

Republic Bk VIII–IX 543a–592b¹

The dialogue now returns to a topic briefly raised at 445d: according to the discussion of *Kallipolis*, certain types of political systems are immoral and unjust, and hence do not allow ‘mental health, bloom and vitality’ (444d–e). By the end of Bk IX, Socrates is confident finally to have answered Glaucon’s initial challenge, *viz.* that the just or moral life is more rewarding than the unjust or immoral one.

1. What is the connection between different political systems and different types of personality? (544c–545c)
2. Select and describe one of the four defective character types, i.e. the timarchic individual (548d–550c), the oligarchic individual (553a–555a), the democratic individual (558c–562a), and the tyrannical individual (571a–576b).
- 3.* Do you recognise Plato’s sketch of democracy? (555b–558c)
4. At 580d, Socrates introduces the idea that each part of the soul has its own particular pleasure (ἡδονή, *hedone*). What are they?
- 5.* From 581d onwards, Plato mixes the discussion of happiness with a discussion of pleasure. Do you think this is justified?
- 6.* Sketch (one of) Socrates’s three ‘proofs’ that the philosophical life is the happiest. (580b–c; 581c–583b; 583b–585b)
7. What is the point of the many-headed beast? (588b–590d)

Background. (a) The Greek word *τιμή* (*time*) mainly means honour, prestige, rank, or glory. Hence, a timocracy (τιμοκρατία) is a political system based on honour. An oligarchy (ὀλιγαρχία) is a political system where a few rule; the Greek *ὀλίγος* (*oligos*) can mean small, few, or little. But it is clear that Plato actually means a plutocracy, where money rules (i.e. the wealthy few). (b) In ancient philosophy, happiness (εὐδαιμονία, *eudaimonia*, see, e.g., 576c) is not at all a conscious feeling or mood. Rather, it denotes a more enduring state of well-being or flourishing. We are happy insofar as we live genuinely worthwhile and hence fulfilled lives; when we not just live, but live well. So, the happy life is both aspiration and achievement. (c) The ends of Bk IX and Bk IV connect to the beginning of Bk II (357b–358a), where Socrates suggests that justice is (1) good for its own sake and (2) good for its consequences. One of the main aims up to Bk IV is to establish (1), connecting justice or morality with mental health (ὕγιειά ψυχῆς, *hygieia psyches*; 444d), which has intrinsic value; and Bk IX completes the argument with supporting (2): the pleasures of the just person are real or genuine (e.g., 586e–587a, 589a–b), and so justice or morality contributes to a person’s happiness (and so has instrumental value).

¹ This is chapters 11–12 in Waterfield’s translation.