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Political Theory

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Reading Response: The Republic Plato

Books I-III of Plato's Republic explore the idea of justice and what makes someone just. In the beginning, Socrates debates with Cephalus and Polemarchus regarding different perspectives of justice. Socrates challenges each perspective given, showing that they are incomplete or questionable. The debate then expands into whether justice is valuable in its own case or only due to the rewards it may bring. The Ring of Gyges is a perspective brought up to argue that people will act unjust when there are no consequences, this brings Socrates into responding about an ideal city they would build to view justice at a much broader scale. Moving forward, the book focuses on how they plan to raise the city up, its leaders, moral education, censoring of harmful influence, etc. So far, I find The Republic to be interesting and informative. The Ring of Gyges made me think, do people act good based on valuing justice and our societal rules, or simply based on the fear of being caught. I also thought the idea of censoring stories and creating noble lies was very intriguing. On one hand, I think Plato is right in the idea that culture and education shape how people think, but on the other, who gets to be the person that decides what's good or bad? Overall, I was surprised by how much Plato focuses on shaping people's morals through society, not just through one's personal decisions. Plato suggests that people need strong stories, education, and even myths to keep society stable and just, though Glaucon's perspective of the Ring of Gyges shows how easily people can act unjustly if there are no consequences. Do

you think justice comes more from personal character (values, beliefs, morals) or more so based on our society and shared beliefs, that keep people from acting unjust?