

Introduction

The Style, Main Argument, and Basic Ideas of the Republic

For it is no ordinary matter we are discussing, but about how we must live. (Republic: 352d¹)

At the center of his [John Rawls'] thought about this history [of moral philosophy] is the idea that in the great texts of our tradition we find the efforts of the best minds to come to terms with many of the hardest questions about how we are to live our lives. (Barbara Herman²)

Plato wrote the *Republic* about the same time he founded the Academy, when he had some distance from his master, Socrates, and had begun to develop answers of his own to Socratic and other questions. Justly regarded as the most comprehensive masterwork of his middle years, it discusses some of the most fundamental questions of philosophy; and remarkably it succeeded in setting the agenda for many questions in ethics, political philosophy, moral psychology, education, art, epistemology and metaphysics.

Beyond introducing some main questions of philosophy, it presents important alternative answers to these questions and reasoned debates of such answers by vigorous proponents and passionate opponents on all sides. It even sets out alternative conceptions of philosophy itself: a Socratic conception of philosophy as a reasoned examination of our own and others' beliefs about how we should live, and a more comprehensive and constructive effort to build theories that can help us understand the world around us and our place in it. The *Republic* exhibits both conceptions, arguably in fruitful and harmonious combination.

1 The Dialogue Style and the Characters

The *Republic* may be the most wonderful philosophy book ever written for any reader. Plato's masterful use of dialogue, his easy conversational style, his use of analogies, metaphors, similes, allegories and myths, take the reader into philosophy almost imperceptibly, leading her from the concrete to the abstract, causing her to question ideas she took for granted and to wonder about the new ideas in the book.

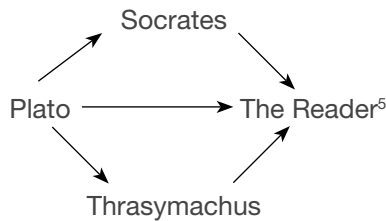
Plato's sketch and use of character add to the intrinsic interest of the large issues debated. Socrates' questions are answered by characters who are star examples of the ideas they defend. With a foot in the grave, fearful of having cheated anyone and ready to make amends, the wealthy old man Cephalus thinks of justice as honesty in word and deed. His more confident son, the war-like leader Polemarchus, takes justice to be something that benefits allies and harms foes. A harsh fighter – “this wolf before ... me” – Thrasymachus argues that justice in societies exists for the benefit of rulers, and the rest of us are better off being unjust if we can get away with it. Plato's brothers, Glaucon and Adeimantus, two good men, are shaken by the debate and want Socrates to make them believe in justice again, a justice which, they propose, would be agreed by all and be better for all than a lawless state of nature.

“The most just man who ever lived,” Socrates is willing to carry the fight for justice to the ends of the earth, even to just reward and punishment after death. In the *Republic* he is Plato's star example of the philosopher. Not only the critical thinker of the early dialogues – and he is that in the first book of the work, fearless and willing to die for the right to examine our lives; but also a constructive philosopher who never stops searching for the truth about justice and our good, and who dares to put forward unpopular proposals for governing and for the equality of women, and to reveal obscure visions of a cosmic good.³

The *Republic's* dialogue style serves many purposes. The oppositions to Socrates' views are presented vividly and dramatically by persons who live their ideas. Socrates can examine persons' lives as well as their theories. The other characters have a chance to defend their views and to raise objections to Socrates' constructive theories. They may represent the ideas and ideals of Plato's contemporaries, who may be closer to the reader, remarkably even the modern reader, than what Plato puts in the mouth of Socrates. Through the other characters, the reader is often represented, her objections

considered. By staying in the background, never identifying himself with any of his characters, Plato fosters the impression that he is staging a debate about how to live that presents all the alternatives fairly.⁴ The series of dialogues that make up the work perhaps mirrors a conception of philosophy as thinking out and discussing reasoned alternative answers to important questions about human life, and is an invitation to all readers to participate and make a rational choice among the alternatives.

In every page of the *Republic* we have at least four voices: the author, at least two characters, and the reader. For example, in the dialogue with Thrasymachus, we have:



The reader might take Socrates' side, play Thrasymachus, work up a third view of her own, criticize the way Plato conducts the debate, or even just sit back and enjoy the whole show.

All this has made the book very popular indeed – perhaps the most popular philosophy book ever written.⁶ But it is not an easy book, not at all. The very literary features and the style that make the book so popular can also mislead the reader and camouflage the difficulties of the ideas it expounds and defends. What reader can fail to appreciate the Allegory of the Cave? To think that she too is in a world of shadows and conflicting opinions, and longs to get out into the light and know the meaning of life? But this very allegory is supposed to illustrate the Platonic journey that only a few can complete, from ignorant perception to true opinion, to knowledge of mathematics, of Platonic Forms and finally of the Form of the Good, about which Socrates had just made the most obscure remarks in the whole Platonic corpus. The allegory by itself is so suggestive and apparently self-contained that teachers sometimes assign it without requiring the student to read the passages in the previous two books, which contain the theories of knowledge and opinion, appearance and reality, and the form of the good – the very theories the allegory is supposed to illustrate!

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The ideas of the book are more difficult than the style might suggest. And Plato's philosophical tools – intricate refutations, inductive and deductive arguments, following out the implications of a hypothesis, thought experiments, abstract theories, analyses of important concepts – all these take hard work to understand; though they are beautifully integrated with the literary devices, and this makes for exciting reading.

A reader might also notice that Plato's dramatic style enables him to illuminate certain things and leave others in shadows, to voice some problems and be silent about others – the “artful chiaroscuro” so characteristic of his writing. We don't know whether he wrote in this way naturally, or by deliberate choice, in uncertainty, or sometimes in ignorance.

Should we try to light up the shadows and voice the silences? In contemporary philosophy this is done all the time; most confidently in the case of arguments that seem to be missing one or more premises – we add premises (which hopefully are not obviously false) necessary to make the argument valid, and attribute them to the author, using a principle of charity; occasionally we are lucky to find the missing premises elsewhere in the author's writings and then we are more confident that he believed them.⁷

But with other kinds of shadows and silences, interpretation is more problematic. When a theory is very incomplete, as Glaucon's social contract theory of justice is, for example, how do we complete it? We can try the argument route if we can arrange the propositions of the theory so that some are premises and some conclusions; but we cannot do this always or conclusively. Or we notice that Plato has Socrates criticize Thrasymachus' theory of justice persistently for many pages, but does not similarly criticize the theories of Plato's brothers, and Plato does not tell us why he did not unleash his star critic on his brothers. What can we make of this silence?

Adding to difficulties but also to excitement can be comparisons of competing ideas to Plato's own, beyond the oppositions that Plato himself sets up, in the history of later important books on the same subjects. The difficulty is to avoid gross anachronisms when we make such comparisons. However great, the *Republic* is a pioneering work embedded in its own historical, philosophical and literary context. And Plato did not have the benefits of subsequent philosophy. But we do; and we can make some comparisons to competing ideas in other important authors on justice, happiness, goodness, ideals of human knowledge and their role in governing, and speculations about utopian institutions. These can set up exciting

contemporary dialogues between Socrates, later philosophers, and the reader. Such comparisons, whether to John Rawls or John Stuart Mill, can also help us understand both the limits and the greatness of the *Republic*.

2 The Main Argument and Plot of the *Republic*

Plato discusses many subjects in the *Republic*: the uses and misuses of wealth, competing theories of what justice is, rival conceptions of human happiness, the relation of justice to happiness, early and advanced education, religion and theology, private property, the other virtues of cities and of individuals, the human soul and human motivations, gender, the monogamous family, good and bad governing, good and bad constitutions, knowledge and opinion, appearance and reality, goodness itself, the nature and value of art and its place in society, even reward and punishment in the after life, and many more. The reader can easily get lost and the work itself can appear without unity and coherence. Did Plato have a design for the work, a grand plan that orders its many subjects?⁸ And does the *Republic*'s dramatic plot follow the plan?⁹

Fortunately, Plato gives us several signposts along the way that support positive answers to these questions. Most noticeably, at the end of Book I, Socrates tells us that they have been discussing three questions, which he orders in a certain way, and expresses his dissatisfaction with their discussion so far: "So now the whole conversation has left me in the dark; for so long as I do not know what justice is, I am hardly likely to know whether or not it is a virtue, or whether it makes a man happy or unhappy" (*Republic*: 354). The last question is discussed repeatedly from beginning to end, most significantly in Books I, II, IV, IX and X. So we know this is a central question that drives the whole investigation. The first question is also discussed in all these books and more, and Socrates has just told us that it is the first question to be answered in the order of investigation. We know then that these are two central questions that motivate the whole work.¹⁰

The question whether justice is good for us and makes us happy, has more breadth and depth than might at first appear. At a very practical, concrete level it seems to pose the choice between acting justly and acting unjustly, or more holistically a choice between leading a just or unjust life. This choice arises in the experience of living, since sometimes it seems that what justice requires is contrary to our good, and then we may reasonably

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ask why we should do what we believe to be just.¹¹ This is indeed a question that the work pursues from beginning to end, and its argument, that we are better off being just, is choice guiding concretely and practically.

But Plato also presents us with three rival major answers to the first question of the work on what justice is: the partial justice of Thrasy-machus, the more egalitarian justice of Plato's brothers, and the unusual conception of justice for societies and human souls that Socrates advocates. It is difficult to escape the implication that Plato means for us, the readers, to choose among these three answers. Thus the *Republic* poses for us not only the practical and concrete choice between just and unjust action – or a just and unjust life – but also the more theoretical and philosophically challenging choice among three kinds of justice.

Moreover, Plato points out that the two choices are interdependent: we cannot reasonably choose between justice and injustice (of actions or lives) unless we first know what justice is or until have made a choice among the known and rival conceptions of justice.¹² It may well be that in a society governed by Thrasy-machus' justice some might be better off sometimes doing what is unjust in that society; whereas in a society that satisfies the principle of justice favored by Socrates, one might always be better off doing what is just in that society. The *Republic* is a great work also because it challenges us to make informed and rational choices not only between just and unjust actions or lives, but also among different kinds of just societies. The work reveals that the reach of justice is far greater and reaches deeper than we might commonly think.¹³

Later, in Books V, VI and VII, we read that knowledge of the Platonic form of the good is necessary for understanding the good of justice and of the other social and individual virtues, for understanding our good, and for governing well. But this knowledge is very difficult and far more valuable than sense perception and opinion; and it is possible only if there are unchangeable universals or archetypes – the Platonic Forms.

In the *Republic*, Platonic Forms have to play two very demanding roles. They have to make possible a very high standard of human knowledge – “infallible” knowledge. And they have to make such high knowledge possible for the good, the beautiful, and the just – the very things that Plato tells us are the most disputed and hard, if not impossible, to measure.¹⁴ And yet these high demands seem necessary for a utopian government – an “epistocracy” – whose basis for political power is knowledge of the good. Very few talented individuals can attain knowledge of the form of the good after a long education in the sciences and Platonic dialectic.

In these middle books we see that Plato thinks these theories of knowledge (epistemology) and of reality (metaphysics) are a necessary foundation for the ethics and political philosophy his Socrates defends in the rest of the work. A far cry, this, from John Rawls who argues that we can have a theory of justice (and, we might add, of goodness as rationality)¹⁵ without metaphysics, in “Justice as Fairness: Political, not Metaphysical” (Rawls 1985).

Thus we know that the *Republic* is centrally about justice and our good, and about the knowledge of the good required for understanding and bringing justice, happiness, and good government into our lives and our societies. If we can discover what justice is, learn what the good or goodness is, and find out how justice is good for us, we can then soundly design the political and social arrangements that approximate these ideals, and we can plan the education that would make us just and happy persons.

The *Republic* proposes many revolutionary reforms of existing institutions: public and strictly planned education, complete separation of political and military power from property and wealth, the equality of women, limits to the monogamous family, public control of art and the media, and many others. But discussions of these institutions and other subjects are subordinate to the advancement of the ideals of justice, knowledge, and the good – and this is the key to understanding the unity and coherence of the work. The book’s greatness is to be found in the blending of this unity and coherence of large ideas that appeal to reason with masterful discussions of significant details and stories, myths, similes, metaphors and allegories that pull in the reader’s emotions.¹⁶

The dramatic plot follows the philosophical grand design, though not always directly. Plato makes a writer’s choice about what to reveal when – how to construct the philosophical drama. For example, primary education for the ideal city is outlined in Books II and III, before the virtues of the completely good city and of the good person are defined in Book IV, even though the education is designed to advance these virtues.¹⁷ Nor do we learn until Books V, VI and VII that understanding and approximating in reality these ideals absolutely depend on knowledge of the form of the good – a very abstract good and a very demanding knowledge that only a few talented can attain after many years of higher education. Again, though the soul is analyzed into three parts in Book IV, the analysis does not become clear till it is put to work in analyzing unjust persons in Book VIII and Plato’s discussion of the influence of art on character in Book X.

To understand the work we have to do more than read on attentively. We also have to look backward from time to time, re-think earlier passages and see the significance of the whole. Fortunately, these “anomalies” are usually signaled by Plato himself, as postponements, digressions, or returns to the main themes.¹⁸ If we understand the grand philosophical plan of the work and the priorities among its many questions, we can still make sense of the whole work as coherent and unified. The philosophical plan and the dramatic plot are weaved together to make the book accessible, readable, and exiting.

3 The Fundamental Ideas of the *Republic*

We have just reviewed one way to understand the unity and coherence of the *Republic*: by its main argument, that we are better off or happier being just rather than unjust; and by the main things this argument presupposes or implies: several theories of justice (and a choice among them); competing conceptions of happiness (and a choice among them); Plato’s theories of forms, of knowledge, and of the good. And there is a large consensus on the centrality of this argument.

Another way to understand the structure and coherence of the work, one that does not compete but rather complements understanding the main argument, is by identifying its basic ideas – the building blocks that explain everything else important in it. Some of these are argued for rather than taken for granted, and their importance becomes quite evident – they can be called “leading ideas” of the work. Others are taken for granted rather than argued for, and can be more difficult to notice, though once found they can be seen at work. They might be called “basic assumptions.” The basic assumptions and the leading ideas can then be used to explain other important ideas of the work that belong to its superstructure.

Ideally, the use of this method would require that we spot all of Plato’s basic assumptions, identify all his leading ideas and show how they can be derived from the assumptions, and finally show how the basic assumptions and the leading ideas explain the rest of Plato’s ideas in that work. This is very ambitious and would take far more work and space.¹⁹ Here we can offer only a sample of how the whole work might be thus understood. For each basic assumption or leading idea I take up below, I sketch other important ideas and themes it helps explain.

There are many basic assumptions in the *Republic*, taken for granted and without argument. Three in particular are worth mentioning here, since they play large yet almost unnoticed roles in Plato's theory of justice. Interestingly, all three first appear early in the work.

An important basic assumption in the *Republic* is Plato's theory of functional virtue and good, the idea that a virtue is a quality that enables something to function well, and that functioning well is an essential part of the good of the thing. This theory is stated without argument, in Book I, in the form of three definitions, but with convincing illustrations of functions from natural organs and from artifacts. It is more like an explicit basic (but complex) assumption.²⁰

This theory is used in that first book to construct an argument that justice makes us happy.²¹ It is used in Books II to IV to construct the completely good city, and to analyze and define the virtues of cities and persons. It is also used to distinguish between knowledge and opinion in Book V, in the analysis of unjust cities and persons in Book VII, and in the analysis of art in Book X. It is hard to doubt its importance textually; though it has not been recognized and discussed explicitly till recently.²² Philosophically, it is even harder to doubt its importance, since it provides Plato with an account of good to build a theory of justice with in Book IV, before the account of the form of the good in Book VI. And we know that a theory of justice cannot be built without some account of the good; especially the justice of society (as distinct from the justice of persons) has to be concerned with how what is good and bad for its members is distributed, and so it has to suppose some account of what is good and bad. It is no accident that in the *Republic* there are disputes about happiness and our good alongside the disputes about justice. In Rawls the dependence of justice on good is quite clear and explicit, and equally clear that the account of the good his justice uses is his theory of primary goods.²³

A second basic assumption is what Plato takes to be the primary subject of justice. Plato, no less than Rawls, knew that the concept of justice is applied to many things: societies, persons, social and individual actions, laws, constitutions, perhaps even desires and intentions. But he chose the first two of these for his investigation into the nature and benefits of justice (*Republic*: 368e), and did so without argument, apparently on the further basic assumption that if he discovers what a just society is and what a just person is, he can derive the other applications from these. But some argument may be needed. Rawls sees the same diverse applications of the concept of justice, but he makes a different choice about what he needs to

investigate, namely the justice of the basic structure of society, and supposes that the justice of persons can be derived from the justice of society.²⁴ These different basic assumptions lead to very different investigations of justice in Plato and Rawls.

A third basic assumption Plato makes without argument is the equivalent of what Rawls calls “the natural lottery” assumption: that nature distributes at birth advantages and disadvantages – such as high or low intelligence, strong or weak spirit, physical strength, beauty, health or birth defects, and so on.²⁵ Plato’s Socrates brings up this assumption at the beginning of his construction of a just city and gives it a big role in the first formulation of his principle of justice: because people are born with different abilities relevant to the cooperative production of the various things people need, not only should labor be divided, but persons with different inborn abilities should be matched to the labors for which their abilities best suit them (*Republic*: 369–70). Thus Plato’s justice takes a stand on these natural inborn differences: she works them into the institutions of society; but not so with all inborn differences – Plato’s justice blindfolds inborn gender differences. The myth of metals is an allegory in part symbolizing this assumption and its role in the just city (*Republic*: 414–15).²⁶

An important leading idea of the *Republic* is the analogy Plato sets up between the virtues or vices of a person and the virtues or vices of a city-state, especially the analogy between a just person and a just soul. This is only stated and illustrated in Book II, but it is argued for in Book IV. The importance of understanding this analogy for understanding the rest of the work is unquestionable. The analogy is used in Book IV to deduce a definition of a just person from the definition of a just city-state that already Plato had constructed (and similarly to deduce the other virtues of persons from the corresponding virtues of the ideal city-state); in Book VIII, it is used again to construct parallels, and to find causal relations, between various unjust city states and unjust persons, and to characterize and rank both. Thus Plato puts normative ethics (the justice and the good of persons) and normative political philosophy (the justice and the good of city-states) on parallel tracks, supposes that we cannot understand either without the other, and finds several causal and other relations between the justice and the good of the one and the justice and the good of the other.²⁷ This analogy has received plenty of attention.²⁸

A second leading idea is Plato’s pioneering analysis of the human soul into reason, spirit, and appetite. In Book IV this tripartite division of the

soul is explicitly argued for and not taken for granted. It is used immediately in the analyses and definitions of the four cardinal virtues of persons. In Book VIII it is used to analyze several types of unjust persons; in Book IX it is used to show that just persons enjoy a pleasanter life, at least in the most valuable pleasures; and in Book X it is used to determine the value of art and its place in society. Further, the analysis of the soul is presupposed in the theory of early education in Books II and III, and assumed in the “longer road” of the higher education of reason in Book VII. Without understanding Plato’s analysis of the soul, none of these other ideas of his can be understood. The whole “moral psychology” of the *Republic* depends on Plato’s analysis of the human psyche. No wonder it also has received so much attention.²⁹

A third leading (and complex) idea in the *Republic* is Plato’s “metaphysical epistemology”:³⁰ his distinction between knowledge and opinion – that knowledge is “infallible” (free of error or falsehood) while opinion can contain errors and can be true or false; his further claim that such knowledge is possible only if there are Platonic forms, everlasting and unchanging universals or archetypes that enable us to sort out and to evaluate physical objects and works of art; and his further claim yet, that there is the universal form of the good that accounts for the value of forms and the lesser value of physical objects and works of art. He argues for this cluster of leading ideas in Books V, VI and VII, and their importance is also indisputable and much discussed.³¹

Plato uses this conception of knowledge, of forms, and the form of the good, to define the philosopher, as one who does not deny or confuse universals with their physical and artistic instantiations; to justify the paradox of the philosopher-king, that political power should be based on knowledge of universals and above all knowledge of the form of the good.³² The incredibly demanding higher education of future rulers, in Book VII, is based on this cluster of leading ideas. And the extreme political elitism of Plato’s ideal city – that only his philosophers can rule well – is also based on this cluster of leading ideas and on the natural lottery assumption, or an empirical part of it, that the extremely high intelligence required for ruling well is naturally distributed to very few at birth.

Even in this little rough and ready partial sketch, we can see that Plato indeed orders his ideas: some are very basic assumptions, others are argued for, and others yet belong to the super-structure that is built on the first two. A more complete ordering would reveal more fully the philosophical structure of the *Republic*.

But we must remember that Plato's ordering is not always explicit – sometimes apparent, sometimes hinted at, sometimes even hidden. And he may not have had a complete ordering of all his ideas in that work. Plato writes informally, dramatically, poetically, and artfully, using every device, weapon, or stratagem known to a writer, be he a poet, philosopher, psychologist, or storyteller.

Notes

- 1 All references to Plato's *Republic* in this book are to Stephanus pages, which are the same in all modern editions and translations of the *Republic*. Such page numbers are usually found in the margins. Thus, in the Cooper edition of *Plato: Complete Works*, "Republic: 352d" refers to the *Republic*, Stephanus page 352 (found in the margin), section d of that page. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated, but heavily indebted to Shorey (1935) and Cornford (1941).
- 2 Rawls (2000).
- 3 For Plato's characters and their integration into the philosophical themes see O'Connor (2007) and Weiss (2007).
- 4 For different readings of the *Republic* due to its dialogue form, see Rowe (2006).
- 5 For Plato's readers see Yunis (2007).
- 6 For the history of the book, ancient and modern, see Introduction in Ferrari (2007).
- 7 See Cohen and Keyt (1992) for the classic discussion of the use of the principle of charity in interpreting Plato.
- 8 In an attempt to exhibit both the richness and the grand plan of the *Republic*, Cornford (1941), in his influential and most popular translation of the work in the twentieth century, offers an analytic table of contents to display the richness of its many subjects, and divides the work into five parts with headings to outline the grand plan that orders the subjects. Though one might disagree with Cornford's re-dividing the *Republic* (into five parts rather than the traditional ten books), his headings of parts and chapters are an invaluable guide to any reader.
- 9 For the integration of plot, character, and philosophy in the *Republic* see especially Rosen (2005), and Anton (2008).
- 10 The second question, whether justice is a virtue, does not appear very explicitly in the rest of the work, but the theory of function and virtue at the end of Book I answers the question of what a virtue is, and the theory of justice in Book IV answers the question whether justice is a virtue. See chapters 4 and 5 below.
- 11 See the Introduction in White (1979: 9–13), for a discussion of this question.

- 12 This is part of the point Socrates makes about the priority of what justice is over the other questions. For a different view see Penner (2005).
- 13 The reach and depth of justice is revealed again in Rawls (1971), “The Subject of Justice,” (1971: 7–11), and well explained by Barry (1989: chapter 6).
- 14 In the *Euthyphro* (7a–7e), Socrates tells us that the arts of counting, measuring, and weighing can help us resolve many disputes, but not disputes about the good, the just, and the beautiful, implying that these cannot be resolved by the mathematical arts. For discussion see Irwin (1995) and Santas (2006b).
- 15 Rawls (1971: chapter VII, “Goodness as Rationality”): a goodness knowledge of which is far more accessible to ordinary human beings. But the rules of choice he proposes are largely rules for instrumental goods. Rawls acknowledges that disputes about ultimate ends are far harder to adjudicate and may be endless; fortunately, he thinks, agreement about ultimate ends is not necessary for agreement on justice. See his “Social Unity and Primary Goods” (Rawls 1982).
- 16 For discussion of the psychology of Plato’s myths and allegories see J. Lear (2006).
- 17 See G. R. Lear (2006) for discussion of education to love of beauty and how it helps to become just.
- 18 Apparent and real digressions are noted by Penner (2006: 238–40) who also sets out the work’s “Project as a Whole”. Ferrari also notes that “the *Republic* itself makes a point of interweaving its themes – since it is replete with anticipations, suspensions, and transformations of its leading ideas” (2007: xx).
- 19 Rickless (2007: chapter 1), used this method to give a clear and orderly statement of *one* of the theories in the *Republic*, Plato’s theory of forms. From a purely philosophical standpoint, this is an admirable way to understand a grand theory, though one that needs to be studied to be appreciated.
- 20 Strictly, the three definitions would be three basic assumptions.
- 21 That argument is found unsatisfactory by Socrates, but the theory itself is not. See Santas (2006a) for details.
- 22 See Santas (2001: 66–90, 11–17) and Santas (2006a), for tracking the use of the functional theory from Book I to X. For further arguments of its importance, see Coumoundouros and Polanski (2009).
- 23 Rawls (1971: 3–6 (The Role of Justice), 90–5 (Primary Goods as the Basis of Expectations), 142–5 (The Rationality of the Parties)).
- 24 Rawls (1971: 7–11, 433–40).
- 25 Rawls calls these advantages “natural” primary goods, as distinct from social primary goods – such as liberties and income and wealth – that society distributes through its basic institutions. Rawls notes that what the natural lottery distributes is neither just nor unjust, but what societies do with such distributions can be just or unjust (consider what societies do with, for example, color, gender, intelligence or beauty).

- 26 See Schofield (2007). In so far as the allegory of the metals is a symbol for the natural lottery assumption, it is no lie on Plato's part, noble or otherwise; Plato believed that people are born with unequal intelligence, spirit, and abilities for productive arts and trades; and we know that people are born with unequal IQ, and unequal abilities for mathematics, music, and so on. Of course, if the allegory or myth of metals is taken literally, that people are born with gold, silver, or iron in their souls, it is false, and young children might take it literally. See Jonathan Lear (2006).
- 27 Plato's most brilliant student, Aristotle separated ethics and politics, and did not take to Plato's analogy between the two, though he found other important relations between them. It is hard to find any subsequent theorists of justice and the good who have followed Plato in this analogy.
- 28 For example, Lear (1993), Williams (1997), Ferrari (2003), Santas (2001), Keyt (2006b), and many others. Since Popper's attack on the political philosophy of the *Republic*, some writers have downplayed the "dismal politics" of the work; this is understandable but not appropriate when we consider the work as a whole.
- 29 In the last fifteen years alone we have had several major works on it (Price 1995; Bobonich 2002; Lorenz 2005; Weinstein 2004).
- 30 See White (1992).
- 31 The literature on this cluster of ideas is immense; for some recent discussions see, e.g. Penner (2006) and Denyer (2007).
- 32 See especially Reeve (1988), and recently Denyer (2007) and Sedley (2007).