Plato's *Republic*

An Introduction

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Introduction

Plato's *Republic* is one of those books that most people have probably heard of, even if they have not actually read it. Even Bubbles, the good-hearted, bespectacled doofus of the long-running Canadian comedy *Trailer Park Boys* knows enough of the *Republic* to appeal to the famous Noble Lie in a conversation with another resident of Sunnyvale Trailer Park.

I first encountered the *Republic* like so many others have: in my first semester of college. This was many years ago, but my memory of the experience was one of feeling lost much of the time. I had a fine high school education, but philosophy was new to me, with its focus on big, abstract questions and especially on rigorous, rational arguments as the means to answering them. I did reasonably well in the course, but the *Republic* was tricky terrain, and I did not really know my way about. My aim in this book is to help readers traverse Plato's philosophical masterpiece with fewer falls and less befuddled wandering than I experienced. I try to do this by pointing out important landmarks and interesting bits of topography, helping readers not to miss the forest for the trees, as the saying goes, but also to appreciate the importance of particular trees, hills, and streams. I consider objections to the views and arguments Plato has Socrates express and make. Thinking philosophically requires, among other things, stating arguments clearly and carefully, articulating assumptions that lurk in the background, and making judgments—hopefully, good judgments—about whether the reasons offered in support of a claim are good reasons.

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The *Republic*'s Two Main Questions

The *Republic* addresses two overarching questions, *What is justice?* and *Is a just life happier—more profitable or personally advantageous—than an unjust life?* Plato addresses these questions in what is for modern readers an unexpected way: in dialogue form. Instead of writing an essay or a treatise directly arguing for his view, he gives us a philosophical drama, so to speak, a conversation between Socrates and several others in which answers are offered, discussed, and typically rejected. Plato wrote almost all of his philosophy as dialogues, most of them featuring Socrates talking with someone he would encounter in Athens (though Plato's later dialogues no longer feature Socrates). Plato was not Socrates' student in a formal sense, since Socrates himself wrote nothing and started no school—unlike Plato, who founded the Academy, where Aristotle studied before founding his own school, the Lyceum. But like many young men of his day, Plato was taken with Socrates, struck by his sharp and open mind and his fearless but often failed pursuit of knowledge. Whether the views the character Socrates expresses in the *Republic* are his own or whether Plato uses him to express his own views is an interesting issue, but it is not one that we need worry over to come to terms with the *Republic.* I will usually make no distinction between Plato and Socrates in this book, except when doing so helps our understanding, as when, for example, Socrates seems to make an error in reasoning or allows a crucial assumption to pass unquestioned. Is the mistake one that Plato himself does not recognize? Or does he intentionally have Socrates stumble or 'pull a fast one' because this is what actually happened in the conversation, of which the dialogue is a faithful but stylized representation? Or—more likely, I think—because he wants us, his readers, to engage in imaginary dialogue with Socrates, to raise objections and questions where the other characters are silent or too agreeable? That Plato writes philosophy in dialogue-form complicates the life of the reader, but it is a complication that is rich and rewarding, and also enables Plato to manifest respect for his readers. His aim is not the transmission of truth or doctrine from the knowing sage to a passive but receptive learner—indeed, in presenting the famous Allegory of the Cave he explicitly rejects the idea that education is 'putting knowledge into souls that lack it, like putting sight into blind

eyes' (7.518b).[1] Instead, we are expected to be active, engaged readers who wrestle with the questions and arguments for ourselves. Writing dialogues suggests that philosophy—which I take to be clear, rigorous thinking about those important questions that are outside the ambit of the natural or social sciences—is best done in conversation with others rather than alone in one's study.

Readers with some familiarity with philosophy will not be surprised that one of our first tasks in trying to understand how Plato has Socrates answer the *Republic*'s two main questions is to question the questions themselves. What exactly does Plato mean when he asks about the nature of justice and whether it is 'more profitable' than injustice? An important point straightaway is that δικαιοσύνη (*dikaiosunê*), which is translated as 'justice', can have broader meaning than the English word 'justice' has, which typically involves fair distributions or the idea of rights. *Dikaiosunê* certainly has this narrower sense too; in Book V of his *Nicomachean Ethics,* Plato's student Aristotle distinguishes between specific and general senses of justice, where specific justice concerns what today we would call distributive justice (which asks whether a particular distribution of goods is fair) and retributive justice (which asks if and how wrongdoers should be punished). The broader sense that Plato has in mind connotes moral goodness more generally, a virtue of 'doing the right thing' (though we will ultimately see that for Plato justice is primarily about being a certain sort of person rather than doing certain kinds of things). Justice in this broad sense might be rendered by 'righteousness', but that seems rather archaic and can have misleading religious connotations. Aristotle suggests that justice in this general sense is 'complete virtue', the whole of virtue, of which the narrower kind of justice is a part.[2] When Socrates asks what justice is, he is asking

1 I will cite the *Republic* in this way. '7.518b' means that the passage quoted is in Book VII of the *Republic* at page 518 in the standard Greek text of Plato's work, section b (about one-fifth of the way down that page). Thus, regardless of which translation readers have before them, we can all quite literally 'be on the same page', so long as the translation provides the 'Stephanus numbers'—named after a sixteenth-century editor of Plato's works—in the margins. I will quote from G.M.A. Grube's translation, as revised by C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1992), which is excellent and inexpensive.

2 *Nicomachean Ethics,* trans. by W. D. Ross and rev. by J. O. Urmson, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle* (*Revised Oxford Translation*), ed. by Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 1783 [Book V, Chapter 1, Bekker page 1129b25].

about the nature of moral goodness generally, asking what is it to be a good person.

The *Republic*'s second question asks whether being a good person makes one personally better off—whether it 'would make living most worthwhile for each of us' (1.344e). There is no question of whether a just life is a *morally* better than an unjust life; the issue the second question raises, by contrast, is whether a just life is *prudentially* better, as philosophers often put it—whether it is in one's interest to be just and act justly. This question has great practical importance, given the overwhelmingly plausible assumption that each of us wants to be happy. As Socrates puts it, 'the argument concerns no ordinary topic but the way we ought to live' (1.352d). In ordinary English there is a subtle distinction between *leading* a good life and *having* a good life. At the funeral of a friend who was devoted to the wellbeing of others we expect the eulogy to focus on the former: they led a good life, helping others without thought of self and often to their own detriment. At the funeral of a friend devoted to the pleasures of the table and the bedroom we are likelier to hear that they *had* a good life. So the *Republic*'s second question inquires about the connection between *leading* a good life and *having* a good life. It is a comparative question, asking if the just person is happier than the unjust person. Socrates is not arguing that justice is *sufficient* for happiness, that being just alone makes for a happy life. Instead, he will argue that justice is *necessary* for happiness, that we cannot be happy without being just. Socrates thinks that justice alone will not guarantee happiness, since there may be external circumstances that make happiness impossible, even for the just person. But the just or morally good person will be as happy as it is possible to be in those circumstances and always be happier than the unjust person, since justice always makes one better off than injustice, he thinks. As we follow along, it will be helpful to bear in mind ways in which 'happiness' can be a misleading translation for the Greek word εὐδαιμονία (*eudaimonia*), which connotes flourishing or thriving, something deeper and longer lasting than the perhaps fleeting psychological state of enjoyment that we might associate with our word 'happiness'. A flourishing person

All translations of Aristotle will be drawn from *The Complete Works* and will be cited by title, book and chapter, and Bekker page (the Aristotelian analog of the Platonic 'Stephanus' numbers), thus: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, V.1 1129b25.

will typically enjoy their life, but the enjoyment is best thought of as a by-product of happiness rather than its essence.

The Structure of the *Republic*

The *Republic*'s two main questions give it its structure, which I sketch here:

Book I introduces but ultimately fails to answer the *Republic*'s two main questions. Socrates discusses the nature and value of justice first with Cephalus and Polemarchus and then with Thrasymachus, a more sophisticated and less friendly interlocutor. Socrates initially thinks that he has refuted Thrasymachus' view that the unjust life is happier than the just life, but he soon realizes that he has left the *Republic*'s first question unanswered and thus that he has not really answered the second question; how could he know which life is happier if he does not yet know what justice is?

Books II–IV answer the *Republic*'s first question, 'What is justice?'. Socrates' young friends Glaucon and Adeimantus (who in real life are Plato's brothers) challenge Socrates to continue after the failure of Book I. They agree with him that the just life is happier than the unjust life, but they recognize that they cannot justify their view and thus do not really *know* that the just life is more profitable. They press Socrates to forgo the rapid-fire argumentation of Book I and to offer a more intuitive, accessible way of answering the *Republic*'s questions. Although these questions concern justice as a virtue of persons (which we'll call personal justice), Socrates suggests that, since a *polis* (a Greek city-state) is just like a person, only bigger, the best way to figure out the nature of personal justice is to investigate justice in the *polis* (political justice) since it will be easier to find justice in the larger thing. Thus they set out to theoretically construct an ideal *polis*, which is completed by the end of Book III. And by the end of Book IV, Socrates thinks he has answered the first question and starts on the second.

In Books V–VII, Socrates answers questions about and objections to his answer to the *Republic*'s first question. These are dubbed 'the Three Waves', since they threaten to destroy the ideal city. The First Wave concerns whether women can be rulers in the ideal *polis*. Socrates' view on this might surprise you. The second addresses the ideal city's

communal life, especially how children are to be raised—which seems to do away with the traditional family. The third and most threatening concerns the ideal *polis* itself: is their ideal city merely theoretical, or could it be realized in the actual world? Socrates thinks such a city can be realized only if it is ruled by philosophers, which leads to an investigation of what a philosopher is. This investigation will last through Book VII. In addressing the Third Wave, Plato has Socrates introduce the famous theory of the Forms and offer one of the *Republic*'s central arguments, the Powers Argument, in defense of this view; he presents the analogies of the Sun and the Divided Line in Book VI, and the famous Allegory of the Cave in Book VII, among other things.

Having addressed the Three Waves to the company's satisfaction, in Books VIII-IX Socrates turns to the *Republic*'s second question, 'Is the just life happier than the unjust life?'. Expanding on the psychology and political philosophy developed earlier, he distinguishes between five possible kinds of souls and city-states and argues that the just life is happier than the unjust life.

Having answered the *Republic*'s two questions, in Book X Socrates returns to the status of poetry, which featured prominently in the educational program sketched in Books II and III. Despite his love for poetry, especially the works of Homer, he argues that most poetry should not be allowed in the ideal city because of its power to corrupt us. He concludes with the intriguing Myth of Er, about the importance of choice in a happy, well-lived life.

Readers will often find it helpful to keep the *Republic*'s overall structure in mind while making their way through the text, since *what* a character is talking about often makes more sense when we understand *why* they are talking about it. So it can be helpful, when feeling a little lost, to orient oneself by asking which question of the *Republic*'s two main questions is being addressed—although it might take a bit of intellectual sleuthing to determine that. For example, the details of the educational program Socrates develops in Books II and III are interesting in their own right, but it is easy to lose sight of why he devotes so much time and intellectual energy to this topic. If we keep the *Republic*'s overall structure in mind, we can see that Socrates discusses education and culture because he is exploring what an ideal *polis* is like, which requires an understanding of how the *polis*'s rulers will be

educated. And of course, he wants to create this ideal *polis* because the plan is to define political justice in order to define personal justice. And while the *Republic*'s first question about the nature of personal justice is interesting in its own right, Socrates wants to answer it because, as he realizes at the end of Book I, we cannot satisfactorily answer the *Republic*'s second question about whether the just life is happier until we know what justice is.

As orienting oneself by overall structure is an aid to understanding, I will try to offer signposts and reminders as we proceed through the *Republic.* Shortly I will offer more detail about what individual chapters of this book will contain, but before doing that I want to draw the reader's attention to one more big-picture topic.

Arguing about Justice

Thrasymachus, Socrates' main antagonist in the second half of Book I, thinks that justice and happiness are at odds with each other, that being just and acting justly leave one worse off. Socrates disagrees, and it is instructive to see what he does and does not do in the face of this disagreement. First, what he does not do: he does not insult Thrasymachus or impugn his intelligence or his motives. Sadly, the same cannot be said for Thrasymachus, who responds to Socrates' arguments in a rather nasty way. Nor does Socrates shrug and say things like, 'Everyone's got a right to their opinion, I guess' or 'Who's to say?' or 'That's just your opinion, man', like a Lebowski of classical antiquity who has traded his bathrobe for a chiton (the ancient Greeks did not wear togas; that was a Roman thing). Socrates does not think that reason merely sheds light on the *Republic*'s main questions, he thinks it can answer them. Some readers will be less confident in the power of rational argument and conceptual clarity; they may be more comfortable than Socrates and Plato are with there being more than one correct answer to these questions—or with there being none. But even though Socrates himself is not a moral pluralist, it is important to see that the method he employs in arguing against Thrasymachus is consistent with there being a plurality of answers to moral questions of the sort that the *Republic* devotes itself to. For while Socrates' method of question-and-answer—formally called *elenchus,* a kind of

cross-examination—is impersonal in the sense of focusing on principles rather than personalities, it is in another sense profoundly personal, for its focus is what the person he is engaging with thinks. The best way to investigate the nature of justice, he thinks, is to critically examine the views of someone who claims to know what justice is, to see if such a view can survive rigorous cross-examination and coherently hang together. So he proceeds from premises that his interlocutors endorse. Although Socrates thinks that there is an Archimedean point from which one can definitively settle moral questions, the Socratic method of question-and-answer does not presuppose this exalted view of reason. Its aim is more modest: to discover whether one's philosophical and moral beliefs are internally consistent. While this method is no respecter of persons in that it does not defer to someone based upon their social class, etc., it is, I think, profoundly respectful of persons, since it takes seriously a person's moral and philosophical views. Even though these views are usually found wanting, a willingness to examine a person's views about the nature of justice or courage or knowledge or whatever is certainly a way of taking those views, and that person, seriously.

What to Expect in this Book

This book is not a line-by-line commentary of the *Republic,* but it hews closely to the main contours of the *Republic*. I intend it as an aid to reading the *Republic* rather than as a substitute for doing so. In the chapters to come I try to guide readers, especially those new to the *Republic* or returning to it after a long absence, to a clear understanding of the *Republic*'s main themes and distinctive arguments. But we will also pause to linger over details that are interesting in themselves and which contribute to a nuanced understanding of Plato's philosophical thought and literary artistry. I will try to clearly and accurately spell out the arguments Plato has Socrates offer and then critically reflect on them, asking questions such as 'Does the conclusion logically follow from the premises?' and 'Do we have good reasons to think the premises are true?' and 'What assumptions are driving the argument?', etc. We will see that Socrates' interlocutors often accept arguments that they have good reason to doubt. This is something most of us do, especially when we think the conclusion is true, but setting aside one's belief in a

conclusion and querying the quality of the reasons offered in support of it is the hallmark of good critical thinking. I will try to model that in the pages to come and hopefully help readers sharpen their own philosophical skills. Since one of Plato's aims is for us, his readers, to think philosophically for ourselves, nothing would delight me more than readers disagreeing with and arguing against claims, interpretations, and assessments I make. Needless to say, there is a lot I will leave out as we proceed through the *Republic,* but by the end readers should have a good sense of the main themes and arguments of the *Republic* and of some of the philosophical problems with them. Here is a chapter-by-chapter rundown of the main issues to be discussed.

Chapter One, 'Fathers and Sons', covers the first half of Book I of the *Republic*, where Socrates raises the *Republic*'s first question about the nature of justice at the home of Cephalus, a wealthy merchant who lives in a suburb of Athens. Cephalus suggests that justice is paying one's debts and telling the truth, but Socrates thinks this cannot be the essence of justice, since there are times when one should not return what one has borrowed. This alerts us to an important fact about what Socrates is looking for in an account of justice: the account should be unconditionally correct, with no ifs, ands, or buts. Cephalus' son Polemarchus jumps into the conversation and offers a revision of his father's definition, suggesting that justice—right conduct, generally—is benefiting one's friends and harming one's enemies. Socrates finds this account has implications that Polemarchus himself cannot accept, so the chapter explores Socrates' reasoning, especially the assumption that justice, a virtue of character, is a craft or skill. We then discuss Socrates' more direct argument against Polemarchus' account, that the just person would not harm anyone.

Chapter Two, 'Taming the Beast: Socrates versus Thrasymachus', is devoted to Socrates' encounter with the sophist Thrasymachus in the second half of Book I. Thrasymachus' answers to the *Republic*'s main questions are a provocative challenge to the reverential attitude Socrates has toward justice in particular and virtue in general. Thrasymachus defines justice as whatever benefits the politically powerful and argues that a conventionally just person lives less happily than their unjust counterpart. Socrates offers five different arguments against Thrasymachus' views, which are spelled out clearly and evaluated

carefully, with attention paid to the connections between them and to the crucial concepts around which they orbit (e.g., the notion of a virtue). Socrates' arguments fall short of the mark, and we will examine why this is the case, exploring avenues of response that Thrasymachus could but does not take. By the close of Book I, Socrates realizes that he has not answered the *Republic*'s second question because he has not yet answered the first: we cannot know whether the just life is happier until we first know what justice is.

Chapter Three, 'A Fresh Start', explores the way in which Socrates tries to address the *Republic*'s two questions, 'What is justice?' and 'Is the just life happier than the unjust life?'. Rather than offering a battery of arguments as he did in Book I, Socrates offers an analogy between the *polis* (the Greek city-state) and the *psychê* (individual soul) that will structure the rest of the *Republic*. The plan is to first discover the nature of justice as a political virtue—as a virtue of the *polis*—and then apply this to the individual soul in order to discover the nature of personal justice.

Chapter Four, 'Blueprints for a Platonic Utopia: Education and Culture', examines Socrates' account of education in the ideal polis, focusing especially on informal, cultural education in music and poetry. We will explore the fascinating connections Socrates draws between aesthetic and moral development, especially the role that poetic and musical style play over and above content. We then discuss Socrates' rather disturbing attitude toward disabled citizens before focusing on the famous Noble Falsehood, which concludes Book III, discussing the role that myth, especially myths of origin, play in civic self-understanding.

Chapter Five, 'Starting to Answer the First Question: The Political Virtues', focuses on the first third of Book IV. The ideal *polis* complete, Socrates and company investigate the political virtues of wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice, defining each and discussing their location in the *polis*. We will explore these accounts and the issues they raise, for example how the kind of agreement that constitutes political moderation differs from the idea of consent in modern liberal political thought, and the question of whether there are other virtues in addition to the four cardinal virtues.

We continue discussing Book IV of the *Republic* in Chapter Six, 'The Republic's First Question Answered at Last: Personal Justice'. We first

attend to Plato's foray into psychology (literally, his account (*logos*) of the soul (*psuchê*)) in which he tries to justify the analogy between city and soul that has shaped the *Republic*. By appealing to the idea that the same thing cannot simultaneously undergo or perform opposite states or activities (dubbed the Opposition Principle), Socrates argues that the soul has a three-part structure, just as the city does: a rational part, which corresponds to the guardian-rulers in the *polis*; a spirited part (the seat of anger and pride), which corresponds to the soldierly auxiliaries of the *polis*; and an appetitive part, which corresponds to the craftspeople. Socrates then derives the personal virtues by applying the political virtues to the soul. The most important personal virtue, of course, is justice, which he conceives of as each part of the soul doing its own work: reason, not appetite or spirit, governs the just soul. We will pay attention to important features of this account, for example how it differs from Cephalus' and Polemarchus', for whom justice is a matter of interpersonal, external doing (of how one treats one's fellows), while for Socrates and Plato is it a matter of intrapersonal, internal being, of what one's soul is like.

In Chapter Seven, 'Questions about the Ideal Polis: The Three Waves', we see Polemarchus and Adeimantus begin Book V by putting the brakes on Socrates' attempt to immediately begin answering the *Republic*'s second question, whether living a morally good life is good for the person living it. They raise questions about and objections to the ideal *polis*, known as 'the Three Waves', which is an apt metaphor for a sea-faring culture. The First Wave concerns the question of whether women can be guardian-rulers in the ideal city. Socrates' affirmative answer—surprising to his companions and to many readers alike (though for different reasons)—raises the question of whether Plato is a feminist. The Second Wave concerns the ideal city's communal living arrangements, especially child-rearing. Socrates argues that not only is the abolition of the traditional family possible, it is beneficial. The Third Wave is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Eight, 'Surfing the Third Wave: Plato's Metaphysical Elevator, the Powers Argument, and the Infallibility of Knowledge', focuses on the Third Wave, which concerns the very possibility of the ideal city. Socrates famously claims that the ideal city can be made real only if philosophers rule. This leads him to explore how philosophers

differ from non-philosophers, which will guide the last part of Book V as well as Books VI and VII. A crucial point of difference is that philosophers have knowledge while non-philosophers merely have belief, a distinction which is explored in some depth and detail. We devote special attention to one of the *Republic*'s most crucial arguments, the Powers Argument, in which Socrates argues for the existence of the Forms, the mind-independently real, timeless essences of the many particular things that populate the everyday world of our senses. The reality of the Forms is perhaps Plato's most distinctive metaphysical view, so we devote quite a bit of attention to stating, explaining, and evaluating the Powers Argument, and to discussing the implications of its being seriously flawed.

Chapter Nine, 'The Philosopher's Virtues', continues to explore the distinction between philosophers and non-philosophers, focusing on their different characters. Central to the discussion is the distinction between virtues of character (for example, justice), intellectual virtues (for example, a good memory), and virtues of personal style (for example, grace and elegance), attending to the light this last category sheds on Plato's moral vision. As a prelude to the key analogies of Book VI, the rest of this chapter is devoted to the interesting analogies Socrates appeals to in addressing features of the Third Wave.

Chapter Ten, 'Metaphors to Think By: The Sun and Divided Line Analogies', is devoted to the marquee analogies of Book VI, both of which address the Third Wave by developing the distinction between the sensible world of concrete particular things and the intelligible world of the Forms. Having suggested that the Form of the good is even more important than justice, Socrates cannot or will not say what the good is, but he does say what he thinks it is like: the good plays the same role in the intelligible world as the sun plays in the visible world. In the Analogy of the Divided Line, Socrates further develops the distinction between belief, which is appropriate to the sensible, visible world, and knowledge, which is appropriate to the intelligible world of the Forms. By exploring the role that hypotheses play in reasoning, he distinguishes philosophical knowledge from mathematical knowledge, somewhat surprisingly taking the former to be more rigorous.

True to its name, Chapter Eleven, 'Shedding Light on the Allegory of the Cave', devotes itself to exploring the famous Allegory of the

Cave from Book VII of the *Republic,* carefully considering its various stages and themes before examining the issue posed by the enlightened philosopher's return to the Cave. As Socrates describes it, the enlightened philosopher descends back into the Cave not because they want to, but because they recognize that justice requires them to do so. This raises an issue for discussion that Socrates does not seem to notice: the enlightened philosopher would be happier if they ignored the demands of justice and remained in the intelligible world of the Forms, which suggests that, contrary to Socrates' view, the just life is not happier than the unjust life.

In Chapter Twelve, 'The Decline and Fall of the Ideal City-Soul', we begin exploring Socrates' answer to the *Republic*'s second question. In Books VIII and IX, Socrates sketches five kinds of cities and souls, noting what each takes as its primary end or goal and which part or class governs the soul and city, respectively. We trace the decay from the best city-soul to the worst, attending to the role that changes to education play and to interesting features of each stage, and discuss at some length Plato's distinction between necessary and unnecessary desires.

Chapter Thirteen, 'The Republic's Second Question Answered: Three and a Half Arguments that the Just Life is Happier', explores the arguments Socrates gives in Book IX that the just life is happier—indeed, 729 times happier—than the unjust life. There are fascinating features of the first two arguments, for example that the tyrannical person is incapable of friendship and that each part of the soul has a distinctive kind of pleasure. The third argument, the Metaphysics of Pleasure Argument, argues that since what is more filling is more pleasant and what is more real is more filling, the Forms, being the most real things, ground the most pleasant pleasures. We discuss this argument at some length, noting its dependence on the Powers Argument but also exploring ways in which Socrates seems to anticipate and preemptively respond to objections. In the last argument, which Socrates does not identify as such (hence the 'half'), is a metaphorical argument which, despite its being less philosophically rigorous than the Metaphysics of Pleasure Argument, is more intuitively persuasive and in no way relies on the problematic Powers Argument. This chapter concludes with a discussion of Plato's paternalism: his view that most of us, being incapable of the philosophical wisdom that consists of knowledge of

the good, are incapable of good self-governance, so we are all better off being governed by someone else's (i.e., a philosopher-king's or -queen's) reason.

Chapter Fourteen, 'Are We There Yet? Tying up Loose Ends in Book X', explores the three topics of the *Republic*'s final book, Book X. The first is the status of poetry, which Socrates wants to revisit since he now has a psychology (the three-part soul) that he lacked when poetry was first discussed. He concludes, quite reluctantly, that very little poetry will be allowed in the ideal city, mainly because of its power to corrupt us: we give ourselves over to emotion and thus dethrone reason from its rightful place. After exploring his arguments for this view, we turn to his argument for the immortality of the soul, which Socrates offers in the context of showing the external advantages of living a just life (namely, having a reputation for justice), which were set aside to answer Glaucon's and Adeimantus' challenge of showing that justice was intrinsically good—that all by itself it made its possessor better off. Lastly, we attend to the Myth of Er, with which the *Republic* ends. Er's story is an allegory about the importance of careful choice in living justly and thus happily. It is a fascinating way to end the *Republic*, in terms of both content and style; we briefly explore what philosophical points Plato might be making by ending a work of philosophy this way.

Needless to say, I have not mentioned everything we will discuss, but this should give readers a good sense of the main contours of the *Republic* and a decent idea of what is to come. Now, on to the *Republic!*