

Republic Book V Study Questions

1. At the beginning of Book V, Socrates is accused of “robbing us of a whole section of the argument” (449c). What has he left out? Does the text provide us with any clues as to why he has left something out? What difference does its inclusion now make to the course of the dialogue?
2. What, according to Socrates, is likely to be viewed as the most ridiculous feature of the relations between men and women that he would arrange for the just city? How does Socrates propose to deal with this response?
3. On the basis of the conversation between Glaucon and Socrates, what can you say about the way(s) in which men and women look to be different? Why is it necessary to include females in the training for the guardian class if women have natures that are different from those of men? Does Socrates view men and women as equals?
4. In speaking of the sexual relations of the guardians, Socrates says that the rulers “will have to use a throng of lies and deceptions for the benefit of the ruled” (459c-d). What kind of lies does he have in mind and how do they work to the benefit of the ruled? What makes this “throng of lies and deceptions” necessary?

5. What are the implications of the community of wives and children for the members of the biological or natural family? Why is this arrangement necessary? In what way(s) does it serve justice?

6. Is the just regime a work of nature or of human artifice? What does Socrates teach us here about the possibility of the regime he has described?