

Unless otherwise specified, you should try to answer from the point of view Socrates argues for.

**I. Book 1: Discussion of Justice.** The topic we emphasized in this book is the process of asking and exploring a philosophical question such as "What is justice?" What you should focus on is not necessarily the specific arguments about justice given by characters, but *the way that they interact with Socrates*. It will also be helpful to know in general *how* Socrates critiques the definitions offered by Cephalus, Polemarchus, and Thrasymachus – that is, not so much his arguments as his method of *raising questions, examining assumptions*, questioning to see if the person he's speaking with might not have to *abandon what he seemed sure of*.

1. Cephalus departs fairly early in the discussion. What is the *philosophical* significance of Cephalus leaving as he does at this point in the discussion?
2. Polemarchus offers a definition of justice: to give "each his due," which soon is transformed into the principle that justice is helping your friends and harming your enemies. How does Socrates this opinion--what view of the justice of "harming one's enemies" does he advocate?
3. What is unphilosophical about the way Thrasymachus participates in the conversation about justice? Another way to ask this is to ask, "Is Thrasymachus *doing* philosophy?" If not, why not?
  - a. What is wrong with Thrasymachus' *manner*, and how is it different from Socrates'?
  - b. What is wrong about Thrasymachus' *goal* (hint: see 338a) and how is it different from Socrates' goal?
4. At the end of Book 1, Socrates says, "The result of our discussion is that I don't know a thing." Why does this *not* mean that Book 1 has been useless?
  - a. To think further about this question, compare this statement of Socrates to what the prisoner in the cave might say when he first looks at the fire or comes out of the cave into the open air (515d-516a).

**II. Book 2: Doubts about the origin and the value of justice itself.**

1. Again, one of the points we emphasized here is the difference between the *manner* in which Glaucon and Adeimantus present their arguments to Socrates and the others, as well as the *goal* they have in mind, compared to the manner and goal of Thrasymachus in Book 1.
  - a. Despite being similar in content, how do they differ? How does this affect how Socrates responds?
2. At the start of Book 2, Socrates and Glaucon lay out three kinds or classes of "goods" and Socrates says justice is "in the most beautiful" one (358a). What makes this class "the most beautiful"?
3. Glaucon and Adeimantus' arguments about justice.
  - a. What does Glaucon maintain is the origin of justice (358e-359b), and why would this contradict the claim Socrates makes (in #II.2 above)?
  - b. What is the point of the story of Gyges (359e-360c), and why would Socrates not want to accept this point?
  - c. What is the "perfection of injustice" according to Glaucon's argument (361a-b)? What, by contrast, is the perfection of justice (361c-d)? Explain.
  - d. How, given what he discusses about the true aim of philosophy in Books 5-7, would Socrates judge these definitions of the "perfection" of justice and injustice? (You could also make some surmises about this from the *Apology*.)
4. You will not have to talk about the "ideal city" form the sections we skipped.

## V. Book 5. The nature of true philosophy.

1. At 471c, Glaucon asks Socrates whether or not the city in words is really a *possible* city. Socrates' first response in a way questions the validity of Glaucon's question itself. Why?
  - a. How is Socrates' answer at 473a consistent with the distinction he later makes between the "many beautiful things" and the "form of beauty itself"?
2. Socrates then addresses the question of possibility with the idea that cities will never be able to achieve justice until "philosophers become kings or those now called kings and regents become genuine philosophers." Note: Socrates' admits that such an idea will be laughed at by the many – it is "completely contrary to opinion." *I will not ask if you think the idea of making philosophers kings is realistic or good, for this ignores the main point – that we can't understand what Socrates means until we process his view of what philosophy really is.*
  - a. What is a true or "genuine philosopher"? You should be able to give the basic *etymological meaning of the word philosopher*, as it is the key to the rest of Book 5.
  - b. Why don't those who love the many beautiful things – such as the many beautiful pieces of music or works of art – qualify in Socrates' mind as *philosophers* (475d-)? What should they be called instead of *philosophers*? (480a)
  - c. You should be able to use and explain the following concepts and terms in your understanding of what Socrates means by philosophy:
    - i. the one (e.g., Beauty Itself) and the many (the many beautiful things);
    - ii. *form, shape, idea*;
    - iii. ignorance – opinion (conjecture) – knowledge;
    - iv. being – becoming/ceasing to be – nonbeing;  
(The middle pair can also be called "generation/decay.")
  - d. What does Socrates mean when he says, "So with the things; they *equivocate*..." (479c)?

## VI. Book 6: The ideal and the reality of philosophers; the shape of the good.

1. Be able to describe briefly the ideal philosopher according to Socrates (484a-487a).
2. In reality, objects Adeimantus, the few philosophers who are decent people are *useless*. Explain how Socrates shows that this fault does not lie entirely with philosophy itself by using the metaphor of the ship – 488a-489c.
3. Moreover, says Adeimantus, most people who claim the title "philosopher" are worse than useless. They are cranks and scoundrels; in other words, evil. What are some of the reasons many with a "philosophic nature" become *corrupt*? You should be able to include the following in an explanation:
  - a. The influence of the majority or many (492b-e) and how this happens;
  - b. the way the teachers called sophists (whom the many distrust) actually further and deepen the corruption caused by the many (493a-494a);
  - c. the influence of a talented young person's friends, family, and fellow citizens (494b-e) on this talented person;
  - d. how the "parts" of a philosophical nature actually contribute to its corruption;
  - e. why people with the gifts necessary for philosophy are often the most dangerous people there are;
  - f. why the *sophists* don't qualify as true philosophers (494a; 495c-496a).
4. A person suited to the pursuit of wisdom who flees the influence of the majority and preserves his or her life from injustice by living quietly and privately – "as under a little wall in a storm" (496d) – will such a person live the *best* kind of life? Why or why not?
5. Note at 498a-b that Socrates first broaches the topic of when and how young people should practice philosophy, which he explains more in Book VII. He mentions the danger of "the hardest part – discussion," which refers to dialectics and its dangers (cp. 539b).
6. How and why does Socrates modify his opinion of "the many" (499e)?

7. The idea or *shape of the good*. Why is the shape of the good higher or more important than justice, beauty, courage, wisdom, etc. (504d-505a)? How will it solve the problems of corruption and uselessness?
  - a. What are the opinions of the many and the refined about “the good” and what is wrong with these opinions? (505b-d)
  - b. The *analogy of the sun*.
    - i. According to Socrates, why are the powers of sight and being seen different and more precious than all other senses (507c-508a)?
    - ii. Socrates says, “The good begot the sun as a proportion to itself: as is the good to intelligence and intelligible things in the intelligible realm, so is the sun to sight and to visible things in the visible realm” (508c). What does he mean?
      - 1) From the analogy of the good to the sun, what is the power of intelligence like? (What metaphor does Socrates use for it at 508d?) What is important about this aspect of the metaphor? (Connect to *shape; form*).
      - 2) What is the importance of the shape of the good for intelligence and for the intelligibles – the forms or “shapes” that are known?
      - 3) You should know that Socrates suggests that “the good is not being, but beyond being, surpassing even it in dignity and power” (509b-c), even though he doesn’t really go on to explain this. (It might not be able to be put into words.)
  - c. The analogy of the *divided line*. Be able to explain the basic divisions of the divided line and the powers or states of the soul associated with them.
    - i. Why couldn’t you have true knowledge about physical things, according to the divided line? What is the best or appropriate relation of the mind/soul to physical things?
    - ii. According to Socrates, how is “intellection” [reason/dialectic] – i.e., the knowledge of the forms – superior to “understanding” or the knowledge of mathematical objects?
    - iii. The ideas expressed in the divided line analogy may seem abstract, especially the highest level, but they help us understand the parable of the cave, below.

## VII. Book 7: The parable of the cave and the practice of dialectic.

1. Be able to give a basic account of the details of the cave, including the significance of :
  - a. the prisoners, their inability to move, the shadows on the wall, the competitions they have, etc.;
  - b. the objects carried along the road by low wall, the fire, the echoed speech (or silence) that accompanies the objects;
  - c. the resistance of the freed prisoner, and his experience when he sees the fire and becomes blind to the shadows he used to see (515d-e);
  - d. the realm outside the cave, including the reaction of the prisoner who is “forcibly dragged up there,” how this person learns to see, and finally, the sun itself (516a-c); and
  - e. the reactions of the prisoners who have remained in the cave to the liberated prisoner who returns to the cave.
2. What name could we give to the process that frees a prisoner from her chains, drags her first to the fire and the objects carried by the people along the road, and then into the outside realm to learn to see things there, and eventually to contemplate the sun itself (517b)? Explain. (Hint: What has Socrates been talking about since the end of Book 5?)
3. Two things confuse the eyes, according to the parable: moving from darkness to the light, and moving back from light into darkness. What do these two confusions symbolize?
  - a. How does this explain people’s reaction to Socrates’ examinations and questioning?

- b. Can you use this insight from the parable to explain Socrates' statement at the end of Book I: "The result of our discussion is that I don't know a thing" (354c).
- 4. According to Socrates, what is the true nature of education, and how is this different from what most people think education involves? (518c-519b)
  - a. If Socrates is right that the power of understanding inheres in everyone's soul, lack of true education is *dangerous* (518e-519a). Explain.
  - b. How does this idea of education fit Socrates' method of asking others to examine their opinions, not simply telling them his own ideas?
- 5. Will those who make it out of the cave want to return to it? Why or why not?
  - a. Given this, why isn't it *unjust* to force them to return? (519e-520c).
  - b. Is it best for a city to be ruled by those who *want* to rule? Explain (520d-521b).
- 6. Awakening the intellect/understanding and the practice of dialectic.
  - a. Socrates asks, "Which study serves as a winch to lift the soul from becoming to being" (521d). His first answer is calculation. *Why?*
    - i. In what way do the fingers on one's hand *not* "invite or awaken intellection" (523b-e)?
    - ii. How would it be possible for the fingers to invite understanding and intellection? (523e-524d).
    - iii. What is the general principle about what sorts of experiences or phenomena "invite the intellect" (524d)?
  - b. For our purposes, it is not very important to know much about the various subjects philosophers in training must study, but identifying them is pretty easy. You should be able to say what it is about these studies that help educate youth with a philosophical nature.
  - c. "The song of dialectics": Though this may be confusing – it is confusing even to Glaucon! – but you should know the following about dialectics:
    - i. The place one will learn and practice dialectics in the parable of the cave (532a).
    - ii. Dialectics involves *discussion* (531e). The most common meaning of *dialectics* is *dialogue*, conversation, or speech between people, or speech coming from two or more different perspectives.
    - iii. In this way, dialectics also involves question and answer.
    - iv. Dialectics is also described as a *journey* (532b) with a specific goal (532d). How does this relate to the parable of the cave.
  - d. The excerpt from Plato's *Seventh Letter* (posted on the web site) helps explain the relationship between the *practice* and the *goal* of dialectics.
    - i. Be able to identify the elements of dialectics or philosophical discussion that are summarized in the letter.
    - ii. According to the letter, is being good at dialectics or getting good definitions an end in itself? Explain. What is needed to make dialectics worthwhile?
  - e. The end of book VII discusses a *danger* of dialectics (537e-539d). be able to explain why dialectics (which includes discussion of arguments on both sides of a question) can be dangerous, especially for young people who are good at it.