

PLATO

The Republic

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Introduction

Plato's Republic is the first great work of Western political philosophy, and has retained its grip on the imagination of political thinkers for over two thousand years. It was also very much the product of particular historical circumstances. In this introduction we will consider the political instability of the Greek world in the late fifth and early fourth centuries BC and investigate the cultural factors most likely to have influenced Plato when he came to write the Republic, bearing in mind that he was not only a pre-eminent philosopher but also a literary writer, an educator, and, not least, an Athenian aristocrat (pp. xi–xxii). We will then assess the Republic's position within political philosophy (pp. xxii–xxv), and present the essentials of its argument (pp. xxv–xxxi). We begin with a harrowing episode from Athenian history – an episode in which Plato's family played a major role.

The Thirty

Plato's mother's cousin was a tyrant. In the course of a single convulsive year, from summer to summer, 404–403 BC, Critias son of Callaeschrus made himself leader of a thirty-man junta imposed on Athens by a foreign power, disarmed the populace, ordered the murder of hundreds of prominent persons – some for their money, some to settle old scores, others because they were rivals – and died fighting the band of exiles that soon after restored the city to democracy. The discussion narrated in Plato's *Republic* takes place in the home of a family that was to come to grief at the hands of the Thirty. Polemarchus, according to the tale his brother Lysias survived to tell, was one of those murdered for their money. Lysias

himself went on to fund the democratic resistance and supply it from the family's arms business. The resistance was based in the Piraeus, the port-district of Athens, a magnet not only for successful immigrant families such as that of Lysias and Polemarchus, whose home was there, but also for the lower ranks of society, who manned and serviced the Athenian navy. The label 'men of the Piraeus' came to identify those who fought for the democracy. The decisive battle – the conflict in which Critias lost his life – took place by the temple of Bendis, the goddess whose inaugural festival gave Socrates, the leader of the discussion at Polemarchus' house, a reason to come to the Piraeus in the first place. Another who lost his life there was Charmides, an associate of the Thirty with special responsibility for the Piraeus. He was Plato's uncle. Not Plato's only, but uncle too of Glaucon and Adeimantus, for Plato gives a major role in the discussion to his own two brothers, and puts them on the best of terms with a family whom their kinsmen will ruin. Socrates was for his part to incur the hostility of the returning democrats because he counted the likes of Critias and Charmides among his philosophic companions.

It is difficult to know what to make of Plato's *mise-en-scène*, and tempting to turn to an autobiographical passage of his *Seventh Letter* (324c–326b), which purports to describe his own dealings with the Thirty. Letters from celebrities were a favourite production of fiction writers and outright forgers in antiquity, and none of the Platonic letters is above suspicion – although scholars these days are inclined to regard the seventh as authentic. But let it stand to Plato only as Plato's *Apology of Socrates* stands to the actual speech of defence that Socrates delivered when on trial for his life; still it would remain the most important interpretation of Plato's political motives to survive from antiquity. Plato speaks of being invited by his relatives and by others he knew in the junta to throw himself in with their enterprise, and of how this excited an idealistic youth – he was in his early twenties – with hopes of a better society and zeal for the power to bring it about. Disenchantment came swiftly. An incident involving Socrates is chosen to serve as an emblem for the regime's immorality: its attempt to co-opt him into the vindictive arrest of a citizen that it had designated a public enemy, and his courageous refusal to do so.

The revived democracy, however, turned out to have as little regard for Socrates' independent character as had its despotic predecessor, and prosecuted him for subverting traditional religious belief – a very serious charge, tantamount to treachery, and a favourite to employ against intellectuals. The resulting execution of his philosophic mentor came as Plato

was once again considering, although more cautiously than before, an entry into politics; and once again he was brought up short. As age sharpened his awareness of the barriers to good government, he tells us in this open letter, he came eventually to understand that no form of government in any existing state was satisfactory, and was driven to declare that there should be no end to the general wretchedness until philosophers, who see justice in all its complexity, were given political power, or until existing rulers learned true philosophy.

Faction

It is a good story, and a poignant preface to the life of a politically engaged philosopher who came to adulthood in the Greek world of the early fourth century BC – a world of small civic communities, independent of each other and jealous of the status conferred by citizenship, yet willing to strike alliances with other cities for self-protection and the discomfiture of their enemies, willing even to accept the hegemony of those cities that sought to extend their power by offering protection, but with all sides aware how readily allegiance grounded only in self-interest can shift. Attempts made during the fourth century to unite the Greek world in 'panhellenic' resistance against Persia went hand in hand with the nostalgic claim that that world had once possessed a sense of its common good, a century earlier, when it had repelled the Persian invader. But if it had ever possessed such a sense, its behaviour belied this now. The common good was rather an ideal for each civic community to espouse within its own boundaries. Indeed, it was by looking to this ideal that the Greeks maintained resistance to the Persian king on a conceptual level even as some of them struck deals with his agents. Throughout the Persian empire, they told themselves, there lived only one free man, its king, whose subjects were his slaves; but Greek cities – those that were not themselves in the hands of tyrants – were self-governing republics, no matter whether oligarchic or democratic, however closely held the privileges of their ruling classes, however restricted their roster of full citizens. For whether political freedom belonged to few or to many, it belonged also to the republic itself.

That such was the ideal is only confirmed by the tendency of Greek political theorists to take a jaundiced view of political reality, and see it as driven by the resentment, avarice and ambition of interest groups. Not only was the common good forgotten in the hurly-burly of factionalism

within individual cities – that is, in the arena where that good was thought to find its natural home – but the factionalism fed off the absence of a common good outside that arena, in the network of relations between Greek cities. Thucydides' *History* (3.82) explains how war between Athens and Sparta at fifth century's end afforded factions in lesser cities a pretext to summon external powers to their aid – Athens if the faction sought democracy, Sparta if it sought oligarchy. In such times, powerful allies were to be had for the asking. The general pattern did not cease with the war of which Thucydides wrote, but persisted and ramified well into the fourth century even as the power blocs became less well defined – Sparta declining, Athens reviving, and Thebes becoming prominent. It was characteristic of the political discourse of the time to polarise the troubles into an antagonism between oligarchy and democracy, and this in turn into an antagonism between rich and poor. -

Such an analysis was not wholly accurate, as Plato knew. Some oligarchies and democracies were more oligarchic or democratic than others; the dichotomy did not in any case exhaust the range of political systems; in many places there existed what the Greeks too called a middle class. However frequent the calls for cancelling debts and redistributing land, the prize contested was political at least as much as economic. Democratic Athens had its disparities of wealth – indeed, the rich were relied upon to fund public services – but political power and legal entitlement extended to all adult male Athenians. Everywhere struggle would typically begin as a division within the elite: between those who would and those who would not strike political bargains with the populace. Despite these caveats, it is understandable that a concerned observer in the fourth century would think the world trapped on a factional see-saw. A reader of the *Seventh Letter* can well believe that Plato, who saw the man he declared the most virtuous of his time suffer first under Critias and his oligarchy and again under democracy, would finally cry: a plague o' both your houses.

So it is at first sight surprising when Callipolis, the ideal city conceived in the *Republic*, turns out not only to conform to the constitution that Critias sought to impose on Athens, but to push it further than perhaps even Critias could have imagined.

A Spartan utopia?

The foreign power that supported Critias' coup was Sparta. For a well-born Athenian such as Critias to be a lover of Spartan ways was nothing

unusual. His varied writings, of which we have only fragments, included laudatory descriptions of the Spartan system, and he was followed in this practice by another of the gentlemen among Socrates' companions, Xenophon, whose *Spartan Constitution* survives entire. Athenians with oligarchic sympathies or elitist attitudes were often accused of acting like Spartans, and some went so far as to dress and wear their hair in the Spartan fashion. But none went so far as Critias, who seems to have wanted to remake all Athens in the image of Sparta.

The contrasts between the Athenian and Spartan systems were stark in a number of ways. In social geography: while Athens was at pains to distribute the privileges of citizenship uniformly through the district under its direct control, the Spartan region had a core of citizens surrounded by non-citizen subordinates in the villages and countryside. In their economy: whereas Athenians of all social ranks could engage in a full range of commercial, agricultural and other activities likely to produce wealth, the small and tight-knit group of full Spartan citizens lived off the agricultural surplus produced by a large body of public serfs, and were expected to hold themselves aloof from money-making pursuits. In their military organisation: Spartiates (Spartan citizens) were full-time warriors, who messed together even when not on campaign, and identified themselves by the privilege of bearing arms that non-citizens were issued only at need; most soldiers and sailors who fought for Athens, by contrast, were called up at times of campaign from the body of regular citizens. In their degree of openness: Athens encouraged foreigners to settle (as the statesman Pericles encouraged Polemarchus' father Cephalus to emigrate from Sicily), naturalised religious cults (as with the cult of Thracian Bendis), and welcomed artistic variety and experiment; Sparta was far more cautious on all these fronts.

Seen against this background, the actions of the Thirty reflect the values of their sponsors. They drew up a list of some 3,000 supporters – about the number of Spartiates at the time – disarmed the rest, and banned them from living within the city limits. They made particular targets of immigrants. The relation they began to establish with the 3,000 was analogous to that between the conservative *gerousia* or senate of Sparta and the collective body of Spartiates. They did all this, we are told, in the cause of purging the city of unjust men and inclining it to virtue and justice. For the fame of Sparta depended not on its actions abroad or its glamour at home but on a distinctive way of life. Sparta was nothing without the lengthy, rigorous and uniform education towards virtue

that it imposed on the Spartiate youth, with the aim of producing well-disciplined men and indeed women of honour, bearers of an austere and martial culture that smothered internal faction and gave the place its reputation for *eunomia*, law and order.

If the rule of Critias was too brief and too harried for us to be sure of its ultimate direction, there can be no doubt that a contemporary reader would have detected more than a whiff of Sparta in his cousin's Callipolis. It too is a city distinguished by the way of life of its military elite, the guardians, who devote themselves entirely to the tasks of defence and policing, and have their material needs provided by a subordinate class of farmers and artisans. The city stands or falls by the upbringing and education of its guardians, a notably austere and conservative process of inculcating discipline and shaping good character. Women among the guardians share the men's way of life to an unusual degree. And in a remarkable passage at the end of Book 7, it is suggested that the quick and easy way to bring all this about would be for those in power to ban everyone over the age of ten from living within the city limits, so as to educate the children in isolation from their parents.

But what would the contemporary reader have made of this quasi-Sparta, this post-Critian coup, when he discovered that the rulers of Callipolis were to be no mere senate of worthies, but philosophers, intellectuals risen from the guardian ranks and educated in mathematics and disputation? Such subjects formed no part of Spartan education; Sparta was a notoriously unbookish place, whose fighters prided themselves on avoiding fancy talk. And would the counts laid against 'timocracy', the first of the unjust societies considered in Book 8, have reinforced this reader's puzzlement, or dispelled it? The timocratic society values militarism and puts the man of honour above all others; its failings are those of a contemporary Sparta, untempered by the intellectual virtues.

For all that the institutions of Callipolis draw inspiration from historical revolutions and familiar societies, in the end they transcend anything known to the Greek world. The discussion sets itself the task of discovering a just city, but finds that it cannot stop short of utopia. How seriously Plato took this utopian vision has long been a controversial issue. The main line of debate divides those who see Callipolis as an ideal whose function is to motivate efforts at personal, not civic, perfection, from those who see it as a guide for future progress on the political, not just the individual level. A different school of thought has denied that Plato intended Callipolis even to seem desirable, let alone practicable. The

question whether the *Republic* is a work primarily of moral or of political philosophy will be addressed in later sections (pp. xxii–xxix). While we are still tracing the work's historical context, let us consider instead the utopian ideas current in Plato's day. Here the fantastic and serious elements are more readily distinguishable than in the *Republic*.

The fantastic we find most clearly in the comedies of Aristophanes – in the Cloud-cuckoo-land of *Birds*, the city in the sky where dreams of absolute power come true; in the means to panhellenic peace and salvation proposed in *Lysistrata*, when the women bring their warring husbands to terms by going on a sex-strike; in the women's rule that comes about in *Women at the Assembly* (or *Ecclesiazusae*), in which the women of Athens, disguised as men, first vote themselves into power, then achieve social concord by equalising distribution of the two great objects of social desire: women and wealth. Equal distribution of property was first proposed, we are told, by a serious utopian theorist, a certain Phaleas of Chalcedon. Less shadowy is Hippodamus of Miletus – a likely model for the Aristophanic geometer and town-planner Meton who offers to lay out the 'streets' of Cloud-cuckoo-land on a radiating pattern. Hippodamus' theories were those of the social engineer and the architect, and sometimes of both together, as in his proposal to divide land according to the occupations and needs of the various classes in the city. He argued for a strict division of the citizenry into three functional groups, although his were farmers, artisans and warriors rather than the producers, warriors and philosopher-kings of the *Republic*. In town-planning his name was associated with the strictly regular geometric line, and some of his layouts were actually built – among them that for the Piraeus, where he lived and worked. In general, the modern reader should bear in mind the ease with which cities in the Greek world could be rebuilt, relocated, or started from scratch. Although Socrates in the *Republic* makes it clear that he is using a metaphor when he calls himself and his discussion partners the founders of Callipolis, starting a new township would not have been regarded as pie-in-the-sky. There is a story that Plato himself was asked to write the laws for one such city, Megalopolis in Arcadia, but refused on the grounds that the new citizens were unwilling to accept equality of possessions.

Yet the town-planner's vision of utopia, the detailed topographic fantasy that became a fixture of utopian writing in Plato's immediate aftermath and marks out the canon from Thomas More's *Utopia* to William Morris' *News from Nowhere*, is notably absent from the *Republic*.

Plato reserves this motif for the twin dialogues *Timaeus* and *Critias*, in which a character Critias who is either the familiar tyrant or an ancestor meant to remind us of him takes a social system purporting to be that of Callipolis and projects it backwards in time onto a primeval Athens. He then tells the tale of its struggle with the now vanished island city of Atlantis, whose glittering palaces and concentric network of canals he lovingly describes. The kinds of writing with which the *Republic* invites comparison have less of Shangri-La about them and are more overtly political.

The philosopher and the king

One of these genres we have encountered already, exemplified by Critias' and Xenophon's writings on the constitution of Sparta. Their manner of contributing to the lively contemporary debate on the relative merits of different constitutions was to offer a partisan, idealised description of just one. Alternatively, a single constitution might be selected for criticism, not praise – as with the *Athenian Constitution* that survives from the late fifth century by an unknown author often called 'The Old Oligarch'. The traditional title of the *Republic* conceals an allusion to such works as these. For if *Politeia* can in Greek name a kind of community that governs itself and has no truck with tyranny – 'Republic' is not an outright misnomer – it is also the normal Greek word for 'constitution'. It was not, then, a *Spartan Constitution* or an *Athenian Constitution* that Plato wrote, but simply a *Constitution*.

When judging constitutions against each other, fourth-century theorists often grouped them into three broad types, complicating the earlier antithesis of oligarchy and democracy by the addition of monarchy. The figure of the king became an important focus for reflection on the powers of men – not only the power of the ruler over those he rules, but the power of a human being to live successfully. The concentration of authority in a single individual fused the moral with the political, made the king's actions on the political plane an expression of his personal virtue and an exercise in self-development. This at least was the theme of a second kind of writing that bears comparison with the *Republic*. It is represented for us by works such as Xenophon's *Education of Cyrus*, a romanticised biography of the Persian king, in which the difficult relation between republican and imperial politics is filtered through the virtues of that princely paragon. Here too belong the Cyprian orations of Isocrates (*To Nicocles*; *Nicocles, or the Cyprians*; and *Evagoras*), which contain his opinions on the

duties that bind kings to their subjects and subjects to their kings. Cyrus was long dead by Xenophon's time, King Nicocles of Cyprus not only alive but an active patron of Isocrates; yet both writers fictionalise their enlightened monarchs.

And if the king was no enlightened monarch but an arbitrary despot whose will was law? Then a Xenophon could imagine him confessing his unhappiness, as in *Hiero*, in which the Sicilian tyrant of that name laments his loveless life in conversation with the wise Simonides, who consoles him with some careful advice on gaining popularity. The early model for such a scene – the confrontation of philosopher and tyrant – can be found in Herodotus' *History* (1.30–33), where Solon, Athenian sage and statesman, and ancestor of Plato, denies King Croesus the satisfaction of being judged the most fortunate of men.

Xenophon and Isocrates had both been associates of Socrates; other 'Socratics' too, to judge by the titles of their lost or fragmentary works, wrote on the topic of kingship and government, and Plato was not the first among them to write Socratic dialogues. The *Education of Cyrus* was already matched with the *Republic* in antiquity. Isocrates never wrote a Socratic dialogue, but did establish a school of 'philosophy' – his name for what he taught, although he rejected speculative and cosmological inquiry as too abstruse and offered himself rather as a master of the art of words and a model for emulation by the civic-minded and politically thoughtful. The school seems to have maintained an uneasy rivalry with the group of students and companions that Plato attracted to his home near a public park just outside Athens, named after an obscure local divinity, Academus. In this Platonic 'Academy' astronomers and mathematicians were welcome, and the training given to philosopher-kings in the *Republic* is usually taken to reflect this fact. *Philosophia* was still an elastic word, and embraced intellectual activities of many sorts.

Plato wrote the *Republic*, then, not only as a concerned member of the political elite and a keen observer of contemporary troubles, but as a writer who looked back at literary models and askance at literary competitors. The *Republic* fits a mould when it indicts the wretched condition of the tyrant from the perspective of the sage, and when it brings its political and moral reflections to a focus in the figure of the enlightened king. But Socrates, although he is a wise man summoned by the social elite to say his piece on virtue and happiness, is not in dialogue with either kings or tyrants; rather, in this case the advice of the philosopher is that the philosopher should remain no mere adviser but should himself become

king, or kings become philosophers. We are to imagine a sage who could counsel himself on kingly happiness, for he would himself be king. Here Plato breaks the literary mould.

Indeed, we may suspect that the considerable fanfare that attends Socrates' proposal is Plato's way of claiming originality more as a literary writer and educational theorist than as a political reformer. Socrates treads very carefully and makes a great show of hesitation before coming out with his advice; his audience reacts to it as if it were quite outrageous (473c-474a). Yet, historically, the coincidence of philosophic ability and political power in notable individuals was by no means unprecedented. One intellectual who drafted a code of law has already been mentioned: Solon, Plato's sixth-century ancestor, who not only brought social reform to Athens but composed poetry on the political issues he was responsible for resolving. Another example is furnished by the 'sophist' (itinerant professor) Protagoras, who wrote the laws for Thurii, and is mentioned in the *Republic* (600c). We have seen that Critias too could have thought himself, at first, something of a philosopher-king.

More generally, philosophers of the sixth to fifth centuries tended to belong to the upper echelon of their communities and for that reason alone would have been called upon for political office – a duty not a few of them are reported to have fulfilled. Or consider the Pythagoreans, who followed a strict regimen of life designed to prepare their souls for the next world, a regimen that ranged dietary taboos together with the practice of philosophy. Beginning in the fifth century, they rose to political power in southern Italy. Many aspects of Pythagorean philosophy, including its mathematical emphasis, are thought to have left their mark on Plato – although the issue of intellectual indebtedness is complicated by the scarcity of good evidence for Pythagoreanism in its early days. But one Pythagorean philosopher, we are told, was not only an intellectual influence on Plato but his political ally and his host: Archytas of Tarentum, seven times elected to the leadership of his city. He was an expert in military ballistics as well as mathematical theory, and his city was later praised by Aristotle for its innovative and socially cohesive politics. Archytas plays a considerable role in the *Seventh Letter*; and some have detected him behind the mask of Timaeus, the otherwise unknown and doubtless fictional philosopher from southern Italy whom Plato makes the principal speaker in his dialogue of that name, and who is introduced as one who has scaled the twin heights of political office and philosophic achievement.

So Plato is exaggerating when he allows the prospect of philosophers in power to seem as preposterous and laughable as ever Aristophanes did the spectacle of the rule of women. Why does he do it? One likely reason is that the reaction to this proposal justifies Socrates in giving a lengthy defence of his conception of the genuine philosopher, in the course of which he explains the position of philosophers in Athenian society, both those who are worthy of the title and those who are not, and lays out a curriculum of philosophic education. From that curriculum the art of words taught by the likes of Isocrates is strikingly absent. A common word for politician at Athens was simply 'speaker', *rhētōr*, for it was by speaking in public assembly that a citizen typically made his way to prominence. Glaucon, whose impetuosity is both displayed and remarked upon in the *Republic*, apparently attempted to speak in the assembly before he was twenty years old – a mark of extreme political ambition. Certainly he and his brother are given the longest and most eloquent political speeches in the work. In the preface to his *Nicocles*, Isocrates writes of the hostility aroused by the eloquence of those who study philosophy – in his sense of the term – and how they are suspected of aiming at selfish advantage rather than virtue. The philosopher-kings whose viability Socrates eventually gets Glaucon and Adeimantus to accept are truer to the Spartan model, and avoid eloquence. Their political rhetoric is a matter of knowing how to keep things hidden from citizens whom the truth would only harm; their art of disputation, the coping-stone of their education, aims to tell things as they are. All this, of course, from the pen of a consummate master of the art of words. Plato is taking his stand, not against eloquence as such, but against its contemporary place in politics and in the education of those who took part in politics.

Both Plato and Isocrates educated politicians. But whereas Isocrates began from his communicative art, and argued that the task of discovering the most decorous considerations with which to frame discourse directed at others on the worthiest of topics cannot but leave its mark on the practitioner's conduct, whether public or private, Plato seems rather to have begun from a conception of virtue as self-possession and self-understanding – attributes that are in a way the precondition of the philosophic life, yet also expressed by it, and in another way its goal – and to have wanted the character of the man to stamp his political discourse, not the discourse to stamp the man.

Nevertheless, it would be easy to exaggerate the contrast between Plato and Isocrates. Both men seem in practice to have been more interested in

promoting competent government of whatever form than in seeing a particular constitution come into being. Plato's associates and students in the Academy were a diverse company: some were connected to the school for many years, and lived primarily intellectual lives, interrupted in a few cases by stints as lawgivers or ambassadors; others were young men from prominent families who came to complete their education. There were foreigners in both categories. While some among the prominent visitors returned home to rule as autocrats, others went back to tumble autocrats from power. In general, almost all varieties of political sympathy can be found among Plato's associates, whether in foreign affairs (pro-Spartan, pro-Athenian, pro-Macedonian) or in constitutional preference.

Plato's own most notable political adventure fits the grand tradition of Solon and Croesus. He became involved with the politics of Syracuse and the dynasty of Dionysius I, the outstanding tyrant of his age, who won himself an empire in Sicily and made Syracuse the glittering embodiment of his personal wealth and magnificence. Dionysius became stereotyped as an enemy of liberty, and his rise to power is thought to have helped shape Plato's account of the onset of tyranny in Book 8. A notable aspect of his court's magnificence was its hospitality towards poets, artists, intellectuals; and Plato was one of the visitors. Stories of his debunking the tyrant's self-image to his face seem too good to be true, too closely modelled on Herodotus. More credit is given to the narrative of Plato's later visits to serve as philosophic mentor for the tyrant's successor, Dionysius II, and of his failure to influence the unworthy and recalcitrant young autocrat. For the details we must rely once more on the *Seventh Letter*. Yet even trusting its portrait of a Plato bent on practising what he has hitherto preached, what we find here are political proposals at once bland and constrained by the Sicilian context. Dionysius was to have some moral fibre infused in him, then to be sent out to unite the Sicilian cities against Carthage, the foreign invader. There is no talk of a guardian class, no call to give women a role in government or to redistribute wealth – no Callipolis in view.

Plato was a thinker, a teacher, a writer fully enmeshed in the controversies of his time, both political and intellectual. Had he been less of his time he would not, perhaps, live so fully on our page.

A political work?

For all the historical particularity of the *Republic*, it has also achieved enduring recognition as a classic of political philosophy. Its position

within the range of political philosophy, however, has proved more difficult to pinpoint than the work's canonical status might lead one to expect. Some, indeed, have wondered whether it ought to be considered a political work at all. Does it not set out to answer a problem of individual rather than collective action, and demonstrate the claim of morality on individual choice and its effect on individual well-being, regardless of social consequences (367b–e)? Does Socrates not explicitly subordinate politics to psychology, describing social structures only as an analogue for corresponding structures of character within the individual (369a)? In which case, it would be better to think of the *Republic* as a work of moral philosophy. Others have chosen to emphasise the fact that its proposals for social reform – its utopian refashionings of education, of property-rights, of the very structure of the family – go well beyond what correspondence with the individual would require, and seem to be developed for their own sake. Even where that correspondence is more strictly observed, in the parallel analyses of unjust societies and individuals that fill Book 8, the critique of actual social conditions that emerges from the correspondence has a relevance and bite of its own.

Yet if the *Republic* would on this account merit its classification as a political work, disagreement returns with the attempt to classify its political stance. Concentrate on its desire to secure collective happiness (420b), its warnings against disparities of wealth and against the mercantile ethos (421d–e, 556c), its efforts to avoid oppression of the weak by the powerful in society, and you may find in it the first stirrings of socialism. Look rather towards its restriction of political power to a tiny elite (429a, 491a), consider their status as moral paragons and saviours (487a, 463b), their centralised control of the moral and cultural as well as economic life of the society, their eugenic techniques (458c–461e), their resort to censorship and to outright deception in order to preserve order and promote good behaviour (389b–c, 414b, 459c–d), and you may think you are reading a prescient charter for fascism – as did some scholars, approvingly, before the Second World War, and many, disgustedly, in its aftermath.

One modern stance whose ancestry it would occur to no one to trace back to the *Republic* is liberalism. What could be further from an ideal of collective self-rule through elected government and uncensored discussion than the political life of Callipolis? In a liberal society, there are for political purposes no morally superior human types, but Callipolis – to describe it now in its own terms rather than with modern categories – is

an aristocracy of the virtuous. Philosophers qualify to form its ruling class by their moral and intellectual excellence – their natural superiority, reinforced and perfected by careful education. Should the *Republic's* theoretical descendants therefore be sought rather in the varieties of republicanism, which, broadly understood, elevates ideals of citizenship and community over individualism, and assigns to politics the goal of promoting virtue? Certainly, Socrates does not hesitate to attribute wisdom and courage to Callipolis as a whole even though the virtues in question are restricted to small classes within the populace (428b–430c) – much as each Greek republic called itself a free and self-governing community no matter how restricted its citizen-roll or governing class. He sets himself the goal of making the entire society flourish, preventing any particular class or individual from flourishing at the expense of the whole (420b–421c). And he sums up the task of his philosopher-kings as that of modelling the community as closely as possible on permanent ideals of virtue (501b).

Yet for all that, it is rather Aristotle's *Politics*, with its famous declaration that man is a political animal, and that the purpose of society is not mere life but a good life, that is the more whole-hearted inaugurator of this tradition. A reader of the *Republic* is unlikely to come away with so celebratory a sense of the possibilities of the self-governing community. Reservations come to a focus at one of the work's central and most disconcerting ideas: that a society should be governed by those who show least eagerness for the task. The idea appears in other writers, including Isocrates and Aristotle, but in connection with conventional political complaints. They frown upon excessive ambition, or sigh for an earlier age when the socially eminent engaged in public life from a sense of their station and its duties. Such thoughts make their appearance in the *Republic* also (347b, 520b–d), but are developed in the direction of outright disenchantment with the political life – famously allegorised in the philosophic soul's escape from the dim and constricted cave of its cultural environment to the sunlit, open spaces of true understanding (514a–517c).

The philosopher, even the philosopher who becomes king, does not look to society as the realm in which to exercise his freedom and realise his virtue, but looks rather to the life of the mind for his liberation; nor does he define himself by his social station or the values of citizenship, but by his individual search for wisdom. For a work that is, in truth, no ancestor of liberalism, the *Republic* lays an unusual emphasis on the indi-

individual; however, it regards individuality not as a possession that confers rights on all and gives society its defining basis, but as an achievement of the few – an achievement in which society can play, at best, only a supporting role. Small wonder, then, that some have doubted whether the *Republic* is truly a political work. One might say, rather, that it is counter-political.

City and soul

Consider how the discussion develops in its early stages. Glaucon offers an account of the origins of justice and law. Human beings were driven to accept legal limits on their urge to take advantage of each other because they judged the unfettered satisfaction of that urge not worth the distress of finding themselves at the receiving end of the conduct to which it prompted others also – a result that only the strongest could entirely avoid (358e–359b). To establish settled laws as the criterion of right and wrong is therefore to impose restrictions on nature, for it is human nature to thrust oneself forward at the expense of others. There is loss as well as gain: the pre-eminence of natural superiority vanishes. A ‘real man’, one who could always prevail, would never agree to restrict his power (359b). The story of society’s origins that Socrates hypothesises in reply presents communal life rather as an organic development that brings us happiness at no cost to our nature. Since none of us is self-sufficient, each will seek to co-ordinate his efforts with others so as to provide for the needs common to all. Individuals will gravitate towards the tasks for which they are naturally suited, and specialise in those, because their needs will be more efficiently addressed in this manner (370c). The process gives rise to a simple, rustic community of farmers, artisans and tradesmen, who live a contented and god-fearing life with no apparent need for rulers or laws (372a–b). They co-ordinate their labour as two men will co-ordinate their rhythm when rowing a boat. Identical needs and a common rationality suffice to produce co-operation even in the absence of hierarchy.

This happy scene is firmly dismissed by Glaucon, who finds it quite devoid of the civilised graces – a ‘city of pigs’ (372d). Socrates permits himself to be drawn into discussion of a community equipped with urban luxuries, including a sophisticated cultural life. This place, unlike the rudimentary society first considered, would have room for intellectuals; yet Socrates’ parting description of the city of pigs is that it is ‘the true city – the healthy version, as it were’ (372e). The healthy city sets its goals

no higher than economic stability and co-operative order among its citizens; the sophisticated city is by contrast bloated and inflamed, and will be driven to make war on its neighbours to feed its excessive appetites (373d-e). However, when the education and discipline necessary for its military class has required a purge of decadent influences in the general culture, and so re-imposed austerity on the city as a whole (399e), is there not a return to health and indeed an achievement of beauty in Callipolis – the word means ‘city of beauty’ – far superior to the simple happiness of the city of pigs? The matter is not as clear-cut as it may seem. That Plato thought the world a better place for having philosophers in it, we cannot doubt; but we may legitimately doubt whether the goals of Callipolis as a society are any higher than those of the healthy city, the true city that it replaces in the discussion.

One way in which such doubts might arise is from consideration of the similes used to describe the task of the good ruler. The philosopher-king is like a ship’s captain or helmsman, who recognises that to steer the ship of state one must have knowledge of the stars, the seasons, the winds. It is not enough, as politicians in a democracy believe, merely to persuade the shipowner – the populace – to let one take the tiller in hand (488a-e). A port of destination has no importance in this analogy and is not mentioned. When the demagogic sailors take control, their aim is not to set a new course but to feast on the ship’s stores and turn the voyage into a carousal. Society is simply a ship at sea, not a ship headed for a particular port. What the true helmsman will do that these sailors will not is use his knowledge of navigation to avoid storms and shoals – to keep the ship afloat. His political goals are limited to security, stability, social harmony. Certainly, he aims to instil virtue into his city, as is clear from another of the similes for the philosopher-king’s task, in which he is compared to a painter working on the canvas of his citizens’ characters (501a-c); but what he paints there are merely the social virtues needed in the city at large, discipline and justice above all (500d). He himself has become, through his philosophic activity and the perfectly rational order of things to which it has given him access, as godlike as it possible for a human being to be. The city that he paints on the model of this rational order, however, is described not as a divine but only as a human likeness, and its general citizenry are not themselves godlike but only ‘as pleasing to god as human characters can be’ (500d vs. 501b-c).

The virtuous society and the virtuous individual are indeed alike in point of virtue, and so the philosopher – that paragon of virtue – is akin

to the finest of cities, Callipolis, the city ruled by philosophers (435b, 408e). But consider what this correspondence amounts to. Wisdom guides the life of the philosophically inclined individual and ensures that his material desires do not grow distractingly materialistic – enforcing that prevention, if necessary, with the aid of an ambitious self-respect. The analysis derives from the *Republic's* theory of the tripartite soul, according to which each person is characterised by a rational or wisdom-loving element, a desiring, material, or profit-loving element, and an ambitious or honour-loving element. Only in the truly virtuous person, however, are these elements properly balanced. Similarly in Callipolis political life is under the guidance of wise philosophers, who ensure that the farmers and artisans supplying the city's material needs keep to their tasks and neither unbalance the economy nor are permitted disruptive inequalities of income, but instead only a decent sufficiency. Should enforcement be required, the military class, which defends the honour of the entire city, can do the policing.

Because of the manner in which the correspondence between society and individual is established – because it is a correspondence of elements and of the relations between those elements – the virtues of the best society and of the best individual can be declared the same even though they come to something quite different. Justice – that multivalent word, in Greek as in English – was first discussed in connection with the keeping of agreements: repaying what one owes, and avoiding fraud (331b). By fastening on the broadest construal of what one owes and is owed, namely as what is deserved, the discussion reviews a traditional conception of justice unemancipated from vengeance, according to which 'an eye for an eye' is the counterpart of 'one good turn deserves another' – this is Polemarchus' contribution (331d–336a). Under Thrasymachus' provocation it considers the idea that what you deserve is whatever your strengths and skills enable you to acquire for yourself. This is the idea that Glaucon reconfigures as the state of nature, and against its background justice appears once more as a matter of keeping agreements, but in the much wider sense of abiding by the convention of law.

Eventually the discussion settles on a definition of justice as 'doing one's own' (433b), where what is one's own is not whatever one is able to get, but what is best for one (586e). Callipolis is a just city because each of its three elements – philosopher-kings, warriors and producers – is performing the task to which it is best suited, and each stands in the appropriate relation to the others. The civic life that this permits is one

of economic stability and harmonious order – values not essentially different from those of the city of pigs, the healthy city. The just individual, by contrast – he of the healthy soul, with its three elements in harmony (444e) – turns out to be no contented pig but a full-blown philosopher, for to take wisdom as one's guide in life is not merely to be rational and prudent in the ordinary sense but to make the disinterested pursuit of understanding one's ultimate value. Only so is the rational element liberated, open to the full range of tasks for which it is best suited: not just controlling the other elements but pursuing wisdom for its own sake (441e, 581b, 586e).

The life that such a person leads is, accordingly, not merely stable and harmonious but godlike and glorious. 'Doing one's own', when it comes to the individual, is more than doing one's part for the community; it is to conduct the business of oneself. Individuality is an achievement, and only the philosopher has the talent to achieve it, for only he provides each element in his make-up with what is best for it. All others may be a part of the just community, but cannot themselves, as individuals, be just. As individuals, Socrates is even prepared to call them the 'slaves' of the just man, the philosopher; as citizens of Callipolis, however, they are called by their rulers not slaves but paymasters and providers, and regard those rulers not as masters but as saviours and defenders (590d, 463b). Each citizen is to find his level; none is to keep his place by virtue of birth alone, but, in theory at least, is to be promoted or demoted as appropriate (415b–c, 423c–d). In this way, Socrates attempts to preserve the pre-eminence of natural superiority that Glaucon thought political life must renounce. Yet he manages also to maintain the benefits of harmonious coexistence that Glaucon claimed as justifying the rule of law in the first place.

The disparity between the philosopher's ambition as an individual and the goals of the city ruled by philosophers becomes only more marked when we consider how the correspondence between individual and society falls out in its unjust forms (Books 8 and 9). It is a spectrum of increasing moral decay that runs from timocracy and the timocratic man, through oligarchy and democracy, and ends with tyranny and the demonstration that the tyrannically inclined man who succeeds in becoming an actual tyrant is the unhappiest wretch of all, and can fulfil no part of his inner being. (Although this decay is presented as a sequence in time, the succession of regimes does not match the history known to Plato – see pp. xiii–xiv – or does so only in certain details, not in its general pattern. But

the pattern is not purely symbolic. For one thing, it surrenders even Callipolis to the prospect of eventual downfall.) Unlike the philosopher, each of the lesser types of person can see only as far as a horizon set by society. The timocrat seeks honour, the oligarch money, the democrat freedom and equality, the tyrannical man an exploitative self-indulgence. It is not simply that these ambitions require a relatively sophisticated civic environment – that much was true also of philosophy – but that they express themselves entirely in social terms, as a matter of one's relations with others.

Mathematics and metaphysics

It may be thought, however, that if Callipolis is ruled by wise philosophers, its civic life is better than stable and harmonious, it can itself be considered wise. And surely the careful filtering of decadent or socially disruptive images and thoughts from the education of the guardians could only be successful if the cultural environment of the entire community were characterised by the austere gracefulness with which the military class must in particular be imbued (401b-d)? Certainly, the *Republic* contains one of the earliest extended analyses (in Books 2, 3 and 10) of the power of cultural artefacts of all sorts to mould the ethos of large groups – a type of analysis familiar in our day from controversies over the influence of advertisements and the censorship of pornographic or violent images. Yet even the inhabitants of so primitive a place as the city of pigs sang praises to the gods – one part of the poetry permitted in Callipolis, with its verses in praise of the gods and of good men (372b, 607a). Similarly, the gracefulness instilled in the guardians by their musical and poetic education aims at and reflects nothing more elevated than social harmony and cohesiveness, together with a piety and a patriotism that fall short of true understanding (386a, 389d–e, 522a).

The education of the most talented among them does not stop, however, at the musical and poetic, but continues with mathematics and philosophy. (Indeed, in retrospect it is suggested that even the youngsters should be made familiar with basic mathematics, 536d.) It is the public policy of the society as a whole that supports this higher education, and provides the conditions in which those with a gift for philosophy can fulfil themselves both intellectually and morally. These are conditions that neither a healthy but rudimentary community nor in its different way a sophisticated but decadent city can provide. Here, in a political system

worthy of him, the philosopher's 'own growth will be greater, and he will be the salvation of his country as well as of himself' (497a; compare 492a). On the other hand, when in Book 4 the whole city ruled by guardians is declared wise by virtue of the knowledge possessed by its ruling class alone, that knowledge has the city for its object – it is expertise in domestic and foreign policy (428d). Only later in the discussion does Socrates make it clear that the knowledge which truly qualifies a guardian to rule is philosophic wisdom, having for its object the whole cosmos (484d, 486a). The question is, how intimate is the connection between this knowledge and the philosopher's political activity?

It is a question surprisingly difficult to answer. As part of the process of qualifying for political power, the guardians are given ten years' education devoted to advanced mathematics, crowned by five years of 'dialectic'. About dialectic Plato is deliberately cagey. It is or involves philosophic disputation, as befits its etymological connection with the Greek word for 'conversation' (534d, 539b–d); it takes a global, unifying view of its topic (537c); it aims to discover the definitions of things, and thereby the unchanging principles of all that exists – the 'forms' – arriving finally at an understanding of the ultimate principle, the form of the good (511b–c, 532a–b, 533b). But we are not told how it achieves this feat, and scholars dispute whether dialectical activity is some kind of meta-mathematics, or whether it quite transcends the ground that mathematics has prepared.

On the one hand, ten years of mathematics seems too long a stretch for a study that would merely be meant to sharpen the intellect in a general way. Yet we need not regard the education of the philosopher-king, at the other extreme, as an internalisation of mathematical structures that function as blueprints for applying his knowledge of the good to the social world. This would have the consequence that, when we read of philosophers looking to the forms in order to paint virtues on the canvas of the citizens' character, we should take them to be embodying in society a mathematical proportion whose structure they have first discovered in abstraction.

A middle ground between these two positions would be the following. A full ten years' preparation in mathematics is required because only long exposure to the rational order of its objects, in combination with dialectic, can succeed in transmitting to the soul of the sympathetic learner a similarly rational order and proportion (500c). This is consonant with the ennobling effects attributed to the study of astronomy and cosmic

harmony in the *Timaeus* (47b, 90d). Once educated, however, the political use to which the philosopher-king puts his mathematical and analytic training consists in resolving particular problems that arise while he is taking his turn at running the city. He does not apply his mathematical expertise to the overall structure of the community and its institutions. He has inherited that structure – ultimately, from Socrates as ‘founder’ of the imaginary city (519c) – and is charged simply to preserve it. The frequent glances back and forth at the painter’s model, the erasures and corrections – these would represent the work of day-to-day judgment, minor legislation, and management of established institutions, whose details Socrates claims there is no need to supply (501b; compare 423e, 425d). Book 5 of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* perhaps gives us some idea how mathematics was thought relevant to such work. Its topic is justice, but its talk is mostly of ‘proportionate equality’, ‘diagonal exchange’ and the like – concepts involved, on the one hand, in the economics of just distribution and commerce, and, on the other, in the ratios of gain and loss, reward and penalty, that make for rectificatory justice.

The work of running Callipolis and assuring the continuance of its system is regarded by philosophers not as a privilege, not as something grand, but as a necessity (540b; compare 520e, 347d). Each takes his tour of duty, but finds his greatest pleasure in philosophic activity, conducted in the company of his peers. His attitude towards political life is intriguingly reminiscent of that which Glaucon attributed to the conventionally just person, for whom justice is a compromise to be practised not willingly, as one would practise something thought to be beneficial, but rather as something unavoidable (358c). There is this difference, however, between the two attitudes: the philosopher does not rule unwillingly – at least if that is taken to mean that he would avoid ruling if he could – but rather in recognition of what is necessary if things are to turn out for the best, both for himself and for his fellow-citizens (592a, 520c–d). The grand and godlike thing is only philosophy, but the philosopher is not only a philosopher. He is a human being, beset by a variety of needs and desires, adrift amid a variety of fellow human beings. Because he is a philosopher, he makes the best of things – for only in a paradise where souls are simply wise could the best alternative be to engage in continuous and perfect contemplation (519c–d, 611c–612a). The politics of the *Republic* draws its strength from a sense of loss.

A guide to further reading

Bibliographical note to the introduction

For those who wish to explore issues arising directly from the editor's introduction, the following works are recommended.

For the **general historical and cultural background**, fundamental and remarkably lively are the volumes of *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 2nd edition, that deal respectively with the fifth and the fourth centuries BC: vol. v, ed. D. M. Lewis *et al.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) and vol. vi [abbr. *CAH* 6], ed. D. M. Lewis *et al.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). An important work of reference is K. J. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974, repr. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994).

A detailed account of the rule of the Thirty can be found in Peter Krentz, *The Thirty at Athens* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982). Plato's *Letters* can be studied in the translation, with critical essays, of Glen R. Morrow, *Plato's Epistles* (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1962).

M. M. Austin gives a succinct account of faction in *CAH* 6 pp. 528–535 ('Social and political conflicts'). There is a full survey in A. W. Lintott, *Violence, Civil Strife and Revolution in the Classical City, 750–330 BC* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981). Martin Ostwald, *From Popular Sovereignty to the Sovereignty of Law: Law, Society and Politics in Fifth-Century Athens* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), is a detailed conceptual history. G. E. M. de Ste Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World: From the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), views the issues from a Marxist perspective. An important study of political groupings at

Athens is W. Robert Connor, *The New Politicians of Fifth-Century Athens* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971, repr. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992).

Every readable social history of Sparta and of its polarity with Athens is Anton Powell, *Athens and Sparta: Constructing Greek Political and Social History from 478 BC* (London: Routledge, 1988). The account of the Republic given by W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. iv [Plato: *The Man and His Dialogues, Earlier Period*] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), is representative of the approach to the Republic's utopianism that understands Callipolis as a personal ideal (see esp. pp. 483–486). M. F. Burnyeat, 'Utopia and fantasy: the practicality of Plato's ideally just city': 175–187 in Jim Hopkins and Anthony Gile, eds., *Psychoanalysis, Mind and Art: Perspectives on Richard Wollheim* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), argues that Plato was serious about the political reforms projected in Callipolis. The approach that puts in question whether Plato intended Callipolis even to seem desirable is identified with Leo Strauss: see the second chapter ('On Plato's Republic') of *The City and Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964). The interpretive essay in Alan Bloom's translation of the *Republic* (New York: Basic Books, 1968) is a more accessible version of this approach. A survey of utopian theory is included in W. Robert Connor's chapter 'Historical writing in the fourth century BC and in the Hellenistic period': 458–471 in P. E. Easterling and B. M. W. Knox, eds., *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, vol. 1 [*Greek Literature*] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). The chapter is also relevant to the issues mentioned next.

A wide selection of **political theory before Plato**, including important but relatively obscure texts such as the 'Old Oligarch' and the fragments of Critias, is translated in Michael Gagarin and Paul Woodruff, eds., *Early Greek Political Thought from Homer to the Sophists* [Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). On Xenophon as a political writer and Socratic see the chapter by Christopher Bruell in Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, eds., *History of Political Philosophy* (3rd edn, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). Martin Ostwald and John Lynch give an account of Isocrates and of the relation between his and Plato's schools in chapter 12a of *CAH* 6 ('The growth of schools and the advance of knowledge'). The opening chapter of Charles Kahn's *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue: The Philosophic Use of a Literary Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press, 1996) is a survey of the literature written by the Socratics as a group. Diskin Clay, 'The origins of the Socratic dialogue': 23–47 in Paul A. Vander Waerdt, ed., *The Socratic Movement* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), analyses the models and the background for Socratic dialogue as a literary form. The classic modern work on the Pythagoreans is Walter Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism* (trans. E. Minar, Jr., Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972). For the political involvement of members of Plato's Academy, in addition to chapter 12a of *CAH* 6 mentioned in this paragraph, see chapter 10 ('Plato's academy and politics') of P. A. Brunt, *Studies in Greek History and Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), which includes an account of Plato's connections with the elder and younger Dionysius, as do chapters 5 and 13 of *CAH* 6 (David Lewis' 'Sicily, 413–368 BC' and H. D. Westlake's 'Dion and Timoleon').

On pp. xxii–xxv of the introduction: the controversy over whether the *Republic* should be considered a proto-fascist work came to a head with the publication of vol. 1 of Karl Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies* (London: Routledge 1945; last revised edn 1966). The question can be profitably studied in the collection of articles *Plato, Popper and Politics*, ed. R. Bambrough (Cambridge: Heffer, 1967).

On pp. xxv–xxxi of the introduction: see the works on psychology, on metaphysics, and on mathematics listed under the heading 'Specific aspects of Plato's thought and of the *Republic*'.

General studies of Plato and of *The Republic*

Two good introductory books on Plato are Bernard Williams, *Plato* (New York: Routledge, 1999), and C. J. Rowe, *Plato* [Philosophers in Context] (New York: St Martin's Press, 1984). G. M. A. Grube, *Plato's Thought* (2nd edn, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980) remains useful. The discussion of the *Republic* in vol. IV of Guthrie's *History of Greek Philosophy* (full reference at p. xxiii above) is useful in its own right and as a gateway to more particular topics; and the same can be said of Guthrie's entire account of Plato and of particular dialogues in vols. IV and V. Ernest Barker's classic *Greek Political Theory* (London: Methuen, 1918), despite its title, is devoted entirely to Plato and the pre-Platonic context of political thought. George Klosko, *The Development of Plato's Political Theory* (New York: Methuen, 1986), is a useful modern discussion of political themes in the dialogues.

R. L. Nettleship, *Lectures on the Republic of Plato* (2nd edn, London: Macmillan, 1901) is still well worth reading. Bernard Bosanquet, *A Companion to Plato's Republic for English Readers* (2nd edn, London: Rivingtons, 1925), which is a philosophic commentary keyed to a translation, remains interesting, especially for its Hegelian perspective. Two books of value from mid-century are N. R. Murphy, *The Interpretation of Plato's Republic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), and, at a more introductory level, R. C. Cross and A. D. Woodley, *Plato's Republic: A Philosophic Commentary* (London: Macmillan, 1963). The subsequent generation of works written by philosophers and intended as introductions includes Nicholas P. White, *A Companion to Plato's Republic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979) and Julia Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981). More ambitious are C. D. C. Reeve, *Philosopher-Kings: The Argument of Plato's Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), and T. H. Irwin, *Plato's Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) – a work which, while not exclusively about the *Republic*, gives an influential account of its theory of justice. Studies that show the influence of Strauss (see p. xxiii above) and are important in their own right include Seth Benardete, *Socrates' Second Sailing: On Plato's Republic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), and Leon Craig, *The War Lover: A Study of Plato's Republic* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

Specific aspects of Plato's thought and of *The Republic*

There is an extensive bibliography arranged by topic in Richard Kraut, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

Those who wish to investigate the metaphysical themes sounded in the *Republic* could begin with chapter 9 of the *Companion* just mentioned, Nicholas P. White's 'Plato's metaphysical epistemology', and move on to the more adventurous territory of Richard Patterson's *Image and Reality in Plato's Metaphysics* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1985) and the difficult but brilliant work of Terry Penner, *The Ascent from Nominalism: Some Existence Arguments in Plato's Middle Dialogues* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1987). Quite different is the approach of the 'Tübingen school', which understands the metaphysical arguments contained in the dialogues as allusions to a Platonic metaphysics never described in them. Little of this

work is available in English, but note the succinct and accessible account by Thomas A. Szlezák, *Reading Plato* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

For Plato's psychology in general, consult the accounts given by Sabina Lovibond, 'Plato's theory of mind': 35–55 in Stephen Everson ed., *Psychology* [Companions to Ancient Thought] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), and Charles Kahn, 'Plato's theory of desire', *Review of Metaphysics* 41 (1987) 77–103. Probing modern studies of the tripartite soul in the *Republic* include Bernard Williams, 'The analogy of city and soul in Plato's *Republic*': 196–206 in E. N. Lee et al., eds., *Exegesis and Argument* (Phronesis supplementary vol. 1, 1973), and John M. Cooper, 'Plato's theory of human motivation', *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 1.1 (1984) 3–21. They should be read alongside the quite different J. L. Stocks, 'Plato and the tripartite soul', *Mind* 24 (1915) 207–221.

For discussion of Plato on literature and culture see G. R. F. Ferrari, 'Plato and poetry': 92–148 in George Kennedy, ed., *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 1 [Classical Criticism] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), Christopher Janaway, *Images of Excellence: Plato's Critique of the Arts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), and M. F. Burnyeat, 'Culture and society in Plato's *Republic*', *Tanner Lectures on Human Values* 20 (1999) 215–324. For a different perspective, see chapter 3 ('Plato and the poets') of H.-G. Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato* (trans. P. Christopher Smith, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980). Andrew Barker, *Greek Musical Writings* (2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, 1989) includes an annotated translation of all passages in Plato having to do with music. For the wider context, see H. I. Marrou, *The History of Education in Antiquity* (trans. G. Lamb, New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956).

Ian Mueller provides a useful survey of the place of mathematics in Plato's thought in his 'Mathematical method and philosophic truth', chapter 5 of *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (full reference at p. xxxv above). Important studies that take opposing views of mathematics are F. M. Cornford, 'Mathematics and dialectic in the *Republic* vi–vii', *Mind* 41 (1932) 37–52; repr.: 61–95 in R. E. Allen, ed., *Studies in Plato's Metaphysics* (London: Routledge, 1965), and M. F. Burnyeat, 'Plato on why mathematics is good for the soul', in T. Smiley, ed., *Mathematics and Necessity in the History of Philosophy* [Dawes Hicks Lectures on Philosophy, British Academy] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Cornford emphasises distinctions between the mathematical and the moral in the *Republic*, Burnyeat emphasises their kinship. The standard history of Greek mathematics as a whole is that of T. L. Heath, *A History of Greek Mathematics* (2 vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921, repr. New York: Dover, 1981). A classic study of the curriculum in Plato's Academy and of the place of mathematics within it is Harold Cherniss' *The Riddle of the Early Academy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1945, repr. New York: Garland, 1980).

Principal dates

The chronology includes no guesses as to when Plato wrote the various dialogues. For the issues and difficulties involved in such attempts, see the quick overview in pp. xii–xviii of the introduction to John M. Cooper, ed., *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), or the full treatments of Holger Thesleff, *Studies in Platonic Chronology* (*Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum* 70, 1982), and Leonard Brandwood, *The Chronology of Plato's Dialogues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<i>Plato</i>		<i>Political events</i>
	431	War declared between Athens and Sparta ('Peloponnesian War')
427	Birth of Plato	
	411	Oligarchic revolution of 'The Four Hundred' at Athens
	410	Democracy restored at Athens
	405	Dionysius I of Syracuse rises to power
	404	Spartan victory over Athens, oligarchic regime of 'The Thirty' imposed
	403	Democracy restored at Athens

*Plato**Political events*

399

Execution of Socrates

395

Athens, Thebes, Corinth
in alliance against Sparta
(‘Corinthian War’)

388

Visits south Italy and
Sicily, meets Archytas
the Pythagorean and
Dionysius I of Syracuse

c. 387

Founds Academy after
return to Athens

386

‘The King’s Peace’
imposed by Persia on the
parties to the Corinthian
War

386–378

Sparta in the ascendant in
the aftermath of the
King’s Peace

378

Athens and Thebes in
alliance against Sparta;
foundation of Second
Athenian League

371

Thebes defeats Sparta at
Leuctra; Spartan military
supremacy comes to an
end

370–362

Thebes in the ascendant
after Leuctra; Athens in
alliance with Sparta
against Thebes

367

Death of Dionysius I of
Syracuse; Dionysius II
succeeds him367–366 Plato visits Dionysius
II in Sicily361–360 Plato revisits Dionysius
II

Principal dates

<i>Plato</i>		<i>Political events</i>
	360	Philip II (father of Alexander the Great) accedes to throne of Macedon and begins to build empire in Greece; Athens at first in alliance, but from 357 onwards at war with Macedon
	357	Dionysius II is ousted by Dion, member of the Syracusan royal family and Plato's confidant and student
347	Death of Plato	354 Dion is assassinated
		338 Final victory of Philip of Macedon at Chaeronea

Abbreviations and conventions

- CAH 6 D. M. Lewis *et al.*, eds., *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 2nd edition, vol. vi [*The Fourth Century BC*] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)
- DK H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (6th edn, rev. W. Kranz, Berlin: Weidmann, 1951–1952)
- EGPT Michael Gagarin and Paul Woodruff, eds., *Early Greek Political Thought from Homer to the Sophists* [Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)
- GPM K. J. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974, repr. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994)

Line references to works by ancient Greek prose writers are keyed to the Oxford Classical Text.

Editor's synopsis of *The Republic*

Book I

327a: Socrates and Glaucon are detained at the Piraeus. The scene is set at Polemarchus' house (328b). – 328c: Socrates converses with Cephalus about old age (328e) and the benefits of wealth (329e), and introduces the topic of justice (331c): it is not simply a matter of being truthful and returning what one owes. – 331d: Discussion between Socrates and Polemarchus. Justice, it is proposed, is a matter of giving what is appropriate: to friends, giving good, to enemies, bad (332c). But in what context (332d)? And won't the just person also be best at injustice (333e)? Besides, who *are* our friends and enemies (334c)? And is it just to treat even an enemy badly (335b)? – 336b: Thrasymachus speaks up. His definition: justice is what is good for the stronger (338c). But does this mean: whatever the stronger *thinks* is good (339b)? Clarification is volunteered by Polemarchus and Cleitophon (340a). Thrasymachus insists that the stronger, to the extent that he *is* stronger, does not make mistakes (340d). Socrates counters with an analysis of art or skill: it aims at what is good for its object, not its practitioner (341c). Thrasymachus objects: shepherds do not aim at what is good for their sheep (343b). Socrates distinguishes the shepherd's concern for his sheep from his concern to earn a living (345c). He suggests that the best rulers are reluctant to rule (347a). He offers three arguments in favour of the just life over the unjust life: (i) the just man is wise and good, the unjust man ignorant and bad (349b); (ii) injustice produces internal disharmony and prevents effective action (351b); (iii) the just person lives a happier life than the unjust person (352d). But it remains to be discovered what justice is (354b).

Book 2

357a: Glaucon, as devil's advocate, renews Thrasymachus' challenge. – 359a: His speech against justice: (i) justice has its origin in a compromise; (ii) is practised only because unavoidable (the Gyges story) (359c); (iii) is desirable only for its rewards, which can be gained by the mere appearance of justice (360e). – 362d: Adeimantus' speech reinforcing Glaucon's critique. Two ways of describing justice are widespread: as something praiseworthy not for itself but for its rewards (363a), or as something dissociated from pleasure and happiness (364a); both these views tend to corrupt the young (365b). Socrates is requested to praise justice for itself, not for the reputation it brings (367b). – 368a: Socrates comes to the defence of justice. He proposes to look for justice in the city first, then for its equivalent in the individual; and begins by imagining the origins of civic life (369a). – 372c: In response to Glaucon's objection that this hypothetical city is uncivilised, Socrates describes instead a luxurious city. He proposes that a professional army will be needed to guard the city (373e), made up of guardians who must be fierce to enemies but gentle to their own people (375c), and educated with special care (376d). Traditional stories about the gods are to be censored (377b); god should be presented to them as good, and as a cause only of good (379a); also as unchanging (380d), and as refraining from deception (381e).

Book 3

386a: Discussion of the guardians' education continues. The qualities that stories should promote in them, in addition to the respect for authority and the social harmony already considered, are (i) courage (386b), (ii) resistance to grief (387d), (iii) resistance to laughter (388e), (iv) respect for truth, but including a willingness to tell lies when necessary (389b), (v) self-discipline (389d). – 392d: Discussion turns from the contents of stories to the manner in which they are told, and Socrates makes a distinction between simple narrative and narrative through imitation. He imposes limitations on the guardians' familiarity with and performance of imitative poetry (394e). They should confine themselves to the austere style and not use either the elaborate or the mixed styles (396c). – 398c: Equivalent restrictions are imposed on the types of music to be included in the guardians' education. – 400e: Finally, Socrates makes a generalisation about the importance of good art in forming good

character, and connects the beauty of art with the beauty that inspires erotic attachment (402d). – 403c: Turning to the guardians' physical education, Socrates recommends a straightforward diet and avoidance of recourse to doctors, which he associates with the avoidance of litigation (404e). Physical education should aim to benefit the soul rather than the body (410b); a balance between intellect and spiritedness is the ideal (410d). – 412b: Socrates describes how rulers should be selected from among the guardians. He designs a patriotic myth to be believed by subsequent generations in the newly founded city (414c), and briefly sketches the guardians' social organisation, forbidding them private property (415d).

Book 4

419a: Adeimantus objects: Will the guardians be happy (419a)? Socrates explains that the task is to make the whole city happy, not any particular group within it (420b). He mentions further requirements if the city as a whole is to be happy: both its wealth (421d) and its size (423b) must be limited. He emphasises once more the importance of education (423e), and urges conservatism when it comes to amending laws (425e). For its religious rituals the city can defer to the traditional authorities (427b). – 427d: Now that the city has been theoretically established, discussion turns to its justice. Socrates proposes that its justice will be what remains after its wisdom, courage and self-discipline have been identified (427e). The city's wisdom is located in its ruling class (428b); its courage is located in the army (429a); and its self-discipline consists in the fact that its subjects are willing to be ruled by those best suited to rule (430d). Its justice, finally, is a matter of each class performing its proper function (432b). – 434d: The corresponding virtues in the individual are now to be identified. First, the general correspondence between city and individual is defended (435a), prompting the question whether the three elements in the soul, corresponding to the three classes in the city, have distinct functions (436b). Socrates distinguishes the function of the rational from that of the desiring element (439a), and that of the spirited element from each of the others in turn (439e, 440e). He explains how the virtues of the individual correspond in their elements and their structure to those of the city (441c). An individual is just when each of the elements internal to his soul performs its proper function (442d). This account is compatible with conventional beliefs (442e). Justice, then, is a

healthy balance of the soul's components, and injustice an unhealthy imbalance (444e). – 445a: Socrates now comes to the question which Glaucon and Adeimantus originally asked him to answer: which is more profitable, justice or injustice? A proper response will require examination of the various unjust societies and of the unjust individuals that correspond to each.

Book 5

449a: Socrates is about to describe the varieties of unjust society when he is distracted by a whispered transaction between Polemarchus and Adeimantus. Invited to speak up, they demand a more detailed account from him of the proposal that women and children should be held in common among the guardians. – 451c: Socrates begins with an argument that female members of the guardian class should perform the same tasks as male guardians. Against the objection that women should be assigned different tasks from men because they differ from men by nature (453b), he responds that this natural difference is not relevant when it comes to running a city (453e). Having shown that this proposal is feasible, he also argues that it is optimal (456c). – 457d: Socrates' second proposal is that there should be no separate families among the guardians. He postpones consideration of its feasibility in order to consider its optimality (458a), and begins by explaining the sexual and eugenic regulations that will be required of the guardians (458c), before describing how these arrangements will achieve a unity among the guardians that can then extend to all the citizens (462a). He points out that, living this way, the guardians are likely to be extremely happy (465d). Once again the feasibility of these arrangements is mooted (466d). Socrates launches into an account of how the guardians will make war (466e), but is presently interrupted by Glaucon, who demands to know precisely how it is possible for a society such as this to come into being (471c). – 472a: After a preamble explaining that the theoretical model of the ideal city remains valid even if its feasibility cannot be demonstrated, Socrates responds that the model cannot become reality unless philosophers become kings, or kings philosophers (473c). To justify this claim, an analysis of philosophy is required (474b). Only philosophers recognise and take pleasure in the single form behind the multiplicity of appearances (476a). Socrates offers an argument to distinguish the philosopher's knowledge from mere opinion (476c).

Book 6

484a: Given the superior discernment of philosophers, Socrates continues, it is to them that the city should look for guidance, provided they can also be shown to be capable of gaining practical experience and of achieving the full range of human virtue. The character traits of the philosopher do in fact cover this range, being love of learning, truthfulness, self-discipline, greatness of spirit, courage, justice, quickness of mind, good memory, refinement and charm (485a). – 487a: Adeimantus objects that actual philosophers are either useless or bad. Socrates responds with an analogy (the ship of state) to show that it is not philosophers who are to blame for their uselessness, but those who refuse to make use of them (488a). He describes how the philosophic nature tends, because of its very excellence, to become distorted by society, which would ignore a less outstanding character (489e). He warns against various impostors who claim the mantle of philosophy (495c), and who far outnumber the few philosophers who manage to escape corruption by society (496b). He explains how it is possible for a city to cope with the challenge of philosophy (497d), and to become free of the prejudice against it (500a). He concludes that Callipolis is both optimal and not unfeasible (502c). – 502d: Turning to the question of how philosopher-kings should be educated, Socrates argues that their most important branch of study will be the study of the good (505a), and offers three analogies to explain it: (i) the sun (507a); (ii) the line (509d).

Book 7

514a: The final analogy to explain the study of the good is that of (iii) the cave. Education ought to turn the eye of the soul away from the shadows with which it is surrounded in the cave of society and lead it to true understanding in the sunlit world above (518c). But philosophers who attain this understanding must be made to return to the cave and rule there (519d). – 521d: Socrates explains how it is the study of mathematics that will do the job of drawing the soul out of the cave. He analyses each branch of mathematics in turn: (i) arithmetic and number (522c); (ii) plane geometry (526c); (iii) solid geometry (528b); (iv) astronomy (528e); (v) harmonics (530d). – 531d: The culmination of the philosopher-king's education is the study of dialectic, which brings him to understand the good. But Socrates cannot give Glaucon a clear idea of what dialectic is, or how it achieves its end. – 535a: Instead, they discuss what qualifications

are necessary for such a course of study, and at what age the various studies should be undertaken (536d). Socrates concludes with a suggestion about the easiest way to bring Callipolis into being (541a).

Book 8

543a: Socrates and Glaucon take stock of the argument so far, and resume the topic that was interrupted at the beginning of Book 5. The four main types of unjust regime will be systematically described, together with the corresponding types of unjust individual, beginning with the least degenerate and proceeding to the most. Socrates once again offers a general justification of the correspondence between city and individual (544e). – 545b: He explains how timocracy arises from aristocracy, the characteristics of timocracy (547d), the character of the correspondingly timocratic individual (548d), and how an individual becomes timocratic (549c). – 550c: Oligarchy. How it arises from timocracy, its characteristics (551c), how the correspondingly oligarchic individual becomes oligarchic (553a), and what his character is (554a). – 555b: Democracy. How it arises from oligarchy, its characteristics (557b), how the correspondingly democratic individual becomes democratic (558c), and what his character is (561a). – 562a: Tyranny. How it arises from democracy, and what its characteristics are (566d).

Book 9

571a: The tyrannical individual. How he becomes tyrannical, and what his character is (573c). Socrates demonstrates this individual's unhappiness by applying the correspondence between city and individual (576c). Unhappiest of all is the tyrannical individual who becomes tyrant of a city (578b). Socrates concludes this first proof that the just are happier than the unjust with a final ranking of the individual characters in respect of happiness (580b). – 580d: Second proof that the just are happier than the unjust. Socrates distinguishes three fundamental human types, the lovers of wisdom, of honour, and of profit, and argues that we should trust the wisdom-lover's judgment that his way of life is the most pleasant. – 583b: Third proof that the just are happier than the unjust. Socrates analyses the nature of pleasure. Relief from pain can seem pleasurable (583c), and most, even if not all, bodily pleasures are no more than a relief from pain (584b). The only truly fulfilling pleasure, by contrast, is that which comes

from understanding (585b). – 586d: Socrates concludes with the claim that each element in the soul can find its proper pleasure if the part that loves wisdom is in control. He calculates the multiple by which the best life is more pleasant than the worst (587a). He offers a final vindication of justice with the help of a comparison between the soul and an imaginary creature of multiple form (588b).

Book 10

595a: Socrates returns to the topic of poetry, last discussed in Books 2 and 3. What is imitation? Socrates answers his question by considering the example of a couch, and distinguishing between the form of the couch, the manufactured couch, and a painting of a couch (596a). He concludes that the products of imitation are far removed from truth (597e). – 598e: Poets, like painters, are imitators. Socrates argues that if they really had the expertise conventionally attributed to them, they would not have been content to remain mere poets (599b). Their knowledge is in fact inferior to a maker's knowledge, which is in turn inferior to a user's knowledge (601c). – 602c: Socrates turns from the topic of what imitators know to that of how they affect their audiences. Using a comparison with optical illusions (602c), he argues that imitative poetry aims to stir the irrational element in the soul (603c). Worst of all, it can corrupt even decent people (606c). He concludes that there is no place for such poetry in Callipolis, but only for verses in praise of the gods and of good men (606e). – 608a: Via the claim that imitative poetry prevents the immortal soul from attaining its true reward, Socrates makes the transition to a proof of the soul's immortality (608d). He insists that the soul cannot be understood in its true nature if we consider only its association with the body, as we have been doing in this discussion (611b). – 612b: Finally, Socrates describes the rewards of justice, as permitted by the rules of their discussion now that justice has first been vindicated without appeal to its reputation or rewards. He briefly reviews the rewards of justice and the penalties for injustice in this life (612d), then narrates an elaborate myth, the myth of Er, describing the rewards and penalties that await us after death (614a). The souls of the dead meet on a meadow to discuss their experiences of reward and punishment (614c); they travel to a place from which they can view the whole cosmos (616b); they choose their next lives (617d); they are reincarnated (620e). Socrates ends the discussion with a farewell (621c).

THE REPUBLIC

Book I¹

7 I went down to the Piraeus yesterday with Glaucon the son of Ariston, to offer a prayer to the goddess.² Also I wanted to watch the festival, to see how they would conduct it, since this was the first time it was being celebrated.³ The parade of Athenians struck me as excellent, and the show put on by the Thracians was every bit as impressive, I thought. We offered our prayers, watched the festival, and then started off on our journey back to town. We were already on our way home when we were spotted by Polemarchus the son of Cephalus. He got his slave to run after us and tell us to wait for him. The slave tugged at my cloak from behind, and said, 'Polemarchus says you are to wait.' I turned round, and asked him where his master was.

'There he is,' he said, 'coming along behind you. Wait for him.'

'We will,' said Glaucon.

c In a few moments Polemarchus reached us, with Glaucon's brother Adeimantus, Niceratus the son of Nicias, and a few others. They had been watching the procession, apparently. And Polemarchus said, 'It looks as if you're all on your way back to the city, Socrates. You're not staying, then?'

¹ It has been traditional since antiquity to divide the *Republic* into ten 'books'. Each book corresponds to a single roll of papyrus, the format in which Plato's writings were archived, distributed, and read in the ancient world. We do not know whether the division into ten books was made by Plato himself or by a later editor. The numbers and letters in the margin follow the pagination of the sixteenth-century edition of Plato by Stephanus. It is the pagination normally used to circumvent differences of format among subsequent editions and translations.

² Bendis, as we are eventually told at the end of Book I (354a).

³ We can date this occasion only to a window of time between 431 and 411 BC.

'That's a pretty good guess,' I replied.

'Do you see how many of us there are?' he asked.

'Yes.'

'Well, then,' he said, 'you must either get the better of all these people, or else stay here.'

'There is another possibility,' I said. 'We might persuade you that you should let us go.'

'And do you really think you could persuade us,' he said, 'if we refused to listen?'

'Of course not,' said Glaucon.

'In that case, make your decision on the assumption that we are *not* going to listen.'

328 'Haven't you heard about the torch race?' Adeimantus added. 'This evening, on horseback, in honour of the goddess?'

'On horseback?' I said. 'That's something new. Do you mean a relay race on horseback, passing torches from one to another?'

b 'Yes,' said Polemarchus. 'And they're going to have an all-night ceremony as well, which should be worth watching. We can go out and watch it after dinner. There'll be lots of young people there. We can spend some time with them, and talk to them. Do stay. Please say "yes."'

'It looks as if we shall have to,' said Glaucon.

'If that's your decision,' I said, 'we shall.'

c So we went back to Polemarchus' house, where we found Polemarchus' brothers Lysias and Euthydemus – as well as Thrasyarchus of Chalcedon, Charmantides from the deme⁴ of Paeania, and Cleitophon the son of Aristonymus. Also there, in the house, was Polemarchus' father d Cephalus. It was a long time since I had seen him, and I found him much aged. He was wearing a garland, and sitting on a sort of cushioned stool. He had just been conducting a sacrifice in the courtyard.⁵ There was a circle of stools round him, so we sat down with him.

As soon as he saw me, Cephalus started to make me welcome. 'You don't often come down to visit us in the Piraeus, Socrates,' he said. 'You should, though. If I were still strong enough to make the journey up to d town without difficulty, there would be no need for you to come here. We would go to you. But as things are, you should come more often. I can assure you, speaking for myself, that the more the pleasures of the body

⁴ The territory of Athens and its surrounding countryside was subdivided into districts called 'demes', each with some degree of self-government.

⁵ Cephalus' garland is an item of sacrificial uniform.

fade, the greater become one's desire and taste for conversation. So do please spend some time with these young men. Do come here and visit us. Regard us as your friends – as your family, even.⁶

'With pleasure, Cephalus,' I replied. 'I love talking to the very old. It's as if they're a long way ahead of us on a road which we too are probably going to have to travel. I feel we should learn from them what the road is like – whether it's steep and rough going, or gentle and easy. In particular, I'd very much like to hear how it strikes you, now that you've actually reached the time of life which the poets call "old age, the threshold."⁶ What is your report on it? Would you call it a difficult time of life?

'I'll tell you exactly how it strikes me, Socrates. There's a group of us who meet fairly often. We're all about the same age, so we're following the words of the old proverb.⁷ When we meet, most of them start complaining; they say they miss the things they used to enjoy when they were young, and they recall their sexual exploits, their drinking, their feasting, and everything connected with those pleasures. They get upset, as if they'd suffered some great loss – as if then they had led a wonderful life, whereas now they're not alive at all. Some of them also complain about the lack of respect shown by their families towards old age, and under this heading they recite a litany of grievances against old age. I think they're putting the blame in the wrong place, Socrates. If old age were to blame, then not only would I have felt the same way about old age, but so would everyone else who has ever reached this age. And yet I've met several people who are not like this – most notably Sophocles the poet. I was there once when someone asked him, "How is your sex life, Sophocles? Are you still capable of making love to a woman?" "Don't talk about it, my good sir," was Sophocles' reply. "It is with the greatest relief that I have escaped it. Like escaping from a fierce and frenzied master." I thought that a good reply at the time, and I still think it a good one now. Old age is altogether a time of great peace and freedom from that sort of thing.

'When our appetites fade, and loosen their grip on us, then what happens is exactly what Sophocles was talking about. It is a final release from a bunch of insane masters. Both in this, and in your relations with your family, there is only one thing responsible, and that is not old age, but your character. For those who are civilised and contented, then even

⁶ That is, the threshold of death. The phrase is common in Homer and other epic poets.

⁷ The proverb runs, literally, 'People of the same age please each other' and has no exact proverbial match in English – but compare 'birds of a feather flock together'.

old age is only a slight burden. Otherwise – for those who are not like this – both old age and youth prove hard to cope with.’

I was very impressed by what he said, and I wanted him to go on talking. So I prompted him further: ‘I suspect most people don’t believe you, Cephalus, when you say that. They think it is not your character which makes old age easy for you, but the fact that you have plenty of money. The rich, they say, have many consolations.’

‘You’re right,’ he said. ‘They don’t believe me. And there’s some truth in what they say. But not as much truth as they think. Themistocles’ famous saying is very much to the point here. A man from Seriphus started making disparaging remarks about him, and telling him that his fame was due not to his own merits, but to those of his city. Themistocles’ reply was that though he himself would never have been famous if he had been born in Seriphus, neither would the other man have been if he had been born in Athens. The same applies to those who are not rich, and who find old age hard to bear. In poverty, even the right temperament will not find old age altogether easy, whereas the wrong temperament, even with the aid of wealth, will never be at peace with itself.’

‘Did you inherit most of the money you possess, Cephalus?’ I asked.

‘Or is most of it money you made yourself, on top of your inheritance?’

‘Did I add to it, Socrates? When it comes to making money, I’m somewhere between my grandfather and my father. My grandfather – my namesake – inherited about as much wealth as I now possess, and increased it many times. My father Lysanias reduced it to even less than it is now. I shall be happy if I can leave these boys not less, but a little bit more, than I inherited.’

‘The reason I asked,’ I said, ‘is that you’ve never struck me as being particularly fond of money. And that’s generally the attitude of those who haven’t made it themselves. Compared with most people, self-made men are doubly fond of their money. Those who have made a fortune are devoted to their money in the first place because it is their own creation – just as poets love their poems, or fathers love their children – and in the second place for what they can do with it, just like anyone else. This makes them very poor company, since they can see no value in anything except money.’

‘You’re right,’ he said.

‘Yes,’ I said. ‘But I have another question for you. What would you say is the greatest benefit you have derived from your possession of great wealth?’

'One which many people might not be inclined to believe, if I told them. But you can take my word for it, Socrates, that when you are confronted by the thought of your own death, you are visited by fear and anxiety about things which never troubled you before. The stories told about what happens in Hades, that anyone who is unjust here will have to pay for it there – stories you once laughed at – begin to trouble your mind. You wonder if they may be true. You start seeing that world for yourself, either through the infirmity of old age, or because you are already in some way closer to it. Suddenly you are full of suspicion and fear; you start calculating and considering whether you've done anyone any sort of injustice. And if you find many acts of injustice in your own life, you keep waking in a panic in the middle of the night, the way children do. You live in a state of apprehension. The person with nothing on his conscience, by contrast, has fine and pleasant hopes – a nurse to his old age, as Pindar puts it. He found just the right words for it, Socrates, when he said that anyone who lives his life in righteousness and purity will find that

Sweet hope, old age's nurse, which chiefly guides
Men's wayward minds, accompanies his heart
And so protects him.⁸

He's right – couldn't be more right. And that's why I attach the greatest importance to the possession of money. Not for everyone, but for those of good character. If you want to avoid defrauding people, or lying to them, however reluctantly, or going to the world below in a state of terror after failing to pay what you owe – whether sacrifices to a god, or money to a man – then the possession of money contributes in no small measure to this end. Of course it has many other uses as well, but weighing one thing against another I would rate this as one of the most important uses of money, in the eyes of anyone with any sense.'

'That's admirably put, Cephalus,' I said. 'But since you've brought up the subject of justice, can we say, quite simply, that it is truthfulness, and returning anything you may have received from anyone else? Or is it sometimes right to behave in these ways, and sometimes wrong? Let me give you an example. Suppose you borrowed some weapons from a friend when he was in his right mind. Suppose he later went mad, and then asked for them back again. Everyone would agree, I imagine, that you shouldn't give them back to him, and that anyone who did give them back

⁸ The poem from which this quotation comes has been lost.

– or who was even prepared to be completely truthful to someone in this condition – would not be doing the right thing.’

d ‘Correct,’ he said.

‘This is not the definition of justice, then – that it is telling the truth, and returning what you have been given.’

‘Yes, it is, Socrates,’ Polemarchus interrupted. ‘At least, it is if we are to believe Simonides.’

‘I’d just like to say,’ Cephalus put in, ‘that this is where I hand the discussion over to you. It’s time I was doing something about the sacrifices.’

‘Well, am I not Polemarchus, your heir?’

‘You certainly are,’ he replied with a laugh, and went off to his sacrifices.

e ‘Tell me then,’ I said, ‘you who have inherited the argument, what does Simonides say about justice that you think is correct?’

‘That it is just to pay everyone what is owed to him.’⁹ That’s what he says, and I think he’s right.’

‘Well,’ I said, ‘Simonides is a wise and inspired man. It is certainly not easy to disagree with him. But what on earth does he mean by this remark? You may well know, Polemarchus. I have no idea. He obviously doesn’t mean what we were talking about just now. If one person gives something to another for safe keeping, and then asks for it back when he is not in his right mind, Simonides doesn’t mean that the other person should give it to him. And yet I imagine the thing which was given for safe keeping is owed to the person who gave it, isn’t it?’

‘Yes.’

‘In that situation – when someone goes out of his mind, and then asks for it back – isn’t returning it completely out of the question?’

‘Yes, it is.’

‘That isn’t what Simonides means, apparently, when he says that it is just to pay back what is owed, or due.’

‘No, it certainly isn’t,’ he said. ‘What he thinks is due to friends is to do them good, not harm.’

‘I understand,’ I replied. ‘If one person gives back to another money which the other has given him for safe keeping, he is not giving what is due if his returning it and the other’s receiving it are harmful, and if the two of them are friends. Isn’t that what you think Simonides means?’

‘Yes, it is.’

⁹ Not a sentiment that is found in the little that survives of Simonides’ poetry.

‘What about enemies? Should you give them whatever is in fact due to them?’

‘You certainly should,’ he said. ‘And what is due between enemies is what is appropriate – something harmful.’

‘Simonides was speaking as a poet, then, apparently, and disguising his definition of justice. What he meant, it seems, was that justice was giving any individual what was appropriate for him, but he called it “what was owed.”’

‘Yes, that must have been what he meant.’

‘Suppose, then, one of us had said to him: “Simonides, take the art or skill which is called medicine. What does it give that is due and appropriate, and to what does it give it?” What do you think his answer would have been?’

‘Obviously,’ he replied, ‘he would have said it gives the body drugs and food and drink.’

‘And the art of cookery? What does it give that is due and appropriate, and to what does it give it?’

‘It gives flavour to cooked food.’

‘Very well. Then what about the art or skill which we would call justice? What does it give, and to what does it give it?’

‘Well, if we are to follow the previous definitions, Socrates, it gives benefits and injuries to friends and enemies.’

‘Does he mean, then, that helping your friends and harming your enemies is justice?’

‘I think so.’

‘All right. When people are unwell, when it’s a question of sickness and health, who is best at helping them if they are friends and harming them if they are enemies?’

‘A doctor.’

‘And when they’re at sea? Who can best help or harm them amid the dangers of a sea voyage?’

‘A ship’s captain.’

‘What about the just man? In what activity, and for what purpose, is he the one best able to treat his friends well and his enemies badly?’

‘In war and alliances, I think.’

‘Very well. Now, when people aren’t ill, my dear Polemarchus, a doctor is no use to them.’

‘True.’

‘And when they’re not at sea, a ship’s captain is no use to them.’

'No.'

'Does that mean the just man is no use to them when they're not at war?'

'No, I'm sure it doesn't.'

'Justice is something useful even in peacetime, then?'

333 'Yes, it is.'

'But then so is agriculture, isn't it?'

'Yes.'

'For producing crops.'

'Yes.'

'And shoemaking?'

'Yes, that's useful.'

'For producing shoes, you would say, presumably.'

'Of course.'

'What about justice, then? When you say it's useful in peacetime, what is it useful *for*? What does it produce?'

'Contracts, Socrates.'

'And by contracts do you mean partnerships, or something else?'

'I mean partnerships.'

b 'All right. Is the just man a good and useful partner when it comes to making moves in draughts?¹⁰ Or would someone who plays draughts be more use?'

'Someone who plays draughts would be more use.'

'And when it comes to bricklaying, or building in stone, is the just man a more useful and better partner than a builder?'

'Of course not.'

'Well, in what kind of partnership is the just man a better partner than a lyre player, in the way a lyre player is better at playing the notes?'

'In partnerships involving money, I think.'

c 'Unless by any chance, Polemarchus, it's a question of putting the money to some use – if you have to buy or sell a horse jointly, for a sum of money. In that case, I imagine, someone who knows about horses is more use, isn't he?'

'Apparently.'

'And for buying or selling a ship, you'd want a shipbuilder or ship's captain.'

¹⁰ 'Draughts' (American 'checkers') is a translation of convenience. The Greek word *petteia* seems to have applied to several board-games. The group includes but is not limited to strategic games of battle and capture.

'So it seems.'

'In what situation, then, requiring the joint use of silver or gold, is the just man more useful than anyone else?'

'When there's a need to deposit money, and have it kept safe.'

'You mean when there's no need to put it to any use. You just want it to stay where it is?'

'That's right.'

'So it's when money is useless that justice is useful for dealing with it?'¹¹

'It looks like it.'

'And a pruning-knife? When you want to keep it safe, then justice is useful, both in public life and in private life. But when you want to use it, then the art of viticulture is what you want?'

'Apparently.'

'And are you going to say the same about a shield or a lyre? That justice is useful when you need to keep them safe and not use them? But that when you do need to use them, then you want the soldier's art and the art of music?'

'I shall have to say that.'

'And in all other examples, justice is useless when it comes to using any of them, and useful only when they are useless?'

'I suppose so.'

'In that case, my friend, justice might not seem to be of any great importance, if its only use is when things are useless. But let's look at a different question. In a fight – a boxing match, possibly, or a fight of some other sort – isn't the person who is cleverest at delivering a blow also the cleverest at guarding against one?'

'He certainly is.'

'And with disease? Is the person who is clever at guarding against it also the cleverest at implanting it secretly?'

'Yes, I think so.'

334 'And in warfare, the man who is good at guarding a military camp is also good at deception. He can steal the enemies' plans, or defeat their undertakings by stealth.'

'Certainly.'

'So whenever someone is clever at guarding something, he will also be clever at stealing it.'

¹¹ Money deposited with bankers or in temple treasuries did not gain interest.

'It looks like it.'

'So if the just man is clever at looking after money, he is also clever at stealing it.'

'Well, that's what the argument suggests,' he said.

'Then the just man, it seems, has turned out to be a kind of thief. You're
b probably thinking of Homer. He praises Autolycus, Odysseus' grandfather on his mother's side, and says that

In swearing oaths and thieving he surpassed
All men.¹²

Justice, according to you and Homer and Simonides, is apparently a kind of art of stealing – but with a view to helping one's friends and harming one's enemies. Wasn't that what you said?

'No, I certainly didn't,' he said. 'Though personally, I don't any longer know what I was saying. But one thing I do think still, and that is that justice is treating your friends well and your enemies badly.'

c 'By friends do you mean the people each individual believes to be good, or those who really are good, even if he doesn't realise it? And the same with enemies?'

'In all probability,' he replied, 'people will like those they think are good, and dislike those they think are no good.'

'And do people ever make mistakes in this? Do they often think people are good when they are not, and vice versa?'

'Yes, they do make mistakes.'

'So for these people, are the good their enemies, and the bad their friends?'

'They certainly are.'

d 'Is it nevertheless just for these people, when this happens, to treat well those who are no good, and to treat the good badly?'

'It looks like it.'

'And the good are just. They're not the kind of people who do wrong.'

'True.'

'So according to your argument it is just to harm those who do no wrong.'

'Impossible, Socrates. It looks as if the argument is no good.'

'Then it must be right,' I said, 'to treat the unjust badly, and the just well.'

¹² *Odyssey* 19.395–396. Autolycus was a notorious trickster; his name includes the word for 'wolf'. The reference in 'swearing oaths' is to perjury for profit.

'That sounds better.'

'In that case, Polemarchus, there are many people for whom it will turn out, if their judgment of people has been mistaken, that it is right to treat their friends badly, since their friends are no good – and their enemies well, since their enemies are good. In those circumstances we shall end up saying the exact opposite of the definition we quoted from Simonides.'

'Yes,' he said. 'It certainly can turn out like that. Let's change our definition. We're probably not defining friend and enemy correctly.'

'How *are* we defining them, Polemarchus?'

'We said that the person who seemed to be good was a friend.'

'And now? How do you want to change that definition?'

'If someone both seems to be good and is, let's call him a friend. If he seems to be, but isn't really, let's say that he seems to be a friend, but isn't really a friend. And let the same definition apply to an enemy.'

'On this definition, it appears, the good man will be a friend, and the one who is no good will be an enemy.'

'Yes.'

'Do you want us to make an addition to our definition of justice? Our first definition was that it was just to help a friend and harm an enemy. Do you want us now to add to that, and say that it is just to help a friend if he is good, and harm an enemy if he is bad?'

'Yes,' he said, 'I think that would be an excellent definition.'

'But is it really in the nature of a just man,' I asked, 'to treat anyone in the world badly?'

'It certainly is,' he said. 'He should treat badly those who are no good – his enemies.'

'If you treat a horse badly, does it become better or worse?'

'Worse.'

'Worse by the standard we use to judge dogs, or the standard we use to judge horses?'

'The standard we use to judge horses.'

'And dogs the same? If you treat *them* badly, they become worse by the standard we use to judge dogs, not horses?'

'They must do.'

'What about humans, my friend? Are we to say, in the same way, that if they are treated badly they become worse by the standard we use to judge human excellence?'

'Certainly.'

'But isn't justice a human excellence?'¹³

'Again, it must be.'

'In which case, my friend, members of the human race who are treated badly must necessarily become more unjust.'

'It looks like it.'

'Are musicians able, by means of music, to make people unmusical?'

'No, that's impossible.'

'Can horsemen make people unskilled with horses by means of horsemanship?'

'No.'

d 'And can the just make people unjust by means of justice? Or in general, can the good use human excellence to make people bad?'

'No, that's impossible.'

'Yes, because it's not the property of heat, I assume, to make things cold. It's the property of its opposite.'

'Yes.'

'Nor is it the property of dryness to make things wet, but of its opposite.'

'Yes.'

'And it is certainly not the property of good to do harm, or treat people badly, but of its opposite.'

'Apparently.'

'And the just man is good?'

'Yes.'

'In that case, Polemarchus, it is not the property of the just man to treat his friend or anyone else badly. It is the property of his opposite, the unjust man.'

'I think you're absolutely right, Socrates,' he said.

e 'So if anyone says it is just to give everyone what is due to him, and if he means by this that what is due from the just man is harm to his enemies, and help to his friends, then whoever said this was not a wise man. What he said was wrong, since we have clearly seen that it is not just to treat anyone badly under any circumstances.'

'I agree,' he said.

'Shall we take up arms, then, you and I together, if anyone claims that this is what was said by Simonides, or Bias, or Pittacus, or any other of those wise and blessedly happy men?'

¹³ The Greek could also mean 'isn't justice human excellence?'

'I certainly shall,' he said. 'I'm ready to play my part in the battle.'

336 'Do you know,' I asked, 'who I think was responsible for the saying that it is just to treat one's friends well, and one's enemies badly?'

'Who?'

'I think it was Periander, or Perdiccas, or Xerxes, or Ismenias the Theban, or some other rich man who thought he had great power.'

'You're absolutely right,' he said.

'Well, then,' I said, 'since this definition of justice – and of what is just – is clearly not right either, what other definition of it might be given?'

b Even in the middle of our conversation Thrasymachus had repeatedly tried to take control of the discussion, but each time he had been prevented by those sitting round us, who wanted to hear the discussion through to the end. But when we reached this stopping-place in the argument, as I asked this question, he was incapable of remaining silent any longer. He gathered himself and sprang at us, like a wild beast at its prey. Polemarchus and I were alarmed and dismayed.

c Speaking up loud and clear, Thrasymachus said: 'What's this nonsense that has got into you two, Socrates? Why be so obliging? Why keep giving way to one other? If you really want to know what justice is, then stop simply asking questions, and scoring points by proving that any answer given by anyone else is wrong. You know perfectly well it's easier to ask questions than to give answers. Come on, why don't you give some answers yourself? Tell us what *you* say justice is. And don't go telling us that it's what's necessary, or what's beneficial, or what's advantageous, or what's profitable, or what's good for you. I won't take any of that stuff. No. Tell us please, quite clearly, exactly what you mean.'

d I was dismayed by this intervention. I looked at him, and started to panic. And I'm sure, if I hadn't looked at the wolf before he looked at me, I'd have been struck dumb.¹⁴ As it was, though, I had in fact looked at him first – at the point where he began to be infuriated by the discussion. As a result, I was able to answer. 'Don't be angry with us, Thrasymachus,' I said, with some apprehension. 'If Polemarchus and I are making mistakes in our examination of the arguments, I assure you we're not making them on purpose. If we were looking for gold, we wouldn't deliberately give way to one another in our search, and so destroy our chances of finding it. So since what we are actually looking for is justice, a thing more valuable than a large quantity of gold, you can't imagine we are so stupid as to

¹⁴ This was a popular superstition that became proverbial (as in our 'Cat got your tongue?').

make concessions to one another, and not be determined to bring it as clearly as possible into view. Believe us, my friend. The trouble is, we lack
 337 the ability. So when you clever people see our efforts, pity is really a far more appropriate reaction than annoyance.'

This brought an unpleasant laugh from Thrasymachus. 'Oh my god,' he said, 'I knew it. The irony of Socrates. I predicted it. I told these people you'd refuse to give any answers, that you'd pretend to be modest, that you'd do anything to avoid answering, if anyone asked you a question.'

'Clever of you, Thrasymachus. Clever enough to know what would
 b happen if you were to ask someone what twelve was, but then give him a warning before he answered: "Now look here, don't go telling us that twelve is twice six, or three times four, or six times two, or four times three. I'm not going to take any nonsense of that sort from you." It was obvious to you, I imagine, that if you asked the question in that way, no one could possibly answer it. Suppose the person you were asking had objected: "What do you mean, Thrasymachus? Am I not to give any of the answers you have forbidden? Are you serious? Even if one of them is in fact true? Am I to give you some answer which is not the truth? Or what?" What would your reply have been to his objection?'

c 'Oh, yes,' he said. 'Such a close analogy!'

'I don't see what's wrong with it,' I said. 'But even if it isn't close, it may still seem to be, to the person being asked the question. Do you think that will stop him giving the answer he thinks is right, whether we forbid him to or not?'

'Is that just what you're going to do now? Are you going to give one of the answers I told you not to give?'

'It wouldn't surprise me,' I said, 'if on reflection I came to that conclusion.'

'What if I give you an answer about justice which is quite different from
 d all those other answers, a much better answer than those? What do you think should be your penalty?'¹⁵

'Well, obviously, the penalty appropriate to someone who doesn't know. He should learn, I take it, from the person who does know.'

'You innocent,' said Thrasymachus. 'No, you must do more than learn. You must pay me some money as well.'

'Very well. As soon as I have any, I will.'

¹⁵ In Athenian legal procedure a defendant found guilty was given the opportunity to propose to the jury a penalty different from that demanded by his accuser.

'You do have some,' said Glaucón. 'If it's money you're worried about, Thrasymachus, go ahead and speak. We will all pay up for Socrates.'

'I'll bet you will,' he said. 'Anything to allow Socrates to play his usual trick – not answer the question himself, but wait for someone else to answer it, and then take what he says and try to prove it wrong.'

'Really, my dear fellow!' I said. 'How could *anyone* answer the question if for a start he didn't know the answer – didn't so much as claim to know it – and on top of that, even supposing he *did* have some idea on the subject, if he'd been told by a man of some authority not to say any of the things he thought? No, it makes much more sense for you to speak. You're the one who claims to know the answer and have something to say. So please, as a favour to me, don't keep your answer to yourself. Give Glaucón here and the others the benefit of your knowledge.'

After this appeal, Glaucón and the rest begged him to do as I asked. Thrasymachus clearly wanted to speak, to gain credit for the excellent answer he thought he had ready. But he pretended to argue, pretended that he wanted me to be the one to answer. Finally he agreed, saying: 'Here's the wisdom of Socrates for you. He refuses to do any teaching himself, just goes around learning from others, without so much as a thank you.'

'That I learn from others, Thrasymachus, is true. But when you say I give them no thanks, you are wrong. I give all the thanks in my power. And what is in my power is merely praise, since I have no money. How enthusiastic I can be, if I approve of what somebody says, you are about to find out, when you give your answer. I'm sure it will be a good one.'

'Hear it, then,' he said. 'I say that justice is simply what is good for the stronger. Well, where's all that praise? You're not going to give it, are you?'

'Yes, I will – as soon as I understand what you mean. At the moment I still don't know. What is good for the stronger, you say, is just. What do you mean by that, Thrasymachus? If Polydamas the all-in wrestler is stronger than us, and eating beef is good for building his body, you presumably don't mean that this food is also good – and right¹⁶ – for us who are weaker than him.'

'Socrates, you're beneath contempt. You're taking what I said in the way which makes it easiest to misrepresent my meaning.'

'Not at all, my friend. But you'll have to tell me more clearly what you mean.'

¹⁶ 'Right' and 'just' both translate the Greek *dikaion*.

'All right,' he said. 'You must be aware that some cities are tyrannies, some are democracies, and others aristocracies?'

'Of course.'

'And what is in control in each city is the ruling power?'

'Yes.'

e 'Every ruling power makes laws for its own good. A democracy makes democratic laws, a tyranny tyrannical laws, and so on. In making these laws, they make it clear that what is good for them, the rulers, is what is just for their subjects. If anyone disobeys, they punish him for breaking
339 the law and acting unjustly. That's what I mean, "my friend," when I say that in all cities the same thing is just, namely what is good for the ruling authority. This, I take it, is where the power lies, and the result is, for anyone who looks at it in the right way, that the same thing is just everywhere – what is good for the stronger.'

'Now I understand what you mean,' I said, 'though whether or not it is true remains to be seen. So even your answer, Thrasymachus, is that what is good for a person is just, though that was an answer you told me firmly not to give. But you add the qualification "for the stronger."'

b 'A trivial addition, you may say.'

'That's not yet clear. It may well be an important one. What is clear is that we must examine whether what you say is true. Like you, I agree that justice is something that is good for a person, but while you qualify it as what is good for the stronger, I'm not so sure. We should examine the question.'

'Go on, then. Examine it.'

'I shall,' I said. 'Tell me, don't you also say that it is just for subjects to obey their rulers?'

'I do.'

c 'And are they infallible, the rulers in all these cities? Or are they capable of making mistakes?'

'They are certainly, I imagine, capable of making mistakes.'

'So when they set about enacting laws, do they enact some correctly, but a certain number incorrectly?'

'In my opinion, yes.'

'And "correctly" is enacting laws which are in their own interest, and "incorrectly" is enacting laws which are against their own interest? Is that what you mean?'

'Yes.'

'But whatever they enact, their subjects must carry it out, and this is justice?'

'Of course.'

'In that case, according to your definition, it is not only just to do what is good for the stronger, but also its opposite, what is not good for him.'

'What *do* you mean?' he said.

'I mean what you mean, I think. Let's look at it more closely. Haven't we agreed that the rulers, in giving orders to their subjects to do anything, sometimes make mistakes about what is in their own best interest, but that it is just for the subjects to carry out whatever orders their rulers give them? Isn't that what we have agreed?'

'Yes,' he said. 'I accept that.'

'Then you must also accept,' I said, 'that we have agreed it is just to do things which are not good for the rulers and the stronger, when the rulers inadvertently issue orders which are harmful to themselves, and you say it is just for their subjects to carry out the orders of their rulers. In that situation, most wise Thrasymachus, isn't the inevitable result that it is just to do the exact opposite of what you say? After all, the weaker have been ordered to do what is *not* good for the stronger.'

'Indeed they have, Socrates,' said Polemarchus. 'No question about it.'

'No question at all,' Cleitophon interrupted, 'if you are acting as a witness for Socrates.'

'Who needs a witness?' said Polemarchus. 'Thrasymachus himself agrees that rulers sometimes issue orders which are bad for themselves, but that it is right for their subjects to carry out these orders.'

'Yes, Polemarchus, because carrying out orders issued by rulers was what Thrasymachus defined as just.'

'Yes, Cleitophon, but in his definition he also said that what was good for the stronger was just. He gave both those definitions, and then went on to agree that those who are stronger sometimes tell those who are weaker, their subjects, to do what is bad for them, the stronger. It follows from these admissions that what is good for those who are stronger would be no more just than what is not good for them.'

'When he talked about what was good for the stronger,' said Cleitophon, 'he meant what the stronger thought was good for him. This is what the weaker must do, and that was his definition of justice.'

'Those weren't the words he used,' said Polemarchus.

'It's neither here nor there, Polemarchus,' I said. 'If those are the words

Thrasymachus is using now, let's take it in that sense. Tell me, Thrasymachus. Was that how you wanted to define justice, as what the stronger *thinks* is good for him, whether it really is good or not? Is that what we should take you to be saying?

'Certainly not,' he said. 'Do you imagine I regard a person who makes a mistake, at the moment when he is making the mistake, as stronger?'

'That's certainly what I *thought* you meant, when you agreed that rulers are not infallible, that they sometimes make mistakes.'

'You're always trying to trick people, Socrates, in the way you argue. I mean, if someone makes a mistake in treating the sick, do you call him a doctor by virtue of the actual mistake? Or an accountant who makes a mistake, at the precise moment when he is making his mistake, by virtue of this mistake? No, I think that's just the form of words we use. We say "the doctor made a mistake," "the accountant made a mistake," "the teacher made a mistake." But the reality, I think, is that none of them, to the extent that he *is* what we call him, ever makes a mistake. In precise language, since you like speaking precisely, no one who exercises a skill ever makes a mistake. People who make mistakes make them because their knowledge fails them, at which point they are not exercising their skill. The result is that no one skilled, no wise man, no ruler, at the moment
341 when he is being a ruler, ever makes a mistake – though everyone would say "the doctor made a mistake" or "the ruler made a mistake." That's how you must take the answer I gave you just now. But the most precise answer is in fact that the ruler, to the extent that he *is* a ruler, does not make mistakes; and since he does not make mistakes, he *does* enact what is best for him, and this is what his subject must carry out. So as I said originally, my definition is that it is just to do what is good for the stronger.'

'Very well, Thrasymachus,' I said. 'So you think I'm a trickster, do you?'

'I certainly do.'

'You think I've been asking the questions I *have* been asking with the deliberate intention of winning the argument unfairly?'

'I'm quite sure of it. It won't do you any good, though. You can't use unfair arguments without my noticing, and once I notice what you are up
b to, you don't have the resources to defeat me in open argument.'

'As if I'd even dream of trying! But since we don't want this situation to arise again, could you make one thing clear? When you say it is right for the weaker to do what is good for the stronger, do you mean the ruler

and the stronger in normal usage, or in the precise sense you were talking about just now?’

‘I mean the ruler in the most precise sense possible,’ he said. ‘There you are. Do your worst. I make no special pleas. Try your tricks if you can. But you won’t be able to.’

‘Do you think I’m crazy? Do you think I want to beard the lion, and start playing tricks on Thrasymachus?’

‘You certainly had a try just now, though you weren’t much good at that either.’

‘Well,’ I said. ‘Enough of all this. Now tell me. You were talking just now about the doctor in the precise sense. Is he a businessman? Or a healer of the sick? And make sure it’s the true doctor you are talking about.’

‘He’s a healer of the sick.’

‘What about a ship’s captain? Is a ship’s captain, in the correct sense, a master of sailors or a sailor?’

‘A master of sailors.’

‘It’s not an objection, I take it, that he sails in the ship. Nor is he for that reason to be called a sailor, since the title “ship’s captain” does not depend on his sailing, but on his art or skill, and his authority over the sailors.’

‘True,’ he said.

‘And for each of these, is there something which is good for him?’¹⁷

‘Certainly.’

‘Doesn’t the art or skill come into existence for just this reason, to seek out and provide what is good for each person?’

‘Yes, it does.’

‘For each of these skills, then, is there anything else which is good for it, apart from being as perfect as possible?’

‘I don’t understand your question.’

‘Suppose you asked me if it was enough for the body to be the body, or whether it needed something else. I would reply: “It certainly does need something else. That’s the reason why the art of medicine has come to be invented, because the body is defective, and therefore not self-sufficient. So the art of medicine was developed to provide it with the things which were good for it.” Do you think I’d be right in giving that answer, or not?’

‘Yes, I think you’d be right.’

¹⁷ The reference could be either to the doctor and captain or to the sick and the sailors. So Thrasymachus could understand Socrates’ next question as referring to the advantages that the artisan derives from his art.

342 'What about medicine itself? Is that defective? Does any art or skill, for that matter, stand in need of some virtue or excellence, in the way that eyes need sight and ears need hearing, and sight and hearing require an art or skill to preside over them, an art or skill which will think about and provide what is good for them? Is there any defect in the actual art or skill itself? Does each art or skill need a further art or skill, which will think about what is good for it? And this one which is thinking about it, does it in its turn need another of the same kind, and so on indefinitely, or does it think for itself about what is good for it? Or does no art or skill have any need either of itself or of any other art or skill, for thinking about what is good for it in the light of its own defects? And is this because no art or skill contains any defect or fault, and because it is not appropriate for an art or skill to pursue the good of anything other than that of which it is the art or skill? Isn't any art or skill itself, in the precise sense, without fault or blemish if it is correct – so long as it is entirely what it is? And when you answer, use words in the precise sense you were talking about. Is it as I have described, or not?' b

'It is as you have described,' he said. 'Apparently.'

c 'In that case,' I said, 'the art of medicine does not think about what is good for the art of medicine, but what is good for the body.'

'Yes.'

'And horsemanship does not think about what is good for horsemanship, but what is good for horses. Nor does any art or skill think about what is good for itself – it has no need to. No, it thinks about what is good for the thing of which it is the art or skill.'

'Apparently.'

'But surely, Thrasymachus, arts and skills control, and have power over, the objects of which they are the arts and skills.'

He conceded this, though with great reluctance.

'In which case, there is no branch of knowledge which thinks about, or prescribes, what is good for the stronger, but only what is good for the weaker, for what is under its control.'

d He agreed to this too, in the end, though he tried to resist it. And when he did agree, I continued: 'Isn't it a fact that no doctor, to the extent that he is a doctor, thinks about or prescribes what is good for the doctor? No, he thinks about what is good for the patient. After all, it was agreed that a doctor, in the precise sense, is responsible for bodies; he's not a businessman. Isn't that what was agreed?'

Thrasymachus assented.

‘And that the ship’s captain, in the precise sense, was in command of sailors, not a sailor?’

‘Yes, that was agreed.’

‘So a ship’s captain or commander of this type will not think about or prescribe what is good for the ship’s captain, but what is good for the sailor, for the person under his command.’

He agreed, though reluctantly.

‘And so, Thrasymachus,’ I said, ‘no one in any position of authority, to the extent that he *is* in authority, thinks about or prescribes what is good for himself, but only what is good for the person or thing under his authority – for whose benefit he himself exercises his art or skill. Everything he says, and everything he does, is said or done with this person or thing in mind, with a view to what is good and appropriate for the person or thing under his authority.’

At this point in the argument it was obvious to everyone that the definition of justice had changed into its opposite. Thrasymachus didn’t try to answer. Instead he said: ‘Tell me, Socrates, have you got a nanny?’

‘I beg your pardon,’ I said in some surprise. ‘Shouldn’t you be answering the question rather than asking things like that?’

‘She takes no notice of your runny nose,’ he said, ‘and doesn’t wipe it clean when it needs it. She can’t even get you to tell the sheep from the shepherd.’

‘What makes you say that?’

‘You seem to imagine that shepherds, or herdsmen, are thinking about the good of their sheep or their cattle – that they are fattening them up and looking after them with some other end in view than the good of their masters and themselves. In particular, you don’t seem to realise that rulers in cities – rulers in the true sense – regard their subjects as their sheep, and that the only thing they’re interested in, day and night, is what benefit they themselves are going to derive from them.¹⁸ Such an expert are you in the just and justice, and in the unjust and injustice, that you haven’t even grasped that justice and the just are actually what is good for someone else – good for the stronger, the ruler – while for the one who obeys and follows, they mean harm to himself. Injustice is the opposite.

¹⁸ The comparison of ruler to shepherd goes back to Homer, who calls the supreme king Agamemnon ‘shepherd of the peoples’, using the term in a benign sense. Plato will develop the comparison beyond the confines of Book 1, in the relationship between the rulers of the ideal city and their sheepdog-like auxiliaries (440d, 459c). It is also important in the political theory of his *Statesman* or *Politicus* (271d–272b, 275a).

It rules over those who are truly simple-minded, the just, and its subjects do what is good for that other person – the one who is stronger. They serve him, and make him happy. They don't make themselves happy at all.

'You can't avoid the conclusion, my simple-minded Socrates, that a just man comes off worse than an unjust in every situation. Take contracts, for a start, where a just man goes into partnership with an unjust. When the partnership is dissolved, you'll never find the just man better off than the unjust. No, he'll be worse off. Or think about public life. When there are special levies to be paid *to* the state, the just man contributes more, and the unjust man less, from the same resources.¹⁹ When there are distributions to be made *by* the state, the just man receives nothing, while the unjust man makes a fortune. Or suppose each of them holds some public office. The outcome for the just man, even if he suffers no other loss,²⁰ is that his own financial position deteriorates, since he cannot attend to it, while the fact that he is a just man stops him getting anything from public funds. On top of this, he becomes very unpopular with his friends and acquaintances when he refuses to act unjustly in order to do them a favour. The outcome for the unjust man is the exact opposite. I mean, of course, the man I was describing just now, the man who has the ability to be selfish on a large scale. He's the one to think about, if you want to assess the extent to which it is better for him, as a private individual, to be unjust than just.

'The easiest place of all to see it is if you look at the most complete form of injustice, the one which brings the greatest happiness to the person who practises it, and the greatest misery to those who experience it, those who would not be prepared to practise it themselves. By this I mean tyranny, which takes other people's possessions – things which are sacred and things which are not – both in secret and by open force. It does this not piecemeal but wholesale, though anyone who is caught committing one of these crimes on its own is punished and altogether disgraced. Temple-robbers,²¹ kidnappers, burglars, pickpockets and thieves, if they

¹⁹ The *eisphora* was an emergency levy on capital wealth for military purposes. There was no investigative bureaucracy to conduct audits.

²⁰ At Athens public offices were generally held by ordinary citizens in frequent rotation rather than being the province of career politicians or bureaucrats. Most were unpaid committee work. At the end of their term of office, magistrates submitted their records to public scrutiny. Charges against them and complaints from any citizen were considered by a special board and often led to penalties.

²¹ Temples were not only sacred places but depositories of wealth. They served the function of treasuries and, in some cases, banks.

carry out individual acts of wrongdoing, are known by the names of their crimes. But those who seize and enslave the citizens themselves, and not just their property, are not called by these terms of reproach. They are called blessed and happy, both by their fellow-citizens and by everyone else who hears about the wholesale injustice they have practised. Those who condemn injustice do so not through fear of practising it, but through fear of experiencing it. There you are, Socrates. Injustice is a thing which is stronger, more free and more powerful than justice, so long as it is practised on a large enough scale. So as I said in the first place,²² justice is in fact what is good for the stronger, whereas injustice is what is profitable and good for oneself.'

Thrasymachus was planning to leave after this outburst, having deluged our ears, like some bath attendant, with this long, relentless explanation. But the people who were there wouldn't let him go. They forced him to stay and justify what he had said. And I too, for my part, was most insistent. 'My dear Thrasymachus,' I said to him, 'you can't be intending to chuck a speech like that at us, and then go away without properly telling us, or finding out, whether or not that is how things are. Do you think it's a trivial matter, this definition we are after? Far from it. We are trying to define the whole conduct of life – how each of us can live his life in the most profitable way.'

'Have I said anything to suggest that I disagree?' Thrasymachus asked.

'It doesn't *look* as if you agree,' I said. 'Either that or you have no concern for us, and don't care whether we live better or worse lives as a result of our ignorance of what you claim to know. Please, my friend, enlighten us as well. It will be no bad investment for you to do a favour to a gathering as large as we are. For my own part, I have to say that I'm not convinced. I don't think injustice is something more profitable than justice, even if it's given a free hand and not prevented from doing what it wants. No, my friend, let him be unjust, let him have the power to act unjustly, whether in secret or in open warfare, still the unjust man cannot convince *me* that injustice is something more profitable than justice. Maybe someone else here feels the same. I may not be the only one. So please be so good as to convince us fully that valuing justice more than injustice is not the right strategy for us.'

'How am I to persuade you?' he asked. 'If you're not convinced by what I said just now, what more can I do for you? Do you want me to sit here and cram the argument in with a spoon?'

²² 338c.

‘God forbid,’ I replied. ‘No, but in the first place, if you say something then stick by what you have said. Or if you change your ground, then do so openly. Don’t try to do it without our noticing. At the moment, c Thrasymachus, if we can take another look at our earlier discussion, you can see that though you started off by defining the doctor in the true sense, you didn’t then think it necessary to keep strictly to the shepherd in the true sense. So you don’t think of the shepherd, to the extent that he is a shepherd, as tending his flocks with a view to what is best for the sheep. You think he has a view to his own enjoyment – like a guest who has been invited out to dinner – or possibly again a view to their sale, like a businessman, not a shepherd. The art of being a shepherd, however, is surely d not concerned with anything other than making the best provision for what is under its direction. The question of its own excellence, I take it, is sufficiently provided for so long as it fully meets the requirements of the shepherd’s art. That is why I thought, a moment ago,²³ that we must necessarily be agreed that any power or authority, to the extent that it is e power or authority, thinks about what is best only for what is under its control and in its care – and that applies to power or authority both in public life and in private life. You, on the other hand, think that rulers of cities – rulers in the precise sense – are keen to be rulers, don’t you?’

‘No,’ he said. ‘I don’t *think* so. I’m quite sure of it.’

‘What about other forms of power or authority, Thrasymachus? You must have observed that no one is prepared to exercise them of his own free will. They ask for pay, in the belief that the benefit from their power or authority will come not to them, but to those over whom they exercise 346 it. Tell me this. Don’t we say that what makes each individual one of these arts or skills different from the others is the fact that it has a different function? And please be good enough to say what you really believe. That will help us to get somewhere.’

‘Yes, that’s what makes each one different,’ he said.

‘And does each one bring us its own individual benefit, rather than all bringing the same benefit? Does medicine bring health, for example, seamanship safety at sea, and so on?’

‘Yes.’

b ‘And does the art of earning a living²⁴ bring payment? Is this its function? Or are you saying that medicine and seamanship are the same?’

²³ 342a–c.

²⁴ This sounds as odd in the Greek as it does in English. The word Socrates uses for it is probably a neologism.

Using words in their precise sense, please, as you instructed, if someone while acting as ship's captain recovers his health because sea voyages are good for him, is that any reason for you to call seamanship medicine?

'Certainly not,' he said.

'You don't, I imagine, call the art of earning a living medicine, just because someone becomes healthy while earning a living?'

'Certainly not.'

'Nor do you call medicine the art of earning a living, do you, if someone earns a living practising medicine?'

He agreed.

'Right. Now, we agreed that each art or skill brought its own individual benefit?'

'What if we did?'

'Well, if there's any benefit which all practitioners of arts or skills receive alike, then clearly they're all making use of something else in addition, something which is the same for all of them, and benefits all of them.'

'It looks that way.'

'We say that they all have the practitioner's ability to benefit by earning a living, and that they do this by practising the art of earning a living in addition to their own.'

He conceded this, though unwillingly.

'In which case, none of them receives this benefit – earning a living – from his own art or skill. No, if we look at it in the precise sense, first medicine produces health, and then earning a living produces payment. First the art of building produces a house, and then earning a living comes along afterwards and produces payment. And the same with all the other arts or skills. Each performs its own function, and benefits the object of which it is the art or skill. If there is no payment in addition, does the practitioner get any benefit from his art or skill?'

'Apparently not,' he said.

'Does he then do no good when he works for nothing?'

'No, I should think he does do some good.'

'In that case, Thrasymachus, one thing is now clear. No art or skill, and no power or authority, provides what is beneficial for itself. They provide and prescribe, as we said originally, for what is under their authority. They think about what is good for *it*, the weaker, and not what is good for the stronger. That, my dear Thrasymachus, is why I said just now that no one was prepared, of his own free will, to exercise authority, to share in the

troubles of others, and try to put them right. No, they demand payment
 347 because the person who is going to be a good practitioner of an art or skill
 never does or prescribes what is best for himself – if his prescription is in
 accordance with his art or skill – but only what is best for the person under
 his authority. That, I said, appeared to be the reason why, if people are
 going to be prepared to rule, or exercise authority, there has to be payment
 – either money, or prestige, or some penalty for not ruling.’

‘Can you explain that, Socrates?’ said Glaucon. ‘I can see what you
 mean by the two forms of payment. But the penalty you refer to, and how
 you can put it in the category of a payment, that I don’t understand.’

b ‘Then you don’t understand the payment the best rulers receive – the
 one which persuades the most suitable people to rule, when they are pre-
 pared to rule. You’re aware, aren’t you, that ambition and greed are
 regarded as, and indeed are, things to be ashamed of?’

‘Yes, I am.’

‘Well, that’s the reason,’ I said, ‘why the good are not prepared to rule
 in return for money or prestige. They don’t want to make a legitimate
 profit from their power, and be called mercenary. Nor do they want to
 make use of their power to take money secretly, and be called thieves.
 They won’t rule for the prestige, because they’re not ambitious. So if
 c they’re going to agree to rule, there must be some additional compulsion
 on them, some penalty. That’s probably why it has always been regarded
 as a disgrace for people to seek office voluntarily, rather than waiting until
 they are forced to seek it. As for the penalty, it consists principally in being
 ruled by someone worse, if they refuse to rule themselves. I think it’s this
 fear which makes decent people rule, when they *do* rule, and these are the
 circumstances in which they seek power. They don’t believe that they are
 entering upon something good, or that it will bring them any benefit.
 d They approach it as something unavoidable, and because they have no one
 better than themselves, or as good as themselves, to whom they can de-
 legate the job. If there were ever a city of good men, there would probably
 be as much competition *not* to rule as there is among us to rule. That
 would be the proof that it really is not in the nature of the true ruler to
 think about what is good for himself, but only about what is good for his
 subject. The result would be that anyone with any sense would choose to
 let someone else do good to him, rather than go to a lot of trouble doing
 e good to others.²⁵ This is where I completely disagree with Thrasymachus

²⁵ Not a conventional or readily declarable moral sentiment, if construed as condon-
 ing the avoidance of effort on behalf of others. Generosity and benefaction were
 praiseworthy and expected of those in a position to give it (*GPM* 175–180).

when he says that justice is what is good for the stronger. But we'll have another look at that question some other time. Much more important, I think, is what Thrasymachus is saying now, that the life of the unjust is better than the life of the just. What about you, Glaucon? Which do you choose? Which view do you regard as most accurate?

'Personally,' he said, 'I prefer the view that the life of the just is more profitable.'

'Did you listen just now,' I said, 'to Thrasymachus' catalogue of the advantages in the life of the unjust?'

'Yes, I did,' he replied. 'But I don't find them convincing.'

'Do you want us to try and find some way of persuading him that he is wrong?'

'Of course I do,' he said.

'Well,' I said, 'if we make a speech in opposition to his speech, setting out the arguments in parallel, and saying what advantages there are, by contrast, in being just, and if he then speaks again, and then we make a second speech, we shall need to keep count of the advantages, and measure them, as we both make our pairs of speeches. And we shall need judges of some sort, to come to a decision between us. But if we look at the question, as we did just now, on the basis of agreement with one another, we shall ourselves be at one and the same time both judges and advocates.'²⁶

'We shall indeed.'

'Well, we'll do whichever you prefer.'

'The second way,' he said.

'Come on, then, Thrasymachus,' I said. 'Let's go back to the beginning, and you can give us our answers. Is it your claim that perfect injustice is more profitable than perfect justice?'

'That certainly is my claim, and I've told you why.'

'Very well, let me ask you a question about injustice and justice. Presumably you'd call one of them a virtue and the other a vice?'

'Of course.'

'You'd call justice a virtue, and injustice a vice?'

'Socrates, you're an innocent,' he said. 'Am I *likely* to say that, if I claim that injustice pays and justice doesn't?'²⁷

²⁶ In some types of court-case the litigants were entitled to interleave two speeches each. This ABAB pattern is preserved for us in the *Tetralogies* of Antiphon.

²⁷ 'Virtue' as a translation of *aretē* must be understood to combine the connotation of superior functionality (as when e.g. a house is said to 'have the great virtue' of being cool in summer and warm in winter) with that of moral rectitude. Hence

'Then what *do* you call them?'

'The opposite,' he said.

'You call justice a vice?'

'No, I call it noble simplicity.'

d 'I see. And you call injustice duplicity, presumably?'

'No, I call it good judgement.'

'And you really think, Thrasymachus, that the unjust are wise and good?'

'Yes, if you mean those who are capable of perfect injustice, who can bring cities and nations under their control. You probably think I'm talking about stealing purses. Mind you,' he added, 'even that can be quite profitable, if you can get away with it. But it's trivial compared with the injustice I was describing just now.'

e 'Yes, I know which sort you mean,' I said. 'But I *was* surprised, before that, by your putting injustice with goodness and wisdom, and justice with their opposites.'

'Well, that's certainly where I do put them.'

349 'That's a much more awkward proposition, my friend. It makes it hard to know what to say. If you said that injustice was profitable, but nevertheless admitted, as most people do, that it was wickedness, or something to be ashamed of, we would be able to make some reply along conventional lines. As it is, however, you're obviously going to say that it is good and strong, and credit it with all the qualities which we used to attribute to justice, since you didn't shrink from classifying it with goodness and wisdom.'

'That's an accurate prediction,' he said.

'Still, we mustn't hesitate, in our discussion, to pursue the object of our enquiry for as long as I take you to be saying what you think. My impression is, Thrasymachus, that this time you're not just trying to provoke us, but genuinely saying what you really believe about the truth of the matter.'

'Does it matter to you whether I really believe it or not? Why don't you try and disprove what I say?'

b 'No, it doesn't matter,' I replied. 'Now, I have a further question, on top of the ones I've asked already. Do you think one just man would be at all prepared to try and outdo another just man?'

footnote 27 (*cont.*)

Thrasymachus is reluctant to describe injustice – that masterful trait – as anything but a virtue. Hence too in the arguments at 335c and 353b–c the word is translated 'excellence'.

'No. If he did, he wouldn't be the polite simpleton we know him to be.'

'How about the just action?'

'No, he wouldn't try to do outdo the just action either,' he said.

'Would he think it right to outdo an unjust man? Would he think that was just, or would he think it was unjust?'

'He'd think it just and right – but he wouldn't be able to.'

'That isn't my question,' I said. 'My question is this. Does the just man think it wrong to outdo another just man? Does he refuse to do this, but think it right to outdo an unjust man?'

'Yes, he does.'

'What about the unjust man? Does he think it right to outdo the just man and the just action?'

'Of course he does. He thinks it right to outdo *everyone*.'

'Good. So the unjust man will try to outdo an unjust man and an unjust action, and will strive to take the largest share of everything for himself?'²⁸

'Yes, he will.'

'Let's put it like this,' I said. 'The just man does not try to outdo what is like him, but only what is unlike him, whereas the unjust man tries to outdo both what is like him and what is unlike him.'

'Admirably put.'

'The unjust man is wise and good, while the just man is neither of these things.'

'Right again,' he said. 'Well done.'

'And is the unjust man also like the wise and good, and the just man unlike?'

'Since the unjust man is wise and good, how could he not also be *like* the wise and good? And how could the just man not be *unlike*?'

'Good. So each of them has the qualities of the people he is like.'

'What else?'

'Well, Thrasymachus, do you agree that one person is musical and another unmusical?'

'I do.'

'Which of them do you think knows what he is doing, and which doesn't?'

²⁸ The verbal phrase translated as 'to outdo' literally means 'to have more', from which derives the range of meanings 'to be greedy', 'to take unfair advantage', as well as simply 'to have the advantage' in a situation, without connotations of unfairness. All these senses are brought into play in this argument. Thrasymachus introduced the term into the discussion at 344a when he described the unjust ruler as one who was capable of being 'selfish on a large scale'.

'I imagine I'd say the musical one knows, and the unmusical one doesn't.'

'Where the musical one knows, he is good, and where the unmusical one doesn't know, he is bad, would you say?'

'Yes.'

'What about someone with medical knowledge? Is that the same?'

'Yes, it is.'

'Do you think, then, my friend, that a musician tuning a lyre would want to outdo another musician – would think it right to get the better of him – in tightening and loosening the strings?'

'No, I don't.'

350 'What about someone unmusical? Would the musician want to outdo him?'

'He'd be bound to.'

'How about someone with medical knowledge? In prescribing food and drink, do you think he'd want to outdo a medical man or medical practice?'

'Of course not.'

'But he would want to outdo someone with no medical knowledge?'

'Yes.'

'Do you think it's the same for every branch of knowledge and ignorance? Do you think there is ever any knowledgeable person who would deliberately choose, either in action or in speech, to do more than another knowledgeable person would do? Wouldn't he do the same as someone like himself would do in the same situation?'

'I'm inclined to think that must be right,' he said.

b 'What about the person who is not knowledgeable? Wouldn't he try to outdo both equally – the person with knowledge *and* the person without knowledge?'

'He might.'

'And the knowledgeable person is wise?'

'Yes.'

'And the wise person is good?'

'Yes.'

'So the good and wise person will not be prepared to outdo the person like him, but only the person unlike him, his opposite.'

'Apparently,' he said.

'Whereas the bad and ignorant person will try to outdo both the person like him and his opposite.'

'It looks like it.'

'Now, Thrasymachus,' I said, 'doesn't our unjust man try to outdo both the person unlike him and the person like him? Isn't that what you said?'

'Yes, I did.'

'Whereas the just man will not try to outdo the person like him, but only the person unlike him?'

'Yes.'

'In that case,' I said, 'the just man is like the wise and good man, and the unjust man is like the bad and ignorant.'

'I suppose so.'

'But we agreed that each of them had the qualities of the person he was like.'²⁹

'Yes, we did.'

'So our just man has turned out to be good and wise, and our unjust man ignorant and bad.'

Thrasymachus conceded all these points, but not in the easygoing way I have just described. He had to be dragged every step of the way, sweating profusely, as you might expect in summer.³⁰ This was the occasion when I saw something I had never seen before – Thrasymachus blushing. Anyway, when we had agreed that justice was virtue and wisdom, and that injustice was vice and ignorance, I said, 'Well, let's leave that question. But we did also say that injustice was something powerful.'³¹ Or have you forgotten that, Thrasymachus?

'No, I haven't,' he said. 'But as far as I'm concerned, I'm not happy with the argument you've just put forward. I have some comments I would like to make on it. But if I made them, I know perfectly well you would say I was making a speech. So either let me say as much as I want to say, or if you want to go on asking questions, then carry on, and I'll behave as one does with old women telling stories. I'll say "Of course!" and nod or shake my head.'

'No,' I said. 'Not if it's not what you yourself think.'

'That way I'll please you,' he said, 'since you won't allow me to speak. What more do you want?'

'Nothing at all. If that's what you're going to do, go ahead. I'll ask the questions.'

'Ask away.'

'I'd like to ask the same question I asked before, so that we can pursue our enquiry into what kind of thing justice actually is, compared with

²⁹ At 349d.

³⁰ By our calendar, the festival of Bendis took place in June.

³¹ At 344c.

- injustice, in an orderly way. The claim was, I believe, that injustice was something more powerful, something stronger, than justice. Whereas in fact,' I said, 'if justice is wisdom and goodness, it will easily be seen to be something stronger than injustice, since injustice is ignorance. No one could any longer fail to recognise that. But I don't just want a simple statement of that sort. I'm interested in a different approach. Would you say
- b a city can be unjust? Can it try to bring other cities into subjection, in an unjust way? Can it succeed in bringing them into subjection, and having subdued a large number of them, can it keep them under its control?'

'Of course it can,' he said. 'And the finest, the most perfectly unjust, city will be best at it.'

'I can see why you say that,' I said. 'That *was* your position. But now I have another question. When a city becomes more powerful than another city, will it gain this power without the aid of justice, or must it necessarily use justice?'

- c 'If your recent argument is valid,' he said, 'and justice is wisdom, then with the aid of justice. If my theory was right, then with the aid of injustice.'

'I'm delighted to see, Thrasymachus, that you're not just nodding and shaking your head, but giving proper answers.'

'Just to please you,' he said.

'Thank you. Can you do me one more favour? Tell me this. Suppose a city, or an army, or pirates, or thieves, or any other group of people, are jointly setting about some unjust venture. Do you think they'd be able to get anywhere if they treated one another unjustly?'

- d 'Of course not.'

'What if they didn't treat one another unjustly? Wouldn't they stand a much better chance?'

'They certainly would.'

'Yes, because injustice, I imagine, Thrasymachus, produces faction and hatred and fights among them, whereas justice produces co-operation and friendship, doesn't it?'

'Let's say it does,' he said. 'I don't want to disagree with you.'

- 'Thank you, my friend. Now, another question. If it's the function of injustice to produce hatred wherever it goes, then when it makes its
- e appearance among free men and slaves, won't it make them hate one another, and quarrel with one another, and be incapable of any joint enterprise?'

'Yes, it will.'

‘And if it makes its appearance in two people, won’t they disagree, and hate one another, and be enemies both of each other and of the just?’

‘They will,’ he said.

‘And if, my admirable friend, injustice appears in an individual, it surely won’t lose its power. Won’t it still retain it?’

‘Let’s say it will.’

352 ‘Clearly, then, its power is such that whatever it appears in – whether city, nation, army, or anything else – it first renders incapable of concerted action, through faction and disagreements, and then makes an enemy to itself, to everything that opposes it, and to the just? Isn’t that right?’

‘It is.’

‘And when it is present in an individual, too, I suspect, it will produce all these effects which it is its nature to bring about. In the first place, it will make him incapable of action, because he is at odds with himself, and in disagreement with himself. And in the second place it will make him an enemy both of himself and of those who are just, won’t it?’

‘Yes.’

‘And are the gods, my friend, among the just?’

b ‘They may as well be,’ he said.³²

‘In that case, Thrasymachus, the unjust man will be an enemy of the gods as well, while the just man will be a friend.’

‘Go on, have a party,’ he said. ‘Enjoy yourself. I’m not going to object. I don’t want to make enemies of all these people.’

‘Come on, then,’ I said. ‘If you want to give us a real treat, just carry on giving me the sort of answers you’re giving now. I can see that the just are clearly wiser and better and more capable of action, whereas the unjust
c are incapable of co-operating in anything; though when we speak of them as being unjust, and yet at times carrying out some vigorous joint action, we’re not getting it exactly right. If they were completely unjust, they couldn’t have resisted attacking one another. So there was obviously *some* justice among them, which stopped them acting unjustly against each other and their adversaries at the same time, and which enabled them to achieve what they did achieve. They set about their unjust actions in a
d state of semi-injustice, since those who are wholly wicked, and completely unjust, are also completely incapable of doing anything. I am confident that this is how things are, and that your first statement is wrong.³³ But

³² Given the activities attributed to the gods of the traditional Greek pantheon, the answer to this question would not go without saying.

³³ That is, the statement made at 344c and recalled at 350d.

whether the just live a better and happier life than the unjust – which was the second question we put forward for examination³⁴ – this has still to be examined. If you want my opinion, they certainly seem to, even from what we have said so far. All the same, we ought to look into it more closely. After all, our discussion is not about something incidental, but about how we ought to live our lives.’

‘Look into it, then.’

‘I will. Tell me this. Do you think a horse has something which is its function?’

‘I do.’

c ‘And would you define the function – of a horse or anything else – as that which you can only do – or can best do – with its help?’

‘I don’t follow,’ he said.

‘Look at it like this. Can you see with anything other than your eyes?’

‘No.’

‘What about hearing? Can you hear with anything other than your ears?’

‘No.’

‘So would we be justified in saying that these are their functions?’

‘Yes.’

353 ‘What about pruning the stem of a vine? Could you use a carving knife, or an engraver’s knife, or any number of things?’

‘Of course.’

‘But none of them would be as good, I take it, as a pruning knife made for that purpose.’

‘True.’

‘In that case, can’t we define that as its function?’

‘Yes, we can.’

‘Now you may have a better understanding, I think, of the question I just asked you. I wanted to know whether the function of anything was that which it alone brought about, or which it brought about better than anything else.’

‘Yes, I do understand,’ he said. ‘And I think this *is* the function of anything.’

b ‘Right,’ I said. ‘And do you think that everything which has some function assigned to it also has an excellence?’³⁵ Let’s go back to the same examples. The eyes, we say, have a function?’

³⁴ 347e.

³⁵ See note 27 to 348c above explaining how *aretē* ranges between ‘excellence’ and ‘virtue’.

‘They do.’

‘Do the eyes then also have an excellence?’

‘They do.’

‘What about the ears? Did we say they have some function?’

‘Yes.’

‘And an excellence as well?’

‘Yes, they have an excellence as well.’

‘And the same with everything else?’

‘Yes, the same.’

‘Well, then. Could the eyes ever perform their own function properly if they lacked their own specific excellence, if they had some defect instead?’

‘How could they? Presumably you mean blindness rather than sight.’

‘Whatever their excellence is,’ I said, ‘though so far that’s not what I’m asking. What I’m asking is whether it is their specific excellence which makes them perform their function well, where they do perform it, and their specific defect which makes them perform it badly.’

‘Yes, that’s true enough,’ he said.

‘And the same with the ears? Without their own excellence, will they perform their function badly?’

‘Yes.’

‘And can we apply the same reasoning to everything else?’

‘I think so.’

‘Very well. Next question. Does your soul have a function, which nothing else in the world could perform? Think about management, or ruling, or decision-making, and all those sorts of things. Would we be justified in attributing those functions to anything other than the soul? Could we say they belonged to anything else?’

‘No.’

‘But then what about living? Shall we say that is a function of the soul?’

‘Most definitely,’ he said.

‘And do we also say that there is an excellence of the soul?’

‘We do.’

‘In that case, Thrasymachus, will the soul ever perform its own functions well if it lacks its own specific excellence? Or is that impossible?’

‘It’s impossible.’

‘So a bad soul necessarily results in bad ruling and bad management, whereas a good soul results in the successful exercise of these functions.’

‘Necessarily.’

'And we agreed that justice was excellence of soul, and that injustice was vice or defect of soul?'³⁶

'We did.'

'In which case the just soul and the just man will have a good life, and the unjust man a bad one.'

354 'It looks like it,' he said, 'according to your argument.'

'But the person who has a good life is blessed and happy, while the person who doesn't is the opposite.'

'Of course.'

'So the just man is happy, and the unjust man is miserable.'

'They may as well be,' he said.

'But being miserable is not profitable, whereas being happy is.'

'Of course.'

'So injustice, my excellent Thrasymachus, is never more profitable than justice.'

'Go ahead, Socrates,' he said. 'It's Bendis' Day. Make a real feast of it.'

'Thanks to you, Thrasymachus,' I said, 'now that you've turned friendly, and stopped being angry. And even then I haven't had a proper treat, though that's my fault, not yours. I think I've been like one of those gluttons who grab at everything that's carried past them, and taste it without ever properly enjoying what went before. Without waiting to find the first thing we were looking for – what justice actually is – I've dropped that, and gone charging off into asking questions about it – whether it's wickedness and ignorance, or wisdom and goodness. And then a little later, when the claim arose that injustice was more profitable than justice, I couldn't resist going on from the earlier question to that one. So the result of our discussion is that I'm none the wiser. After all, if I don't know what justice is, I'm hardly going to know whether or not it is in fact some kind of excellence or virtue, or whether the person who possesses it is unhappy or happy.'

³⁶ At 350c–d.

Book 2

With these words I thought I had finished what I had to say. But I was wrong. Apparently it was only an introduction. Glaucon is an extremely determined character in everything he does, and on this occasion he refused to accept Thrasymachus' surrender. 'Socrates,' he said, 'do you really want to convince us that it is in every way better to be just than unjust, or is it enough merely to seem to have convinced us?'

'I would prefer,' I said, 'really to convince you, if I had a choice.'

'In that case,' he said, 'you are not achieving your aim. Tell me this. Do you think there is a good of the kind we would choose to have because we value it for its own sake, and not from any desire for its results? Enjoyment, for example, and pleasures which are harmless and produce no consequences for the future beyond enjoyment for the person who possesses them.'

'Yes,' I said, 'I do think there is a good of this kind.'

'What about the sort we value both for itself and for its consequences? Things like thinking, seeing, being healthy. We value goods of this sort, I imagine, for both reasons.'

'Yes,' I said.

'And can you distinguish a third class or category of good,' he asked, 'a class which contains physical exercise, undergoing medical treatment when we are ill, practising medicine, and earning a living in general? These we would describe as unpleasant but beneficial. We would not choose to have them for their own sakes, but only for the payment or other benefits which result from them.'

'Yes,' I said, 'there is this third class as well. What of it?'

'In which of these classes,' he asked, 'do you put justice?'

358 'In my opinion,' I replied, 'it is in the finest class, which is to be valued by anyone who wants to be happy, both for itself and for its consequences.'

'That's not what most people think,' he said. 'Most people would put it in the unpleasant class, which we should cultivate in return for payment and reputation, on account of public opinion, but which purely for itself is to be avoided like the plague.'

'I know that's what they think,' I said. 'Thrasymachus criticised it – and praised injustice – on those grounds some while back. But I'm a slow learner, apparently.'

b 'Well,' he said, 'listen to me as well, and see if you agree with what I suggest. I think Thrasymachus too readily allowed himself to be bewitched by you, like a snake being charmed by a snake-charmer. As far as I'm concerned, the proof is not yet convincing, either for justice or injustice. I want to be told what each of them is, and what effect it has, just by itself, when it is present in the soul. I want to forget about the rewards and results it brings. So here's what I am going to do, if you have
c no objection. I'm going to revive Thrasymachus' argument. First I shall say what kind of thing people reckon justice is, and how they think it arises. Secondly I shall claim that all those who practise it do so as something unavoidable, against their will, and not because they regard it as a good. Thirdly I shall say that this is a rational way for them to behave, since the unjust man, in their view, has a much better life than the just man. These are not my own opinions, Socrates. But I am dismayed by the
d unending sound in my ears of Thrasymachus and thousands like him, whereas I have never yet heard from anyone, in the form I would like to hear it, the argument *for* justice, the argument that it is something better than injustice. I want to hear it praised simply for itself, and I have high hopes that you, if anyone, can do this for me. So I am going to make the most powerful speech I can in defence of the unjust life, and in my speech I shall show you how I want to hear you, in your turn, criticising injustice and defending justice. There you are. See if you approve of my suggestion.'

c 'I'd like nothing better,' I replied. 'What else would anyone with any sense prefer to make a habit of talking about or hearing about?'

'That's good,' he said. 'Now, listen to the first thing I said I was going to talk about – what sort of thing justice is, and how it arises. Doing wrong, men say, is by its nature a good – and being wronged an evil – but

the evil of being wronged outweighs the good of doing wrong. As a result, when people wrong one another and are wronged by one another, and get a taste of both, those who are unable to avoid the one and achieve the other think it will pay them to come to an agreement with one another not to do wrong and not to be wronged. That's how they come to start making laws and agreements with one another, and calling lawful and just that which is laid down by the law. They say that this is the origin and essence of justice, that it is a compromise between the best case, which is doing wrong and getting away with it, and the worst case, which is being wronged and being unable to retaliate. Justice, being half-way between these two extremes, is not prized as a good; it finds its value merely in people's want of power to do wrong. The person who does have the power to do wrong – the true man – would never make an agreement with anyone not to do wrong and not to be wronged. It would be lunatic for him to do that. That, more or less, is the nature of justice, Socrates. That is what it is like, and those are the kinds of causes which gave rise to it, according to this theory.¹

As for the claim that people who practise justice do so reluctantly, being too weak to do wrong, the easiest way to see that it is true is to imagine something like this. Suppose we gave each of them – the just and the unjust – the freedom to do whatever he liked, and then followed them and kept an eye on them, to see which way his desire would take each of them. We would soon catch the just man out. Led on by greed and the desire to outdo others, he would follow the same course the unjust man follows, the course which it is everybody's natural inclination to pursue as a good, though they are forcibly redirected by the law into valuing equality. Roughly speaking, they would have the freedom I am talking about if they had the kind of power they say the ancestor of Gyges the Lydian once had. They say he was a shepherd, and that he was a serf of the man who was at that time the ruler of Lydia. One day there was a great rainstorm and an earthquake in the place where he grazed his sheep. Part of the ground opened up, and a great hole appeared in it. He was astonished when he saw it, but went down into it. And the legend has it that among many marvels he saw a hollow horse made of bronze, with

¹ The passage is an early appearance of the concept of a social contract imposed on a state of nature, which was to have great importance in the classic political and moral theories of the enlightenment. It is unclear whether Plato has any particular contemporary version of this concept in mind.

e windows in it. Peeping through them, he saw inside what appeared to be a corpse, larger than human, wearing nothing but a golden ring on its hand. They say he removed the ring, and came out.

‘The shepherds were having one of their regular meetings, so that they could give the king their monthly report on the flocks. And the man turned up as well, wearing the ring. As he sat with the rest of them, he
360 happened to twist the setting of the ring towards him, into the palm of his hand. When he did this, he became invisible to those who were sitting with him, and they started talking about him as if he had gone. He was amazed, and twisted the ring again, turning the setting to the outside. As soon as he did so, he became visible. When he realised this, he started experimenting with the ring, to see if it did have this power. And he found that that was how it was. When he turned the setting to the inside, he became invisible; when he turned it to the outside, he became visible.
b Once he had established this, he lost no time arranging to be one of those making the report to the king. When he got there, he seduced the king’s wife, plotted with her against the king, killed him and seized power.

‘Imagine there were two rings like that, and that the just man wore one, while the unjust man wore the other. People think that no one would be sufficiently iron-willed to remain within the bounds of justice. No one could bring himself to keep his hands off other people’s possessions, and steer clear of them, if he was free to take whatever he liked without a
c second thought, in the market-place, or go into people’s houses and sleep with anyone he liked; or if he could kill or release from prison anyone he chose, and in general go round acting like a god among men. If he behaved like this, the just man would be acting no differently from the unjust. Both would be following the same course.

‘This is a strong argument, you might say, for the claim that no one is just voluntarily, but only under compulsion. Justice is not thought to be
d a good thing for individuals, since wherever anyone thinks he *can* do wrong, he does do wrong. Every man believes injustice to be much more profitable for the individual than justice. And he will be right to think this, according to the person putting forward this view. Anyone who came into possession of the kind of freedom I have described, and then refused ever to do anything wrong, and did not lay a finger on other people’s possessions, would be regarded by observers as the most pathetic and brainless of creatures – though of course in public they would praise him, lying to one another because of their fear of being wronged.

e ‘That’s all I have to say about that claim. As for the choice between the

lives of the people in question, the only way we can make it properly is by contrasting the completely just man with the completely unjust man. How shall we contrast them? Like this. We will subtract nothing either from the injustice of the unjust man or from the justice of the just man. We will assume that each is a perfect example of his particular way of behaving. So for a start let's make the unjust man's behaviour like that of a skilled practitioner of a profession. A really good ship's captain or doctor, for example, can distinguish in the exercise of his skill between what is not feasible and what is feasible. He attempts what is feasible, and avoids what is not feasible. What is more, if he makes a false move somewhere, he is capable of correcting it. That's how it can be with our unjust man. Let's assume, if he is going to be *really* unjust, that he goes about his wrongdoings in the right way, and gets away with it. The one who gets caught is to be regarded as incompetent, since perfect injustice consists in appearing to be just when you are not. We must credit the completely unjust man, then, with the most complete injustice. To the person who commits the greatest wrongs we must not deny – in fact, we must grant – the enjoyment of the greatest reputation for justice. If he makes a false move, we must allow him the ability to put it right. He must be capable of using persuasion – so that if any evidence of his wrongdoings is brought against him, he can talk his way out of it – but capable also of using force where force is needed, relying on his courage and strength, and the possession of friends and wealth.

'That is our model of the unjust man. Beside him let us put our imaginary just man, a simple and honourable man who wants, in Aeschylus' words, not to appear to be good, but to be good.² We must deprive him of the appearance, since if he appears to be just, the appearance of justice will bring him recognition and rewards, and then it will not be clear whether his motive for being just was a desire for justice or a desire for the rewards and the recognition. So we must strip him of everything but justice; we must put him in a situation which is the opposite of our previous example. Despite doing nothing wrong, he must have the worst possible reputation for injustice. Then, if it is unaffected by disgrace and its consequences, the purity of his justice will have been tested in the fire. Let him live out his life like this, without any change, until the day of his death, appearing to be unjust though actually being just. That way they

² Part of the description (*Seven against Thebes* 592) of the wise and god-fearing seer Amphiaraus, explaining why he chooses to put no blazon on his shield.

can both attain the extreme – one of justice, the other of injustice – and the judgment can be made, which of them is happier.’

‘Help!’ I said. ‘That’s a pretty vigorous job you’ve done, my dear Glaucon, cleaning up each of our contestants to get them ready for judgment. Like scouring a statue.’

‘I’ve done my best,’ he said. ‘And if both their situations are as I have described, it shouldn’t be beyond us, I imagine, to give a full account of the kind of life which awaits each of them. So that is what I must do now. And if my language is rather crude and uncivilised, Socrates, don’t imagine it’s me talking. No, it’s the people who recommend injustice in preference to justice. They will claim that in this situation the just man will be whipped and put on the rack, will be thrown into chains and have his eyes burnt out. Finally, after all these injuries, he will be crucified, and realise that the important thing to aim for is not *being* just, but *appearing* to be just.³ So what Aeschylus said turns out to be a much more accurate description of the unjust man, who wants not to appear to be unjust, but to be unjust, living his life in touch with reality rather than trying to satisfy appearances and public opinion,

In his mind enjoying the deep furrow’s fruit,
From which good counsel grows.⁴

In the first place, they will say, he can be a ruler in his city, because of his reputation for justice; secondly, he can marry where he likes, give his daughters in marriage to whom he chooses, and make contracts and partnerships with anyone he wishes. Besides all this he finds it easy to make himself a rich man, since he has no compunction about acting unjustly. That is why, they say, he is successful in political and legal disputes – both public and private – and why he gets the better of his enemies. By getting the better of them he grows rich, and can help his friends and harm his enemies. He can make full and generous sacrifices and offerings to the gods, and is much better able than the just man to serve the gods and that part of mankind whom he chooses to serve. As a result, they claim, he is

³ Glaucon is exaggerating. Although a type of crucifixion was one of the methods by which criminals were executed in Athens, torture and mutilation was not a standard form of punishment. It is rather what a tyrant would inflict on his enemies.

⁴ These lines are also part of the description of Amphiaras and follow on immediately from the line adapted (but not directly quoted) at 361b. In their original context they referred to his intelligence and his attempt to prevent bloodshed between the two brothers Eteocles and Polynices; in their new context the ‘good counsel’ becomes the careful scheming of the unjust man.

in all probability more likely than the just man to be the gods' favourite. Those are the ways, Socrates, in which they say the unjust man gets a better deal, both from gods and men, than the just man.'

When Glaucon finished, I was all set to reply. But his brother Adeimantus intervened. 'I hope you don't think, Socrates,' he said, 'that that is the whole of their case.'

'Why? What more is there?' I asked.

'We have left out the part,' he said, 'which most needs to be included.'

'Well,' I said, 'let brother stand by brother, as the saying goes.⁵ By all means join in, and come to his assistance, if he has left anything out – though as far as I am concerned, even what he did say was enough to throw me, and make me incapable of coming to the defence of justice.'

'Nonsense,' he said. 'You must listen to this second instalment as well. To make it clearer what I think Glaucon wants, we must go through the contrary arguments to his – the ones which recommend justice and criticise injustice. Fathers giving advice to their sons, and all those who are responsible for others, encourage them to be just – not, I take it, because they value justice by itself, but because they value the approval it brings. If they appear to be just, they argue, then this reputation will bring them public office, marriage and all the benefits Glaucon has just enumerated, which the just man gains from being well thought of. And that isn't all they have to say about the benefits of reputation. Once they start adding in the approval of the gods, they have an abundance of rewards to offer the pious – gifts of the gods, they say. The admirable Hesiod and Homer⁶ say the same thing. Hesiod says that for the just, the gods make oak trees

Bear acorns on their lofty tops, and bees
Beneath, on lower branches. Weight of wool
Burdens their fleecy sheep.

And many other benefits of the same kind.⁷ Homer says much the same:

⁵ Not a proverb attested before Plato. A contemporary variant runs: 'There is pardon for helping a brother.'

⁶ As authors of the Greeks' most ancient poems describing their gods, Hesiod and Homer functioned as theological authorities.

⁷ *Works and Days* 232–234. The other benefits mentioned by Hesiod are: absence of war and famine, women bearing children who are like their fathers, abundance rendering trade by sea unnecessary.

c Or like some worthy king who, fearing god,
Supports the right. For him the rich dark earth
Bears wheat and barley, while with fruit his trees
Bow down. Unfailing his flocks bear lambs.
For him the sea yields fish.⁸

Musaeus and his son make the just receive rewards of a more exciting kind from the gods.⁹ In their account, they conduct them to Hades, sit d them down, and organise a party for the pious. They crown them, and make them spend the whole of time getting drunk, regarding perpetual drunkenness as the finest reward for human goodness. Others again grant rewards from the gods which are more extensive even than these. They say that children's children and a tribe of descendants are the posterity of the pious man, the man who keeps his oaths. That, and some more like it, is what they say in praise of justice. As for the impious and unjust, they e bury them in Hades, in mud of some kind. They make them carry water in a sieve;¹⁰ and they bring them into disgrace while they are still alive. They impose on the unjust all Glaucon's list of penalties for those just people who have the reputation of being unjust; these are all the penalties they can think of. That, then, is their recommendation and criticism of each of the two ways of life.

364 'Apart from that, Socrates, you should take into account another common way of talking about justice and injustice – both in everyday speech and in the poets. In their praise of self-discipline and justice, they all sing with one voice. They regard them as a good, but as one which is difficult and laborious, whereas self-indulgence and injustice are pleasant and easy to follow; they are shameful only in the reputation they bring, and by convention. They say that for the most part unjust actions are more profitable than just ones. They are quite happy to congratulate the

⁸ *Odyssey* 19.109–113, omitting line 110 ('and ruling over many powerful men'), and breaking off in mid-sentence ('... yields fish because of his good leadership, and under him his people flourish').

⁹ A reference to 'mystic' cults and their associated body of poetry – cults which distinguished themselves from the common run of religious ritual by requiring a special regimen and/or purificatory initiation in this life in order to gain rewards in the afterlife. By Musaeus' son is probably meant Eumolpus, founder of the clan which had charge of the most famous of the mystic rites engaged in by Athenians – the Eleusinian. For general information on these cults see W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), ch. 6.

¹⁰ The traditional punishment of the daughters of Danaus. In the *Gorgias* (493a–c) their fate is used as an allegory for the consequences of self-indulgence in the absence of purificatory initiation.

icked, if they possess wealth and exercise power, and to pay them respect in both public life and private life. The others they despise and ignore – any of them who are weak and poor – though they admit they are better people than the wicked. However, the most remarkable statements on this subject are those about the attitude of the gods to human goodness. They say the gods give many good people unhappiness and a wretched life, while to their opposites they give a life which is quite different. Mendicant priests and seers knock at the rich man's door, and try to persuade him that they have a power, bestowed on them by the gods in return for sacrifices and incantations, to use the delights of feasting to put right any wrong done by him or his ancestors.¹¹ And that if anyone wants to harm an enemy, for a small charge they can injure just and unjust alike with charms and spells. They say they can persuade the gods to act for them. To all these claims they call the poets as witnesses. Some quote Homer on the ease of wrongdoing.

There is much wickedness; it is never hard
To make that choice. The way is smooth, the goal
Lies near at hand. Virtue is out of reach
Without much toil. That is the gods' decree.¹²

It is a long, uphill road. Others, talking about the way men can influence the gods, call Homer to witness, with his claim that

Even the gods themselves
Will hear our prayers. Men who do wrong, and sin,
Can thus dissuade them from their purposes
With fair entreaty or with sacrifice,
With incense or the fat of offered meat.¹³

They bring forward a host of books by Musaeus and Orpheus, the children of Selene and the Muses, so they claim. These are what govern their sacrificial rituals, and they persuade cities as well as individuals that sacrifices and pleasurable amusements can win release and purification from injustice both for those still alive and for those who have passed

¹¹ The victims of animal sacrifice in Greek religious ritual were made the centrepiece of a feast.

¹² Hesiod, *Works and Days* 287–289. Hesiod goes on to mitigate the 'long, uphill road' with the thought that once you get to the top it becomes easy to follow.

¹³ The words spoken to Achilles by his childhood guardian Phoenix in *Iliad* 9.497–501, omitting line 498: '[the gods] who are our superiors in excellence, honour and might'.

away. Passing through the rites, they call it, which can release us from evils in the afterlife. And if we don't sacrifice, then horrors await us.

'That's the nature and force, Socrates, of all the things that are said about goodness and wickedness, and the value put on them by men and gods. What effect do we think they have on the minds of the young when they hear them – the able ones, those capable of flitting, as it were, from opinion to opinion, gathering information on what sort of person to be, and which way to go, in order to live the best possible life? A young man might well ask himself, using Pindar's words, "How climb the highest wall? Will justice help? Or devious deception?"¹⁴ And so live my life to its end, in the safety of the citadel? To judge by the poets, if I am just without also seeming to be just, I can expect nothing out of it but hardship and clear loss. If I am unjust, but have gained a reputation for justice, then I am promised a wonderful life. Therefore, since "Appearance," as the wise men have pointed out to me, "overpowers truth" and controls happiness,¹⁵ I must turn all my attention to that. I must draw an exact likeness of goodness around myself, as a front and façade, bringing along behind it the wise Archilochus' crafty and subtle fox.¹⁶

"The trouble with that," someone will say, "is that it is hard to be evil and get away with it for ever." "Well," we shall say, "nothing great was ever easy. But if we are going to be happy, we must follow where the trail of our argument leads us. And to get away with it, we shall form secret clubs and societies,¹⁷ and there are teachers of persuasion to give us the wisdom of the assembly and the lawcourts. With their help we shall sometimes use persuasion, and at other times force, and so come out on top without paying for it."

"But it's impossible to use stealth or force against the gods." "Well, if the gods don't exist, or if they are not at all interested in men, why should we in our turn be interested in keeping what we do a secret? If they *do* exist, and *are* interested in men, our only knowledge or hearsay of them comes from custom and the poets who sing of the gods' family histories.

¹⁴ The quotation is adapted to fit seamlessly into the young man's thought. Other sources give us a fuller version of the fragment: 'How climb the highest wall? Will justice help the race of men that dwells on earth to scale it? Or devious deception? My mind is divided and cannot say for certain.'

¹⁵ A fragment of a lost poem by Simonides.

¹⁶ The cunning fox of animal fable was a frequent figure in the poems of Archilochus.

¹⁷ In the absence of formal political parties, private clubs were important in launching the politically ambitious. In the fifth century they became notorious hives of oligarchic conspiracy against the institutions of democratic Athens.

But these are the writers who tell us that it is in the gods' nature to be moved and won over 'with fair entreaty and with sacrifice'.¹⁸ We must either believe both the claims made by the poets or neither of them. And if we believe them, the best policy will be to act unjustly, and use the proceeds to pay for sacrifices. If we act justly, we shall avoid punishment by the gods, but also lose the rewards of injustice, whereas if we are unjust we shall get the rewards, and by means of prayers when we overstep the mark and do wrong we can persuade the gods to let us off without penalty."

"Ah, but we shall have to pay in the next world – either we ourselves or our descendants – for the wrongs we do here." "Not so, my friend," he will say, with a calculating air. "There is great power in the mystic rites, and the gods who give absolution. So say the greatest cities, and the children of the gods, those who become the poets and mouthpieces of the gods; they assure us these things are so."

"What reason remains, then, for us to choose justice in preference to the most complete injustice? If we can have injustice coupled with counterfeit respectability, then we shall be following our own inclinations in our dealings with gods and men alike, both in our lifetime and after our death. That is the opinion of most people and of the experts. In the light of all these arguments, Socrates, what could induce anyone with any force of personality, any financial resources, any physical strength or family connections, to be prepared to respect justice, rather than laugh when he hears it being recommended? If anyone can show that what we have said is false, and is fully satisfied that justice is a good thing, then I imagine he is very forgiving towards the unjust, and does not get angry with them. He knows that apart from those who are born with a kind of divine aversion to injustice, or who gain the knowledge to refrain from it, no one really wants to be just. People condemn injustice as a result of cowardice, or old age, or weakness of some other kind, and from an inability to practise it. It's quite obvious. The minute one of these people comes into a position of power, he immediately starts acting as unjustly as he possibly can.

"The reason for all this is simply the observation which prompted the two of us to inflict these long speeches on you, Socrates. It is this. There is no shortage of people like you, my admirable friend, who claim to be supporters of justice, starting with the heroes of early days, whose words

¹⁸ Referring back to 364e.

have come down to us, right up to people of the present day. None of you has ever condemned injustice or recommended justice except in terms of the reputation, prestige and rewards they bring. Nobody has ever yet, either in poetry or in private discussion, given a sufficiently detailed account of each of them in itself, when it is present with its own force in the soul of the person possessing it, undetected by gods or by men. No one has shown that injustice is the greatest of the evils the soul has within it, or
 367 that justice is the greatest good. If that were what you had all been saying right from the start, and if you had been persuading us from our earliest years, we would not now be keeping an eye on one another, to guard against injustice. Each man would be keeping an eye on himself, afraid that by doing wrong he might admit the greatest of evils to share his abode.

‘This, Socrates, and perhaps even more than this, is what Thrasymachus, or anyone else for that matter, might say on the subject of
 b justice and injustice. They assign the wrong value to each – a gross mistake, in my view. The reason – and I will be quite open with you – why I have set out their position as vigorously as I can is that I want to hear the opposite view from you. Don’t just demonstrate to us by argument that justice is something more powerful than injustice.¹⁹ Tell us what effect each of them has, just by itself, on the person possessing it, which makes one of them something bad and the other something good. You must strip them of their reputations, as Glaucon recommended. You must remove
 c shall say that you are not defending justice, but the appearance of justice, and that you are not condemning injustice, but the appearance of injustice. We shall say you are encouraging us to be secretly unjust, and that you agree with Thrasymachus when he says that justice is what is good for someone else – what is good for the stronger – whereas injustice is what is good and profitable for oneself – what is bad for the weaker. You agreed that justice was one of those great goods which are worth having partly for their consequences, but much more so for their own sake,
 d goods such as sight, hearing, intelligence – and health, for that matter – and the rest of that finest class of goods, those which are good by their very nature, and not because of the reputation they bring.²⁰ That is the

¹⁹ As in the argument with Thrasymachus (351a).

²⁰ The Greek is ambiguous, and could also mean ‘and the rest of that class of goods which are productive by their very nature, and not because of the reputation they bring’.

praise of justice I want you to make. Just by itself, how does it help – and how does injustice harm – the person who possesses it? You can leave the praise of rewards and reputation to others. I'm prepared to accept other people praising justice in these terms, and condemning injustice, and listen to them extolling or criticising the reputation and rewards associated with them. But I won't accept it from you, unless you tell me I must, since this is precisely the question you have spent your whole life studying. So please don't just demonstrate to us by argument that justice is something more powerful than injustice. Tell us the effect each of them has, just by itself, on the person possessing it – whether or not gods and men know about it – the effect which makes one of them good and the other bad.'

I had always had a high opinion of Glaucon's and Adeimantus' characters, but when I heard what they had to say I was particularly delighted with them. 'So, children of the great man,'²¹ I said, 'Glaucon's lover was right, when you distinguished yourselves in the battle at Megara, to begin his poem in your honour with the words:

Ariston's sons, great father's godly line . . .²²

A fair description, I think, my friends. There was certainly something inspired about your performance just now – to be able to speak like that in favour of injustice without being convinced it is a better thing than justice. And judging by the evidence of your whole way of life, I believe you when you say you are really not convinced, though from what you actually said I wouldn't have believed you. The trouble is, the more firmly I believe you, the less certain I am what to do next. I can't defend justice. I don't think I have the ability. I say that because you have rejected the arguments by which I thought I had proved to Thrasymachus that justice was something better than injustice. On the other hand, I can't *not* defend her, since I can't help feeling it is wrong to stand idly by when I hear

²¹ An obscure phrase. It could be a playful address between intimates (compare 'you son of a gun'); an ironic allusion to the brothers' inheritance of the argument from Thrasymachus (compare 358b, 331d); or an anticipation of the mention of their father Ariston in the verse that Socrates proceeds to quote.

²² The identity of Glaucon's lover is not known, although Critias (see pp. xi–xiii of the introduction) has been thought a likely candidate. A pattern of homosexuality in which an older man would act as social mentor to a youth in return for sexual favours was standard in Athens (see K. J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978). It is unclear which of the many battles between Athens and Megara is meant. Ariston's name means 'Best'.

justice coming under attack, and not come to her defence for as long as I have breath in my body and a tongue in my head. So the best thing is to make what defence I can.'

Well, Glaucon and the rest of them insisted that they wanted me to make a defence, and not abandon the argument. They wanted me to make a full investigation into what justice and injustice both were, and what the true position was concerning the benefit they both brought. So I adopted what seemed to me the best approach. 'The enquiry we are undertaking is not a simple matter. If you ask me, it requires sharp eyesight. And since we are not clever people, I think we should conduct our search in the same sort of way as we would if our eyesight were not very good, and we were told to read some small writing from a bit of a distance away, and then one of us realised that a larger copy of the same writing, apparently, was to be found somewhere else, on some larger surface. We would regard it as a stroke of luck, I think, to be able to read the large letters first, and then turn our attention to the small ones, to see if they really did say the same thing.'

'We certainly would,' said Adeimantus. 'But where can you see anything like that in our search for justice?'

'I'll tell you,' I said. 'We say that there is justice in an individual; but also, I take it, justice in a whole city?'

'Yes.'

'And a city is something bigger than an individual?'

'Yes, it is.'

'In that case, maybe justice will be on a larger scale in what is larger, and easier to find out about. So if you approve, why don't we start by finding out what sort of thing it is in cities? After that we can make a similar inquiry into the individual, trying to find the likeness of the larger version in the form the smaller takes.'

'I think that's a good idea,' he said.

'Suppose then,' I said, 'we were to study the theoretical origin of a city, would we also see the origin in it of justice and injustice?'

'We might,' he said.

'And if we do that, is there a chance that what we are looking for will be easier to find?'

'Yes, much easier.'

'You think, then, that this is a task we should attempt to complete? I suspect it is a fairly major undertaking, so you decide.'

'We have decided,' said Adeimantus. 'Go ahead.'

'Very well,' I said. 'The origin of a city lies, I think, in the fact that we are not, any of us, self-sufficient; we have all sorts of needs. Can you think of any other reason for the foundation of a city?'

'No, I can't.'

'Different individuals, then, form associations with one person to meet one need, and with another person to meet a different need. With this variety of wants they may collect a number of partners and allies into one place of habitation, and to this joint habitation we give the name "city," don't we?'

'Yes, we do.'

'Does one person share with another, when he *does* share – or does he accept a share – because he thinks it is better for him personally?'

'Yes, he does.'

'Right then,' I said. 'Let's construct a hypothetical city, from the beginning. It is the product, apparently, of our needs.'

'Of course.'

'And the first and most important of those needs, if we are to exist and stay alive, is the provision of food.'

'Unquestionably.'

'Second comes the need for housing, and third the need for clothing and things like that.'

'That is right.'

'Well then,' I said, 'how will our city be equal to meeting these requirements? Won't it just be one farmer, plus a builder, plus a weaver? Or should we add a shoemaker as well, and anyone else who provides for physical needs?'

'Yes, we should.'

'So the most basic city would have to consist of four or five men.'

'It looks like it.'

'Next question. Should each one of them make what he produces available to all alike? Should the one farmer, for example, provide food for four? Should he put four times the hours, and four times the effort, into the production of food, and then share it with the others? Or should he forget about them and provide for himself alone, producing only a quarter of the amount of food in a quarter of the time – and of the remaining three-quarters, devote a quarter each to the provision of housing, of clothing, and of footwear? That way he would save himself the trouble of sharing with others, and provide for his own needs by his own individual efforts.'

'No, Socrates,' Adeimantus replied, 'the other way is probably easier.'

'That's certainly what you'd expect,' I said. 'And one thing immediately struck me when you said that, which is that one individual is by nature quite unlike another individual, that they differ in their natural aptitudes, and that different people are equipped to perform different tasks. Don't you think so?'

'I do.'

'Well, then. Will a single individual do better exercising a number of skills, or will each do best concentrating on one?'

'Concentrating on one,' he replied.

'And another thing. It is clear, I think, that if you let the right moment for a task pass by, the task suffers.'

'Yes, that is clear.'

'That is because the task in hand will not wait for the person doing it to have a spare moment. So it is essential that whoever is doing it should concentrate on it, and not regard it as a hobby.'

'Yes, it is essential.'

'It follows from this that in any enterprise more is produced – and that it is better and more easily produced – when one person does a single task which is suited to his nature, and does it at the right time, keeping himself free from other tasks.'

'It certainly does.'

'Then it will take more than four citizens, Adeimantus, to provide for the needs we were talking about. The farmer, it appears, will not make himself a plough with his own hands – not if it's going to be a good plough – nor a hoe, nor any of his other farming implements. No more will the builder, who also needs a number of tools. And the same goes for the weaver and the shoemaker.'

'True.'

'So carpenters, and blacksmiths, and a whole lot of skilled workers of that kind, will become partners in our little city, and make the place quite crowded.'

'They will.'

'All the same, it still won't be all that large, even if we add cattlemen, shepherds and other herdsmen, so that the farmers can have oxen for ploughing, and so that builders as well as the farmers will be able to use animals for carrying materials, and so that weavers and shoemakers can have hides and wool.'

'It certainly won't be a small city,' he said, 'if it contains all that.'

'That's not all,' I said. 'It will be more or less impossible to locate the city itself in a place where it won't need imports.'

'Quite impossible.'

'So it will require yet more people in addition, to bring it the things it needs from some other city.'

'It will.'

'What is more, if their agent goes empty-handed, taking nothing which meets the needs of the people from whom they are importing the things they are short of, then he will come back empty-handed, won't he?'

'I think so.'

'So in their own economy the citizens must not only provide adequately for themselves; they must also produce the right kind of goods – and in large enough quantities – for the people they need to trade with.'

'Yes, they must.'

'So our city needs more farmers, and more workers in other occupations.'

'Yes.'

'And more agents as well, presumably, the ones who are going to do all the importing and exporting. These people are merchants, aren't they?'

'Yes.'

'So we shall need merchants as well.'

'Definitely.'

'And if our trade is by sea, we shall need a large number of other people as well – experts on seafaring.'

'Yes, a large number.'

'What about trade in the city itself? How will each group share its production with others? That after all was our reason for forming an association and establishing a city.'

'Obviously,' he said, 'by buying and selling.'

'That will give rise to a market-place and a currency, a unit of exchange for transactions.'

'Undoubtedly.'

'But when the farmer, or member of one of the other occupations, brings to market part of what he produces, he may not arrive there at the same moment as those who need to exchange goods with him. Is he going to sit around in the market-place, taking time off from his work?'

'Certainly not,' he said. 'There are people who identify this need, and

d make themselves available for this activity. In a well-run city they tend to be the weakest physically, those who are useless for any other kind of work. They have to wait around there in the market-place, receiving goods in exchange for money from those who have something to sell, and then again money in return for goods from all those who want to buy.'

'So this is the need,' I said, 'which brings dealers into our city. Don't we call people dealers, if they sit there in the market-place offering a selling and buying service, whereas those who travel round the cities we call merchants?'

'We do.'

e 'And there is still another group of people, I think, offering a service. We certainly would not want them as partners or associates for their mental attributes, but they possess physical strength suitable for manual labour. This they offer for sale, and the price they put on it they call their hire. That, I imagine, is why they in turn are called hired labourers. Isn't that right?'

'Yes.'

'So hired labourers, it seems, will also go to fill up our city.'

'I think they may.'

'Well then, Adeimantus, is our city now large enough? Is it complete?'

'Maybe it is.'

'In which case, where exactly are justice and injustice to be found in it? In which of the elements we have examined have they made their appearance?'

372 'Speaking for myself, Socrates,' he said, 'I have no idea – unless, I suppose, it is in some sort of need which those elements have of one another.'

b 'I think that may be the right answer,' I said. 'We must examine it without hesitation. Let's look first at the way people will spend their time in an economy of this kind. Won't it be that they produce bread and wine and clothing and shoes? They will build themselves houses. In summer they will go about their work lightly clad, and barefoot, and in winter they will be properly clothed and shod. They will live on barley-meal and wheat flour. Kneading and baking these, they will have fine barley cakes or wheat loaves served on reeds or fresh leaves. They will eat lying on straw beds covered with bryony and myrtle. They can live very well like this – they and their children. Drinking wine after their meals, wearing garlands on their heads, and singing the praises of the gods, they will live

c quite happily with one another. They will have no more children than they can afford, and they will avoid poverty and war.'²³

At this point Glaucon interrupted. 'No art of cookery, apparently, for these people you describe as living so well.'

d 'That's a good point,' I said. 'I forgot that they will have the art of cookery. Obviously they will use salt, and olives, and cheese, and they will boil the usual country dishes of wild roots and vegetables. And for dessert we can offer them figs and chickpeas and beans; and they will roast myrtle berries and acorns in front of the fire, with a modest amount to drink. In this way, living lives which are peaceful and in all probability healthy, they will die in old age, handing down the same way of life to their descendants.'

'If you were organising a city of pigs, Socrates, isn't that just how you would feed them?'²⁴

'Well, what sort of meals *should* we give them, Glaucon?' I asked.

e 'The usual kind. If they are going to eat in comfort, they should lie on couches, eat off tables, and have the cooked dishes and desserts which people today have.'

'I see,' I replied. 'So we are not just looking at the origin of a city, apparently. We are looking at the origin of a luxurious city. Maybe that's not such a bad idea. If we look at that sort of city too, we may perhaps see the point where justice and injustice come into existence in cities. I think the true city – the healthy version, as it were – is the one we have just described. But let's look also at the swollen and inflamed city, if that is what you prefer. We can easily do that. What's to stop us?'

373 'All this, and this way of life, will not, it seems, be enough for some people. They will have couches and tables, and other furniture in addition, and cooked dishes of course, and incense, perfumes, call-girls, cakes – every variety of all these things. As for those needs we talked about at the beginning, we can no longer prescribe only the bare necessities – houses, clothing and shoes. We must introduce painting and decoration, and start using gold and ivory and all those sorts of things, mustn't we?'

²³ The picture borrows some of its effect from that of the primeval golden age in Hesiod's *Works and Days* (109–126), notably the absence of war and the relative simplicity of life; but it owes much more to a sentimental view of the life of the small farmer or peasant in the Athenian countryside. The contempt Glaucon is about to show for it is accordingly that of the sophisticated city-dweller.

²⁴ Pigs were considered slow and stupid (compare 535e) as well as dirty and greedy – the emblem of all that was uncouth.

b 'Yes.'

'So once again we must enlarge our city, since our first, healthy city is no longer big enough. We must fill it with a great mass and multitude of things which are no longer what cities must have as a matter of necessity. For example, we must have hunters of all kinds, artists, all those using figure and colour for their imitations, and those using music, poets and their assistants – reciters, actors, dancers, producers – and the makers of all sorts of goods, especially those used for making women look beautiful. What's more, we shall need more people in service. Don't you think we shall need attendants for our sons, wetnurses, nannies, hairdressers, barbers, not to mention cooks and chefs? And besides those, we shall need people to keep pigs as well. We didn't have them in our earlier city, since there was no need for them. But in this city there *will* be a need for them, as also for all sorts of other livestock, in case anyone wants them to eat. Isn't that right?'

d 'Of course.'²⁵

'And living like this, will we have much greater need of doctors than we did before?'

'Yes. Much greater.'

'What is more, I imagine the territory which was originally adequate to feed the original population will no longer be adequate. It will be too small. Do we accept that?'

'Yes.'

'Do we need, then, to carve ourselves a slice of our neighbours' territory, if we are going to have enough for pasturage and ploughing? And do they in turn need a slice of our land, if they too give themselves up to the pursuit of unlimited wealth, not confining themselves to necessities?'

e 'They are bound to, Socrates.'

'And will the next step be war, Glaucon? Or what?'

'War.'

'Let us say nothing for the moment,' I said, 'about whether the effect of war is harmful or beneficial. Let us merely note that we have discovered, in its turn, the origin of war. War arises out of those things which are the commonest causes of evil in cities, when evil does arise, both in private life and public life.'

'Yes.'

²⁵ Meat was a luxury, and the rural diet was of necessity mainly vegetarian. There were also deliberate vegetarians, notably the Pythagorean communities, who practised vegetarianism for philosophic reasons.

‘Our city needs to be even bigger, my friend. And not just a bit bigger; we must add to it a whole army, which can go out and fight against invaders, and defend all our wealth and the other things we were talking about just now.’

‘What about the citizens themselves? Aren’t there enough of them?’

‘No,’ I said, ‘not if we were right, you and the rest of us, in what we agreed earlier, when we were forming our city. Surely we agreed, if you remember, that no individual was capable of practising several arts or skills properly.’

‘True.’

‘Well, how about fighting in battle?’ I asked. ‘Don’t you think that is essentially an art or skill?’

‘Very much so,’ he said.

‘And should we regard the art of shoemaking as more important than the art of war?’

‘No.’

‘Well then. We didn’t allow our shoemaker to try and be a farmer as well – or a weaver or builder. He had to be a shoemaker, to make sure the business of shoemaking was carried out properly. In the same way we assigned a single task to each member of the other occupations – the task he was naturally suited to, and for which he would keep himself free from other tasks, working at it throughout his life, and taking every opportunity to produce good results. Isn’t it of the highest importance that warfare should be carried on as efficiently as possible? Or is war so easy that any farmer, any shoemaker, or any practitioner of any art or skill, can be a soldier as well?²⁶

‘Even to be a decent draughts or dice player, you have to have been playing since you were a child. It can’t be done in your spare time. So how can you pick up a shield – or any other weapon or instrument of war – and immediately be equipped to take your place in the battle-line, or in any of the other sorts of fighting which occur in time of war? Think of other instruments: there isn’t one of them that will turn a person into a craftsman or athlete simply by being picked up, or that will be of any use to him if he has no expertise or has not had enough practice in handling it.’

‘No,’ he said, ‘they’d be extremely valuable instruments if you could.’

²⁶ It was a point of pride among the general citizenry of most of the Greek states of the fifth and (to a lesser degree) the fourth centuries to fight their own battles; there were no standing armies of professional soldiers. For further background consult ch. 12e (‘Warfare’) of *CAH* 6.

e 'Since the guardians' job, then,' I said, 'is the most important, it must correspondingly call for the greatest freedom from other activities, together with the highest level of expertise and training.'

'That's certainly my opinion,' he said.

'And also, of course, a natural disposition suited to precisely this way of life?'

'Of course.'

'And it would be our job, apparently, if we are capable of it, to choose which dispositions, and which kinds of dispositions, were suited to the defence of the city.'

'That would indeed be our job.'

375 'Heavens,' I said, 'that's a major responsibility we have taken upon ourselves. All the same, as far as our abilities permit, we must try not to back out of it.'

'Yes, we must.'

'Well, then,' I said, 'when it comes to acting as a guardian, don't you think that in his disposition a young man of good birth is like a young pedigree hound?'

'In what way?'

'Well, for example, each of them needs acute senses, speed in pursuit of what they detect, and strength as well, in case they catch it and have to fight with it.'

'Yes,' he said, 'they need all these qualities.'

'Plus courage, of course, if he is to fight well.'

'Of course.'

b 'But is any living creature likely to be brave – whether horse or dog or anything else – if it doesn't have a spirited and energetic nature? Haven't you noticed what an irresistible and unconquerable thing spirit is? With spirit, any living creature is fearless and invincible in the face of any danger.'

'Yes, I have noticed that.'

'As for the physical characteristics required of a guardian, then, they are obvious.'

'Yes.'

'And the mental requirement is that he should be spirited, or energetic.'

'Yes. That too.'

'In that case, Glaucon,' I said, 'if their natural disposition is as we have described, what is to stop them being aggressive towards one another and the rest of the citizens?'

'Precious little,' he said.

- c 'But we want them to be gentle in their dealings with their own people, and fierce in their dealings with the enemy. Otherwise they won't need to waste time looking for someone else to come along and destroy their city; they'll be in there first, doing it for themselves.'

'True,' he said.

'What shall we do, then?' I asked. 'Where can we find a natural disposition which is both gentle and full of spirit? After all, I take it that a gentle disposition is the opposite of spirit.'

'It appears to be.'

- d 'And yet if someone is deficient in either of these qualities, he cannot possibly be a good guardian. The combination of them looks like an impossibility, which means that a good guardian is an impossibility.'

'Perhaps it is.'

I didn't know what to say then. I thought over what we had said, and then tried again. 'No wonder we can't find the answer, my friend. We have forgotten the example we set up for ourselves.'

'Explain.'

'We forgot that there actually are natural dispositions of the kind we have just decided don't exist, dispositions which do contain these opposite qualities.'

'Where?'

- e 'Well, you can find them in a number of animals, but especially in the one we compared with our guardian. You are aware, presumably, that it is the natural disposition of pure-bred dogs to be as gentle as possible to those they know and recognise, and the exact opposite to those they don't know.'

'Yes, I am.'

'So such a thing is possible,' I said. 'And in looking for a guardian of this kind, we are not looking for something unnatural.'

'Apparently not.'

'In that case, do you think the person who is going to be guardian material needs another quality as well? Do you want him, as well as being spirited and energetic, to be also by temperament a lover of wisdom, a philosopher?'²⁷

- 376 'What do you mean? I don't understand.'

²⁷ *Philosophia* in Greek derives from two words meaning 'love of wisdom'. It is largely at Plato's hands that it comes to mean something closer to 'philosophy'. See pp. xviii-xxii of the introduction.

'It's another thing you see in dogs,' I replied. 'Something which makes you wonder at the animal.'

'What is that?'

'When it sees someone it doesn't know, a dog turns nasty, even though it hasn't been badly treated by him in the past. When it sees someone familiar, it welcomes him, even if it has never been at all well treated by him. Haven't you ever found that rather remarkable?'

'I'd never really thought about it, up to now,' he said. 'But I think there's no doubt a dog does behave like that.'

'It seems clever, this side of its nature. It seems to show a true love of wisdom.'

b 'In what way?'

'Because,' I replied, 'it classifies what it sees as friendly or hostile solely on the fact that it knows one, and doesn't know the other. It must be a lover of knowledge if it defines friend and enemy by means of knowledge and ignorance.'

'Yes,' he said, 'it must.'

'And are love of knowledge and love of wisdom the same thing?'

'They are.'

c 'So can we say with some confidence of a man too, that if he is going to be someone who is gentle towards those he knows and recognises, he must by his nature be a lover of knowledge and of wisdom?'

'We can.'

'Then will the person who is going to be a good and true guardian of our city be a lover of wisdom, spirited, swift and strong?'

'He certainly will.'

d 'Well, so much for his nature. But what about the upbringing and education of our guardians? What form will those take? Will looking into that question be of some use to us in finding the answer to our main enquiry, which is how justice and injustice arise in a city? We want to cover the subject properly, without going on at enormous length.'

Glaucon's brother answered. 'Speaking for myself,' he said, 'I'm quite sure that looking into it will be useful in our main aim.'

'In that case, my dear Adeimantus,' I said, 'we must certainly not leave it out, even if it takes longer than we expect.'

'No, we mustn't.'

'Very well, then. Let's imagine we are telling a story, and that we have all the time in the world. Let's design an education for these men of ours.'

e 'Yes, that's what we should do.'

'What should their education be, then? Isn't it hard to find a better education than the one which has been developed over the years? It consists, I take it, of physical education for the body, and music and poetry²⁸ for the mind or soul.'

'It does.'

'And shouldn't we start their education in music and poetry earlier than their physical education?'

'We should.'

'Do you count stories as part of music and poetry, or not?'

'Yes, I do.'

'And are stories of two kinds – one true, the other false?'

'Yes.'

'Should we educate them in both, starting with the false?'

'I don't understand what you mean,' he said.

'You mean you don't understand that we start off by telling children legends? These, I take it, are broadly speaking false, though there is some truth in them. And we start children on these legends before we start them on physical education.'

'That is right.'

'That was what I meant when I said we should start their education in music and poetry before their physical education.'

'You were right,' he said.

'Very well, then. You are aware that it is the beginning of any undertaking which is the most important part – especially for anything young and tender? That is the time when each individual thing can be most easily moulded, and receive whatever mark you want to impress upon it.'

'Yes, of course.'

'Shall we be perfectly content, then, to let our children listen to any old stories, made up by any old storytellers? Shall we let them open their minds to beliefs which are the opposite, for the most part, of those we think they should hold when they grow up?'

'No. We shall certainly not allow that.'

'For a start, then, it seems, we must supervise our storytellers. When they tell a good story, we must decide in favour of it; and when they tell a

²⁸ Instrumental music, at least until the end of Plato's life, directly accompanied or otherwise complemented song, chant and declamation rather than being developed for its own sake. The single word *mousikē* can therefore denote accomplishment in both music and poetry.

bad one, we must decide against it.²⁹ We shall persuade nurses and mothers to tell children the approved stories, and tell them that shaping children's minds with stories is far more important than trying to shape their bodies with their hands.³⁰ We must reject most of the stories they tell at the moment.'

'Which ones?'

'If we look at our greatest stories, we shall see how to deal with lesser examples as well,' I replied. 'Greater and lesser must have the same standard, and the same effect. Don't you think so?'

'Yes, I do,' he said. 'But I'm not even sure which these "great" stories are you talk about.'

'The ones Hesiod and Homer both used to tell us – and the other poets. They made up untrue stories, which they used to tell people – and still do tell them.'

'Which stories? What is your objection to them?'

e 'The one which ought to be our first and strongest objection – especially if the untruth is an ugly one.'

'What is this objection?'

'When a storyteller gives us the wrong impression of the nature of gods and heroes. It's like an artist producing pictures which don't look like the things he was trying to draw.'

'Yes,' he said, 'it is right to object in general to that sort of story. But what exactly do we mean? Which stories?'

'I'll start,' I said, 'with an important falsehood on an important subject.

There is the very ugly falsehood told of how Ouranos did the things
378 Hesiod says he did, and how Kronos in his turn took his revenge on him.³¹
As for what Kronos did, and what his son did to him, even if they were true I wouldn't think that in the normal course of events these stories should be told to those who are young and uncritical. The best thing

²⁹ While there was no state supervision in Athens of the stories children heard in the course of their education, the state did control the poetic works that adult citizens witnessed at the dramatic festivals, since it was the responsibility of various magistrates to select, from a pool of applicants, the dramatists who could take part each year.

³⁰ The reference is to the use of massage and swaddling clothes for directing the growth of infants.

³¹ Hesiod, *Theogony* 154–182, 453–506. The sky god Ouranos prevented the children conceived for him by the earth mother Gaia from emerging into the light. Gaia's son Kronos avenged them by castrating his father with a sickle of his mother's manufacture. Kronos in his turn swallowed the children borne him by his consort Rhea and succumbed likewise to the wiles of the mother and of one of those children, Zeus, who thereby became king of the gods.

would be to say nothing about them at all. If there were some overriding necessity to tell them, then as few people as possible should hear them, and in strict secrecy. They should have to make sacrifice. Not a pig, but some large and unobtainable sacrificial animal, to make sure the smallest possible number of people heard them.'

'Yes,' he said. 'Those stories are pretty hard to take.'

'We will not have them told in our city, Adeimantus. When the young are listening, they are not to be told that if they committed the most horrible crimes they wouldn't be doing anything out of the ordinary, not even if they inflicted every kind of punishment on a father who treated them badly. We won't tell them that they would merely be acting like the first and greatest of the gods.'

'Good heavens, no. Personally, I don't think these are at all the right stories to tell them.'

'Nor, in general, any of the stories – which are not true anyway – about gods making war on gods, plotting against them, or fighting with them. Not if we want the people who are going to protect our city to regard it as a crime to fall out with one another without a very good reason. The last thing they need is to have stories told them, and pictures made for them, of battles between giants, and all the many and varied enmities of gods and heroes towards their kinsmen and families. If we do intend to find some way of convincing them that no citizen has ever quarrelled with another citizen, that quarrelling is wrong, then this is the kind of thing old men and women must tell our children, right from the start. And as the children get older, we must compel our poets to tell stories similar to these. As for the binding of Hera by her son, the hurling of Hephaestus out of heaven by his father, for trying to protect his mother when she was being beaten, and the battles of the gods which Homer tells us about,³² whether these stories are told as allegories or not as allegories, we must not allow them into our city. The young are incapable of judging what is allegory and what is not, and the opinions they form at that age tend to be ineradicable and unchangeable.³³ For these reasons, perhaps, we

³² The son who bound Hera and the son who came to her defence against Zeus are one and the same: Hephaestus. The story is that he was rejected by his mother at birth and in revenge made a trick throne for her which caught her fast when she sat in it. The incident with Zeus is narrated by Homer, *Iliad* 1.586–594. Battles of the gods in Homer: *Iliad* 20.1–74, 21.385–513.

³³ At school, Athenian youngsters would memorise rather than interpret poetry, but it was characteristic of the professional intellectuals who offered the elite a higher education to find hidden meanings in the poets, especially Homer.

should regard it as of the highest importance that the first things they hear should be improving stories, as beautiful as can be.'

'That makes sense,' he said. 'But suppose someone were to go on and ask us what these things are, and what stories we should tell, which ones should we say?'

'Adeimantus,' I said, 'we are not acting as poets at the moment, you and
379 I. We are the founders of a city. It is the founders' job to know the patterns on which poets must model their stories, or be refused permission if they use different ones. It is not their job to start creating stories themselves.'

'True,' he said. 'But what about this question of patterns for stories about the gods? What should these patterns be?'

'Something like this, I should think. They should always, I take it, give a true picture of what god is really like, whether the poet is working in epic, or in lyric, or in tragedy.'

'Yes, they should.'

'Well then, isn't god in fact good? Shouldn't he be represented as such?'

b 'Of course.'

'The next point is that nothing that is good is harmful, is it?'

'No, I don't think so.'

'Does what is not harmful do any harm?'

'No.'

'Can what does no harm do any evil?'

'No, it can't do that either.'

'But if something does no evil, it couldn't be the cause of any evil, could it?'

'Of course not.'

'Very well. Now, is the good beneficial?'

'Yes.'

'Responsible for well-being, in other words?'

'Yes.'

'In that case the good is not responsible for everything. It is responsible for what goes well, but not responsible for what goes badly.'

'Absolutely.'

c 'In which case,' I said, 'god, since he is good, could not be responsible for everything, as most people claim. Some of the things that happen to men are his responsibility, but most are not; after all, we have many fewer good things than bad things in our lives. We have no reason to hold anyone else responsible for the good things, whereas for the bad things we *should* look for some other cause, and not blame god.'

'I think you are absolutely right.'

'In that case,' I said, 'we should not allow Homer or any other poet to make such a stupid mistake about the gods, and tell us that two jars

Stand in the hall of Zeus, full filled with fates.
One of the two holds good, the other ill.

Nor that the person to whom Zeus gives a mixture of the two

Sometimes encounters evil, sometimes good,

whereas for the person to whom he does not give a mixture, but gives evil in its pure form,

Dread famine drives him over earth's fair face.³⁴

Nor describe Zeus as

Of good and evil steward and dispenser.³⁵

As for Pandarus' violation of the oaths and the truce, we shall disapprove of anyone who says that Athena and Zeus were the cause of it,³⁶ or that Themis and Zeus were the cause of the quarrel of the goddesses, and the judgment between them.³⁷ Nor again must we let the young hear the kind of story Aeschylus tells, when he says:

For god implants the fatal cause in men,
When root and branch he will destroy a house.

If anyone writes about the sufferings of Niobe – as here³⁸ – or about the house of Pelops,³⁹ or the Trojan War, or anything like that, we must either not allow them to say that these events are the work of a god, or if the poet claims that they *are* the work of a god, then he must find more or less the

³⁴ A mixture of quotation and description of *Iliad* 24.527–532. The words are spoken by Achilles to Priam.

³⁵ Where this line comes from is not known.

³⁶ Homer, *Iliad* 4.30 ff. Despite the piety of the Trojans towards him, Zeus succumbs to cajoling by Hera and Athena, who support the Greeks, and agrees to permit Athena to beguile the Trojan archer Pandarus into breaking the truce currently holding between the two sides in the war.

³⁷ The Trojan prince Paris judged in favour of Aphrodite in the contest for beauty between her and the goddesses Hera and Athena – a decision that eventually led to the Trojan War.

³⁸ Aeschylus' *Niobe* has not been preserved. Niobe boasted of having finer children than those of the goddess Leto – Apollo and Artemis. As a result, these gods were sent by their mother to destroy the children of Niobe.

³⁹ The lurid travails of the descendants of Pelops – including adultery, child killing, cannibalism, and multiple murder between kin – were a frequent topic of tragic drama.

- b sort of explanation we are looking for at the moment. He must say that what god does is right and good, and that these people's punishments were good for them. We must not allow the poet to say that those who paid the penalty were made wretched, and that the person responsible was a god. If poets said that the wicked were made wretched because they needed punishment, and that in paying the penalty they were being helped by god, then we should allow that. But the claim that god, who is good, is responsible for bringing evil on anyone, is one we must oppose with every weapon we possess. We must not let anyone make this claim in our city, if it is to be well governed, nor should we let anyone hear it, whether the hearer be young or old, and whether or not the storyteller tells his story in verse. These claims, if they were made, would neither be holy, nor good for us, nor consistent with one another.'

'You have my vote for this law,' he said. 'I thoroughly approve.'

'There you are, then,' I said. 'That would be one of the laws about the gods, one of the patterns on which storytellers must base their stories, and poets their poems – that god is not responsible for everything, but only for what is good.'

'Yes,' he said, 'that should do it.'

- d 'What about a second law, or pattern? Do you think god is a magician? Would he deliberately appear in different guises at different times? Are there times when he really becomes different, and changes his shape into many forms, and other times when he deceives us into thinking that is what he is doing? Or do you think he has a single form, and is of all creatures the least likely to depart from his own shape?'

'I'm not sure I'm in a position to answer that, just at the moment.'

'How about a different question? When things do depart from their own shape, isn't it necessarily true that they either change themselves or are changed by something else?'

- e 'Yes, it is.'

'Doesn't an external cause of change or motion have least effect on the finest specimens? Think of a body, for example, and the effect on it of food, drink and exertion. Or plants, and the effect of sun and wind and things like that. Isn't the healthiest and strongest specimen least affected?'

- 381 'Yes, of course.'

'And wouldn't the bravest and wisest soul be least disturbed and altered by an outside influence?'

'Yes.'

'The same, presumably, goes for anything manufactured – furniture,

houses and clothes. What is well made and in good condition is least affected by time and other influences.'

'That is so.'

'So anything which is a fine example, whether by its nature or its design, or both, is the most resistant to being changed by an external agency.'

'It looks like it.'

'But god and his attributes are in every way perfect.'

'Of course.'

'So god would be most unlikely to take many shapes as a result of external causes.'

'Most unlikely.'

'Could he, in that case, change and transform himself?'

'Obviously he does,' he said. 'If he changes at all, that is.'

'Does he then turn himself into something better and more beautiful, or into something worse and uglier than himself?'

'If he does change, it must necessarily be into something worse. I don't imagine we are going to say that god is lacking in beauty or goodness.'

'No, you are quite right,' I said. 'And that being so, do you think that anyone, Adeimantus, whether god or man, is prepared to make himself worse in any way at all?'

'No, that's impossible,' he said.

'In which case,' I replied, 'it is also impossible for god to have any desire to change himself. No, each of the gods, it appears, is as beautiful and good as possible, and remains for ever simply in his own form.'

'Yes,' he said, 'I think that must undoubtedly follow.'

'Well, then, my friend, we don't want any of the poets telling us,' I said, 'that

Disguised as strangers from afar, the gods
Take many shapes, and visit many lands.⁴⁰

We don't want any of their falsehoods about Proteus and Thetis,⁴¹ nor do we want tragedies or other poems which introduce Hera, transformed into the guise of a priestess, collecting alms for

⁴⁰ Homer, *Odyssey* 17.485-486.

⁴¹ Both were divinities of the ocean who slipped from the grasp of mortals by changing into a multitude of different creatures.

The life-giving sons of Argive Inachus.⁴²

e And there are many other falsehoods of the same sort which we don't want them telling us – any more than we want mothers to believe them, and terrify their children with wicked stories about gods who go round at night, taking on the appearance of all sorts of outlandish foreigners. That way we can stop them from blaspheming against the gods, and also stop them turning their children into cowards.'

'No, we don't want any of that.'

'Well then,' I suggested, 'though the gods would not themselves change, maybe they nevertheless make it seem to us that they appear in all sorts of different guises? Perhaps they deceive us, and play tricks on us.'

'Possibly.'

382 'What! Would a god be prepared to deceive us, in his words or his actions, by offering us what is only an appearance?'

'I don't know.'

'You don't know,' I said, 'that the true falsehood – if one can call it that – is hated by god and man alike?'

'What do you mean?'

'I mean this. No one deliberately chooses falsehood in what is surely the most important part of himself, and on the most important of subjects. No, that is the place, more than any other, where they fear falsehood.'

b 'I still don't understand,' he said.

'That's because you think I'm talking about something profound,' I said. 'But all I mean is that the thing everyone wants above all to avoid is being deceived in his soul about the way things are, or finding that he has been deceived, and is now in ignorance, that he holds and possesses the falsehood right there in his soul. That is the place where people most hate falsehood.'

'I quite agree,' he said.

c 'As I was saying just now, this ignorance in the soul, the ignorance of the person who has been deceived, can with absolute accuracy be called true falsehood, whereas verbal falsehood is a kind of imitation of this condition of the soul. It comes into being later; it is an image, not a wholly unmixed falsehood. Don't you agree?'

'I do.'

⁴² We do not know why Hera was collecting alms for the sons of Inachus. The line quoted comes from a lost play of Aeschylus.

'The real falsehood is hated not only by gods but also by men.'

1. 'Yes, I think so.'

'What about verbal falsehood? When is it useful, and for whom? When does it not deserve hatred? Isn't it useful against enemies, or to stop those who are supposed to be our friends, if as a result of madness or ignorance they are trying to do something wrong? Isn't a lie useful in those circumstances, in the same way as medicine is useful? And in the myths we were discussing just now, as a result of our not knowing what the truth is concerning events long ago, do we make falsehood as much like the truth as possible, and in this way make it useful?'

'Yes,' he said, 'that is exactly how it is.'

'In which of these ways, then, is falsehood useful to god? Does he make falsehood resemble the truth because he doesn't know about events long ago?'

'No, that would be absurd,' he said.

'So there is nothing of the false poet in god.'

'I don't think so.'

'Is he afraid of his enemies? Would he tell lies for that reason?'

'Far from it.'

'Or because of the ignorance or madness of his friends, perhaps?'

'No,' he said. 'No one who is ignorant and mad is a friend of the gods.'⁴³

'There is no reason, then, for god to tell a falsehood.'

'No, none.'

'So the supernatural and the divine are altogether without falsehood.'

'Absolutely.'

'In that case, god is certainly single in form and true, both in what he does and what he says. He does not change in himself, and he does not deceive others – waking or sleeping – either with apparitions, or with words, or by sending signs.'

383 'That's how it seems to me too,' he said, 'as I listen to what you say.'

'Do you agree then,' I asked, 'that this should be the second pattern for telling stories or writing poems about the gods? They are not magicians who change their shape, either in their words or their actions, and they do not lead us astray with falsehoods.'

'Yes, I agree.'

'So while there is much in Homer we approve of, we shall not approve

⁴³ Adeimantus gives full weight to a term (*theophilēs*) that usually means simply 'favoured by the gods', i.e. 'fortunate'.

- b of Zeus' sending a dream to Agamemnon;⁴⁴ nor of Aeschylus, when Thetis says that Apollo, singing at her wedding, "dwelt upon the children" she would have,

Their length of life, their freedom from disease,
And summing up, sang me a hymn of blessing
For my good luck and favour with the gods.
My hope was high, for Phoebus was a god,
And Phoebus' mouth, brimming with mantic art,
Must speak the truth, I thought. But he who sang,
He who was present at the feast, the one
Who said these things, is now the one who killed
My son.⁴⁵

- c When anyone talks in this way about the gods, we shall get angry with him, and not grant him a chorus.⁴⁶ Nor shall we allow teachers to use his works for the education of the young – not if we want our guardians to become god-fearing and godlike, to the greatest extent possible for a human being.'

'I entirely agree,' he said, 'with these patterns, and I would want to see them made law.'

⁴⁴ *Iliad* 2.1–34: Zeus sends a dream to Agamemnon promising him victory over the Trojans if he leads an immediate assault against them, but his real intention is to bring about a Greek defeat that will salve Achilles' wounded pride.

⁴⁵ The goddess Thetis was the mother of Achilles. Achilles was killed by an arrow from the Trojan Paris, guided by Apollo (also known as Phoebus). We have lost the play of Aeschylus from which these lines come.

⁴⁶ That is, not allow him to stage his play.

Book 3

'When it comes to stories about the gods, then,' I said, 'this is apparently the sort of thing which from their earliest childhood people must be told – and not told – if they are to show respect for the gods and their parents, and put a high value on friendship with one another.'¹

'Yes, I think our views on this are correct,' he said.

'What about courage? If we want them to be brave, aren't these the stories we should be telling them, plus the kind of stories which will minimise their fear of death? Do you think anyone can ever get to be brave if he has this fear inside him?'

'Good heavens, no.'

'How about belief in the underworld and its horrors? Do you think that makes people fearless in the face of death, makes them choose death in preference to defeat or slavery?'

'Of course not.'

'This is another branch of storytelling, then, where it looks as if we must keep an eye on those who want to tell these stories. We shall have to ask them to stop being so negative about the underworld, and find something positive to say about it instead. What they say at the moment is neither true, nor helpful to those we want to become warlike.'

'Yes, we shall have to keep an eye on them,' he said.

'Then we shall eliminate all descriptions of that sort, starting with:

I had rather labour as a common serf,
Serving a man with nothing to his name,
Than be the lord of all the dead below.²

¹ Respect for parents: 378b; friendship with one another: 378c d.

² Homer, *Odyssey* 11.489–491. The ghost of Achilles is speaking to Odysseus in the underworld.

Or:

- d His halls revealed to mortals and immortals,
Grim, dank, abhorrent even to the gods.³

Or:

Alas, there is then, in the house of Hades,
A spirit and a phantom, but no mind
Within it dwells.⁴

Or:

Alone possessed of thought, the rest but shadows.⁵

Or:

Leaving his limbs, his soul to Hades flew,
Its fate lamenting, and lost youth and strength.⁶

387 Or:

Like smoke his soul departed, crying shrill,
Beneath the earth.⁷

Or:

As in dark corners of mysterious caves
The squeaking bats take flight when, from the bunch
That clings together on the rock, one falls –
So, shrilly crying, did these souls depart.⁸

- b We shall ask Homer and the rest of the poets not to be angry with us if we strike out these passages, and any others like them. Not that they lack poetic merit, or that they don't give pleasure to most people. They do. But the more merit they have, the less suitable they are for boys and men who are expected to be free, and fear slavery more than death.'

'Absolutely.'

'So we must also discard all the weird and terrifying language used

³ Homer, *Iliad* 20.64–65. The 'halls' are the realm of Hades, god of the dead.

⁴ *Iliad* 23.103–104. This is Achilles' lament after he has tried and failed to grasp hold of the ghost of his friend Patroclus.

⁵ *Odyssey* 10.495: a description of the soul of the wise prophet Tiresias in the underworld, the single exception to the rule voiced by Achilles in the previous quote.

⁶ *Iliad* 16.856–857: a description of Patroclus slain by Hector.

⁷ *Iliad* 23.100–101: again of Patroclus, as he slips from Achilles' grasp.

⁸ *Odyssey* 24.6–9: a description of the souls of the suitors slain by Odysseus.

about the underworld. No more wailing Cocytus, or hateful Styx,⁹ or food for worms, or mouldering corpses, or any other language of the kind which makes all who hear it shudder. It may be fine in some other context, but when it comes to our guardians, we are worried that this shuddering may make them too soft and impressionable for our needs.'

'We are right to be worried,' he said.

'That sort of language must go, then?'

'Yes.'

'And our storytellers and poets should use language which follows the opposite pattern?'

'Obviously.'

'Then we shall get rid of weeping and wailing by famous men.'

'We shall have to,' he said. 'We can't get rid of the other things, and not that.'

'What you *should* ask yourself, though,' I said, 'is whether or not we shall be right to get rid of them. Our view is that a good man does not regard it as a disaster when death comes to another good man, his friend.'

'Yes, that is our view.'

'So he certainly wouldn't lament on his friend's account, as if something awful had happened to him.'

'No, he wouldn't.'

'But we also say that when it comes to living a good life, a good man is the most capable of meeting his own needs, and has less need of other people than anyone else has.'

'True.'

'So he least of all will regard it as a misfortune to lose a son, or a brother, or some money, or anything like that.'

'Yes.'

'And he least of all will grieve over the loss. He more than anyone can take it in his stride when an accident of this kind happens to him.'

'He can indeed.'

'We shall be right, then, to get rid of the heroes' songs of lamentation, putting them in the mouths of women – and not even the best women, at that – and cowards. We want the people we say we are bringing up to be guardians of our country to be appalled at the idea of behaving like this.'

'Yes, we shall be right,' he said.

⁹ 'Wailing' and 'hateful' are the etymological meanings of these names of underworld rivers.

‘So we have another request to make to Homer and the rest of the poets: not to show us Achilles, the son of a goddess,

First lying on his side, then on his back,
Then on his front,

and then when he gets up,

Drifting, distraught and aimless, on the shore
Of the unharvested sea.¹⁰

- b Nor, as he puts it, “taking the black, burnt dust in both his hands, and pouring it o’er his head”.¹¹ We shall ask him to spare us all the rest of those tears and laments he makes him utter. We shall ask him not to show Priam, close kinsman of the gods, in his entreaties:

Rolling in dung, calling each man by name.¹²

Much more important, we shall ask him not to show the gods lamenting, and saying:

- c Ah! Woe is me,
Unhappy mother of a noble son.¹³

If he must show the gods behaving like this, let him at least not have the nerve to give us such a false picture of the greatest of the gods, when he makes him say:

How dear to me the man my eyes now see
Pursued around the city. My heart grieves.¹⁴

Or:

- d And must Sarpedon, that most dear of men,
Fall to Patroclus, son of Menoetius?¹⁵

¹⁰ *Iliad* 24.10–12: Achilles is unable to sleep for missing the dead Patroclus and remembering their experiences together.

¹¹ *Iliad* 18.23–24: Achilles’ reaction on being brought the news of Patroclus’ death.

¹² *Iliad* 22.414–415. Priam, king of Troy, was seventh in line from Zeus, the king of the gods. Here he implores his people to allow him to go to Achilles to beg back the corpse of his son Hector, slain by Achilles in revenge for Patroclus.

¹³ *Iliad* 18.54: Thetis’ reaction on hearing the grief of her son Achilles at Patroclus’ death, from which comes the quotation at 388b.

¹⁴ *Iliad* 22.168–169: Zeus expresses his sadness on behalf of Hector, about to be slain by Achilles.

¹⁵ *Iliad* 16.433–434: Sarpedon was a mortal son of Zeus, who here grieves that Patroclus is about to slay him.

If our young men take these kinds of things seriously, my dear Adeimantus, if they don't laugh at them as the unworthy offerings of storytellers, then, since they are only human, they are hardly going to think it beneath them to behave like this themselves. They won't be appalled at the very idea of speaking or acting in this way. No, they'll be quite unashamed, making not the slightest effort to put a brave face on it, as they give voice to great songs of grief and lamentation over trivial misfortunes.'

e 'You're absolutely right,' he said.

'But that isn't how they should be behaving, as our reasoning just now showed. And until someone gives us a good reason for believing something different, we must have faith in our reasoning.'

'No, it isn't how they should be behaving.'

'On the other hand, they must not be too fond of laughter either. Abandonment to violent laughter, generally speaking, is a violent agent for change.'

'I agree,' he said.

389 'So we must not accept it if we are shown men of any importance – still less gods – being overcome by laughter.'

'Particularly not the gods.'

'So we won't accept this sort of thing about the gods from Homer:

Unquenchable the laughter that arose
Among the blessed gods. They sat and watched
Hephaestus bustling up and down the hall.¹⁶

We mustn't accept this, according to your reasoning.'

b 'Call it mine, if you like,' he said. 'We certainly mustn't accept it, anyway.'

'Then again, truth is another thing we must value highly. If we were right just now,¹⁷ if lies really are useless to the gods, and useful to men only in the way medicine is useful, then clearly lying is a task to be entrusted to specialists. Ordinary people should have nothing to do with it.'

'Clearly.'

c 'So if anyone is entitled to tell lies, the rulers of the city are. They may do so for the benefit of the city, in response to the actions either of enemies or of citizens. No one else should have anything to do with lying, and for

¹⁶ *Iliad* 1.599–600. Hephaestus, the lame and ugly god, is clowning in the role of wine-pourer, a role typically assigned to the youthful and attractive, in order to amuse and pacify his fellow-gods.

¹⁷ 382c.

an ordinary citizen to lie to these rulers of ours is as big a mistake – bigger, in fact – as telling your doctor or trainer lies about the condition of your body when you are ill or in training, or giving a ship's captain misleading information about the ship and its crew, and how you or your fellow-sailors are getting on.'

'Very true,' he said.

d 'So if a ruler catches anyone else in the city lying – any of those "who work as artisans,"

A prophet, healer of ills, or worker of wood,¹⁸

he will punish him for introducing a practice which is as subversive and destructive in a city as it is in a ship.'

'Yes, if actions are going to be true to words,' he said.

'And then what about self-discipline? Won't our young men need that?'

'Of course they will.'

e 'For the general population, doesn't self-discipline consist principally in being obedient to their masters, and being themselves masters of the pleasures of drink, sex and food?'

'Yes, I think it does.'

'We shall approve, I think, of the kind of thing Diomedes says in Homer:

Be seated, friend, in silence. Hear my advice.¹⁹

And the lines which come next:

The Achaeans now moved forward, breathing fire.
Silent they marched, in awe of their commanders.²⁰

And any other passages like these.'

'Yes, we shall approve of them.'

'What about lines like this?

You wine-dulled dolt,
With spaniel eyes, and courage of a deer.²¹

¹⁸ *Odyssey* 17.383–384. The sentence concludes: 'or an inspired poet, who pleases with his song'.

¹⁹ *Iliad* 4.412: the hero Diomedes rebukes his companion Sthenelus.

²⁰ In fact these two lines neither follow the previous quotation nor each other, but are from different descriptions contrasting the silence of the Greek advance with the racket made by the Trojans (*Iliad* 3.8 and 4.431).

²¹ *Iliad* 1.225: Achilles is insulting Agamemnon, commander-in-chief of the Greek army.

100 And the speech which follows? Shall we approve of them, and any other piece of insolence, in the works of the storytellers or the poets, addressed by an ordinary citizen to his rulers?’

‘No, we shan’t.’

‘No. If we want the young to develop self-discipline, I don’t think these are the right things for them to hear – though it’s no surprise if they are entertaining in other ways. Do you agree?’

‘Yes,’ he said.

‘How about making a very wise man say he thinks the finest of all sights is this:

b With bread and meat the tables laden full,
And pourers drawing wine from mixing-bowls
To fill the waiting cups.²²

Do you think hearing that is going to help a young man be master of himself? Or this?

Nothing so wretched as to meet one’s fate
Dying of hunger.²³

c And what about showing Zeus remaining awake all alone while the other gods and mankind sleep, but then happily forgetting all his plans in his desire for sex, and being so carried away with the sight of Hera that he refuses to go inside, and wants to make love right there on the ground? He is gripped, he says, by desire greater even than when they first slept with one another, deceiving their dear parents.²⁴ Nor do we want to show the binding of Ares and Aphrodite by Hephaestus for the same kind of behaviour.²⁵

‘No, I certainly don’t think that is the right sort of thing to show,’ he said.

²² *Odyssey* 9.8–10: a selective quotation of the proverbially clever Odysseus’ actual remark after hearing the bard Demodocus sing, which is rather that no situation is more delightful than when banqueters sit listening happily to a singer, among laden tables.

²³ *Odyssey* 12.342. The speaker is one of Odysseus’ shipwrecked crew, Eurylochus, urging his fellows to eat the sacred cattle of the Sun god. Odysseus has just commanded them to resist their hunger.

²⁴ The episode is narrated in *Iliad* 14.292–353. Hera, consort of Zeus, protests at the shameless behaviour; but she has in fact planned the seduction all along.

²⁵ *Odyssey* 8.266–366. Hephaestus punishes his consort Aphrodite and her lover Ares by trapping them under an invisible mesh while they are in bed together, then calling on the other gods to witness their embarrassment.

'On the other hand,' I said, 'if there are any examples, in the speeches or actions of distinguished men, of endurance in the face of everything then these are models for them to observe and listen to. For example:

He smote his chest, and thus rebuked his heart.

Bear up, my heart. You have borne yet worse than this.²⁶

'Yes, those are unquestionably the right models,' he said.

'Then again, we must not allow our citizens to be corrupt or avaricious.'

'No.'

e 'We won't let them hear this recited, then:

With gifts can gods, with gifts can noble kings
Be swayed.²⁷

We shall not praise Achilles' tutor Phoenix for giving sound advice to him, to come to the defence of the Achaeans if he was rewarded with gifts, but not lay aside his anger if there were no gifts.²⁸ Nor shall we think it right
391 – in fact, we shall not believe it – for Achilles himself to be so avaricious, taking gifts from Agamemnon, or on another occasion refusing to release Hector's body for burial except in return for payment.²⁹

'No,' he said, 'it would be quite wrong to praise this kind of behaviour.'

'It's only my high opinion of Homer,' I said, 'which stops me calling it impious to talk like this, or give ear to people when they talk like this, about Achilles. Or to suggest that he said to Apollo:

Thou most destructive out of all the gods,
Archer Apollo, thou hast injured me.
I'd swiftly take revenge, had I the power.³⁰

b Or that he refused to obey the river-god, and offered to fight him.³¹ Or that he wanted to offer Patroclus, after his death, the locks of his hair which were sacred to the other river, Spercheius:

²⁶ *Odyssey* 20.17–18. Odysseus, hearing his maidservants flirting with the suitors the night before he is to take his vengeance on them all, banishes thoughts of immediate slaughter.

²⁷ The quotation may be from Hesiod. The sentiment is cited as proverbial in Euripides, *Medea* 964.

²⁸ *Iliad* 9.515–523. The gifts are from king Agamemnon, with whom Achilles has his quarrel.

²⁹ *Iliad* 24.501–2, 552–562, 592–595.

³⁰ *Iliad* 22.15, 20. Apollo has tricked Achilles into allowing the Trojans to slip back inside their city walls.

³¹ Achilles challenges the river-god Scamander in *Iliad* 21.222 ff.

Now let me give Patroclus, noble hero,
This lock of hair, to take with him.³²

We should not believe Achilles did this. As for his dragging Hector round the tomb of Patroclus, and slaughtering live prisoners on his funeral pyre,³³ we shall not admit that any of these are true stories. Achilles was the son of a goddess and of Peleus – a most sensible man and a grandson of Zeus – and he was brought up by the wise Cheiron. We're not going to leave our people believing that he was so utterly disturbed as to possess two completely contradictory faults – an avaricious meanness of spirit, and great arrogance towards gods and men.'

'You are right,' he said.

'In which case,' I said, 'let us not believe either – and let us not allow people to say – that Theseus the son of Poseidon and Peirithous the son of Zeus set off to carry out those disgraceful abductions, or that any other hero and child of a god could bring himself to do terrible godless deeds of the kind which nowadays are falsely attributed to them.'³⁴ Let us require poets to say either that these were not their actions or that they were not the children of gods. They must not say both, and they must not try to persuade our young men that gods can father evil deeds, or that heroes are no better than men. As we said earlier, these beliefs are both impious and untrue. We proved, didn't we, that it is impossible for evil to come into being from the gods?'³⁵

'We did.'

'What is more, these beliefs are damaging to those who hear them. Anyone will forgive himself for doing wrong if he believes that this sort of thing was and is typical even of:

The gods' close kin, those near to Zeus, who have
An altar sacred to ancestral Zeus
On Ida's mountain, high among the clouds,
And in their veins the blood of demigods
Has not run dry.³⁶

³² *Iliad* 23.151. Since he is now doomed to die at Troy, Achilles releases himself from the vow made by his father to reserve the lock for a sacrifice to Spercheius, the river of Achilles' homeland, upon his return.

³³ Dragging Hector: *Iliad* 24.14–21; slaughtering the prisoners: *Iliad* 23.175–176.

³⁴ In collusion with his cousin Peirithous, Theseus, king of Athens, abducted Helen from Sparta to be his bride, thus provoking a war with Sparta. The pair then attempted to abduct the goddess Persephone from the underworld to be bride to Peirithous. ³⁵ 379a–380c.

³⁶ A fragment of Aeschylus' lost play *Niobe*. Niobe is speaking of her divine ancestry. Her father Tantalus was son of Zeus.

That's why we must put a stop to stories of this kind, before they produce a totally casual attitude in our young men toward wickedness.'

392 'Yes, we must,' he said.

'Well, then,' I asked, 'in our definition of the kind of stories which may and may not be told, what class of stories is left? We have dealt with stories about the gods, and about demigods, heroes and the dead.'

'We have.'

'The final class, then, would be stories about mankind.'

'Clearly.'

'And we are not in a position to lay down rules for that just at the moment, my friend.'

'Why not?'

'Because we shall say, I imagine, that writers of poetry and prose both
b make very serious errors about mankind. They say that lots of people are unjust but happy, or just but miserable, and that injustice pays if you can get away with it, whereas justice is what is good for someone else, but damaging to yourself. We shall stop them saying things like this, and tell them to say just the opposite in their poems and stories. Don't you think so?'

'I'm quite sure we shall,' he said.

'But if you admit I'm right about that, can't I claim that you have admitted what we have been trying to prove all along?'

'Yes,' he said, 'I see how the argument would go.'

c 'So we can't reach an agreement about mankind, and the kind of stories which should be told, until after we have discovered what sort of thing justice is, and shown that its nature is to be profitable for the person who possesses it, whether or not people *think* he is just.'

'Very true.'

'Let that be enough on the stories. The telling of them, I suggest, is the next thing for us to think about. Then we shall have completely covered both what should be told and how it should be told.'

'I don't understand,' said Adeimantus at this point. 'What do you mean?'

d 'It's important that you do understand, though,' I said. 'Here's a way of looking at it which may give you a better idea. Aren't all stories told by storytellers and poets really a narrative – of what has happened in the past, of what is happening now, or of what is going to happen in the future?'

'Well, obviously.'

'Don't they achieve their purpose either by simple narrative, or by narrative expressed through imitation, or by a combination of the two?'

'There again, I'm afraid, I still need a clearer explanation.'

'As a teacher,' I said, 'I seem to have a laughable inability to make my meaning clear. I'd better do what people who are no good at speaking do – avoid generalisations, take a particular example, and try to use that to show you what I mean. You know the beginning of the *Iliad*, where the poet says that Chryses asks Agamemnon to let his daughter go, and Agamemnon loses his temper, and then Chryses, when his request is turned down, utters a prayer to Apollo against the Achaeans?'

'Yes. I do.'

'In that case, you must be aware that down as far as the lines

He implored the Achaean lords, but most of all
Atreus' two sons, the marshals of the host,³⁷

the poet speaks in person. He does not attempt to direct our imagination towards anyone else, or suggest that someone other than himself is speaking. But in the lines which follow he talks as if he himself *is* Chryses, and does everything he can to make us imagine it is not Homer speaking, but the priest. He talks like an old man. The whole of the rest of his narrative is constructed along more or less the same lines – not only events at Troy, but also events in Ithaca, and the whole of the *Odyssey*.'

'Exactly,' he said.

'But it's all narrative – both the individual speeches he delivers and the bits he says in between the speeches?'

'Yes, of course.'

'And when he makes a speech in the character of someone else, can we say that he always makes his own style as close as possible to that of the person he tells us is speaking?'

'No question of it.'

'But making yourself resemble someone else – either in the way you speak or in the way you look – isn't that imitating the person you make yourself resemble?'

'Of course it is.'

'In passages like this, apparently, Homer and the rest of the poets use imitation to construct their narrative.'

'Yes.'

'If there were no passages where the poet concealed his own person,

³⁷ *Iliad* 1.15–16. The passage Socrates is discussing runs from line 8 to line 42. Chryses, a priest of Apollo, comes to ransom his daughter. She has been captured in a raid by the Greeks (Achaeans) and is in the possession of the supreme commander Agamemnon, son of Atreus.

d then his whole work, his whole narrative, would have been created without using imitation. To save you telling me again that you don't understand how this can be, I will explain. Imagine Homer told us that Chryses came, bringing his daughter's ransom, as a suppliant to the Achaeans, and in particular to their kings, but then went on to tell the story not in the person of Chryses, but still as Homer. You realise that would be simple narrative, not imitation. The story would go something
 e like this. I'm no poet, so I won't tell it in verse: "The priest came and prayed that the gods might grant to the Achaeans that they should capture Troy, and return home safely, but he asked them to release his daughter in return for the ransom, and out of reverence for the god. When he had finished, the rest of the Achaeans showed him respect, and would have agreed to his request, but Agamemnon lost his temper, telling him to depart immediately, and not come back again; otherwise his priest's staff and the god's garlands would be no protection to him. The priest's
 394 daughter would be an old woman living in Argos with him before there was any question of releasing her. He told the priest to go away and stop bothering him, if he wanted to get home safely. The old man was alarmed by Agamemnon's threats, and went away in silence. But after he had left the camp he addressed many prayers to Apollo, calling on the cult-names of the god, reminding him of past favours, and asking his help in return if he had ever, in the building of temples or the sacrifice of victims, given the god a gift which had been a source of pleasure to him. In return for these favours, he prayed that Apollo's arrows might make the Achaeans
 b pay for his tears." That, my friend, is the simple narrative, without imitation.'

'I see,' he said.

'In that case,' I said, 'you can also see that you get just the opposite if you omit what the poet says between the speeches, and leave the dialogue.'

'Yes, I can see that too,' he said. 'That's the kind of thing you get in tragedy.'

'Exactly,' I said. 'Now I think I can make clear to you what I couldn't make clear before, that one type of poetry and storytelling is purely
 c imitative – this is tragedy and comedy, as you say. In another type, the poet tells his own story. I imagine you'd find this mainly in dithyramb. The third type, using both imitation and narrative, can be found in epic poetry, and in many other places as well.³⁸ Are you following me?'

³⁸ Tragedy and comedy were in Socrates' and Plato's day the pre-eminent forms of literature. The dithyramb was a type of choral lyric, originally connected with the cult

'Yes. I see now what you were getting at.'

'Now, let me remind you what we have just been saying. We said we had decided *what* stories should be told, but still had to look into the question *how* they should be told.'

'Yes, I remember that.'

'So the thing I was really trying to say we should make up our minds about was this. Shall we permit poets to use imitation in their works? Or partly imitation and partly narrative? In which case, when should they use one, and when the other? Or should they not use imitation at all?'

'Let me make a prediction,' he said. 'You're going to ask whether or not we should allow tragedy and comedy into our city.'

'Possibly,' I said. 'Possibly more than that, even. I don't know yet. But we have set sail, and must go where the wind, or the argument, blows us.'

'You are right,' he said.

'Here's a question for you, then, Adeimantus. Do we want our guardians to be given to imitation, or not? Or does the same principle apply here as applied earlier?³⁹ The principle was that each individual can only do one thing well. He can't do lots of things. If he tries, he will be jack of all trades, and master of none.'

'Yes, it does apply. Why shouldn't it?'

'Does it apply to imitation as well? Is the same person incapable of imitating many things as well as he can imitate one?'

'Of course.'

'So he's unlikely both to follow one of the worthwhile occupations and also to be a versatile imitator, and given to imitation. After all, the same people aren't even able to be successful in two apparently quite similar forms of imitation such as comedy and tragedy. You did classify both of those, just now, as types of imitation?'

'I did. And you're right. The same people can't be good at both.'

'Nor as reciters and actors either.'⁴⁰

'True.'

'The same people can't even be actors in comedy as well as tragedy. These are all examples of imitation, aren't they?'

'Yes, they are.'

of Dionysus. The 'other places' in which both imitation and narrative are found would include the victory odes of Pindar and much other lyric poetry.

³⁹ 369e-370c, 374a-d.

⁴⁰ 'Reciters' (or 'rhapsodes') specialised in the performance of epic poetry, that of Homer above all. They did not act in drama.

'What's more, Adeimantus, I think man's nature is a currency minted into even smaller denominations than these. This means he can't be good at imitating many different things, nor good at doing the many real things of which the imitations are copies.'

'Very true,' he said.

'So if we stick to our original plan, which was that our guardians should be released from all other occupations, and be the true architects of freedom for our city, and that everything they do must contribute to this end, it is essential that they do not do or imitate anything else. If they do imitate anything, then from their earliest childhood they should choose appropriate models to imitate – people who are brave, self-disciplined, god-fearing, free, that sort of thing. They should neither do, nor be good at imitating, what is illiberal, nor any other kind of shameful behaviour, in case enjoyment of the imitation gives rise to enjoyment of the reality. Have you never noticed how imitation, if long continued from an early age, becomes part of a person's nature, turns into habits of body, speech and mind?'

'I certainly have,' he said.

'So imitating a woman, young or old, maybe abusing her husband, or competing with the gods and boasting about her good fortune, or in the grip of disaster, or grief, or mourning, will not be a legitimate activity for the people we say we are interested in – the ones we wanted to grow up into the right sort of men. They are, after all, men. And still less do we want them imitating a woman who is ill, or in love, or in childbirth.'

'Absolutely not,' he said.

'Nor should they imitate female or male slaves behaving in the way slaves behave.'

'No. Not that either.'

'Nor the wrong sort of men, presumably: cowards, and those whose behaviour is the opposite of what we said just now they *should* imitate – men who insult or ridicule one another, or use bad language, drunk or for that matter sober, and all the other faults which people of this sort are guilty of in their language and behaviour towards themselves and others. Nor, in my opinion, should they get in the habit of modelling themselves, in their language or behaviour, on people who are mad. They must recognise madness and wickedness in men and women, but none of this is behaviour for them to adopt or imitate.'

'Very true,' he said.

'What about people working in bronze?' I asked. 'Or practising some

...er art or skill? Or rowing triremes, or calling the time to the rowers,⁴¹ or any other activity of this type? Should our guardians imitate them?’

‘How can they,’ he said, ‘if they are not even allowed to be interested in any of them?’

‘What about horses neighing and bulls bellowing? Will they imitate those? Or the sound of rivers, or the sea breaking on the shore, or thunder, or anything of that sort?’

‘No. They are forbidden either to be mad or to behave like those who are mad.’

‘If I understand you rightly, then,’ I said, ‘there is a form of speech and of narrative which is the one the right sort of man would employ when he needed to say something, and then again a second form of speech, quite unlike the first, which would appeal to a man with the opposite kind of nature and upbringing, and which he would employ.’

‘What are these forms of speech?’

‘I think the decent man, when he comes in his narrative to some saying or action of a good man, will be prepared to report it as if he himself really were the person concerned. He will not be ashamed of an imitation of this sort. He will imitate the good man most when he acts in a responsible and wise manner, and will imitate him less, and less fully, when the good man is led astray by disease or passion, or by drunkenness or misfortune of some kind. When he comes to someone who is unworthy of him, I think he’ll refuse to make any serious attempt to resemble one who is his inferior – except perhaps briefly, when the character is doing something good – both because he has had no training in imitating people like this, and because he resents shaping and modelling himself on the pattern of his inferiors. Inwardly he treats behaviour of this sort as beneath him – unless of course it’s in jest.’

‘Very likely,’ he said.

‘So he’ll use the kind of narrative we described a few moments ago, when we were talking about Homer’s epics. The way he tells stories will combine both styles, imitation and the other kind of narrative, but with only a small amount of imitation even in a long story. Or have I got it wrong?’

‘No,’ he said, ‘this is bound to be the style of a speaker of this sort.’

⁴¹ These military tasks were performed by the poorest class of Athenian society.

397 'Now, as for the speaker who is not of this sort, the worse he is, the more prepared he will be to use imitation all the time.⁴² There is nothing he will regard as beneath him, and so he will take it upon himself, in all seriousness, and at public performances, to imitate all the things we were talking about just now – thunder, the din of wind and hail, of wheels and pulleys, b the sound of trumpet, pipe, panpipe, and every musical instrument, even the noise of dogs, or sheep, or birds. Will the way this man tells stories consist entirely of imitation, in word and gesture, with maybe a small element of narrative?'

'Again, it's bound to.'

'There you are, then,' I said. 'That's what I meant when I said there were two styles of storytelling.'

'I accept that,' he said. 'There *are* two.'

'Of these two styles the first involves only slight variations. If he uses a musical mode and rhythm which are right for his style, it is pretty well possible for the person who tells stories in the right way – since the variations in his style are very slight – to achieve musical consistency, using a c single mode and of course a similarly appropriate rhythm.'

'That is certainly true.'

'What about the style of the other storyteller? Because of the enormous range of variations it contains, won't it need just the opposite treatment – all the musical modes, and every kind of rhythm – if it too is to be told in a way appropriate to it?'

'Undoubtedly.'

'Do all poets, then, and storytellers of all kinds, hit upon one or other of these styles, or some combination of the two?'

'They must,' he said.

d 'In that case,' I asked, 'what shall our policy be? Shall we allow them all into our city? Or one or other of the pure styles? Or the mixed style?'

'If my view prevails,' he said, 'we shall allow only the pure imitator of the good man.'

'And yet the mixed style is enjoyable as well, Adeimantus. In fact, the one which is the exact opposite of the one you are selecting is by far the most enjoyable, in the opinion of children and their attendants, and of the population at large.'

'Yes, it is the most enjoyable.'

'Possibly, however, you would say that this style is not in tune with our

⁴² An alternative version of Plato's text yields the translation: 'the more prepared he will be to narrate anything and everything'.

regime. Our men do not have a dual or manifold nature, since each of them performs only one task.'

'No, it is not in tune.'

'Is this the reason, then, why ours is the only city in which we shall find a shoemaker who is only a shoemaker, and not a ship's captain as well as a shoemaker, a farmer who is only a farmer, and not a juryman as well as a farmer, a soldier who is only a soldier, and not a businessman as well as a soldier, and the others the same?'

'Yes,' he said.

'Suppose, then, there were a man so wondrous wise as to be utterly versatile, able to imitate anything. If he came to our city wanting to perform his poems in person, it looks as if we would fall down before him, tell him he was sacred, exceptional and delightful, but then explain to him that we do not have men like him in our city, that it is not right for them to be there. We would pour myrrh over his head, garland him with woollen garlands, and send him on his way to some other city.⁴³ For our own good, we would content ourselves with a simpler, if less enjoyable, poet and storyteller, who can imitate the decent man's way of speaking, and model his stories on those patterns which we laid down at the beginning of our attempt to provide an education for our soldiers.'

'Yes, that is certainly what we should do, if it were up to us.'

'Well, my friend,' I said, 'on the poetic and musical side of our education it looks as if we have dealt pretty fully with the section on stories and myths. We have laid down both what stories are to be told and how they are to be told.'

'Yes, I agree,' he said. 'I think we have dealt with that.'

'Well then, does that leave the question of styles of songs and music?'

'Obviously it does.'

'Presumably anyone could now work out the kind of character we need to prescribe for those, to be in harmony with what has been laid down already.'

Glaucon laughed. 'It looks, in that case, Socrates, as if I'm not "anyone." I'm not sure I'd trust myself to make a guess, on the spur of the moment, about the sort of thing we ought to prescribe. Though I have a pretty good idea.'

⁴³ Lavish treatment with myrrh and garlands was given to statues of a deity. But these statues were not then expelled from the city; this suggests rather the expulsion of a sacred scapegoat in order to remove impurities from the community, as in the annual festival of the Thargelia.

'What you certainly can say with some confidence, I imagine, is that music is essentially composed of three elements: words, harmonic mode⁴⁴ and rhythm.'

'Yes, I can say that,' he said.

'As far as the words go, then, they are no different from words which are not set to music. Shouldn't they conform to the same patterns we laid down just now, and be in the same style?'

'Yes, they should.'

'What is more, the mode and rhythm must follow from the words.'⁴⁵

'Of course.'

'And mourning and lamentation were things we said we could do without in our stories.'

'They were.'

'Which then are the mourning modes? You're musical. You tell me.'

'The Mixolydian,' he said. 'The Syntonolydian. That sort of thing.'

'Should these be banned, then?' I asked. 'After all, they are no use even to women – if we want them to be good women – let alone to men.'⁴⁶

'They certainly should.'

'Drunkenness is also something quite unsuitable for our guardians. And so are luxury and laziness.'

'Of course they are.'

'Which of the modes, then, are appropriate to luxury and parties?'

'There are some Ionian modes,' he said, 'and again Lydian, which are called relaxed.'

399 'Will these be any use to men of a warlike disposition?'

'No,' he said. 'So it looks as if that leaves you with the Dorian and Phrygian.'

'I don't know about modes,' I said. 'Leave me the mode which can most fittingly imitate the voice and accents of a brave man in time of war, or in any externally imposed crisis. When things go wrong, and he faces death

⁴⁴ The several harmonic modes (*harmoniai*) of Greek music are literally 'attunements'. The chief component of each mode was a fixed series of tonal intervals, but other matters beyond the bare notes of the scale seem also to have been specified, such as the relative frequency of the notes to be used, and the tessitura (the degree of high or low singing required). Thus the choice of mode could determine the style of the musical piece, and from early times differences in mode went with differences in poetic genre, occasion and mood. For further details consult M. L. West, *Ancient Greek Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

⁴⁵ A conventional but conservative opinion, which came under increased pressure during the fourth century from the rise of virtuoso instrumental playing.

⁴⁶ Ritualised keening at funerals was the province of women rather than men.

wounds, or encounters some other danger, in all these situations he holds out to the end in a disciplined and steadfast manner. Plus another mode for someone engaged in some peaceful, voluntary, freely chosen activity. He might be trying to persuade someone of something, making a request – praying to a god, or giving instructions or advice to a man. Just the opposite. He might be listening patiently to someone else making a request, or explaining something to him, or trying to get him to change his mind, and on that basis acting as he thinks best – without arrogance, acting prudently and calmly in all these situations, and being content with the outcome. These two modes, then. One for adversity and one for freely chosen activity, the modes which will best imitate the voices of the prudent and of the brave in failure and success. Leave me those.’

‘I leave you, in other words, with precisely the two I suggested just now,’ he said.⁴⁷

‘That means we shan’t want an enormous range of strings, and every possible mode, in our songs and melodies.’

‘No, I think not,’ he said.

‘In which case we shan’t produce any makers of those triangular harps, rectangular harps, or all those many-stringed instruments which can play many modes.’⁴⁸

‘Apparently not.’

‘What about the makers and players of reed instruments? Will you allow them into your city? Isn’t playing a reed instrument more “many-stringed” than anything else? And aren’t the instruments which can play many modes in fact just imitations of the reed-pipe?’

‘Yes, obviously they are.’

‘That leaves you the lyre and the cithara,’ I said.⁴⁹ ‘They’ll be right for the city. In the countryside, by contrast, there could be some sort of reed-pipe for our herdsmen.’

The classification of the Dorian mode as dignified and manly was long established, but the standard association of the Phrygian was rather with the freedom shown in excitement, as in ecstatic religious ritual.

Harps were of Lydian origin and retained associations of foreignness.

The reed-pipe (*aulos*) was nothing like a flute (the traditional translation of the word) but more like an oboe or clarinet. It had a strong and uncompromising tone, and was the favoured instrument of the wilder sorts of religious ritual. Many notes could be produced from manipulation of a single hole, whereas each string of a lyre produced only a single note. The lyre and the cithara were the fundamental stringed instruments. Their principal service was that of duplicating the sung melody. The reed-pipe, by contrast, lent itself to solos.

e 'Well, that's certainly the way our reasoning points,' he said.

'There's nothing very radical,' I said, 'in our preferring Apollo and Apollo's instruments to Marsyas and his instruments.'

'Good heavens, no,' he said. 'I'm sure there isn't.'

'Ye dogs!' I said.⁵⁰ 'Without meaning to, we have purged the city we said was too luxurious.'

'That was sensible of us,' he said.

'Come on, then,' I said. 'Let's purge the rest of it. Our next concern after mode will be rhythm. We should not pursue complexity, nor do we
400 want all kinds of metres. We should see what are the rhythms of a self-disciplined and courageous life, and after looking at those, make the metre and melody conform to the speech of someone like that. We won't make speech conform to rhythm and melody. Which these rhythms are is for you to say, as it was with the modes.'

'I really don't know what to say about that,' he said. 'In my experience, there are three types of rhythm from which metres are woven together, just as when it comes to tones, there are four elements from which all the modes are derived. But I have no idea which types imitate which lives.'

b 'That's something we can ask Damon about,' I said. 'He can tell us which metres are appropriate to meanness of spirit, arrogance, madness and other faults of character, and which rhythms should be left for those whose character is the opposite. I seem to remember, though I can't be sure, hearing him use terms like "composite enoplion"; then there were "dactyls," and "heroic metre," which he arranged, somehow or other, so that upbeat and downbeat were made equal as it turns into short or long
c at the end. Then there was the "iambic," I seem to remember, and another he called "trochaic," with their long and short syllables. For some of them, I think he condemned or approved the pulse of the metrical feet as much as the rhythms themselves.⁵¹ Or possibly it was the two together, I can't be sure. All these questions, as I say, can be referred to Damon. It

⁵⁰ It is characteristic of Socrates to swear 'by the dog' – a euphemistic oath, comparable to our substitution of 'gosh!' for 'God!'

⁵¹ Greek metre was based on length of syllable rather than stress-accent. One long syllable was the equal of two short. The three types of rhythm fundamental to poetic metre correspond to different proportions between the divisions (upbeat and downbeat) of the metrical foot: 2:2 or equal as in dactyl (—), spondee (—) and anapaest (—); 2:1 or double as in iamb (—) and trochee (—); 3:2 as in cretic (—). The enoplion (or 'martial') was a rhythm used for processional and marching songs; heroic metre is the dactylic hexameter of Homeric epic, in which dactyl and spondee can be substituted for each other.

would take us a long time to decide them. Or do you think we should try?’

‘God forbid.’

‘But that gracefulness and want of grace can follow on from what is rhythmical and unrhythmical, that is something you *can* decide.’

‘Of course.’

‘But then if rhythm and mode follow language, as we said just now, and not the other way round, what is rhythmical must follow and imitate fine language, while what is not rhythmical follows the opposite. The same with harmony and discord.’

‘Yes, rhythm and mode certainly should follow language,’ he said.

‘What about manner of speaking,’ I asked, ‘and what is actually said? Don’t they follow from the nature of the speaker’s soul?’

‘Of course.’

‘And the other things follow from manner of speaking?’

‘Yes.’

‘In that case, all these things – the right way of speaking, the right attunement, grace and rhythm – follow from a good nature. I don’t mean the good nature which is the polite name we give to stupidity,⁵² but the true intelligence which consists in a character which is rightly and properly constituted.’

‘Exactly,’ he said.

‘So if the young are to perform their proper function, aren’t these the qualities they should be everywhere aiming at?’

‘They are.’

‘Painting is full of these qualities, I imagine, as is any skill of the same sort. So are weaving, embroidery, building – the manufacture of any household object, in fact – even the condition of our bodies and of all things that grow. All these contain gracefulness and want of grace. Want of grace or rhythm, and wrong attunement, are close relatives of wrong speech and a wrong nature, while their opposites are close relatives and imitations of the opposite, the self-disciplined and good nature.’

‘Precisely,’ he said.

‘Is it only the poets we have to keep an eye on, then, compelling them to put the likeness of the good nature into their poems, or else go and write poems somewhere else? Don’t we have to keep an eye on the other craftsmen as well, and stop them putting what has the wrong nature, what is undisciplined, slavish or wanting in grace, into their representations of

⁵² *Eu-ētheia*, ‘good nature’, more usually meant ‘simplicity’ in the disparaging sense.

- living things, or into buildings, or into any manufactured object? Anyone who finds this impossible is not to be allowed to be a craftsman in our city.
- c That way our guardians will not be brought up among images of what is bad, like animals put out to graze on bad pasture. We don't want them browsing and feeding each day – taking in a little here and a little there – and without realising it accumulating a single large evil in their souls. No, we must seek out the craftsmen with a gift for tracking down the nature of what is fine, what has grace, so that our young can live in a healthy environment, drawing improvement from every side, whenever things which are beautifully fashioned expose their eyes or ears to some whole-
- d some breeze from healthy regions and lead them imperceptibly, from earliest childhood, into affinity, friendship and harmony with beauty of speech and thought.'

'Yes, that would be by far the best way for them to be brought up,' he said.

- 'Aren't there two reasons, Glaucon, why musical and poetic education is so important? Firstly because rhythm and mode penetrate more deeply into the inner soul than anything else does; they have the most powerful
- e effect on it, since they bring gracefulness with them. They make a person graceful, if he is rightly brought up, and the opposite, if he is not. And secondly because anyone with the right kind of education in this area will have the clearest perception of things which are unsatisfactory – things which are badly made or naturally defective. Being quite rightly disgusted by them, he will praise what is beautiful and fine. Delighting in it, and
- 402 receiving it into his soul, he will feed on it and so become noble and good. What is ugly he will rightly condemn and hate, even before he is old enough for rational thought. And when rationality does make its appearance, won't the person who has been brought up in this way recognise it because of its familiarity, and be particularly delighted with it?'

'Yes,' he said. 'If you ask me, that certainly is the point of a musical and poetic education.'

- 'It's just like learning to read,' I said. 'We could do it as soon as we realised that there are only a few letters, and that they keep recurring in all the words which contain them. We never dismissed them as unworthy of our attention, either in short words or in long, but were keen to
- b recognise them everywhere, in the belief that we would not be able to read until we could do this.'

'True.'

'Well, then. We shan't recognise copies of the letters – supposing

reflections of them were to appear in water, or in a mirror – until we can recognise the letters themselves. Don't both involve the same skill and expertise?'

'Of course they do.'

'And isn't it, as I say, exactly the same with musical and poetic education? There's not the remotest chance of becoming properly educated – either for ourselves or for the people we say we must educate to be our guardians – until we recognise the sort of thing self-discipline is. Likewise courage, liberality and generosity of spirit, which keep recurring all over the place, plus all the qualities which are closely related to them, and their opposites. We must see the presence both of them and of their likenesses in all the things they are present in, and we must learn never to dismiss them, be the context trivial or important, but to regard them as part of the same skill and expertise.'

'Yes,' he said, 'it is absolutely essential that we learn this.'

'So if someone is lucky enough to possess a soul containing a good character, and a physical form which matches and harmonises with that character, which is modelled on the same pattern, wouldn't that be the fairest of sights for anyone with eyes to see it?'

'Very much so.'

'But what is fairest is most desirable.'

'Naturally.'

'So the well educated man will fall in love with people as much like this as possible. But he will not fall in love with someone whose soul and body are out of tune.'

'Not if the defect is in the soul,' he said. 'If it is in the body, he might put up with it, and be prepared to love him.'

'Ah, yes, of course,' I said. 'Am I right in thinking you are – or were – the lover of a boy like this? Anyway, be that as it may, I think you're right. Now, the next question. Does too much pleasure have anything to do with self-discipline?'

'How could it? Too much pleasure makes you as irrational as pain does.'

'Does it have anything to do with any other good quality?'

'No.'

'How about arrogance and indiscipline? Does it have anything to do with those?'

'Yes, everything.'

'Can you think of any pleasure greater or keener than sexual pleasure?'

'No,' he said. 'Nor a more insane pleasure, either.'

'Whereas the right sort of love is by its nature the self-controlled and harmonious love of what is self-disciplined and beautiful?'

'Precisely,' he said.

'So we must not offer the right sort of lover what is insane, or what is related to lack of discipline?'

'No, we mustn't.'

b 'In which case we mustn't offer him sexual pleasure, must we? Neither lover nor boy must have anything to do with it, if they are loving and being loved in the right way.'

'Good heavens, no, Socrates. We certainly mustn't offer them that.'

'You will pass a law to that effect, presumably, in this city you are founding. A lover can kiss his boy friend, spend time with him and touch him, as he would a son – for beauty's sake, and if the boy says "yes." Apart
c from that, his relationship with the boy he is interested in should never allow anyone to imagine he has gone any further than that. Otherwise he will be condemned as uneducated, and blind to beauty.'

'Yes, I shall pass a law to that effect,' he said.

'Well, then, do you think our discussion of musical and poetic education has come to an end?' I asked. 'It has certainly ended where it ought to end. Music and poetry ought, I take it, to end in love of beauty.'

'I agree,' he said.

'And after musical and poetic education, our young men must be given a physical education.'

'Naturally.'

d 'Here, too, from their earliest childhood and throughout their lives, they must be brought up very carefully. The situation is something like this, I believe, but see what you think. It's my opinion that if the body is in good shape, it does not by its own excellence make the soul good. On the other hand, a good soul *can* by its own excellence make a body as good as it is capable of being. What is your opinion?'

'I agree with you,' he said.

'Let's assume we have made adequate provision for the mind. If we
e were now to entrust it with making detailed prescriptions for the body, contenting ourselves for brevity's sake with providing general guidelines, would we be going about things in the right way?'

'We would.'

'Well, drunkenness was one thing we said they should avoid. A guard

the last person who can be allowed to get drunk, and not know where
 earth he is.'

'Yes,' he said, 'it's absurd for a guardian to need a guardian.'

'What about their food? After all, these men are competing for us,
 aren't they, in the most important of all competitions?'

'Yes.'

'In that case, would the diet of present-day athletes be the right thing
 for them?'

'It might well be.'

'It's a pretty soporific diet,' I said, 'and unreliable from a health point
 of view. Haven't you noticed that these athletes spend most of their lives
 asleep, and that if they depart even slightly from their prescribed regime,
 they contract serious and acute diseases?'

'Yes, I have noticed that.'

'We need something a bit less crude as a regimen for our warrior-
 athletes. It's vital that they should be alert, like hounds, as keen of sight and
 hearing as possible, and capable, when they are on active service, of toler-
 ating a variety of drink and food, extremes of heat, storms, without any
 adverse effect on their health.'

'Yes, I think I agree.'

'Well, then, won't the best physical education be sister, in a way, to the
 musical and poetic education we have just outlined?'

'How do you mean?'

'It will be physical education, I take it, of a simple and judicious type
 – especially since it is intended for those who are soldiers.'

'Simple and judicious in what way?'

'This is the sort of thing you could learn from Homer, actually. In the
 heroes' feasts when they are on campaign, you remember, he does not
 feast them on fish – despite the fact that they are on the Hellespont, right
 by the sea – nor on stewed meat, but only on roast, which is what soldiers
 would find easiest to cope with. Wherever you are, more or less, it is easier
 just to use fire than to carry pots and pans around with you.'

'It certainly is.'

'As for seasonings, Homer never, as far as I remember, says anything
 about them. All athletes know, don't they, that if you want your body to
 be in good shape you must avoid anything like that?'

'They are right about this,' he said, 'and they do well to avoid that kind
 of thing.'

d 'Then if you think this is right, my friend, Syracusan cuisine and the Sicilian *à la carte* are apparently not things you approve of.'⁵³

'No, I don't think I do approve of them.'

'Then you disapprove also of Corinthian girl friends for men who are going to be in good shape physically.'⁵⁴

'Definitely.'

'How about the delights, so-called, of Attic pastries?'

'I have no choice but to condemn those too.'

e 'I suspect that if we likened these foods, and this whole regimen, to the music and song that uses every mode and all the rhythms, that would be an accurate comparison.'

'Indeed it would.'

'There, variety and luxury bred indiscipline. Here it breeds disease. And as simplicity in music and poetry gave souls self-discipline, so simplicity in physical training gives bodies health, doesn't it?'

'That is absolutely right,' he said.

405 'As lawlessness and disease multiply in a city, don't lawcourts and clinics start opening up all over the place? And when even free men, in large numbers, start taking them seriously, don't these disciplines become extremely self-important?'

'How can they fail to?'

'You won't be able to find any clearer evidence of bad, inferior education in a city, will you, than the need for skilled doctors and judges. And b not just among ordinary manual workers, but even among those with pretensions to a free and enlightened upbringing? Don't you think it's a disgrace, and a sure sign of poor education, to be forced to rely on an extraneous justice – that of masters or judges – for want of a sense of justice of one's own?'⁵⁵

'The greatest disgrace possible,' he said.

'And yet, is it really any more disgraceful, would you say, than the person who in addition to spending the greater part of his life in the law-

⁵³ Sicily in general, and the court of Dionysius at Syracuse in particular, were noted for elaborate cuisine.

⁵⁴ Corinth was a noted supplier of *hetairai* – female dining companions, professionals something like the Japanese geisha, except that sex was taken for granted as part of the service.

⁵⁵ Athenian lawcourts were in fact staffed by amateurs – jurymen chosen by lot from a pool of citizen volunteers, and a judge who was no more than a presiding magistrate, also chosen by lot, and held office only for a year. Hence the word translated as 'judges' at 405a also means 'jurors'.

accusations as defendant or plaintiff, is also convinced, such is his ignorance of what is good, that his cleverness at committing crimes, and his subsequent ability to use every evasion and loophole to escape conviction and avoid paying the penalty, is actually a matter for self-congratulation? And all for the sake of what is trivial and of no importance, because he does not realise how much finer and better it is to see to it that his life does not depend on finding a juror who is half-asleep.'

'You're right,' he said. 'That is worse than the previous example.'

'And don't you think it's a disgrace,' I asked, 'to need medical attention, not as a result of injuries or the onset of some seasonal illness, but because our inactivity, and a routine such as we have described, have filled us up with gas and ooze, like a marsh, and compelled those clever doctors of the school of Asclepius to invent names like "wind" and "flux" for our diseases?'

'Yes, they really do have some extraordinary new names for diseases,' he said.

'It wasn't so, I believe, in Asclepius' time. I am thinking of his sons, at Troy. When Eurypylos is wounded, and is given Pramnian wine with a lot of barley sprinkled over it and cheese grated on to it – which does indeed seem likely to cause a fever – they do not criticise the woman who gives him the drink, nor do they find fault with Patroclus, who is responsible for the treatment.'

'Yes, it certainly is a surprising drink to give someone in that condition.'

'Until you remember,' I said, 'that it was not until the time of Herodicus, or so they say, that the school of Asclepius took up the modern medicine which is a slave to the disease. Herodicus was an athletics coach who became an invalid. With a combination of physical regimen and medicine, he started off by making his own life a misery, and then graduated to making other people's lives a misery as well – lots of them.'

'How did he do that?'

'By making his own death such a long-drawn-out business,' I said. 'He devoted himself to his terminal illness – without ever really managing to cure himself – and spent his whole life completely wrapped up in the business of being a patient. He had a wretched time if he departed in any way from his normal routine, but using his knowledge to give himself a hard death, he did reach old age.'

'A fine reward for his skill,' he said.

'No more than he deserved, for not realising that Asclepius' failure to

explain this branch of medicine to his sons was not the result of ignorance or lack of experience. It was because he knew that in any well-run society each citizen has his own appointed function to perform in the state, and that no one can afford to spend his whole life being ill and being an invalid. We recognise this when it's the man in the street, but then rather absurdly fail to recognise it in the case of those who are rich and supposedly fortunate.'

'What do you mean?'

- d 'When a carpenter falls ill,' I said, 'he has no objection to taking some medicine from the doctor to purge the disease, or to getting rid of it by means of an emetic, or cauterisation, or surgery. But if he is prescribed a long course of treatment, and has to wear special caps,⁵⁶ with all that involves, he'll soon tell you he can't afford to be ill, and that life is not worth living if he has to spend all his time thinking about his illness, and
- e neglecting his business. Then he'll bid a doctor of this kind good day, and resume his normal routine. If he regains his health, he can get on with his life, and do his work. If he is too weak physically, he will die, and so escape his troubles.'

'Yes, I think that's the right kind of attitude towards medicine for someone like that.'

- 407 'Because he had a certain function to perform,' I said, 'and his life was worth nothing to him if he couldn't perform it?'

'Clearly.'

'Whereas the rich man, in our view, has no prescribed function of the kind which makes life not worth living if he is forced to give it up.'

'Not if we're to believe what people say.'

'You're obviously not aware of Phocylides' saying, that once you have the means of subsistence you should start to practise goodness.'

'I am aware of it,' he said, 'but I don't think people should wait that long.'

- b 'Well, we won't argue with him about that,' I said. 'However, here's a question we *can* settle for ourselves. Is practising goodness something the rich man should devote himself to, and is life not worth living for a rich man who can't devote himself to it? Or is being an invalid a handicap to carpentry, or any other art or skill, because it stops people concentrating on them, and yet not an impediment to following Phocylides' advice?'

⁵⁶ Felt caps for the head, typically worn by long-term invalids – not a treatment, but something like staying on the couch all day in one's dressing-gown.

'certainly is an impediment,' he said. 'In fact, this exaggerated concern for the body, going beyond normal physical exercise, is just about the greatest impediment of all. It creates difficulties when you are running a household, or on military service, or even in some sedentary job or public office.'

'Worst of all,' I said, 'it is a problem when it comes to any form of learning, thought or self-development. Concern for the body is for ever causing headaches or dizziness, and saying they are caused by philosophy so that wherever it appears, it is in every way an impediment to the practice and study of virtue. It makes people spend their whole time thinking they are ill. They can't stop worrying about their bodies.'

'That wouldn't surprise me,' he said.

'Are we going to say, then, that this too is something Asclepius was made of? There are some people whose constitution and regimen give them good physical health, but who have contracted some identifiable disease. It was for their benefit, and for people in their situation, that he taught the art of medicine, using drugs and surgery to rid them of their diseases, but then prescribing their normal daily routine, to avoid disruption to civic life, whereas he did not try to prescribe for those whose bodies are internally riddled with disease. He didn't try to draw off a little bit of the poison in a little bit there, and in this way give men long and unpleasant lives, and enable them to produce children, in all probability, no different from themselves. He thought it wrong to treat those who were unable to take their place in the daily round, on the grounds that they were worth nothing either to themselves or to the city.'

'A bit of a statesman, your Asclepius.'

'He obviously was. And as for his children – with a father like that – you can see both that they distinguished themselves at Troy on the field of battle, and that they employed medicine in the way I have described. Do you remember how they treated Menelaus for the wound he received from Pandarus?

They sucked the blood,
And to the wound applied their soothing herbs.⁵⁷

'They did not try to tell him what he should eat or drink afterwards, any more than they tried to tell Eurypylus. They thought that for men who had been in good health and living a sober life before they were wounded, their drugs were a sufficient cure. They could even drink a posset of

⁵⁷ *Iliad* 4.218.

barley and cheese immediately afterwards. But if someone was naturally unhealthy, and leading a dissolute life, they regarded his life as of no value either to himself or to anyone else. They did not believe their art was intended for people like this, and they refused to treat them, even if they were richer than Midas.'

'Very enlightened, the way you describe them, these sons of Asclepius.'

'So they should be,' I said. 'All the same, Pindar and the tragedians do not believe us. They say that Asclepius was the son of Apollo, that in return for gold he cured a rich man who was at death's door, and that for this he was struck by lightning. What we have said so far does not allow us to believe both parts of their story. If he was the son of a god, we shall say, then he was not mercenary. If he was mercenary, then he was not the son of a god.'

'I quite agree with you,' he said, 'as far as that goes. But there's another question I'd like to ask you, Socrates. We need good doctors in our city, don't we? And I imagine the best doctors will be the ones who have treated the greatest number of healthy and sick people. Similarly, the best judges will be those who have associated with all kinds of characters.'

'We certainly do need doctors,' I said. 'Good ones, that is. And do you know who I think the good ones are?'

'I will if you tell me,' he said.

'I'll try. But you're asking about two quite different things in the same question.'

'Why is that?'

'Doctors will become most skilled,' I said, 'if from their earliest years they not only learn the art of medicine, but also come into contact with the largest possible number of the most diseased bodies, and if they have themselves suffered from all illnesses, and are by their nature far from healthy. The reason for this, I believe, is that they do not use the body to treat the body. If they did, it would not be allowable for a doctor's body ever to be, or get itself into, a bad condition. No, they use the mind to treat the body, and it is not permitted for a mind which has become diseased, and is still in bad shape, to treat anything successfully.'

'True,' he said.

'A judge, on the other hand, uses the mind to rule the mind. So it is not allowable for a judge's mind, from its earliest years, to be brought up in close contact with minds which are no good, or for it to have done a complete course in all forms of wrongdoing for itself, so that it can readily draw on its own experience in dealing with the wrongdoings of others,

like a doctor drawing on his experience of the body when he treats disease. No, if it is to be fine and noble, and able to judge questions of right and wrong in a healthy way, it must have had no experience – no taint – of evil natures when it was young. That's why, when they are young, people who are morally good strike us as naïve, and easily fooled by wrongdoers. They have no internal model corresponding to the behaviour of people who are no good.'

'Yes, that's exactly what happens to them,' he said.

'For that reason,' I said, 'the good judge must be old, not young, a late developer when it comes to discovering the nature of injustice. He will not have seen it as something internal, in his own soul, but as something external, in the souls of others. He will have trained himself over a long period of time to see the kind of evil injustice is, relying on theoretical knowledge, not on personal experience.'

'Yes, that certainly seems the noblest kind of judge.'

'And a *good* judge, what is more. That was your question. After all, a good soul makes a good person. The person who is knowing and distrustful, with a long history of wrongdoing of his own, who regards himself as a criminal, but a clever one, can cope with people like himself when he meets them. His wariness makes him seem knowing, because he has the model of his own behaviour to refer to. But when he comes into contact with people who are good, older people, then he looks pretty silly. He is distrustful without reason, and cannot recognise a healthy nature, because he has no model of it. But because he encounters more people who are no good than good, he is regarded, by himself and by others, as wise rather than foolish.'

'That is absolutely true,' he said.

'In that case,' I said, 'if we are looking for a good and wise judge, he is not our man. We want the other sort. Evil can never understand either goodness or itself, whereas goodness, if its natural gifts are improved by education, will in time gain a knowledge both of itself and of evil. So though the good man can become wise, in my view, the bad man cannot.'

'That's my view, too,' he said.

'In which case, this is the kind of art of judging you will legislate for in your city, isn't it, together with an art of medicine of the kind we described earlier? Between them they will care for the souls and bodies of those citizens who are naturally good. As for the ones who are not good, they will allow the physically defective to die, whereas those who have incurable faults of the soul they will themselves put to death.'

'Yes. After all, it has been shown to be the best thing both for the individuals concerned and for the city.'⁵⁸

'Of course, our young people will clearly be reluctant to resort to the law, if they receive the simple musical and poetic education we described, the one we claimed bred self-discipline.'

'Yes. What of it?'

- b 'Well, won't the person with the right musical and poetic education take the same approach in his hunt for a physical education? Won't he end up, if he so chooses, gaining independence from medicine except in emergencies?'

'Yes, I think he will.'

'His actual physical training, his exercises, are things he will do with a view to arousing the spirited part of his nature rather than developing his strength – unlike most athletes, whose diet and exercise is aimed at improving their physique.'

'Exactly,' he said.

- c 'In that case, Glaucon,' I said, 'when people establish a system of artistic and physical education, isn't their reason for doing so different from the one usually attributed to them – that one cares for the body, and the other for the soul?'

'What is the reason, then?' he asked.

'I suspect both are established principally for the benefit of the soul.'

'Explain.'

'Have you never observed the mentality of those who spend all their time on physical education, to the exclusion of musical and poetic education? Or those whose way of life is the opposite?'

'What have you in mind?'

- d 'Savagery and hardness, in the one case. Weakness and gentleness, in the other.'

'Yes,' he said, 'I have noticed that those whose education is purely physical turn out more savage than they should. Those who have only a musical and moral education, on the other hand, do become softer than is good for them.'

'What is more,' I said, 'the fierce element comes from the spirited part of their nature. Correctly brought up, it would be brave, but when it is developed to a higher pitch than is necessary, it is likely to become harsh and unmanageable.'

⁵⁸ At 407e this conclusion was drawn concerning those whose physical ill-health precluded useful activity of either a manual or intellectual sort. There has been no previous discussion, however, of the treatment of the incurably criminal.

'Yes, I think that's right,' he said.

'What about the gentle element? Isn't it a property of the wisdom-loving or philosophical nature? Undue relaxation makes it too soft, doesn't it, whereas the right upbringing makes it gentle and well-behaved.'

'Yes.'

'The guardians must have both these natural attributes, we say.'⁵⁹

'Yes, they must.'

'And these must be harmonised with one another?'

'Of course.'

'The soul of someone who is harmonised in this way is self-disciplined and brave, isn't it?'

'Yes.'

'Whereas the soul of someone discordant is cowardly and uncivilised?'

'Exactly.'

'So if you give music the chance to play upon your soul, and pour into the funnel of your ears the sweet, soft, lamenting modes we were talking about a little while ago, if you spend your whole life humming them, bewitched by song, then the first effect on a nature with any spirit in it is to soften it, like heating iron, making it malleable instead of brittle and unworkable. But if you press on regardless, and are seduced by it, the next stage is melting and turning to liquid – the complete dissolution of the spirit. It cuts the sinews out of your soul, and turns it into a "feeble warrior."⁶⁰

'Yes,' he said.

'If you start with a soul which is not very spirited by nature,' I said, 'this happens quite quickly. If you do have a spirited soul, you weaken the spirit and make it unstable – easily roused by trivial things, and as easily extinguished. People like this become hot-tempered and quick to anger rather than spirited; they are full of discontent.'

'They certainly do.'

'What about the person who puts a lot of effort into his physical training, and eats like a horse, but has nothing to do with music or philosophy? At first, because his body is in good shape, isn't he full of decision and spirit? Doesn't he become braver than he was before?'

'Much braver.'

'But suppose that is all he does. Suppose he has no contact with the Muse. Even if he did have some love of learning in his soul, it gets no taste

⁵⁹ 375c-376c.

⁶⁰ Said of Menelaus in Homer (*Iliad* 17.588).

of learning or enquiry, and has no experience of rational argument or any artistic pursuit. As a result, since it never wakes up and has nothing to feed on, and since there is nothing to purify its senses, it becomes weak, and deaf, and blind, doesn't it?

'Yes, it does,' he said.

'Someone like this becomes an enemy of rational argument, I suspect, and an enemy of music and literature. He abandons any attempt at persuasion using rational argument, and does everything with savage violence, like a wild animal. He lives his life in ignorance and stupidity, without grace or rhythm.'

'Yes,' he said, 'that's exactly what he is like.'

412 'If you want my opinion, then, the two elements for which some god has given mankind two arts – one musical and poetic, the other physical – seem to be not the mind and the body, or only incidentally, but the spirited part of their nature and the philosophical part, so that these can be brought into harmony with one another through the appropriate tension and relaxation.'

'Yes, those do seem to be the two elements,' he said.

'In that case, we would be entitled to describe as perfectly musical and harmonious the person who best combines physical with musical and poetic education, and who introduces them into his soul in the most balanced way. Far more musical and harmonious than the person who tunes the strings of an instrument.'

'Very likely, Socrates.'

b 'Well then, Glaucon, won't we always need someone like this in our city to keep an eye on things, if our state is to be secure?'

'Yes, we shall. It will be our greatest need.'

'So much for the patterns of education and upbringing. We don't have to go through the dances, modes of hunting and coursing, athletic events or horse races that go with them. It's pretty obvious these must follow from the patterns, so there can't now be any difficulty in discovering them.'

'No, it probably wouldn't be too difficult,' he said.

'Very well, then,' I said. 'What is the next question we have to decide? Isn't it which of these people are to rule, and which be ruled?'

'Unquestionably.'

c 'Is it obvious the rulers should be older, and those who are ruled younger?'

'Yes, it is.'

'And that the rulers should be the best among them?'

'That too.'

'Among farmers, aren't the best ones the ones who most possess the attributes of a farmer?'

'Yes.'

'So in this context, since we are looking for the best of the guardians, must they not be the ones who most possess the attributes of a guardian of the city?'

'Yes.'

'And for this purpose, do they have to be wise, powerful and above all devoted to the city?'

'They do.'

'And people are most devoted to whatever it is they love.'

'Bound to be.'

'And they love most what they believe to have the same interests as themselves, the thing whose success or failure they think results in their own success or failure.'

'True,' he said.

'Then we must select from the guardians the kind of men who on examination strike us most strongly, their whole lives through, as being utterly determined to do what is in the city's interests, and as refusing to act in any way against its interests.'

'Yes, they should be the people we want.'

'I think we should observe them at all ages, to make sure they are the guardians and defenders of this belief, and that neither magic nor force can make them forget, and jettison their conviction that they should do what is best for the city.'

'What do you mean by this jettisoning?' he asked.

'I'll tell you,' I said. 'I think our minds can lose a belief either with or without our consent. With our consent when it's a false belief and we learn better. Without our consent in the case of all true belief.'

'I understand the loss which is with our consent, but the loss which is without our consent I need to have explained to me.'

'Really? Don't you agree with me that what is good can be taken away from people only without their consent, whereas what is bad is taken away with their consent? Isn't being deceived about the truth something bad, and knowing the truth something good? And don't you think that having a belief which agrees with the way things are is knowing the truth?'

'You're right. When people lose a true belief, it is without their consent.'

b 'And is that a question of theft, or magic, or force?'

'Once again, I'm afraid, I don't see what you mean.'

'I seem to be making myself about as clear as a tragic poet,' I said. 'By theft I mean people who are talked into changing their minds, and people who forget. Either the passage of time or some process of argument takes away their belief without them realising it. You do see what I mean now I hope?'

'Yes.'

'By force I mean those whom pain or grief causes to change their beliefs.'

'Yes, I understand that as well,' he said. 'And I agree.'

c 'As for magic, you would also accept, I imagine, that there are people whose beliefs change because they are seduced by pleasure, or because there is something they are afraid of.'

'Yes, all the things which deceive us do look like a form of magic.'

'So as I said just now,⁶¹ we must look for those who are the best defenders of their conviction that in any situation they must do what they think is in the city's best interests for them to do. From their earliest childhood we must watch them, and set them the kind of tasks which could most easily make them lose sight of this aim, and lead them astray. Then we must choose the ones who remember their aim and are not easily led astray. Those who are led astray we must reject, mustn't we?'

'Yes.'

'As a second type of test we must give them hardship, pain, and trials, and in all of them look for the characteristics we want.'

'Correct,' he said.

'Then we must have a third type of test – a test for magic – and watch their reactions to that. Just like people taking young colts close to loud and confused noises, to find out if they are easily frightened, we must expose our guardians, when they are young, first to danger and then to pleasure. We must test them like gold in the fire, only more so. Does this one stand out in every situation as immune to magic and endowed with grace? Is he a good guardian of himself and the musical education he has received? Does he show qualities of rhythm and harmony in all the tests we set him? Is he the kind of person who would be the greatest use to himself and the

⁶¹ 412e.

from our children, from our young and grown men, the one who constant testing emerges as pure is the one who should be chosen as a ruler and guardian of our city. We should heap honours on him in life and in death, and when it comes to burial and other memorials should receive the greatest tributes. The one who fails the tests we should reject. Well, Glaucon, so much for my views on the selection and appointment of the rulers and guardians. It's only a general outline, of course, not a precise specification.'

'I think my views are pretty much the same as yours,' he said.

'In that case, aren't these really the people who can most accurately be called good guardians – making sure friends within do not *want* to harm it, and enemies without are not *able* to harm it? The young people whom we have been calling guardians up to now we can call auxiliaries,⁶² the defenders of the rulers' beliefs.'

'I agree.'

'In that case,' I said, 'how can we contrive to use one of those necessary falsehoods we were talking about a little while back? We want one single, grand lie which will be believed by everybody – including the rulers, naturally, but failing that the rest of the city.'⁶³

'What kind of thing do you mean?'

'A very familiar story, of Phoenician origin. It has happened in the past, in several places. So the poets tell us, and they have found believers. But it has not happened in our time, and I don't even know if it *could* happen. People would take a lot of persuading.'

'You seem a bit reluctant to tell your story,' he said.

'With good reason – as you will see when I do tell you.'

'Don't worry,' he said. 'Tell it.'

'Very well. I will. Though I don't know how I shall have the nerve, or find the right words. I have to try and persuade first of all the rulers themselves and the soldiers, and then the rest of the city, that the entire upbringing and education we gave them, their whole experience of it happening to them, was after all merely a dream, something they imagined, and that in reality they spent that time being formed and raised deep

⁶² In addition to its general meaning, the term can be used to refer to mercenary troops (compare Adeimantus' complaint at 419a), as well as to a tyrant's bodyguard, which was typically composed of such mercenaries.

⁶³ The need for falsehoods was explained at 382c–d. The lie is grand or noble (*gennaïos*) by virtue of its civic purpose, but the Greek word can also be used colloquially, giving the meaning 'a true-blue lie', i.e. a massive, no-doubt-about-it lie (compare the term 'grand larceny').

e within the earth – themselves, their weapons and the rest of the equipment which was made for them. When the process of making them was complete, the earth their mother released them, and now it is their duty to be responsible for defending the country in which they live against any attack – just as they would defend their mother or nurse – and to regard the rest of the citizens as their brothers, born from the earth.’

‘No wonder you were so embarrassed about telling us your lie.’

415 ‘Yes, I had good reason,’ I said. ‘But you must listen to the second half of the story as well. “You are all brothers,” our story will tell them, “all of you in the city. But when god made you, he used a mixture of gold in the creation of those of you who were fit to be rulers, which is why they are the most valuable. He used silver for those who were to be auxiliaries, and iron and bronze for the farmers and the rest of the skilled workers. Most
b of the time you will father children of the same type as yourselves, but because you are all related, occasionally a silver child may be born from a golden parent, or a golden child from a silver parent, and likewise any type from any other type. The first and most important instruction god gives the rulers is that the thing they should be the best guardians of, the thing they should keep the most careful eye on, is the compound of these metals
c in the souls of the children. If their own child is born with a mixture of bronze or iron in him, they must feel no kind of pity for him, but give him the position in society his nature deserves, driving him out to join the skilled workers or farmers. On the other hand, any children from those groups born with a mixture of gold or silver should be given recognition, and promoted either to the position of guardian or to that of auxiliary. There is a prophecy, god tells them, that the end of the city will come when iron or bronze becomes its guardian.”⁶⁴ Well, that’s the story. Can you think of any possible way of getting people to believe it?’

d ‘No,’ he said. ‘Not the actual people you tell it to. But their children might, and *their* children after them, and the rest of the population in later generations.’

‘Even that might help them to care more about the city and one another. I think I see what you’re getting at. Anyway, let that turn out as popular belief and tradition will have it. Our job now is to arm these earth-born warriors of ours, and lead them forth, with the rulers at their

⁶⁴ This part of the story makes use of a different mythical tradition, that found in Hesiod’s story of the different races of men – gold, silver, and so on (*Works and Days* 109–201). But Hesiod’s races are successive generations, and his story is one of decay over time. This aspect of the tradition will come to the fore in Book 8 (546a–547a).

head. Let them go and look for the best place in the city to put their camp, a place from which they can most easily control their own citizens, if any of them refuse to obey the laws, or repel any external threats, in the event of some enemy coming down on them "like a wolf on the fold." When they have set up their camp, they can sacrifice to the appropriate gods, and then organise their sleeping accommodation. Does that sound right?"

"Yes," he said.

"Should it be the kind of accommodation which will give them adequate shelter both in winter and summer?"

"Of course. This is their home you are talking about, I take it."

"Yes," I said. "But a home fit for soldiers, not for businessmen."

"What is the difference, in your view?"

"I'll try and tell you. When shepherds are breeding dogs as protectors of their flocks, the worst possible disaster and disgrace, I imagine, is to breed dogs whose nature and training are such that lack of discipline, hunger or some fault of character leads them to try to attack the sheep themselves, and start behaving like wolves instead of dogs."

"Yes, of course that is a disaster."

"In that case we must guard in every way we can against our auxiliaries doing the same sort of thing to the citizens. After all, they are stronger than the citizens. We don't want them behaving like savage masters instead of friendly allies."

"Yes, we must guard against that," he said.

"Won't the best insurance against this be for them to have received a really good education?"

"But they *have* received one," he said.

"And I said, 'We can't be sure of that, my dear Glaucon. What we *can* be sure about is what we have just been saying, which is that when it comes to gentleness – both to themselves and to those under their protection – then the right education, whatever that may be, is the key.'"

"Yes, we are right to be sure of that."

"In addition to this education, an intelligent observer may say, the guardians should be furnished with housing and a general standard of living which will not hinder them from becoming the best possible guardians, and which will give them no encouragement to do wrong in their dealings with the rest of the citizens."

"He may say that. And he will be quite right."

"Well, then," I said, "do you agree with some suggestions about the way they should live and be housed if this is what we want them to be like? In

the first place, no one is to have any private property beyond what is absolutely essential. Secondly, no one is to have the kind of house or storeroom which cannot be entered by anyone who feels like it. For their subsistence, which should meet the needs of self-disciplined and courageous warrior-athletes, they should impose a levy on the rest of the citizens, and receive an annual payment for their role as guardians which leaves them with neither a surplus nor a deficiency. They should live a communal life, eating together like soldiers in camp. As for gold and silver, they should be told they already have in their souls, all the time, the divine gold and silver given to them by the gods. They have no need of human gold in addition, and it is sacrilege to contaminate the divine gold they possess by adding to it a mixture of the perishable gold, since the gold in circulation among ordinary people has been the cause of much evil, whereas their own gold is pure. To them alone, out of the city's population, is it forbidden to handle or touch gold or silver, or be beneath the same roof, or wear it as jewellery, or drink from gold or silver cups. In this way they will be kept safe, and they will keep the city safe. Once they start acquiring their own land, houses, and money, they will have become householders and farmers instead of guardians. From being the allies of the other citizens they will turn into hostile masters. They will spend their whole lives hating and being hated, plotting and being plotted against. Their fears of enemies inside the city will be much more numerous and more acute than their fears of enemies outside the city. Both they themselves and the city will be heading at full speed towards imminent destruction. For all these reasons, shall we say that our guardians are to be provided with the housing and way of life we have described? Are these the laws we should enact, or not?

'They certainly are,' said Glaucon.