

# Plato's *Republic*: Book I

## Questions

← → ? PPE QBs / 115 Plato's Republic

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Book I			Properties	Filter	Sort	Search	...	New	
#	Year	#	Question...	Name				Tags	+
	2020	1	'Socrates' arguments against Thrasymachus in book 1 are rhetorical failures, but not philosophical ones.' Discuss.					1c. Socrates' failure	
	2019	1	Does Plato accept Thrasymachus's claim that a craftsman insofar as he is a craftsman never errs? If he does not, why doesn't he have Socrates oppose or refute this claim? If he does, what does this imply for Socrates' overall argument in <i>Republic</i> , book 1?					1b. Thrasymachus' (in)consistency 1c. Socrates' failure	
	2018	1	Is Thrasymachus refuted by the end of Book I?					1c. Socrates' failure 1b. Thrasymachus' (in)consistency	
	2017	1	Socrates seems to admit at the end of book I that his arguments have been deficient. So why did Plato bother to include them in the work?					1c. Socrates' failure 1d. Book I in context	
	2016	1	How does book 1 differ from the rest of the <i>Republic</i> ? Why is this significant?					1d. Book I in context	
	2014	1	How successful is Socrates' refutation of Polemarchus?					1a. Polemarchus	
	2013	1	Does Thrasymachus have a consistent position? If he does, is it one we should take seriously? If he does not, why does he appear in Book I?					1b. Thrasymachus' (in)consistency	
	2012	1	Why is the notion of a ruler 'in the strict sense' important in <i>Republic</i> ? Is the use that is made of this notion defensible?					1b. Thrasymachus' (in)consistency	
	2011	1	EITHER (a) Is being just like being a good cobbler? Why does the idea that it is figure so prominently in <i>Republic</i> , Book I? OR (b) 'Nothing of philosophical importance would be lost if we started to read the <i>Republic</i> at the beginning of Book II.' Discuss.					1a. Polemarchus 1b. Thrasymachus' (in)consistency	
	2010	1	What is the philosophical significance of the order of the interlocutors in Book I - why does Plato choose to start Socrates off talking to Cephalus, then introduce Polemarchus, and then Thrasymachus?					1d. Book I in context	
	2009	1	How is Book I an introduction to the <i>Republic</i> , as a whole?					1d. Book I in context	
	2008	7	Have we good reason to believe, or to deny, that Book I of the <i>Republic</i> was originally an independent dialogue?					1d. Book I in context	
	2007	1	'The arguments [of Socrates] work against Thrasymachus, despite their obvious faults, precisely because those faults bet overcompression of deep truths' (PAPPAS). Do you agree?					1c. Socrates' failure	
	2006	1	Are the inconsistencies in Thrasymachus' position deep, or only superficial?					1b. Thrasymachus' (in)consistency	
	2005	1	Does Thrasymachus express a moral viewpoint?					1b. Thrasymachus' (in)consistency	
	2004	2	Does Thrasymachus consistently maintain that justice is the advantage of the stronger?					1b. Thrasymachus' (in)consistency	
	2004	1	Assess the view of Simonides, defended by Polemarchus, that 'it is just to give to each what is owed to him'.					1a. Polemarchus	
	2002	1	'The triumph of bad arguments over good.' Is this a fair description of Socrates' debate with Thrasymachus?					1b. Thrasymachus' (in)consistency 1c. Socrates' failure	
	2001	1	Is there important common ground between Socrates and Thrasymachus?					1b. Thrasymachus' (in)consistency 1c. Socrates' failure	

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# Building Blocks

## 1.1 What happens in book I?

- Socrates and Glaucon visit Piraeus and meet Cephalus.
- Cephalus is Polemarchus' father; he has dedicated his life to making money
- In his conversation with Socrates, it is revealed that Cephalus is concerned about living rightly but in a very limited sense – i.e. not lying and giving back what is not yours.
- Cephalus does not resent old age, which suggests he is near philosophical detachment, but he also loses interest once Socrates' questions force him to think
- Cephalus does not explicitly define justice but it is clear that justice to him is no more than a list of duties
- Cephalus leaves and Polemarchus then joins in with the conversation
- He builds on Cephalus' argument
- Thrasymachus is irritated by Socrates' philosophical exchanges and offers his own account of justice
- Socrates rejects Thrasymachus' points, although his rebuttals were unsatisfactory to both himself and Glaucon

## 2.1 What is Cephalus' argument?

- Justice as certain action types e.g not lying and giving back what is owed
- Socrates' counter-example: returning a weapon to someone who has gone mad
- Therefore, justice cannot be thought of via action types
- Cephalus is not bothered to think any further and leaves

## 2.2 What is Cephalus' personality like? (Annas 1981)

- Cephalus is not an Athenian citizen, but an 'resident alien' from Syracuse; he has chosen to spend his life making money by living in a foreign city and renouncing all the rights, duties, and activities of a citizen, things vitally important to the self-respect of most Greeks
- He is concerned about living rightly, but his ideal of the right way to live is a very limited one
- He does not care very much about morality, and has no intellectual interest in the matter at all. As soon as Socrates asks questions which force him to think, he loses interests and goes away

## 2.3 What is the point of including Cephalus in book I? (Annas 1981)

- We see Plato's contempt for moneymaking and for the complacency it engenders
- The *Republic* was written for an audience that knew that the security based on wealth which Cephalus had spent his life building up was wholly illusory: only a few years later, when Athens fell, the family was totally ruined
- Cephalus is presented as a limited and complacent man

## 3.1 What is Polemarchus' argument and how does Socrates refute him? (331d-336a)

<https://courses.washington.edu/ancient/phil335/Polemarchus.pdf>

1. Polemarchus defines justice as giving what is due: good to one's friends, bad to one's enemies (331d-332d)

2. Socrates introduces the notion that justice is a craft (*technē*), a word which has the connotations “science” has for us (e.g. a doctor practices the craft of medicine; a ship’s captain practices the craft of sailing) (332d)
3. Socrates questions the end and the object of the craft of justice (332d-333e)
  - a. Problem 1: Justice is not worth much: “it is only useful for useless things”
4. Socrates questions whether justice brings good (333e-334b)
  - a. Socrates thinks a skill is a skill for ‘doing opposites’: if you are skilled in doing X you will also be skilled in doing the opposite of X [very questionable!]
  - b. Problem 2: A just man, who is good at keeping things safe, will also be good at appropriating them
5. Socrates questions the concepts of friends and enemies (334b-335b)
  - a. People can make mistakes about who is good and who is bad, so it would be just to do bad things to those who do no injustice; Polemarchus rejects this
  - b. Polemarchus then refines his definition so that someone who is both believed to be useful and is useful is a friend; thus, justice is benefiting one’s friends if they are good, harming one’s enemies if they are bad
6. Socrates questions whether a just person would ever do harm to anyone; he thinks not, and thus rejects the refined definition (335b-336a)
  - a. Polemarchus: a just person would harm those who are both bad and enemies
  - b. Socrates: (1) justice is human virtue (*aretē*), (2) a person becomes less just when harmed [questionable!] and (3) a craft cannot be used to achieve its opposite (e.g. horsemen cannot make people unhorsemanlike through horsemanship; a just person cannot make people less just through justice)
  - c. Problem 3: It isn’t the function of a just person to harm anyone, even their enemies; it is the function of an unjust person
  - d. Socrates claims that Polemarchus’ stance belongs to notorious tyrants or men famous for their wealth (336a)
  - Polemarchus holds generally that it is just to render what is due to each, but he apparently thinks of *what is due* as relative to certain descriptions of agent and patient (Young 1980)
  - **Anticipation** Book X against poetry; don’t believe poetic myths about God inflicting harm on people sometimes because a true just person would never do that

### 3.2 How does Socrates refute Polemarchus, and what are the problems with his refutation? (Annas)

- Socrates gets Polemarchus to accept that justice is the same as excellence (335c) (p.31)
- Dryness makes things dry, not wet; excellence makes things excellent, not the opposite (p.32)
- In the same way, a just person cannot make another person unjust
- Hence, Polemarchus’ argument that justice is to be good to one’s friends and bad to one’s enemy fails
- Problems with the argument
  - (1) Polemarchus agrees that justice is the human excellence or *arête* and that justice is to people what being a good specimen of its type is to a horse or a dog

- BUT we ought to think what makes a good specimen should also depend on some physical characteristics, not merely what the being does
- (2) The analogies are odd
  - Heat and dryness are not examples of rational capacities
  - Musical skill and skill in horsemanship are impartible skills and can be passed over from one person to another without them having to share a common aim; justice cannot be passed on irrespective of motivation

### 3.3 What is the point of including Polemarchus in book I? (Annas 1981)

*We are shown the limits of moral complacency*

- Cephalus and Polemarchus depicts the ordinary person's view of justice: they agree in thinking of justice very externally, as a matter of sticking to a few rules and maxims; motives are unimportant – but we see three problems with this view
  1. The view leads to [moral] complacency; justice probably needs more effort
  2. Because people become complacent, no need is felt to think about justice much, and so their beliefs lack intellectual backing
  3. Once complacency is shaken (people realise you have to try to be just) there is nothing that can be put in its place apart from scepticism – nobody envisages any coherent alternative in Book I
- Plato thinks there is no such thing as natural virtue (an untrained disposition to do the right thing unaccompanied by any ability to explain and defend what is done)
- Polemarchus represents the best that common sense has to offer about justice, and in Plato's view this is not very much

### 4.1 What are Thrasymachus' definitions of justice?

1. Justice is the advantage of the stronger (338c)
2. Justice is the advantage of the ruler(s) (338e)
3. Justice is obeying the laws of the ruler (conventionalism / legalism) (339c)
4. Justice is the advantage of another (343c)

### 4.2 What is Thrasymachus' personality like?

- Rude
- He makes long speeches, after which he tries to leave without being questioned about it; this is in contrast with Socrates' method, consisting of short questions and answers that are aimed at discovering the truth. (Annas, p.44)
- Plato wants us to dislike him

### 4.3 What is Cleitophon's contribution?

- Socrates challenges Thrasymachus, claiming rulers can make mistakes (339b-340c)
  - Thrasymachus faces the problem of reconciling definitions (1) and (2)
- Cleitophon suggests that 'the advantage of the stronger' means what the stronger *believes* is to his advantage, but Thrasymachus rejects this
- Thrasymachus claims that, strictly speaking, no craftsman ever errs; it's when his knowledge fails him that he makes an error, and in regard to that error he is no craftsman (e.g. insofar as one is a ship's captain, one cannot sink a ship) (340e)

#### 4.4 What are Socrates' arguments against Thrasymachus?

1. Each craft provides something advantageous to its object (341a-343a)
  - a. Socrates argues that each craft in the strict sense has its own object and sphere of activity, and works for the advantage of the object, not itself (e.g. medicine seeks not its own advantage but that of the body)
  - b. He also argues that the crafts rule over and are stronger than the things of which they are the crafts
  - c. So, if ruling is a craft in the strict sense, the ruler exercises it in the subjects' interest, not his own
2. If a craftsman (e.g. a shepherd) benefits from a craft, it is because he simultaneously practices a second craft, viz., wage-earning (346a1-347a5)
3. A genuine practitioner of a craft does not outdo or overreach and thus does not act unjustly (349b-350c)
4. Justice is required for appropriate or successful acting, ruling or functioning (351a-352d)
5. Souls rule, deliberate and live well if and only if souls are just (352d2-354a11)

#### 4.5 Are Socrates' refutations of Thrasymachus successful?

- Yes (Nawar 2018)
  - Socrates' first argument is an abstract one, not one based on induction
    1. Each craft provides something advantageous to itself or something advantageous to its object
    2. Each craft is perfect
    3. If a craft is perfect, it doesn't provide something advantageous to itself
    4. So, each craft does not provide something advantageous to itself
    5. So, each craft provides something advantageous to its object
  - The conclusion is established with an eye towards showing that Thrasymachus' claims about the infallibility of crafts do not safeguard his views concerning the nature of justice and of ruling
  - If crafts are infallible and perfect as how Thrasymachus thinks they are, and ruling is a craft, he is wrong to think that rulers seek their own advantage at the expense of (i.e. the disadvantage) of those over whom they rule (343a2)
  - Socrates' second argument aims to show that if Thrasymachus stands by his claims about shepherds and rapacious rulers, then *by Thrasymachus' own lights* he should accept that there is a wage-earning craft; if this is problematic, it is important to notice that this is a problem *for Thrasymachus*. Socrates is not aiming to establish that in his own view there is a wage-earning craft
  - Regarding Socrates' third argument, although several readers complain that the argument is flawed because practitioners of a craft are often competitive and obviously seek to do better than each other, it is important to notice that Thrasymachus cannot readily allow this. This is because, according to Thrasymachus, each craft is maximally perfect and its practitioners act unerringly
  - Socrates' fourth and fifth argument do not offer a direct response to Thrasymachus' objections (they primarily address broader concerns), but they do suggest that Thrasymachus should reconsider his assumptions about the nature of advantage and his view that goods are zero-sum (i.e. that for one

person to gain advantage, another must be disadvantaged) while offering additional grounds for criticising Thrasymachus' views about justice

- No (Reeve 1985)
  - Socrates' second argument undermines his first: for the second to succeed, the craft of wage-earning must benefit its practitioner, making it a counterexample to his claim in the first, that no craft does this
  - Socrates' third argument equivocates: the craftsman does not try to 'outdo' in one sense, he does not try to go beyond (or abandon) the principles of his craft, but to practice them exactly as his fellow Craftsmen do, while the unjust man 'outdoes' in another sense, viz., by trying to get the advantage of everyone else; but trying to outdo everyone in the second sense hasn't the least tendency to show that injustice isn't a craft: practitioners of competitive Crafts such as fencing and wrestling do it all the time
  - Socrates' fourth argument is unconvincing: it isn't clear that a polis can't threaten its members justly, producing the desired coherence, while treating non-members unjustly. If it can, the argument collapses; for a man could then treat himself justly, so to speak, act coherently as a result, and treat others unjustly all the while (Irwin 1977)
  - Socrates' fifth argument is weak because its assumptions are only supported by his third argument, which is itself weak
- No; Socrates' arguments against [the thesis that injustice pays] are all weak and unconvincing to an amazing degree (Annas 1981)
  - Socrates' fourth argument as thrown at us here is just extraordinary. We will get, later on, a theory that the soul has parts [etc], but at this point nothing indicates this. What Socrates says here is merely unconvincing rhetoric, no better than the immediately following claim that the just man is better off because he is dear to the gods. But if we discount the rhetoric, the argument does not refute Thrasymachus' position
  - Socrates' fifth argument has been found particularly scandalous: where and how has it been agreed (by Socrates and Thrasymachus) that justice is excellence of the soul, and that injustice is vice of soul? It has not been argued for

### **5.1 What are the arguments for definition 1?**

(1) *Justice is the advantage of the stronger (338c)*

- Thrasymachus (and Polemarchus) think of justice as a function of human relationships, holding just conduct to be relative to and determined by the human relationships that obtain between an agent and those in relation to whom he acts; justice is the advantage of the stronger in the sense that in acting justly one frustrates the advantage of those who have legitimate claims on one's conduct (Young 1980)

### **5.2 What are the arguments against definition 1?**

(1) *Justice is the advantage of the stronger (338c)*

- What does *stronger* mean? In parallel cases e.g. a promiser and a promisee, we could not conclude that justice for a promiser is the advantage of the stronger (Young 1980)

- It is unlikely that (1) is a definition (specifying some property with which justice is to be identified) because it would need to be the case that all actions which are to the advantage of anyone stronger than the agent would thereby be just (Everson 1998)
- It seems that there is a problematic implication: the tyrant (who is most unjust) would be the most just, since he furthers his own aims

### 5.3 What are the arguments for definition 2?

(2) *Justice is the advantage of the ruler(s)* (338e)

- (2) is sometimes conflated with (1)
  - Advantage of the rulers is a subset of advantage of the stronger (1)
- (2) could be seen as a consequence of (3)

### 5.4 What are the arguments against definition 2?

(2) *Justice is the advantage of the ruler(s)* (338e)

- It is unlikely that (2) is a definition (specifying some property with which justice is to be identified) because it would need to be the case that all actions which are to the advantage of the ruler would thereby be just (Everson 1998)
- It seems not to fit properly into the development of the argument of the *Republic*. It is true that the specifically political aspect is first raised by Thrasymachus, yet considering the dialogue's structure, it would be strange if he were concerned exclusively with politics [e.g. he sees the crucial issue as being whether the just life or the unjust life is superior, and 'life' means not merely political activity] (Nicholson 1974)
- It is not a doctrine which Thrasymachus holds consistently (Nicholson 1974)
  - 'Stronger' and 'ruler' are not synonymous expressions, because Thrasymachus is not only talking of rulers and ruling but of all men and all social relations
  - One can subject 'advantage of the stronger' to 'advantage of another', so the popular sense of 'just' is to be a means of satisfaction to the ruler → but this consistency comes at the heavy price of the doctrine applying only to some people (e.g. not to the ruler)
  - "Advantage of another" is the universal characteristic of justice. It is the "advantage of the stronger" only in those cases where the stronger takes advantage

### 5.5 What are the arguments for definition 3?

(3) *Justice is obeying the laws of the ruler* (339c)

- Whereas (1) and (2) are unlikely to be definitions, (3) provides a conventionalist account of justice: to act justly is to act in obedience to the law (Everson 1998)
  - Since all laws are instituted in the interests of those in power, whenever someone acts justly they will be benefiting those in power
  - Since those in power are stronger than those who are not, such actions will also benefit those who are stronger than the agent
  - This does not entail the requirements for if (1) and (2) were taken as definitions

## 5.6 What are the arguments against definition 3?

### (3) *Justice is obeying the laws of the ruler (339c)*

- Thrasymachus' views are not legalist: he opens by talking about laws, but his speech shows that we are to consider all the rulers' acts and not simply laws. I suggest that Thrasymachus has in mind not only what we call constitutional law, but as elsewhere, anything to do with money [e.g. taxation provides opportunities for just or unjust action by both rulers and subjects] (Nicholson 1974)
- Many commentators think there is something wrong with Thrasymachus' adoption of the position that the ruler qua ruler does not err: that he blunders by abandoning a realistic empiricism for an idealism, that he should have used Cleitophon's solution. None of this is acceptable to those who deny that "the advantage of the ruler(s)" [i.e. (3)] is Thrasymachus' main view of justice (Nicholson 1974)
- Cleitophon is in fact suggesting that Thrasymachus explicitly adopt conventionalism, but Thrasymachus violently rejects this, suggesting he does not want to hold a conventionalist position (Annas)

## 5.7 What are the arguments for definition 4?

### (4) *Justice is the advantage of another (343c)*

- Adeimantus formulates Thrasymachus' doctrine in his own words as "the opinion that justice is the other man's good, the advantage of the stronger, and that injustice is advantageous and profitable to oneself but disadvantageous to the inferior" (367 C). Clearly, Adeimantus takes the doctrine to be that justice is the advantage of another, though he speaks loosely and equates "another" with "stronger", which we saw is strictly speaking incorrect, but there is no indication that he means by "stronger" merely "ruler" (in the political sense) (Nicholson 1974)
- The *Republic* deals with the doctrine that justice is the advantage of another, including the idea that justice for subjects is the advantage of the ruler, and not the latter solely or even mainly (Nicholson 1974)

## 5.8 What are the arguments against definition 4?

### (4) *Justice is the advantage of another (343c)*

- Thrasymachus mentions (1)/(2) five times (338c1-2, 339a1-2, 339a3-4, 341a3-4, 343c4, 344c7) and (4) only once (343c2) (Reeve 1985)
- There is little likelihood that Plato means us to understand 'justice is another's good' as Thrasymachus' definition of justice (he only mentions it once) (Young 1980)
- Socrates rejects (1)/(2) at 343a1-2 (c.f. 342e6-11), so it seems clear that he had no doubt that (1)/(2) is the definition he must refute (Reeve 1985)

## 6.1 What are the arguments for Thrasymachus' coherence?

- Thrasymachus' views form a consistent whole (Nicholson 1974)
  - Thrasymachus' arguments can be exhibited as both consistent and coherent, once it is understood that he is concerned to characterise and not define, that he prefers to do this by his own method of argument, and that he presents his case in an unexpected order
    - (1) + (2) are characterisations, not definitions
    - Not (3) because we should consider things beyond constitutional laws
    - Therefore, his definition is (4)
  - (A) if we consider just acts as a single class, then their common characteristic is that they are "the advantage of another" ;
  - (B) if we consider the sub-class where the just man's act is to the advantage of the consistently unjust man, justice is "the advantage of the stronger"; and
  - (C) if we consider the sub-class of (2) where the just man's act is to the advantage of the stronger who is his ruler(s), justice is "the advantage of the ruler(s)"
- Thrasymachus actually has two impressive and consistent arguments (Reeve 1985)
  - Thrasymachus' first argument (338c1-341a4) is based on a daring insightful theory of the Polis s being a kind of exploitation machine in which both social behaviour and the Standards by which it is evaluated are rigged by those who have the power to rule so s to benefit themselves. A polis, on this account, is like a coin-tossing game played according to two rules or laws: Law 1 (the law of play) states that if heads comes up the Ruler wins and if tails comes up the Subject loses. Law 2 (the law of play evaluation) states that play is just or fair if it accords with Law 1. With these Laws in Operation the Rulers don't have to cheat or act unjustly to win; they win by being just
  - If I have represented Thrasymachus' line of thought correctly, then its force is scarcely diminished at all by the introduction of strict and philosophical Rulers. For we can now see that the Polis with its Rulers and Subjects is simply an idealization or ideal model of the polis (c.f. 472d9ff)
  - The first argument makes no use of any moral judgments or principles; it is conceptually external to any moral point of view
  - Thrasymachus' second argument [injustices is virtue and wisdom] is conceptually internal to the interlocutors' point of view
- Thrasymachus' inconsistencies are superficial (Annas 1981)
  - A plausible account: Thrasymachus' real position is (4), whereas injustice is acting in the vigorous pursuit of your own interests. At first he gives a formulation of this (1) which only applies to subjects of competent rulers, which leads him into saying (3), which is misleading since it suggests that he holds a conventionalist position. Only when Cleitophon faces him with adopting this position does he reject it and come up with a much broader formulation (4), which encapsulates what he really wants to say
  - Thrasymachus sums up his speech (344c) by saying 'And, as I said from the first, justice is what is advantageous to the stronger, while injustice is to one's own profit and advantage' – he is trying to claim that his position is consistent
  - Plato's main interest is (4) which implies justice is something no sensible person would want. In the light of this, (1) is seen to reduce to the more trivial

claim that rulers always rule in their own interests, and Plato thinks this can be met by a fairly short argument (money-making being a separate interest)

## 6.2 What are the arguments against Thrasymachus' coherence (for his incoherence)?

- From 343c, when Thrasymachus begins to characterize the ruler as unjust, he is not consistent with his earlier account (Everson 1998)
  - 340c-341a
    - Thrasymachus maintains that (1) justice is what is to the advantage of the stronger, against a previous suggestion at 340b that the stronger sometimes gives orders to his subjects that are disadvantageous to himself
    - "A ruler, insofar as he is a ruler, never makes errors and unerringly decrees what is best for himself, and this his subject must do. Thus, as I said from the first, it is just to do what is to the advantage of the stronger." (340e-341a)
  - 343c-344d
    - "And, as I said from the first, justice is what is advantageous to the stronger, while injustice is to one's own profit and advantage." (344c)
    - The contradiction: A strong and just person would also be unjust because he does things to his own profit and advantage
  - Scott: Thrasymachus starts with a reductionist philosophical definition of justice in the first speech but uses the conventional, intuitive definition of justice in the second speech
- Scott: Rulers should rule in their own interests, not the interests of the people
  - Inconsistency between (2)&(3) and (4)
- Scott: Thrasymachus' speeches take different positions
  - First speech is descriptive: Justice is the advantage of the stronger (the advantage of whoever is in power)
  - Second speech is prescriptive: Injustice makes you happy

According to...	Thrasymachus is...	And his true position is...
Young (1980)	Consistent, and, with qualification, saying the same thing as Polemarchus	(1) with qualification
Reeve (1985)	Consistent (and impressive)	(1) and (2) (stronger or ruler)
Everson (1998)	Inconsistent	(3) → (4)
Scott	Inconsistent	(3)
Annas (1981)	Only superficially inconsistent	(4)
Nicholson (1974)	Consistent	(4)

## 7.1 What is the significance of book I with regards to the *Republic*?

- Theoretical point: existing views on justice are not good enough
  - In effect, book I clears the ground for Plato's new theory of justice by highlighting difficulties and inadequacies in existing views (conventionalism, the idea that justice consisted simply in adherence to the laws and practices of one's state and society, and scepticism, the idea that it is irrational to take other people's interests into account when one acts) (Everson 1998)
- Methodological point: the Socratic method is not good enough
  - We can see book I as signalling the need for an abandonment of the Socratic method, and thus as serving a genuine introduction for the positive theory of justice which Plato begins in book II (Everson 1998)
  - Plato himself abandons the Socratic elenchos; positive political and psychological theory replace the elenchos as Thrasymachus said they should [...] Book I contains the anti-Socratic arguments which led Plato to see the need for the new departure in moral theory (c.f. 366e2-9) which occupies the remaining nine books of his *Republic* (Reeve 1985)
  - A tenet of Platonic epistemology is that one cannot know whether something has particular attributes without knowing what it is to be that type of thing; in focusing his investigation of someone else's beliefs, Socrates' pursuit of understanding is hostage to that person's intelligence; Thrasymachus' inability to understand and follow an argument means Socrates makes no progress towards understanding the nature of justice; and so Plato shows why it will be philosophically useful to provide Socrates with the more docile and passive interlocutors we find in the rest of the *Republic* (Everson 1998)
- Literary (?) point: introduce themes for what is to come in the *Republic*
  - Book I serves as a preamble / prelude (*prooímion*) (357a2) to the *Republic* as a whole, but Socrates' arguments do more than merely raise issues which are to be tackled later on in the *Republic*. Once their true form and dialectical nature is understood, Socrates' arguments in *Republic* 1 offer a more effective response to Thrasymachus than often supposed (Nawar 2018)
  - It is not, I think, that books 2-10 cannot be understood properly without book 1, but rather that book 1 itself makes much more sense when considered as an introduction to what follows (Everson 1998)
  - The importance of the debate with Thrasymachus is that it sets many themes for the book as a whole (of course still others are set by Glaucon and Adeimantus). Socrates and Thrasymachus agree that ruling is an art, that an art involves knowledge, that the just ruler governs for the advantage of his subjects, that rulers are stronger, and that there must be a comparison made between the lives of the perfectly just man and the perfectly unjust man to see which is happier (Nicholson 1974)
  - See Kahn, 'Proleptic composition in the *Republic*, or why book I was never a separate dialogue', *Classical Quarterly* (1993) 43: 131– 42.

## **7.2 Is the coherence of Thrasymachus required for him to be taken seriously?**

- No (Everson 1998)
  - Whether Thrasymachus presents two or three conflicting accounts of justice or one account incompetently, the details of what he says do not shape the development of Socrates' theory, and its value is in no way dependent on whether Thrasymachus manages to articulate a powerful or even a coherent attack on the belief that justice is valuable
  - Even if one thinks that Thrasymachus does present a single and coherent account of justice, it would still be the case [that] Glaucon presents a challenge to Socrates which is far more powerful, because far more carefully articulated, than anything found in what Thrasymachus says