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Political
Thought

Plato

The Republic

Edited by

G. R. F. Ferrari

Translated by

Tom Griffith

CAMBRIDGE TEXTS IN THE
HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

PLATO
The Republic

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PLATO

The Republic

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TOM GRIFFITH



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THE REPUBLIC

Book 1¹

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

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

'We will,' said Glaucon.

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

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

² Bendis, as we are eventually told at the end of Book 1 (354a).

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

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

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

'Yes.'

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

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

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

'Of course not,' said Glaucon.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁵ Cephalus' garland is an item of sacrificial uniform.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

‘Did you inherit most of the money you possess, Cephalus?’ I asked. ‘Or is most of it money you made yourself, on top of your inheritance?’

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

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

‘You’re right,’ he said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

d ‘Correct,’ he said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

‘Yes.’

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

‘Yes, it is.’

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

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

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

‘Yes, it is.’

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

d ‘It gives flavour to cooked food.’

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

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

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

‘I think so.’

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

‘A doctor.’

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

‘A ship’s captain.’

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

‘In war and alliances, I think.’

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

‘True.’

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

'No.'

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

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

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

333 'Yes, it is.'

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

'Yes.'

'For producing crops.'

'Yes.'

'And shoemaking?'

'Yes, that's useful.'

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

'Of course.'

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

'Contracts, Socrates.'

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

'I mean partnerships.'

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

'Someone who plays draughts would be more use.'

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

'Of course not.'

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

'In partnerships involving money, I think.'

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

'Apparently.'

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

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

‘So it seems.’

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

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

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

‘That’s right.’

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

‘It looks like it.’

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

‘Apparently.’

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

‘I shall have to say that.’

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

‘I suppose so.’

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

‘He certainly is.’

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

‘Yes, I think so.’

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

‘Certainly.’

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

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

'It looks like it.'

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

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

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

In swearing oaths and thieving he surpassed
All men.¹²

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

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

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

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

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

'Yes, they do make mistakes.'

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

'They certainly are.'

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

'It looks like it.'

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

'True.'

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

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

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

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

‘That sounds better.’

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

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

‘How *are* we defining them, Polemarchus?’

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

‘And now? How do you want to change that definition?’

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

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

‘Yes.’

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

b ‘Yes,’ he said, ‘I think that would be an excellent definition.’

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

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

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

‘Worse.’

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

‘The standard we use to judge horses.’

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

‘They must do.’

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

‘Certainly.’

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

'Again, it must be.'

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

'It looks like it.'

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

'No, that's impossible.'

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

'No.'

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

'No, that's impossible.'

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

'Yes.'

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

'Yes.'

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

'Apparently.'

'And the just man is good?'

'Yes.'

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

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

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

'I agree,' he said.

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

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

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

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

‘Who?’

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

‘You’re absolutely right,’ he said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁶ ‘Right’ and ‘just’ both translate the Greek *dikaion*.

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

'Of course.'

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

'Yes.'

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

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

- b 'A trivial addition, you may say.'

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

'Go on, then. Examine it.'

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

'I do.'

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

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

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

'In my opinion, yes.'

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

'Yes.'

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

‘Of course.’

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

‘What *do* you mean?’ he said.

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

‘Yes,’ he said. ‘I accept that.’

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

‘Those weren’t the words he used,’ said Polemarchus.

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

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

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

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

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

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

'I certainly do.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

‘He’s a healer of the sick.’

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

d ‘A master of sailors.’

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

‘True,’ he said.

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

‘Certainly.’

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

‘Yes, it does.’

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

‘I don’t understand your question.’

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

‘Yes, I think you’d be right.’

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

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

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

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

'Yes.'

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

'Apparently.'

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

He conceded this, though with great reluctance.

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

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

Thrasymachus assented.

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

'Yes, that was agreed.'

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

He agreed, though reluctantly.

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

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

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

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

'What makes you say that?'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²² 338e.

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

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

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

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

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

‘Yes.’

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

²³ 342a–e.

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

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

'Certainly not,' he said.

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

'Certainly not.'

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

c He agreed.

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

'What if we did?'

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

'It looks that way.'

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

He conceded this, though unwillingly.

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

'Apparently not,' he said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

‘Yes, I am.’

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Of course I do,' he said.

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

'We shall indeed.'

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

'The second way,' he said.

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

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

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

'Of course.'

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

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

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

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

- ‘Then what *do* you call them?’
 ‘The opposite,’ he said.
 ‘You call justice a vice?’
 ‘No, I call it noble simplicity.’
 d ‘I see. And you call injustice duplicity, presumably?’
 ‘No, I call it good judgement.’
 ‘And you really think, Thrasymachus, that the unjust are wise and good?’
 ‘Yes, if you mean those who are capable of perfect injustice, who can bring cities and nations under their control. You probably think I’m talking about stealing purses. Mind you,’ he added, ‘even that can be quite profitable, if you can get away with it. But it’s trivial compared with the injustice I was describing just now.’
 e ‘Yes, I know which sort you mean,’ I said. ‘But I *was* surprised, before that, by your putting injustice with goodness and wisdom, and justice with their opposites.’
 ‘Well, that’s certainly where I do put them.’
 ‘That’s a much more awkward proposition, my friend. It makes it hard to know what to say. If you said that injustice was profitable, but nevertheless admitted, as most people do, that it was wickedness, or something to be ashamed of, we would be able to make some reply along conventional lines. As it is, however, you’re obviously going to say that it is good and
 349 strong, and credit it with all the qualities which we used to attribute to justice, since you didn’t shrink from classifying it with goodness and wisdom.’
 ‘That’s an accurate prediction,’ he said.
 ‘Still, we mustn’t hesitate, in our discussion, to pursue the object of our enquiry for as long as I take you to be saying what you think. My impression is, Thrasymachus, that this time you’re not just trying to provoke us, but genuinely saying what you really believe about the truth of the matter.’
 ‘Does it matter to you whether I really believe it or not? Why don’t you try and disprove what I say?’
 b ‘No, it doesn’t matter,’ I replied. ‘Now, I have a further question, on top of the ones I’ve asked already. Do you think one just man would be at all prepared to try and outdo another just man?’

footnote 27 (*cont.*)

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

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

‘How about the just action?’

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

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

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

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

‘Yes, he does.’

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

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

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

‘Yes, he will.’

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

‘Admirably put.’

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

‘Right again,’ he said. ‘Well done.’

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

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

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

‘What else?’

e ‘Well, Thrasymachus, do you agree that one person is musical and another unmusical?’

‘I do.’

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

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

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

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

'Yes.'

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

'Yes, it is.'

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

'No, I don't.'

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

'He'd be bound to.'

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

'Of course not.'

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

'Yes.'

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

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

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

'He might.'

'And the knowledgeable person is wise?'

'Yes.'

'And the wise person is good?'

'Yes.'

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

'Apparently,' he said.

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

'It looks like it.'

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

c ‘Yes, I did.’

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

‘Yes.’

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

‘I suppose so.’

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

‘Yes, we did.’

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

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

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

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

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

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

‘Ask away.’

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

²⁹ At 349d.

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

³¹ At 344c.

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

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

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

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

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

'Just to please you,' he said.

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

d 'Of course not.'

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

'They certainly would.'

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

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

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

'Yes, it will.'

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

‘They will,’ he said.

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

‘Let’s say it will.’

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

‘It is.’

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

‘Yes.’

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

b ‘They may as well be,’ he said.³²

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

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

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

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

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

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

‘Look into it, then.’

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

‘I do.’

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

‘I don’t follow,’ he said.

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

‘No.’

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

‘No.’

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

‘Yes.’

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

‘Of course.’

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

‘True.’

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

‘Yes, we can.’

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

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

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

³⁴ 347e.

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

‘They do.’

‘Do the eyes then also have an excellence?’

‘They do.’

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

‘Yes.’

‘And an excellence as well?’

‘Yes, they have an excellence as well.’

‘And the same with everything else?’

‘Yes, the same.’

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

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

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

‘Yes, that’s true enough,’ he said.

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

‘Yes.’

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

d ‘I think so.’

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

‘No.’

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

‘Most definitely,’ he said.

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

‘We do.’

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

‘It’s impossible.’

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

‘Necessarily.’

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

'We did.'

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

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

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

'Of course.'

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

'They may as well be,' he said.

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

'Of course.'

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

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

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

³⁶ At 350c–d.

Book 2

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

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

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

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

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

'Yes,' I said.

'And can you distinguish a third class or category of good,' he asked, 'a class which contains physical exercise, undergoing medical treatment when we are ill, practising medicine, and earning a living in general?'

d These we would describe as unpleasant but beneficial. We would not choose to have them for their own sakes, but only for the payment or other benefits which result from them.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁵ A fragment of a lost poem by Simonides.

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁸ Referring back to 364e.

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

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

¹⁹ As in the argument with Thrasy-machus (351a).

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

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

I had always had a high opinion of Glaucon's and Adeimantus' characters, but when I heard what they had to say I was particularly delighted 368 with them. 'So, children of the great man,'²¹ I said, 'Glaucon's lover was right, when you distinguished yourselves in the battle at Megara, to begin his poem in your honour with the words:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Yes.'

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

'Yes, it is.'

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

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

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

'We might,' he said.

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

b 'Yes, much easier.'

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

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

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

‘No, I can’t.’

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

‘Yes, we do.’

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

‘Yes, he does.’

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

‘Of course.’

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

‘Unquestionably.’

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

‘That is right.’

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

‘Yes, we should.’

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

‘It looks like it.’

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

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

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

'I do.'

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

'Concentrating on one,' he replied.

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

'Yes, that is clear.'

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

'Yes, it is essential.'

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

'It certainly does.'

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

'True.'

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

'They will.'

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

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

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

‘Quite impossible.’

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

‘It will.’

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

‘I think so.’

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

‘Yes, they must.’

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

‘Yes.’

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

‘Yes.’

‘So we shall need merchants as well.’

‘Definitely.’

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

‘Yes, a large number.’

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

‘Obviously,’ he said, ‘by buying and selling.’

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

‘Undoubtedly.’

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

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

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

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

'We do.'

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

'Yes.'

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

'I think they may.'

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

'Maybe it is.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

b 'Yes.'

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

d 'Of course.'²⁵

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

'Yes. Much greater.'

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

'Yes.'

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

e 'They are bound to, Socrates.'

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

'War.'

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

'Yes.'

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

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

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

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

‘True.’

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

‘Very much so,’ he said.

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

‘No.’

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Of course.'

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

'That would indeed be our job.'

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

'Yes, we must.'

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

'In what way?'

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

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

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

'Of course.'

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

'Yes, I have noticed that.'

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

'Yes.'

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

'Yes. That too.'

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

‘Precious little,’ he said.

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

‘True,’ he said.

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

‘It appears to be.’

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

‘Perhaps it is.’

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

‘Explain.’

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

‘Where?’

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

‘Yes, I am.’

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

‘Apparently not.’

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

376 ‘What do you mean? I don’t understand.’

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

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

'What is that?'

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

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

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

b 'In what way?'

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

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

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

'They are.'

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

'We can.'

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

'He certainly will.'

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

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

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

'No, we mustn't.'

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

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

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

‘It does.’

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

‘We should.’

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

‘Yes, I do.’

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

‘Yes.’

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

377 ‘I don’t understand what you mean,’ he said.

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

‘That is right.’

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

‘You were right,’ he said.

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

‘Yes, of course.’

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

‘No. We shall certainly not allow that.’

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

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

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

'Which ones?'

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

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

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

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

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

'What is this objection?'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Yes, they should.'

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

b 'Of course.'

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

'No, I don't think so.'

'Does what is not harmful do any harm?'

'No.'

'Can what does no harm do any evil?'

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

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

'Of course not.'

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

'Yes.'

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

'Yes.'

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

'Absolutely.'

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

‘I think you are absolutely right.’

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

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

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

Sometimes encounters evil, sometimes good,

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

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

- e Nor describe Zeus as

Of good and evil steward and dispenser.³⁵

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

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

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

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

³⁵ Where this line comes from is not known.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- e 'Yes, it is.'

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

- 381 'Yes, of course.'

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

'Yes.'

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

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

'That is so.'

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

'It looks like it.'

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

'Of course.'

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

'Most unlikely.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁴⁰ Homer, *Odyssey* 17.485–486.

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

The life-giving sons of Argive Inachus.⁴²

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

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

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

'Possibly.'

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

'I don't know.'

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

'What do you mean?'

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

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

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

'I quite agree,' he said.

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

'I do.'

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

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

‘Yes, I think so.’

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

‘Yes,’ he said, ‘that is exactly how it is.’

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

‘No, that would be absurd,’ he said.

‘So there is nothing of the false poet in god.’

‘I don’t think so.’

e ‘Is he afraid of his enemies? Would he tell lies for that reason?’

‘Far from it.’

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

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

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

‘No, none.’

‘So the supernatural and the divine are altogether without falsehood.’

‘Absolutely.’

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

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

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

‘Yes, I agree.’

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Book 4

419 At this point Adeimantus interrupted us. 'How will you defend yourself, Socrates, against the charge that you are not making these men very happy, and that they have only themselves to blame? The city in fact belongs to them, yet they derive no benefit from it. Other people have acquired land, built themselves beautiful great houses, and are now collecting the furniture to go with them; they make their own sacrifices to the gods; they entertain foreign visitors; and they are also the owners of the things you've just been talking about – gold, silver and everything
420 which is regarded as necessary for people who are going to be happy. Our men just seem to sit there in the city, like hired bodyguards. All they do is guard it.'

'Yes,' I said, 'and working just for their keep at that. Unlike the others, they receive no pay over and above their food, so if they feel like going abroad as private individuals, they won't be able to. They can't give presents to mistresses, or spend money on anything else they choose, on the things people who are generally regarded as happy spend money on. You left that, and a whole lot more along the same lines, out of your accusation.'

'Very well,' he said, 'you can take those as being part of the accusation as well.'

b 'What is our defence, then? Is that your question?'

'Yes.'

'We shall find our answer, I think, if we carry on down the same road. We shall say that we wouldn't be at all surprised if even our guardians were best off like this, but that in any case our aim in founding the city is not to make one group outstandingly happy, but to make the whole city

as happy as possible. We thought we would be most likely to find justice in a city of this kind, and most likely to find injustice in the city with the worst institutions, and that looking at these would give us the answer to our original question. What we are doing at the moment, we believe, is not separating off a few of the inhabitants, and making *them* happy, but constructing a complete city, and making that happy. We'll have a look at its opposite later. Imagine we were putting the colours on a statue of a man, and someone came along and told us we were doing it wrong, since we weren't using the most beautiful colours for the most beautiful parts of the living creature.¹ The eyes, the most beautiful feature, had been coloured black, not purple. We would regard it as a quite reasonable defence to say to him: "Hang on a minute. You surely don't think, do you, that we should make the eyes – or any of the other parts of the body – so beautiful that they don't even look like eyes. The thing to ask yourself is whether by giving the right colours to everything we are making the whole thing beautiful." It's the same with us. You mustn't start forcing us to give the guardians the kind of happiness which will turn them into anything other than guardians. We could perfectly easily dress our farmers in purple robes, and give them gold jewellery to wear, and tell them to work the land when they feel like it. We could let our potters recline on banqueting couches, passing the wine to the right and feasting in front of their fire, with their potters' wheels beside them for when they really felt like doing some pottery. We could make everyone else happy in the same kind of way, so that the whole city would be happy. You mustn't ask us to do that. If we do as you suggest, the farmer will not be a farmer, the potter will not be a potter, nor will anyone else continue to fulfil any of the roles which together give rise to a city.

'For most of the population it is not that important. If our cobblers are no good, if they stop being proper cobblers and only pretend to be when they are not, the city won't come to much harm. But if the guardians of our laws and our city give the impression of being guardians, without really *being* guardians, you can see that they totally destroy the entire city, since they alone provide the opportunity for its correct management and prosperity. If we are making real guardians, people who are incapable of harming the city, whereas the person who criticises us is making them into farmers of some kind, who are not so much running a city as presiding

¹ Our image of Greek statues is one of unpainted stone. This, however, is the fault of time, which has left the stone but removed the paint.

over a jolly banquet at a public festival, then he is not talking about a city at all. The question we have to ask ourselves is this. What is our aim in appointing the guardians? Is it to provide the greatest possible happiness for them? Or does our aim concern the whole city? Aren't we seeing if we can provide the greatest degree of happiness for that? Isn't that what we should be compelling these auxiliaries and guardians to do? Shouldn't we be persuading them – and everyone else likewise – to be the best possible practitioners of their own particular task? And when as a result the city prospers and is well established, can't we then leave it to each group's own nature to give it a share of happiness?

'I'm sure you're right,' he said.

'In that case,' I said, 'I want to ask another question, closely related to the last one. Are you going to think that reasonable as well?'

'What question, exactly?'

'I wonder if there aren't some things which can corrupt other skilled workers as well, so that they too turn bad.'

'What sort of things?'

'Wealth and poverty,' I said.

'And how do they corrupt them?'

'Like this. Do you think a potter who becomes rich will still be prepared to practise his craft?'

'No.'

'Does he grow more lazy and careless than he was before?'

'Yes. Much more.'

'He becomes a worse potter, in fact?'

'Again, much worse.'

'On the other hand, if poverty stops him equipping himself with tools or anything else he needs for his business, will what he produces suffer? And will his sons, or anyone else he teaches, turn out worse craftsmen as a result of his teaching?'

'Of course.'

'So both these things, poverty and wealth, have a damaging effect both on what craftsmen produce and on the craftsmen themselves.'

'It looks like it.'

'We've found another class of things, apparently, for our guardians to watch out for. They must do everything they can to prevent them creeping into the city without their noticing.'

'What sort of things do you mean?'

422 'Wealth and poverty,' I said. 'One produces luxury, idleness and

revolution, the other meanness of spirit and poor workmanship – and of course revolution as well.’

‘Exactly. But here’s a question for you, Socrates. Since our city has no money, how will it be capable of fighting a war – especially if it is forced into war with a large, wealthy city?’

‘Well, obviously fighting one large, wealthy city will be more difficult than fighting two.’

b ‘What do you mean?’ he said.

‘Well, for a start,’ I said, ‘if they have to fight, I take it their opponents will be rich men. They by contrast will be warrior-athletes, won’t they?’

‘Yes,’ he said. ‘For what that’s worth.’

‘Think about boxing, Adeimantus. Don’t you think a single boxer, with the finest possible training, could easily fight two rich, fat people who were not boxers?’

‘Possibly not both at the same time,’ he said.

c ‘Even if he were allowed to take to his heels, and then turn round and hit whichever of them was nearer to him at the time? Even if he kept on doing this repeatedly, on a sunny day, in stifling heat? Don’t you think a boxer like this could even beat a larger number of opponents of that sort?’

‘It would certainly be no surprise if he did.’

‘And don’t you think the rich have greater knowledge and experience of the art of boxing than of the art of war?’

‘I certainly do,’ he said.²

‘So our trained warriors will probably have no difficulty in fighting against two or three times their own numbers.’

‘I’m not going to argue with you,’ he said. ‘I think you’re right.’

d ‘What if they sent an embassy to one of the other two cities, and said to them, quite truthfully, “Gold or silver are no use to us. We are not allowed them. But you are. Be our allies in this war, and you can have our opponents’ wealth.” Do you think anyone who heard this offer would choose to make war on dogs who are lean and fit, rather than side with the dogs against the fat, tender sheep?’

e ‘No, I don’t. But if the wealth of the other cities is concentrated in the hands of one city, you’d better be careful it doesn’t pose a threat to the one that has no wealth.’

‘Well, if you think there’s any point in calling anything “a city” other than the one we are establishing, the best of luck to you.’

² Sports were the man of leisure’s regular concern, whereas it was a controversial question whether the handling of weapons required special training.

‘What *should* we call them?’ he asked.

‘The others need some grander name,’ I said. ‘Each of them is “cities upon cities, but no city,” as the quip goes.³ At the very least two, opposed
 423 to one another. A city of the poor, and a city of the rich. Each of these contains many more, and if you treat them as a single city, you will achieve nothing, whereas if you treat them as several cities, offering one group the money and power – or even the people themselves – of another group, you will always have plenty of allies and few enemies. As long as your city lives the disciplined life we have just laid down for it, it will be a great city. Not in reputation, I don’t mean, but great in fact, even if it is a city with only
 b a thousand men to fight for it. You will have a job to find a single city which is great in this way, either among Greeks or non-Greeks, though you will find plenty, many times the size of this one, which give the illusion of greatness. Don’t you agree?’

‘Emphatically,’ he said.

‘In that case,’ I said, ‘this could also be an excellent marker, or limit, for our rulers, to show them how big they should make the city, and the amount of land they should mark out for a city this size, before saying “no” to any more.’

‘What is the limit?’ he asked.

‘This, I would guess. As long as any increase in size is unlikely to stop the city remaining united, they should let it go on increasing. But not beyond that point.’

‘Yes, that’s a good approach,’ he said.

c ‘In which case we shall give our guardians one further instruction. They are to guard in every way against the city being small, but also against its giving the appearance of greatness. It should be no more than adequate in size, and united.’

‘A trivial task for them, no doubt.’

‘Yes,’ I said. ‘Almost as trivial as the requirement we mentioned earlier,⁴
 d for an inferior child of the guardians to be sent to join the other classes, and for an outstanding child from those classes to join the guardians. This was intended to show that among the rest of the citizen body they should assign each individual to the one task he is naturally fitted for, so that by applying himself to his own one task each may become a single person

³ It is likely that this obscure proverbial expression had its origin in a board-game of the *petteia* family (see note 10 to 333b, p. 8 above), a game of battle between cities, itself called ‘Cities’.

⁴ 415b–c.

rather than many people, and in this way the entire city may grow to be a single city rather than many cities.'

'Oh, fine,' he said. 'Even simpler than our first directive.'

'You may be thinking, my dear Adeimantus, that we give them a great
c long list of weighty instructions. But we don't do that. The instructions are all trivial, provided they keep a careful eye on the "first and great commandment."⁵ Though "great" isn't really the right word. More of a minimum requirement.'

'And what is that requirement?' he asked.

'Education and upbringing,' I said. 'If the guardians are well educated, and grow up into men of sound judgment, they will have no difficulty in
424 seeing all this for themselves, plus other things we are saying nothing about – such as taking wives, marriage, and having children. They will see the necessity of making everything as nearly as possible "shared among friends," in the words of the proverb.'⁶

'Yes, that would be best,' he said.

'Once it gets off to a good start,' I said, 'our regime will be a kind of virtuous circle. If you can keep a good system of upbringing and education, they produce naturally good specimens. These in their turn, if they receive a good education, develop into even better specimens than their
b predecessors. Better in general, and better in particular for reproduction. The same is true in the animal kingdom.'

'I'm sure you're right,' he said.

'To put it briefly, then, the overseers of our city must keep a firm grip on our system of education, protecting it above all else, and not allowing it to be destroyed accidentally. They must reject any radical innovation in physical or musical education, preserving them as far as they can unchanged. They should regard with apprehension anyone who tells them that

The latest song, fresh from the singer's lips,
Has most appeal to men.⁷

c People who approve of this might easily think the poet meant a new style of song, rather than just new songs. But that is not the sort of thing they

⁵ Said with reference to the proverb 'the fox knows many things, the hedgehog one great thing'.

⁶ The proverb was 'friends will hold things in common', and is said to have originated in the unusually close-knit Pythagorean communities of southern Italy.

⁷ An adaptation of Homer, *Odyssey* 1.351–352.

should approve of, and they should not think that was what the poet meant. They should beware of new forms of music, which are likely to affect the whole system of education. Changes in styles of music are always politically revolutionary. That's what Damon says, and I believe him.'

'In which case, you can count me among the believers as well,' said Adeimantus.

d 'Presumably this is where we think the guardians should build their watchtower. In music.'

'It's certainly a place where breaking rules can easily become a habit without anyone realising,' he said.

'Yes, people don't see how breaking rules in the realm of entertainment can do any harm.'

'It can't,' he said. 'Except that once the idea of breaking rules has gradually established itself, it seeps imperceptibly into people's characters and habits. From there it brims over, increasing as it goes, into their contracts
e with one another. And from contracts, Socrates, it extends its course of wanton disruption to laws and political institutions, until finally it destroys everything in private and public life.'

'I see. So that's how it is, is it?'

'I think so,' he said.

'In that case, as we were saying at the beginning, our children must have entertainment of a more disciplined kind.⁸ When entertainment is
425 undisciplined – and children likewise – it's impossible for the children to grow up into disciplined and responsible men.'

'Of course,' he said.

'If they start off as children with the right sort of entertainments, they will acquire discipline through their musical education. This discipline has the opposite effect on them to the effect you were describing just now. It accompanies them in all their actions, and helps them grow, correcting any part of the city which may earlier have gone wrong.'

'That is true,' he said.

'When this happens,' I said, 'these people find out for themselves the apparently trivial rules which were all destroyed by their predecessors.'

'What rules are those?'

b 'Things like the young keeping quiet in the presence of their elders, as

⁸ The reference is to the austerity of the literary and musical reforms proposed in Books 2 and 3, and first remarked upon at 399c.

they should; giving up their seats to them; standing up when they come in; respect for their parents; their hair-styles, clothes, shoes and general appearance. All those sorts of things. Don't you agree?"

'Yes, I do.'

'I think it's absurd to make laws about these things. They aren't the result of spoken or written rules. And even if they were, they wouldn't last.'

'Of course not.'

c 'It certainly looks, Adeimantus, as if everything follows from the direction a person's education takes. Like always produces like, doesn't it?"

'Naturally.'

'And I imagine we'd say the final result, for better or worse, is something unique, complete and vigorous.'

'What else?"

'Well, for my part,' I said, 'in this situation I wouldn't go so far as to try and pass laws about this kind of thing.'

'I'm sure you're right,' he said.

'But then what on earth are we to do about business dealings?' I asked.

d 'The contracts various parties make with one another in the market-place, for example? Or contracts with builders, cases of slander or assault, the bringing of lawsuits and the selection of juries, the payment or collection of any tariffs due in markets or ports, and the general regulation of markets, city or harbours? Can we really bring ourselves to legislate for any of these?"

e 'No,' he said. 'If we've got the right sort of citizens, it's a waste of time telling them what to do. I imagine they can easily develop most of the necessary legislation for themselves.'

'Yes, my friend,' I said. 'Provided, that is, god grants them the safe preservation of the laws we have described so far.'

'The alternative,' he said, 'is for them to spend their whole lives enacting and amending detailed legislation of this kind, in the belief that they will hit on the ideal solution.'

'You mean their lives will be like those of people who are ill, and who lack the self-discipline required to give up their unhealthy way of life.'

'Precisely.'

426 'What a delightful life those people lead! Their medical treatment achieves nothing, except to increase the complications and severity of their ailments, yet they live in constant hope that each new medicine recommended will be the one which will make them healthy.'

‘Yes, that’s exactly what life is like for patients of that sort,’ he said.

‘And what about their equally charming habit of reserving their greatest hostility for the person who tells them the truth, which is that until
b they give up drinking, over-eating, sex and idleness, no medicine, cauterisation or surgery, no charms, amulets or anything of that kind, will do them the slightest good.’

‘It’s not a charming habit in the least,’ he said. ‘There’s nothing charming about getting angry with people who tell you the truth.’

‘You don’t seem to be a great admirer of people like this,’ I said.

‘Emphatically not.’

‘So you won’t be impressed if, as we were just saying, the city as a whole
c behaves like this. Don’t you think this is just what cities are doing when they are badly governed, and yet forbid their citizens to make any change at all in the constitution, telling them they will be put to death if they do? Rather it is the person who takes the city as it is, who is the people’s most beguiling servant and flatterer, who creeps into their good graces, who anticipates their wishes and is adept at satisfying them – this person they will declare a fine man, a man profoundly wise. This man they will honour.’⁹

‘Yes, I think it’s exactly what cities are doing. And I can see nothing to be said for it.’

d ‘How about those who are willing and eager to be the servants of cities like this? Don’t you admire their courage and readiness?’

‘Yes, I do,’ he said. ‘Apart from the ones who let the approval of the majority fool them into thinking they really are statesmen.’

‘Are you saying you can’t find any excuse for these people? If a man knows nothing about measurement, and lots of people who also know nothing tell him he is six feet tall, do you suppose it is possible for him to
e avoid thinking that’s what he is?’

‘No, I don’t.’

‘Don’t let it annoy you, then. After all, surely people like this are the most entertaining of all, passing and amending the kind of laws we were describing just now, in the constant belief that they will find an answer to

⁹ Although the Athenian political system made it quite easy for citizens to propose new laws or decrees for action, it hedged the procedure by making liable to prosecution and severe penalty anyone whose proposal was found to contravene existing law. The rhetoric used in such cases tended to present the laws as ancestral and permanent. In practice, new laws and decrees were most often proposed by the leading politicians, who became adept at surviving the legal hazards.

dishonesty in business dealings and all the areas I have just been talking about. They don't realise they are cutting off the Hydra's head.'

427 'Though that's exactly what they *are* doing,' he said.

'Well, if it were up to me,' I said, 'I wouldn't have thought the true law-giver should concern himself with these details of the laws and the constitution – either in a badly-governed or a well-governed city. In one it is pointless, and achieves nothing; in the other, some of the legislation can be devised by absolutely anyone, while the rest follows automatically from our previous arrangements.'

b 'In that case,' he asked, 'what area of lawmaking have we still got left?'

And I said, '*We* haven't got any. But Apollo at Delphi has – the most important, the finest and the most fundamental pieces of legislation.'

'What are those?'

'The foundation of temples. Sacrifices. Other acts of service performed for gods, demigods and heroes. The burial places of the dead, and the observance which must be paid to those below to keep them
c favourable. We do not know about this kind of thing, and when we found our city, if we have any sense, the only advice we shall follow, the only authority we shall recognise, is the traditional authority. And I take it that in these matters Apollo, making his pronouncements seated on the stone which forms the earth's navel, is the ancestral authority for the whole of mankind.'¹⁰

'You are right,' he said. 'That must be our approach.'

d 'In that case, son of Ariston, your city can now be regarded as founded. The next step is to look inside it, and for that you are going to need a pretty powerful light. You can provide your own, or get your brother and Polemarchus and the others to help you. Then perhaps we shall find some way of seeing just where in the city justice is, where injustice is, what the difference is between the two, and which of them people who are going to be happy must possess, whether all the gods and all mankind realise they possess it or not.'

e 'Oh, no, you don't,' said Glaucon. 'You told us *you* were going to look for justice. You said it was impious not to do everything you possibly could to support justice.'

¹⁰ The oracle of Apollo at Delphi was authoritative on religious questions for the entire Greek world – questions which were not as a rule so sharply differentiated from other kinds of political questions as they are in this passage. It was also consulted before the founding of any colony. The sanctuary contained a stone, the 'navel-stone', which was thought to mark the centre of the earth.

‘That’s true,’ I said. ‘Thank you for reminding me. I must do what I promised. But you must do your bit as well.’

‘We will.’

‘In that case,’ I said, ‘here’s how I hope to find the answer. I take it our city, if it has been correctly founded, is wholly good.’

‘It can’t help being.’

‘Clearly, then, it is wise, courageous, self-disciplined and just.’

‘Clearly.’

‘Then as we find each of these elements in it, those we have not yet found will constitute the remainder.’

‘Of course.’

428 ‘With any four things, if we were looking for one of them in some place or other, and it was the first thing we caught sight of, that would be enough for us. But if we identified the other three first, then the one we were looking for would *ipso facto* have been identified as well, since clearly it could then only be whatever was left.’

‘You are right,’ he said.

‘It’s the same for us now. Since there actually are four elements, should we conduct our search in the same way?’

‘Yes. Obviously.’

b ‘Well, I think the first one to catch the eye is wisdom. And it seems to have an unusual feature.’

‘What is that?’

‘It is truly wise, I think, this city we have described. It has good judgment, doesn’t it?’

‘Yes.’

‘Now this thing, judgment, is clearly knowledge of some sort. Good decisions, I take it, are the result of knowledge, not ignorance.’

‘Obviously.’

‘But our city contains many types of knowledge, of very different kinds.’

‘Of course it does.’

c ‘Is it the knowledge possessed by its carpenters which entitles us to call our city wise, and say it possesses good judgment?’

‘Certainly not,’ he said. ‘That merely entitles us to call it good at carpentry.’

‘So a city is not to be called wise because of its knowledge and judgment in making the best possible wooden furniture.’

‘Absolutely not.’

'How about its knowledge of making things out of bronze, or any other knowledge of that kind?'

'No, nothing like that,' he said.

'Nor the knowledge of how to grow crops from the soil, since that's called farming.'

'So I believe.'

'Is there, then,' I asked, 'among any of the citizens of this city we have
d just founded, *any* branch of knowledge which makes decisions about the city as a whole – deciding on the best approach to itself and to other cities – and not about one particular element in the city?'

'There most certainly is.'

'What is this knowledge, and in which group is it to be found?'

'It is the knowledge possessed by the guardians,' he said. 'And it is to be found in the rulers, whom we have just been calling the perfect guardians.'¹¹

'And what is the label you give your city on the strength of this knowledge?'

'I call it sound in judgment, and truly wise.'

e 'So which do you think our city will have more of? Metalworkers, or these true guardians?'

'Metalworkers,' he said. 'Far more.'

'Of all the groups which have a branch of knowledge of their own, and which are identified as a group, wouldn't the guardians be the smallest?'

'Easily the smallest.'

'In which case, the wisdom of a city founded on natural principles depends entirely on its smallest group and element – the leading and
429 ruling element – and the knowledge that element possesses. The class which can be expected to share in this branch of knowledge, which of all branches of knowledge is the only one we can call wisdom, is by its nature, apparently, the smallest class.'

'That's very true,' he said.

'Well, that's one of the four things we were looking for. And we've not only found it, I'm not quite sure how, but also found whereabouts in the city it is located.'

'Nothing much wrong with the way it was found as far as I'm concerned,' he said.

'Courage, next. It is not hard to see both the thing itself and the part of

¹¹ They were distinguished as 'full guardians' at 414b.

the city in which it is located, the part which gives the city the name “courageous.”

‘Explain.’

- b ‘No one classifying a city as cowardly or brave would look at any other part of it than the part which makes war in the city’s defence, and serves in its army.’

‘Yes, that’s the only part anyone would look at,’ he said.

‘I think the reason for that,’ I said, ‘is that the cowardice or bravery of the rest of the population would not be enough to make the city itself cowardly or brave.’

‘No, it wouldn’t.’

- c ‘Does that mean a city’s courage, as well as its wisdom, lies in a part of itself, because it has in that part a power capable of preserving, in all situations, the opinion that what is to be feared is just what the lawgiver listed and classified as such in the course of their education? Or isn’t that what you call courage?’

‘I didn’t altogether follow that. Say it again.’

‘I mean that courage is a kind of preservation,’ I said.

‘Preservation? Of what?’

- d ‘Of the opinion formed by education, under the influence of law, about which things are to be feared. When I talked about its preservation in all situations, I meant keeping it intact, through pains, pleasures, desires and fears, without rejecting it. I can give you an analogy, if you would like.’

‘I would.’

- e ‘When dyers want to dye wool purple,’ I said, ‘you know they start by selecting, from wools of various colours, the ones which are naturally white. They give these a lengthy preliminary preparation, so that they will absorb as much of the colour as possible. Only then do they do the dyeing. Anything dyed in this way is colour-fast. No washing, with or without detergent, can remove the colour from it. But when things are dyed in some other way, whether the wool is some other colour, or whether it is white but dyed without preparation, you know what happens.’

‘Yes,’ he said. ‘They look faded and ridiculous.’

- 430 ‘That’s the kind of thing you must imagine we too were doing, to the best of our ability, when we selected our soldiers and gave them their musical, poetic and physical education. You must realise that all we were trying to do was organise things so that they would absorb our laws as completely as possible, like a dye. We wanted them to possess the right character and upbringing, so that their views on danger and other things

would be colour-fast, incapable of being washed out by any of the detergents which are such good solvents. Not by pleasure, which is a better solvent than any soda or lye. Nor by pain, fear or desire, which are stronger than any other detergent. This kind of power and preservation I call courage – the preservation, in all situations, of correct and lawful belief about what is to be feared and what is not. That's my definition, unless you have some objection to it.'

'No, I have no objection,' he said. 'I take it that when a slave or an animal has a correct opinion on these subjects, an opinion which is not the result of education, you do not regard this as properly lawful,¹² and you give it some name other than courage.'

'Precisely,' I said.

'In that case, I accept your definition of courage.'

'Take it as a definition of courage *in a city*,' I said, 'and you will be right. We can give a better account of courage some other time, if you like. At the moment, though, we are investigating justice, not courage. And for that purpose I think this is enough.'

'Yes. You are right.'

'That leaves two things to for us to identify in our city,' I said. 'One is self-discipline. The other is the object of our entire investigation, justice.'

'Yes.'

'Well, is there some way we can find justice without having to bother about self-discipline?'

'I don't know,' he said. 'I wouldn't want it to make its appearance too soon, if that means giving up the search for self-discipline. If I have any say in the matter, please examine self-discipline first.'

'Well, if it's not wrong of me, I'm quite happy to do that?'

'Start looking, then.'

'I shall have to,' I said. 'My first impression is that it is more like a harmony or musical mode than the other two.'

'In what way?'

'Self-discipline, I take it, is a kind of order. They say it is a mastery of pleasures and desires, and a person is described as being in some way or other master of himself. And there are other clues of the same sort in the way it is talked about, aren't there?'

'Indeed there are,' he said.

'But isn't the phrase "master of himself" an absurdity?¹³ The master of

¹² A less secure manuscript reading would be translated 'not properly permanent' rather than 'not properly lawful'.

¹³ The literal meaning of the phrase translated 'master of himself' here and through-

431 himself must surely also be slave to himself, and the slave to himself must be master of himself. It's the same person being talked about all the time.'

'Of course.'

'What this way of speaking seems to me to indicate is that in the soul of a single person there is a better part and a worse part. When the naturally better part is in control of the worse, this is what is meant by "master of himself." It is a term of approval. But when as a result of bad upbringing or bad company the better element, which is smaller, is overwhelmed
b by the mass of the worse element, this is a matter for reproach. They call a person in this condition a slave to himself, undisciplined.'

'Yes, I think that is what it indicates,' he said.

'Now, if you take a look at this new city of ours, you will find one of these situations prevailing. You will admit that it can quite legitimately be called master of itself, if something in which the better rules the worse can be called self-disciplined and master of itself.'

'Yes, when I take a look at our city,' he said, 'you are right.'

c 'But you do also find the whole range and variety of desires, pleasures and pains. Particularly in children, women, slaves, and among so-called free men, in the majority of ordinary people.'

'You certainly do.'

'Whereas simple, moderate desires, which are guided by rational calculation, using intelligence and correct belief, are things you come across only among a few people, those with the best natural endowment and the best education.'

'True,' he said.

d 'Well, do you see the same qualities in your city? And are the desires of the ordinary majority controlled by the desires and wisdom of the discerning minority?'

'Yes, they are.'

'So if any city can be called the master of its pleasures and desires, and master of itself, this one can.'

'It certainly can,' he said.

'In which case, can't we also call it self-disciplined in all these respects?'

'Very much so.'

e 'What is more, if agreement is to be found among rulers and ruled in any city about which of them is to rule, it is to be found in this one, don't you think?'

out this passage is 'stronger than himself', which is an idiom in Greek but not in English. Correspondingly, the phrase translated 'slave of himself' has the literal meaning 'weaker than himself'.

'I couldn't agree more.'

'Well then, when they agree in this way, in which of the two groups of citizens will you say the self-discipline is located? In the rulers? Or in the ruled?'

'In both, I suppose.'

'See what a plausible prediction we made just now,' I said, 'when we compared self-discipline to a harmony of some sort?'¹⁴

'Explain.'

432 'It is not the same as courage and wisdom. Each of those was located in a particular part, and yet one of them made the whole city wise, and the other made it brave. Self-discipline does not operate in the same way. It extends literally throughout the entire city, over the whole scale, causing those who are weakest – in intelligence, if you like, or in strength, or again in numbers, wealth or anything like that – together with those who are strongest and those in between, to sing in unison. So we would be quite justified in saying that self-discipline is this agreement about which of them should rule – a natural harmony of worse and better, both in the city and in each individual.'

b 'I quite agree,' he said.

'Very well. Three of the qualities have been identified in our city. Or such is our impression, at any rate. What can the remaining quality be, which allows a city to share in excellence? Because clearly, this is going to be justice.'

'Clearly.'

c 'Now, Glaucon, this is the moment for us to position ourselves, like hunters, in a ring round the thicket. We must concentrate, and make sure justice does not escape. We don't want it to vanish and disappear from view. It's obviously here somewhere, so keep your eyes open, and try your hardest to see where it is. If you see it first, give me a shout.'

'Some hope,' he said. 'No, I'm afraid the only help I'm going to be to you is if you want a follower, someone who can see things when they are pointed out to him.'

'Say a prayer, then, and follow me.'

'I will. Just you lead the way,' he said.

'The place is impenetrable,' I said, 'and full of shadows. And it's certainly dark. Not an easy place to dislodge our quarry from. Still, we must go on.'

'Yes, we must.'

d And then I caught sight of it. 'Aha! Over here, Glaucon,' I cried. 'This looks like the trail. I think our quarry is not going to escape us, after all.'

¹⁴ At 430e.

‘That’s good news,’ he said.

‘We’ve been complete idiots.’

‘In what way?’

‘We’re fine ones! It’s been lying here under our noses all this time. Right from the start, though we couldn’t see it. We’ve been making fools of ourselves. You know how sometimes you look for a thing when you’re holding it in your hand. Well, that’s what we’ve been doing. We haven’t been looking in the right direction. We’ve been looking miles away in the opposite direction, and that’s probably why we haven’t seen it.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘All I mean,’ I said, ‘is that I think we’ve been talking about it, and listening to ourselves talking about it, without realising it was in some way what we were talking about.’

‘This is a very long introduction,’ he said. ‘Your audience is getting impatient.’

433 ‘Very well. See if I’m talking sense, then. The principle we laid down right at the start, when we first founded our city, as something we must stick to throughout – this, I think, or some form of it, is justice. What we laid down – and often repeated, if you remember – was that each individual should follow, out of the occupations available in the city, the one for which his natural character best fitted him.’¹⁵

‘Yes, we did say that.’

b ‘And we have often heard others say, and have often said ourselves, that doing one’s own job, and not trying to do other people’s jobs for them, is justice.’¹⁶

‘Yes, we have said that.’

‘Well, it looks, my friend, as if in some way or other *justice* is this business of everyone performing his own task. Do you know what makes me think that?’

‘No. Tell me.’

‘I think the remaining element in the city, besides the virtues we have been looking at – self-discipline, courage and wisdom – is the thing which gave all the others the power to come into being, and the thing whose

¹⁵ Laid down at 370a–c; repeated or alluded to at 374a–c, 395b, 406c, 421a.

¹⁶ Credit for not trying to do other people’s jobs was typically claimed by or awarded to citizens who avoided litigiousness or aggressive politicking, and to states which respected the autonomy of other states (see *GPM* 188). It therefore accrued also to the contemplative life of the philosopher who shunned political ambition. On the other hand, non-interference could be given the coloration of apathy, aggressiveness that of dynamism, as famously in Pericles’ funeral oration in Thucydides (2.40).

c continued presence keeps them safe once they *have* come into being. We said earlier that justice would be the one left over, if we could only find the other three.¹⁷

'Yes, it would have to be,' he said.

'Now, if we had to decide,' I said, 'which of these elements would do most to make our city good by its inclusion, that would be a difficult decision. Is it the agreement of the rulers and the ruled? Or the preservation, in the ranks of the warriors, of an opinion approved by law about which things are to be feared and which are not? Or the wisdom and protectiveness we find in the rulers? Or does the largest contribution to making the d city good come from the presence, in child and woman, slave and free man, in skilled craftsman, ruler and ruled, of the principle that each single individual is to perform his own task without troubling himself about the tasks of others?'

'Yes, that would be a difficult decision,' he said. 'Bound to be.'

'So as a means of producing an excellent city, the ability of everyone to perform his own function is apparently a strong competitor with the city's wisdom, self-discipline and courage.'

'Very much so.'

'And would you not say that the thing which is a strong contender with them when it comes to producing an excellent city is justice?'

e 'Definitely.'

'Here's another way of looking at it. See if you still agree. Will you give the rulers in your city the task of hearing cases in the lawcourts?'

'Of course.'

'When they hear cases, will their main aim be to make sure no class either takes what belongs to another, or has what belongs to it taken away by somebody else?'

'Yes, that will be their main aim.'

'Because this is just?'

'Yes.'

434 'So from this point of view as well, people's ownership and use of what belongs to them, and is their own, can be agreed to be justice.'

'That is so.'

'Now, see if you agree with me about the next step. If a carpenter tried to do the job of a shoemaker, or a shoemaker the job of a carpenter, either because they exchanged tools and positions in society, or because one

¹⁷ 427e-428a.

person tried to do both jobs, do you think in general that changes of this sort would do much harm to the city?’

‘No, not really,’ he said.

‘But I imagine it’s different when someone who is naturally a craftsman
b or moneymaker of some other kind is puffed up by wealth, popularity, strength, or something like that, and tries to enter the warrior class, or when one of the warriors tries to enter the decision-making and guardian class, without being up to it. If these people exchange tools and positions in society, or if one person tries to do all these jobs at the same time, then I think you will agree with me that this change and interference on their part is destructive to the city.’

‘Yes, it certainly is.’

c ‘It is the interference of our three classes with one another, then, and interchange between them, which does the greatest harm to the city, and can rightly be called the worst crime against it.’

‘Absolutely.’

‘Isn’t “injustice” the name for the greatest crime against one’s own city?’

‘Of course.’

‘That, then, is what injustice is. Conversely, its opposite – the ability of the commercial, auxiliary and guardian classes to mind their own business, with each of them performing its own function in the city – this will be justice, and will make the city just.’

d ‘Yes, I think that’s exactly how it is,’ he said.

‘I don’t think we can be too sure about it just yet,’ I said. ‘If the same characteristic turns up in each individual human being, and is agreed to be justice there too, then we shall accept it, since there will be no alternative. If not, we shall have to look for something else. For the moment, though, let’s complete our original enquiry. We thought if we started with some large object which had justice in it, and tried to observe justice there,
e that would make it easier to see what justice was like in the individual.¹⁸

We chose a city as this large object, and that’s why we founded the best city we could, in the confident belief that it is in the good city that justice is to be found. Now let us apply our findings there to the individual. If they agree, well and good. If we come to some other conclusion about the
435 individual, then we shall go back to the city again, and test it on that. If we look at the two side by side, perhaps we can get a spark from them.

¹⁸ See 368e.

Like rubbing dry sticks together. If that makes justice appear, we shall have confirmed it to our satisfaction.'

'You're on the right road,' he said. 'That is what we must do.'

'Very well, then,' I said. 'If you have two things – one larger, one smaller – and you call them by the same name, are they like or unlike in respect of that which gives them the same name?'

'Like,' he said.

- b 'So the just man in his turn, simply in terms of his justice, will be no different from a just city. He will be like the just city.'

'He will.'

'In the case of the city, we decided it was just because each of the three types of nature in it was performing its own function. And we decided it was self-disciplined, brave and wise as a result of other conditions and states of the same three types.'

'True.'

- c 'In that case, my admirable friend, if the individual too has these same elements in his soul, we shall feel entitled to expect that it is because these elements are in the same condition in him as they were in the city that he is properly titled by the same names we gave the city.'

'Yes, inevitably,' he said.

'Well! Here's another simple little question we seem to have blundered into,' I said. 'About the soul, this time. Does it contain these three elements within it? Or doesn't it?'

'Not such a little question, if you ask me. Maybe, Socrates, there is some truth in the saying that the good never comes easily.'

- d 'So it seems. And I have to tell you, Glaucon, that in my view we are certainly not going to find a precise answer to our enquiry by the kind of methods we are using at the moment in our argument. There *is* a way of getting there, but it is longer and more time-consuming.¹⁹ Still, we may be able to get an answer which is no worse than our earlier answers and investigations.'

'Can't we be content with that?' he said. 'For my part, I would reckon that was enough to be going on with.'

'Yes,' I said, 'I'd be more than satisfied with that, too.'

'No weakening, then,' he said. 'Carry on with the enquiry.'

- e 'Very well. Do we have no choice but to agree that in each of us are found the same elements and characteristics as are found in the city? After

¹⁹ The allusion is explained in Book 6, 504a–d.

all, where else could the city have got them from? It would be ludicrous to imagine that the spirited element in cities has come into being from anywhere other than the individual citizens – where the citizens in fact possess this reputation. People in Thrace, for example, or Scythia, or pretty well anywhere in the North. The same goes for love of learning,
 436 which can be regarded as the outstanding characteristic of our region.²⁰ Or the commercial instinct, which you could say was to be found principally among the Phoenicians and people in Egypt.’

‘Yes, it would be totally ludicrous to imagine these qualities came from anywhere else.’

‘That’s the way it is, then,’ I said. ‘No problem in recognising that.’

‘None at all.’

‘What *is* a problem, though, is this. Do we do each of these things with the same part of ourselves? Or, since there are three elements, do we do different things with different elements? Is there one element in us for learning, another for feeling spirited, and yet a third for our desire for the
 b pleasures of food, sex, and things like that? Or do we do each of these things, when we embark upon them, with our entire soul? Those are questions to which it will be hard to give a convincing answer.’

‘I agree,’ he said.

‘So, let us try to ascertain whether they are the same as each other or different. And let’s go about it like this.’

‘Like what?’

‘It’s obvious that nothing can do two opposite things, or be in two opposite states, in the same part of itself, at the same time, in relation to the same object. So if this is what we find happening in these examples,
 c we shall know there was not just one element involved, but more than one.’

‘Fair enough.’

‘Now, concentrate.’

‘I am,’ he said. ‘Carry on.’

‘Is it possible,’ I asked, ‘for one thing to be at the same time, and with the same part of itself, at rest and in motion?’

‘No.’

‘Can we be even more precise about what we are agreeing, to avoid argument later on? Imagine a man standing still, but moving his head and

²⁰ Both because the clear, dry air of the place was thought to promote clarity and acuteness in its inhabitants, and because Athens was an international magnet for intellectuals and had an especially well-developed cultural life.

his hands. If anyone said the same man was at the same time both at rest and in motion, then I don't think we would regard that as a legitimate claim. What he should say is that one part of him is at rest, and another part is in motion, shouldn't he?

'Yes, he should.'

'He could amuse himself with an even more ingenious example. If he said, of a spinning top with its centre fixed in one place, or of anything else rotating on the same spot, that the whole thing is both at rest and in motion, we would not accept that. In cases like this, the parts in respect of which they are both stationary and in motion are not the same parts. We would say they possess both a vertical axis and a circumference. With respect to the axis they are at rest, since they remain upright. With respect to the circumference they are rotating. And if, while they are still revolving, the vertical axis inclines to right or left, or front or back, then they can't be at rest at all.'

'True,' he said.

'So we're not going to be at all intimidated by examples of this kind. It will do nothing to persuade us that it is in any way possible for one thing, in the same part of itself, with respect to the same object, to be at the same time in two opposite states, or to be or do two opposite things.'

'It certainly won't persuade me,' he said.

'All the same,' I said, 'we don't want to have to work our way through every objection of this kind, spending hours establishing that they are not valid. So let us proceed from here on the assumption that this *is* the situation, with the proviso that if this isn't how things turn out to be, all our conclusions based on this assumption will have been destroyed.'

'Yes, that is what we should do,' he said.

'Very well. Now, think about things like saying "yes" and saying "no", desire and rejection, or attraction and repulsion. Wouldn't you classify all those as pairs of opposites? Whether they are activities or states will be irrelevant for our purposes.'

'Yes, as opposites.'

'What about hunger and thirst,' I said, 'and desires in general? Or wanting and being willing? Wouldn't you find all those a place among the categories we just mentioned? Won't you say, for example, that the soul of the person who desires something either reaches out for what it desires, or draws what it wants towards itself? Or to the extent that it is willing to have something provided for it, that it mentally says "yes" to it, as if in reply to a question, as it stretches out towards the realisation of its desire?'

‘Yes.’

‘What about not wanting, being unwilling, and not desiring? Won’t we classify them with rejection and refusal, with all the corresponding opposites, in fact?’

‘Of course.’

d ‘That being so, can we say that the desires form a class, and that the most striking of them are the ones we call thirst and hunger?’

‘We can.’

‘And that one is a desire for drink, the other a desire for food?’

‘Yes.’

e ‘Well, then, is thirst, considered simply as thirst, a desire in the soul for anything more than we have just said? For example, is thirst thirst for a warm drink or a cold drink? For a large drink or a small one? Or, to put it briefly, is it for any particular kind of drink at all? Or does the addition of a little bit of warmth to the thirst produce the desire for cold as well? And does the addition of cold produce desire for warmth? If the presence of largeness makes the thirst a large one, will it produce the desire for a large drink? And will a small thirst produce the desire for a small one? But thirst itself cannot possibly be a desire for anything other than its natural object, which is purely and simply drink – any more than hunger can be a desire for anything other than food.’

‘That’s right,’ he said. ‘Each and every desire, in itself, is a desire only for the thing which is its natural object. The additional element in each case is what makes it a desire for this or that particular *kind* of object.’

438 ‘We don’t want to be interrupted by objections we haven’t considered,’ I said. ‘So here’s one. No one desires drink, but rather good drink. No one desires food, but rather good food, since everyone desires good things. So if thirst is a desire, it must be a desire for something good. Either a drink, or whatever else it is a desire for. The same goes for the other desires.’

‘Well,’ he said, ‘you might think there was something in this objection.’

b ‘Yes,’ I said, ‘but if you take all the things which are such as to be related to something else, I think that qualified instances are related to qualified objects, whereas the things themselves are each of them related only to an object which is just itself.’

‘I don’t understand,’ he said.

‘What don’t you understand? That it is the nature of what is greater to be greater than something?’

‘No, I understand that.’

‘Greater than what is smaller?’

‘Yes.’

‘And what is much greater than what is much smaller?’

‘Yes.’

‘And what was once greater than what was once smaller, and what will be greater than what will be smaller?’

‘Obviously,’ he said.

c ‘And the same with more in relation to less, double in relation to half, and all those sorts of things? Or heavier in relation to lighter, faster in relation to that which is slower? Or hot in relation to cold, for that matter, or anything of that sort?’

‘Certainly.’

d ‘What about branches of knowledge? Doesn’t the same principle apply? There is knowledge in itself, which is knowledge simply of that which can be learnt – or of whatever it is we are to suppose that knowledge is knowledge of. Then there is this or that branch of knowledge, which is knowledge of this or that specific subject. The kind of thing I mean is this. When a knowledge of housebuilding came into being, did it differ from other branches of knowledge? Was that why it was called knowledge of building?’

‘Yes, of course.’

‘Because it was a specific branch of knowledge, different from all the other branches?’

‘Yes.’

‘And was it not because it was knowledge of some specific subject that it became a specific branch of knowledge? And the same with the other branches of skill and knowledge?’

‘True.’

e ‘Well, if you understood it this time,’ I said, ‘that is what you must take me to have meant just now. I said that when things are such as to stand in some relation to something else, the things just by themselves are related to objects just by themselves, while qualified instances are related to qualified objects. That’s not in any way to say they *are like* the things they are in relation to – that the knowledge of health and disease is healthy or diseased, or that the knowledge of good and bad is good or bad. Rather, since the knowledge here is not of that which just is the object of knowledge, but of some qualified object – in this case what is healthy or diseased – the knowledge itself turned out to be a specific branch of knowledge as well. This is why it was no longer simply called knowledge, but rather, because of this specific addition, medical knowledge.’

‘I understand,’ he said. ‘And I think you’re right.’

439 ‘Let’s go back to thirst, then,’ I said. ‘Won’t you put that in the category of things which are what they are in relation to something else? Thirst, then, is of course thirst . . .’

‘Yes. For drink.’

‘So for any particular kind of drink, isn’t there also a particular kind of thirst? Whereas thirst as such is not thirst for a large drink or a small drink, nor for a good drink or a bad drink – nor, to put it briefly, for any specific drink at all. No, the object of thirst as such is, in the nature of things, simply drink as such, isn’t it?’

‘Absolutely.’

‘Then all the thirsty person’s soul wants, in so far as he is thirsty, is to drink. That’s what it reaches out for, and makes for.’

b ‘Clearly.’

‘And if there is anything at all holding it back when it is thirsty, would this have to be a different element in it from the actual part which is thirsty, and which drives it like an animal to drink? After all, the same thing cannot, in our view, do two opposite things, in the same part of itself, with respect to the same object, at the same time.’

‘No, it cannot.’

‘In the same way, I think it’s wrong to say of an archer that his hands are pushing and pulling the bow at the same time. What we should say is that one hand is pushing, while the other is pulling.’

‘Precisely,’ he said.

c ‘Now, can we say that some thirsty people sometimes refuse to drink?’

‘Yes, lots of them,’ he said. ‘Often.’

‘What can be said about these people, then? Can’t we say there is something in their soul telling them to drink, and also something stopping them? Something different from, and stronger than, the thing telling them they *should* drink?’

‘Yes, I think we can say that,’ he said.

d ‘The thing which stops them in these cases – doesn’t it arise, when it does arise, as a result of rational calculation, whereas the things which drive or draw them towards drink are the products of feelings and disorders?’

‘Apparently.’

‘It will be a reasonable inference, then,’ I said, ‘that they are two completely different things. The part of the soul with which we think rationally we can call the rational element. The part with which we feel sexual

desire, hunger, thirst, and the turmoil of the other desires can be called the irrational and desiring element, the companion of indulgence and pleasure.'

- e 'Yes,' he said, 'that would be a perfectly natural conclusion for us to come to.'

'Let's take it, then, that we have established the presence of these two elements in the soul. How about spirit, the thing which makes us behave in a spirited way? Is that a third element? If not, its nature must be the same as one of the others. Which?'

'The second, maybe. The desiring element.'

- 'As against that,' I said, 'there's a story I once heard which I think can guide us here. Leontius, the son of Aglaeon, was on his way up to town from the Piraeus. As he was walking below the north wall, on the outside, he saw the public executioner with some dead bodies lying beside him. He wanted to look at the bodies, but at the same time he felt disgust and
440 held himself back. For a time he struggled, and covered his eyes. Then desire got the better of him. He rushed over to where the bodies were, and forced his eyes wide open, saying, "There you are, curse you. Have a really good look. Isn't it a lovely sight?"'

'Yes, I've heard that story, too,' he said.

'It shows that anger can sometimes be at war with the desires, which implies that they are two distinct and separate things.'

'Yes, it does show that,' he said.

- 'Aren't there lots of other situations as well – whenever people are
b forced into doing things by their desires against the advice of their reason – when they curse themselves, and are furious with the bit of them which forces them to do these things? It's as if there's a civil war going on inside someone like this, with spirit acting as an ally of reason. Spirit siding with the desires, on the other hand, when reason has declared its opposition, is not the kind of thing I imagine you'd ever claim to have seen, either in yourself or in anybody else.'

'No, I certainly haven't,' he said.

- c 'Think about someone who realises he is in the wrong. Isn't it the case that the better his character, the less he is capable of feeling anger at having to endure hunger, or cold, or anything like that at the hands of someone he regards as entitled to inflict these things on him? Isn't it his spirit, as I say, which refuses to raise any objection?'

'Yes, that's true.'

- d 'How about someone who thinks he is *being* wronged? While this is going on, doesn't he boil with rage at hunger, cold and any hardships of

this kind? Doesn't he ally himself with what he thinks is just, and endure all these things until he wins through, refusing to give up his justified indignation until he either achieves his aim, or dies, or is called back and pacified by the reason within him, like a dog being recalled by a shepherd?

'Yes, that's a very close parallel with what you were talking about. What is more, in our city we specified that the auxiliaries should be obedient dogs to the city's shepherd rulers.'²¹

'Good,' I said. 'You understand exactly what I'm talking about. But there's another point too you might notice about it.'

'What is that?'

e 'It's the opposite of our suggestion about the spirited element a few moments ago. We thought then it was desirous in character, whereas now we regard it as anything but. In the civil war of the soul, it is far more likely to take up arms on the side of the rational part.'

'Absolutely,' he said.

441 'Is it something independent of the rational element as well, or is it some form of the rational element? Are there not three elements in the soul, but only two, the rational and the desiring? Or is the soul like the city? The city was held together by three classes, commercial, auxiliary and decision-making. Does the soul also contain this third, spirited, element, which is auxiliary to the rational element by nature, provided it is not corrupted by a poor upbringing?'

'Yes, it does contain a third element,' he said. 'It must do.'

'Yes, provided this can be shown to be something distinct from the rational element, just as it was shown to be something distinct from the desiring element.'

b 'That's easily shown,' he said. 'You can see it in young children. Right from the time they are born, they are full of spirit, though most of them, if you ask me, only achieve some degree of rationality late in life. And some never at all.'

'How right you are. Even in animals you can see that what you are talking about applies. And apart from these examples, there is the evidence of Homer, in the line I think we quoted earlier:

He smote his chest, and thus rebuked his heart.²²

²¹ 416a.

²² *Odyssey* 20.17, quoted together with line 18 at 390d. The citation develops the comparison of spirit to a dog, since Odysseus is quieting the heart that bays like a dog within him and longs for revenge.

c In that passage Homer clearly portrays two different elements. The part which has reflected rationally on what is better and what is worse has some sharp words to say to the element which is irrationally angry.'

'You are certainly right,' he said.

'There we are, then,' I said. 'We have made it to dry land – not without difficulty – and we are pretty well agreed that the soul of each individual contains the same sorts of thing, and the same number of them, as a city contains.'

'True.'

'The immediate and inescapable conclusion is that the individual is wise in the same way, and using the same part of himself, as the city when it was wise.'

'Of course.'

d 'Also that the thing which makes the individual brave, and the way in which he is brave, is the same as the thing which makes the city brave, and the way in which it is brave. That in everything to do with virtue the two of them are the same.'

'Yes, that is inescapable.'

'So a just man is just, I think we shall say, Glaucon, in the same way a city was just.'

'That too follows with complete certainty.'

'We haven't at any point forgotten, I hope, that the city was just when each of the three elements in it was performing its own function.'

'No, I don't think we have forgotten that,' he said.

e 'In that case, we must also remember that each one of us will be just, and perform his own proper task, when each of the elements within him is performing *its* proper task.'

'Yes, we must certainly remember that.'

'Isn't it appropriate for the rational element to rule, because it is wise and takes thought for the entire soul, and appropriate for the spirited element to be subordinate, the ally of the rational element?'

'Yes.'

442 'Won't a combination, as we said,²³ of musical and physical education make these two elements concordant? They will bring the rational part to a higher pitch, with their diet of improving stories and studies, while at the same time toning down the spirited part by gentle encouragement, calming it by means of harmony and rhythm.'

²³ 411a–412a.

‘They certainly will,’ he said.

‘When these two elements are brought up on a diet of this kind, when they truly receive the teaching and education appropriate to them, then the two of them will exercise control over the desiring element, which in any individual is the largest element in the soul and, left to itself, the most insatiable where material goods are concerned. They will keep a close eye on it, to make sure the satisfaction of the body’s so-called pleasures
b doesn’t encourage it to grow great and strong, stop performing its own function, and throw the life of all of them into confusion by its attempt to enslave and rule over elements which it is not naturally equipped to rule over.’

‘They will indeed,’ he said. ‘A very close eye.’

‘Aren’t these two elements also the best defenders, for body and soul in their entirety, against external enemies? One makes the decisions, the other does the fighting, under the leadership of the ruling element, using its courage to put those decisions into effect.’

‘True.’

c ‘The title “brave,” I think, is one we give to any individual because of this part of him, when the spirited element in him, though surrounded by pleasures and pains, keeps intact the instructions given to it by reason about what is to be feared and what is not to be feared.’

‘Rightly so,’ he said.

‘And the title “wise” because of that small part which acted as an internal ruler and gave those instructions, having within it a corresponding knowledge of what was good both for each part and for the whole community of the three of them together.’

‘Exactly.’

d ‘What about “self-disciplined”? Isn’t that the result of the friendship and harmony of these three? The ruling element and the two elements which are ruled agree that what is rational should rule, and do not rebel against it.’

‘Yes. That’s exactly what self-discipline is,’ he said, ‘both for a city and for an individual.’

‘And a person will be just, finally, by virtue of the principle we have several times stated.²⁴ It determines both the fact and the manner of his justice.’

‘Yes, inevitably.’

²⁴ The principle of doing one’s own job, last mentioned at 441d. See also 433b, with note 14.

'In that case,' I said, 'do we find justice looking at all blurred round the edges? Does it seem any different to us from what it was when it showed up in the city?'

'Not to me it doesn't.'

- c 'If there *is* anything in our soul which is still inclined to dispute this,' I said, 'we can appeal to everyday life for final confirmation.'

'What do you mean, everyday life?'

- 'Well, imagine we were discussing this city and the man who by his nature and upbringing resembles it, and we had to agree whether we thought a man like this would embezzle a sum of gold or silver deposited with him for safe keeping. Could anyone, do you suppose, possibly
443 imagine such a man to be more likely to do this than people who were different from him?'

'No,' he said. 'I don't suppose anyone could.'

'Would this man have anything to do with temple-robbery, theft and betrayal? Either of his friends in private life, or of his city in public life?'

'No, he wouldn't.'

'What is more, he would be utterly reliable in keeping oaths and other sorts of agreement.'

'Of course.'

'Then again adultery, neglect of parents, failure in religious observance – he'd be the last person you'd expect to find with those faults.'

'Absolutely the last,' he said.

- b 'Is the reason for all this that when it comes to ruling and being ruled, each of the elements within him performs its own function?'

'Yes, that is the reason. The sole reason.'

'In which case, do you still want justice to be anything more than this power which can produce both men and cities of this calibre?'

'No, that's more than enough for me,' he said.

- 'In that case, we have seen the final realisation of our dream – our
c suspicion that our very first attempt at founding our city might possibly, with a bit of divine guidance, have hit upon both the origin, and some sort of model, of justice.'

'Yes, we certainly have seen its realisation.'

'So this principle, Glaucon – that if you are a shoemaker by nature, you should confine yourself to making shoes, if you are a carpenter you should confine yourself to carpentry, and so on – really was a kind of image of justice. Which is why it was so useful to us.'

'Apparently so.'

‘But the truth is that although justice apparently *was* something of this
 d kind, it was not concerned with the external performance of a man’s own
 function, but with the internal performance of it, with his true self and
 his own true function, forbidding each of the elements within him to
 perform tasks other than its own, and not allowing the classes of thing
 within his soul to interfere with one another. He has, quite literally, to put
 his own house in order, being himself his own ruler, mentor and friend,
 and tuning the three elements just like three fixed points in a musical scale
 e – top, bottom and intermediate. And if there turn out to be any inter-
 vening elements, he must combine them all, and emerge as a perfect unity
 of diverse elements, self-disciplined and in harmony with himself. Only
 then does he act, whether it is a question of making money, or taking care
 of his body, or some political action, or contractual agreements with
 private individuals. In all these situations he believes and declares that a
 just and good action is one which preserves or brings about this state of
 444 mind, and that wisdom is the knowledge which directs the action. That
 an unjust action, in its turn, is any action which tends to destroy this state
 of mind, and that ignorance is the opinion which directs the unjust
 action.’

‘You are absolutely right, Socrates.’

‘Well then,’ I said, ‘if we were to say we had found the just man and the
 just city, and what justice really was in them, we couldn’t be said to be
 totally wide of the mark, in my view.’

‘We most certainly couldn’t,’ he said.

‘Is that what we are going to say, then?’

‘We are.’

‘Let’s leave it at that, then,’ I said, ‘since the next thing we have to look
 into, I imagine, is injustice.’

‘Obviously.’

‘Injustice, on this definition, must be some sort of civil war between
 b these three elements, a refusal to mind their own business, and a deter-
 mination to mind each other’s, a rebellion by one part of the soul against
 the whole. The part which rebels is bent on being ruler in it when it is not
 equipped to be, its natural role being that of slave to what is of the ruling
 class. Something like this is what we shall say, I think. And we shall add
 that the disorder and straying of the three elements produce injustice,
 indiscipline, cowardice, ignorance – evil of every kind, in fact.’

c ‘We shall not say something *like* this,’ he said. ‘We shall say exactly
 this.’

‘Very well,’ I said. ‘Now that we have a clear picture of injustice and justice, do we also have a clear picture of unjust actions and acting unjustly? And similarly of just actions?’

‘Explain.’

‘Well,’ I said, ‘the effect on the soul of actions which are just and unjust is really no different from the effect on the body of actions which are healthy and unhealthy.’

‘In what way?’

‘Things which are healthy produce health, presumably. And things which are unhealthy produce disease.’

‘Yes.’

- d ‘So does acting justly produce justice, and acting unjustly produce injustice?’

‘It’s bound to.’

‘Producing health is a question of arranging the elements in the body so that they control one another – and are controlled – in the way nature intends.²⁵ Producing disease is a question of their ruling and being ruled, one by another, in a way nature does not intend.’

‘True.’

‘Does it follow, then,’ I asked, ‘that producing justice in its turn is a question of arranging the elements in the soul so that they control one another – and are controlled – in the way nature intends? Is producing injustice a question of their ruling and being ruled, one by another, in a way nature does not intend?’

‘Indeed it is,’ he said.

- e ‘In which case, virtue would apparently be some sort of health, beauty and vigour in the soul, while vice would be disease, ugliness and weakness.’

‘That is so.’

‘Doesn’t it follow also that good behaviour leads to the acquisition of virtue, and bad behaviour to the acquisition of vice?’

‘Inevitably.’

- 445 ‘The only question now remaining for us to answer, it seems, is which is more profitable. Just actions, good behaviour and being just – whether the just person is known to be just or not? Or unjust actions, and being unjust – even if the unjust person gets away with it, and never reforms as a result of punishment?’

²⁵ It was common in medical theory to attribute health to the right balance between the constituents of the body, disease to a disruption of this balance.

‘Now that justice and injustice have turned out to be the kinds of things we have described, that seems an absurd question, if you want my opinion, Socrates. When the body’s natural constitution is ruined, life seems not worth living, even with every variety of food and drink, and all manner of wealth and power. Is someone’s life going to be worth living when the natural constitution of the very thing by which he lives is upset and ruined, even assuming he can then do anything he likes – apart from what will release him from evil and injustice, and win him justice and virtue?’

‘You’re right,’ I said. ‘It’s an absurd question. Still, now that we’ve got to the point of being able to see as clearly as possible that this is how things are, this isn’t the moment to take a rest.’

‘No,’ he said. ‘The last thing we should do is show any hesitation.’

‘This way, then, if you want to see what I believe to be the forms taken by vice. The ones worth looking at, anyway.’

‘I’m right behind you,’ he said. ‘Speak on.’

‘Well, now that we’ve got this far in our discussion,’ I said, ‘it looks from my vantage-point as if there is a single form of virtue, and any number of forms of vice, of which four are worth mentioning.’

‘Please explain,’ he said.

‘If you think how many types of political regime there are with their own specific form,’ I said, ‘that’s probably how many types of soul there are.’

‘And how many is that?’

‘Five types of political regime,’ I said, ‘and five types of soul.’

‘Tell me which they are,’ he said.

‘All right. I would say that one type of regime is this one we have just described, though there are two names it might be given. It might be called monarchy, if one exceptional individual emerges among the rulers, or aristocracy if several emerge.’

‘True.’

‘This one, then, I class as a single form,’ I said. ‘It makes no difference whether it is several who emerge, or an individual. Given the upbringing and education we have described, they would not disturb any of the important laws of the city.’

‘No. That wouldn’t be sensible,’ he said.