

CHARACTERS IN THE DIALOGUE

SOCRATES, narrator.

GLAUCON and ADEIMANTUS, sole respondents in the dialogue after Book I. Elder brothers of Plato.

POLEMARCHUS, a resident in Piraeus, the port of Athens: the dialogue takes place at his house.

CEPHALUS, a Syracusan by birth, Polemarchus' father and apparently resident with him. Respondent in the early part of the dialogue until his place is taken by Polemarchus.

THRASYMACHUS OF CHALCEDON, sophist and orator, the main respondent in Book I.

LYSIAS and EUTHYDEMUS, Polemarchus' brothers. Lysias became an orator and speech-writer, noted for the purity of his style; a number of his speeches are still extant (e.g. 'Against Eratosthenes' in *Greek Political Oratory*, trans. A. N. W. Saunders: Penguin, 1970). NICERATUS, son of Nicias the Athenian statesman and general. CHARMANTIDES and CLEITOPHON, of whom we otherwise know nothing. The only one of this last group to speak in the dialogue is Cleitophon, and his is the briefest interjection (340).

The dramatic date of the dialogue is commonly supposed to be just before 420 BC, when Socrates would be about fifty.

PART I INTRODUCTION

1. Prelude

The scene set and the characters introduced. The subject of the dialogue, justice or right conduct¹ is introduced in a preliminary discussion with Cephalus who, in effect, describes it as telling the truth and paying one's debts. BK I

I went down yesterday to the Piraeus with Glaucon, son of Ariston. I wanted to say a prayer to the goddess and also to see what they would make of the festival,² as this was the first time they were holding it. I must say that I thought that the local contribution to the procession was splendid, though the Thracian contingent seemed to show up just as well. We had said our prayers and seen the show and were on our way back to town when Polemarchus, son of Cephalus, noticed us in the distance making our way home and sent his slave running on ahead to tell us to wait for him. The slave caught hold of my coat from behind and said 'Polemarchus says you are to wait.' I turned and asked where his master was. 'He's coming along behind you,' he said. 'Do wait.' 'We will,' said Glaucon, and soon afterwards Polemarchus came up; with him were Adeimantus, Glaucon's brother, Niceratus, son of Nicias, and others who had all apparently been to the procession. 'Socrates,' said Polemarchus, 'I believe you are starting off on your way back to town.' You are quite right,' I replied. 'Do you see how many of us there are?' he asked. 'I do.' 'Well, you will either have to get the better of us or stay here.' 'Oh, but there's another

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alternative,' said I. 'We might persuade you that you ought to let us go.' 'You can't persuade people who won't listen,' he replied. 'No,' said Glaucon, 'you certainly can't.' 'Well, you 328 a can assume we shan't listen.' 'And don't you know,' added Adeimantus, 'that there is going to be a torch race in the evening on horseback, in honour of the goddess?' 'On horseback?' said I; 'that's a novelty. Do you mean a relay race, in which they carry torches on horseback and hand them on to each other?' 'Yes,' answered Polemarchus, 'and there's to be an all-night carnival as well, which will be worth seeing. We will go out b after dinner and watch it; we shall meet a lot of young men there to talk to. So please do stay.' To which Glaucon replied, 'It looks as if we shall have to.' 'Well, if you think so,' I said, 'stay we must.'

So we went to Polemarchus' house, where we found his brothers Lysias and Euthydemus, and besides them Thrasy- machus of Chalcedon, Charmantides of Paeania and Cleito- phon, son of Aristonymus. Polemarchus' father, Cephalus, was c there too; a very old man he seemed to me, for it was a long time since I had seen him last. He was sitting garlanded on some sort of an easy chair, as he had just been sacrificing in the courtyard. There were some chairs standing round about, so we sat down beside him. As soon as he saw me Cephalus welcomed me and said, 'You don't come down to the Piraeus to see us, Socrates, as often as you should. If I were still strong enough to d make the journey to town easily, there would be no reason for you to come here; I would visit you. As it is, you ought to come here more frequently: for I myself find that as age blunts one's enjoyment of physical pleasures, one's desire for rational conversation and one's enjoyment of it increase correspondingly. So don't refuse me, but come and talk to the young men here and visit us as if we were old friends.' 'As a matter of fact, Cephalus,' I said, 'I enjoy talking to very old men, for they have e gone before us, as it were, on a road that we too may have to tread, and it seems to me that we should find out from them what it is like and whether it is rough and difficult or broad and easy. You are now at an age when you are, as the poets say, about to cross the threshold,³ and I would like to find out how

it strikes you and what you have to tell us. Is it a difficult time of life, or not?'

'I'll certainly tell you how it strikes me, Socrates,' he said. 329 a 'For some of us old men often meet together, like the proverbial birds of a feather. And when we do meet, most of them are full of woes; they hanker for the pleasures of their youth, remembering how they used to make love and drink and go to parties and the like, and thinking it a great deprivation that they can't do so any more. Life was good then, they think, whereas now they can hardly be said to live at all. And some of them grumble that b their families show no respect for their age, and proceed to harp on the miseries old age brings. But in my opinion, Socrates, they are putting the blame in the wrong place. For if old age were to blame, my experience would be the same as theirs, and so would that of all other old men. But in fact I have met many whose feelings are quite different. For example, I was once present when someone was asking the poet Sophocles about sex, and c whether he was still able to make love to a woman; to which he replied, "Don't talk about that; I am glad to have left it behind me and escaped from a fierce and frenzied master." A good reply I thought then, and still do. For in old age you become quite free of feelings of this sort and they leave you in peace; and when your desires lose their intensity and relax, you get d what Sophocles was talking about, a release from a lot of mad masters. In all this, and in the lack of respect their families show them, there is only one thing to blame; and that is not their old age, Socrates, but their character. For if men are sensible and good-tempered, old age is easy enough to bear: if not, youth as well as age is a burden.'

I was delighted by what he said, and tried to lead him on to say more by replying, 'I'm afraid that most people don't agree e with what you say, Cephalus, but think that you carry your years lightly not because of your character but because of your wealth. For they say that the rich have many consolations.'

'Of course they don't agree with me,' he said, 'and there's something in what they say, though not as much as they think. The story about Themistocles is very much to the point. A Seriphian was abusing him and saying that his reputation was 330 a

due not to his personal merits but to his being an Athenian, and Themistocles answered, "I certainly should not have been famous if I had been a Seriphian, but nor would you if you had been an Athenian." The same remark applies to those who are not rich and find old age a burden: a good man may not find old age easy to bear if he's poor, but a bad man won't be at peace with himself even if he is rich.'

'Did you inherit most of your fortune,' I asked Cephalus, 'or did you make it yourself?'

b 'Did I make my fortune, Socrates?' he said. 'As a business man I rank somewhere between my grandfather and my father. For my grandfather, after whom I am named, inherited about as much as I now have and multiplied it several times over, while my father Lysanias reduced it to less than what it is now: for myself, I shall be pleased enough if I leave these boys of mine a little more than I inherited.'

c 'The reason why I asked,' I said, 'was that you did not seem to me over-fond of money. And this is the way in general with those who have not made it themselves, while those who have are twice as fond of it as anyone else. For just as poets are fond of their own poems, and fathers of their own children, so money-makers become devoted to money, not only because, like other people, they find it useful, but because it's their own creation. So they are tiresome company, as they have a good word for nothing but money.'

'That's true,' he said.

d 'It is indeed,' said I. 'But I have another question. What do you think is the greatest advantage you have gained from being so rich?'

e 'One,' he replied, 'which many will perhaps not credit. For you know, Socrates, when a man faces the thought of death there come into his mind anxieties that did not trouble him before. The stories about another world, and about punishment in a future life for wrongs done in this, at which he once used to laugh, begin to torment his mind with the fear that they may be true. And either because of the weakness of old age or because, as he approaches the other world, he has some clearer perception of it, he is filled with doubts and fears and begins to

reckon up and see if there is anyone he has wronged. The man who finds that in the course of his life he has done a lot of wrong often wakes up at night in terror, like a child with a nightmare, and his life is full of foreboding: but the man who is conscious of no wrongdoing is filled with cheerfulness and with hope, "the comfort of old age" as Pindar calls it. For I love that passage where he says of the man who has lived a just and godfearing life,

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sweet hope,
Who guides men's wandering purpose,
Treads at his side, gladdens his heart,
And comforts his old age.

Wonderful lines! Now it is chiefly for this that I think wealth is valuable, not perhaps to everyone but to good and sensible men. For wealth contributes very greatly to one's ability to avoid both unintentional cheating or lying and the fear that one has left some sacrifice to God unmade or some debt to man unpaid before one dies. Money has many other uses, but taking one thing with another I reckon that for a reasonable man this is by no means its least.

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'That's fair enough, Cephalus,' I said. 'But are we really to say that doing right⁴, consists simply and solely in truthfulness and returning anything we have borrowed? Are those not actions that can be sometimes right and sometimes wrong? For instance, if one borrowed a weapon from a friend who subsequently went out of his mind and then asked for it back, surely it would be generally agreed that one ought not to return it, and that it would not be right to do so, nor to consent to tell the strict truth to a madman?'

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Debt

'That is true,' he replied.

'Well then,' I said, 'telling the truth and returning what we have borrowed is not the definition of doing right.'

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'Oh yes it is,' said Polemarchus, interrupting, 'at any rate if we are to believe Simonides.'⁵

'Well,' said Cephalus, 'I bequeath the argument to the two of you, for I must go and see about the sacrifice.'

'While I take over from you?' asked Polemarchus.
'You do,' said Cephalus with a smile, and left for his sacrifice.

2. The Conventional View of Justice Developed

Polemarchus takes up the argument and maintains that justice is giving a man his due. Socrates draws a series of unacceptable conclusions in order to demonstrate the inadequacy of this conventional view.

e 'Well then,' said I, 'as heir to this argument, tell me, what is this saying of Simonides that you think tells us the truth about doing right?'

'That it is right to give every man his due,' he replied; 'in that, I think, he puts the matter fairly enough.'

'It is indeed difficult to disagree with Simonides,' I said; 'he had the poet's wisdom and inspiration; but though you may know what he meant by what he said, I'm afraid I don't. For he clearly does not mean what we were talking about just now, that we should return anything entrusted to us even though the person asking for it has gone mad. Yet what one has entrusted to another is surely due to one, isn't it?'

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'Yes.'

'Yet in no circumstances should one return it to a madman.'

'True.'

'So Simonides must mean something different from this when he says that it is right to give every man his due.'

'He certainly must,' he replied; 'for his thought is that one friend owes it as a due to another to do him good, not harm.'

good
&
harm

'I see,' I said; 'then as between two friends one is not giving the other his due when he returns a sum of money the other has entrusted to him if the return is going to cause harm – is this what Simonides means?'

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'Certainly.'

'Well then, ought we to give our enemies too whatever is due to them?'

'Certainly,' he said, 'what is due to them; and that is, I

assume, what is appropriate between enemies, an injury of some sort.'

'It looks,' said I, 'as if Simonides was talking about what is right with a poet's ambiguity. For it appears that he meant that it is right to give everyone what is appropriate to him, but he called this his "due".'

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Due
&
skill

'Of course.'

'Yes, but look here,' I said, 'suppose someone asked him "How then does medical skill⁶ get its name, Simonides? What does it supply that is due and appropriate and to whom?" How do you suppose he would reply?'

'Obviously that it is the skill that supplies the body with remedies and with food and drink.'

'And if he were asked the same question about cookery?'

'That it is the skill that supplies the flavour to our food.'

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'Then what does the skill we call justice supply and to whom?'

'If we are to be consistent, Socrates, it must be the skill that enables us to help and injure one's friends and enemies.'

'So Simonides says that justice is to benefit one's friends and harm one's enemies?'

justice:
benefit
friends &
harm
enemies?

'I think so.'

'Who then is best able to benefit his friends and harm his enemies in matters of health?'

'A doctor.'

'And in the risks of a sea voyage?'

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'A navigator.'

'And what about the just man? In what activity or occupation will he best be able to help his friends and harm his enemies?'

'In war: he will fight against his enemies and for his friends.'

'Good. Yet people who are healthy have no use for a physician, have they, Polemarchus?'

'True.'

'Nor those that stay on land of a navigator?'

'No.'

'Do you then maintain that those who are not at war have no use for a just man?'

'No, I certainly don't.'

'So justice is useful in peacetime?'

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'It is.'

'So too is agriculture?'

'Yes.'

'For providing crops?'

'Yes.'

'And shoemaking?'

'Yes.'

'Presumably for supplying shoes.'

'Yes.'

'Well then, what is the use of justice in peacetime, and what do we get out of it?'

'It's useful in business.'

'And by that you mean some form of transaction between people?'

'Yes.'

b 'Well, if our transaction is a game of chess, is a just man a good and useful partner, or a chess player?'

'A chess player.'

'And if it's a matter of bricks and mortar, is the just man a better and more useful partner than a bricklayer?'

'No.'

'Well, for what kind of transaction is the just man a better partner than the bricklayer or the musician? Where does he excel the musician as the musician excels him in music?'

'Where money is involved, I suppose.'

'Except perhaps,' said I, 'when it's a question of buying or selling; if, for example, we are buying or selling a horse, a trainer would be a better partner, would he not?'

c 'I suppose so.'

'Or if it's a ship, a shipbuilder or sailor?'

'Presumably.'

'Then in what financial transactions is the just man a better partner than others?'

'When we want to put our money on deposit, Socrates.'

'In fact when we don't want to make use of it at all, but lay it by?'

'Yes.'

'So when we aren't making any use of our money, we find justice useful?' *d*

'It looks rather like it.'

'And so when you want to store a pruning-knife, justice is useful both to the community and to the individual; but if you want to use it then you turn to the vine dresser.'

'Apparently.'

'And if you want to keep your shield or your lyre safe you need the just man, but if you want to use it the soldier or musician?'

'That must follow.'

'And so in all spheres justice is useless when you are using things, and useful when you are not?'

'Maybe.'

'Justice, then, can't be a very serious thing,' I said, 'if it's only useful when things aren't used. But there's a further point. In boxing and other kinds of fighting, skill in attack goes with skill in defence, does it not?' *e*

'Of course.'

'So, too, does not the ability to save from disease imply the ability to produce it undetected?' *334 a*

'I agree.'

'While ability to bring an army safely through a campaign goes with ability to rob the enemy of his secrets and steal a march on him in action.'

'I certainly think so.'

'So a man who's good at keeping a thing will be good at stealing it?'

'I suppose so.'

'So if the just man is good at keeping money safe he will be good at stealing it too.'

'That at any rate is the conclusion the argument indicates.'

'So the just man turns out to be a kind of thief, a view you have perhaps learned from Homer. For he approves of Odysseus' grandfather Autolycus⁷ who, he says, surpassed all men in stealing and lying. Justice, in fact, according to you and Homer and Simonides, is a kind of stealing, though it must be done to help a friend or harm an enemy. Is that your meaning?' *b*

'It certainly isn't,' he replied, 'but I don't really know what I did mean. Yet I still think that justice is to help your friends and harm your enemies.'

c 'But which do you reckon are a man's friends or enemies? Those he thinks good, honest men and the reverse, or those who really are even though he may not think so?'

'One would expect a man's likes and dislikes to depend on what he thinks.'

'But don't men often make mistakes, and think a man honest when he is not, and vice versa?'

'Yes, they do.'

'In that case their enemies are good and their friends bad.'

'Certainly.'

d 'Then it's only right that they should help the bad and harm the good.'

'I suppose so.'

'Yet good men are just and not likely to do wrong.'

'True.'

'So that by your reckoning it is right to injure those who do no wrong.'

'Oh no, Socrates; it looks as if my reckoning was wrong.'

'Well then,' I said, 'it must be right to harm wrongdoers and help those who do right.'⁸

'That seems more reasonable.'

e 'So when men are mistaken in their judgements, Polemarchus, it will often be right for them to injure their friends, who in their eyes are bad, and help their enemies, who are good. Which is the very opposite of what we said Simonides meant.'

'That is the conclusion that follows, certainly,' he said. 'But let us put the matter differently. For our definitions of friend and enemy were perhaps wrong.'

'How wrong?'

'When we said a friend was one who *seemed* a good, honest man.'

'And how are we to change that?'

335 a 'By defining a friend as one who both *seems* and *is* an honest man; while the man who seems, but is not, an honest man seems a friend, but really is not. And similarly for an enemy.'

'On this reckoning the good man is a friend and the bad man an enemy.'

'Yes.'

'And you want us to add to our previous definition of justice (that justice was to do good to a friend and harm to an enemy) by saying that it is just to do good to one's friend if he is good, and to harm one's enemy if he is evil.'

'Yes,' he said, 'that puts it very fairly.'

'But does a just man do harm to anyone?'

'Oh yes,' he replied: 'one *ought* to harm bad men who are our enemies.'

'If we harm a horse do we make it better or worse?'

'Worse.'

'Worse, that is, by the standard of excellence¹⁰ by which we judge horses, not dogs?'

'Yes.'

'And a dog if harmed becomes a worse dog by the standard of excellence by which we judge dogs, not horses?'

'Surely.'

'But must we not then say of a man that if harmed he becomes worse by the standards of human excellence?'

'Certainly.'

'But is not justice human excellence?'

'It surely must be.'

'So men if harmed must become more unjust.'

'So it would seem.'

'Well, musicians will hardly use their skill to make their pupils unmusical, or riding masters to make their pupils bad horsemen.'

'Hardly.'

'Then will just men use their justice to make others unjust? Or, in short, will good men use their goodness¹¹ to make others bad?'

'That cannot be so.'

'For it is not the function of heat to cool things, but of its opposite.'

'Yes.'

'Nor the function of dryness to wet things, but of its opposite.'

'True.'

'Well then, it is not the function of the good man to do harm but of his opposite.'

'Clearly.'

'But is not the just man good?'

'Of course.'

'Then, Polemarchus, it is not the function of the just man to harm either his friends or anyone else, but of his opposite, the unjust man.'

'What you say seems perfectly true, Socrates.'

^e 'So it wasn't a wise man who said that justice is to give every man his due, if what he meant by it was that the just man should harm his enemies and help his friends. This simply is not true: for as we have seen, it is never right to harm anyone at any time.'

'I agree.'

'So you and I,' said I, 'will both quarrel with anyone who says that this view was put forward by either Simonides or Bias or Pittacus or any of the canonical sages.'¹²

'For myself,' he replied, 'I am quite ready to join your side of the quarrel.'

^{336 a} 'Do you know whose I think this saying is that tells us it is right to help one's friends and harm one's enemies? I think it must be due to Periander or Perdiccas or Xerxes or Ismenias of Thebes,¹³ or someone else of wealth and arrogance.'

'Very likely,' he replied.

'Well, well,' said I; 'now we have seen that this is not what justice or right is, will anyone suggest what else it is?'

Tahme

It will be noticed that throughout the foregoing argument Socrates continually draws analogies from various human occupations, from cookery to horse-breeding. To describe all such occupations the Greeks had a single word, Technē, for which there is no equivalent in English that will bring out the variety of its meaning. It includes both the fine arts (music) and the practical arts (cookery); all forms of skilled craftsmanship (ship-building) and various professional activities (navigation and soldiering); besides activities calling for scientific skill

(medicine). It may thus be said to cover any skilled activity with its rules of operation, the knowledge of which is acquired by training. But it is a very elusive word to translate, varying between art, craft, professional skill, and science according to the emphasis of the context. The principle followed in this translation is to give the meaning that seems best to suit the context rather than retain a single word throughout; but behind the group of words used (which are sufficiently indicated by what has been said) there lies only the one word Technē in the Greek. Whether or how far the analogy from skilled activity of this kind, from craft or profession or science, to morals and politics is a sound one, is one of the fundamental questions which the reader of Plato must constantly be asking himself.

3. Thrasymachus and the Rejection of Conventional Morality

1. First Statement and Criticisms

Socrates has shown that there are confusions in conventional morality: Thrasymachus rejects it altogether and maintains that human behaviour is and should be guided by self-interest. He represents a type of view that was not uncommon in the fifth century, among the Sophists in particular, and which has indeed always had advocates. The precise interpretation of Thrasymachus' presentation of it is a matter of controversy (cf. Cross and Woosley, ch. 2) and Plato's treatment of him is unsympathetic, making him noisy and offensive. He starts, after some introductory argumentative sparring with Socrates, by saying that Right is the 'Interest of the Stronger'; and explains this to mean that the ruling class in any state will forcibly exact a certain type of behaviour from its subjects to suit its own interests. Morality is nothing more or less than the code of behaviour so exacted. Socrates first asks how this is affected by the fact that rulers may often be mistaken about their own interests; and then, when Thrasymachus replies that rulers, qua rulers, are never mistaken, uses the technē-analogy to show that rulers

*don't pursue their own interests. Much of the detail of the argument is of questionable validity, but Socrates' main point is, briefly, that the exercise of any skill is, as such, disinterested.*¹⁴

Thrasymachus
 b While we had been talking Thrasymachus had often tried to interrupt, but had been prevented by those sitting near him, who wanted to hear the argument concluded; but when we paused and I asked my question, he was no longer able to keep quiet but gathered himself together and sprang on us like a wild beast, as if he wanted to tear us in pieces. Polemarchus and I were panic-stricken, as Thrasymachus burst out and said, 'What
 c is all this nonsense, Socrates? Why do you go on in this childish way being so polite about each other's opinions? If you really want to know what justice is, stop asking questions and then playing to the gallery by refuting anyone who answers you. You know perfectly well that it's easier to ask questions than to answer them. Give us an answer yourself, and tell us what you think justice is. And don't tell me that it's duty, or expediency,
 d or advantage, or profit, or interest. I won't put up with nonsense of that sort; give me a clear and precise definition.'

I was staggered by his attack and looked at him in dismay. If I had not seen him first I believe I should have been struck dumb; but I had noticed him when our argument first began to exasperate him, and so I managed to answer him, saying
 e diffidently: 'Don't be hard on us, Thrasymachus. If we have made any mistake in our consideration of the argument, I assure you we have not done so on purpose. For if we were looking for gold, you can't suppose that we would willingly let mutual politeness hinder our search and prevent our finding it. Justice is much more valuable than gold, and you must not think we shall slacken our efforts to find it out of any idiotic deference to each other. I assure you we are doing our best. It's the ability that we lack, and clever chaps like you ought to be sorry for us and not get annoyed with us.'

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Thrasymachus laughed sarcastically, and replied, 'There you go with your old affection, Socrates. I knew it, and I told the others that you would never let yourself be questioned, but go

on shamming ignorance and do anything rather than give a straight answer.

'That's because you're so clever, Thrasymachus,' I replied, 'and you know it. You ask someone for a definition of twelve, and add "And I don't want to be told that it's twice six, or three times four, or six times two, or four times three; that sort of nonsense won't do." You know perfectly well that no one would answer you on those terms. He would reply "What do you mean, Thrasymachus; am I to give none of the answers you mention? If one of them happens to be true, do you want me to give a false one?" And how would you answer him?'
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'That's not a fair parallel,' he replied.

'I don't see why not,' I said: 'but even if it is not, we shan't stop anyone else answering like that if he thinks it fair, whether we like it or not.'

'So I suppose that is what you are going to do,' he said; 'you're going to give one of the answers I barred.'

'I would not be surprised,' said I, 'if it seemed to me on reflection to be the right one.'

'What if I give you a quite different and far better reply about justice? What do you think should be your penalty then?'
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'The proper penalty of ignorance, which is of course that those who don't know should learn from those who do; which is the course I propose.'¹⁵

'You must have your joke,' said he, 'but you must pay the fee for learning as well.'

'I will when I have any cash.'

'The money's all right,' said Glaucon; 'we'll pay up for Socrates.'¹⁶ So give us your answer, Thrasymachus.'

'I know,' he replied, 'so that Socrates can play his usual tricks, never giving his own views and when others give theirs criticizing and refuting them.'
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'But, my dear man, what am I to do?' I asked. 'I neither know nor profess to know anything about the subject, and even if I did I've been forbidden to say what I think by no mean antagonist. It's much more reasonable for you to say something, because you say you know, and really have something to say. Do please
 338 a

therefore do me a favour and give me an answer, and don't grudge your instruction to Glaucon and the others here.'

Glaucon and the others backed up my request, and it was obvious that Thrasymachus was anxious to get the credit for the striking answer he thought he could give; but he went on pretending he wanted to win his point and make me reply. In the end, however, he gave in, remarking, 'So this is the wisdom of Socrates: he won't teach anyone anything, but goes round learning from others and is not even grateful.'

To which I replied, 'It's quite true, Thrasymachus, to say I learn from others, but it's not true to say I show no gratitude. I am generous with my praise – the only return I can give, as I have no money. You'll see in a moment how ready I am to praise a good answer, for I'm sure the one you're going to give me will be good.'

Thras.
Justice
Interests
of the
Stronger

c 'Listen then,' he replied. 'I say that justice or right¹⁷ is simply what is in the interest of the stronger party. Now where is your praise? I can see you're going to refuse it.'

'You shall have it when I understand what you mean, which at present I don't. You say that what is in the interest of the stronger party is right; but what do you mean by interest? For instance, Polydamas the athlete is *stronger* than us, and it's in his *interest* to eat beef to keep fit; we are *weaker* than him, but you can't mean that the same diet is in our *interest* and so *right* for us.'

'You're being tiresome, Socrates,' he returned, 'and taking my definition in the sense most likely to damage it.'

'I assure you I'm not,' I said; 'you must explain your meaning more clearly.'

'Well then, you know that some of our city-states are tyrannies, some democracies, some aristocracies?'

'True enough.'

'And that in each city power is in the hands of the ruling class?'

'Yes.'

e 'Each type of government enacts laws that are in its own interest, a democracy democratic laws, a tyranny tyrannical ones and so on; and in enacting these laws they make it quite

plain that what is "right" for their subjects is what is in the interest of themselves, the rulers, and if anyone deviates from this he is punished as a lawbreaker and "wrongdoer". That is what I mean when I say that "right" is the same thing in all states, namely the interest of the established government; and government is the strongest element in each state, and so if we argue correctly we see that "right" is always the same, the interest of the stronger party.'

'Now,' I said, 'I understand your meaning, and we must try to find out whether you are right or not. Your answer is that "right" is "interest" (though incidentally this is an answer which you forbade me to give), but you add the qualification "of the stronger party".'

'An insignificant qualification, I suppose you will say.'

'Its significance is not yet clear; what is clear is that we must consider whether what you say is true. For I quite agree that what is right is an "interest"; but you add that it is the interest "of the stronger party", and that's what I don't know about and what we must consider.'

'Go on,' he said.

'Very well,' said I. 'You say, do you not, that obedience to the ruling power is *right*?'¹⁸

'I do.'

'And are those in power in the various states infallible or not?'

'They are, of course, liable to make mistakes,' he replied.

'When they proceed to make laws, then, they may do the job well or badly.'

'I suppose so.'

'And if they do it well the laws will be in their interest, and if they do it badly they won't, I take it.'

'I agree.'

'But their subjects must act according to the laws they make, for that is what *right* is.'

'Of course.'

'Then according to your argument it is *right* not only to do what is in the interest of the stronger party but also the opposite.'

'What do you mean?' he asked.

'My meaning is the same as yours, I think. Let us look at it

more closely. Did we not agree that when the ruling powers order their subjects to do something they are sometimes mistaken about their own best interest, and yet that it is *right* for the subject to do what his ruler enjoins?

'I suppose we did.'

^e 'Then you must admit that it is *right* to do things that are *not* in the interest of the rulers, who are the stronger party; that is, when the rulers mistakenly give orders that will harm them and yet (so you say) it is right for their subjects to obey those orders. For surely, my dear Thrasymachus, in those circumstances it must follow that it is "right" to do the opposite of what you say is right, in that the weaker are *ordered* to do what is against the interest of the stronger.'

^{340 a} 'A clear enough conclusion,' exclaimed Polemarchus.

'No doubt,' interrupted Cleitophon, 'if we are to take *your* word for it.'

'It's not a question of *my* word,' replied Polemarchus; 'Thrasymachus himself agrees that rulers sometimes give orders harmful to themselves, and that it is right for their subjects to obey them.'

'Yes, Polemarchus, that was because he asserted that it was right to obey the orders of the rulers.'

^b 'And that the interest of the stronger was right, Cleitophon. But having made both these assumptions he went on to admit that the stronger sometimes give orders which are not in their interest and which their weaker subjects obey. From which admission it follows that what is in the interest of the stronger is no more right than the reverse.'

'But,' objected Cleitophon, 'what Thrasymachus meant by the interest of the stronger was what the stronger *thinks* to be in his interest; this is what the subject must do, and this was the position Thrasymachus took up about what is right.'

'Well, it was not what he said,' replied Polemarchus.

^c 'It does not matter, Polemarchus,' I said. 'If this is Thrasymachus' meaning let us accept it. Tell me, Thrasymachus, was this how you meant to define what is right, that it is that which *seems* to the stronger to be his interest, whether it really is or not? Is this how we are to take what you said?'

'Certainly not,' he replied; 'do you think that I call someone who is making a mistake "stronger" just when he is making his mistake?'

'I thought,' I said, 'that that was what you meant when you agreed that rulers are not infallible but sometimes make mistakes.'

'That's because you're so malicious in argument, Socrates. ^d Do you, for instance, call a man who has made a mistaken diagnosis a doctor by virtue of his mistake? Or when a mathematician makes a mistake in his calculations do you call him a mathematician by virtue of his mistake and when he makes it? We use this form of words, of course, and talk of a doctor or a mathematician or a teacher "making a mistake"; but in fact, I think, each of them, in so far as he is what we call him, is ^e infallible. And so to be precise (and precision is what you aim at) no skilled craftsman ever makes a mistake. For he makes his mistake because his knowledge fails him, and he is then no longer a skilled craftsman. So no craftsman or scientist ever makes a mistake, nor does a ruler so long as he is a ruler; though it's true that in common parlance one may *talk* about the doctor or ruler making a mistake, and that's how you should take the answer I gave you just now. To be really precise one must say that the ruler, in so far as he is a ruler, makes no mistake, and so infallibly enacts what is best for himself, which his subjects ^{341 a} must perform. And so, as I said to begin with, "right" means the interest of the stronger party.'

'Well,' said I, 'so you think I'm malicious, do you, Thrasymachus?'

'I certainly do.'

'You think my questions were deliberately framed to distort your argument?'

'I know perfectly well they were. But they won't get you anywhere; you can't fool me, and if you don't you won't be able to crush me in argument.' ^b

'My dear chap, I wouldn't dream of trying,' I said. 'But to stop this sort of thing happening again, will you make this point clear; when you speak of the ruler and stronger party whose interest it is right that the weaker should serve, do you use the

words in their more general sense or in the precise sense which you have just defined?’

‘I mean ruler in the precisest sense,’ he replied. ‘Try your low tricks on that if you can – I ask no mercy. But you are not likely to succeed.’

c ‘Surely,’ I said, ‘you don’t think I’m foolish enough to try to beard the lion and trick Thrasymachus?’

‘You tried just now,’ he answered, ‘but nothing came of it.’

‘Well, let us leave it at that,’ I said; ‘but tell me, this doctor in the precise sense you have just been talking about, is he a businessman or a medical practitioner? I mean the man who really is a doctor.’

‘A medical practitioner.’

‘And a ship’s captain? Is he a member of the crew or in command of it?’

‘In command.’

d ‘For it would, I take it, be wrong to take account of his mere presence on board to call him a member of the crew. For he is not captain by virtue of being on board, but because of his professional skill and command of the crew.’

‘True.’

‘And each one of these¹⁹ has his own particular interest.’

‘Yes.’

‘And in each case the purpose of the professional skill²⁰ concerned is to further and provide for that interest?’

‘That is its object.’

‘Then has any form of professional skill any interest at which it aims over and above its own perfection?’

e ‘What do you mean by that?’

‘Suppose, for example,’ I replied, ‘that you were to ask me whether the body were self-sufficient, with no needs beyond itself, I should answer “It certainly has needs. That is the reason why medicine has been discovered, because the body has its defects and is not self-sufficient; medical skill was, in fact, developed to look after the interests of the body.” Would that be a correct answer, do you think?’

‘It would.’

342 a ‘Then is the science or art of medicine itself defective? Does it

or any other skilled activity²¹ need anything further to perfect²² it? I mean as the eyes need sight and the ears hearing, so they also need an art to look to their interests and provide them with what they need in this respect. But is it a characteristic of skilled activity as such to be defective, so that each activity needs another to look after its interests, and this one another, and so *ad infinitum*? Or does each look after its own interest? Is it not rather true that each has no need either of its own or another’s supervision to check its faults and watch its interests? For there is no fault or flaw in any science or art, nor is it its business to seek the interest of anything but its subject matter; each is faultless and flawless and right, so long as it is entirely and precisely what it is. Now consider, in your precise sense am I right or not?’

‘You are right,’ he said.

‘Medicine therefore looks to the interest not of medicine but of the body.’

‘Yes.’

‘And training to the interest of the horse and not its owner. Nor does any form of skill²³ seek its own interest (it needs nothing) but that of its subject-matter.’

‘It looks like it.’

‘Yet surely,’ I said, ‘all forms of skill rule and control their subject-matter.’

Thrasymachus only agreed to this very reluctantly.

‘Then no science²⁴ studies or enforces the interest of the controlling or stronger party, but rather that of the weaker party subjected to it.’

He agreed to this, too, in the end, though he tried to make a fight of it. Having secured his agreement I proceeded, ‘Then it follows that the doctor *qua* doctor prescribes with a view not to his own interest but that of his patient. For we agreed that a doctor in the precise sense controlled the body and was not in business for profit, did we not?’

He assented.

‘And did we not also agree that a ship’s captain in the precise sense controlled the crew but was not one of them?’

He agreed.

'So that a captain in this sense is in control, but will not give his orders with his own interest in view, but that of the crew which he controls.'

He agreed reluctantly.

'And therefore, my dear Thrasymachus,' I concluded, 'no ruler of any kind, *qua* ruler, exercises his authority, whatever its sphere, with his own interest in view, but that of the subject of his skill. It is his subject and his subject's proper interest to which he looks in all he says and does.'

2. *Second Statement and Final Refutation*

To avoid a formal defeat in the argument Thrasymachus interrupts it with a restatement of his main position. What he says may be divided into two parts. First, he reiterates his opening contention (338c-e) that political power is merely the exploitation of one class by another. And (since Socrates has used the analogy from *technē*) he illustrates his view by comparing the shepherd who fattens his flock for his own and his master's benefit. Ordinary morality is simply the behaviour imposed by exploiter on exploited, and is thus 'someone else's interest'. But, second, in addition to this political argument, he also maintains that, on the level of ordinary day-to-day behaviour, the pursuit of self-interest, in its narrowest and most obvious form, is both natural and right, and the course which pays the individual best.

Socrates deals first with the more strictly political part of Thrasymachus' thesis, and argues that government, like any other form of professional skill, has its own standard of achievement, and is not merely a matter of profit-making or exploitation. The argument that 'money-making' or 'profit-making' is a separate activity may seem artificial to modern minds, for do we not exercise our profession to make our living? But what Plato is trying to say is that government is a job or profession like others, with specific tasks to perform, which it may perform well or ill, and that what the individual 'makes out of it' (as we should say) is to that extent irrelevant. This reinforces and extends the latter part of the argument of the preceding section.

At this stage of the argument it was obvious to everyone that his definition of justice had been reversed, and Thrasymachus, instead of replying, remarked, 'Tell me, Socrates, have you a nurse?' 343 a

'What do you mean?' I returned. 'Why not answer my question, instead of asking that sort of thing?'

'Well, she lets you go drivelling round and doesn't wipe your nose, and you can't even tell her the difference between sheep and shepherd.'

'And why exactly should you say that?' I asked.

'Because you suppose that shepherds and herdsmen study the good of their flocks and herds and fatten and take care of them with some other object in view than the good of their masters and themselves; and don't realize that the rulers of states, if they are truly such, feel towards their subjects as one might towards sheep, and think about nothing day and night but how they can make a profit out of them. Your view of right and wrong, just and unjust, is indeed wide of the mark. You are not aware that justice or right is really what is good for someone else, namely the interest of the stronger party or ruler, imposed at the expense of the subject who obeys him. Injustice or wrong is just the opposite of this, and rules those who are really simple and just, while they serve their ruler's interests because he is stronger than they, and as his subjects promote his happiness to the complete exclusion of their own. I'm afraid you're very simple-minded, Socrates; but you ought to consider how the just man always comes off worse than the unjust. For instance, in any business relations between them, you won't find the just man better off at the end of the deal than the unjust. Again, in their relations with the state, when there are taxes to be paid the unjust man will pay less on the same income, and when there's anything to be got he'll get a lot, the just man nothing. Thus if it's a question of office, if the just man loses nothing else he will suffer from neglecting his private affairs; his honesty will prevent him appropriating public funds, and his relations and friends will detest him because his principles will not allow him to do them a service if it's not right. But quite the reverse is true of the unjust man. I'm thinking of the man I referred to just now who

344 a can further his own advantage in a big way: he's the man to study if you want to find how much more private gain there is in wrongdoing than in right. You can see it most easily if you take the extreme of injustice and wrongdoing, which brings the highest happiness to its practitioners and plunges its victims and their honesty in misery – I mean, of course, tyranny. Tyranny is not a matter of minor theft and violence, but of wholesale b plunder, sacred or profane, private or public. If you are caught committing such crimes in detail you are punished and disgraced: sacrilege, kidnapping, burglary, fraud, theft are the names we give to such petty forms of wrongdoing. But when a man succeeds in robbing the whole body of citizens and reducing c them to slavery, they forget these ugly names and call him happy and fortunate, as do all others who hear of his unmitigated wrongdoing. For, of course, those who abuse wrongdoing and injustice do so because they are afraid of suffering from it, not of doing it. So we see that injustice, given scope, has greater strength and freedom and power than justice; which proves what I started by saying, that justice is the interest of the stronger party, injustice the interest and profit of oneself.

d After deluging our ears with this shower of words, Thrasymachus intended to leave; the others, however, would not let him, but insisted he should stay and answer for²⁵ what he had said. I supported their pleas, saying, 'My dear Thrasymachus, you can't mean to throw a theory like that at us and then leave e us without explaining it or examining its truth. Surely it's no small matter to define the course we must follow if we're to live our lives to the best advantage?'

'I never supposed it was,' he countered.

'You seemed to,' I replied; 'or perhaps it is that you have no consideration for us, and don't care what sort of lives our ignorance of what you claim to know makes us lead. Come on, let us know your secret – it won't be a bad investment to give 345 a so many of us the benefit of your knowledge. For as far as I am concerned, you have not convinced me, and I don't think that injustice pays better than justice even if it has a clear field to do what it wants. No, my dear Thrasymachus; I grant you your unjust man and I grant him the ability to continue his wrongdo-

ing by fraud or force, yet he still does not persuade me that injustice pays better than justice. And there may be others who feel the same as I do. It is for you, therefore, to persuade us that we are wrong in valuing justice more highly than injustice.' b

'And how am I to persuade you?' he retorted. 'If you don't believe what I have just said, what more can I do? Do you want ideas spoon-fed to you?'

'Not by you at any rate,' I replied. 'But to begin with, do stick to what you say, or if you modify it, do so openly and above board. For instance, to look at what you have just been saying, c you started by defining what a true doctor is: yet when you came to the true shepherd you abandoned your former precision, and now suppose that the shepherd's business is to fatten his flock, not with a view to its own good, but in the hope either of a good meal, like a prospective guest at a feast, or of making a sale, as if he were a businessman, not a shepherd. Yet the shepherd's d skill is devoted solely to the welfare of the flock of which he is in charge; and so long as it succeeds in discharging its function, its own welfare is adequately provided for.²⁶ And so I thought just now that we agreed that it followed that any kind of authority, public or private, pursued only the welfare of the subjects under its care. But tell me, do you think that the rulers e of states (rulers in the true sense, that is) really want to rule?'

'I don't think it, I know it,' he replied.

'Very well, Thrasymachus,' I said; 'but have you not noticed that no one really wants to exercise other forms of authority? At any rate, they expect to be paid for them, which shows that they don't expect any benefit for themselves but only, for their 346 a subjects. For tell me, don't we differentiate between one art or profession²⁷ and another by their different functions? And please tell me what you really think, so that we can get somewhere.'

'That is how we differentiate them,' he replied.

'And so each one benefits us in a distinct and particular way; medicine brings us health, navigation a safe voyage, and so on.'

'Certainly.'

'So wage-earning brings us wages; for that is its function. For b you don't identify medicine and navigation, do you? Nor, if you are going to use words precisely, as you proposed, do you call

navigation medicine just because a ship's captain recovers his health on a voyage because the sea suits him.'

'No.'

'Nor do you call wage-earning medicine if someone recovers his health while earning money.'

'No.'

'Well then, can you call medicine wage-earning, if a doctor earns a fee when he is curing his patient?'

'No,' he said.

'We are agreed then that each professional skill²⁸ brings its own peculiar benefit?'

'I grant that.'

'Any common benefit, therefore, that all their practitioners enjoy, must clearly be procured by the exercise of some additional activity common to all.'

'It looks like it.'

'And further, if they earn wages it is a benefit they get from exercising the profession of wage-earning in addition to their own.'

He agreed reluctantly.

'This benefit of receiving wages does not therefore come to a man as a result of the exercise of his own particular profession; if we are to be precise, medicine produces health and wage-earning wages, and building produces a house while wage-earning, following in its train, produces wages. Similarly all other arts and professions each operate to the benefit of the subject which falls to their particular charge; and no man will benefit from his profession, unless he is paid as well.'

'It seems not,' he said.

'But if he works for nothing, does he still confer no benefit?'

'He surely does.'

'In fact it is clear enough, Thrasy-machus, that no profession or art or authority provides for its own benefit but, as we said before, provides and orders what benefits the subject of which it is in charge, thus studying the interest of the weaker party and not the stronger. That was why I said just now that no one really wants authority and with it the job of righting other people's wrongs, unless he is paid for it; because in the exercise of his

professional skill, if he does his job properly, he never does or orders what is best for himself but only what is best for his subject. That is why, if a man is to consent to exercise authority, you must pay him, either in cash or honours, or alternatively by punishing him if he refuses.'

'What's that, Socrates?' said Glaucon; 'I recognize your two kinds of reward, but I don't know what the punishment is or in what sense you speak of it as pay.'

'Then you don't understand how the best men must be paid if they are to be willing to govern. You know that to be over-ambitious or mercenary is reckoned, and indeed is, something discreditable?'

'Yes.'

'So good men will not consent to govern for cash or honours. They do not want to be called mercenary for exacting a cash payment for the work of government, or thieves for making money on the side; and they will not work for honours, for they aren't ambitious. We must therefore bring compulsion to bear and punish them if they refuse – perhaps that's why it's commonly considered improper to accept authority except with reluctance or under pressure; and the worst penalty for refusal is to be governed by someone worse than themselves. That is what, I believe, frightens honest men into accepting power, and they approach it not as if it were something desirable out of which they were going to do well, but as if it were something unavoidable, which they cannot find anyone better or equally qualified to undertake. For in a city of good men there might well be as much competition to avoid power as there now is to get it, and it would be quite clear that the true ruler pursues his subjects' interest and not his own; consequently all wise men would prefer the benefit of this service at the hands of others rather than the labour of affording it to others themselves.'

Socrates now turns to the other part of Thrasy-machus' argument, that the pursuit of self-interest or injustice pays better than that of justice. He deals with it in three stages.

(A) In the first there are ambiguities in the Greek which it is difficult to render in English, and this section of the argument

347 a

b

*the good
don't
govern
for cash
or honor*

c

d

has been called 'embarrassingly bad'.²⁹ The basis of the argument is again the Technē analogy. No two craftsmen or professional men are in disagreement about the standards of correctness in their own particular craft or profession, and in that sense are not in competition with each other; and since just men also do not compete with each other either, they are analogous to the skilled craftsman, and so the just man is 'wise and good', words which in Greek imply that he has both the knowledge and the effectiveness to lead the best kind of life, whatever that may be.

T's on idea that the unjust life is a superior life

e 'You see, then, that I entirely disagree with Thrasymachus' view that justice is the interest of the stronger; but the point is one that we can examine again later, and far more important is his recent statement³⁰ that the unjust man has a superior life to the just. Which side are you on, Glaucon? And which of us seems to be nearer the truth?' d

'I think the just man's life pays the better.'

348 a 'Did you hear the list of good things in the unjust man's life which Thrasymachus has just gone through?' I asked.

'I heard them,' he replied, 'but I'm not persuaded.'

'Shall we then try and persuade him, if we can find any flaw in his argument?'

'By all means,' he said.

'We might, then, answer his speech by a rival one of our own, setting out the advantages of justice, to which he would make a rejoinder, to which we again would reply; but we shall then have to count and measure up the advantages put forward by either side, and shall soon be wanting a jury to decide between them. But if we proceed by mutual agreement, as we have done so far, we can ourselves be both counsel and jury.'

'We can.'

'Which course, then, do you prefer?'

'The latter,' he replied.

'Well then,' said I, turning to Thrasymachus, 'let us begin again at the beginning. You say that perfect injustice pays better than perfect justice.'

c 'That's what I say,' he replied, 'and I've given you my reasons.'

'Then what do you say about this: is one of them an excellence³¹ and one a fault?'³²

'Of course.'

'Justice an excellence, I suppose, and injustice a fault?'

'My dear man,' he replied, 'is that likely? When I am telling you that injustice pays and justice doesn't.'

'Then what do you think?'

'The opposite,' he answered.

'You mean that justice is a fault?'

'No; it's merely supreme simplicity.'

'And so injustice is duplicity, I suppose.'

'No; it's common sense.'

'So you think that the unjust are good sensible men?'

'If they can win political power over states and peoples, and their wrongdoings have full scope. You perhaps think I'm talking of bag-snatching; even things like that pay,' he said, 'if you aren't found out, but they are quite trivial by comparison.'

'I see what you mean about that,' I said; 'but what surprised me was that you should rank injustice with wisdom and excellence, and justice with their opposites.'

'Yet that is just what I do.'

'That is a much tougher proposition,' I answered, 'and it's not easy to know what to say to it. For if you were maintaining that injustice pays, but were prepared to admit that it is a fault and discreditable quality, we could base our argument on generally accepted grounds. As it is, having boldly ranked injustice with wisdom and excellence, you will obviously attribute to it all the strength of character that we normally attribute to justice.'

'You've guessed my meaning correctly,' he said.

'Still, there must be no shirking,' I rejoined, 'and I must pursue the argument as long as I'm sure you are saying what you think. For I think you are really in earnest now, Thrasymachus, and saying what you think to be the truth.'

'What's it matter what I think?' he retorted. 'Stick to the argument.'

'It doesn't matter at all,' was my reply; 'but see if you can' b

answer me this further question. Will one just man want to get the better³³ of another?’

‘Certainly not; otherwise he would not be the simple, agreeable man we’ve just seen him to be.’

‘And will he think it right and proper to do better than the unjust man or not?’

‘He’ll think it right and proper enough, but he’ll not be able to.’

‘That’s not what I’m asking,’ I said, ‘but whether one just man thinks it improper to compete with another and refuses to do so, but will compete with an unjust man?’

‘Yes, that is so,’ he replied.

‘Then what about the unjust man? Will he compete with the just and want more than his share in an act of justice?’

‘Of course he will; he wants more than his share in everything.’

‘Will one unjust man, then, compete with another in an unjust action and fight to get the largest share in everything?’

‘Yes.’

‘Then let us put it this way,’ I said. ‘The just man does not compete with his like, but only his unlike, while the unjust man competes with both like and unlike.’

‘That puts it very well.’

‘And the unjust man is a good sensible man, the just man not?’

‘Well said again.’

‘And so the unjust man is like the good sensible man, while the just man is not?’

‘Of course, being the kind of person he is, the unjust man must be *like* others of his kind, and the just man unlike them.’

‘Good. So each of them is of the same sort as those he is like.’

‘Well, what next?’

‘So far, so good, Thrasymachus. Do you recognize the distinction between being musical and unmusical?’

‘Yes.’

‘And which of the two involves intelligence?’

‘Being musical; and being unmusical does not.’

‘And intelligence is good, lack of it bad.’

‘Yes.’

‘And the same argument applies to medicine.’

‘It does.’

‘Then does one musician who is tuning a lyre try to do better than another, or think that he ought to outdo him in tightening or loosening the strings?’

‘I think not.’

‘But he does try to do better than an unmusical layman?’

‘He must try to do that.’

‘What about a doctor then? In prescribing a diet is he trying to outdo other doctors and get the better of them in medical practice?’

‘No.’

‘But he tries to do better than the layman?’

‘Yes.’

‘Then do you think that over the whole range of professional knowledge³⁴ anyone who has such knowledge aims at anything more in word or deed than anyone with similar knowledge? Don’t they both aim at the same result in similar circumstances?’

‘I suppose there’s no denying that.’

‘But the man who has no knowledge will try to compete both with the man who has and with the man who has not.’

‘Maybe.’

‘And the man with professional knowledge is wise?’

‘I agree.’

‘And the wise man is good?’

‘I agree.’

‘So the good man, who has knowledge, will not try to compete with his like, but only with his opposite.’

‘So it seems.’

‘While the bad and ignorant man will try to compete both with his like and with his opposite.’

‘So it appears.’

‘But it was surely the unjust man, Thrasymachus, who, we found, competes both with his like and his unlike? That was what you said, wasn’t it?’

‘It was,’ he admitted.

‘While the just man will not compete with his like, but with his unlike.’

'True.'

'The just man, then,' I said, 'resembles the good man who has knowledge, the unjust the man who is ignorant and bad.'

'That may be.'

'But we agreed that each of them is of the same kind as the one he is like.'

'We did.'

'Then,' I concluded, 'we have shown that the just man is wise and good and the unjust bad and ignorant.'

d Thrasymachus' agreement to all these points did not come as easily as I have described, but had to be dragged from him with difficulty, and with a great deal of sweat – for it was a hot day. And I saw something then I had never seen before, Thrasymachus blushing. So when we had agreed that justice was goodness³⁵ and knowledge and injustice their opposites, I said, 'Well, we have settled that point, Thrasymachus; but you will remember that we also said that injustice was strength.'

'I remember well enough,' he replied; 'but I still don't accept your last arguments, and have more to say about them. Yet if I were to say it, I know you would accuse me of making speeches.'

e Either therefore let me say all I have to say, or else, if you prefer it, continue your cross-questioning; and I will answer "Very good", "Yes", and "No", like someone listening to old wives' tales.'

'But don't answer contrary to your real opinion,' I replied.

'Yes, I will, to please you,' he said, 'since you won't let me speak freely. What more can you ask?'³⁶

'Nothing at all,' said I. 'Do as you suggest, and I will ask the questions.'

'Ask away then.'

(B) Thrasymachus had claimed that injustice is a source of strength. On the contrary, says Socrates, it is a source of disunity and therefore of weakness. There must be cooperation among thieves if they are to achieve any common action.

351 a 'Well then, to proceed with the argument, I return to my question about the relation of justice and injustice. We said,³⁷ I

think, that injustice was stronger and more effective than justice, whereas if, as we have now agreed, justice implies excellence³⁸ and knowledge it will not, I think, be difficult to show that it is stronger than injustice, which, as must by now be obvious to anyone, involves³⁹ ignorance. But I don't want to argue in general terms like this, Thrasymachus, but rather as follows. Would you say that a state might be unjust and wrongly try to reduce others to subjection, and having succeeded in so doing continue to hold them in subjection?

b 'Of course,' he replied. 'And the most efficient state, whose injustice is most complete, will be the most likely to do so.'

'I understood that that was your argument,' said I. 'But do you think that the more powerful state needs justice to exercise this power over its neighbour or not?'

c 'If you are right and justice involves⁴⁰ knowledge, it will need justice; but if I am right, injustice.'

'I am delighted that you are not just saying "yes" and "no", but are giving me a fair answer, Thrasymachus.'

'I'm doing it to please you.'

d 'Thank you,' said I. 'Then will you be kind enough to tell me too whether you think that any group of men, be it a state or an army or a set of gangsters or thieves, can undertake any sort of wrongdoing together if they wrong each other?'

'No.'

'Their prospect of success is greater if they don't wrong each other?'

'Yes, it is.'

'Because, of course, if they wrong each other that will breed hatred and dissension among them; but if they treat each other justly, there will be unity of purpose and friendly feeling among them.'

'Yes – I won't contradict you.'

e 'That's very good of you,' I said. 'Now tell me this. If it is a function of injustice to produce hatred wherever it is, won't it cause men to hate each other and quarrel and be incapable of any joint undertaking whether they are free men or slaves?'

'It will.'

'And so with any two individuals. Injustice will make them

quarrel and hate each other, and they will be at enmity with themselves and with just men as well.'

'They will.'

'And in a single individual it will not lose its power, will it, but retain it just the same?'

'Let us assume it will retain it.'

'Injustice, then, seems to have the following results, whether it occurs in a state or family or army or in anything else: it renders it incapable of any common action because of factions and quarrels, and sets it at variance with itself and with its opponents and with whatever is just.'

'Yes.'

'And it will produce its natural effects also in the individual. It renders him incapable of action because of internal conflicts and division of purpose, and sets him at variance with himself and with all who are just.'

'Yes.'

'And the gods, of course, are just.'

'Granted.'

'So the unjust man is an enemy of the gods, and the just man their friend.'

'Go on, enjoy your argument,' he retorted. 'I won't annoy the company by contradicting you.'

'If you will go on answering my questions as you are at present,' I replied, 'you will complete my entertainment. We have shown that just men are more intelligent and more truly effective in action, and that unjust men are incapable of any joint action at all. Indeed, when we presumed to speak of unjust men carrying out any effective joint action between them, we were quite wrong. For had they been completely unjust they would never have kept their hands off each other, and there must have been some element of justice among them which prevented them wronging each other as well as their victims, and brought them what success they had; they were in fact only half corrupted when they set about their misdeeds, for had their corruption been complete, their complete injustice would have made them incapable of achieving anything. All this seems to me to be established against your original contention.'

(C) Finally, Socrates shows that the just man is happier than the unjust. Using the idea of 'function', he argues that a man needs justice to enable him to perform his own particular function and so to achieve happiness. Justice, however, remains undefined. 'Happiness depends on conformity to our nature as active beings. What active principles that nature comprises, and how they are organized into a system we learn in the immediately following books' (A. E. Taylor, *The Mind of Plato* (University of Michigan), p. 270).

'We must now proceed to the further question which we set ourselves, whether the just live better and happier lives than the unjust. It is, in fact, already clear, I think, from what we have said, that they do; but we must look at the question more closely. For it is not a trivial one; it is our whole way of life that is at issue.'

'Proceed,' he said.

'I will,' I replied. 'So tell me, do you think a horse has a function?'

'Yes.'

'And would you define the function of a horse, or of anything else, as something one can only do, or does best, with the thing in question?'

'I don't understand.'

'Look at it this way. Can you see with anything but eyes?'

'No.'

'Again, can you hear with anything but ears?'

'Certainly not.'

'So we can rightly call these the functions of eye and ear.'

'Yes.'

'So again, could you cut off a vine-shoot with a carving-knife or a chisel or other tool?'

'You could.'

'But you would do the job best if you used a pruning-knife made for the purpose.'

'True.'

'Shall we then call this its "function"?''

'Yes, let us.'

'And I think you may see now what I meant by asking if the "function" of a thing was not that which only it can do or that which it does best.'

b 'Yes, I understand,' he replied, 'and I think that is what we mean by a thing's function.'

'Good,' said I. 'And has not everything which has a function its own particular excellence?⁴¹ Let me take the same examples again. The eyes have a function, have they not?'

'They have.'

'Have they also their own particular excellence?'

'They have their excellence also.'

'Then have the ears a function?'

'Yes.'

'And an excellence?'

'And an excellence.'

'And is not the same true of everything else?'

'Yes, it is.'

c 'Come, then; could the eyes properly perform their function if instead of their own peculiar excellence they had the corresponding defect?'

'How could they? For you mean, I suppose, blindness instead of sight?'

'I mean whatever their excellence may be. For I am not concerned with that yet, but only to find out whether a thing's characteristic excellence enables it to perform its function well, while its characteristic defect makes it perform it badly.'

'Yes, that is certainly true,' he replied.

'So we can say that the ears, if deprived of their own peculiar excellence, perform their function badly.'

'Certainly.'

d 'Then may we assume that the same argument applies in all other cases?'

'I agree.'

'Then the next point is this. Is there any function that it is impossible to perform with anything except the mind?⁴² For example, paying attention, controlling, deliberating, and so on: can we attribute any of these to anything but the mind, of which we should say they were particular characteristics?'

'No.'

'And what about life? Is not that a function of mind?'

'Very much so,' he said.

'And the mind will surely have its peculiar excellence?'

'It will.'

'And if deprived of its peculiar excellence will it perform its function well, or will it be incapable of so doing?'

'Quite incapable.'

'It follows therefore that a good mind will perform the functions of control and attention well, a bad mind badly.'

'It follows.'

'And we agreed,⁴³ did we not, that justice was the peculiar excellence of the mind and injustice its defect?'

'We did.'

'So the just mind and the just man will have a good life, and the unjust a bad life?'

'So it appears from your argument.'

'But the man who has a good life is prosperous and happy, and his opposite the reverse?'

'Of course.'

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

'So be it.'

'But it never pays to be miserable, but to be happy.'

'Of course.'

'And so, my dear Thrasymachus, injustice never pays better than justice.'

'This is your holiday treat,' he replied, 'so enjoy it, Socrates.'

'If I do enjoy it, it's thanks to you, Thrasymachus,' I replied, 'for you have been most agreeable since you stopped being cross with me. But I'm not enjoying it all the same; and it's my own fault, not yours. I'm like a greedy guest who grabs a taste of the next course before he has properly finished the last. For we started off to inquire what justice is, but gave up before we had found the answer, and went on to ask whether it was excellence and knowledge or their opposites, and then when we stumbled on the view that injustice pays better than justice, instead of letting it alone off we went in pursuit, so that I still know nothing⁴⁴ after all our discussion. For so long as I don't know

what justice is I'm hardly likely to find out whether it is an excellence or not, or whether it makes a man happy or unhappy.'

This section claims to prove that the just man is happier than the unjust. Similarly at 361d Glaucon asks Socrates to answer the question whether the just or unjust man is happier; and the theme of happiness will recur throughout the dialogue, as e.g. on 419-421c. The common Greek word for 'happy' (eudaimōn) has overtones rather different from those of the English word. It implies less an immediate state of mind or feeling ('I feel happy today') than a more permanent condition of life or disposition of character, something between prosperity and integration of personality, though of course feeling is involved too.

BK II

4. Adeimantus and Glaucon Restate the Case for Injustice

There has been a touch of broad caricature about the picture of Thrasymachus, and Plato evidently thinks that the view which he represents needs a clearer statement and fairer treatment. Accordingly, Glaucon says that he is not content with the way in which Socrates has dealt with Thrasymachus and proceeds to restate his argument in a different form; he is followed by Adeimantus, who supplements what he has said.

1. Glaucon argues that justice, or morality, is merely a matter of convenience. It is natural for men to pursue their own interests regardless of others; but it would be impossible to run an orderly society on that basis, and the system of morality is arrived at as a compromise. But it is only a compromise and has no other authority, as can be seen easily enough by considering how a man would behave if its sanctions were removed. And a contrast between the perfectly 'just' and perfectly 'unjust' man shows conclusively that 'injustice' is the more paying proposition.

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I thought, when I said this, that the argument was over; but in fact, as it turned out, we had only had its prelude. For

Glaucon, with his customary pertinacity, characteristically would not accept Thrasymachus' withdrawal, but asked: 'Do you want our conviction that right action is in all circumstances better than wrong to be genuine or merely apparent?' b

'If I were given the choice,' I replied, 'I should want it to be genuine.'

'Well then, you are not making much progress,' he returned. 'Tell me, do you agree that there is one kind of good which we want to have not with a view to its consequences but because we welcome it for its own sake? For example, enjoyment or pleasure, so long as pleasure brings no harm and its only result is the enjoyment it brings.'

'Yes, that is one kind of good.'

'And is there not another kind of good which we desire, both for itself and its consequences? Wisdom and sight and health, for example, we welcome on both grounds.' c

'We do,' I said.

'And there is a third category of good, which includes exercise and medical treatment and earning one's living as a doctor or otherwise. All these we should regard as painful but beneficial; we should not choose them for their own sakes but for the wages and other benefits we get from them.' d

'There is this third category. But what is your point?'

'In which category do you place justice and right?'

'In the highest category, which anyone who is to be happy welcomes both for its own sake and for its consequences.' 358 a

'That is not the common opinion,' Glaucon replied. 'It is normally put into the painful category, of goods which we pursue for the rewards they bring and in the hope of a good reputation, but which in themselves are to be avoided as unpleasant.' in what category is justice?

'I know that is the common opinion,' I answered; 'which is why Thrasymachus has been criticizing it and praising injustice. But it seems I'm slow to learn.'

'Listen to me then, and see if I can get you to agree,' he said. 'For you seem to have fascinated Thrasymachus into a premature submission, like a snake charmer; but I am not satisfied yet about justice and injustice. I want to be told what exactly b

each of them is and what effects it has as such on the mind of its possessor, leaving aside any question of rewards or consequences. So what I propose to do, if you agree, is this. I shall ^c revive Thrasymachus' argument under three heads: first, I shall state the common opinion on the nature and origin of justice; second, I shall show that those who practise it do so under compulsion and not because they think it a good; third, I shall argue that this conduct is reasonable because the unjust man has, by common reckoning, a better life than the just man. I don't believe all this myself, Socrates, but Thrasymachus and hundreds of others have dinned it into my ears till I don't know what to think; and I've never heard the case for the superiority ^d of justice to injustice argued to my satisfaction, that is, I've never heard the praises of justice sung simply for its own sake. That is what I expect to hear from you. I therefore propose to state, forcibly, the argument in praise of injustice, and thus give you a model which I want you to follow when your turn comes to speak in praise of justice and censure injustice. Do you like this suggestion?

^e 'Nothing could please me better,' I replied, 'for it's a subject which all sensible men should be glad to discuss.'

'Splendid,' said Glaucon. 'And now for my first heading, the nature and origin of justice. What they say is that it is according to nature a good thing to inflict wrong or injury,⁴⁵ and a bad thing to suffer it, but that the disadvantages of suffering it exceed the advantages of inflicting it; after a taste of both, therefore, ^{359 a} men decide that, as they can't evade the one and achieve the other, it will pay to make a compact with each other by which they forgo both. They accordingly proceed to make laws and mutual agreements, and what the law lays down they call lawful and right. This is the origin and nature of justice. It lies between what is most desirable, to do wrong and avoid punishment, and what is most undesirable, to suffer wrong without being able to get redress; justice lies between these two and is accepted not as being good in itself, but as having a relative value due to our ^b inability to do wrong. For anyone who had the power to do wrong and was a real man would never make any such agreement with anyone – he would be mad if he did.⁴⁶

'This then is the account they give of the nature and the origins of justice; the next point is that men practise it against their will and only because they are unable to do wrong. This we can most easily see if we imagine that a just man and an unjust man have each been given liberty to do what they like, and then follow them and see where their inclinations lead them. We shall catch the just man red-handed in exactly the same pursuits as the unjust, led on by self-interest, the motive which all men naturally follow if they are not forcibly restrained by the law and made to respect each other's claims.

'The best illustration of the liberty I am talking about would be if we supposed them both to be possessed of the power which Gyges, the ancestor of Gyges the Lydian, had in the story. He was a shepherd in the service of the then king of Lydia, and one day there was a great storm and an earthquake in the district where he was pasturing his flock and a chasm opened in the earth. He was amazed at the sight, and descended into the chasm and saw many astonishing things there, among them, so the ^{story of} story goes, a bronze horse, which was hollow and fitted with ^{magic} doors, through which he peeped and saw a corpse which seemed to be of more than human size. He took nothing from it save a ^{ring} gold ring it had on its finger, and then made his way out. He was wearing this ring when he attended the usual meeting of shepherds which reported monthly to the king on the state of his flocks; and as he was sitting there with the others he happened to twist the bezel of the ring towards the inside of his hand. Thereupon he became invisible to his companions, and they began to refer to him as if he had left them. He was astonished, and began fingering the ring again, and turned the bezel outwards; whereupon he became visible again. When he saw this he started experimenting with the ring to see if it really had this power, and found that every time he turned the bezel inwards he became invisible, and when he turned it outwards he became visible. Having made his discovery he managed to get himself included in the party that was to report to the king, and when he arrived seduced the queen, and with her help attacked and murdered the king and seized the throne.

'Imagine now that two such rings existed and the just man

put on one, the unjust the other. There is no one, it would commonly be supposed, who would have such iron strength of will as to stick to what is right and keep his hands from taking other people's property. For he would be able to steal from the market whatever he wanted without fear of detection, to go into any man's house and seduce anyone he liked, to murder or to release from prison anyone he felt inclined, and generally behave as if he had supernatural powers. And in all this the just man would differ in no way from the unjust, but both would follow the same course. This, it would be claimed, is strong evidence that no man is just of his own free will, but only under compulsion, and that no man thinks justice pays him personally, since he will always do wrong when he gets the chance. Indeed, the supporter of this view will continue, men are right in thinking that injustice pays the individual better than justice; and if anyone who had the liberty of which we have been speaking neither wronged nor robbed his neighbour, men would think him a most miserable idiot, though of course they would pretend to admire him in public because of their own fear of being wronged.

'So much for that. Finally, we come to the decision between the two lives, and we shall only be able to make this decision if we contrast extreme examples of just and unjust men. By that I mean if we make each of them perfect in his own line, and do not in any way mitigate the injustice of the one or the justice of the other. To begin with the unjust man. He must operate like a skilled professional – for example, a top-class pilot or doctor, who know just what they can or can't do, never attempt the impossible, and are able to retrieve any errors they make. The unjust man must, similarly, if he is to be thoroughly unjust, be able to avoid detection in his wrongdoing; for the man who is found out must be reckoned a poor specimen, and the most accomplished form of injustice is to seem just when you are not. So our perfectly unjust man must be perfect in his wickedness; he must be able to commit the greatest crimes⁴⁷ perfectly and at the same time get himself a reputation for the highest probity,⁴⁸ while, if he makes a mistake he must be able to retrieve it, and, if any of his wrongdoing comes to light, be ready with a

convincing defence, or when force is needed be prepared to use force, relying on his own courage and energy or making use of his friends or his wealth.

'Beside our picture of the unjust man let us set one of the just man, the man of true simplicity of character who, as Aeschylus says, wants "to be and not to seem good".⁴⁹ We must, indeed, not allow him to seem good, for if he does he will have all the rewards and honours paid to the man who has a reputation for justice, and we shall not be able to tell whether his motive is love of justice or love of the rewards and honours. No, we must strip him of everything except his justice, and our picture of him must be drawn in a way diametrically opposite to that of the unjust man. Our just man must have the worst of reputations for wrongdoing even though he has done no wrong, so that we can test his justice and see if it weakens in the face of unpopularity and all that goes with it; we shall give him an undeserved and life-long reputation for wickedness, and make him stick to his chosen course until death. In this way, when we have pushed the life of justice and of injustice each to its extreme, we shall be able to judge which of the two is the happier.'

'I say, Glaucon,' I put in, 'you're putting the finishing touches to your two pictures as vigorously as if you were getting them ready for an exhibition.'

'I'm doing my best,' he said. 'And these being our two characters, it is not, I think, difficult to describe the sort of life that awaits each. And if the description is somewhat brutal, remember that it's not I that am responsible for it, Socrates, but those who praise injustice more highly than justice. It is their account that I must now repeat.'

'They will say that the just man, as we have pictured him, will be scourged, tortured, and imprisoned, his eyes will be put out, and after enduring every humiliation he will be crucified, and learn at last that one should want not to be, but to seem just. And so that remark which I quoted from Aeschylus could be more appropriately applied to the unjust man; for he, because he deals with realities and does not live by appearances, really wants not to seem but to be unjust. He

the just
man who
is punished
b/c he's
perfect
as
unjust

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Reaps thought's deep furrow, for therefrom
Spring goodly schemes⁵⁰

b

– schemes which bring him respectability and office, and which enable him to marry into any family he likes, to make desirable matches for his children, and to pick his partners in business transactions, while all the time, because he has no scruples about committing injustice, he is on the make. In all kinds of competition public or private he always comes off best and does down his rivals, and so becomes rich and can do good to his friends and harm his enemies. His sacrifices and votive offerings to the gods are on a suitably magnificent scale, and his services to the gods, and to any man he wishes to serve, are far better than those of the just man, so that it is reasonable to suppose that the gods care more for him than for the just man. And so they conclude, Socrates, that a better life is provided for the unjust man than for the just by both gods and men.

c

2. Adeimantus, supplementing what Glaucon has said, stresses the unworthy motives commonly given for right conduct. Men only do right for what they can get out of it, in this life and the next. They much prefer to do wrong, because in general it pays better; and they are encouraged to do wrong by contemporary religious beliefs which tell them that they can avoid punishment in this world if they sacrifice to the gods lavishly enough, and in the next if they go through the appropriate initiation ceremonies. Adeimantus and Glaucon ask Socrates to show that just or right conduct is preferable in itself and without reference to any external rewards or punishments.

d

When Glaucon had finished speaking I had it in mind again to make some reply to him, but his brother Adeimantus forestalled me, saying, 'You don't suppose that is a complete statement of the argument, do you, Socrates?'

'Well, isn't it?' I replied.

'The most essential point has not been stated.'

'Well,' said I, 'they say blood is thicker than water;⁵¹ so if your brother has left anything out, lend him a hand. Though as

far as I am concerned, he has said quite enough to floor me and make me quite incapable of coming to the rescue of justice.'

'That's nonsense,' he answered. 'But listen to what I have to say. In order to make clearer what I take to be Glaucon's meaning, we ought to examine the converse of the view he stated, that is, the arguments normally used in favour of justice and against injustice. For fathers tell their sons, and pastors and masters of all kinds urge their charges to be just not because they value justice for itself, but for the good reputation it brings; they want them to secure by a show of justice the power and family connections and other things which Glaucon enumerated, all of which are procured for the just man by a good reputation. And they go on to enlarge on the importance of reputation, and add that if a man stands well with heaven there is a whole list of benefits available for the pious, citing the authority of Hesiod and Homer. For Hesiod⁵² says that for the just the gods make the oaks bear "acorns at the top, bees in the middle", while his "wool-bearing sheep are weighed down by their fleeces". And Homer⁵³ speaks in similar terms of "some perfect king, ruling with the fear of god in his heart, and upholding the right, so that the dark soil yields its wheat and barley, the trees are laden with ripe fruit, the sheep never fail to bring forth their lambs, nor the sea to provide its fish".

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e

b

c

d

'The rewards which Musaeus and his son⁵⁴ give for the just are still more exciting. After they have got them to the other world they sit them down to a banquet of the Blest and leave them garlanded and drinking for all time, as if they thought that the supreme reward of virtue was to be drunk for eternity. And some extend the rewards of heaven still further and say that the pious and honest leave children's children and a long posterity to follow them. That is the sort of recommendation they produce for justice. The unjust and the irreligious they plunge into some sort of mud in the underworld or make them carry water in sieves, while in this world they give them a bad reputation and inflict on them all the punishments which Glaucon described as falling on the just man who seemed to be wicked – they can think of no others.

e

'So much for the way in which justice is recommended and

injustice blamed. But there is another line of argument about them which one meets in the poets as well as in ordinary conversation. People are unanimous in hymning the worth of self-control or justice, but think they are difficult to practise and call for hard work, while self-indulgence and injustice are easy enough to acquire, and regarded as disgraceful only by convention; wrong on the whole pays better than right, they say, and they are ready enough to call a bad man happy and respect him both in public and private provided he is rich and powerful, while they have no respect for the poor and powerless, and despise him, even though they agree that he is the better man. But most surprising of all are the stories about the gods and virtue, which tell how they often allot misfortune and a hard life to the good and the reverse to the wicked. There are itinerant evangelists and prophets who knock at the door of the rich man's house, and persuade him that by sacrifices and spells they have accumulated some kind of divine power, and that any wrong that either he or his ancestors have done can be expiated by means of charms and sacrifices and the pleasures of the accompanying feasts; while if he has any enemy he wants to injure they can for a small fee damage him (whether he is a good man or not) with their spells and incantations, by which they profess to be able to persuade the gods to do their will. In support of all this they cite the evidence of the poets. Some, in support of the easiness of vice, quote Hesiod:⁵⁵ "Evil can men attain easily and in companies: the road is smooth and her dwelling near. But the gods have decreed much sweat before a man reaches virtue" and a road that is long and hard and steep. Others quote Homer⁵⁶ on turning aside the gods –

The very gods are capable of being swayed. Even they are turned from their course by sacrifice and humble prayers, libations and burnt offerings, when the miscreant and sinner bend the knee to them in supplication.

Or they produce a whole collection of books of ritual instructions written by Musaeus and Orpheus, whom they call descendants of the Moon and the Muses; and they persuade not only

individuals but whole communities that, both for living and dead, remission and absolution of sins may be had by sacrifices and pleasant trivialities, which they are pleased to call initiations, and which they allege deliver us from all ills in the next world, where terrible things await those who have failed to sacrifice.

'Now what do you think, Socrates, is likely to be the effect of all this sort of talk about virtue and vice, and how far gods and men think them worth while, on the minds of young men who have enough natural intelligence to gather the implications of what they hear for their own lives and how best to lead them, the sort of person they ought to be and the sort of ends they ought to pursue? Such a young man may well ask himself, in Pindar's⁵⁷ words,

Shall I by justice reach the higher stronghold, or by deceit,

and there live entrenched securely? For it is clear from what they tell me that if I am just, it will bring me no advantage but only trouble and loss, unless I also have a reputation for justice; whereas if I am unjust, but can contrive to get a reputation for justice, I shall have a marvellous time. Well then, since the sages tell me that "appearance has more force than reality" and determines our happiness, I had better devote myself entirely to appearances; I must put up a façade that gives the illusory appearance of virtue, but I must always have at my back the "cunning, wily fox" of which Archilochus⁵⁸ so shrewdly speaks. You may object that it is not easy to be wicked and never be found out; I reply, that nothing worth while is easy, and that all we have been told points to this as the road to happiness. To help us avoid being found out we shall form clubs and secret societies, and there are always those who will teach us the art of persuasion, political or forensic; and so we shall get our way by persuasion or force and avoid the penalty for doing our neighbour down. "Yet neither deceit nor force is effective against the gods." But if there are no gods or if they care nothing for human affairs, why should we bother to deceive them? And if there are gods and they do care, our only knowledge of them

is derived from tradition and the poets who have written their genealogies, and they tell us that they can be persuaded to change their minds by sacrifices and "humble prayers" and offerings. We must believe them in both types of testimony or *Sin or sacrifice* neither; and if we believe them then the thing to do is to sin first and sacrifice afterwards from the proceeds. For if we do right *366 a* we shall merely avoid the wrath of heaven, but lose the profits of wrongdoing; but if we do wrong we shall get the profits and, provided that we accompany our sins and wickednesses with prayer, be able to persuade the gods to let us go unpunished. "But we shall pay in the next world for the sins we commit in this, either ourselves or our descendants." To which the calculating answer is that initiation and the gods who give absolution are very powerful, as we are told both by the most *b* important among human societies, and by children of the gods who have become poets and prophets with a divine message and have revealed that these things are so.

"What argument, then, remains for preferring justice to the worst injustice, when both common men and great men agree that, provided it has a veneer of respectability, injustice will enable us, in this world and the next, to do as we like with gods *c* and men? And how can anyone, when he has heard all we have said, possibly value justice and avoid laughing when he hears it being praised, if he has any force of character at all, any advantages of person, wealth, or rank? For indeed if there is anyone capable of disproving what we have said, and assuring himself of the superiority of justice, his feeling for the wicked will be forgiveness rather than anger; he will know that unless a man is born with some heaven-sent aversion to wrongdoing, or unless *d* he acquires the knowledge to refrain from it, he will never do right of his own free will, but will censure wrongdoing only if cowardice or age or weakness make him powerless to practise it himself. That is all too obvious: once give him the power, and he will be the first to use it as fully as he can.

"The root of the whole matter is the assertion from which this whole discussion between the three of us started, Socrates, and which we may put as follows. "All you professed partisans of *e* justice, from the heroes of old whose tales have survived to our

own contemporaries, have never blamed injustice or praised justice except for the reputation and honours and rewards they bring; no one, poet or layman, has ever sufficiently inquired what the effect of each is on the mind⁵⁹ of the individual (an effect that may be unobserved by either gods or men), or explained how it is that injustice has the worst possible effect on the mind and justice the reverse. Had you adopted that *367 a* method from the beginning and set about convincing us when we were young, there would be no need to protect ourselves against our neighbours wronging us; each man would be his own best protector, because he would be afraid that by doing wrong he was doing himself a grave and lasting injury."

"This, and indeed a good deal more than this, is what Thrasy-machus and others would say about justice and injustice. It is, in my opinion, a gross distortion of their real effect; but (to be candid) I have stated it as forcibly as I can because I want to hear you argue against it. What we want from you is not only a *b* demonstration that justice is superior to injustice, but a description of the essential effects, harmful or otherwise, which each produces on its possessor. And follow Glaucon's instructions and leave out the common estimation in which they are held. Indeed, if you do not assign to each the reputation the other bears, we shall consider that you are concerned to praise or blame the appearance and not the reality, and that your advice *c* is that we should do wrong and avoid being found out, and that you agree with Thrasymachus that justice is what is good for someone else, the interest of the stronger party, while injustice is what is to one's own interest and advantage, and pursued at the expense of the weaker party. You have agreed that justice falls into the highest category of goods, of goods, that is, which are worth choosing not only for their consequences but also, *d* and far more, for themselves, such things as sight, hearing, intelligence, health, and all other qualities which bring us a real and not merely an apparent benefit. Let us therefore hear you commending justice for the real benefits it brings its possessor, compared with the damage injustice does him, and leave it to others to dwell on rewards and reputation. I am prepared to listen to other people commending or condemning justice and

injustice in this way by an assessment of rewards and reputation; but you have spent your life studying the question, and from you, if I may say so, we expect something better. Prove to us therefore, not only that justice is superior to injustice, but that, irrespective of whether gods or men know it or not, one is good and the other evil because of its inherent effects on its possessor.'

PART II

PRELIMINARIES

I. First Principles of Social Organization

So far the discussion has been about justice (or right conduct or morality) in the individual. But Socrates now says that it is easier to study things on a large scale than on a small, and proposes accordingly to discuss justice in the state or community first, and then see how the conclusions so reached apply to the individual. This method of argument from the state or community to the individual, runs throughout the dialogue.

Socrates starts by asking how society is made up. His account is historical in form. But the Greeks knew little archaeology or prehistory, and the historical form should not be taken too seriously. Socrates is concerned to find out what are the underlying principles of any society, even the simplest. He finds them to be two. First, mutual need. Men are not self-sufficient, they need to live together in society. Second, difference of aptitude. Different people are good at different things, and it is best for all that each should concentrate on developing his particular aptitudes. In this sense, society, with its regulations, is a 'natural' growth.

Starting from these two principles Socrates deals first with what we should call the economic structure of society, though in a very simple form. He finds five main economic classes or functions: (1) Producers, agricultural or industrial, (2) Merchants, (3) Sailors and Shipowners, etc., (4) Retail traders, (5) Wage-earners or manual labourers. (Slaves are not mentioned, but their existence, it is clear from elsewhere (e.g. 469c, 471a), is assumed.¹ Plato would regard them as appendages to