

Arts One 2018: Authority and Resistance  
Essay Topics, Plato's *Republic*

**Please note: while Socrates is a real historical person with his own philosophical views, he is used by Plato to expound strictly Platonic positions. Please assume that in ALL questions, Socrates speaks only for Plato.**

1. Does Plato's justification for the use of falsehoods in the service of a just society enhance or undermine the authority of his argument in defence of philosopher rulers?
2. What account does Plato offer regarding gender roles and gender relations in the kallipolis? Evaluate his account in the context of his own view of the just society.
3. What is it about philosophers as described by Plato that give them sole (and soul!) authority? What does the genuine philosopher know that others do not?
4. What role does the Myth of Er play with respect to the argument of the *Republic* as a whole in its account of justice? Does the use of this myth present any challenges to Plato's argument that justice is its own reward?
5. Plato argues that imitative poets should be banished from the ideal state. How, then, do you account for his own extensive use of images, symbols, allegories, and other poetic devices in *Republic*?
6. Evaluate Plato's treatment of poetry and the performing arts in *Republic* and suggest how his desire to exercise censorship connects to his views about the authority of philosopher rulers.
7. Plato condemns the political model of Thrasymachus on the grounds that its rulers educate and govern by coercive force for personal advantage. Does anything prevent us from drawing the same conclusion about Plato's philosophical rulers?
8. Does the delivery of Plato's argument in the form of a philosophical dialogue between characters add anything to the content of his argument in *Republic*? What if anything would be lost without Plato's cast of characters?
9. Critics often condemn Plato's *Republic* for its attack on liberty and equality. How does Plato view these concepts?
10. How does Plato's emphasis on the distinction between appearance and reality connect to the relationship described in the text between knowledge and power, authority and resistance?
11. Assuming that Plato's kallipolis did exist, would the issue of resistance to authority ever arise? Why or why not?