The Republic

by Plato

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Plato's foundational dialogue on justice, the ideal polity, education, and the philosopher-king.

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Editor’s synopsis of The Republic xlii

If you tell people you are translating Plato’s Republic, the question they almost invariably ask is ‘Why? Surely there are plenty of translations already.’ The answer is fairly simple. For whatever reason, Plato chose to put his philosophical thoughts in dialogue form, and I believe that when he did so, he intended these dialogues to sound like conversations. Maybe not straightforward, everyday conversations, but conversations nonethe¬ less. And it is still true, though things have improved in recent years, that there are many translations of Plato where you cannot read a complete page without coming across something which no English-speaking person would ever say, or ever have said. So in balancing the conflicting demands of the translator, I have tried to give the highest priority, with only a few exceptions, to the requirement that what I wrote should sound like a conversation. The danger in this, since I am not a professional Plato scholar, was that in trying to make it sound conversational I might commit myself to an interpretation which ran counter to the agreed and accepted views of those who were scholars. That being so, I have been exception¬ ally fortunate to have had John Ferrari as my academic minder. I would never have undertaken the project without his encouragement and guar¬ antee of help and support. And once embarked on it, I found him ready and willing to give up huge amounts of his time to the task of vetting my early drafts — a laborious task which involved reading the whole text against the Greek, flagging the hundreds (literally) of passages where he did not agree with what I had written, explaining in precise detail why he disagreed, and (bless him) suggesting an alternative in each and every instance. His influence is strongest in those passages where the transla¬ tion of key terms has been the subject of much critical discussion, but

there is no part of the translation which has not benefited immeasurably from his comments, advice and suggestions, and it should be seen, to a very considerable extent, as a joint effort rather than mine alone. It has been an enormous labour for him, and I am greatly in his debt for per¬ forming it.

The thought of translating Plato’s Republic is not unlikely to cross the mind of any Platonist. Whenever it crossed mine, I dismissed it firmly. Too many scholarly ghosts hovered about its text, too many pitfalls lurked on every page, and the impossibility of satisfying all of the readers all of the time was only too easy to anticipate. Then I discovered Tom Griffith’s remarkable translation of Plato’s Symposium, and saw that there could after all be a role for me in producing a new translation of the Republic , a technical, advisory role, and that the effort would be repaid many times over. I have had the privilege of exceptionally close editorial collaboration with Tom as his translation took shape, and he co-operated with unfail¬ ing intelligence, patience and tact. For all my relentless editing of details, the translation remains essentially his. I have contributed the introduc¬ tion, notes, and other ancillary material - all of which have benefi ted from Tom’s scrutiny.

Plato’s Republic is the first great work of Western political philosophy, and has retained its grip on the imagination of political thinkers for over two thousand years. It was also very much the product of

particular his¬ torical circumstances. In this introduction we will consider the political instability of the Greek world in the late fifth and early fourth centuries BC and investigate the cultural factors most likely to have influenced Plato when he came to write the Republic, bearing in mind that he was not only a pre-eminent philosopher but also a literary writer, an educator, and, not least, an Athenian aristocrat (pp. xi—xxii). We will then assess the Republic ’s position within political philosophy (pp. xxii—xxv), and present the essentials of its argument (pp. xxv-xxxi). We begin with a harrowing episode from Athenian history — an episode in which Plato’s family played a major role.

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

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

It is difficult to know what to make of Plato’s mise-en-scene, and tempt¬ ing to turn to an autobiographical passage of his Seventh Letter (3240-326^, which purports to describe his own dealings with the Thirty. Letters from celebrities were a favourite production of fiction writers and outright forgers in antiquity, and none of the Platonic letters is above sus¬ picion — although scholars these days are inclined to regard the seventh as authentic. But let it stand to Plato only as Plato’s Apology of Socrates stands to the actual speech of defence that Socrates delivered when on trial for his life; still it would remain the most important interpretation of Plato’s political motives to survive from antiquity. Plato speaks of being invited by his relatives and by others he knew in the junta to throw himself in with their enterprise, and of how this excited an idealistic youth — he was in his early twenties — with hopes of a better society and zeal for the power to bring it about. Disenchantment came swiftly. An incident involving Socrates is chosen to serve as an emblem for the regime’s immorality: its attempt to co-opt him into the vindictive arrest of a citizen that it had des¬ ignated a public enemy, and his courageous refusal to do so.

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

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

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

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

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

time to polarise the troubles into an antagonism between oligarchy and democracy, and this in turn into an antagonism between rich and poor.

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

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

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

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

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

was far more cautious on all these fronts.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

One of these genres we have encountered already, exemplified by Critias' and Xenophon's writings on the constitution of Sparta. Their manner of contributing to the lively contemporary debate on the relative merits of different constitutions was to offer a partisan, idealised description of just one. Alternatively, a single constitution might be selected for criticism, not praise — as with the Athenian Constitution that

survives from the late fifth century by an unknown author often called ‘The Old Oligarch’. The traditional title of the Republic conceals an allusion to such works as these. For if Politeia can in Greek name a kind of community that governs itself and has no truck with tyranny - ‘ Republic’ is not an outright misnomer - it is also the normal Greek word for ‘constitution’. It was not, then, a Spartan Constitution or an Athenian Constitution that Plato wrote, but simply a Constitution.

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

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

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

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

Plato wrote the Republic , then, not only as a concerned member of the political elite and a keen observer of contemporary troubles, but as a writer who looked back at literary models and askance at literary com¬

petitors. The Republic fits a mould when it indicts the wretched condition of the tyrant from the perspective of the sage, and when it brings its polit¬ ical and moral reflections to a focus in the figure of the enlightened king. But Socrates, although he is a wise man summoned by the social elite to say his piece on virtue and happiness, is not in dialogue with either kings or tyrants; rather, in this case the advice of the philosopher is that the philosopher should remain no mere adviser but should himself become

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

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

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

So Plato is exaggerating when he allows the prospect of philosophers in power to seem as preposterous and laughable as ever Aristophanes did the spectacle of the rule of women. Why does he do it? One likely reason is that the reaction to this proposal justifies Socrates in giving a lengthy defence of his conception of the genuine philosopher, in the course of which he explains the position of philosophers in Athenian society, both those who are worthy of the title and those who are not, and lays out a cur¬ riculum of philosophic education. From that curriculum the art of words taught by the likes of Isocrates is strikingly

absent. A common word for politician at Athens was simply ‘speaker’, rhetor , for it was by speaking in public assembly that a citizen typically made his way to prominence. Glaucon, whose impetuousness is both displayed and remarked upon in the Republic , apparently attempted to speak in the assembly before he was twenty years old — a mark of extreme political ambition. Certainly he and his brother are given the longest and most eloquent political speeches in the work. In the preface to his Nicocles, Isocrates writes of the hostility aroused by the eloquence of those who study philosophy — in his sense of the term — and how they are suspected of aiming at selfish advantage rather than virtue. The philosopher-kings whose viability Socrates even¬ tually gets Glaucon and Adeimantus to accept are truer to the Spartan model, and avoid eloquence. Their political rhetoric is a matter of knowing how to keep things hidden from citizens whom the truth would only harm; their art of disputation, the coping-stone of their education, aims to tell things as they are. All this, of course, from the pen of a con¬ summate master of the art of words. Plato is taking his stand, not against eloquence as such, but against its contemporary place in politics and in the education of those who took part in politics.

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

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

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

Plato’s own most notable political adventure fits the grand tradition of Solon and Croesus. He became involved with the politics of Syracuse and the dynasty of Dionysius I, the outstanding tyrant of his age, who won himself an empire in Sicily and made Syracuse the glittering embodiment of his personal wealth and magnificence. Dionysius became stereotyped as an enemy of liberty, and his rise to power is thought to have helped shape Plato’s account of the onset of tyranny in Book 8. A notable aspect of his court’s magnificence was its hospitality towards poets, artists, intellectuals; and Plato was one of the visitors. Stories of his debunking the tyrant’s self- image to his face seem too good to be true, too closely modelled on Herodotus. More credit is given to the narrative of Plato’s later visits to serve as philosophic mentor for

the tyrant's successor, Dionysius II, and of his failure to influence the unworthy and recalcitrant young autocrat. For the details we must rely once more on the Seventh Letter. Yet even trust¬ ing its portrait of a Plato bent on practising what he has hitherto preached, what we find here are political proposals at once bland and constrained by the Sicilian context. Dionysius was to have some moral fibre infused in him, then to be sent out to unite the Sicilian cities against Carthage, the foreign invader. There is no talk of a guardian class, no call to give women a role in government or to redistribute wealth - no Callipolis in view.

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

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

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

Yet if the Republic would on this account merit its classification as a political work, disagreement returns with the attempt to classify its polit¬ ical stance. Concentrate on its desire to secure collective happiness (420b), its warnings against disparities of wealth and against the mercan¬ tile ethos (qaid—e, 556c), its efforts to avoid oppression of the weak by the powerful in society, and you may find in it the first stirrings of socialism. Look rather towards its restriction of political power to a tiny elite (429a, 491a), consider their status as moral paragons and saviours (487a, 463b), their centralised control of the moral and cultural as well as economic life of the society, their eugenic techniques (458c 46 ie), their resort to cen¬ sorship and to outright deception in order to preserve order and promote good behaviour (389b-c, 414b, 45gc-d), and you may think you are reading a prescient charter for fascism — as did some scholars, approv¬ ingly, before the Second World War, and many, disgustedly, in its after- math.

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

an aristocracy of the virtuous. Philosophers qualify to form its ruling class by their moral and intellectual excellence — their natural superiority, re¬ inforced and perfected by careful education. Should the Republic's theo¬ retical descendants therefore be sought rather in the varieties of republicanism, which, broadly understood, elevates ideals of citizenship and community over individualism, and assigns to politics the goal of pro¬ moting virtue? Certainly, Socrates does not hesitate to attribute wisdom and courage to Callipolis as a whole even though the virtues in question are restricted to small classes within the populace (428b 430c) — much as each Greek republic called itself a free and self-governing community no matter how restricted its citizen-roll or governing class. He sets himself the goal of making the entire society flourish, preventing any particular class or individual from flourishing at the expense of the whole (42ob~42ic). And he sums up the task of his philosopher-kings as that of modelling the community as closely as possible on permanent ideals of virtue (501b).

Yet for all that, it is rather Aristotle's Politics , with its famous declara¬ tion that man is a political animal, and that the purpose of society is not mere life but a good life, that is the more whole-hearted inaugurator of this tradition. A reader of the Republic is unlikely to come away with so celebratory a sense of the possibilities of the self-governing community. Reservations come to a focus at one of the work's central and most dis¬ concerting ideas: that a society should be governed by those who show least eagerness for the task. The idea appears in other writers, including Isocrates and Aristotle, but in connection with conventional political complaints. They frown upon excessive ambition, or sigh for an earlier age when the socially eminent engaged in public life from a sense of their station and its duties. Such thoughts make their appearance in the Republic also (347b, 520b—d), but are developed in the direction of out¬ right disenchantment with the political life - famously allegorised in the philosophic soul's escape from the dim and constricted cave of its cultural environment to the sunlit, open spaces of true understanding (5143-5170).

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

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

Consider how the discussion develops in its early stages. Glaucon offers an account of the origins of justice and law. Human beings were driven to accept legal limits on their urge to take advantage of each other because they judged the unfettered satisfaction of that urge not worth the distress of finding themselves at the receiving end of the conduct to which it prompted others also - a result that only the strongest could entirely avoid (358e—359b). To establish settled laws as the criterion of right and wrong is therefore to impose restrictions on nature, for it is human nature to thrust oneself forward at the expense of

others. There is loss as well as gain: the pre-eminence of natural superiority vanishes. A ‘real man’, one who could always prevail, would never agree to restrict his power (359b). The story o f society’s origins that Socrates hypothesises i n reply presents communal life rather as an organic development that brings us happiness at no cost to our nature. Since none of us is self-sufficient, each will seek to co-ordinate his efforts with others so as to provide for the needs common to all. Individuals will gravitate towards the tasks for which they are naturally suited, and specialise in those, because their needs will be more efficiently addressed in this manner (370c). The process gives rise to a simple, rustic community of farmers, artisans and tradesmen, who live a contented and god-fearing life with no apparent need for rulers or laws (372a-b). They co-ordinate their labour as two men will co-ordinate their rhythm when rowing a boat. Identical needs and a common ration¬ ality suffice to produce co-operation even in the absence of hierarchy.

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

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

One way in which such doubts might arise is from consideration of the similes used to describe the task of the good ruler. The philosopher-king is like a ship’s captain or helmsman, who recognises that to steer the ship of state one must have knowledge of the stars, the seasons, the winds. It is not enough, as politicians in a democracy believe, merely to persuade the shipowner - the populace - to let one take the tiller in hand (488a-e). A port of destination has no importance in this analogy and is not men¬ tioned. When the demagogic sailors take control, their aim is not to set a new course but to feast on the ship’s stores and turn the voyage into a carousal. Society is simply a ship at sea, not a ship headed for a particu¬ lar port. What the true helmsman will do that these sailors will not is use his knowledge of navigation to avoid storms and shoals - to keep the ship afloat. His political goals are limited to security, stability, social harmony. Certainly, he aims to instil virtue into his city, as is clear from another of the similes for the philosopher-king’s task, in which he is compared to a painter working on the canvas of his citizens’ characters (soia-c); but what he paints there are merely the social virtues needed in the city at large, discipline and justice above all (5ood). He himself has become, through his philosophic activity and the perfectly rational order of things to which it has given him access, as godlike as it possible for a human

being to be. The city that he paints on the model of this rational order, however, is described not as a divine but only as a human likeness, and its general citizenry are not themselves godlike but only ‘as pleasing to god as human characters can be’ (sood vs. 501b—c).

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

to the finest of cities, Callipolis, the city ruled by philosophers (435b, 498c). But consider what this correspondence amounts to. Wisdom guides the life of the philosophically inclined individual and ensures that his material desires do not grow distractingly materialistic - enforcing that prevention, if necessary, with the aid of an ambitious self-respect. The analysis derives from the Republic’s theory of the tripartite soul, according to which each person is characterised by a rational or wisdom- loving element, a desiring, material, or profit-loving element, and an ambitious or honour-loving element. Only in the truly virtuous person, however, are these elements properly balanced. Similarly in Callipolis political life is under the guidance of wise philosophers, who ensure that the farmers and artisans supplying the city’s material needs keep to their tasks and neither unbalance the economy nor are permitted disruptive inequalities of income, but instead only a decent sufficiency. Should enforcement be required, the military class, which defends the honour of the entire city, can do the policing.

Because of the manner in which the correspondence between society and individual is established — because it is a correspondence of elements and of the relations between those elements - the virtues of the best society and of the best individual can be declared the same even though they come to something quite different. Justice - that multivalent word, in Greek as in English — was first discussed in connection with the keeping of agreements: repaying what one owes, and avoiding fraud (331b). By fastening on the broadest construal of what one owes and is owed, namely as what is deserved, the discussion reviews a traditional conception of justice unemancipated from vengeance, according to which ‘an eye for an eye’ is the counterpart of ‘one good turn deserves another’ - this is Polemarchus’ contribution (33id-336a). Under Thrasymachus’ provocation it considers the idea that what you deserve is whatever your strengths and skills enable you to acquire for yourself. This is the idea that Glaucon reconfigures as the state of nature, and against its background justice appears once more as a matter of keeping agreements, but in the much wider sense of abiding by the convention of law.

Eventually the discussion settles on a definition of justice as ‘doing one’s own’ (433b), where what is one’s own is not whatever one is able to get, but what is best for one (s86e). Callipolis is a just city because each of its three elements — philosopher-kings, warriors and producers — is performing the task to which it is best suited, and each stands in the appropriate relation to the others. The civic life that this permits is one

of economic stability and harmonious order - values not essentially different from those of the city of pigs, the healthy city. The just indi¬ vidual, by contrast - he of the healthy soul, with its three elements in harmony (444c) — turns out to be no contented pig but a full-blown philosopher, for to take wisdom as one’s guide in life is not merely to be rational and prudent in the ordinary sense but to make the disinterested pursuit of understanding one’s ultimate value. Only so is the rational element liberated, open

to the full range of tasks for which it is best suited: not just controlling the other elements but pursuing wisdom for its own sake (44ie, 581b, s86e).

The life that such a person leads is, accordingly, not merely stable and harmonious but godlike and glorious. ‘Doing one’s own’, when it comes to the individual, is more than doing one’s part for the community; it is to conduct the business of oneself. Individuality is an achievement, and only the philosopher has the talent to achieve it, for only he provides each element in his make-up with what is best for it. All others may be a part of the just community, but cannot themselves, as individuals, be just. As individuals, Socrates is even prepared to call them the ‘slaves’ of the just man, the philosopher; as citizens of Callipolis, however, they are called by their rulers not slaves but paymasters and providers, and regard those rulers not as masters but as saviours and defenders (S9od, 463b). Each citizen is to find his level; none is to keep his place by virtue of birth alone, but, in theory at least, is to be promoted or demoted as appropriate (415b—c, 423c—d). In this way, Socrates attempts to preserve the pre¬ eminence of natural superiority that Glaucon thought political life must renounce. Yet he manages also to maintain the benefits of harmonious coexistence that Glaucon claimed as justifying the rule of law in the first place.

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

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

It may be thought, however, that if Callipolis is ruled by wise philo¬ sophers, its civic life is better than stable and harmonious, it can itself be considered wise. And surely the careful filtering of decadent or socially disruptive images and thoughts from the education of the guardians could only be successful if the cultural environment of the entire com¬ munity were characterised by the austere gracefulness with which the military class must in particular be imbued (40ib-d)? Certainly, the Republic contains one of the earliest extended analyses (in Books 2, 3 and 10) of the power of cultural artefacts of all sorts to mould the ethos of large groups — a type of analysis familiar in our day from controversies over the influence of advertisements and the censorship of pornographic or violent images. Yet even the inhabitants of so primitive a place as the city of pigs sang praises to the gods - one part of the poetry permitted in Callipolis, with its verses in praise of the gods and of good men (372b, 607a). Similarly, the gracefulness instilled in

the guardians by their musical and poetic education aims at and reflects nothing more elevated than social harmony and cohesiveness, together with a piety and a patri¬ otism that fall short of true understanding (386a, 38gd-e, 522a).

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

worthy of him, the philosopher's 'own growth will be greater, and he will be the salvation of his country as well as of himself' (497a; compare 492a). On the other hand, when in Book 4 the whole city ruled by guardians is declared wise by virtue of the knowledge possessed by its ruling class alone, that knowledge has the city for its object - it is expertise in domes¬ tic and foreign policy (42 8d). Only later in the discussion does Socrates make it clear that the knowledge which truly qualifies a guardian to rule is philosophic wisdom, having for its object the whole cosmos (484d, 486a). The question is, how intimate is the connection between this knowledge and the philosopher's political activity?

It is a question surprisingly difficult to answer. As part of the process of qualifying for political power, the guardians are given ten years' edu¬ cation devoted to advanced mathematics, crowned by five years of 'dialec¬ tic'. About dialectic Plato is deliberately cagey. It is or involves philosophic disputation, as befits its etymological connection with the Greek word for 'conversation' (S34d, S39b-d); it takes a global, unifying view of its topic (537c); it aims to discover the definitions of things, and thereby the unchanging principles of all that exists - the 'forms' - arriv¬ ing finally at an understanding of the ultimate principle, the form of the good (51 ib-c, 532a—b, 533b). But we are not told how it achieves this feat, and scholars dispute whether dialectical activity is some kind of meta¬ mathematics, or whether it quite transcends the ground that mathemat¬ ics has prepared.

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

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

harmony in the Timaeus (47b, 9od). Once educated, however, the politi¬ cal use to which the philosopher-king puts his mathematical and analytic training consists in resolving particular problems that arise while he is taking his turn at running the city. He does not apply his mathematical expertise to the overall structure of the community and its institutions. He has inherited that structure - ultimately, from Socrates as ‘founder’ of the imaginary city (519c) — and is charged simply to preserve it. The frequent glances back and forth at the painter’s model, the erasures and corrections - these would represent the work of day-to-day judgment, minor legislation, and management of established institutions, whose details Socrates claims there is no need to supply (501b; compare 423c, 425d). Book 5 of Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics perhaps gives us some idea how mathematics was thought relevant to such work. Its topic is justice, but its talk is mostly of ‘proportionate equality’, ‘diagonal exchange’ and the like - concepts involved, on the one hand, in the eco¬ nomics of just distribution and commerce, and, on the other, in the ratios of gain and loss, reward and penalty, that make for rectificatory justice.

The work of running Callipolis and assuring the continuance of its system is regarded by philosophers not as a privilege, not as something grand, but as a necessity (540b; compare 52oe, 347d). Each takes his tour of duty, but finds his greatest pleasure in philosophic activity, conducted in the company of his peers. His attitude towards political life is intrigu- ingly reminiscent of that which Glaucon attributed to the conventionally just person, for whom justice is a compromise to be practised not will¬ ingly, as one would practise something thought to be beneficial, but rather as something unavoidable (358c). There is this difference, however, between the two attitudes: the philosopher does not rule unwillingly — at least if that is taken to mean that he would avoid ruling if he could — but rather in recognition of what is necessary if things are to turn out for the best, both for himself and for his fellow-citizens (592a, 520c-d). The grand and godlike thing is only philosophy, but the philosopher is not only a philosopher. He is a human being, beset by a variety of needs and desires, adrift amid a variety of fellow human beings. Because he is a philosopher, he makes the best of things - for only in a paradise where souls are simply wise could the best alternative be to engage in continu¬ ous and perfect contemplation (siqc-d, 6nc-6i2a). The politics of the Republic draws its strength from a sense of loss.

Bibliographical note to the introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

University Press, 1996) is a survey of the literature written by the Socratics as a group. Dislcin Clay, ‘The origins of the Socratic dialogue’: 23—47 in Paul A. Vander Waerdt, ed., The Socratic Movement (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), analyses the models and the background for Socratic dialogue as a literary form. The classic modern work on the Pythagoreans is Walter Burkert, Lore and Science in Ancient

Pythagoreanism (trans. E. Minar, Jr., Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972). For the political involvement of members of Plato's Academy, in addition to chapter 12a of CAH 6 mentioned in this paragraph, see chapter 10 ('Plato's academy and politics') of P. A. Brunt, Studies in Greek History and Thought (Oxford: Clarendon Press, r993), which includes an account of Plato's connections with the elder and younger Dionysius, as do chapters 5 and 13 of CAH 6 (David Lewis' 'Sicily, 413—368 bc' and H. D. Westlake's 'Dion and Timoleon').

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

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

General studies of Plato and of The Republic

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

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

Specific aspects of Plato's thought and of The Republic

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Athens and Sparta ('Peloponnesian War')

Athens, oligarchic regime of 'The Thirty' imposed

in alliance against Sparta ('Corinthian War')

Sicily, meets Archytas the Pythagorean and Dionysius I of Syracuse

imposed by Persia on the parties to the Corinthian War

386-378 Sparta in the ascendant in the aftermath of the King's Peace

alliance against Sparta; foundation of Second Athenian League

Leuctra; Spartan military supremacy comes to an end

370-362 Thebes in the ascendant after Leuctra; Athens in alliance with Sparta against Thebes

Syracuse; Dionysius II succeeds him

367-366 Plato visits Dionysius II in Sicily

Alexander the Great) accedes to throne of Macedon and begins to build empire in Greece; Athens at first in alliance, but from 357 onwards at war with Macedon

337 Dionysius II is ousted by Dion, member of the Syracusan royal family and Plato's confi dant and student

338 Final victory of Philip of Macedon at Chaeronea

CAH 6 D. M. Lewis et al eds., The Cambridge Ancient History, 2nd edition, vol. vi [The Fourth Century BC] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)

DK H. Diels, Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker (6th edn, rev: W.

EGPT Michael Gagarin and Paul Woodruff, eds., Early Greek Political Thought from Homer to the Sophists [Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

GPM K. J. Dover, Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974, repr. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994)

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

327a: Socrates and Glaucon are detained at the Piraeus. The scene is set at Polemarchus' house (328b). — 328c: Socrates converses with Cephalus about old age (328e) and the benefits of wealth (329c), and introduces the topic of justice (331c): it is not simply a matter of being truthful and returning what one owes. - 33id: Discussion between Socrates and Polemarchus. Justice, it is proposed, is a matter of giving what is appro¬ priate: to friends, giving good, to enemies, bad (332c). But in what context (332d)? And won't the just person also be best at injustice (333e)? Besides, who are our friends and enemies (334c)? And is it just to treat even an enemy badly (335b)? - 336b: Thrasymachus speaks up. His definition: justice is what is good for the stronger (338c). But does this mean: what¬ ever the stronger thinks is good (339b)? Clarification is volunteered by Polemarchus and Cleitophon (340a). Thrasymachus insists that the stronger, to the extent that he is stronger, does not make mistakes (34od). Socrates counters with an analysis of art or skill: it aims at what is good for its object, not its practitioner (341c). Thrasymachus objects: shep¬ herds do not aim at what is good for their sheep (343b). Socrates distin¬ guishes the shepherd's concern for his sheep from his concern to earn a living (345c). He suggests that the best rulers are reluctant to rule (347a). He offers three arguments in favour of the just life over the unjust life: (i) the just man is wise and good, the unjust man ignorant and bad (349b); (ii) injustice produces internal disharmony and prevents effective action (351b); (iii) the just person lives a happier life than the unjust person (352d). But it remains to be discovered what justice is (354b).

357a: Glaucon, as devil's advocate, renews Thrasymachus' challenge. — 359a: His speech against justice: (i) justice has its origin in a compromise; (ii) is practised only because unavoidable (the Gyges story) (359c); (iii) is desirable only for its rewards, which can be gained by the mere appear¬ ance of justice (36oe). - 362d: Adeimantus' speech reinforcing Glaucon's critique. Two ways of describing justice are widespread: as something praiseworthy not for itself but for its rewards (363a), or as something dis¬ sociated from pleasure and happiness (364a); both these views tend to corrupt the young (365b). Socrates is requested to praise justice for itself, not for the reputation it brings (367b). - 368a: Socrates comes to the defence of justice. He proposes to look for justice in the city first, then for its equivalent in the individual; and begins by imagining the origins of civic life (369a). - 372c: In response to Glaucon's objection that this hypo¬ thetical city is uncivilised, Socrates describes instead a luxurious city. He proposes that a professional army will be needed to guard the city (373e), made up of guardians who must be fierce to enemies but gentle to their own people (375c), and educated with special care (376d). Traditional stories about the gods are to be censored (377b); god should be presented to them as good, and as a cause only of good (379a); also as unchanging (38od), and as refraining from deception (38ie).

386a: Discussion of the guardians' education continues. The qualities that stories should promote in them, in addition to the respect for authority and the social harmony already considered, are (i) courage (386b), (ii) resistance to grief (38yd), (iii) resistance to laughter (388c), (iv) respect for truth, but including a willingness to tell lies when neces¬ sary (389b), (v) self-discipline (38qd). — 392d: Discussion turns from the contents of stories to the manner in which they are told, and Socrates makes a distinction between simple narrative and narrative through imi¬ tation. He imposes limitations on the guardians' familiarity with and performance of imitative poetry (394c). They should confine themselves to the austere style and not use either the elaborate or the mixed styles (396c). - 398c: Equivalent restrictions are imposed on the types of music to be included in the guardians' education. — qooe: Finally, Socrates makes a generalisation about the importance of good art in forming good

character, and connects the beauty of art with the beauty that inspires erotic attachment (402d). — 403c: Turning to the guardians' physical education, Socrates recommends a straightforward diet and avoidance of recourse to doctors, which he associates with the avoidance of litigation (404c). Physical education should aim to benefit the soul rather than the body (410b); a balance between intellect and spiritedness is the ideal (4iod). - 412b: Socrates describes how rulers should be selected from among the guardians. He designs a patriotic myth to be believed by sub¬ sequent generations in the newly founded city (414c), and briefly sketches the guardians' social organisation, forbidding them private property (41 sd).

419a: Adeimantus objects: Will the guardians be happy (419a)? Socrates explains that the task is to make the whole city happy, not any particular group within it (420b). He mentions further requirements if the city as a whole is to be happy: both its wealth (42id) and its size (423b) must be limited. He emphasises once more the importance of education (423c), and urges conservatism when it comes to amending laws (425e). For its religious rituals the city can defer to the traditional authorities (427b). — 42yd: Now that the city has been theoretically established, discussion turns to its justice. Socrates proposes that its justice will be what remains after its wisdom, courage and self-discipline have been identified (4276). The city's wisdom is located in its ruling class (428b); its courage is located in the army (429a); and its self-discipline consists in the fact that its subjects are willing to be ruled by those best suited to rule (43od). Its justice, finally, is a matter of each class performing its proper function (432b). — 434d: The corresponding virtues in the individual are now to be identified. First, the general correspondence between city and indi¬ vidual is defended (435a), prompting the question whether the three elements in the soul, corresponding to the three classes in the city, have distinct functions (436b). Socrates distinguishes the function of the rational from that of the desiring element (439a), and that of the spirited element from each of the others in turn (439c, 44oe). He explains how the virtues of the individual correspond in their elements and their struc¬ ture to those of the city (441c). An individual is just when each of the elements internal to his soul performs its proper function (442b). This account is compatible with conventional beliefs (442c). Justice, then, is a

healthy balance of the soul's components, and injustice an unhealthy imbalance (4446). — 445a: Socrates now comes to the question which Glaucon and Adeimantus originally asked him to answer: which is more profitable, justice or injustice? A proper response will require examina¬ tion of the various unjust societies and of the unjust individuals that cor¬ respond to each.

449a: Socrates is about to describe the varieties of unjust society when he is distracted by a whispered transaction between Polemarchus and Adeimantus. Invited to speak up, they demand a more detailed account from him of the proposal that women and children should be held in common among the guardians. -451c: Socrates begins with an argument that female members of the guardian class should perform the same tasks as male guardians. Against the objection that women should be assigned different tasks from men because they differ from men by nature (453b), he responds that this natural difference is not relevant when it comes to running a city (453e). Having shown that this proposal is feasible, he also argues that it is optimal (456c). - 457c!: Socrates' second proposal is that there should be no separate families among the guardians. He postpones consideration of its feasibility in order to consider its optimality (458a), and begins by explaining the sexual and eugenic regulations that will be required of the guardians (458c), before describing how these arrange¬ ments will achieve a unity among the guardians that can then extend to all the citizens (462a). He points out that, living this way, the guardians are likely to be extremely happy (463d). Once again the feasibility of these arrangements is mooted (466d). Socrates launches into an account of how the guardians will make war (466e), but is presently interrupted by Glaucon, who demands to know precisely how it is possible for a society such as this to come into being (471c). - 472a: After a preamble explaining that the theoretical model of the ideal city remains valid even if its feasibility cannot be demonstrated, Socrates responds that the model cannot become reality unless philosophers become kings, or kings philosophers (473c). To justify this claim, an analysis of philosophy is required (474b). Only philosophers recognise and take pleasure in the single form behind the multiplicity of appearances (476a). Socrates offers an argument to distinguish the philosopher's knowledge from mere opinion (476e).

484a: Given the superior discernment of philosophers, Socrates continues, it is to them that the city should look for guidance, provided they can also be shown to be capable of gaining practical experience and of achieving the full range of human virtue. The character traits of the philosopher do in fact cover this range, being love of learning, truthfulness, self-discipline, greatness of spirit, courage, justice, quickness of mind, good memory, refinement and charm (485a). - 487a: Adeimantus objects that actual philosophers are either useless or bad. Socrates responds with an analogy (the ship of state) to show that it is not philosophers who are to blame for their uselessness, but those who refuse to make use of them (488a). He describes how the philosophic nature tends, because of its very excellence, to become distorted by society, which would ignore a less outstanding char¬ acter (489c). He warns against various impostors who claim the mantle of philosophy (495c), and who far outnumber the few philosophers who manage to escape corruption by society (496b). He explains how it is pos¬ sible for a city to cope with the challenge of philosophy (49yd), and to become free of the prejudice against it (500a). He concludes that Callipolis is both optimal and not unfeasible (502c). - 502d: Turning to the question of how philosopher-kings should be educated, Socrates argues that their most important branch of study will be the study of the good (505a), and offers three analogies to explain it: (i) the sun (507a); (ii) the line (sogd).

514a: The final analogy to explain the study of the good is that of (iii) the cave. Education ought to turn the eye of the soul away from the shadows with which it is surrounded in the cave of society and lead it to true understanding in the sunlit world above (518c). But philosophers who attain this understanding must be

made to return to the cave and rule there (sigd). - S2id: Socrates explains how it is the study of mathemat¬ ics that will do the job of drawing the soul out of the cave. He analyses each branch of mathematics in turn: (i) arithmetic and number (522c); (ii) plane geometry (526c); (iii) solid geometry (528b); (iv) astronomy (52 8e); (v) harmonics (S3od). - 53id: The culmination of the philosopher-king's education is the study of dialectic, which brings him to understand the good. But Socrates cannot give Glaucon a clear idea of what dialectic is, or how it achieves its end. - 535a: Instead, they discuss what qualifications

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

543a: Socrates and Glaucon take stock of the argument so far, and resume the topic that was interrupted at the beginning of Book 5. The four main types of unjust regime will be systematically described, together with the corresponding types of unjust individual, beginning with the least degen¬ erate and proceeding to the most. Socrates once again offers a general justification of the correspondence between city and individual (544e). — 545b: He explains how timocracy arises from aristocracy, the characteris¬ tics of timocracy (54yd), the character of the correspondingly timocratic individual (548d), and how an individual becomes timocratic (549c). - 550c: Oligarchy. How it arises from timocracy, its characteristics (551c), how the correspondingly oligarchic individual becomes oligarchic (553a), and whathis character is (554a). — 555b: Democracy. How it arises from oligarchy, its characteristics (557b), how the correspondingly democratic individual becomes democratic (558c), and what his character is (561a). - 562a: Tyranny. How it arises from democracy, and what its characteristics are (s66d).

571a: The tyrannical individual. How he becomes tyrannical, and what his character is (573c). Socrates demonstrates this individual's unhappi¬ ness by applying the correspondence between city and individual (576c). Unhappiest of all is the tyrannical individual who becomes tyrant of a city (578b). Socrates concludes this first proof that the just are happier than the unjust with a final ranking of the individual characters in respect of happiness (580b). - s8od: Second proof that the just are happier than the unjust. Socrates distinguishes three fundamental human types, the lovers of wisdom, of honour, and of profit, and argues that we should trust the wisdom-lover's judgment that his way of life is the most pleasant. - 583b: Third proof that the just are happier than the unjust. Socrates analyses the nature of pleasure. Relief from pain can seem pleasurable (583c), and most, even if not all, bodily pleasures are no more than a relief from pain (584b). The only truly fulfilling pleasure, by contrast, is that which comes

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

595a: Socrates returns to the topic of poetry, last discussed in Books 2 and 3. What is imitation? Socrates answers his question by considering the example of a couch, and distinguishing between the form of the couch, the manufactured couch, and a painting of a couch (596a). He concludes that the products of imitation are far removed from truth (S97e). - 598c: Poets, like painters, are imitators. Socrates argues that if they really had the expertise conventionally attributed to them, they would not have been content to

remain mere poets (599b). Their knowledge is in fact inferior to a maker's knowledge, which is in turn inferior to a user's knowledge (601c). - 602c: Socrates turns from the topic of what imitators know to that of how they affect their audiences. Using a comparison with optical illusions (602c), he argues that imitative poetry aims to stir the irrational element in the soul (603c). Worst of all, it can corrupt even decent people (606c). He concludes that there is no place for such poetry in Callipolis, but only for verses in praise of the gods and of good men (6o6e). — 608a: Via the claim that imitative poetry prevents the immortal soul from attaining its true reward, Socrates makes the transition to a proof of the soul's immortality (6o8d). He insists that the soul cannot be understood in its true nature if we consider only its association with the body, as we have been doing in this discussion (61 ib). - 612b: Finally, Socrates describes the rewards of justice, as permitted by the rules of their discus¬ sion now that justice has first been vindicated without appeal to its repu¬ tation or rewards. He briefly reviews the rewards of justice and the penalties for injustice in this life (6i2d), then narrates an elaborate myth, the myth of Er, describing the rewards and penalties that await us after death (614a). The souls of the dead meet on a meadow to discuss their experiences of reward and punishment (614c); they travel to a place from which they can view the whole cosmos (616b); they choose their next lives (6i7d); they are reincarnated (62oe). Socrates ends the discussion with a farewell (621c).

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 cel¬ ebrated. 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.'

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 RepMic 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.

Socrates, Polemarchus, Glaucon, Adeimantus, Cephalus

‘That’s a pretty good guess,’ I replied.

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

‘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?’

‘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 cer¬ emony 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.’

S o we went back to Polemarchus’ house, where we found Polemarchus’ brothers Lysias and Euthydemus — as well as Thrasymachus of Chal- cedon, Charmantides from the deme 4 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 dis¬ tricts 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.’ e ‘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 particu¬ lar, 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 complain¬ ing; 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 e 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' 330 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?’ b ‘Did I add to it, Socrates? When it comes to making money, I’m some¬ where 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.’

c ‘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.’

d ‘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 con¬ fronted 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 e 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 cal¬ culating and considering whether you’ve done anyone any sort of injus¬ tice. And if you find many acts of injustice in your own life, you keep 331 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 b 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.’ c ‘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 dis¬ cussion 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 332 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?'

'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?'

'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 b 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?'

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 c 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 appro¬ priate, 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?’

‘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?’

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

‘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?’

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

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

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

‘Justice is something useful even in peacetime, then?’

‘But then so is agriculture, isn’t it?’

‘For producing shoes, you would say, presumably.’

‘What about justice, then? When you say it’s useful in peacetime, what is it useful fori What does it produce?’

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

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?’

‘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.’

‘Unless by any chance, Polemarchus, it’s a question of putting the c 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?’

‘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.

‘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?’

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

‘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?’

‘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?’

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

e ‘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?’

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

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.’

‘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.

‘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’ grand¬ father 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?’

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

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?’

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

‘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.

‘In that case, Polemarchus, there are many people for whom it will turn e 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?’

33s ‘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.’

‘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 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?’

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?’

‘But isn’t justice a human excellence ?’ 13

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

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

‘Can horsemen make people unskilled with horses by means of horse¬ manship?’

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?’

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

‘Nor is it the property of dryness to make things wet, but of its oppo¬ site.’

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

‘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.’

‘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?’

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‘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?’

‘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 pre¬ vented by those sitting round us, who wanted to hear the discussion through to the end. But when we reached this stopping-place in the argu¬ ment, 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 valu¬ able 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

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 con¬ clusion.’

‘What i f 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 Glaucon. ‘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 Glaucon here and the others the benefit of your knowledge.’

After this appeal, Glaucon 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 enthu¬ siastic 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. W hat 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 right 16 - 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?’

‘And what is in control in each city is the ruling power?’

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 every¬ where - 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.’

‘I shall,’ I said. ‘Tell me, don’t you also say that itis just for subjects to obey their rulers?’

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?’

‘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?’

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

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

‘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?’ e ‘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.’

340 ‘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 b 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. c ‘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 d 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 e 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?’

‘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.’

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

‘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.’

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

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

‘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?’

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.’

‘And horsemanship does not think about what is good for horseman¬ ship, 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.’

‘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 t o 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 busi¬ nessman. Isn’t that what was agreed?’

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

‘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.’

‘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 answer¬ ing 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.’

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 (44od, 459c). It is also important in the political theory of his Statesman ovPoliticus (27id—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 con¬ tracts, 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 commit¬ ting 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 rota¬ tion 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 c 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. e 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 345 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, b 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?’

‘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 fife. 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, sea¬ manship safety at sea, and so on?’

b ‘And does the art of earning a living 24 bring payment? Is this its func¬ tion? Or are you saying that medicine and seamanship are the same?

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?’

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

‘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?’

‘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 addi¬ tion, something which is the same for all of them, and benefits all of them.’

‘We say that they all have the practitioner’s ability to benefi t 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 med¬ icine 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?’

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

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

‘Can you explain that, Socrates?’ said Glaucon. ‘I can see what you mean by the two forms of payment. But the penalty you ref er to, and how you can put it in the category of a payment, that I don’t understand.’ b ‘Then you don’t understand the payment the best rulers receive — the one which persuades the most suitable people to rule, when they are pre¬ pared to rule. You’re aware, aren’t you, that ambition and greed are regarded as, and indeed are, things to be ashamed of?’

‘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 del¬ egate the job. If there were ever a city of good men, there would probably be as much competition not to rule as there is among us to rule. That would be the proof that it really is not in the nature of the true ruler to think about what is good for himself, but only about what is good for his subject. The result would be that anyone with any sense would choose to let someone else do good to him, rather than go to a lot of trouble doing e good to others . 25 This is where I completely disagree with Thrasymachus

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

when he says that justice is what is good for the stronger. But we’ll have another look at that question some other time. Much more important, I think, is what Thrasymachus is saying now, that the life of the

unjust is better than the life of the just. What about you, Glaucon? Which do you choose? Which view do you regard as most accurate?'

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

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?'

'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

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

'Come on, then, Thrasymachus,' I said. 'Let's go back to the begin¬ ning, and you can give us our answers. Is it your claim that perfect injus¬ tice 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?'

'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 arete 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

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

'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 never¬ theless 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 impres¬ sion 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?’

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

‘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?’

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

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

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

‘Let’s put it like this,’ I said. ‘The just man does not try to outdo what d 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.’

‘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?’

‘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?’

‘What about someone with medical knowledge? Is that the same?’

‘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?’

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

‘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?’

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

‘Do you think it’s the same for every branch of knowledge and igno¬ rance? 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?’

‘And the knowledgeable person is wise?’

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

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

‘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?’

‘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.’

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

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

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

‘No, I haven’t,’ he said. ‘But as far as I’m concerned, I’m not happy with the argument you’ve just put forward. I have some comments I e 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.’

‘I’d like to ask the same question I asked before, so that we can pursue 351 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.

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 state¬ ment 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 necessar¬ ily 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 injus¬ tice.'

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

'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?'

'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 enter¬ prise?'

'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?'

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

'Clearly, then, its power is such that whatever it appears in - whether 352 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?'

'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?'

‘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 35od.

whether the just live a better and happier life than the unjust - which was the second question we put forward for examination 34 - 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.’

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

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?’

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

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

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

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?’

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

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

‘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 any¬ thing.’

b ‘Right,’ I said. ‘And do you think that everything which has some func¬

tion assigned to it also has an excellence ? 35 Let’s go back to the same examples. The eyes, we say, have a function?’

35 See note 27 to 348c above explaining how arete ranges between ‘excellence’ and

‘Do the eyes then also have an excellence?’

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

‘Yes, they have an excellence as well.’

‘And the same with everything else?’

‘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 Pm asking. What Pm 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?’

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

‘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?’

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

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

‘In that case, Thrasymachus, will the soul ever perform its own func¬ tions well if it lacks its own specific excellence? Or is that 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.’

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

‘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.’

‘So the just man is happy, and the unjust man is miserable.’

‘But being miserable is not profitable, whereas being happy is.’

‘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.’

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 b 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.’

‘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 conse¬ quences.’

‘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 some¬ thing 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 def ence 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 sugges¬ tion.’

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 contem¬ porary 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 posses¬ sions, 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 some¬ where, 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, W'e 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 pos¬ session of friends and wealth.

‘That is our model of the unjust man. Beside him let us put our imagi¬ nary just man, a simple and honourable man who W'ants, 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 w hich is the opposite of our pre¬ vious example. Despite doing nothing wrong, he must have the w'orst pos¬ sible 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

z 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 judg¬ ment. 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 e the kind of lif e 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 part¬ nerships 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 immedi¬ ately 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

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

‘Why? What more is there?’ I asked.

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

‘Well,’ I said, ‘let brother stand by brother, as the saying goes . 5 By all means join in, and come to his assistance, if he has left anything out — though as far as I am concerned, even what he did say was enough to throw me, and make me incapable of coming to the defence of justice.’ e ‘Nonsense,’ he said. ‘You must listen to this second instalment as well. To make it clearer what I think Glaucon wants, we must go through the contrary arguments to his — the ones which recommend justice and 3 63 criticise injustice. Fathers giving advice to their sons, and all those who are responsible for others, encourage them to be just — not, I take it, because they value justice by itself, but because they value the approval it brings. If they appear to be just, they argue, then this reputation will bring them public office, marriage and all the benefits Glaucon has just enumerated, which the just man gains from being well thought of. And that isn’t all they have to say about the benefi ts 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 Homer 6 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 ren¬ dering trade by sea unnecessary.

Or like some worthy king who, fearing god,

Supports the right. For him the rich dark earth c Bears wheat and barley, while with fruit his trees

Bow down. Unfailingly his flocks bear lambs.

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.

'Apart from that, Socrates, you should take into account another common way of talking about justice and injustice — both in everyday 364 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 dis¬ tinguished 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.

There is much wickedness; it is never hard d 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

Even the gods themselves Will hear our prayers. Men who do wrong, and sin, e 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 happi¬ ness , 14 I must turn all my attention to that. I must draw an exact likeness of goodness around myself, as a front and fafade, 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 some¬ times 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 olig¬ archic 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 Vith 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 chil¬ dren 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 coun¬ terfeit 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 aver¬ sion 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 prac¬ tise 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

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 injus¬ tice. We shall say you are encouraging us to be secretly unjust, and that you agree with Thrasymachus when he says that justice is what is good for someone else - what is good for the stronger - whereas injustice is what is good and profitable for oneself — what is bad for the weaker. You agreed that justice was one of those great goods which are worth having partly for their consequences, but much more so for their own sake, d goods such as sight, hearing, intelligence — and health, for that matter — and the rest of that finest class of goods, those which are good by their very nature, and not because of the reputation they bring . 20 That is the

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

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

praise of justice I want you to make. Just by itself, how does it help - and how does injustice harm — the person who possesses it? You can leave the praise of rewards and reputation to others. I’m prepared to accept other people praising justice in these terms, and condemning injustice, and listen to them extolling or criticising the reputation and rewards associ¬ ated 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’ char¬ acters, but when I heard what they had to say I was particularly delighted 368 with them. ‘So, children of the great man ,’ 21 1 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, 33id); 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 any¬ thing 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?’

‘And a city is something bigger than an individual?’

‘In that case, maybe justice will be on a larger scale in what is larger, 369 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?'

'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?'

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?'

'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?'

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

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

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

'Well then,' I said, 'how will our city be equal to meeting these require¬ ments? 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?'

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

e 'Next question. Should each one of them make what he produces avail¬ able 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 immedi- b ately 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?’

‘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.’

‘That is because the task in hand will not wait for the person doing it c 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.’

‘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.’

‘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 d 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.’

‘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.’

e ‘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.’

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

‘What i s more, if their agent goes empty-handed, taking nothing which 371 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?’

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

‘So our city needs more farmers, and more workers in other occupa¬ tions.’

‘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?’

‘So we shall need merchants as well.’

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

‘What about trade in the city itself? How will each group share its pro¬ duction with others? That after all was our reason for forming an associ¬ ation 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.’

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

make themselves available for this activity. In a well-run city they tend to d 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?’

‘And there is still another group of people, I think, offering a service, e 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?’

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

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

‘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 appear¬ ance?’

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 descen¬ dants.'

'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, appar¬ ently. 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 addi¬ tion, 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 sim¬ plicity 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 53Se) as well as dirty and greedy — the emblem of all that was uncouth.

‘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?’

‘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?’

‘Do we need, then, to carve ourselves a slice of our neighbours’ terri¬ tory, 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?’

‘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 discov¬ ered, 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.’

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.’

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

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

‘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 opportu¬ nity 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