

## The Republic Ideas for Discussion

- Although we are discussing the republic under the general topic of truth, the first two books focus on justice, in terms of both the individual and the city. With this in mind one discussion topic could be linking justice with truth, i.e., as stated approximately midway through the text, one must obtain truth to become just.
- Another idea is one which Tony Brunello used to use, in which the class is divided into small groups to construct their own ideal republic. Once again, this could be done in the context of justice and truth. Things to include:
  1. Clear distribution of power, or decision-making rules;
  2. Selection of leaders i.e. how are leaders to be chosen?
  3. What is the proper size of the republic for the maintenance of the best government and society?
  4. How are values distributed? What are the goals of society? What goods and services are necessary? What is the family structure, rule of religion, education, arts, etc? One of the goals of the class should be to truly attempt to justify why that republic would be an ideal form of government and, of course, how it compares with what we see in the world today?
- The allegory of the cave is also a good discussion topic. One method is that discussed by Sheila Hanes (included in the study guide). In this case a slide projector is used to cast shadows of familiar and unfamiliar objects on a screen, and students (not knowing what those objects are) try to describe them. Although I probably will discuss the allegory of the cave in terms of my own field, in which we try to reconstruct geologic history (truth) with an incomplete, and biased set of clues (shadows). It is only by education in our discipline and understanding the philosophy of our discipline that we can accurately (hopefully) reconstruct the geologic history. The same technique should be amenable to a variety of different disciplines.
- Another tack might take, and I might take it early, is to examine the method of inquiry for addressing problems. Specifically, I would compare the methods utilized in the Republic with those used in my own field of study. I think that this may lend itself to other disciplines also. Some questions that may be addressed include: is this method adequate for effectively answering questions specific to one's discipline? Is it a biased or flawed method? Does it involve circular reasoning? In my field it is sometimes tougher, and more appropriate, to ask the correct questions than it is to come up with the correct answers.