

# Plato's republic the quest for justice

Philosophy



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Socrates himself is very concerned with the ideal combination of justice between oneself and one's city or society. It is the basis of a good deal of The Republic. His quest for the perfect description of self and society leads him to many arguments and finally to his conclusion that the self and the city should be governed quite similarly, by a hierarchy of systematic components. For the city, these components are based on present city rule. The rulers govern the guardians followed by the artisans, in the same fashion the self should first be governed by reason, then spirit and finally desire. He also interjects that justice is found in a city and in the self when both "mind their own business." In this idea of a just society being controlled by rulers, Socrates believes that the rulers of a city should be philosophers. According to our lecture notes, philosophers are typically geeky and aloof, not characteristics that are most desired in political figures. It is also a concern that when philosophers discuss problems, their discussion can be very in depth and those who do not necessarily understand the discussion end up feeling manipulated. The city also needs the guardians and artisans in order to function properly but also that if a city is made up of just individuals it helps create a just society. Socrates also states that in order to find justice in the individual one should be made up of three parts. He decides the governing part to be reason over spirit and desire. Socrates feels that reason should be in control because it provides rational thought and self awareness. The next governing body in the self is spirit or courage and strength. Finally, Socrates states, the self shall be governed by desire. Desire accounts for basic needs and instincts: food, sex, money, the primal part of the self. It is within this balance that Socrates believes justice to be found in both examples of the self and the city, all of the separate parts need to work

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together to find a balance. As he states in *The Republic*, "...notice that, when desires force someone contrary to calculation, he reproaches himself and his spirit is roused against that in him which is doing the forcing; and, just as though there were two parties at faction, such a man's spirit becomes the ally of speech? But as for its making common cause with the desires to do what speech has declared must not be done, I suppose you'd say you had never noticed anything of the kind happening to yourself, nor I suppose, in anyone else."(119) This passage along with the story of Leontius, describes the three parts of the self working together to control actions of the self. The parts of the city and parts of the self correspond with one another. The leaders are in control of the city as is reason of the self. This is the obvious choice as the leaders are elected, born or fought into power thereby showing some form of dominance over the rest of the city. Reason is the most refined part of the self, it recognizes self awareness and controls the will of the spirit and keeps desires in check. The guardians maintain order in the city but show a sense of pride in their obligation. In the same sense, the spirit can maintain the self, but also provide a great sense of pride. The spirit can be described as the will of a person which would need to be controlled by reasoning as the spirit is unaware of itself. Finally the artisans work to keep the basic needs of the city met. They work to provide for their interests, to benefit the economy and to pay taxes. In the same light, desires work to maintain the basic needs of the body. Without desire, reason and spirit may starve or miss out on basic enjoyment throughout life. The ideal individual as well as the ideal city would operate in a functioning combination of all of its respective parts. The individual controls desire by spirit and both are controlled by reason. The ideal individual, according to Socrates, would mind <https://assignbuster.com/platos-republic-the-quest-for-justice/>

his own business. If one minds his internal business and his house is in order, then he will be just and beneficial to society. If all of society is made up of just men who mind themselves first and foremost, then the outcome is a just society. It is within this ordered harmony that Socrates bases his ideas of justice. He also states that justice is far more beneficial to the individual as well as the society as opposed to injustice. Justice and minding oneself promotes a healthy environment. To correlate with his conclusion on the ideal individual Socrates says, " But in truth justice was, as it seems, something of this sort; however, not with respect to a man's minding his external business, but with respect to what is within, with respect to what truly concerns him and his own. He doesn't let each part in him mind other people's business or the three classes in the soul meddle with each other, but really sets his own house in good order and rules himself; he arranges himself, becomes his own friend, and harmonizes the three parts..." (123) If the ideal self or individual minds his own business, then according to Socrates, the ideal city would be composed of these individuals and also mind itself. Socrates brings up the point of the pilot of a ship. He cannot pay close attention to every detail; his primary concern is piloting a safe and successful journey. This is to be an example of how leaders should control a country or city. It would be impossible to notice every single minute detail of the city, so the leaders should know what is best for the good of the whole and follow his instincts. Socrates had several ideals for the ultimate city and individual. He had a way, through philosophy, of making his point clear and strangely adapted by most of his listeners. Whether or not any of his or his companions' ideas about justice are true or acceptable is relevant to ideas on justice in present day. Socrates' thoughts and recorded conversations <https://assignbuster.com/platos-republic-the-quest-for-justice/>

have withstood the test of time and are still considered inspirational to present day standards that are a testament to the validity of his arguments.

Works Cited: The Republic, Bloom, Allan, 1968 Lecture Notes, Adamson, Dr.

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