The Ideal State

Justice
Social Classes
Civic Virtues

I. Plato has been called the founder of Western Philosophy.
   A. Life and Character (c. 429-347 BC):
      1. Plato came from an aristocratic Athenian family.
      2. He was influenced by teachings of Socrates.
      3. He began writing dramas, and turned to writing philosophy in dialogue form.
   B. Philosophical accomplishments:
      1. Around 20 of his philosophical dialogues survive, including REPUBLIC.
      2. He founded "The Academy" as a philosophical school.
   C. Philosophical positions:
      1. Like Socrates, he opposed the relativism of the sophists.
      2. He also opposed democracry.
      3. He believed that goodness, for a states and individuals, is one, knowable by reason, and the same everywhere, at all times.

II. Plato's REPUBLIC is a classic in Western philosophy and political theory.
    A. REPUBLIC proposes a theory of "justice" for governments and individuals.
    B. The term "justice" signifies both a state of affairs and a virtue or good character trait.
       1. REPUBLIC initially treats justice as a state of affairs.
       2. Plato shifts to define justice as a virtue.
    C. Glaucen poses the leading question of REPUBLIC: Why be a just person? Isn't it better to be unjust and appear just? ("The ring of Gyges")

III. Plato has Socrates answer Glaucen's question by outlining an Ideal State.
    A. Justice is easier to recognize in a state than in an individual.
       1. States come into existence because people can satisfy needs more easily by associating with others.
       2. Needs are satisfied most efficiently when labor is divided into areas expertise.
    B. A well functioning state needs three classes of citizens:
       1. Producers, the largest class: including craftsmen, farmers, businessmen, physicians, sailors, laborers.
       2. Guardians, who wage war and defend the state, and control internal conflict.
       3. Select Guardians, the smallest and best educated class, who govern the state.
    C. This Ideal State manifests the four virtues: wisdom, courage, temperance, justice
       1. The state is wise when governed by the good counsel of select guardians.
       2. The state is courageous when the guardians know what to fear and what not to fear.
       3. The state is temperate when everyone in the state consents to be controlled by the wisest, the select guardians.
       4. Finally, the state is just when everyone in the state is doing his own job and not another's.
    D. A state educational system is necessary to ensure justice.
       1. Children, not raised by natural parents, become children of the state.
       2. Educations directs students into careers most useful to the state. ("The noble lie")
       3. The paradox of Plato's educational system: A just state requires good education; but good education requires a just state. How can either get started?