that you and your fellow workers have set for yourselves is, in a sense, to acknowledge that you work not only for remuneration but also to practice your particular form of work justly, with justice in mind. Doctors, lawyers and teachers are each examples of professionals who set respective ethical standards for themselves and who thereby promise themselves to the needs of those they serve, or what is sometimes called "the public good." Is professionalism and the idea of being a member of a profession an idea lurking within Socrates' remarks about the respecting the division of labour in a *polis*? Sometimes his remarks seem negatively to be only about policing the *polis*; sometimes his remarks seem more positively to be about doing justice to one's work by doing it not only to be paid but also for the sake of the well-being of others.

One way to approach Socrates' seemingly very conservative notion that citizens should stick to their own jobs is to locate that notion in the context of the local framework of the *Republic*. In that framework, it is important to remember that whatever Socrates says about the organization and governance of the *polis* or city is in the final analysis an attempt to understand the organization and governance of the individual soul. So when Socrates speaks of ensuring that one part of the citizenry doesn't take on the work of another part, he is also–and perhaps mostly–speaking *metaphorically*–about problems and possibilities of the individual soul. What's finally most significant for Socrates is that the various parts of the soul work together, no single part taking on tasks of another part: the appetitive part of the soul, brimming with basic desires, shouldn't take on the position of ruling the soul, which is properly speaking the job of the rational faculty. Spiritedness shouldn't step out of its lane and trying to take the place of rationality. The revered Greek war-hero, Achilles, embodied that sort of misshapen soul, a man overcome with jealous rage and vengeful impulses, a man unable to think about anything but gaining honours and distinctions for himself while crushing his enemies. Against the prevailing common-sense wisdom of Athens, Socrates imagines creating a classroom that turns away from the example of Achilles (and other Greek war heroes), since, for him, there was something terribly wrong with the man's soul: one part of it was trying to do the job of another part. And the rational faculty shouldn't usurp the rest of the soul, attacking and trying to jettison the appetitive part, a soul that would

end up looking much less human and more like an angel (i.e., a figure who doesn't have appetites at all). Socrates puts that argument to us when he describes the proper role of the teacher–i.e., the one who might understandably want to dwell in the light of the perfect Forms, those immutable icons of the true reality, far from the heat and dust of the world, but in the end she or he is duty-bound to go back to the cave and to struggle with flesh and blood students. You can't be a teacher and live in an ivory tower, indulging in abstractions. You can't have a just soul and indulge only your rational faculty. Not and remain human. (For those of you who know Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, you might recall two problematical characters, the airy sprite named Ariel and the instinctual creature named Caliban. Neither are treated as human in the play because each demonstrates what happens when the soul is not made up of the harmonious community of faculties: Caliban is all appetite, seeking only to gratify his base desires, and so lacks rationality. Ariel, on the other hand, is all rationality, lacking appetite, but not without some spiritedness–he is resistant to his master's wishes, and restless under his stern rule, longing to escape. But we see how inhuman Ariel is when, observing the deep grief of one of the human characters in the play, he acknowledges that he cannot feel that feeling himself. As a pure, disembodied spirit, Ariel cannot grieve the death of another. Shakespeare puts to us that without experiencing loss of another, we cannot be human. In Term 2, we will discuss Judith Butler's argument that certain individuals and communities are abandoned by being treated as *ungrievable*: they are deemed not to grieve and not to be worthy of grief. That is how they are denied their humanity.)

The education of the rulers and auxiliaries involves a radical reorganization of the social order in which they live. There will be no private property, Socrates imagines; they will live and eat communally. They will thrive based on a levy that the city imposes on itself that leaves no surplus, i.e., they will consume exactly what they require, and no more. We start to see how the *city of pigs* or the *true city* returns here in the disguised form of the city within the city inhabited by the rather ascetic guardians. These citizens will have no need for gold, which is toxic to their spirited regard not for themselves but for the well-being of the *polis*. (In the background is a principle that Karl Marx will explore, namely that money is the source of self-destructive class division and the eventual collapse of anything like a truly social and political life. As Marx argues, and as we shall see on this course, money eventually causes individuals to replace genuinely *social* relationships, i.e., relationships between real people, with relationships with commodities, with the things that we buy, sell and consume–and for the majority, that means selling our labour to those

few who can afford to purchase it and to determine what that labour is worth....to them. Under the influence of what he calls "the money form," human life is eventually debased to the point that our relationship with things, including our labour, trumps our relationships with people.) If a guardian does start to accumulate possessions, he will revert to the status of a worker like a farmer . . . a transformation and class mobility which reminds us again that there is nothing natural or inborn about the division of labour in the *polis* as Socrates sometimes dreams of it.

Book Four

Adeimantus jumps into the discussion once more, frankly critical of Socrates' imaginings. What on earth would motivate rulers to rule this city if they are so scrupulously held away from the things that would make them happy? Who would actively embrace living an ascetic and restricted life like that? Compare how *others, who possess lands, and build fine big houses, and possess all the accessories that go along with these things*, he notes (419a). Others flourish, so what could it be like not to flourish? Socrates' response? –The happiness of the entire *polis* matters more than the happiness of one particular group. (Study tip: can you quote a few phrases that Socrates uses to make this point?) What's telling here is that Socrates doesn't really address Adiemantus' challenge, preferring instead to change gears. But Socrates' response is not without merit. Adeimantus misconstrues happiness itself if happiness only means satisfying one's own wants and interests; there may be forms of happiness that aren't easily described in those individualistic and consumeristic terms. For the rulers to be happy, Socrates points out, they could no longer truly be rulers: they would only appear to be rulers.

Socrates announces that the ideal city is now all but fully conjured. It is a city that embodies the cardinal virtues associated with Plato's work: wisdom, bravery or courage, moderation, and justice (427e). Socrates describes each virtue in turn, the assumption being that once we grasp the first three, the third, justice will emerge somewhat more legibly.

1) Wisdom: various labourers in the city each have knowledge or "smartness" important to their respective work or craft, but the wisdom to which Socrates is referring is a kind of social and political knowledge, a wisdom about the city *as a whole*, a wisdom that affirms the ways in which the city or *polis* is more than the sum of its parts. Recall that the *Republic* is the first

concerted attempt to formulate such a body of knowledge, i.e., a set of principles of social and political life, and is a memorable affirmation that such principles in fact can, do and should exist.

2) Courage or bravery: The soldiers need to possess this virtue to defend the city even if it means death to themselves. This virtue is closely is related to spiritedness, an elemental quality of the soul (or psyche) to which Socrates will return. Note the curious but vivid metaphor to which Socrates appeals, namely making colour-fast clothes. As a virtue, he points out, courage has a lot to do with "permanence." Courage is what allows us to be loyal to a good idea, no matter what swirls around us...in the same way that a colour-fast piece of clothing remains dyed and true to its colour, no matter how badly it is treated. Courage means not washing-out.

3) Moderation or self-discipline: unlike courage and wisdom, virtues Socrates associates with the rulers and auxiliaries, moderation is a virtue that Socrates wants to see flow throughout the city: *moderation stretches throughout the whole* (432a), he says. Moderation is immediately identified with the harmony of the parts of the *polis*. Socrates will subsequently resort to a revealing metaphor for that internal harmony: *the city with the best regime is most like . . . a human being,* i.e., most "like an organism," he says (462d). Why an *organism*? There are several reasons. An organism is perhaps the most legible and spectacular example of an entity that is always more than the sum of its parts. It is made up of parts, to be sure, but it is something in addition to those parts. It is that "something" in the *polis* that calls for a principled body of wisdom or knowledge and a principled way of living. The *organism* is an attractive metaphor too because it speaks to the importance of the harmonious integration of the various parts of a *polis*. As Plato's own student, Aristotle, will point out in his work, organisms demonstrate remarkable degrees of organization, efficiency and parsimony: according to an ancient theory of biology, no part of a living creature is superfluous, every part serving the purpose of the whole. The wonder of a life-form is that nothing is missing and nothing is extra. Socrates can and does identify justice with that harmoniously organic life: a just and good soul is a soul whose various parts work together like the parts of a living creature; a just and good city is a city whose various parts work together like the parts of a living creature. So an *organism* is a useful figure for the elemental interdependence of the city's or the soul's various parts. But there is another reason why an organism proves to be a useful metaphor for how a city is organized; anything that dissents from the harmonious integration of the organism is treated as an illness or pathogen that

unquestioningly calls for elimination or expulsion. In a *polis* modelled on an *organism*, dissenting voices are automatically treated as hurtful and destructive rather than simply and thankfully *different*--analogous to a tumour that must be excised from the body. The social and political consequences of thinking of communities in organic terms can be horribly violent and exclusive. Yet it remains a familiar metaphor or trope with which to think of communities.

4) Justice: At this point in the *Republic*, we get what really does seem like a rather impoverished notion of justice, but one that does speak to worries and hopes Socrates has shared with us. Importantly, Socrates will himself implicitly acknowledge the limitations of his own definition shortly, so we're expected to take it with a grain of salt. Justice is the agreement "to do one's own job" or *minding one's own business* (433b; the Greek has been translated both ways). To unsettle the harmony of the city by, for example, failing to do one's work is to do injustice to it. --And to destroy the integrity of the city, to mar its organic wholeness, is most *extreme evil-doing* (434b).

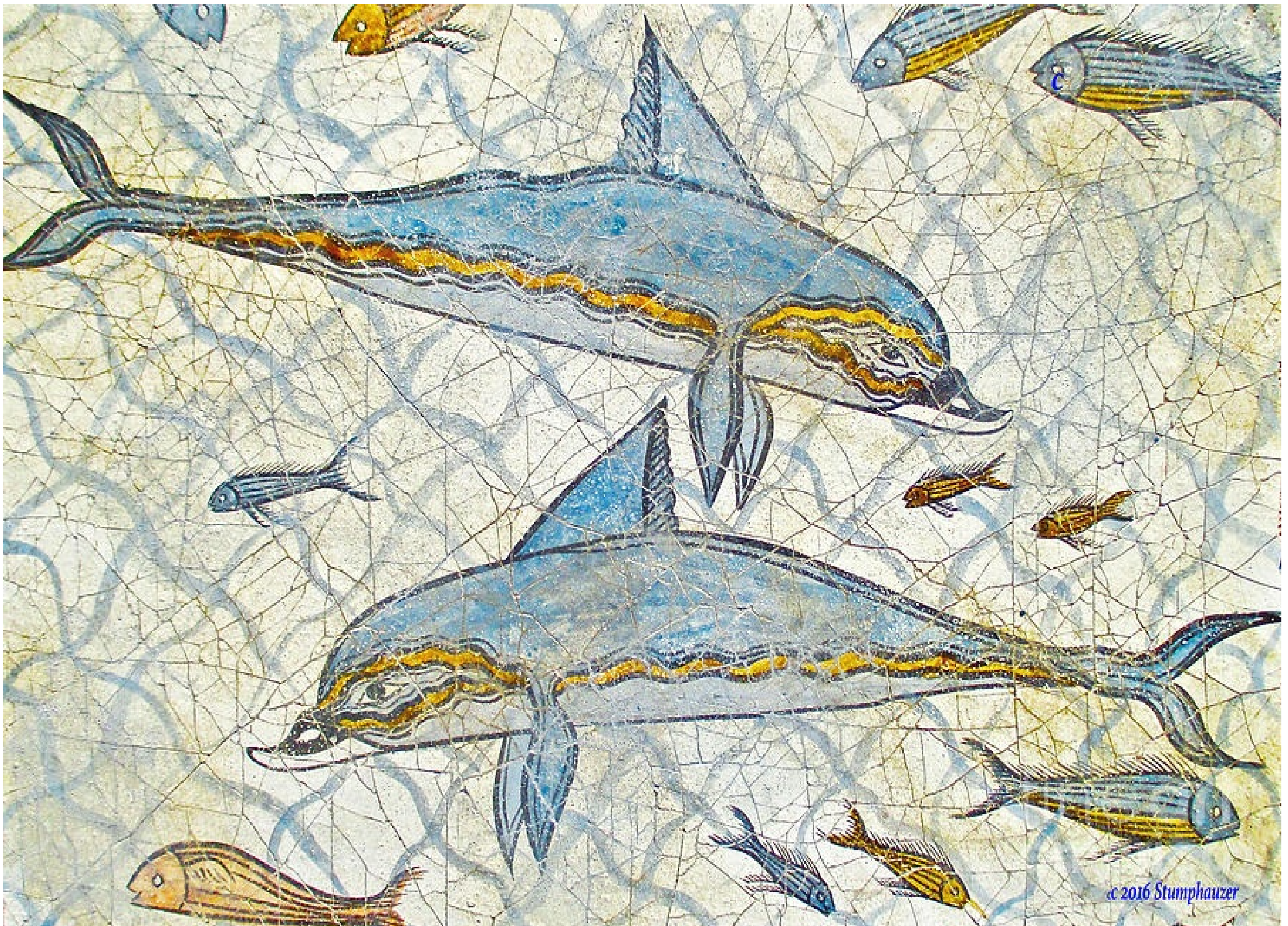
Having laid out the elements of the ideal *polis*, Socrates turns to the question of the "constitution" or make-up of individual or the soul. The fact that he does so with so little effort reminds us of a very important point–namely, that all this talk about citizens of the *polis* doing their job has been a means by which Socrates talks about what truly interests him, namely the parts of the soul working together. *Let's apply what came to light* in my previous explorations of the city *to a single man* (434e). And as he says, what intrigues him is not, finally, the question of a citizen *minding his external business, but with respect to what is within* (443e). We glimpse here something like a Platonic theory of psychology. Socrates describes the soul as structured in three parts or perhaps activated by three different sorts of forces: the rational or thinking part; the appetitive or desiring part; and the spirited part. He points out that we most legibly see the first two parts when they are in conflict with one another: for whatever reason, a thirsty person might choose not to drink, and the mere possibility of that kind of behaviour suggests that the soul is the site of at least two differing forces or inclinations or faculties. As I've pointed out earlier in these notes, for Socrates there is a third faculty or force in operation, spiritedness, which looks a bit like an appetite or desire. It's difficult to find something analogous in our understanding of what makes people tick, but perhaps spiritedness resembles what we might call *heart*...as in, "those young soldiers were afraid in battle, but they showed *heart*." Spiritedness seems to mean

something more deeply affecting than "pluckiness" or "stick-to-it-ness," but it's not entirely different either. Socrates rather obscurely remarks that spiritedness often expresses itself in the form of a certain kind of propulsive anger, including anger directed at oneself. He tells the story of Leontius, who wants to observe corpses thrown outside the city walls after a public execution. He *desired to look but at the same time he was disgusted and made himself turn away*. Leontius castigates himself for wanting to see this *fair sight* (439e), Socrates notes very sarcastically, his own language soaking up a little bit of Leontius's anger at himself: look at you, Leontius seems to say of himself, what a messed up creature you are, attracted to the sight of corpses the way you might otherwise be to something "beautiful" or "fair"! What's wrong with you (Leontius in effects says to himself) such that you both hungrily want to look on those dead bodies *and* know that there is something disgusting about that desire! Note how the sarcastic use of the word "fair" registers a kind of disgust with oneself that isn't easily described as either rational or appetitive. Something else seems to be going on here in the depths of the soul. Socrates turns to Homer (an author with whom he is usually quite impatient), and to a verse in which Odysseus, the great hero of *The Odyssey*, rebukes himself and holds himself passionately in check, as he observes how his home has been overtaken by others in his long absence (441b). The Homeric example demonstrates the conflict between the rational part of the soul and the spirited part when one is angry not at someone else or something else but at oneself. Isn't it worth thinking about, Socrates is in effect saying, how we humans can be angry at ourselves as though the part of the self to which we direct our angry *were a different part*, i.e., as if we were not one person but two separate people? The reason for this brief but suggestive foray into Greek psychological theory is that Socrates is interested in thinking with others about souls that are not harmonious and thus self-disciplined. A harmonious soul is one in which all three parts or faculties work together and the most vivid way to imagine that integration is to conjure up scenes in which that harmony is absent. Once again, we see Socrates interest as a thinker and as a teacher in working *dialectically*, discerning what a thing might be by tarrying with what it is *not*. (Socrates: *only the dialectical way of inquiry proceeds in . . . destroying the hypotheses, to the beginning itself to make itself secure* [533c-d]) The true Athenian would not experience what Leontius does; he would not be at odds with himself the way he is. The paradox is that a true Athenian can only really know what it means to live harmoniously with oneself by frankly considering what it means to be at odds with oneself. It is worth noting here one other moment in the *Republic* in which Socrates makes the complexities of the inner life of the individual soul legible–and that is the moment when

Thrasymachus blushes. What do you make of this curious moment? What exactly is a blush? The proud orator suddenly feels a certain embarrassment or perhaps self-consciousness that is unique to the condition of blushing. To his claim that *justice is the advantage of the stronger*, Socrates responds by pointing out that leadership can't only be about wielding power; ruling others involves wisdom too, doesn't it? Here Socrates is appealing to Thrasymachus' profession, for he is someone who, for money, is teaching the male children of wealthy Athenian families how to govern well as well as how to govern craftily. This point embarrasses Thrasymachus, the sign of which is that he blushes–meaning that he feels himself caught under the gaze of Socrates and is, in that moment, split between two versions of himself: the one who proudly makes the argument for power and the one who knows that that argument cannot itself be as powerful as it seems. He is himself and sees himself as another does. Thrasymachus finds himself at odds with himself, and his body–his reddening face–expresses that division, his flesh taking on a kind of life of its own. To help grasp the significance of this detail in the *Republic*, it might help to remember a moment in your own life in which you blushed and to think about how, from a Socratic perspective, that moment briefly registers a certain unruliness of the soul–i.e., how your blush makes legible the marvellously conflicted nature of your own psyche.

The story of Leontius puts to us that we can understand a harmonious soul by considering a disorganized one. And so Socrates goes on to remind the brothers that it remains important to understand justice by thinking about what it is not. The elusive "justice" that Socrates is working towards (and may never actually articulate, the effort being more than enough) is *not* an everyday understanding of justice, one available to everyone; namely, that justice is a matter just actions. Just actions, what one does, how one behaves with others and with oneself, are important. They are, as he says, a useful *phantom of justice* (443c) or "image of justice." But as a "phantom of justice" these examples are *not* the justice of which they are but an image: they are mere ghostly images of what justice actually is. For Socrates, what is much more important than the just action is the just person; being just precedes doing justice, just as being unjust precludes doing genuinely just things. Sir Philip Sidney, a thinker we look at next, will wrestle with this question too: can a mathematician draw a straight line with a crooked heart, he asks? Justice is also a state of mind, a condition of the relation of the parts of one's soul. If you are wise, brave, and self-disciplined, then your soul is just . . . a claim that is certainly open to question and debate, since history brims with people who are smart, courageous, and tremendously disciplined who did grotesquely bad

things. Perhaps justice here it depends on keeping very precise definitions of what truly constitutes wisdom, bravery and self-discipline: if these virtues are all in earnest of the well-being of the city as a whole, then perhaps justice does flow from them. It seems inconceivable to Socrates that a person with justice in their soul, each part harmoniously working with the others, could commit unjust acts, of which there are many listed and described in the *Republic*.



Minoan fresco found at the palace of Knossos, Island of Crete (circa 2000 BCE).

Book Five

Adeimantus and Glaucon interrupt Socrates because they are intrigued, puzzled, and perhaps a bit titillated by Socrates's dreamed-up city. Polemarchus, who has been notably silent since Book One, suddenly surfaces again, drawing Adeimantus near and whispering in his ear: shall we let "it" go?, meaning let's make Socrates return to something he had hinted at in Book Four, namely that women and children will be held *in common* in the perfected city (423e-424a). One wonders what a man like Polemarchus is thinking here. As Plato scholars have long pointed out, Socrates' more detailed account of the city in Book Five would have been among the most scandalous things he suggests--this, in a text that is very often scandalous. What Socrates goes on to say here sounds a bit ludicrous, and Socrates knows he will be lampooned for saying it. But we should think about *why* what he says is preposterous. It is so because it turns upside-down so many things that the privileged slave-holding men of Athens would have held dear: their pride, their ideas of what constitutes a normal and healthy family, their idea of what a political leader should be, and indeed what a city or *polis* should be. The object of his remarks: to get us to critically consider what families are in a *polis* rather than assume ahead of time that we know what they are. Family allegiances often trumped larger political allegiances in ancient Greece. Socrates's response: let's imagine families purpose built to shed those private allegiances and instead designed solely to meet the larger needs of the *polis*. The results are disconcerting to say the least. But there's a deeper consideration too: the scandalous family Socrates imagines may also function to bring out how "ordinary" Athenian families are themselves a kind of "breeding" machine, endlessly producing and reproducing certain values and certain kinds of citizens that, so far as he can determine, haven't especially served Athens very well. The families Socrates imagines so vividly may in the end be strangely similar to the conventional Athenian family, and simply makes legible elements of the established family that are too often obscured by sentimental idealizations and accepted "wisdom" about what families are. Families are already such strange and variegated things, after all. How to get Athenians thinking about that, rather than endlessly mouthing platitudes about putting family first? What would it mean to consider entirely new forms of households, if only for the sake of shaking up our accepted ideas?

These scandalous propositions come in three *waves*, as Socrates puts it. He may need a magic dolphin to save himself from being drowned, he laughingly suggests. (Dolphins are ancient symbols of solidarity and amity, in addition to being the national animal of Greece.) As your

translator points out, the ancient Greek word for "wave" (*kuma*) is also the word for "foetus." Reading this way, Socrates is a kind of midwife, assisting the birth of three infants.

1) First wave: Socrates turns to the role of women in his imaginary city. Inasmuch as Socrates refers to women at all, he most often reproduces classical Greek assumptions about them as a form of chattel or property of men, whether fathers, brothers, or husbands. That objectification of women as property will last a very long time. Outside of Book Five, women are most often mentioned only in negative terms: a man who outwardly expresses deep grief is said to be "womanly;" a man who desecrates the corpse of an enemy soldier is said to be acting in an "womanish" manner (469d). An exception to this rule would be Socrates's metaphorical description of justice as a woman. (Where exactly does he do so?) The fact that Socrates turns positively to the role of women in the *polis* is thus counter-intuitive, even shocking. But he does, and advises the brothers that women must be educated equally with the men (taking into account, as says, their supposed relative physical weakness) and that they should live equally with men. That cooperative life includes physical education, which Greek men typically did without wearing clothes. Women too will do this, Socrates notes, scoffing at the prurient remarks and leering looks (and "locker-room" talk, to use some current language in circulation) of those men who are still trapped in old fashioned notions of female modesty and decorum.

Socrates notes that men and women are biologically different, presumably because he knows that many Athenians will use that difference as a rationale for confining women to the home and out of the public life of the city. (Indeed, Socrates fully anticipates that his arguments about the equal roles of men and women in the *polis* will be contradicted by his own insistence that citizens are born to do one job and one only [453c].) Two thousand years later, Mary Wollstonecraft will be up against the same tactic. But as Socrates says, biological difference has no

more bearing on the participation of women in the life of the *polis* than whether a man is bald or not, bearded or not. The natural capacity to rule or not, or to contribute meaningfully to the city as a whole, is shared among men and women. After all, Socrates points out, female dogs join male dogs in the labour of hunting and defending their masters; female dogs aren't incapacitated from these duties because they give birth to puppies. Competence and incompetence are distributed across the gender line, so the city is made up equally of women as well as men who can lead and who cannot lead. If women are to participate in the city's governance, Socrates reasons, they deserve an equivalent share in the education that the *polis* had to offer. Socrates: *Is there anything better for a city than the coming to be in it of the best possible men and women?* (456e) In asking this question, he is unsettling the unarticulated presuppositions of Athenian men, specifically presuppositions "about what a woman is" and "about who counts as a woman" (to recall phrases from Judith Butler, whose work we will consider in Term 2).

2) Second wave: In the imaginary city, women and children are shared in common with the men. Socrates finds it much less possible to imagine men being shared by the women, so what at first looks like a radically communistic world may still be organized by old-fashioned ideas of sexual difference. In truth, Socrates's thought experiment seems closer to describing a world in which men traffic in women so as to shore up their solidarity among each other; i.e., women are used by men to consolidate the close bonds among men. (Various cultural theorists have written about this phenomenon, including discussions of the behaviour of the men in U.S. Supreme Court Justice Kavanaugh's highschool, men who appear to have shored up their male friendships by assaulting women in front of male friends.) In any case, children will not belong to individual families and in fact will not even know who their biological families are. Socrates is the first to acknowledge how strange this proposal is. The question is where it comes from. Does the private realm of the family, the very strong bonds that are to be found there, threaten the bonds between citizens and their city? Does Socrates' proposal to dismantle family and kinship structures (often thought, even to this day, to be the original social and political organization) come from an uneasiness about love, sexual attraction, as well as domestic obligations representing a kind of *polis* within the polis, a city within the city, but at odds with the larger city? Is the question for Socrates, then, how to redirect the energies conventionally sunk into shoring up family life towards the larger life of the city, the larger life of the community. The social world Socrates imagines, shares <u>everything</u>: it is a *community of pleasures and pain*s (464a). Note this mixture

here: the just city is not a city without troubles or disappointments or fears. The point is that they will be shared. Or perhaps Socrates is trying to bring out how, as Elif Batuman says, "there is nothing more political than the depoliticization of the lives of women and children" (*London Review of Books* 21 July 2022 7). Socrates breaks down the barrier that hives women and children off from the political world of the *polis*, but the decision to hive them off in the first place was, after all, a political act, not a fact of nature but the result of the forces shaping the *polis*. In the existing *polis*, women, children, and the family are not depoliticized by nature: their depoliticization is itself a political act. Socrates welcomes them back into the life of the *polis* that they had, in effect, never left.

The city's rulers and auxiliaries will be having sex, of course, since they are human, as Socrates says, but that sex will be highly regulated. Good luck with that! For example, a rigged lottery system will ensure that only the best men and the best women have sex, with women offered as a reward for men excelling in their work. Notice that Socrates both imagines sexual relations to be entirely in the service of reproduction, having children to staff the city and acknowledges that sexual relations are more than a matter of reproduction. There are pleasures to be had for the sake of pleasure and that pleasure too needs to be yoked, put to city's use. (After their reproductive years, Socrates will go on to say, men and women guardians are free to have sex with other men and women, as a prize for their good service.) The children that come from these arranged liaisons are taken to public nurseries, rearing *pens*, as your translator puts it (460c). The family as it is conventionally understood is dismantled, presumably in the name of a new "family," the "family" of the city in which citizens are "brothers" and "sisters." (At the end of the eighteenth-century, French revolutionaries described the new France that they were trying to create as a community of "brothers:" *fraternité*. The French Republic, disavowing its feudal and monarchical origins, would be recreated in the name of "fraternity," as they said . . . not "sorority" and "fraternity." In 1955, the Museum of Modern Art in New York sponsored an exhibition of extraordinary photographs of people going about their daily lives that toured the world for almost a decade called *The Family of Man*, an exhibition that asked us to imagine all the peoples of the planet belonging to one family. At the time, still in the shadow of the catastrophes of the Second World War, you could perhaps be excused for indulging in such a fantasy. But the idea that all the peoples of the world are members of a single family is also frightening, even totalitarian. Why? The metaphor of the family, so powerfully evocative, threatens to dismiss or obscure the radical

disparities, irreconcilable differences, and irrepressible incoherences that characterize the various peoples of the world, most of whom were, after all, were never asked if they wanted to belong to one "family" or ever considered themselves to be part of one "family." And we might well ask, *whose* "family," meaning, whose idea of the family is behind the idea of "the family of man?" There are many different ideas of what a family is, including ideas that don't normatively emphasize commonality, coherence, unity, and obedience. And that is not even to consider the possibility that there may be entirely new ways of organizing families in the future, ways that have yet to be imagined . . . Or perhaps Socrates is inviting us to consider a world in which the family isn't in place any more, and not even metaphorically available to describe political life. In doing so, citizens are stripped of the one thing that they might cherish more than the *polis*, as Allan Bloom notes (*The Republic of Plato*, 385). The strictness of the rules set in place to unbind the family says a great deal about the tightness of those bonds. A lot of ongoing work will be needed to dissolve those bonds, if they are to be dissolved at all. And even with all the rules (and perhaps *because* of all these rules), unruly things still happen. People will be having unregulated sex and children will be born of those unsanctioned dalliances, Socrates concedes.

We are quickly reminded that the guardians are, after all, trained soldiers (just as Socrates had once been). Men and women will fight wars together, Adeimantus and Glaucon are told, presumably prompting wide-eyed disbelief. (Consider how radical that idea remains today. Until relatively recently, women were forbidden to be involved in combat roles in the Canadian Armed Forces. The Australian military began a five-year plan to integrate women into combat roles as late as 2011. In 1994 the U.S. actively banned women from combat, a law that was rescinded only in 2013.) Children, Socrates notes, must be brought to the front to observe and understand the carnage of war (467c). One wonders if children were exposed to war would they be rendered immune to its violence or learn a deeply felt aversion to it? It's also worth pausing for a moment to consider Socrates' point more carefully. He seems to imagine that children are not in fact *already* at the front, i.e., subjected to the terror and violence of war. –And are not women too, regardless of whether they serve in the armed forces? And were there not child soldiers in Plato's day, as there certainly are in ours? And if children happened, by some miracle, not to be actively conscripted to fight, did they not regularly observe their cities ravaged by war or directly feel the deranging effects of war, body and soul? (And why do we assume that children, properly speaking, are innocent of many different kinds of violence, including wrenching loss,

uncontrollable feelings, and aggressive impulses? As my doctoral student, Rachel Shields, argues in her doctoral dissertation, children are deeply immersed in "disappointment, exclusion, failure, fear, and humiliation," injurious emotions and traumatizing experiences from which they have very little psychological protection. As the narrator of Elena Ferrante's great novel, *The Lost Daughter*, says, "A child, yes, is a vortex of anxieties." In some sense, children are at war with themselves and the world, which they often experience as frustratingly oppressive because blocking their desires for mastery. So when Socrates says that children must join soldiers on the battlefront he is only describing an experience that children have already had. His objective here is to embarrass Adiemantus and Glaucon, pointing to the naivete of their unexamined belief that children are "innocent" and that adults are "worldly," and charged with protecting that "innocence.'") Women may not have been formal members of the Athenian army or navy but they certainly would have known and felt the very worst forms of war savagery. Indeed, historically women and children are disproportionately the subject such violence; they are, in other words, always "at the front," whether enrolled as soldiers or not. So the seemingly scandalous nature of his proposals for women and children going to the front or fighting may in fact simply cover for another scandal, one that every Athenian citizen would have known all too well--and that is that women and children know war intimately. They don't need Socrates' proposals since they are compelled to occupy the battlespace already. I imagine that Socrates's subsequent remarks about the proper conduct of soldiers on the battlefield is a tacit acknowledgment that wars are never in fact proper at all, i.e.. that they obey no decorum or rules, and that the harm done to women and children is the most legible case of that fundamentally ungovernable nature of armed conflict. Socrates' more general point is that the home or domestic space is in effect to be turned inside out, exposed through and through to the contingencies of the public world, combat being the most vivid and unsparing example of that world. Through Socrates's strange suggestions for a radical reconception of the family, Plato invites us to consider the importance of attachments that are *other* than and larger than the local ones, i.e., the love of spouses, partners, family members, household property, clans, etc.. Beyond the love of the family lies something like the love of wisdom, the love of the Good.

With his first and second "wave," then, Socrates begins a kind of thought experiment, proposing a world in which the political and public has fully colonized the private, erotic and familial: for a vividly memorable moment, he toys with the idea that erotic life and domestic life

can be commanded to align with the interests of public or political life. Or perhaps his point is much more radical than that: erotic life and domestic life were never actually private at all. The shame and modesty to which Socrates refers at the start of this part of his discussion remind us of that fact, the ways in which what feels private, an inward matter of our individual lives, is always already laced through with political or public power, values and assumptions. Socrates' suggestion that in the ideal city the personal *is* the public may be his way of saying that the personal is never truly personal, but imbued with public or shared and circulated assumptions, fears, hopes, knowledges, expectations, and rules. In other words, the personal was never actually personal, but always formed and activated by publically held claims and presuppositions. Socrates's plan for the family only makes that fact vividly legible. Far from being a zone that is mostly free from societal expectations, worries, and "politics," the family, like erotic life, is arguably one of the areas of life *most* subject to these forming and deforming forces. What seems and feels "inside" is in fact always already "outside." Contemporary political theorists like Michel Foucault (whose work we look at in Term 2) certainly argue that this is the case. Indeed, Foucault repeatedly goes back to Roman and Greek antiquity to examine the degree to which erotic and family life were then, as now, saturated with publically held concerns and values. Wollstonecraft will make an analogous point about late 18th-century Britain. When middle class women–the subject of Wollstonecraft's critique–are confined to the home and barred participating in public life they are forced to endure and feel the brute, coercive force of the politics of the age, the politics which scrupulously govern how society works. Women are said to deserve only the supposedly non-political space of the home, but the severely policed regulations that put them there are of course political through and through. Perhaps the notion of a truly personal and domestic space separate from the political space is only a fiction. It is the political space's fiction of its own outside. In a sexist society, perhaps no space is more thoroughly political or politicized , more saturated with authoritarian control, than the supposedly private space of the home.

Before Socrates moves on to the Third Wave, what he treats as the most scandalous of his propositions, he turns to the question of how the Greeks shall fight wars, how *our soldiers will deal with enemies*, i.e., how they "should act towards the enemy" (469b). Is he delaying getting to the last of a triplet of scandals because he is a bit reluctant to spring it on his interlocutors...or because he has a flare for the dramatic and knows that teaching is sometimes a matter of timing? In any case, in war and on the battlefield, what constitutes the ideal Athenian and the ideal Athens

is thrown into the sharpest possible relief. War becomes a kind of laboratory in which the Athenian virtue (or Athenian vice) becomes especially legible. The question of the just *polis* is here directly linked to how that city wages war. The question of justice is here thus revealingly reframed as a question of war. Socrates' remarks here lay the groundwork for a major concern in social and political thought to this day, namely, what are unjust and just ways of entering war, what are unjust and just ways of conducting war, and what are unjust and unjust ways of concluding war? Unjust war helps clarify what justice might look like under wartime conditions . . . and it may be that wartime conditions are always the social and political conditions in which we live. As Kant says in *Toward Perpetual Peace*, the end of war may not be the same thing as peace but instead a period of more war or different war or the preparation for more war. Foucault says that warring relations never cease, whether we are technically at war or not. In Plato's day, as in our own, the reasons why a society goes to war and how a society conducts that war is a telling measure of that society's values, its view of justice and injustice. War too is a social and political thought worth consideration, which is what Socrates asks the brothers to do. Justice here is a matter of what "just war" is and what "the laws of war" are. But we might ask, does lawfulness and justice ever apply to warfare? That is a problem and a question with which we are still struggling. It was only in the wake of the Holocaust that Allied jurists determined that the Nazis had not only waged war but waged a war that was murderously criminal, i.e., unjust, and so calling not for peace but for justice. That's why the perpetrators of the Holocaust could be tried after the war and found guilty of the then newly invented "crimes against humanity," rather than simply allowed to go home and pick up their pre-war lives. (As it turned out, many of the perpetrators of the Holocaust did simply go home, for the trials only captured a tiny fraction of those who were criminally responsible.) Socrates addresses the importance of a just city waging war that in some way embodies that justice. War for him is not a duty-free zone, where the requirements of justice are lifted, but an arena in which justice also must prevail. Perhaps it is his way of saying to us that justice cannot be refused and that it permeates all facets of human life, even those places where killing lawlessness is the order of the day. (Study tip: how specifically does Socrates use the discussion of war to illustrate just and unjust communities and just and unjust human beings?)

Nazi military leaders accused of wartime atrocities listen to proceedings in the dock at the Nuremberg Trials in 1946

What then do just war and just soldiers look like?

a) Greek cities shall not enslave each other (although he says nothing about the fact that each are founded upon slavery and could not exist without the enslavement of human beings).

b) Committing indignities to the bodies of the war dead are forbidden. Regarding the body or corpse of the dead soldier as your enemy (*to hold the enemy to be the body of the dead enemy* [469d]) is totally wrong, meaning that war ceases with the death of the enemy and should not be waged on the corpse. Socrates is here striking a blow against the battlefield behaviour of the mythical Greek hero, Achilles, who famously demeaned and defaced the body of his foe, Hector, by dragging it in front of the gates of Troy. (Recent political theory has returned to this question, investigating the specific warring conditions in which the desecration of dead bodies takes place . . . what Steven Miller calls "war after death," warring violence inflicted on corpses, as if killing soldiers was not the limit of what can be done to the enemy.)

c) Greeks fighting Greeks is not war but civil strife, a sign of being *sick*, a combat between *friends* (470c). Note how Socrates will not imagine that Greeks can be enemies of each other. But that's not a squeamishness and an aversion unique to him. Throughout history, civil wars are often haunted by the difficulty of facing up to the fact that the friend can be the enemy.

d) In civil strife, or in any combat, there can be no total war, no destruction of the land and crops, no punishment and enslavement of the enemy. Combatants must *have the frame of mind of men who will* [one day] *be reconciled and not always be at war* (470e). In order to ensure that peace after war is possible, soldiers must limit the ways in which they conduct war. Kant too will insist on this point in *Toward Perpetual Peace* (1794-95).

e) As a demonstration of one's Athenian Greekness, it is important to treat strangers, *barbarians*, as one would treat fellow Greeks (471b). In other words, the respect and honour due to one's own must be extended to all others. That's a truly remarkable claim for a Greek to have made in Plato's day. Plato makes the point haltingly, to be sure, since in these same pages of the *Republic*, Socrates also seems to make a special case for war between the Greeks, as if separate rules applied for that sort of combat, different from the rules governing combat between Greeks

and non-Greeks.

Two thousand years later, Kant will point out that the normal state of affairs between otherwise law-abiding nations is in fact a state of sheer lawlessness (or "a state of nature") with each other. The "reason of state" is assumed to apply always to relations between states, i.e., a state can and will do whatever it wants to ensure its continuity and integrity, up to and including the destruction of another state. In effect, as Kant points out, a state of perpetual war exists between states even if the government of a state is committed to peaceableness with its own citizens. Lawfulness governs the internal life of states, but, strangely, enacting and enforcing an analogous lawfulness governing the relationship *between* states remains extremely problematical to this day.

The Battle of Antietam, Maryland – 17 September, 1862. 22,720 soldiers were killed at this battle, almost half the total killed during the entire Vietnam War.

3) Third wave: As we come up to the third of three scandals, *the biggest and most difficult* (472a), Glaucon is quite testy. He questions Socrates: how on earth can it be *possible for this*

regime to come into being (472a)? Socrates tartly reminds him that he was not seeking to prove *that it's possible for these things to come into being*, i.e., it was his purpose to prove that these could exist (471d). In other words, what we have been listening in on is a remembered conversation that is also a kind of thought experiment--not the plans for an actual city. Socrates: *It was, therefore, for the sake of a pattern* [or model] . . . *that we were seeking both for what justice by itself is like, and for the perfectly just man, if he should come into being, and what he would be like once come into being; and, in their turns, for injustice and the most unjust man* (472c). The city on paper and in theory, as it were, is there to activate virtue in human beings and to help them do justice to justice, not provide the working plans for a new Athens. To underscore his point, Socrates provides an example: think of an artist painting a beautiful man. The artist is not able to demonstrate that such a creature exists in the world: but the painting invites us nevertheless to contemplate what a man is and what beauty is. In any case, he adds, *practice* and *theory* are often at odds with each other: *Can anything be done as it is said?*, he asks? (473a). Ideals can only ever be partly realized, and the suggestion hovering in the background is perhaps that ideals should not be realized. Sometimes it is important to be careful what we wish for. Kant will make that point too, i.e. a perfectly realized social and political condition would, paradoxically, be stultifying, deadening. The key for Kant is working *toward* or en route to *perpetual peace*, as the title of his work indicates, and so labouring in earnest of peace . . . not achieving peace as such. Perhaps Kant learned that lesson from Socrates, who also emphasizes the labouriousness and precariousness of *turning* toward the good rather than absolutely achieving goodness. (Study tip: consider the details of the pages of the *Republic* in which Socrates makes that argument about *turning*. What exactly does he argue there?)

Glaucon says "stop stalling and get on with telling us what the next wave looks like!" Socrates replies: *Unless the philosophers rule as kings or those now called kings and chiefs, genuinely and adequately philosophize, and political power and philosophy coincide in the same place . . . there is no rest from ills for the cities . . . nor I think for human kind* (472d). Glaucon is indeed shocked, and suggests that Socrates should worry about his safety after making such a remark (474a), presciently anticipating the dangerous circumstances in which the real Socrates will indeed one day find himself. This proposal is a scandal for the Greek *polis*, which otherwise would separate the administration of the city from those who love wisdom, a city in which, after all, the very idea of a principled body of thought about political justice did not yet exist and was

only coming into being with the writing of Plato's *Republic*. It is important to hang on to the fact that Plato, in the form of his dialogue, is mobilizing a new practice of knowledge, one whose future is hardly secure, as subsequent human history will amply demonstrate. And the proposal is also a scandal in Socrates own argument, since up to now he has put so much emphasis on each person pursuing their own work and not mixing that work with the labour of others. But Socrates is quite capable of scandalizing *himself*. We are now asked to imagine the hybridization of working worlds and thought-worlds otherwise conventionally imagined to be antithetical. Two thousand years later, Kant will wrestle with the same convention, beginning *Toward Perpetual Peace* by remarking that bringing "philosophy" into "politics," practices of thinking into practices of belonging, will be understood by most as silly at best, subversive at worst. But Socrates reminds us that the love of wisdom cannot be an entirely personal matter, completely removed from the life and death of the *polis*, not if the polis is to survive and thrive. And without a thriving *polis*, he suggests, can we be fully human? For Socrates, the task thus becomes to account for why the love of wisdom ought to have a seat at the table of the ruling powers, which is to say why a love of wisdom should activate governance, why the competence to rule and the capacity to think or to philosophize are or can be or should be compatible.

To make his case, Socrates tries his best to make clearer what a philosopher is, what a *lover of wisdom is.* "Love" (or the "philo" of "philosophy") is here a metaphor for a particularly deep *relationship* with knowledge. Socrates counts on us grasping at the same time that "love," like "justice," is something that clamours for definition and is central to human flourishing while also being wonderfully and frustratingly elusive. Whatever love is it is precious and precarious, forceful yet vulnerable, somehow fulfilling and yet haunted by loss. In other words, Socrates mobilizes the metaphor of love knowingly, assuming we will take on the full weight of the complexity of his assertion that wisdom is something to love and with which to fall in love. Philosophers are lovers, lovers of wisdom, and of the Ideas that finally form the content of wisdom. It is interesting to consider how Socrates locates at the heart of thinking something that isn't easily described as thinking, something called "love," i.e., a kind of complex attachment *to* wisdom. Philosophers, we are told, differ from other kinds of lovers, those who love particular kinds of wisdom, i.e., the knowledge of certain specific things over other things. Philosophers love wisdom <u>as such</u>, not or not only wisdom about this or that thing. But, Glaucon points out, that doesn't that mean that philosophers are a kind of dilettante, i.e., someone who

indiscriminately enjoys many different things at the same time, *the lovers of hearing and the lovers of sights* (476b) –Another dialectical moment in the lesson. The problem, Socrates replies, is that those lovers of different beautiful things are *unable to see and delight in the nature of the fair [or Beautiful] itself*. One can indeed savour the beauty of particular things, but it takes another kind of intelligence to turn towards the beautiful *as such*, the Idea of the Beautiful. "Beauty" or "the fair" here is a kind of metaphor for apprehending the wholeness or entirety of something, against which Socrates compares the rulers who, as administrators, are trapped in the management of the busyness of the quotidian, the day-to-day. Socrates acknowledges that some lovers of wisdom are preoccupied with knowledge about specific instances of, say, justice. But to those persons he compares the true philosopher, the one worthy of leadership, who loves justice itself, the Idea of Justice. Socrates is a little bit ahead of himself here (he often proceeds this way, making him sometimes sound a bit disorganized), but he will soon unpack in more detail a principle that is fundamental to his work as a thinker, namely the normative distinction between the particular instance or example of something (justice, beauty, goodness, to name three) and the Forms of those things, what those things are in and of themselves rather than how they appear to you or I in particular times and places.

To help understand this distinction consider the isosceles triangle, i.e., the triangle with two identical sides, which forces two of its interior angles to be acute. There are the millions of individual isosceles triangles that human beings have drawn, from prehistoric times to a future a thousand years from now, triangles drawn on Earth or on a distant planet. Some of those triangles are carved in stone, some created on a computer, others drawn with a Sharpie. And then there is the isosceles triangle *as such*, the Idea of the Isosceles Triangle, that remains immutable, unchangeable. Wherever we go, whenever it is in history, the isosceles triangle is characterized by utterly immutable principles that are elemental to its Idea. Without such an Idea, individual isosceles triangles would never exist. Mathematics, like geometry, powerfully appealed to Plato because it seemed to describe immutable truths, truths independent of the vagaries of perception, the latter being that faculty which most immerses us in the changeable world of things. Pure mathematics refers only to itself, not to anything perceivable, Plato contends, and that is what makes it so important, for it evokes a universe "behind" the universe, a universe of forms that are unchangeable and universal, the same everywhere and never anything more or less than the same. The great 20th-century philosopher, Bertrand Russell (whose archive, by the way, is held here at

McMaster), says it best:

> I should agree with Plato that arithmetic, and pure mathematics generally, is not derived from perception. Pure mathematics consists of tautologies, analogous to "men are men," but usually more complicated. To know that a mathematical proposition is correct, we do not have to study the world, but only the meanings of symbols; and the symbols, when we dispense with definitions (of which the purpose is merely abbreviation), are found to be such words as "or" and "not," and "all" and "some," which do not, like "Socrates," denote anything in the actual world.
>
> A mathematical equation asserts that two groups of symbols have the same meaning; and so long as we confine ourselves to pure mathematics, this meaning must he one that can be understood without knowing anything about what can be perceived. Mathematical truth, therefore, is, as Plato contends, independent of perception; but it is truth of a very peculiar sort, and is concerned only with symbols. (Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (1945), Book One. Part II, Ch. XVIII : Knowledge and Perception in Plato, p. 155.)

I resort to this example from mathematics and geometry because Plato appears later in life to have idealized geometry and mathematics as the purest forms of the love of wisdom, presumably because it is a knowledge so singularly devoted to unchanging forms. In a sense, Plato's idealization of mathematics represents the point in his work at the farthest remove from the Piraeus. By analogy, there are always particular instances of justice, practices of doing justice that are site specific, tied irrevocably to particular things: a captain captaining a ship, a shepherd shepherding her flock, a physician caring for their patients, to evoke examples to which Socrates resorts; but in order reasonably to discuss these specific instances of justice and to think about them there must be something like "justice as such" or what Socrates calls the "Idea" of justice. (Similarly, to apprehend individual cats and to know them as cats, rather than, say, Buicks or dogs, we must have *an idea of a cat in our mind*. Otherwise we would encounter each individual cat as wholly different creature, an unclassfiable creature because always, each time, at most one of a kind.) True lovers of wisdom are called ultimately to turn their thoughts to the Ideas and to

apprehend, insofar as this is humanly possible, what a thing is as such, to see it as it really is...or at least to discern its presence behind the welter of our actual experience. --A formidable and perhaps an impossible task . . . and Socrates never unequivocally claims otherwise. For Socrates, the person who dwells only in the particulars is like someone who is asleep. He or she is dreaming because he or she is constantly mistaking one thing for another in the sense of mistaking the image *of* the original *for* the original, the particular and sensible version of something *for* its original form, an individual isosceles triangle that I could draw on a blackboard in our classroom today for the isosceles triangle as such, which is a series of angles that, ultimately, are not answerable to any perceptible triangle, any particular triangle that I might observe or draw. The true thinker dwells amid knowledge, and focuses finally on Forms, or at least orients herself towards them, whereas the other kind of thinker lives among opinions and beliefs and particularities and is happy to remain there.

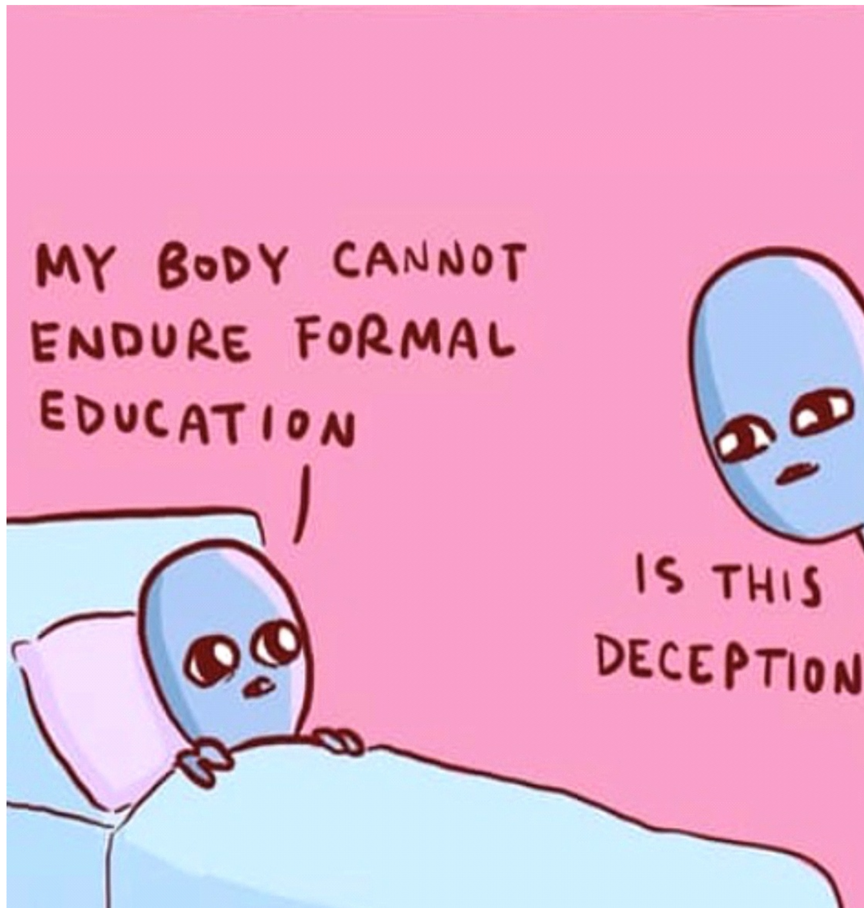
<u>**Book Seven**</u>

Plato returns to this question of Forms and the mere images of Forms by telling another story, namely the so-called Allegory of the Cave. This story is perhaps the most well-known part of Plato's vast and varied body of work so a question you might ask is *why*, i.e., what accounts for the longevity and appeal of this story? Perhaps it speaks to a fascination and a worry that so many have had and have today, namely the question of whether what we see and feel today is all that there is, or whether there is not another world behind or beyond this one. In any case, here Socrates thoroughly mixes a discussion of justice with a discussion of what he calls the Good, or rather the Idea of the Good. Goodness appears to lie beyond justice as the pinnacle of wisdom. The question of Goodness is given primacy here and elsewhere in Plato's work, meaning that as important as questions regarding politics are, and as important as questions concerning knowledge are, another question always comes first: what is Goodness and what does it mean to be Good? The French philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas, will take Plato's point and develop an entire body of work around it. For Levinas, the most important questions we can ask are not "how do I govern?" or "how do I know things?" or even "what is a thing–an illness, an organism, a nation, an atom, etc.--as such?" (each fundamentally important questions in their own right) but "what are my responsibilities?" (or, in Plato's language, "what is goodness?" or "what is the goodness that forms the model for my life?"). In Book Six, Socrates points out to Adeimantus

that the study of justice cannot proceed without also studying the Good. Previously, the Idea of justice had been the ultimate object of consideration: now it is said to itself be derivative of an even larger idea, the Idea of the Good, meaning Goodness itself, not one of its many, many wonderful and important examples and manifestations in the world. (Today, as you read these Study Notes, consider the individual expressions and example of Goodness that you know first-hand. But for you to think of them as instances of Goodness means that in some sense you are already in a relationship with the Idea of the Good, Goodness as such, in and of itself, the Goodness that makes all specific examples of goodness recognizable as, well, good.) We can love good things, good practices, but beyond that is a relationship with the Good itself, the basis for everything that we know or desire. For Socrates, the Idea of the Good is like the sun, that which makes everything visible, visible, and it is the source of light and life . . . but which is itself impossible to look at directly if it can be looked at all. Socrates reminds his listeners that the *sun is not sight* but it is instead *the cause of sight itself.* In other words, the Good is not something we can actually apprehend but is instead a word–and what a word!–for that which makes seeing and understanding possible in the first place. It is what makes the nature of things thinkable, i.e., worth considering, pondering, wrestling with. It is what reminds us that we aren't merely creatures drowning in the chaos of the universe, but uniquely purposive beings, in the world but activated by the abiding sense that there is more to this world than the welter of experience. Is that what separates human beings from all other living creatures? Perhaps. To change metaphors, as the basis for all things, the Good is that towards which we orient ourselves whenever and wherever, using our faculty of reason, we turn away from mere appearances to the Forms of things. In doing so we model goodness. We become more than we are. Not forever, to be sure, but just enough for us to grasp that unlike the cows that the German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche observes at the beginning of his essay, "The Use and Abuse of History for Life," we aren't trapped or doomed to be trapped in the "now" but instead creatures uniquely able to imagine the world otherwise than it is or seems to be.

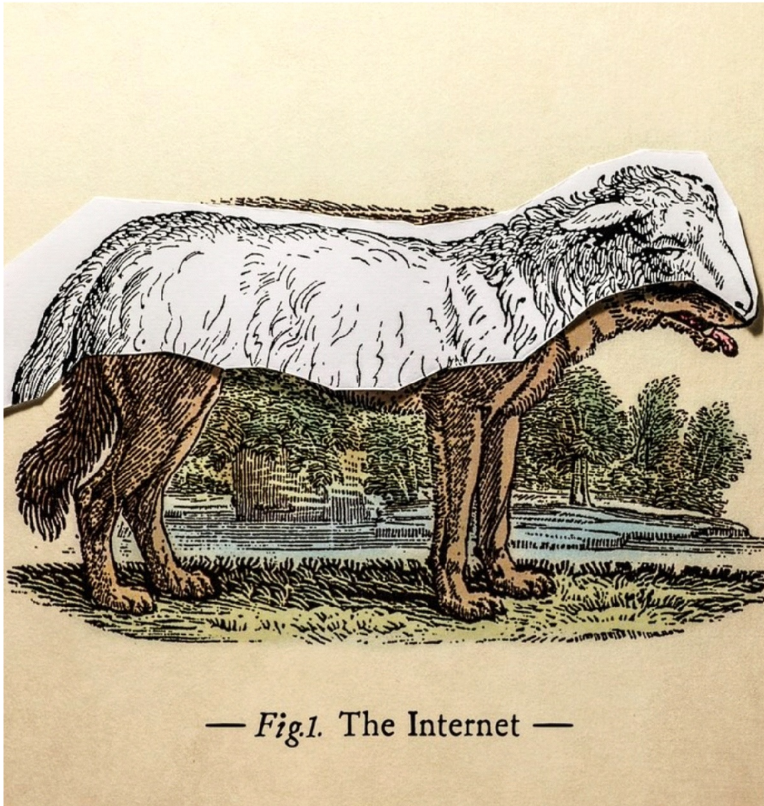
The Allegory of the Cave is indeed fantastical–not a description of reality but something closer to the "noble lie" Socrates evokes earlier in the *Republic*, i.e., a kind of fiction that knows itself to be a fiction but which also tells its own kind of truth about the nature of things. We are invited to consider human beings living in a cave where they have been chained since childhood, necks and legs in fetters. They can only see in front of themselves and cannot turn their heads.

There is light, but it comes in the form of a fire above and behind them. Objects, *all sorts of artifacts . . . statues of men and other animals wrought from stone, wood, and every kind of material* (515a), are manipulated and carried in front of the fire, so that their shadows are cast on the cave wall for the *strange prisoners* to contemplate. The prisoners dwell in a world of flickering darkness and light, transfixed by the shadows on the wall of a cave. The shadows are shadows of objects that are themselves mere reproductions of other objects, meaning that the prisoners observe, in effect, not shadows but shadows *of* shadows. This, Socrates says, is us. We are those prisoners, seeing shadows and convincing ourselves or letting ourselves be convinced that they are reality. We live amid a vast and compelling running simulation but have somehow forgotten it to be a simulation and so that it becomes "real" and feels "real." But it is not real. Politically speaking, the realm of the flickering shadows, images of images, is the realm of mere opinions, the world of conventional understandings of social and political life, understandings that we inherit or have been given or have been forced to adopt. These opinions and conventions and stories can often have their own mesmerizing charm, and can be captivating and reassuring, violent and coercive, but they are not what Socrates would characterize as the truth that is our birthright. We are prisoners of thoughtlessness, a thoughtlessness that runs so deep that many have forgotten that they are prisoners, preferring or forced to accept things as they are *as* the ways things are meant to be.



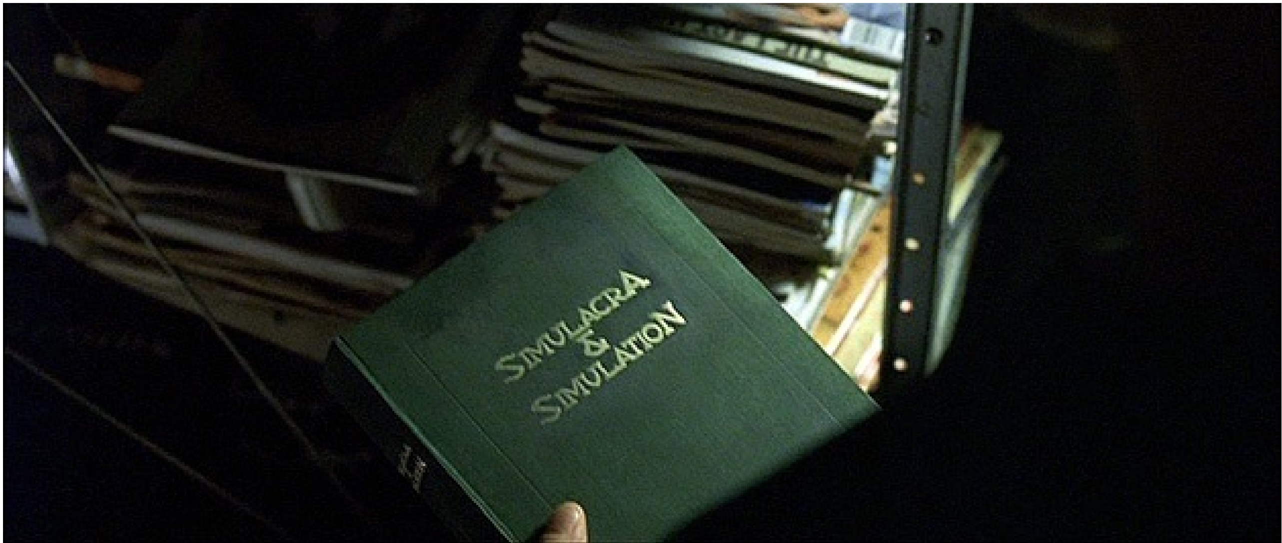
Socrates imagines a difficult process in which some of those prisoners turn from the shadows to the statues to the objects of which those statues are models, and then to the Sun itself which makes those models or objects legible at all. (Study tip: familiarize yourself with all the details of these pages of the dialogue and with how, step by step, Socrates tells his story and then teaches from it, teaches his students about teaching and learning and the relationship of those practices of knowledge to justice.) The ascent up into the sunlight is arduous, but some take on this labour, and those same people return to the cave to help others to see for the first time, helping turn souls towards the Form of the Good. Socrates emphasizes that the Allegory of the

Cave teaches a valuable lesson about education: education is not filling our heads with new knowledge but a dynamic, almost physically active practice of knowing, *an art of turning around, concerned with the way in which this power can most easily and efficiently be turned around, not an art of producing sight in it* (518d). In other words, education is not so much bringing-light as turning others toward light. Others need help in making that turn, and the fact that they need assistance suggests that there is a part of us that would rather live amid the shadows, satisfied with opinions and cliches because, perhaps, they are safer and familiar. Socrates' allegory points to something interesting and important about education. As Socrates seems to recognize, education is not a matter of transmitting content from teacher to student but, more complexly, more humanely, a matter of negotiating with a will or resistance *to* knowing, the resistance that accounts for the fact that those who remain in the cave threaten the escapee-teacher with scorn and violence, so attached are they to their illusions and misunderstandings. Kant will make the same point in the late 18th-century. Would that education were simply a matter of providing new knowledge, and of replacing ignorance with knowledge! But in point of fact, he argues, education must address a more fundamental issue, namely the active *will not to know*.



— *Fig.1.* The Internet —

The Allegory of the Cave is a vividly metaphorical way of putting to us the dangers of mistaking what our perceptions, opinions, habits and received understandings tell us about the world. It is a way to teach us to be wary of that which presents itself to be true and that feels like it should be true . . . but is in fact far from the truth. Don't believe your eyes!, Socrates is telling us. What you see may not be what you get. Be incredulous and sceptical about those things that are said to be commonsense or given or true because someone says so or because they have the weight of tradition behind them. It may be that reality is not commonsensical at all. How far off the mark is Plato, I wonder? My colleagues in physics tell me that matter is mostly space and that what looks solid is in fact not that at all. When you and I look at things, we are of course only seeing the light reflected off of things, not the things themselves. At the end of the eighteenth century, Immanuel Kant pointed out that what seems real to us is in fact always a universe arranged by the uniquely shaping structures of our own cognitive and perceptual faculties: we experience the world only as our brains form it, never the world as it actually is. The 20th-century French philosopher, Jacques Derrida, whose work we turn to in Term 2, argues that there is no such thing as "a world," i.e., no unified and single field in which we, along with all the other contents of our lives and surroundings, find ourselves. The idea that there is *a* world is an illusion, he argues, a necessary illusion, but an illusion nonetheless. In point of fact, there are many, many worlds which, for the sake of convenience, we pretend are *one.* The premise of *The Matrix* films is that what looks like the world is an enormous and deceitful simulation. That seems like pure fantasy or science fiction, except the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard wrote a trilogy of widely influential books exploring the ways in which you and I are schooled into embracing simulations so much so that the very idea of a "real" world is now gone. It's all simulations, all the way down. It is telling that the first time we see Neo in the film (played, of course, by Keanu Reeves), he is reading a translation of Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation.* I mention all of these thinkers just to point out that in the wake of Plato's Allegory of the Cave, many others have wrestled with the question of distrusting what our senses and experiences tell us to be true. The truth may lie elsewhere and be otherwise than we think and want it to be.)



Still from *The Matrix*, Dir. Lana Wachowski and Lilly Wachowski (1999)

Glaucon is incredulous that there are teachers our there who would help others turn towards the Forms because it is just and good to do so. Who would do such unrewarding work? Who would do this work without enriching themselves? Who would return to the Cave when they could live a much better life in the sun? Socrates reminds Glaucon that in the ideal city, the objective is not to make one group happy. The objective of education is to recall us to the city as a whole, to work on *binding the city together* (520a). And after all, he says, the lovers of wisdom, the philosophers, were *begotten* by the city and thus have obligations to the city (520b). Still, Glaucon wonders, who does that kind of thankless work? Socrates answers with one of his riddles: *men who aren't lovers of ruling must go to it*, i.e., "it is those who are no lovers of governing who must govern" (521b). That is to say, those who are not dominated only by the wish to govern, but have other priorities, namely the pursuit of the Good, are best suited to governing justly: *So you must go down, each in his turn, into the common dwelling of others and get habituated along with them to seeing the dark things. And, in getting habituated to it, you will see then thousand times better than the men there, and you'll know what each of the phantoms is, and of what it is a phantom, because you have seen the truth about the fair, just, and good things. And thus, the city will be governed by us and by you in a state of waking, not in a dream as many cities nowadays are governed by men who fight over shadows with one another and form factions for the sake of ruling, as though it were some great good* (520b). Teaching and learning is process and a practice that involves turning *the whole body*, not just the eyes (518c),

i.e., it is not a practice designed to spirit you and I away from the welter of the world, from this life, but remains and must remain grounded in the here and now, even if it situates itself with reference to the Forms...and thus, "through" the Forms, to the Good, i.e., to that which makes everything possible in the first place and that ensures human beings that they have a reason for existing beyond simply living from moment to moment. As Socrates is careful to point out, the ideal teacher is not the one who retreats to the *Isles of the Blessed while they are still alive* (519c), not someone who retreats to a quiet utopia of thinking but instead remains committed to the rough and tumble of life and of living a life.

Book Eight

You aren't responsible for Book Eight, but it might help you to consolidate your knowledge of the *Republic* to get a sense of what it is about. Socrates begins Book Eight by summarizing the elements of life in the ideal city. He then explains that we now need to consider four other kinds of cities, and the four kinds of persons that capture the essence of these cities . . . once more in order to grasp what is just and unjust in them and so come to a more nuanced understanding of justice and injustice. We are reminded that the very reason for comparing and contrasting cities is to better understand how they function: the title of Plato's dialogue, *Politeia*, means, not "republic," as it has been long conventionally translated, but something closer to "how a city-state functions," or perhaps, "the constitution of the city," if by "constitution" we mean its codified laws, how it is made, and what its character is (all meanings we associate today with the term "constitution"). The cities all are described on the basis of the tripartite criteria for the city that the dialogue as a whole establishes: the city must sustain its citizens; the city must be in a position to defend itself; the city must have rulers for whom the common good is paramount. How a city fares with respect to these founding requirements is how Socrates ranks the five cities here, with the aristocratic city that Socrates imagines being the only city that does so best.

All actual cities presumably lie between these various five cities, and in many ways each brings out elements of social and political life that are strikingly familiar to us today. Briefly, the cities are:

1) The aristocratic city modelled by Socrates.

2) The Cretan or Laconian or timocratic city ("timocratic" means "love of honour"), *praised by most people*.

3) The Oligarchic city, second most praised, *full of many evils*.

4) The Democratic city.

5) The Dictatorship, *the last diseased city*.

In each of these cities, there is an exemplary kind of person, someone who individually captures the essence of the city of which they are a part, for good or for ill.

1) Aristocracy: *the good and just man*.

2) Cretan city: governed by men activated by love of honour, ambition. Athens great rival, Sparta, is the obvious embodiment of this city, a city that possesses stability in part because the citizens remain courageous, willing to defend the city rather than sell it out. Timocratic cities are governed by rulers who would rather wage war than create peaceableness. Their rulers are quickened secretly by desire for cash, although outwardly they cherish *honour*, and are too ashamed to give up their duties to the city only to accumulate goods and money for themselves. These cities are ruled by men who are over-educated in matters of strength and the body and under-educated in terms of the arts that Socrates had said was good for the soul. Today we might call these rulers hyper-masculine, devoted to a cult of the strong body. Putin comes to mind.These cities are characterized by sons in conflict with their fathers, the sons urging the father to seek honor and ambition.

3) The oligarchic city is in fact a city split into two separate cities, the city of the rich and the city of the poor, a city of the wealthy and a city of the *poor man without means* (552a). In this city, the good is money, indeed, an excessive valuation of the accumulation of money. The unusual esteem given to money, which triggers insatiable desires, is not compatible with the Platonic virtue of moderation and self-discipline. Money, Socrates points out, is an odd thing, since it only breeds a desire for more money; it has no internal limit, no limit natural to it, only external limits. We see the first signs of what Marx will call *the commodity form*, and the way in which money takes on a life of its own, called *capital*, overtaking subjects to the point that social and political life is hijacked by economic life, by the exchange of money rather than social relations. But the wealth of the few is predicated on the impoverishment of the many, or what political theorists today called "accumulation by dispossession." The paupers, Socrates explains to Adeimantus, are either *drones without stings* (552c), those who are left without a productive role

in the city, or drones with *dangerous stings*, those who effectively become criminals, who attempt to criminalize governance and who must constantly be observed and disciplined. An oligarchic city emerges when the timocratic city turns from honour and ambition to the sheer accumulation of wealth, characterized by an obsession with money, a city where the ones with the most property call all the shots (550d). It is a fearful city, the rulers afraid of the soldiers, who might turn on them in a moment, and a city in which the rulers in turn fail to arm the soldiers adequately, leaving the city vulnerable to attack.

4) The democratic city emerges in the ruins of the oligarchic city. But in Socrates' hands it is only a way-station, a transitional city, on the way to the worst regime, the tyrant's regime. The sickness and imbalance of a city dissolved by the rifts introduced by the dominance of money leads to civil strife, *divided by faction* (556e). The democratic city is born out of the violent overthrow of the wealthy few by the impoverished many. So "democratic" in Socrates's terms means something unexpected to our ears, something closer, perhaps, to "mob rule" or "rule by referendum." Kant too will associate "democracy" with "mob rule," distinguishing its feverish unpredictability from what he calls a "republic" which for him is the pinnacle of the constitution of a state. And even to this day, a country like the U.S. has an electoral college in part to deflect and control the power of a voting majority. A democratic city for Socrates is a city in which it is a case of every person for himself or herself (557b). Strictly speaking, this city is not *a* city at all but an aggregate of separate atoms, each cleaving to their own rule. What laws it does have don't have any real binding force. It suffers from an excess of liberty, and Socrates admits that that freedom is attractive, the freedom to do and be whatever you want to do and be. In some sense, it may be *the fairest of regimes* (557c). But again, it is a matter of distinguishing wisely between appearance and reality. The excess of freedom is what this city defines as the good; we might call this the triumph of licence over liberty, the anarchic freedom to do anything one wants vs. the freedom to do what one wants within the context of the city. The hatred of any appearance of administration, governance, or control is the negative principle at work in the city, valued for its own sake. (We see this libertarian streak in American politics, where the government is viewed as intrinsically tyrannical because it said to be coercive and only coercive.) Socrates notes that although different, both oligarchies and democracies are destroyed from within. Each city is characterized by a fundament error in judgement:

–the timocratic city values honour as the Good.
--the oligarchic city treats money as the Good.
–democracies treat the Good as liberty or perhaps licence.

5) Dictatorship or tyranny: The democratic city is characterized by pervasive strife, with different factions in an ongoing struggle with other factions, including the wealthy against the landless and propertyless people. Amid this chaos, the people understandably seek a leader and form a kind of cult of the leader, and dictatorship results. The dictator resorts to criminal actions to maintain power, while always promising the people more. The tyrant puts the city on a constant war footing, which in turn calls for leadership, thereby turning the people's eyes from the tyrant's mistakes. The tyrant introduces slaves and foreigners into the city to act as his body-guards. Slaves from other cities are offered liberty from their foreign masters in exchange for forming the bodyguard of the tyrant. They are thus the antithesis of the guardians. The tyrannical city is characterized by purges, the violent liquidation or expulsion of anyone who is competent, whether friends or enemies, since these are all potential rivals (567b). The tyrant forms a cleptocracy, i.e., a tyrannical rule founded on the theft of property, including his own father's property! He will steal *the sacred money* [or treasures] *in the city*, Socrates notes (568d). Not even his family is safe. *The tyrant* is *a parricide (569b)* i.e., a murderer of fathers, the law, and the truth (in ancient Greek, *logos* meant father, law, and truth . . . imagine that). The people of the city see that they are now under the rule of a ruleless dictator but recognize too late that they are slaves and no longer citizens.