

## Republic Bk I 327a–354c

*Introduction.* The following questions are intended to guide your reading. We will discuss some of them in the classes. If you would like credit, you have two options. (1) You could write up your answers from four worksheets like this one. A few sentences are enough: your answers should be as short as possible and only as elaborate as necessary. The questions with an asterisk (\*) are optional. (2) You could write an essay of ca. 1000 words on one of the questions or on a topic that we arrange together.

### Questions.

1. Socrates asks ‘Can a moral/just person harm anyone?’ (335b). What is the answer to this question, and how is it reached?
2. Explain Thrasymachus challenge to Socrates (338c–339a).
3. Socrates employs a series of five arguments to refute Thrasymachus. Can you find where they are introduced in the discussion?
- 4.\* Explain one of the arguments as you understand it.
- 5.\* Do you agree with Socrates that immorality or injustice is never more rewarding than morality or justice (e.g., 354a), or do you think that Thrasymachus has a point after all?

*Background.* (a) The *Republic* was written and distributed on ten rolls of papyrus, which constitute the ten *books*. This order is more or less arbitrary. It is common to use the *pagination* of Stephanus’s 16<sup>th</sup>-century edition, which also divides each page in five sections (a–e). Hence, a reference to ‘Rep. 359d’, say, is often sufficient. The numbers alone however can be ambiguous: in this case, it refers to a passage in the dialogue *Protagoras*. (b) The Greek words δίκαιος (*dikaios*) and δικαιοσύνη (*dikaio-syne*; cf. 331c) are often translated as ‘just’, ‘right’ and ‘doing right’, respectively, but they have *ethical*, rather than legal, associations. Hence ‘moral’ seems apt too (as in Waterfield’s translation). (c) It seems that Bk I was written earlier than the rest of the *Republic*. It is a typical *Socratic dialogue*, where Socrates probes other people’s beliefs, but rarely offers a theory himself. This is what Thrasymachus has in view when he complains that Socrates only simulates his ignorance (337a). Yet, according to the oracle in Delphi, nobody is wiser than Socrates.<sup>1</sup> In the *Apology* (21b–e), it emerges that this is because he knows that (or when) he does not know. Socrates is the son of a midwife. This is an important fact: he compares his philosophical work as midwifery with all the attributes of labour (of the soul), pain, pregnancy, and delivering offspring; without bearing ‘children’ of his own. Rather, he delivers and examines other people’s ideas (see *Theatetus* 150a–151d).

1 See Diogenes Laertius (fl. 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD), *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, Bk II 36.

