PLATO

How to think critically: "we [can]…separate Plato's specific answers to his questions from, firstly, the importance of the questions he asks and, secondly, from the way he goes about answering them, from the methods he adopts." (IPT 26)

Introducing Idealism and the Socratic 'Turn'

- The **presocratics**: Heraclitus, Democritus, Pythagoras, etc.
- The **relativists**: Herodotus ('each [cultural] group was horrified by the 'unnatural' practice of the other')
- The **subjectivists** and differing preferences: Protagoras ('a man is the measure of all things')
- The objectivists: **Platonic idealism** – attempts to answer the question 'what is justice?'

Overview of *The Republic*

- Book I: Thrasymachus' **political realism**: "justice…is simply what is in the interest of the stronger party" (338c)
- Book II: Glaucon's **psychological egoism** (passage on 29 and the 'invisibility ring example'): "no man is just of his own free will, but only under compulsion…he will always do wrong when he gets the chance" (360c)
    - Under this view, justice is **instrumental** (and artificial) rather than **inherent** (and natural): "it is not justice that is good but only those things that go along with justice, the rewards of acting justly such as good reputation and the wealth and power that reputation brings. Adiemantus points out that in fact it is best to be unjust but to mask this with a reputation for justice." (IPT 30)
- Plato's response: **politics is natural** – as we shall see with Aristotle's hierarchical view of the world, there are effects of viewing politics this way. In other words, how (if at all) have Platonic idealism and Aristotelian empiricism shaped the subsequent intellectual and political history of the Western world? What, by contrast, are the social and political effects of viewing politics and **justice as artificial**, as did Machiavelli and Hobbes?
    - Because different people naturally have different aptitudes under this view, Plato's solution is divide the polis into two broad classes of people: **artisans** and **guardians**. The guardians are further subdivided into the soldiers (**auxiliaries**) and the **philosopher-kings**.
    - The '**noble lie**' – the myth of the metals.
        - How does this work? Why do you think Plato concocted this?
        - **Q**: Can you think of any modern examples of 'noble lies'?
    - In this framework, justice for Plato can be summed up as "minding your own business" (IPT 33)
        - Rulers (philosopher-kings) → reason
        - Auxilaries (soldiers) → spirit
        - Workers (artisans) → desire/appetite
    - The **Forms**, of which the highest is the 'Form of the Good' (Simile of the Sun, IPT 37)
    - Because the philosopher-kings pursue knowledge through reason (via **rationalism**) rather than sensory experience, only they are suitable to know the Forms of the Good and the Just, and therefore only they can lead others out of the cave
- Is the Form of Justice needed to counter the claims of relativism/subjectivism? (this is known as **foundationalism**)

Critical Analysis of Book II (357-367): Glaucon and Adeimantus

- What are the three kinds of goods Glaucon introduces? Where does justice fall, according to Socrates? According to Glaucon? Why? (357-8) And how does Glaucon define justice? (359)
- Glaucon's two hypotheticals

1) The **Lydian ring** of invisibility

2) Who is happier: the unjust person perceived by all as just or the just person perceived by all as unjust? (360)

- Adeimantus' reiteration: justice has only instrumental value, and no inherent value (363-367)
- How does Socrates respond? Would you respond differently?