Plato's *Gorgias*

Persons in the dialogue: Callicles, Socrates, Chaerephon, Gorgias, Polus.

Cal: [447A] Well, Socrates, you know the saying, 'When going to war or a battle it may be too late to join in!'

Soc: Oh! Does this mean that a banquet has ended and we are late?

Cal: Yes, a very elegant banquet indeed, for Gorgias[1] gave us an exhibition[2] of great variety and beauty a short time ago.

Soc: Actually it was all the fault of Chaerephon[3] here, for forcing me to spend so long in the Agora.[4]

Chae: [447B] It does not matter, Socrates. I shall also solve the problem. Yes, Gorgias is a friend of mine, so he will give the exhibition for you now if you like, or some other time if you prefer.

Cal: What's this, Chaerephon? Does Socrates want to hear Gorgias?

Chae: That is the very reason we are here.

Cal: In that case, come and visit me at my house whenever you wish. Yes, Gorgias is staying with me, and he will give the exhibition for you.

Soc: It is kind of you to offer, Callicles, but would he agree to converse [447C] with us? In fact, I want to find out from him what power this skill of his possesses, and what it is that he proclaims and teaches. He may present the other exhibition on some other occasion, as you suggest.

Cal: There's nothing like asking the man himself, Socrates. Actually, this was one part of his exhibition, for a moment ago he called upon anyone who was inside to ask any question they wished, and he said that he would answer them all.

Soc: That is wonderful news! You ask him, Chaerephon.

Chae: What should I ask?

Soc: [447D] Ask him who he is.

Chae: What do you mean?

---

[1] Gorgias was a noted and influential rhetorician and sophist from Leontini in Sicily.
[2] An exhibition was a sample lecture or set speech used to show off the skill of a sophist, or professional teacher.
[3] Chaerephon was Socrates' close friend who famously asked the oracle at Delphi whether there was anyone wiser than Socrates (*Apology* 21a). He appears in a number of Plato's dialogues.
[4] The commercial and civic centre of Athens and a gathering place.

Soc: For example, if he happened to be a maker of shoes, I presume he would answer that he is a cobbler. Do you understand what I mean?

Chae: I understand and I shall ask. Tell me, Gorgias, is Callicles[5] here speaking the truth, that you proclaim that you will answer whatever question anyone may ask you?

Gorg: [448A] It is true, Chaerephon. Yes indeed, I made that very announcement, and I can tell you that no one has yet asked me a new question, not for many years.

Chae: Then I expect you will find this easy to answer.

Gorg: Now is your chance, Chaerephon, to put that to the test.

Pol: Come on, Chaerephon, why don't you put me to the test instead? For I think that Gorgias is quite tired, since he has just been doing a lot of talking.

Chae: What is this, Polus?[6] Do you think that you can give better answers than Gorgias?

Pol: [448B] What difference does that make, as long as they are good enough for you?

Chae: None. Anyway, since you want to, you should answer.

Pol: Ask.

Chae: My question is this. If Gorgias happened to be knowledgeable in the skill that his brother Herodicus possesses, what would we be right to call him? The same thing we call his brother?

Pol: Certainly.

Chae: So, if we called him a physician, we would have described him accurately.

Pol: Yes.

Chae: Yes, and if he practised the skill of Aristophon, the son of Aglauphon, or his brother,[7] what would we be right to call him?

Pol: [448C] Obviously a painter.

Chae: And now, what would be the correct title to give Gorgias, in view of the skill in which he is knowledgeable?

Pol: Chaerephon, humanity possesses numerous skills that have been discovered in a practical way through experience. For practicality makes our time on earth proceed on the basis of skill, impracticality on the basis of chance. Various people partake of these particular skills in various ways, and the best partake of the best. And Gorgias here is one of the best, and he practises the most sublime skill of all.

Soc: [448D] Gorgias, when it comes to speeches, Polus appears to have been equipped well and truly. And yet he is not keeping the promise he made to Chaerephon.

---

[5] Callicles is thought to have been an Athenian political thinker, but there is no further evidence for his existence outside of this dialogue.
[6] Polus was from Acragas in Sicily. He was an orator and a student of Gorgias. Much of what we know of Polus comes from this dialogue. He also appears in Plato's *Phaedrus* and *theages*.
[7] Aristophon's brother was Polygnotus, the famous 5th century mural and vase painter.

Gorg: What exactly do you mean, Socrates?

Soc: He appears to me not to have answered the question at all.

Gorg: Then you should question him, if you'd like to.

Soc: If you yourself were willing to answer, I would much prefer to ask you. In fact, it is evident to me from what Polus has said that he has studied so-called rhetoric more than dialectic.

Pol: [448E] Why is that, Socrates?

Soc: Because, Polus, when Chaerephon asked you what skill Gorgias knows about, you praised this skill of his as if someone were criticising it, but you did not give an answer as to what it is.

Pol: Did I not answer that it is the most sublime skill?

Soc: You did indeed. But nobody asked you what Gorgias' skill is like, but what it is, and what we should call Gorgias. Just as Chaerephon set out questions for you earlier and you answered him clearly and concisely, [449A] so should you speak now, and say what this skill is, and what we should call Gorgias. Or better yet, Gorgias, tell us yourself what you should be called, and on account of your knowledge of what skill.

Gorg: The skill of rhetoric, Socrates.

Soc: So you should be called a rhetorician?

Gorg: Yes, Socrates – but I am a good one – if you are prepared to call me what, in Homer's phrase, 'I boast myself to be'![8]

Soc: I am quite prepared to do so.

Gorg: Then call me that.

Soc: [449B] And should we say that you are able to turn other people into rhetoricians?

Gorg: Yes, I profess to do just that, not only here but in other places too.

Soc: Now, Gorgias, would you agree to continue our conversation as we are now doing – one person asking questions, the other answering – and defer to another occasion any lengthy speeches such as the one with which Polus began? And be true to your promise, but please answer each question briefly.

Gorg: Well, Socrates, some answers demand that long speeches be made. However, I shall try [449C] anyway to be as brief as possible. And indeed, what is more, one of my claims is that no one can express himself as concisely as I on the same issues.

Soc: That is what is needed, Gorgias. Just give me an exhibition of this concise form of speech and defer the lengthy form to another occasion.

Gorg: That's what I shall do, and you will say that you have heard no one speak more concisely.

---

[8] *Iliad* vi.211 and xiv.113.

Soc: Come on then. You say that you are [449D] knowledgeable in the skill of rhetoric, and can make a rhetorician of someone else. With which of the things that are, is rhetoric concerned? For instance, weaving is concerned with the manufacture of garments, isn't it?

Gorg: Yes.

Soc: And isn't music concerned with composing melodies?

Gorg: Yes.

Soc: By Hera, Gorgias, I am delighted with these answers. You are answering as briefly as you possibly could.

Gorg: Yes, Socrates, I really think that I am doing quite well.

Soc: Well said. Come now, answer me in the same way about rhetoric. About which of the things that are, is rhetoric the knowledge?

Gorg: [449E] About speeches.

Soc: What sort of speeches, Gorgias? Speeches that show sick people the regimen by which they may become healthy?

Gorg: No.

Soc: So rhetoric is not concerned with all speeches anyway.

Gorg: Of course not.

Soc: And yet it does make people capable of speaking.

Gorg: Yes.

Soc: And to understand what they are speaking about?

Gorg: Inevitably.

Soc: Now does medicine, which we just [450A] mentioned, make someone capable of understanding and speaking about those who are ill?

Gorg: It must.

Soc: So medicine, it seems, is also concerned with speeches.

Gorg: Yes.

Soc: Speeches concerning illnesses?

Gorg: Certainly.

Soc: And isn't gymnastic also concerned with speeches about the good or bad condition of the body?

Gorg: Entirely so.

Soc: And indeed, Gorgias, the same applies [450B] to the other skills. Each of them is concerned with speeches relating to the subject matter of that particular skill.

Gorg: So it appears.

Soc: Then why don't you ever refer to the other skills as rhetorical, since they are concerned with speeches, if in fact you call the skill that is concerned with speeches rhetoric?

Gorg: Because, Socrates, the other skills are almost entirely concerned with knowledge of practical dexterity and activities of that sort, whereas no aspect of rhetoric involves practical dexterity. Rather its action and efficacy work entirely through words. **450C** For these reasons, I regard the skill of rhetoric as being concerned with speeches, and that, I say, is a correct account.

Soc: Now, do I really understand the sort of skill that you wish to call it? But perhaps I shall come to know this more clearly. So answer me this. We do possess skills, is this not so?

Gorg: Yes.

Soc: Well, I think that the vast majority of skills involve practical dexterity and very little speaking, and some involve none at all because the objective of the skill may be attained through silence, as in the case of painting and sculpting and numerous other skills. I think you are saying that rhetoric is not concerned with skills such **450D** as these. Is this so?

Gorg: You have understood my meaning very well, Socrates.

Soc: And yet there is a different set of skills that operates entirely through speech, and requires almost no action or very little. Take arithmetic for instance, or calculation, geometry, or even draughts-playing, and numerous other skills. Some of these involve almost as much speech as activity, but in many such cases most, if not all, of their entire activity and their efficacy **450E** is based upon words. And I think it is a skill belonging to such activities as these that you say is rhetoric.

Gorg: True.

Soc: But I do not think you wish to refer to any particular one of these skills as the skill of rhetoric, even though the formulation you used implies that a skill that is effected through words is rhetoric. Indeed, someone who wanted to contrive difficulties in these arguments might respond, "So, Gorgias, are you saying that arithmetic is rhetoric?" But I do not think you are saying that either arithmetic or geometry is rhetoric.

Gorg: **451A** Indeed, Socrates, your thinking is correct, and you rightly understand my meaning.

Soc: Come on now. You should also work through the answer to the question in the way that I asked it. Since rhetoric happens to be one of those skills that relies for the most part upon speech, and since there are also other skills of this sort, try to state what words the efficacy of rhetoric is concerned with. Words about what? For instance, if someone were to ask me about any of the skills I mentioned just now, "Socrates, what is **451B** the skill of arithmetic?" I would tell him, as you did just now, that it is one of the skills that is effected by means of speech. And if he were to ask again, "Speech about what?" I would reply that it is speech about odd and even numbers, and the extent of each. And if he were to go on and ask, "What skill do you refer to as 'calculation'?" I would say that it is one of the skills that is effective entirely through speech. And if he were also to ask, "About what?" I would say, as the recorders **451C** in the Assembly might say, that 'for the most part' calculation is just like

arithmetic, for it is concerned with the same thing, the odd and the even. Yet they differ insofar as calculation considers the quantity associated with the odd and the even, both in relation to themselves and in relation to one another. And if someone asked about astronomy, because I said that it is effective entirely through speech, and said, "What are the pronouncements of astronomy concerned with?" I would reply that they deal with the motion of the stars and sun and moon, and their speed relative to one another.

Gorg: Well, you are right to say all that anyway, Socrates.

Soc: [451D] Then you should try this too, Gorgias. Rhetoric is one of those skills that operates and is effective through speech. Is this so?

Gorg: That's what it is.

Soc: Can you explain what it is concerned with? Among things that are, what is it that the particular words employed by rhetoric are concerned with?

Gorg: With the most important and sublime of human affairs, Socrates.

Soc: But, Gorgias, this too is ambiguous, and you are still not saying anything [451E] that is clear. In fact, I am sure you have heard the round that men sing at parties, in which they make a list in song, according to which it is best to be healthy, second best to be beautiful, and third best, according to the composer of the song, is to be wealthy by honest means.

Gorg: Yes, I have heard this, but why are you referring to it?

Soc: [452A] What if artificers of whatever is praised by the composer of the song were to stand before you right now? I mean a physician, a trainer, a businessman. First the physician would say, "Socrates, Gorgias is deceiving you. This skill of his is not concerned with the most important good of humankind. Mine is." Now, if I were to ask him, "Who are you to say so?" he would probably say that he is a physician. "What do you mean?" I would say. "Is the product of your skill the most important good?" "Of course it is" he would probably reply. "Socrates, the product of my skill is health, and what good [452B] is more important to humanity than health?"

And if the trainer spoke next and said, "I too would be surprised, Socrates, if Gorgias was able to show you that there is a greater good in this skill of his than I could show in mine," I would in turn ask him, "Who are you, my man, and what is your job?" And he would reply, "I am a trainer and my job is to make men's bodies strong and fair." After the trainer, the businessman would say, I imagine, with total contempt for everyone else, [452C] "Think about this, Socrates. Does any good seem more important to you than wealth, whether it belongs to Gorgias or anyone else at all?" We might then say, "Oh! Are you the artificer of this?" and he would say, "Yes." "Who are you?" we would ask. "A businessman." And we shall say, "Well then, do you regard wealth as the greatest good for us humans?" "Of course it is" he will say. And we would reply, "And yet Gorgias here is arguing that the skill he possesses is the cause of greater good than yours." Of course he would then ask, "And what is this [452D] good? Put that question to Gorgias." So come on, Gorgias, you should regard yourself as being questioned by these people and by me. Tell me what it is that you describe as the greatest good to humanity, a good of which you are the artificer.

Gorg: What it is in truth, Socrates, is a great good, and the cause on the one hand of freedom for humanity itself, and at the same time of dominion over others, for each person in his own city.

Soc: And what do you call this good?

Gorg: **452E** I call it the ability to persuade by means of speeches: to persuade jurors in a law court, councillors in the Council, assembly men in the Assembly, or anyone else at a gathering convened for political purposes. In fact, in virtue of this power, the physician will be your slave, and the trainer will be your slave, and this businessman will turn out to be making money for someone else and not for himself – for you, actually, the man with the power to speak and persuade crowds of people.

Soc: I think you have now come as close as possible to showing what you consider **453A** rhetoric to be. And if I understand at all, you are asserting that rhetoric is an artificer of persuasion, and its entire function and summation consists in this. Or can you say that rhetoric is able to do anything more than produce persuasion in the soul of those who hear it?

Gorg: Not at all, Socrates. I think you are defining it quite adequately. Yes, that is the summation of rhetoric.

Soc: Listen, Gorgias. You need to appreciate something. I am convinced **453B** that if anyone ever converses with anyone else with the intention of understanding precisely what it is that the discussion is concerned with, I am one of those people, and I count you among them too.

Gorg: What point are you making, Socrates?

Soc: I shall tell you now. You need to be fully aware that when you speak of this persuasion produced by rhetoric, I do not know what exactly it is, or what sort of issues it relates to. And yet I do have my suspicions somehow, based upon what I think you are saying it is, and what it relates to. Nevertheless, I shall ask you what precisely you mean by the persuasion produced by rhetoric, **453C** and what subjects it relates to. Now, since I have my suspicions, why do I proceed to ask you rather than telling you myself? Well, it is not for your sake, but for the sake of the argument, so that it may proceed in this way to render the issue we are discussing as evident to us as possible. You should consider whether you regard my questioning as justified. For instance, suppose I were to ask you what sort of painter Zeuxis[9] is, and you were to reply that he painted animals, wouldn't I be justified in asking what sort of animals he paints, and where?

Gorg: Entirely so.

Soc: **453D** And is the reason that there are other painters who paint numerous other animals?

Gorg: Yes.

Soc: But if no one else besides Zeuxis did any painting, would your response have been adequate?

---

[9] Zeuxis was an accomplished painter from Heraclea in the south of modern-day Italy. He was especially known for his facility in reproducing nature.

Gorg: Of course.

Soc: Come on then, and speak about rhetoric. Do you think that rhetoric alone produces persuasion, or do other skills do this too? I mean, does anyone who teaches any subject whatsoever engage in persuasion or not?

Gorg: He does, of course. He is more persuasive than anyone else.

Soc: **453E** Let us talk again about the same skills we referred to a moment ago. Doesn't arithmetic, and the person who is arithmetical, teach us whatever relates to number?

Gorg: Entirely so.

Soc: And doesn't he also persuade?

Gorg: Yes.

Soc: So arithmetic is also an artificer of persuasion?

Gorg: So it appears.

Soc: Therefore, if someone asks us what kind of persuasion it is, and what it relates to, I presume we would answer him that it is instructive persuasion concerning the extent of the even **454A** and the odd. And for all of the other skills we mentioned just now, we shall be able to show that they are artificers of persuasion, what sort it is, and what it relates to. Is this so?

Gorg: Yes.

Soc: So rhetoric is not the sole artificer of persuasion.

Gorg: That's true.

Soc: Then since it is not the only skill that performs this function, but others do so too, we would be justified in questioning once more anyone who asserts this, just as we put a further question in relation to painting. Of what kind of persuasion is rhetoric a skill, and concerning what? Or don't you think it is right to ask this question once more?

Gorg: **454B** I do.

Soc: Well, Gorgias, since that is what you think, you should answer the question.

Gorg: Socrates, I am referring to the sort of persuasion that occurs in courts of law and in other gatherings, as I said earlier, and it concerns matters that are just and unjust.

Soc: Yes, Gorgias, and I suspected that this was the sort of persuasion you meant, and that this was its concern. But I do not want you to be surprised if I ask you another question like this quite soon, the sort of question that seems **454C** obvious but which I repeat in any case. For, as I say, I am not asking for your sake but for the sake of the completion of the argument, so that we do not get into the habit of snatching at one another's pronouncements through guesswork. Instead, you should come to your own conclusions in whatever manner you wish on the basis of the hypothesis.

Gorg: Yes, I think that's the right way to do it, Socrates.

Soc: Come on then, and let us consider this. Do you use the expression 'to have learned'?

Gorg: I use it.

Soc: And ‘to have believed’?

Gorg: I do. **454D**

Soc: Now, do you think ‘to have learned’ and ‘to have believed’ and ‘learning’ and ‘belief’ are the same, or different?

Gorg: In my view anyway, Socrates, they are different.

Soc: Yes, you are right to think so and you may confirm it as follows. For if someone were to ask you, “Gorgias, is there true belief and false belief?” you would agree, I presume.

Gorg: Yes.

Soc: What about this? Is there true and false knowledge?

Gorg: Not at all.

Soc: So it is obvious that they are not the same.

Gorg: What you say is true.

Soc: **454E** And yet those who have learned have been persuaded, and so have those who believe.

Gorg: This is so.

Soc: So, do you want us to posit two forms of persuasion, one furnishing belief without knowing, and the other furnishing knowledge?

Gorg: Entirely so.

Soc: In that case, which persuasion does rhetoric produce in law courts and other gatherings in relation to matters of justice and injustice? Is it the sort from which believing arises without the knowing, or the sort from which the knowing arises?

Gorg: It is obvious, surely, that it is the sort from which believing arises.

Soc: So rhetoric is, it seems, the articifer **455A** of belief-based rather than instructive persuasion about the just and the unjust.

Gorg: Yes.

Soc: So, the rhetorician is not instructive towards law courts and the other gatherings with regard to matters of justice and injustice, he is merely persuasive. For of course, he would not be able to instruct a gathering of that sort in a limited time on such important matters.

Gorg: Of course not.

Soc: Come on then, let us look at what precisely we are saying about rhetoric. **455B** For I myself am unable to understand, as yet, what I am saying. Whenever there is a meeting in the city about the selection of physicians, or ship-builders, or some other category of artificers, that is not the occasion when the rhetorician will give advice, is it? For it is evident that in each of these selections, the most skilled person should be selected. Nor do they advise us when the subject is the construction of walls, or the fitting out of harbours and

dockyards. No, the architects advise us then. Again, when there is deliberation about the selection of generals, or our formation against our enemies, or the capture[455C] of territories, it is military men who give advice then, and not the rhetoricians. Or how would you describe deliberations of this kind, Gorgias? Indeed, since you say that you are yourself a rhetorician and can make rhetoricians of others, it would be worthwhile to find out about the details of this skill from you. And you should regard me too as someone who is concerned for your interests, for there may be someone inside who wishes to become a pupil of yours. I notice some, quite a number actually, and they would probably be embarrassed to question you. So when you are being questioned by me,[455D] regard yourself as being questioned by them too. "What will be ours, Gorgias, if we consort with you? On what affairs of the city shall we be enabled to advise? Is it only about what is just and unjust, or also about the topics Socrates mentioned a moment ago?" Now, try to respond to them.

Gorg: Well, Socrates, I shall try to reveal the entire power of rhetoric to you in a clear manner. You led the way very nicely yourself. For you know, of course, that those dockyards, and [455E] the walls of Athens, and the fitting out of the harbours, owe their origin to the advice of Themistocles, and the others to the advice of Pericles, but not to the advice of artificers.[10]

Soc: Yes, Gorgias, that is what they say about Themistocles, and I heard Pericles myself when he advised us about the Middle Wall.[11]

Gorg: [456A] And whenever there is a decision of the kind you mentioned just now, you see that the rhetoricians are those who give advice, and whose opinions prevail on these matters.

Soc: Yes, these are the issues I wonder about, and for some time I have been asking what precisely the power of rhetoric is. For when I consider it in this way, its greatness appears to me as something supernatural.

Gorg: If only you knew all of it, Socrates, that it somehow incorporates all of the powers within itself! [456B] I'll give you strong evidence for this. On many occasions I have gone along with my brother, and with the other physicians, to someone who was ill but was unwilling to swallow the medicine, or submit to cutting or burning at the physician's hands. Now the physicians were unable to persuade him, but I persuaded him by means of no other skill than rhetoric. And I also assert that if the physician and the rhetorician went to any city you care to name, and it was necessary to have a verbal contest in the Assembly or some other meeting, as to which of them should be chosen as physician, the physician would not feature [456C] at all, but the one with the power to speak would be chosen, if he so wished. And if he were to compete against any other artificer whatsoever, the rhetorician would persuade people to choose himself rather than anyone else at all. For there is no issue on which the rhetorician could not speak more persuasively at a gathering than any other artificer. Now then, such is the power of this skill, and such is its extent.

---

[10] Themistocles and Pericles were important Athenian statesmen. The Themistoclean walls included both city walls and walls around the port of Piraeus. The later Periclean 'Long Walls' linked Athens with her port.
[11] The 'Middle Wall' was built in 444-442 to enclose the military road from Athens to the Piraeus and ran parallel to the north Long Wall.

However, Socrates, one should make use of rhetoric just as one uses any other competitive skill. And indeed, no other competitive skill **456D** is learned in order to be used against the entire human race. Because one learns boxing and fighting and fighting in full armour so as to be superior to friends and to enemies, one does not, on that account, strike one's friends or stab them or kill them. Nor, by Zeus, if someone has frequented a gymnasium, gets his body into good shape, becomes a skilled boxer, and then punches his father or mother or some family members or friends, should we, on that account, hate the trainers, **456E** or the teachers of armour-fighting, and expel them from our cities? No, those men imparted the skill to others to be used in a just manner against enemies and miscreants, defensively, not on their own initiative. But the pupils pervert **457A** it, and use their strength and skill in an improper manner.

Therefore, those who teach it are not corrupt, nor, on this account, is the skill either blameworthy or corrupt. No, I think the fault lies with those who do not use it properly. Now the same argument also applies to rhetoric. The rhetorician has the power to oppose everyone, and to speak on every topic, and so he is more persuasive before large gatherings on **457B** any issue he chooses, almost anything at all. However he need not, on that account, be any more inclined to take away the reputation of physicians or other artificers, just because he has the power to do so. Instead, as with any other competitive skill, he needs to use rhetoric justly. But in my view, if someone who has become a rhetorician acts unjustly by means of this power and this skill, we should not hate the person who taught him, and expel him from our cities. For that man imparted the knowledge to be used justly, **457C** but the pupil used it in the opposite way. So it is right to hate the one who used it improperly, and exile him or kill him, but not the one who taught him.

Soc: I imagine, Gorgias, that you, like me, have experience of a whole range of speeches, and that you have observed something about them: that the speakers are not easily capable of mutually defining the issues they are trying to discuss, and of learning and teaching themselves, and concluding their meeting upon that basis. **457D** Instead, when they dispute over something, and one says that the other is not speaking correctly or clearly, they become angry, and they believe that the other is speaking from resentment towards them, from a thirst for victory, rather than pursuing the issue in front of them for discussion. And some of them end up behaving most disgracefully, engaging in slander, and saying and hearing such things as make even their audience angry on their own account, because they deemed such fellows worth listening to.

457E Well, why am I saying this? It is because I think that what you are now saying is neither entirely consistent nor consonant with what you first said about rhetoric.[12] Yet I am afraid to refute you in case you assume that I am out for victory, and my words are aimed at you, rather than the issue and its elucidation. Now if you are the sort of person that I am, **458A** I would gladly continue to question you, but otherwise I shall have done with it.

What sort of person am I? I am one of those who would gladly be refuted if I say anything untrue, and would gladly engage in refutation if someone else were to say something untrue,

---

[12] See 454b.

and yet I am no less averse to being refuted than to engaging in refutation. Indeed, I think that being refuted is a greater good, insofar as it is a greater good to be released oneself from the greatest evil, rather than releasing someone else. For I believe that nothing is so evil for a person as a false [458B] opinion on the issues with which our present discussion is concerned. So if you claim to be someone of this sort, let us have a discussion, but if you think we should have done with it, let us bid the issue farewell now, and bring our discussion to an end.

Gorg: No, Socrates, I say that I myself am the sort of person you have described. However we should probably take our audience into consideration too. Yes, I should tell you that a while ago, before you arrived, I gave numerous exhibitions to these people, and we are now likely to prolong [458C] this unduly if we engage in discussion. So we should also consider their circumstances, in case we are detaining some of them who wish to do something else.

Chaer: Socrates and Gorgias, listen for yourselves to the commotion from these men, who wish to hear anything you have to say. As for myself, I pray that I never become so busy that I would set aside such discussions as these, conducted in this manner, because it became more important to do something else.

Cal: [458D] Yes, by the gods, Chaerephon, I myself have been present at many discussions over the years, but I don't know if I have ever before been so delighted as I am now. Accordingly, if you wish to converse for the whole day, you will be doing me a favour anyway.

Soc: And indeed, Callicles, there is no impediment on my part as long as Gorgias is willing.

Gorg: Well, Socrates, after all that it would be a disgrace for me to prove unwilling, since I was the one who announced that anyone could ask whatever they wanted.[458E] So if this is how these people see it, proceed with the discussion and ask any question you want.

Soc: Then listen, Gorgias, to what surprised me in the statements that you made. Indeed it is possible that what you say is correct, and I am not understanding you correctly. Do you say that you can make someone a rhetorician, if he wishes to learn from you?

Gorg: Yes.

Soc: So that he may be persuasive before a crowd, not teaching them but persuading them? [459A]

Gorg: Entirely so.

Soc: And you also said just now that even on health matters, the rhetorician will be more persuasive than the physician.

Gorg: Yes I did, before a crowd anyway.

Soc: Does not 'before a crowd' mean 'before those who do not know'? For surely before those who know he would not be more persuasive than the physician.

Gorg: What you say is true.

Soc: And since he will be more persuasive than the physician, he turns out to be more persuasive than the one who knows.

Gorg: Certainly.

Soc: [459B] Although he is not a physician. Is this so?

Gorg: Yes.

Soc: But the non-physician is, of course, not knowledgeable on matters of which the physician is knowledgeable.

Gorg: Obviously.

Soc: So, whenever the rhetorician is more persuasive than the physician, the person who does not know will be more persuasive than the person who knows, before those who do not know. Does this follow, or does it not?

Gorg: It follows from what went before, anyway.

Soc: Therefore in relation to all the other skills, the position of the rhetorician or rhetoric is the same. It does not need to know anything about the actual details, since it has discovered [459C] some means of persuasion by which, before those who do not know, it appears to know more than those who know.

Gorg: Well, doesn't it make things much easier, Socrates, when without having learned the other skills but just this one skill, you are no worse off than the other artificers?

Soc: We shall investigate presently whether or not the rhetorician is worse off than the others under such circumstances, if that is relevant to our discussion. But there is something we should consider first. [459D] When it comes to just and unjust, base and noble, good and bad, is the situation of the rhetorician the same as it was in the case of health, and the various concerns of the other skills? Without knowing what is good and bad, base and noble, just and unjust, could he bring about persuasion in relation to these so that before those who do not know, he seems to know more [459E] than those who actually know, even though he doesn't know? Or is it necessary to know these, and should the person who intends to learn rhetoric know these things before he arrives in front of you? And if not will you, the teacher of rhetoric, decline to teach these subjects to the new arrival, since it is not your job? And instead, although he does not know such matters, will you make him seem to know before the multitude, and seem to be good when he is not? Or will you be unable to teach him rhetoric at all if he does not know the truth about these matters in advance? What is the situation here, Gorgias? And by Zeus, [460A] as you said you would do earlier, please reveal rhetoric, and state what precisely its power is.

Gorg: Well I believe, Socrates, that if he happens not to know, then he will learn these matters from me too.

Soc: Hold there! Yes, that is well expressed. If you are to make a rhetorician of someone, it is necessary for him either to know the just and the unjust beforehand, or learn these subsequently from you.

Gorg: Yes, certainly. [460B]

Soc: What about this? Someone who has learned carpentry is a carpenter, is he not?

Gorg: Yes.

Soc: And is not someone who has learned music a musician?

Gorg: Yes.

Soc: And is someone who has learned medicine a physician? And does the same argument apply to the other subjects? Whoever learns any of them is, in each case, the sort of person that the knowledge makes him.

Gorg: Yes, certainly.

Soc: Therefore, according to this argument, the person who has learned justice is just?

Gorg: Entirely, of course.

Soc: And presumably the just man performs just actions?

Gorg: Yes.

Soc: [460C] Therefore it is necessary that the rhetorician be just, and that the just man wishes to perform just actions.

Gorg: So it appears anyway.

Soc: So the just man will never wish to act unjustly.

Gorg: Necessarily.

Soc: And according to the argument it is necessary that the rhetorician be just.

Gorg: Yes.

Soc: So the rhetorician will never wish to act unjustly.

Gorg: It appears not anyway.

Soc: Now, do you remember saying a little earlier that we should not blame the trainers, [460D] or expel them from our cities, if a trained boxer makes use of his boxing skill to act unjustly? And on the same basis, that if the rhetorician uses rhetoric unjustly, we should not blame the instructor or drive him out of our cities, but we should blame the one who acted unjustly and did not use rhetoric correctly? Is that what was said or is it not?

Gorg: That's what was said.

Soc: But now it turns out that the same [460E] person, the rhetorician, would not ever act unjustly. Is this not so?

Gorg: Apparently.

Soc: And in our initial discussion it was said that rhetoric was concerned with speeches, not about number, odd and even, but about the just and the unjust. Is this so?

Gorg: Yes.

Soc: What is more, at the time you were saying all this, I understood that rhetoric would never be an unjust activity, since the speeches it makes are always about justice. But later on, when you said that the rhetorician could also use rhetoric **461A** unjustly, I was amazed at this, and being of the view that your statements were not concordant, I made those pronouncements, that if you were of the view, as I am, that there is an advantage in being refuted, it would be worthwhile to carry on a discussion, but if not, we should bid farewell to the matter. But of late, as we continue our investigation, you see for yourself that we are in agreement once more, that the rhetorician is unable to use rhetoric unjustly, or to desire to act unjustly. So, Gorgias, by the dog, **461B** [13] we shall need considerable time together to investigate precisely how matters stand here.

Pol: What's this, Socrates? Do you really believe what you are now saying about rhetoric? Or do you imagine that because Gorgias was ashamed not to agree with you about the man who studies rhetoric knowing the just and noble and good, and even if he were to frequent Gorgias without knowing these, he would teach him. Perhaps it was from this concession that a contradiction then showed up in his **461C** propositions, something that delights you, as you draw people into questions of this sort. Yes, do you believe that anyone would totally deny that he himself knew about justice and would teach this to others? No, it is very crude of you to lead the discussions in such directions.

Soc: Please, most noble Polus, this surely is why we acquire companions and sons, so that when we ourselves get older and stumble, you younger men are there to put our lives right once more, both in word and in deed. And now, if Gorgias **461D** and I have made some stumble in our discussions, here you are to put us right. It is your duty, and if it seems to you that anything that has been agreed has not been agreed fairly, then I am willing to retract whatever you wish, if you would just watch out for one thing for my sake.

Pol: What are you referring to?

Soc: That you restrain the lengthy manner of speaking that you tried to use earlier, Polus.

Pol: What's this? Shall I not be allowed to say just as much as I want to?

Soc: **461E** Best of men, you would surely be in an outrageous predicament if, having arrived in Athens where there is more freedom of speech than anywhere else in Greece, you were the only person there who did not attain it. But look at it the other way. If you speak at length and are not willing to answer what you are asked, would not my predicament be even more outrageous if I was not allowed to leave, **462A** and stop listening to you? Rather, if anything in the discussion that has just taken place bothers you and you wish to put it right, then, as I said just now, retract whatever you wish, take your turn in questioning and being questioned, just like myself and Gorgias, and practise refuting and being refuted. Now, I presume you also claim to know the same things as Gorgias. Is this so?

Pol: I do indeed.

---

[13] See footnote at 482b.

Soc: In that case, do you also frequently call upon people to ask you any question they want, on the basis that you are knowledgeable in answering?

Pol: Yes, certainly.

Soc: [462B] So you should now do whichever of these you prefer, ask or answer.

Pol: That's what I'll do then, and you should answer me, Socrates. Since Gorgias seems to you to be in perplexity in relation to rhetoric, what do you say that it is?

Soc: Are you asking me what kind of skill I say that it is?

Pol: I am.

Soc: Since I should speak the truth to you, Polus, it seems to me anyway that it is not a skill at all.

Pol: Then what do you think rhetoric is?

Soc: An activity which you claim to have made into a skill in your treatise, [462C] which I have recently read.

Pol: What activity do you mean?

Soc: I mean a practice.

Pol: So, does rhetoric seem to you to be a practice?

Soc: To me it does, unless you can suggest an alternative.

Pol: Practice of what?

Soc: A practice of bringing about some gratification and pleasure.

Pol: Don't you think rhetoric is noble since it is able to gratify people?

Soc: What is this, Polus? Have you already found out from me what I assert that rhetoric [462D] is? Is that why you are asking the subsequent question about whether I think it is noble?

Pol: Well, didn't I find out that you say it is a practice?

Soc: Well, since you have such respect for gratification, are you prepared to gratify me, just a little?

Pol: I am indeed.

Soc: Ask me now what skill I think cookery is.

Pol: I am asking you then. What skill is cookery?

Soc: It is not a skill, Polus.

Pol: I am saying so.

Soc: It is a practice.

Pol: I am saying so.

Soc: Of bringing about [462E] gratification and pleasure, Polus.

Pol: So is cookery the same thing as rhetoric?

Soc: Not at all, but it is a part of the same pursuit.

Pol: What pursuit do you mean?

Soc: It may sound somewhat crude if I speak the truth. Indeed, I am reluctant to speak, on Gorgias' account, in case he thinks I am mocking his own pursuit. Now, what I call rhetoric is part of an activity that is not the fairest of activities, but I do not know if this is the rhetoric that Gorgias engages in, **463A** for earlier on nothing clear emerged from our discussion as to what precisely this man believes.

Gorg: Say what it is, Socrates. Don't be ashamed on my account.

Soc: Well then, it seems to me, Gorgias, to be a pursuit devoid of skill, and yet it belongs to an intuitive soul that is also courageous and naturally clever in dealing with humanity. And in summary, **463B** I call this flattery. Now, I do think that there are many other parts of this pursuit, but one of them is indeed cookery, which actually seems to be a skill, but according to my account it is not a skill but practice and habit. I also refer to rhetoric as part of this, as are beautification and sophistry – four parts associated with four activities. Now if Polus wishes to inquire, he should inquire, although he has not yet **463C** inquired as to what sort of part of flattery I assert that rhetoric is. No, he has not noticed that I have not yet answered that question, so he proceeds to ask if I regard it as noble. But I shall not answer him as to whether I regard rhetoric as noble or base, until I have first answered what it is. No, that would not be right, Polus. But if you really do wish to engage in inquiry, ask me what sort of part of flattery I say that rhetoric is.

Pol: That's my question then. So tell me what sort of part it is.

Soc: **463D** Now will you understand my answer? Rhetoric, according to my account, is an image of part of politics.

Pol: What else? Are you saying that it is noble or base?

Soc: Base, in my view anyway, for I refer to what is bad as base, since I must respond to you as if you have already understood what I mean.

Gorg: By Zeus, Socrates, I don't understand what you mean either.

Soc: **463E** Gorgias, it is quite likely that I am not making my meaning clear, but Polus here is young and impetuous.

Gorg: Just leave him be and tell me what you mean by saying that rhetoric is an image of part of politics.

Soc: Then I shall try to state what rhetoric appears, to me anyway, to be. And if it happens not to be what I say it is, Polus here will refute me. **464A** I presume there is something you call body and something you call soul?

Gorg: How could there not be?

Soc: In that case, do you also think that there is some good condition of each of these?

Gorg: I do indeed.

Soc: What about this? Can they seem to be in good condition when they are not? I am referring to a situation such as the following. Many people seem to have their bodies in good condition, and it is not easy for anyone to discern that they are not in good condition, but the physician and any physical trainer can do so.

Gorg: What you say is true.

Soc: I am referring to the sort of thing, present in body and in soul, which makes body and soul seem to be in good condition, when in fact they possess no more than that seeming. [464B]

Gorg: There are such things.

Soc: Come on now, and if I can I will give you a clearer demonstration of what I mean. Since there are two activities, I am saying there are two skills. One is directed to the soul and I call it politics, but the single skill directed to the body I cannot name for you off hand. Yet I am saying that care of the body is one, though it has two parts, gymnastic and medicine. And in the field of politics, the legislative part corresponds to gymnastic, while justice is the counterpart of medicine. [464C] Now each of these does indeed have something in common, one with the other – medicine with gymnastic, and justice with law-making – in as much as they are associated with the same thing, and yet they are somewhat different from one another. So there are these four, and they always aim for the best in caring for what belongs to the body on the one hand, and what belongs to the soul on the other. Now flattery notices this. I do not mean that she knows, but she guesses. She divides herself into four, adopts the guise of each of the four, and pretends to be [464D] the one whose guise she adopts. Then, devoid of any understanding of what is best, she uses the pleasure of the moment to hunt instead for folly, and she practises deception so as to seem to be of the utmost value. So cookery, having adopted the guise of medicine, also pretends to know what foods are best for the body, so that if the cook and the physician had to contest the matter before children, or before men who were just as silly as children, as to whether the physician or the cook had more expertise about wholesome or harmful [464E] foods, the physician would die of starvation. Now this is what I call flattery, and I say that something of this sort [465A] is base, because it guesses at pleasure regardless of what is best, Polus, and that is my reply to you. But I say that it is not a skill but a practice, because it does not possess any rational account of the nature of what it applies to, or of what those things are applied to, so that it is unable to express the cause of each. And I do not call an activity devoid of an account a skill. Yet, if you wish to contest these assertions, I am prepared to defend the argument.

[465B] Now cookery is the flattery that hides behind medicine, while in the very same way beautification hides behind gymnastic, and in this sense it is a bad influence, deceptive, ignoble and slavish. It practises deception through shaping, colouring, smoothing and dressing up, in such a way as to make an alien beauty intrude, to the neglect of the native beauty brought about by means of gymnastic. Now, to avoid being long-winded, I wish to talk to you as the geometers do, for at this stage you are probably [465C] following me. What beautification is to gymnastic, so is cookery to medicine; and more to the point, what beautification is to gymnastic so is sophistry to law-making; and what cookery is to

medicine so is rhetoric to justice. Well as I say, on this basis they are distinct by nature, yet insofar as they are closely related, sophists and rhetoricians become confounded into sameness, concerned also with the same issues, and they themselves do not know how to make use of themselves, nor does the rest of humanity know how to use them. And indeed, if the soul did not rule over the body **465D** but the body ruled over itself, and cookery and medicine were not contemplated by means of soul and distinguished from one another, but the body itself were to decide using its own delectation as the measure, the sameness of Anaxagoras would take over, my dear Polus. Indeed, you are familiar with his sayings. Everything would be confounded into sameness,[14] and medicine, health and cookery would be indistinguishable.

So now you have heard what I say that rhetoric is, the counterpart **465E** in the soul of cookery, doing in the soul what cookery does in the body. And yet I have surely done something unusual, because whilst not allowing you to deliver lengthy speeches, I myself have delivered an extremely protracted one. However, I do deserve forgiveness, for when I spoke briefly you did not understand, nor were you able to make use of the answer I gave you, rather you required further elaboration. And indeed, if I **466A** am unable to make use of your answers when you respond to me, you should protract your speech too, but if I can use them, allow me to use them. That is only fair. And now, if you are able to make any use of this answer, use it.

Pol: What's your point then? Do you think that rhetoric is flattery?

Soc: I said, in fact, that it is part of flattery. Can you not remember at your age, Polus? What will happen to you in later life?

Pol: And do the good rhetoricians seem to you to be held in low regard in the cities because they are flatterers?

Soc: **466B** Is this a question, or are you starting to deliver a speech?

Pol: I am just asking.

Soc: In my view anyway, they are not regarded at all.

Pol: How could they not be regarded? Don't they exercise enormous power in our cities?

Soc: Not if you mean that the exercise of power is something good for the powerful person.

Pol: But of course I mean that.

Soc: Then it seems to me that the rhetoricians exercise less power than anyone else in the city.

Pol: But why? Aren't they just like tyrants? Don't they kill anyone they **466C** wish, confiscate property, and expel from the cities whoever seems to them to deserve it?

[14] Anaxagoras was a natural philosopher from Clazomenae in Ionia who lived a generation before Socrates. The opening line of his book describing the initial state of the cosmos was: 'All things were from the same'.

Soc: By the dog, Polus, I am in two minds on each of the points you are making. Do you yourself mean this, and are you expressing your own opinion, or are you asking me a question?

Pol: Yes, I am asking you a question.

Soc: So be it, my friend. In that case, are you asking me two questions at once?

Pol: In what way are there two?

Soc: Did you not just say something of this sort: "Can't the **466D** rhetoricians kill anyone they wish, just like tyrants, confiscate property, and expel from the cities whoever seems to them to deserve it?"

Pol: I did indeed.

Soc: Then I am saying that there are two questions here, and I shall give you an answer in relation to both. Indeed I assert, Polus, that both the rhetoricians and the tyrants exercise the least power in the cities, as I said a moment ago. For in a sense, they do nothing they wish. **466E** Instead they do whatever seems to them to be best.

Pol: Isn't that the exercise of enormous power?

Soc: Not according to Polus anyway.

Pol: Am I denying this? No, I am asserting this.

Soc: By the ... No, you are not, since you assert that the exercise of enormous power is a good to the powerful person.

Pol: Yes, that's what I assert.

Soc: Well, do you think it is good if someone who does not possess intelligence does whatever seems to him to be the best? And do you refer to this as the exercise of enormous power?

Pol: I do not.

Soc: In that case, once you have refuted me, will you demonstrate that the rhetoricians possess intelligence, and rhetoric is a skill **467A** and not flattery? And if you leave me unrefuted, the rhetoricians, who do whatever seems best to them in the cities, and the tyrants, will have acquired nothing good thereby. But according to you, the power is good. Yet you also agree that doing what seems best without intelligence is bad, do you not?

Pol: I do.

Soc: So how could rhetoricians exercise enormous power in the cities, or tyrants either, unless they really are doing what they wish, and Socrates is thus refuted by Polus?

Pol: **467B** This man!

Soc: I deny that they are doing what they wish. Now refute me!

Pol: Didn't you just agree that they do what seems best to them?

Soc: And I still agree now.

Pol: In that case, don't they do what they wish?

Soc: That I deny.

Pol: Are they doing what seems best to them?

Soc: That's what I am saying.

Pol: What you are saying is shocking, Socrates, extremely so.

Soc: Do not make accusations, precious Polus, if I may address you in your own manner. [467C] Rather question me if you are able to, and prove that I am speaking falsely. Otherwise you should respond to me.

Pol: Then I'm willing to respond, so that I actually understand what you are saying.

Soc: Well, what do you think people wish for, the action they are performing at the time, or that for the sake of which they perform the action they are performing? Take for instance those who drink medicine at the behest of the physicians. Do you think they wish for the action they are performing, drinking the medicine and suffering its effects, or is it for something else, for the healthy condition, that for the sake of which they drink it?

Pol: Obviously it is the [467D] healthy condition.

Soc: And in the case of those who undertake sea voyages or engage in other money-making activities, it is not the activity that they wish for, the one they are performing at the time, for who wishes to be at sea, running risks and enduring hardship? No, I think they travel by sea for the sake of something else, to be wealthy, for they take to the sea for the sake of wealth.

Pol: Yes, certainly.

Soc: So, does not the same go for all other actions? If anyone does anything for the sake of something, he does not wish for the action he is performing, but for that for the sake of which [467E] he performs the action.

Pol: Yes.

Soc: Now among things that are, is not everything either good, or bad, or in between these two, neither good nor bad?

Pol: This simply must be so, Socrates.

Soc: Would you not say that wisdom, health and wealth and the like are good, while the opposites of these are bad?

Pol: I would indeed.

Soc: And do you say that the things that are neither good nor bad are those which sometimes [468A] partake of the good, and sometimes of the bad, and sometimes of neither like sitting, walking, running and sailing, or indeed stones and wood and anything else of that sort? Are you not referring to these? Or do you refer to some other things as neither good nor bad?

Pol: No, just these.

Soc: Now which is it? Whenever people perform actions, do they perform those in between actions for the sake of whatever is good, or the good actions for the sake of the in between?

Pol: The in between [468B] for the sake of the good, of course.

Soc: So whenever we walk, we walk in pursuit of the good, thinking it better to do so. And in the opposite case we stand, when we do stand, for the same reason, for the sake of the good. Is this not so?

Pol: Yes.

Soc: Therefore too, if we kill someone do we not kill them, or banish them, or confiscate their property, thinking that it is better for us to do so rather than not do so?

Pol: Yes certainly.

Soc: So, those who do all of these things, do them for the sake of the good.

Pol: I agree.

Soc: Have we agreed then that whenever we perform actions for the sake of something else, we do not wish for those activities, but for that [468C] for the sake of which we do them?

Pol: Very much so.

Soc: So, we do not wish to butcher people, or expel them from our cities, or confiscate their property just like that. But when these actions are beneficial, we wish to perform them, and when they are harmful, we do not wish to do so. For we wish for whatever is good, as you say, but we do not wish for what is neither good nor bad, or what is bad, do we? Do you think what I am saying is true or not, Polus? Why do you not answer?

Pol: True.

Soc: [468D] Therefore, since we are agreed on all this, if anyone, either a tyrant or a rhetorician, kills someone or banishes them from the city or confiscates their possessions, thinking that it is better for himself and it happens to be worse, this man is obviously doing whatever seems best to him. Is this so?

Pol: Yes.

Soc: Now, is he also doing what he wishes, if these actions happen to be bad for him? Why do you not answer?

Pol: Well, I don't think that he is doing what he wishes.

Soc: So, is there any sense in which such a person is exercising enormous power [468E] in that city, since as you agreed the exercise of enormous power is something good?

Pol: There is not.

Soc: Then I spoke the truth when I said that it is possible for a man who is doing what seems best to him in a city not to be exercising enormous power, or doing what he wishes.

Pol: Yes, Socrates, as if you would not welcome the opportunity of doing whatever seems best to you in the city, given the choice, nor would you envy someone whom you saw killing

whoever seemed to him to deserve it, or confiscating his property, or putting people in chains.

Soc: Do you mean justly or unjustly?

Pol: [469A] Whatever he does, isn't it enviable in either case?

Soc: Mind what you say, Polus.

Pol: Why so?

Soc: Because the unenviable must not be envied, nor should the wretched. In fact they should be pitied.

Pol: What's this? Do you think that the men I am referring to are in that situation?

Soc: How could they not be?

Pol: Well, do you think someone is wretched and pitiable when he has killed someone who seems to him to deserve it, and the killing is just?

Soc: I do not think so, but he is not enviable either.

Pol: Didn't you say just now that he is wretched?

Soc: [469B] That was the person who did the killing unjustly, and he is pitiable as well. But the one who does it justly is unenviable.

Pol: Surely it is the person who has been unjustly killed who is pitiable and wretched.

Soc: Less than the person who killed him, Polus, and less than someone who is justly killed.

Pol: How can that be, Socrates?

Soc: On the basis that doing injustice happens to be the greatest of evils.

Pol: Is it the greatest? Isn't it a greater evil to suffer injustice?

Soc: Not in the least.

Pol: So, would you prefer to suffer injustice, rather than do injustice?

Soc: [469C] I myself would prefer neither. But if it were necessary either to do injustice or to suffer injustice, I would choose to suffer injustice rather than do injustice.

Pol: So you would not welcome being a tyrant?

Soc: Not if you mean what I mean by 'being a tyrant' anyway.

Pol: Well, I mean what I said already, being able to do whatever seems best to you in the city – killing, banishing, and doing everything based upon your own opinion.

Soc: Bless you. Then think about what I am going to say. [469D] Suppose I were in a crowded market-place carrying a dagger under my arm, and I said to you, "Polus, I have just been granted a wonderful and tyrannical power. Yes, if it should seem to me that one of these men whom you see deserves to die right now, the man I think should die shall die. And if it should seem to me that one of them should have his head smashed, smashed it will be there and then. And if his cloak should be torn, torn it will be, so great [469E] is the power I shall

exercise in this city." Now if you did not believe me, and I were to show you the dagger, you would probably look at it and say, "Socrates, anyone at all could exercise great power in this manner, since based on this approach you could also burn down any house you thought you should, and the dockyards of Athens, triremes included, and all the ships, public as well as private." But this is not really the exercise of great power, doing what seems best to you. Or do you think it is?

Pol: Of course not, not when it's done in this way anyway.

Soc: [470A] Now can you say why you deprecate power of this sort?

Pol: I can.

Soc: Why so? Tell me.

Pol: Because it is necessary for the person who behaves in this way to undergo punishment.

Soc: And is it not bad to undergo punishment?

Pol: Very much so.

Soc: In that case, my wonderful friend, once again you are of the view that provided acting as seems best to you corresponds to acting beneficially, it is good, and this seemingly is the possession of great power. But if not it is bad, and is insignificant power. [470B] But let us also consider this. Do we not agree that it is sometimes good to do the deeds we mentioned, to kill and to banish people and confiscate their property, and sometimes it is not?

Pol: Very much so.

Soc: Then this point, it seems, is agreed by you and by me.

Pol: Yes.

Soc: So when do you say it is better to do these deeds? Tell me what distinction you make.

Pol: You should answer that question, Socrates.

Soc: [470C] Well, Polus, if it is more pleasant for you to hear this from me, I say that whenever anyone does these deeds justly, it is better. Whenever anyone does them unjustly, it is worse.

Pol: Oh! You are so hard to refute, Socrates! Couldn't a mere child refute you and show you are not speaking the truth?

Soc: Then I shall be very grateful to the child, and equally so to you, if you happen to refute me and rid me of folly. So do not tire of doing good deeds for a man who is your friend. Refute me.

Pol: Well then, Socrates, there is no need to refer to ancient deeds [470D] in order to refute you. Indeed, recent and not so recent events are enough to refute you, and show that many people who act unjustly are happy.

Soc: What sort of events?

Pol: You see, don't you, that this Archelaus fellow, the son of Perdiccas, is ruling Macedonia?

Soc: Not really, but I have heard this.

Pol: Well, do you think he is happy, or is he wretched?

Soc: I do not know, Polus, for I have not yet been in the man's company.

Pol: **470E** What's this? You would know if you were in his company, but otherwise you do not simply recognise that he is happy?

Soc: By Zeus, of course I do not.

Pol: Then, Socrates, it is obvious that you will say that you do not recognise that even the Great King[15] is happy.

Soc: And I shall be speaking the truth, for I do not know how he stands with regard to justice and education.

Pol: Come now, is all happiness contained in this?

Soc: That is what I say anyway, Polus. For I assert that the noble and good men and women are happy, while the unjust and degenerate are wretched.

Pol: **471A** So by your account this Archelaus fellow is wretched?

Soc: Yes, my friend, if he is unjust.

Pol: But how could he not be unjust? None of the authority he now exercises belonged to him, as he was born of a woman who was a slave of Alcetas, the brother of Perdiccas, so by right he was a slave of Alcetas. And if he had wished to enact what is just, he would have acted as a slave to Alcetas, and would have been happy according to your account. But now, wonder of wonders, he has become wretched, since he has perpetrated enormous injustices. Anyway, he first sent for this man, his own **471B** master and uncle, on the pretext of restoring the authority that Perdiccas had taken from him. Once he had entertained Alcetas, he got him drunk along with his son Alexander – Archelaus' own cousin of almost the same age – threw them into a wagon, led them away by night, slit their throats, and they were never seen again. Having perpetrated these injustices, he failed to notice that he had become utterly wretched, and he did not mend his ways. No, a little later **471C** he showed no wish to become happy by rearing his own seven-year-old brother, the legitimate son of Perdiccas, in a just manner and bestowing the throne upon him to whom it devolved by right. Instead, he threw him into a well and drowned him, and told the boy's mother, Cleopatra, that he had fallen in and died whilst running after a goose. And of course, since he has behaved more unjustly than anyone in Macedonia, he is the most wretched of all the Macedonians, and not the happiest. And perhaps there is some Athenian, who, following **471D** your example, would prefer to be any other Macedonian rather than Archelaus.

Soc: Indeed, Polus, at the beginning of these discussions I praised you, because I thought you had been well educated in rhetoric but had neglected dialectic. And now, is this the argument by which a child could refute me? And do you think I have been refuted by you,

[15] The Great King traditionally referred to the King of the Persian (Achaemenid) Empire.

by means of this argument, I who assert that those who act unjustly are not happy? Where is the refutation, good man? On the contrary, I do not agree with anything you are saying.

Pol: **471E** You actually don't want to, yet you are thinking what I am saying.

Soc: Bless you! You are trying to refute me in a rhetorical manner, just like those who believe they are engaging in refutation in courts of law. Yes indeed, in those places, one party seems to refute another once they bring forward many well-regarded witnesses in support of the speeches they deliver, while the opposing speaker furnishes only one or none. But this refutation is of no value with regard to truth. **472A** For on occasion, anyone may be subject to false testimony from numerous witnesses who are held in some regard. And now, with few exceptions, all Athenians and strangers alike will say the same things you say, should you wish to bring witnesses against me to say I am not speaking the truth. They will testify for you if you wish: Nicias, the son of Niceratus, and his brothers too, whose tripods stand in a row in the Sanctuary of Dionysus; Aristocrates, the son of Skellias, **472B** whose beautiful statue stands in the Pythian precinct, if you wish; the entire household of Pericles too, or any other family you wish to select from among this company.[16] But I, being one, do not agree with you, for you do not compel me. Instead, you furnish many false witnesses against me in your efforts to divorce me from my property, the truth. But if I do not produce you yourself as one witness who agrees with what I am saying, then I think I have achieved nothing worth mentioning in relation to the subjects of our **472C** discussion. And neither have you, unless I, one solitary person, bear witness for you, and you bid all those others farewell.

Now this is the particular manner of refutation which you and many others accept. Yet there is another which I, for my part, believe in.

So let us place them side by side and find out if there is any difference between them. What is more, the issues over which we are disputing are not completely trivial. No, to have knowledge of these matters is almost the fairest acquisition of all, and to lack this knowledge is utterly base, for at the heart of all this is knowing, or being ignorant, of who is happy and who **472D** is not. First, there is the immediate issue under discussion at the moment. You think it is possible for a man to be blessed although he is unjust and acting unjustly, since you think that Archelaus is unjust and yet happy. May we regard this as your viewpoint?

Pol: Very much so.

Soc: But I say this is impossible. That is one issue we are disputing. So be it. He will be happy although he is acting unjustly, but what if he meets with justice and punishment?

Pol: He's least happy, since he would be utterly wretched under those circumstances.

Soc: **472E** But if the person acting unjustly does not meet with justice, then, according to your account, he will be happy.

Pol: I agree.

[16] Here Socrates mentions three Athenian political leaders: Nicias, an old-fashioned conservative; Aristocrates, an oligarch; and Pericles, a democrat.

Soc: But in my view, Polus, the one who is unjust and acting unjustly is utterly wretched anyway. However he is more wretched if he does not pay a penalty and does not receive punishment as a wrongdoer. But he is less wretched if he does pay a penalty and meets with justice at the hands of gods and men.

Pol: [473A] You are trying to express some strange notions, Socrates.

Soc: And I shall also try anyway to make you, my colleague, say the same things to me, for I regard you as a friend. Well then, these are the issues on which we now differ, and you should consider these. Did I not say a while ago that doing injustice is worse than suffering it?

Pol: You certainly did.

Soc: But you said suffering injustice is worse.

Pol: Yes.

Soc: And I said that those who act unjustly are wretched, and I was refuted by you.

Pol: Yes, by Zeus.

Soc: [473B] So you think, Polus.

Pol: What I think is true.

Soc: Perhaps, and you say anyway that those who act unjustly are happy, provided they do not pay a penalty.

Pol: Yes, certainly.

Soc: And I say these people are utterly wretched, but those who pay a penalty are less so. Would you also like to refute this?

Pol: Oh, Socrates, this is even more difficult to refute than the other.

Soc: Not at all, Polus, it is impossible! For the truth is never refuted.

Pol: What are you saying? If a man is caught engaging in unjust action, striving to become a tyrant, [473C] and is put on the rack, castrated, has his eyes burned out, and is subjected to a host of other outrageous abuses, sees his own children and wife abused too, and is finally impaled and tarred, will this fellow be happier than if he had evaded this, set himself up as a tyrant, and spent his life ruling the city, doing as he wished, envied and accounted happy by citizens [473D] and strangers alike? Are you saying that all this is impossible to refute?

Soc: Now you are telling horror stories, noble Polus, and a moment ago you were calling witnesses, but you are not engaging in refutation. But in any case, remind me of one detail. Did you say he was striving unjustly to become a tyrant?

Pol: I did.

Soc: Then neither of them will ever be happier, neither the one who manages to become a tyrant by unjust means nor the one who pays a penalty, for of two wretches, neither would be [473E] happier. However, the one who evades justice and becomes a tyrant is more

wretched. What is this Polus? Are you laughing? Is this yet another form of refutation – to laugh at someone when they say something, but not refute them?

Pol: Do you think you haven't been refuted, Socrates, when you are saying things the like of which no man at all would assert? Ask anyone here!

Soc: Oh, Polus, I am not one of your politicians. And last year I was allotted membership of the Council,[17] but when my tribe[18] had the Presidency[19] and I had to cast my vote, **474A** I became a figure of fun as I was unable to cast it. So do not call upon me now to take the votes of the people here. Rather, if you do not have a better refutation than these, then as I said a moment ago, let me have my turn and try out the kind of refutation that I deem necessary. For I know how to furnish just one witness of what I am saying, the person with whom my conversation takes place, but I bid the multitudes farewell. And I know how to take the vote from one, and I do not even engage in discussions with multitudes. **474B** Now, let us see if you are prepared, in turn, to provide an opportunity for refutation by answering whatever you are asked. Indeed I am of the view that both you and I, and all these other men, hold that doing injustice is worse than suffering injustice, and not paying a penalty is worse than paying it.

Pol: I, for one, don't think that I or any other man at all holds this view. So would you accept the infliction of injustice in preference to acting unjustly?

Soc: Yes. You would too, and so would everyone else.

Pol: Far from it. No. I wouldn't, you wouldn't, and neither would anyone else.

Soc: In that case, will you respond?

Pol: **474C** Yes, certainly. In fact I am eager to know what precisely you are going to say.

Soc: Then, Polus, so that you may know, tell me, as if I were questioning you from the beginning, which seems worse to you, doing injustice or suffering injustice?

Pol: Suffering injustice, in my view anyway.

Soc: But what about this? Which is the more base, doing injustice or suffering injustice? Answer.

Pol: Doing injustice.

Soc: In that case it is also worse, if in fact it is more base.

Pol: Not in the least.

Soc: I understand. It seems you do not **474D** think that noble and good, bad and base, are the same.

---

[17] The Council consisted of 500 citizens from each of the ten tribes, chosen by lot to serve for one year. Its chief function was to prepare legislation for the Assembly.
[18] The Athenian citizen body was divided into ten tribes which were united politically, militarily and socially and represented the three regions of Attica: the coast, the plains, and the hills.
[19] Each tribe served in rotation on the Executive Committee of the Council. A member was chosen daily by lot to be the president or chairman.

Pol: Of course not.

Soc: What about the following? In the case of anything noble, such as bodies, colours, shapes, sounds and activities, do you refer to each of them as noble without looking to something else? Firstly, for instance, do you not say that noble bodies are noble either on the basis of their use, what each is useful for, or on the basis of some pleasure, if the beholding engenders delight in the beholders? Have you anything besides this to say about the nobility of the body? **474E**

Pol: I have not.

Soc: Does not the same apply to all the others, and do you not refer to shapes and colours as noble because of some pleasure or benefit or both?

Pol: I do indeed.

Soc: Do you not also refer similarly to sounds and all elements associated with music?

Pol: Yes.

Soc: And indeed, in the case of the laws or any activities, these presumably are not noble because of anything apart from being beneficial or pleasant or both.

Pol: **475A** I don't think so anyway.

Soc: Does not the same apply to the nobility of whatever we learn?

Pol: Yes, certainly. And you are defining this nicely now, Socrates, defining the noble in terms of pleasure and goodness.

Soc: Do we not define the base in terms of the opposite, in terms of pain and by badness?

Pol: Necessarily.

Soc: So, whenever there are two fair things and one is more noble than the other, it is more noble by exceeding in one or both of these factors, in pleasure or in benefit or in both.

Pol: Yes, certainly.

Soc: But when the two are base, and one **475B** is more base, it will be more base by exceeding either in pain or in badness. Must not this be so?

Pol: Yes.

Soc: Come then! What was said just now about doing injustice and suffering injustice? Did you not say that suffering injustice is more bad, and doing injustice is more base?

Pol: I said so.

Soc: Therefore, if in fact doing injustice is more base than suffering injustice, it is either more painful and would be more base by exceeding it in pain, or in badness, or in both. Is this not also necessarily so?

Pol: How could it not be so?

Soc: [475C] Then let us consider this first. Does the perpetration of injustice exceed the suffering of injustice in pain, and are those who act unjustly more pained than those who suffer injustice?

Pol: Not at all, Socrates. It is not this.

Soc: So it does not exceed it in pain anyway.

Pol: Certainly not.

Soc: Therefore, if it does not exceed it in pain, it would not exceed it in both.

Pol: Apparently not.

Soc: In that case only the other factor remains.

Pol: Yes.

Soc: The badness.

Pol: So it seems.

Soc: Therefore, doing injustice would be worse than suffering injustice because it exceeds it in badness.

Pol: Yes, that is obvious.

Soc: [475D] Do not most men agree, and did you not agree with me a while ago, that doing injustice is more base than suffering injustice?

Pol: Yes.

Soc: But now it turns out to be more bad.

Pol: So it seems.

Soc: Well, would you accept the more base and bad in preference to what is less so? Do not be reluctant to answer, Polus, for no harm will come to you. Just surrender nobly to the argument as though it were a physician. Answer, and either affirm [475E] or deny whatever I ask you.

Pol: No, I would not accept that, Socrates.

Soc: Would any other man?

Pol: I do not think so, not on the basis of this argument anyway.

Soc: So I was speaking the truth. Neither I, nor you, nor any other man, would accept the perpetration of injustice rather than suffer injustice, for it happens to be more bad.

Pol: So it appears.

Soc: Now you see, Polus, that when one mode of refutation is set alongside the other, there is no resemblance between them. Although everyone else agrees with you except me, you are sufficient for me, one solitary [476A] person who agrees with me and testifies for me, and I am taking the vote from you alone and bidding the others farewell. And let that be our conclusion on this matter. Let us go on now and consider the second issue we were disputing

about: whether, as you believe, the greatest evil for someone acting unjustly is to pay a penalty or, as I believe, the greater evil is not to pay a penalty. Let us look at it this way. Do you refer to paying a penalty, and being justly disciplined for acting unjustly, as the same thing?

Pol: I do.

Soc: [476B] Now can you deny that everything that is just is fair, insofar as it is just? Think carefully before you answer.

Pol: I don't think I can deny this, Socrates.

Soc: Then consider this too. If someone does something, must there also be something that suffers at the hands of that doer?

Pol: I think so.

Soc: And does it experience what the doer enacts, and in the manner that the doer enacts it? I mean, for instance, that if someone is striking, something must be struck.

Pol: It must.

Soc: And if the striker [476C] strikes forcibly or quickly, is whatever is struck, struck in like manner?

Pol: Yes.

Soc: So, is the experience of whatever is struck akin to what the striker does?

Pol: Entirely so.

Soc: Also, in the case in which someone burns, is it necessary that something be burned?

Pol: How could it be otherwise?

Soc: And if he burns intensely or painfully, is whatever is burned, burned in the manner in which the burner burns?

Pol: Entirely so.

Soc: And in the case in which someone cuts, does the same argument apply?

Pol: Yes.

Soc: And if the cut is large or deep or painful, is whatever is cut, cut with the sort of cut [476D] that the cutter inflicts?

Pol: Apparently.

Soc: Now, see if you agree with the concise statement I made earlier: in all circumstances, the sort of thing the doer does is the sort of thing the sufferer suffers.

Pol: Yes, I agree.

Soc: Well, based upon what we have agreed, is paying a penalty something that is suffered or something that is done?

Pol: It must be something that is suffered, Socrates.

Soc: Therefore, it is being done by someone.

Pol: How could it not be? By the one who disciplines him.

Soc: And does he who disciplines rightly discipline justly? [476E]

Pol: Yes.

Soc: Is he performing just actions or is he not?

Pol: The actions are just.

Soc: Therefore, is it the case that the one who is disciplined and pays a penalty suffers just actions?

Pol: Apparently.

Soc: And it is agreed, I presume, that just actions are noble.

Pol: Entirely so.

Soc: So, one of these people performs what is noble and the other, the one who is disciplined, experiences this.

Pol: Yes.

Soc: [477A] Therefore, since they are noble, are they good? For noble actions are either pleasant or beneficial.

Pol: Necessarily.

Soc: So the person who pays a penalty experiences what is good?

Pol: So it seems.

Soc: So he is benefited?

Pol: Yes.

Soc: Is the benefit what I presume it to be? That his soul becomes better, if in fact he is justly disciplined.

Pol: Quite likely.

Soc: So is a person who pays a penalty released from badness of soul?

Pol: Yes.

Soc: In that case, is he released [477B] from the very worst badness? Think about this. When it comes to the state of a man's property, can you envisage any badness besides poverty?

Pol: No, only poverty.

Soc: What about the condition of the body? Would you say that the badness is illness, disease, uncomeliness and the like?

Pol: I would.

Soc: Do you not think that there is also some vice in the soul?

Pol: How could there not be?

Soc: Do you not refer to this as injustice, ignorance, cowardice and the like?

Pol: Yes, certainly.

Soc:, Since there are wealth, body, [477C] and soul, these three, you have mentioned three vices, poverty, disease, and injustice.

Pol: Yes.

Soc: Which of these vices is the most base? Is it not injustice, in short, the vice of the soul?

Pol: Very much so.

Soc: If it is indeed the most base, is it also the worst?

Pol: What do you mean, Socrates?

Soc: This. On the basis of what was agreed earlier, the base is always base either because it produces the greatest pain, or harm, or both.

Pol: Certainly.

Soc: And did we just agree [477D] that what is most base is injustice and all the vice of the soul?

Pol: Yes, we agreed.

Soc: Therefore it is either the most distressing, and is the most base of these, because it exceeds in distress or in harm or in both.

Pol: Necessarily.

Soc: Now are injustice and indiscipline, cowardice and ignorance, more painful than being poor or being ill?

Pol: I don't think so, not from these arguments anyway.

Soc: Now since by your account at least, the vice of the soul does not exceed the others [477E] in pain, it is the most base of them all because it exceeds them extraordinarily in some great harm and astounding badness.

Pol: Apparently.

Soc: However, I presume that whatever exceeds to the greatest extent in harm would be the greatest badness that there is.

Pol: Yes.

Soc: In that case, is injustice, indiscipline and the general vice of the soul, the greatest badness that there is?

Pol: Apparently.

Soc: Which skill frees one from poverty? Is it not the skill of money-making?

Pol: Yes.

Soc: What frees us from disease? Is it not medical skill?

Pol: [478A] Necessarily.

Soc: And what frees us from vice and injustice? In case you have no ready answer, consider this. Where and to whom do we bring people whose bodies are ill?

Pol: To the physicians, Socrates.

Soc: Where do we bring those who act unjustly or without discipline?

Pol: To the judges. Is that what you mean?

Soc: So that they may pay a penalty?

Pol: I agree.

Soc: Now, do not the people who discipline them aright do so by recourse to some justice?

Pol: Obviously.

Soc: So wealth generation frees [478B] us from poverty, medical skill from disease, and justice from indiscipline and injustice.

Pol: Apparently.

Soc: Then which of these is the noblest?

Pol: Of what?

Soc: Of money-making, medical skill and justice.

Pol: Justice excels by far, Socrates.

Soc: Furthermore, if in fact it is noblest, does it not produce the greatest pleasure or benefit or both?

Pol: Yes.

Soc: Now is medical treatment pleasant, and are those who undergo medical treatment pleased?

Pol: I do not think so.

Soc: But it is beneficial anyway. Is this so?

Pol: Yes. [478C]

Soc: For it brings release from enormous badness, and so it is advantageous to endure the distress and become healthy.

Pol: How could it not be?

Soc: Now on this basis, with regard to the body, would the happiest man be the one who has undergone medical treatment, or the one who was not even ill in the first place?

Pol: Obviously the one who was not even ill.

Soc: Then it seems that happiness is not the release from badness, but not acquiring it in the first place.

Pol: This is so.

Soc: [478D] What about this? If there are two people possessed of badness, either in body or in soul, which of the two is more wretched, the one who undergoes treatment and is released from the badness, or the one who does not undergo treatment and still has it?

Pol: The one who is not treated. So it appears to me.

Soc: Was paying a penalty not a release from the greatest badness, namely vice?

Pol: It was.

Soc: For justice, I suppose, makes one sound-minded and more just, and is a cure for evil.

Pol: Yes.

Soc: So the happiest person is the one who is possessed of no badness in soul, since this has turned out to be the worst [478E] badness of all.

Pol: Yes, of course.

Soc: Second happiest is, presumably, the person who is released from badness.

Pol: So it seems.

Soc: And this is the fellow who is chastised, rebuked, and has paid a penalty.

Pol: Yes.

Soc: So, the fellow who retains his badness and is not released from it lives the worst life.

Pol: Apparently.

Soc: And is this not, in fact, the fellow who perpetrates the greatest injustices, and despite using unjust means, arranges neither to be chastened, nor disciplined, nor to pay a penalty, just as you say [479A] Archelaus and other tyrants, rhetoricians, and men of power contrive?

Pol: So it seems.

Soc: Indeed, best of men, in a sense these fellows have almost arranged to be in the same predicament as someone afflicted with serious illnesses, who contrives not to pay a penalty to the physicians for the aberrations of the body or to undergo treatment, fearing the burning and the cutting, just like a child, because it is painful. [479B] Or does it not seem like that to you too?

Pol: It does.

Soc: It seems they are somehow unaware of what health and excellence of body are like. For, based upon what we have just concluded, these men who are evading justice, Polus, are also in danger of doing something similar: of clearly discerning the pain thereof but having a blind spot towards its benefit, and of being unaware of how much more wretched it is to live with a soul that is not healthy, a soul that is unsound, unjust and impious. [479C] Hence they do anything so as neither to pay a penalty nor be released from this great badness, providing themselves with possessions and friends and the ability to speak as persuasively as possible.

But if what we have agreed is true, Polus, can you see the consequences of the argument? Would you like me to sum them up?

Pol: Unless you have something else to suggest.

Soc: Well, does it follow that injustice, and acting unjustly, [479D] is the greatest badness?

Pol: So it appears anyway.

Soc: And did the release from this badness turn out to be the payment of a penalty?

Pol: It was probable.

Soc: And is the non-payment a continuation of the badness?

Pol: Yes.

Soc: So the second greatest badness is the perpetration of injustice, but the foremost and greatest badness of all is, by nature, doing injustice without paying a penalty.

Pol: So it seems.

Soc: Now is this not, my friend, what we disagreed about: you for your part regarding Archelaus as happy though he perpetrated enormous injustices [479E] without paying a penalty; and I for my part holding the opposite view, that if either Archelaus or any other person does not pay a penalty when he acts unjustly, he is inevitably wretched, more so than any other person; and that the perpetrator of injustice is always more wretched than the sufferer; and the one who pays no penalty is more wretched than he who pays one? Are these not the assertions I made?

Pol: Yes.

Soc: Has it not been shown that what was asserted is true?

Pol: Apparently.

Soc: [480A] So be it. Now if this is all true, Polus, what is the great advantage of rhetoric? In fact, on the basis of what is now agreed, a man should be particularly vigilant of himself in case he might act unjustly and get his fill of badness. Is this so?

Pol: Entirely so.

Soc: But if either he, or someone else for whom he cares, acts unjustly, he will go willingly to wherever he may pay a penalty as quickly as possible, going to a judge just as he would to a physician, hastening [480B] lest the disease of injustice be protracted and make the soul fester and become incurable. Or how should we express this, Polus, if what we previously agreed still stands? Must not these assertions, expressed in this way but not otherwise, be in agreement with the earlier ones?

Pol: Well then, Socrates, what should we say?

Soc: So rhetoric is not useful to us at all, Polus, in the defence of our own injustice, or that of our parents, or companions, or children, or fatherland, except if it is deployed [480C] for the opposite purpose: to prosecute oneself in particular, as one must, and indeed any other kinfolk or loved ones when they happen to act unjustly, not in order to conceal this, but to

bring the unjust action to light, in order that a penalty is paid and health is restored; to compel both himself and the others to show no cowardice, but to submit with closed eyes, worthily and courageously, as if he were being cut or burned by a physician; intent upon the good and the noble, taking no account of the pain; submitting to flogging, if **480D** his unjust deeds merit flogging; to imprisonment, if they merit imprisonment; paying the fine, if a fine is imposed; going into exile, if exile is deserved; and submitting to death, if execution is deserved; he himself being the chief accuser of himself, and of his other kinfolk, and making use of rhetoric for this purpose, so that with their unjust deeds fully exposed, they may be released from the greatest of evils, injustice. Should we formulate it like this, or should we not, Polus?

Pol: **480E** It seems absurd to me, Socrates. However, to you it probably seems to be in line with what we said before.

Soc: Then we must either dispense with the former statements as well, or these latter ones necessarily follow.

Pol: Yes, that's how matters stand.

Soc: What is more, turning to the opposite case, if it proves necessary to act badly towards someone, be he an enemy or anyone else, then as long as you yourself are not being treated unjustly by that enemy – you do need to be careful about this – and the enemy treats someone else unjustly, one must contrive by every means, in word and in deed, **481A** that he pay no penalty, and is not brought before a judge. But if he is brought, one must arrange that the enemy is acquitted and does not pay a penalty; and if he has stolen a lot of gold, that he does not repay this, but holds on to it and spends it unjustly and godlessly on himself and his own people; and if he is deserving of death for his unjust actions, arrange that he does not suffer death – yea, that this never happens – so that he becomes immortal as an evildoer, and if not, that he lives for as long **481B** as possible in such a plight. It seems to me, Polus, that rhetoric is useful for such purposes, seeing that its usefulness to those with no intention of acting unjustly is insignificant, if indeed it has any use at all, since in the previous discussion it appeared not to be useful at all.

Cal: Tell me, Chaerophon, is Socrates serious about all this, or is he playing games?

Chae: He seems to me, Callicles, to be exceedingly serious. However, there is nothing like asking the man himself.[20]

Cal: By the gods, I am eager to ask. Tell me, Socrates, **481C** should we presume that you are now being serious, or joking? For if you are serious, and these pronouncements you are making happen to be true, won't the life of every human being be turned upside-down? And won't we all, so it seems, be doing the complete opposite of what we should?

Soc: Callicles, if people did not have some experience that was the same, some sharing one experience, others sharing another, but instead one of us underwent a unique experience different from everyone else, it would not be easy for him to describe **481D** his own experience to another. And I speak from a recognition that you and I happen to have gone

[20] Chaerephon here uses the exact same phrase that Callicles used in addressing Socrates at 447c5.

through the same experience. We are two lovers, each with two loves. My two are Alcibiades, the son of Cleinias,[21] and philosophy. Yours are the Athenian demos and Demos, the son of Pyrilampes.[22] Clever and all as you are, I notice that you constantly change your stance back **481E** and forth, because you are unable to contradict what your favourite asserts, and what he declares to be the case. In the Assembly, when you are saying something, and the Athenian populace deny that this is the case, you change your stance and propose whatever they wish. And also with this fair youth, the son of Pyrilampes, you are affected in a similar fashion, for you are unable to oppose the formulations and assertions of your favourite. And so if anyone were ever surprised at what you say when you speak under those influences, because the assertions are so absurd, if you wanted to speak the truth, you would probably tell him that unless someone stops **482A** your favourite from making those pronouncements, you will never stop uttering them either. Therefore, you should realise that it is also necessary to hear more statements of this sort from me, and you should not be surprised that I make them. Rather you must stop philosophy, my favourite, from saying what she says.

For she is constantly stating what you are now hearing from me, my dear friend, and she is much less impulsive with me than my other favourite, for the words of this son of Cleinias change from one moment to the next, while the words of philosophy are always the same. **482B** She is saying what now surprises you, although you were also present yourself as it was spoken. So, as I just said, you should either refute her by proving that doing injustice and acting unjustly without paying a penalty is not the most extreme badness that there is, or else, if you leave this statement unrefuted, by the dog, the god of Egypt,[23] Callicles, Callicles will not be in agreement with you. Instead he will be in discord throughout his entire life. And yet, best of men, I for my part think it better that my lyre be out of tune and discordant, so too the chorus that I provide, and that most **482C** of humanity disagree with me and speak against me, rather than that I, being one, should be discordant with and speak against myself.

Cal: Socrates, it seems to me that you are out of control in your arguments, like a true mob orator. Yes, you are making these appeals to the mob, now that Polus has met the very same fate that he accused Gorgias of meeting at your hands. Indeed he pointed out, I believe, that when you asked Gorgias whether Gorgias himself would teach justice to someone who came to him, wishing to learn rhetoric **482D** but without any knowledge of justice, the man was ashamed, and said he would teach him only on account of human convention, because people would be indignant if he said otherwise. Of course, due to this concession, he himself was forced to speak against himself, the very thing you delight in. And he ridiculed you at the time – rightly so in my view – but now he himself, in turn, has suffered the same fate. And I am not much pleased with Polus on this particular issue, because he conceded to you that doing injustice is more base than suffering injustice. For out of this **482E** concession, he

[21] Alcibiades was a prominent and controversial Athenina statesman, orator, and general. He was a close associate of Socrates, and two dialogues that bear his name have been attributed to Plato. He also features prominently toward the end of Plato's *Symposium* where he describes his relationship with Socrates.
[22] The Athenian demos refers to the populace of Athens; Demos also happens to be the name of Callicles' beloved.
[23] This is a light-hearted euphemistic oath alluding to the dog-headed god, Anubis.

for his part got tangled up in the discussion at your hands, and was reduced to silence, ashamed to say what he was thinking. Yes, Socrates, whilst claiming to be pursuing the truth, you are really diverting us into banalities and populisms, propositions that are not sound by nature, but only by convention. Yet in general these two, nature and convention, are opposed to one another. Therefore, if anyone is ashamed, **483A** and does not dare to say what he thinks, he is compelled to utter contradictions. And of course, having recognised this piece of wisdom, you wreak havoc in the discussions, asking surreptitiously about the natural whenever someone mentions the conventional, and about the conventional when they refer to the natural. It happened just now in the references to doing injustice and suffering injustice. When Polus referred to what is base according to convention, you pursued the argument according to nature. For by nature, everything that is more base, such as suffering injustice, is also more bad; whereas by convention, doing injustice is more base. Indeed, this predicament of suffering injustice does not belong to a man, **483B** but to some slave, for whom it is better to die than to live, someone who, on suffering injustice or being mistreated, is unable to defend himself or anyone else he cares for. But in my view, those who set down the laws are the weak people, the multitude. They institute the laws with a view to themselves and their own advantage, and they praise what they praise and censure what they censure. **483C** To intimidate the stronger people who have the power to get more than their share, and to ensure they don't get more than the multitude, they say that getting more than your share is base and unjust, and that seeking to have more than others constitutes unjust activity. For I believe that they themselves, being lesser men, would be delighted with an equal share. Of course, that's why they say that this 'seeking to have more than the multitude' is, by law, unjust and base, and they refer to it as unjust action. And yet I believe that nature herself testifies to this: that it is just **483D** for the superior men to have more than the inferior men, and for the more powerful to exceed the less powerful. And it is evident in many cases that this is so, both among animals in general, and in the cities and dynasties of men. What is just is decided in this way – the stronger rule over the weaker and have more than them.

To what conception of justice did Xerxes[24] have recourse when he waged war against Greece, or his father against the Scythians? And we could describe countless other **483E** instances of this sort. Yet I believe these people are acting in accord with the nature of the just. Yes, by Zeus, in accord with the law of nature anyway, though probably not in accord with the one we institute, moulding the superior and stronger men among us. Capturing them when they are young as though they were lions, we reduce them to slaves with enchantments and beguilements, declaring **484A** that equality is what is needed, and that's what's fair and just. And yet, if a man whose nature is up to the task were to arise, having shrugged off all this, broken it asunder and fled, trampled upon our traditions, aphorisms, verses, and all laws that are opposed to nature, that slave would prove to be our master, and the justice of nature would blaze **484B** forth. And it seems to me that Pindar makes the point I am making in the ode in which he says that

Law the lord of all,

[24] Xerxes, the son of Darius, was King of the Persian (Achaemenid) Empire.

of mortals and immortals both ...

and then he says, it

conducts extreme violence
with a high hand and renders it just.
My proof lies in the deeds of Heracles,
When, without payment ...[25]

It says something of that sort, for I don't know the ode. But it does say that he drove off the cattle of Geryon[26] without payment and without permission, because **484C** by nature that's what is just. Both the oxen and all the other possessions of the lesser and the weaker belong to the superior and the stronger.

Now that is the truth of the matter, and you will recognise this once you have bidden farewell to philosophy, and moved on to greater things. Yes, philosophy is indeed a delight if it is taken up in due measure at the right age, but if a man continues its practise for longer than necessary, it can ruin people. For even if he has great natural endowments, but engages in philosophy beyond the right age, a man must perforce remain **484D** inexperienced in all matters where experience is needed, by anyone who intends to be a noble, good man who is well thought of. In fact, he is rendered inexperienced in the laws governing the city, and the language one must use to engage in the business dealings of men, be they public or private, in the pleasures and desires of humanity, and in short he becomes completely inexperienced in the ways of the world. So once they take to any private or political business **484E** they become laughing stocks, just as the men of politics would, I presume, become laughable too, if they in turn were to take up this activity of yours and its arguments. And this confirms the statement of Euripides that

Each person shines in this and is eager for this,
Assigning the greater part of the day to this
Where he himself excels ...[27]

485A But he shuns and reviles the activity in which he is inferior, and he praises the other one out of good will towards himself, believing that he himself is praising himself by doing so, but in my view it is best to have a share of both. Insofar as philosophy is educational, it is good to partake thereof, and it is no disgrace for a young man to engage in philosophy. However, if he still engages in philosophy as an older man, he becomes a comical character, Socrates, and I myself have exactly the same **485B** feeling towards the philosophers as I do towards people who mumble or behave childishly. For when I see a little child mumbling and being immature, it is still appropriate for him to converse in this manner, so I am pleased and it seems delightful to me, free-spirited and suited to the age of the child.

---

[25] This fragment is from a lost ode of Pindar.
[26] This refers to the Tenth Labour of Heracles; Geryon was a fearsome legendary giant who is described variously as having had multiple heads and/or bodies.
[27] Euripides was one of the three great Athenian tragic playwrights. These lines, from a much-quoted speech by Zethus, appear in his play *Antiope*.

However, when I hear a young child expressing himself articulately, this seems distasteful to me. It offends my ears, and I regard it as more appropriate for a slave. And whenever anyone hears a man **485C** mumbling or sees him behaving immaturely, this appears comical and unmanly and deserving of a beating. Now I myself have the very same feeling towards the philosophers, for I am delighted when I see philosophy in a young adolescent. It seems appropriate to me, and I regard this man as a free-spirited person, and the one who does not engage in philosophy as devoid of freedom, one who will never prove himself worthy of any fair and noble dealings. **485D** And yet, when I see an older man still engaging in philosophy and not giving it up, at that stage, Socrates, the man seems to me to be in need of a beating. For as I said just now, even if this man has many natural endowments, he is prone to become unmanly, avoiding the centres and meeting places of the city – in which, as the poet says,[28] men become illustrious – slinking away to live the rest of his life whispering with three or four **485E** adolescents in a corner, never expressing anything unbridled and visionary to meet the need of the moment.

Now, Socrates, I do have a somewhat friendly disposition towards you, so having been reminded of Zethus, I am now inclined to have the same feeling as he had towards Amphion in Euripides' play.[29] In fact it occurs to me to say the same sort of things to you as he said to his brother: "Socrates, you care not for what you should, and although your soul has been granted a noble nature, you are pre-eminent in the guise of some youthful figure, and you could neither present speeches before the assemblies of justice in the proper manner, nor proclaim anything persuasive or probable, **486A** nor advocate a novel proposal on behalf of someone else." What's more, dear Socrates – and don't be angry with me for I am about to speak with good intentions towards you – doesn't it seem disgraceful to you to be in the predicament I think you are in, along with the rest of those who are in the habit of pressing philosophy too far? For if someone were now to take hold of you, or anyone else of your sort, and cart you off to prison, claiming that you had acted unjustly when you had done nothing wrong, you know that you wouldn't know what to do with **486B** yourself. No, you would be dizzy, open-mouthed, not knowing what you should say, and on being brought to court, meeting some lowly, knavish accuser, you would be executed if he wanted the death penalty for you. Yes indeed, Socrates. 'How can this be anything wise, a skill that takes a naturally talented man and makes him worse?', unable either to help himself, or to save either himself or anyone else from the utmost dangers, liable to have all his property confiscated by his enemies, **486C** living in the city effectively deprived of his rights? And to put it quite crudely, it is possible to slap someone like this across the face and pay no penalty. So, good fellow, heed my entreaty: desist from the practice of refutation. Practise the sweet music of business affairs instead. Practise something that will make you seem intelligent. Leave the subtleties to other people, the nonsensicalities, or fooleries, or whatever they should be called, for these will have you 'dwelling in empty halls'.[30] Do not

[28] The poet is Homer; and the reference is to *Iliad* ix.441.
[29] Amphion is the musician brother of Zethus who was a herdsman. In *Antiope* the brothers represent two contrasting ways of life, one artistic, the other practical.
[30] Both here and in the lines quoted above, Callicles paraphrases Euripides' *Antiope*.

envy those who engage in these [486D] trifling refutations, but men of substance, reputation and other advantages aplenty.

Soc: Callicles, if my soul happened to be made of gold, do you not think I would be pleased to discover one of those stones with which they test gold, the best one there is? And if I applied the soul to this, and it confirmed to me that my soul had been properly cared for, would I be right to accept that I am, finally, in good condition, or would I still need another test?

Cal: [486E] Why are you asking this question, Socrates?

Soc: I will tell you right now. I think that this chance encounter with you is an encounter with a god-send of this kind.

Cal: In what way?

Soc: I know very well that if you agree with me on the issues about which my soul forms opinions, such agreements then constitute truth itself. For I realise that [487A] someone who proposes to test comprehensively whether or not the soul lives aright surely needs to have three qualities, all of which you possess: knowledge, good intentions and frankness. Indeed I meet many people who are not able to test me, because they are not wise like you. There are others who are wise, but they are not prepared to speak the truth to me, because they do not care about me, as you do. These two visitors, Gorgias and Polus, despite being wise and being friends [487B] of mine, are yet lacking in frankness, and are both more reticent than they need to be. How could they not be? They both ended up in such embarrassment that for shame, each of them dared to contradict themselves, in front of a lot of people, on issues of the utmost importance. But you possess all those qualities that the others lack, for you have been properly educated, as numerous Athenians would attest, and you are well disposed towards me.

[487C] What evidence do I have? I shall tell you. I know, Callicles, that there are four of you who have become associates in wisdom: yourself, Teisander of Aphidnae, Andron, son of Androtion, and Nausicydes of Cholargos.[31] And I once heard you deliberating on how far one should pursue the practice of wisdom, and I know that an opinion prevailed among you that went something like this: that you should not be eager to engage in philosophy in a serious way, instead you encouraged [487D] one another to be careful, lest you become wise beyond the limit of necessity and get corrupted without noticing it. Now, when I hear you giving me the same advice you give to your own companions, that is enough evidence for me that you are, in truth, well disposed towards me. And indeed you yourself assert, and the speech you made a short time ago confirms, that you are able to speak frankly, and be devoid of shame. So it is evident that this is where we stand on these issues. If [487E] you come to agree with me on anything in these discussions, the point in question will at that stage have been adequately tested by you and me, and will not need to be subjected to any other test. For you would never have gone along with it, either from lack of wisdom or excessive shame, and what is more you would not make the concession to deceive me, for as you say

[31] These were wealthy, ambitious and somewhat unscrupulous young men. Teisander was a property owner, Andron an oligarchic politician, and Nausicydes a miller and owner of foreign slaves.

yourself you are my friend. Therefore, agreement between you and me will in fact already constitute complete truth. But the most sublime inquiry of all concerns the issues over which you rebuked me – the sort of person a man should be, the pursuits [488A] he should engage in, and how far he should pursue them, both when he is younger and when he is older. Indeed, if I am acting incorrectly in some aspect of my own life, rest assured that I am not going astray deliberately, but through my own ignorance. And since you have begun to correct me, do not give up. Rather show me, satisfactorily, what it is that I should pursue, and the manner in which I may acquire it. And if you find me agreeing with you now, and yet sometime later not enacting what was agreed, you should regard me as an utter fool, and never [488B] correct me again thereafter because I do not deserve it.

But tell me from the beginning, what do you and Pindar claim that the justice that accords with nature actually involves? Is it that the stronger carry off the possessions of the weaker by force, that the superior rule over the inferior, and that better men have more than lesser men? Are you saying that justice is something else, or am I recalling this correctly?

Cal: Yes, that's what I said then, and that's what I say now.

Soc: And do you refer to superior and stronger as the same? [488C] Indeed, I was not really able to understand what precisely you were saying. Are you calling the more powerful people stronger? And should the weaker people obey the stronger, which is what I think you were indicating earlier, since the bigger cities attack the smaller ones in accord with what is just by nature, because they are stronger and more powerful, since the stronger, more powerful and superior are the same? Or is it possible to be superior and yet lesser and weaker, to be stronger and yet in a worse state? Or is the definition [488D] of the superior and of the stronger the same? Make this particular distinction for me in a clear manner. Are the superior, the stronger, and the more powerful the same, or are they different?

Cal: But I am telling you clearly that they are the same.

Soc: In that case, is the multitude not stronger, according to nature, than the individual? And indeed they impose laws upon the individual, as you also said earlier.

Cal: Of course.

Soc: So the laws of the multitude are the laws of the stronger?

Cal: Yes, certainly.

Soc: [488E] Are they, therefore, the laws of the superior folk? For according to your argument, I presume the stronger are superior.

Cal: Yes.

Soc: Are their laws not good, by nature, being the laws of the stronger?

Cal: I agree.

Soc: And do the multitude conventionally believe, as you said already, that it is just to maintain equality, and more base to do injustice than to suffer injustice? [489A] Is this the case or is it not? And do not get trapped here and become ashamed like the others. Does the multitude conventionally believe this or not: that it is just to have an equal share and no

more, and it is more base to do injustice than to suffer injustice? Do not begrudge me an answer to this, Callicles, so that should you agree with me, I may finally attain certainty through you, seeing that a man who is competent to decide has agreed with me.

Cal: Well, the multitude at any rate do conventionally believe this.

Soc: So it is not only by convention, but also by nature, that doing injustice is more base than suffering injustice, **489B** and that the maintenance of equality is just. And so it is very likely that you were not speaking the truth earlier, and your criticism of me was incorrect, when you said that nature and convention are opposed, and that I knew this, and wreaked havoc in the arguments by referring to convention whenever someone spoke on the basis of nature, and referring to nature when they spoke on the basis of convention.

Cal: This man will not cease talking nonsense! Tell me, Socrates, are you not ashamed, at your age, to be chasing after words, and making out that it is a god-send if **489C** someone goes awry in expressing himself? Indeed, do you think I am saying that being stronger is something different from being superior? Did I not tell you long ago that I declare the superior and stronger to be the same? Or do you think I am saying that if a mob of slaves and people of all sorts were to get together, worthless except perhaps for their physical strength, and these fellows were to make some pronouncements, that such pronouncements would constitute law?

Soc: So be it, my utterly wise Callicles. Is that your meaning?

Cal: Yes, very much so.

Soc: **489D** Well, my divine friend, I myself have been guessing for some time that you meant something of this sort by 'the stronger', and I am eager to understand clearly what you are saying. For I presume that you do not regard two as superior to one, nor your slaves as superior to you because they are stronger than you. So tell me once more, from the beginning, what precisely you mean by 'the superior' since they are not 'the stronger'? And, my wonderful friend, instruct me more gently to begin with, so that I do not leave your school.

Cal: **489E** You are being ironical, Socrates.

Soc: By Zethus, I am not, Callicles, to refer to the character you invoked just now, when you were being highly ironical towards me. Come on, tell us! Who do you say are the superior?

Cal: I mean the better.

Soc: Do you not see that you yourself are uttering words but explaining nothing? Will you not tell us whether by the superior and the stronger you mean the more intelligent, or someone else?

Cal: Yes, by Zeus, that is what I mean, emphatically so.

Soc: **490A** So in most cases, according to your argument, one man of intelligence is stronger than ten thousand who are devoid of intelligence, and this man should rule, and the others should be ruled, and the ruler should have more than those who are ruled. Yes, this is what I

think you wish to say, and I am not trapping you with words, if the one is stronger than the ten thousand.

Cal: Indeed that is what I mean. For I believe this is just, by nature: those who are superior and more intelligent rule over, and have more than, the lesser people.

Soc: [490B] Hold it there! What exactly are you saying now? Suppose we are together, in the same place just as we are now, a large gathering with a large common store of food and drink, and suppose we are a mixed group, some strong, others weak. But one of us is more intelligent about these matters as he is a physician, although in all likelihood he would be physically stronger than some but weaker than others. Will this fellow be superior and stronger in these matters, as he is more intelligent about them than we are?

Cal: Entirely so.

Soc: [490C] Now, should he have more of these provisions than the rest of us, because he is superior? Or, in virtue of his authority, should this man distribute them all, and yet obtain no more than anyone else by consuming them and diverting them towards his own person, if he is to avoid paying a penalty? And should some get more while others get less? And if the superior man happens to be more feeble than everyone else, should he get less than everyone else, Callicles? Or does it not work like this, my friend?

Cal: You keep referring to food and drink and physicians and fooleries, [490D] but I am not talking about these.

Soc: Are you not saying that the more intelligent person is superior? Say yes or no.

Cal: I am.

Soc: And should the superior not have more?

Cal: Not of food and drink though.

Soc: I understand. But maybe it applies to clothing, and the most accomplished weaver has the largest cloak, and goes about dressed in the utmost variety and finery.

Cal: What has clothing got to do with this?

Soc: But in relation to shoes it is obvious that the man who is most intelligent [490E] in this area, the utterly superior man, should have more. The cobbler should walk about shod in the grandest and greatest number of shoes.

Cal: Why mention shoes? You are talking persistent nonsense!

Soc: Well, if that is not the sort of thing you mean, then it is probably something like this. For instance a man of farming stock, intelligent with respect to the land, noble and good – this fellow should probably have more seeds, and use as much seed as he possibly can on his own land.

Cal: You keep on saying the same things, Socrates!

Soc: Not only that, Callicles, but also in relation to the same issues.

Cal: [491A] Yes, by the gods, you are absolutely always talking about cobblers, clothes-cleaners, cooks and physicians – you never stop – as if these had anything to do with the argument.

Soc: So why will you not say who it relates to? What is it that the superior, more intelligent man has more of, and justly so? Or will you neither accept what I am suggesting, nor propose anything yourself?

Cal: But I have been saying this for quite some time. Firstly, by those who are superior, I mean neither cobblers nor cooks, but those [491B] who are intelligent in relation to the affairs of the city, and the manner in which it may be well administered. And they are not merely intelligent, but also courageous, competent to bring their plans to completion without faltering through softness of soul.

Soc: Do you see, utterly superior Callicles, that your accusation against me is not the same as my accusation against you? You claim that I am always saying the same things, and you censure me for this. But I make the opposite accusation of you, that you never say the same things in relation to the same issues, but one moment you define the superior [491C] and stronger as the more powerful, then again as the more intelligent. And now you arrive holding an alternative view, some more courageous people are proposed by you as the stronger and superior. But, good fellow, tell me once and for all, who exactly do you say are superior and stronger, and in what respect?

Cal: But I have already said that they are the men who are intelligent in relation to the affairs of the city, and who are courageous. For it is fitting [491D] for these people to rule the cities, and that is what justice is. These people have more than the others. The rulers have more than the ruled.

Soc: But what about themselves, my friend? Are they ruling or being ruled?

Cal: What do you mean?

Soc: I mean each one ruling himself. Or do you think there is no need for someone to rule himself, but only to rule others?

Cal: What do you mean by ruling himself?

Soc: Nothing contrived, just what most people mean: being sound-minded, master of himself, ruling [491E] over pleasures and desires within himself.

Cal: How innocent of you. You are saying that the foolish people are the sound-minded people.

Soc: How could I be? Anyone can see that that is not what I am saying.

Cal: It certainly is, Socrates! For how could a person become happy whilst in slavery to anyone else at all? No, I will speak frankly now, and tell you what is noble and just according to nature. Anyone who would live rightly should allow his own desires to be as great as possible, and not restrain them, but be competent to minister unto them when they [492A] are at their utmost, through courage and intelligence, and satisfy them with whatever the desire of the moment is for. But in my view, most people are unable to do this, and so out of

shame they criticise people of this sort, concealing their own impotence. And as I said earlier, they claim that this lack of restraint is base, enslaving the naturally superior men. Being unable themselves to attain fulfilment of their desires, they praise sound-mindedness **492B** and justice on account of their own cowardice. Yet for men who, from the very outset, are either sons of kings or are themselves naturally competent to secure some authority, be it a tyranny or a power-group, what in truth could be more base and ignoble for these men than sound-mindedness and justice? When they are allowed the benefit of good things with no interference from anyone, what could be worse than they themselves imposing a master on themselves – the law, word and censure of the majority of men? Or how could they avoid becoming wretched **492C** on account of this 'benefit' of justice and sound-mindedness, whereby they bestow no more upon their friends than upon their enemies, even though they are ruling in their own city? But in truth, Socrates – since you claim to pursue the truth – the fact of the matter is that luxury, lack of restraint and freedom, provided they have support, constitute excellence and happiness, while all else, the niceties and the unnatural contrivances of humanity, are foolishness, and of no value.

Soc: **492D** Callicles, the frankness with which you tackle the argument is not devoid of nobility. Indeed, you are now stating clearly what others are thinking, but they are reluctant to express this. So I ask you not to relent in any way, so that the manner in which a person should live may actually become evident. Now tell me, do you say that the desires should not be restrained if a man is to be as he should be? Rather, letting them develop to the utmost, should he prepare satisfaction for them from any source whatsoever, and does this constitute excellence?

Cal: **492E** Yes. That is what I declare.

Soc: So it would not be correct to say that those who are in need of nothing are happy?

Cal: No, for in that case stones and corpses would be happiest.

Soc: But surely the life you are describing is awful too. In fact, I would not be surprised if Euripides is speaking the truth, in the lines where he says,

> Who knows whether being alive is being dead
>
> **493A** And being dead is being alive.[32]

And we perhaps are actually dead, for I heard at some stage, from one of the wise, that we are now dead and the body is our tomb, while this part of the soul in which the desires reside is prone to persuasion, and to fluctuation back and forth. And some subtle person – perhaps a Sicilian or an Italian – told a story involving a play upon the words, and due to its credulous and persuadable nature, he called it a pitcher, and the mindless people he called 'uninitiated', and the part of the soul of the mindless people **493B** in which the desires reside, the unrestrained and the unconfined part of it, he compared to a leaking pitcher, because of its insatiability. Now this fellow, in contrast to yourself, Callicles, indicates that these uninitiated people are the most wretched of those in Hades, by which he means 'the unseen', and they carry water to their leaky pitcher in another such leaky vessel, a sieve. And

[32] These lines are from Euripides' *Phrixus* or *Polyidos*.

according to the person who told [493C] me this, he means that the sieve is the soul, and he likened the soul of the mindless people to a sieve because it is leaking, since due to disbelief and forgetfulness it is unable to retain anything.

Now this is all somewhat strange, yet it does indicate what I wish to prove to you, if I am able, in order to persuade you to change your stance and choose an orderly life, ever content and satisfied with what you have at any moment, rather than a life without restraint, and devoid of satisfaction. Well, am I persuading [493D] you, and are you changing to the view that the orderly people are happier than those without restraint? Or would you not change your position, even if I were to relate many more stories of this kind?

Cal: The latter option is truer, Socrates.

Soc: Come on then, I will relate another image from the same school as this one. Yes, consider whether you are saying something of this sort about the lives of the sound-minded and unrestrained people. It is as if two men each have a number of pitchers, and in one case [493E] they are sound and full of wine, honey and milk. And there are many others with a variety of contents, but the supply of each of these is meagre and hard to come by, and is made available with considerable exertion and difficulty. In one case, once filled, the man neither replenishes them nor worries about them, and on account of this he is at peace. But in the other case, as with the other man, the supply can be made available but it is hard to come by, and the vessels are leaky and unsound, so he is compelled to fill them constantly, night and day, [494A] or suffer intense pain. Now since this is what their lives are like, would you say that the life of the unrestrained person is happier than that of the orderly person? In saying all this, do I persuade you at all to go along with the view that the orderly life is better than the unrestrained life, or are you unpersuaded?

Cal: You do not persuade me, Socrates. For one man no longer has any pleasure at all once he has been filled, but as I said just now that is to live like a stone, no longer experiencing delight or tribulation once you have been filled up. [494B] But living a life of pleasure involves taking in as much as you can.

Soc: But if a lot is to flow in, mustn't a lot flow out? And mustn't the holes for the outflow be of considerable size?

Cal: Very much so.

Soc: In that case you are describing the life of a gull rather than a corpse or a stone. Are you referring to something like being hungry, and eating when you are hungry?

Cal: I am.

Soc: [494C] Or being thirsty, and drinking when you are thirsty?

Cal: That's what I mean – and having all the other desires, and delighting in being able to satisfy them and live happily.

Soc: Excellent, well said! Proceed as you have begun and take care that you suffer no shame. And it seems I must exhibit no shame either. So tell me firstly whether someone who

is itchy, and is scratching with unlimited scope for scratching, who spends his life scratching, is living happily.

Cal: **494D** How strange you are, Socrates, an out and out rabble-rouser!

Soc: Yes indeed, Callicles, and I shocked Polus and Gorgias and made them ashamed, but you should be neither shocked nor ashamed for you are courageous. So just answer the question.

Cal: In that case, I declare that the scratcher also lives pleasantly.

Soc: Since he lives pleasantly, does he also live happily?

Cal: Certainly.

Soc: **494E** Is this so if he only scratches his head? What if I ask you about other parts? Consider how you would reply, Callicles, if someone were to ask about all the parts in turn, working down from there. And what about the ultimate consideration in all this, the life of the catamites?[33] Is this not terrible, shameful and wretched? Or will you dare to say that these fellows are happy provided they have unlimited access to what they want?

Cal: Are you not ashamed at leading our discussion onto topics of this kind, Socrates?

Soc: Am I the one who led us there, my noble friend? Or was it the person who said, in such absolute terms, that those who enjoy pleasure, regardless of how they enjoy it, are happy, **495A** and who did not distinguish between good pleasures and bad ones? But you should also declare now whether you are saying that pleasure and good are the same, or that there are some pleasures that are not good.

Cal: Well, since my responses will be contradictory if I say they are different, I declare that they are the same.

Soc: You are undermining your opening assertions, Callicles, and will no longer be investigating things that are, in an adequate manner, along with me, if you actually speak contrary to your own opinions.

Cal: **495B** The same goes for you, Socrates.

Soc: Then if I am actually doing this, neither of us is acting correctly. But, blessed man, consider the possibility that the good may not be this unqualified gratification. Indeed, if this is how matters stand, then the many shameful conclusions I hinted at just now, and many more besides, must follow.

Cal: That's what you think anyway, Socrates.

Soc: And do you really hold to those views, Callicles?

Cal: I do.

Soc: **495C** So, should we tackle this argument on the basis that you are serious about it?

---

[33] A catamite was the passive partner in the homosexual relationships that typified the ancient practice of pederastia.

Cal: Yes, very much so.

Soc: Come on then, since that is what you think. Make the following distinctions for me. I presume there is something you refer to as knowledge?

Cal: There is.

Soc: And did you not say just now that courage is something that may accompany knowledge?

Cal: I said so indeed.

Soc: So, on the basis that courage is different from knowledge, you referred to two things?

Cal: Most emphatically.

Soc: What about this? Are pleasure and knowledge the same or different?

Cal: [495D] Different of course, O wisest of men.

Soc: And is courage different from pleasure?

Cal: How could it not be?

Soc: Come then, make sure we remember that Callicles of Acharnae declares pleasure and good to be the same, but knowledge and courage to be different from one another, and from the good.

Cal: And Socrates of Alopece disagrees with us on this. Or does he agree?

Soc: [495E] He does not agree, and I do not think Callicles will agree either, once he sees himself correctly. Indeed, tell me. Do you not believe that those who are acting well are characterised by the opposite quality to those who act badly?

Cal: I do.

Soc: Well then, since these are opposite to one another, must not the same consideration apply to them as applies to being healthy and to being ill? For a person is obviously not healthy and ill at the same time, nor is he rid of health and illness at the same time.

Cal: What do you mean?

Soc: For example, take any part of the body you wish, and consider [496A] it. Can a person get the disease of the eyes called ophthalmia?

Cal: Of course he can.

Soc: And the same eyes are obviously not, simultaneously, healthy.

Cal: Not at all.

Soc: But what happens when he is rid of the ophthalmia? Is he also rid of the health at that stage, and does he end up rid of both at the same time?

Cal: Not in the least.

Soc: Yes, I think [496B] that would be a strange and illogical outcome. Is that so?

Cal: Very much so.

Soc: Rather, I believe we acquire either of them and lose them in turn.

Cal: I agree.

Soc: Does not the same go for strength and weakness?

Cal: Yes.

Soc: And for swiftness and slowness?

Cal: Certainly.

Soc: And for anything good, and for happiness, and the opposites of these, anything bad and wretchedness. Are they acquired in turn, and are we quit of either of them in turn?

Cal: That is totally obvious.

Soc: **496C** So if we were to find any qualities that a person is quit of and possesses at the same time, it is obvious that these would not be the good and the bad. Do we agree on this? And give this very serious consideration before you reply.

Cal: But I couldn't agree more!

Soc: Let us go back to what we agreed upon earlier. Did you say that hunger was pleasant or unpleasant? I am referring just to the hunger.

Cal: I say it is unpleasant, but to eat when hungry is pleasant.

Soc: **496D** So do I. I understand. However, the hunger itself is unpleasant, is it not?

Cal: I agree.

Soc: Does not the same go for thirst?

Cal: Very much so.

Soc: Now, should I ask you even more questions, or do you agree that all lack and desire is unpleasant?

Cal: I do. Stop asking.

Soc: So be it. And do you agree that to drink when thirsty is pleasant?

Cal: I do.

Soc: So this formulation 'when thirsty' obviously means 'when in pain'.

Cal: **496E** Yes.

Soc: And the drinking is both the satisfaction of the lack, and a pleasure.

Cal: Yes.

Soc: Therefore, whilst the drinking takes place, you say there is enjoyment.

Cal: Certainly.

Soc: When you are thirsty anyway.

Cal: I agree.

Soc: And experiencing pain?

Cal: Yes.

Soc: Now, are you aware of the conclusion that whenever you say that you drink whilst thirsty, you are saying that you experience enjoyment and are in pain simultaneously? Does this not occur at the same time and in the same place, be it in soul or in body? I do not think it makes any difference which it is. Is this the case or is it not?

Cal: It is.

Soc: However, you do declare that acting well and acting **497A** badly at the same time is impossible.

Cal: Yes, I do.

Soc: And yet you have agreed that it is possible to have enjoyment whilst experiencing displeasure.

Cal: Apparently.

Soc: So enjoyment is not 'acting well', nor is displeasure 'acting badly', and consequently pleasure turns out to be different from the good.

Cal: I don't understand these wise utterances of yours, Socrates.

Soc: You do understand but you are playing the simpleton, Callicles. Just move on to the next point anyway, **497B** so that you may know how wise you are to admonish me. Does not each of us cease being thirsty, and simultaneously cease being pleased by the drinking?

Cal: I do not know what you mean.

Gorg: Don't be like that, Callicles, but answer him for our sake too, so that the arguments may be concluded.

Cal: But Socrates is always like this, Gorgias. He asks petty, worthless questions, and refutes people.

Gorg: But why does it matter to you? It is not really up to you to assess their worth, Callicles, but to allow Socrates to carry out his refutation in any way he pleases.

Cal: **497C** Well, since that is what Gorgias thinks, ask your petty, restrictive questions.

Soc: You are blessed, Callicles, that you have been initiated into the Great Mysteries prior to the Lesser ones.[34] I did not realise that this was permitted. Now answer the question from where you left off. Does not each of us cease being thirsty, and simultaneously cease experiencing pleasure?

Cal: I agree.

[34] This refers to annual initiation rites: The Lesser Mysteries were held in spring in Attica; the Greater Mysteries were held in autumn at the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore in Eleusis.

Soc: In that case, is there cessation of hunger and the other desires, and cessation of pleasures, simultaneously?

Cal: This is the case.

Soc: [497D] Therefore, there is a simultaneous cessation of the pains and the pleasures?

Cal: Yes.

Soc: However, as you have agreed, there is not a simultaneous cessation of whatever is good and whatever is bad. But do you not agree now?

Cal: I agree. So what?

Soc: Then whatever is good, my friend, turns out not to be the same as whatever is pleasant, nor is what is bad the same as what is unpleasant. For in one case there is simultaneous cessation, and in the other case there is not, because they are different. So how could whatever is pleasant be the same as whatever is good, or the unpleasant be the same as whatever is bad?

But consider it in the following manner if you prefer, for I do not think you agree [497E] based on this approach. Look at it this way. Do you not call good people good, due to the presence of goods, just as you call those to whom beauty is present, beautiful?

Cal: I do.

Soc: What about this? Do you refer to the unintelligent and cowards as good men? Well, you did not do so earlier anyway, rather you said the good were the courageous and intelligent. Or do you not refer to these men as good?

Cal: I certainly do.

Soc: What about this? Have you ever seen an unintelligent child being delighted?

Cal: I have.

Soc: And have you ever yet seen an unintelligent man being delighted?

Cal: I think I have, but what about it?

Soc: [498A] Nothing, just answer.

Cal: I have seen this.

Soc: And does someone possessed of intelligence experience pain and delight?

Cal: I agree.

Soc: But who experiences delight and pain to the greatest extent, the intelligent or the foolish?

Cal: Well, I don't think they differ very much.

Soc: That will do. And have you ever seen a cowardly man in battle?

Cal: Of course.

Soc: What about the withdrawal of the enemy? Which of them seemed to you to be most delighted, the cowards or the courageous?

Cal: Both, in my view, but perhaps the cowards delight more, [498B] or else they are nearly equal.

Soc: That makes no difference. So the cowards are delighted too?

Cal: Intensely so.

Soc: The fools too, so it seems.

Cal: Yes.

Soc: And at the approach of the enemy, do the cowardly alone experience pain? Or do the courageous do so too?

Cal: Both.

Soc: To a similar extent?

Cal: Perhaps the cowardly experience it more.

Soc: But do they not experience more delight at the withdrawal?

Cal: Perhaps.

Soc: Then according to you, the foolish and the sensible, the cowardly and the brave, experience pain and delight to a similar [498C] extent, although the cowardly experience them to a greater extent than the brave?

Cal: I agree.

Soc: However, the sensible and courageous are good, while the cowardly and foolish are bad?

Cal: Yes.

Soc: Then the good and the bad experience delight and pain to a similar extent?

Cal: I agree.

Soc: So are the good people and the bad people good and bad to a similar extent? Or are the bad people even more good?

Cal: [498D] By Zeus, I do not know what you are saying.

Soc: Do you not know that you are saying that the good are good by the presence of goods, and the bad are bad by the presence of what is bad? And that the goods are the pleasures, and what is bad are the displeasures?

Cal: I do.

Soc: Are not the goods – the pleasures – present to those who are experiencing delight, if they are actually experiencing delight?

Cal: Obviously.

Soc: And since goods are present, are not those who experience delight good?

Cal: Yes.

Soc: What about this? Are not bad things – pains – present to those who experience displeasure?

Cal: Yes, they are present.

Soc: [498E] And yet you think that the bad people are bad due to the presence of what is bad. Or do you no longer say so?

Cal: I do.

Soc: So those who experience delight are good, while those who experience displeasure are bad.

Cal: Entirely so.

Soc: Those who experience these to a greater extent are so to a greater extent. Those who experience these to a lesser extent are so to a lesser extent. Those who experience these to a similar extent are so to a similar extent.

Cal: Yes.

Soc: Now do you not claim that the sensible men and the fools, the cowardly and the courageous, are delighted and pained to a similar extent, or that the cowardly experience them even more?

Cal: I do.

Soc: Well, please sum up what follows from all that we have agreed, along with me. For they say it is [499A] well to state and investigate anything exalted twice or even thrice. We say that the intelligent and courageous man is good. Is this so?

Cal: Yes.

Soc: But the foolish and cowardly man is bad?

Cal: Entirely so.

Soc: And what is more, the man who experiences delight is good?

Cal: Yes.

Soc: And the man who experiences displeasure is bad?

Cal: Necessarily.

Soc: So the good and the bad experience displeasure and delight to a similar extent, but perhaps the bad person experiences them more?

Cal: Yes.

Soc: Does it not turn out that the bad man [499B] is good and bad, to a similar extent as the good man, or is even more good? Do not these, and those former consequences, follow, once

someone declares that pleasures and good are the same? Is this not necessarily the case, Callicles?

Cal: Socrates, I have been listening to you for some time now, making concessions and reflecting that if someone grants you anything at all, even in jest, you hold onto it in delight just like a child. Do you really think that I, or any other man whatsoever, does not realise that some pleasures are better and some are worse?

Soc: My, my, Callicles. How clever you are and how like a child **499C** you treat me, deceiving me by saying at one moment that this is how matters stand, and the next moment that the same matters stand otherwise. And yet I had not expected at the outset that I would be intentionally deceived by you, since you are my friend. But now I have been played false, and it seems necessary for me, as the old saying goes, 'to make the best of what is there', and to accept what you have given me. And indeed what you are now saying, it seems, is that certain pleasures are good, while others are bad. Is this so?

Cal: **499D** Yes.

Soc: Well, are the beneficial pleasures good, while the harmful ones are bad?

Cal: Certainly.

Soc: And do the beneficial ones bring about something good, the harmful ones something bad?

Cal: I agree.

Soc: So do you mean, for instance, in the case of the bodily pleasures we referred to just now, pleasures of eating and drinking, that those producing health or strength or some other physical excellence in the body are good, while those producing the **499E** opposite effects to these are bad?

Cal: Certainly.

Soc: Does not the same go for pains, some are useful, while others are evil?

Cal: Inevitably.

Soc: Should the useful pleasures and pains be selected and enacted?

Cal: Yes, certainly.

Soc: But not the evil ones?

Cal: Obviously.

Soc: Indeed you may recall that it seemed to us, Polus and I, that everything must somehow be enacted for the sake of whatever is good.[35] Do you also share this view, that the aim of all actions is the good, and all else must be enacted for the sake of that, rather **500A** than the other way around? Are you also voting with us, as a third vote?

Cal: I am.

---

[35] See 468b.

Soc: So everything else, pleasures included, must be enacted for the sake of whatever is good, rather than enacting whatever is good for the sake of the pleasures.

Cal: Certainly.

Soc: Now, does it belong to every man to select what sort of pleasures are good and what sort are bad, or is a skilled person required in each case?

Cal: A skilled person is required.

Soc: Then let us go on, recalling what I was saying to Polus and Gorgias.[36] I said, if you remember, that there are **500B** processes that go as far as pleasure and furnish pleasure alone, and do not recognise the better and the worse, and there are processes which do recognise what is good and what is bad. And in the category concerned with pleasure, I placed cookery, a practice, but not a skill. In the category concerned with the good, I placed the skill of medicine. And in the name of friendship, Callicles, do not presume that you need to play games with me, and do not respond at random and contrary to your opinions, and do not, again, **500C** treat my utterances as some sort of game playing. Indeed, our discussions are concerned with a topic on which even a man of minute intelligence should be most serious, the manner in which a person should live. Is it the one to which you exhort me, namely engaging in these manly activities, speaking in public, practising rhetoric, and engaging in the mode of politics that you people practise these days? Or is it the life spent in philosophy? And how exactly does this life differ from the other one? Now perhaps it is best **500D** to distinguish them as I tried to do before, and once we have made the distinction, and agreed with one another, then consider if these are indeed two ways of life, how they differ from one another, and which of the two we should live by. But perhaps you do not understand what I mean yet.

Cal: Not at all.

Soc: Then I shall relate it to you more clearly. Since we have agreed, you and I, that there is a good and there is a pleasant; that the pleasant is different from the good; that there is a study and process of acquisition belonging to both, one pursuing the pleasant, the other pursuing the good – but first you should either agree or **500E** disagree with me about this. Do you agree?

Cal: I agree with this.

Soc: Come on then. You should agree with me fully on the points I made to our friends here, provided I seemed to you to be speaking the truth at the time. I think I said that cookery did not seem to me to be a skill, but a practice. But in the case of medicine, **501A** I said that it considers the nature of whomever it cares for, and the motive for whatever it enacts, and is able to give an account of each of these. But the other one cares for pleasure and is directed entirely to that, going about it in an utterly unskilled manner. It provides pleasures without considering either the nature of the pleasure or the motivation for it, utterly irrational, scarcely bothering to count classifications, retaining, through habit and experience, only a memory of what usually happens. **501B** Now, in the first place, do you think these have been

[36] See 464b–465a.

adequately described? Or do there also seem to be any processes of this kind concerning the soul, some of which involve a skill and possess a certain foresight of what is best for the soul, and others which make light of this, while they for their part consider, as in the former case, only the pleasure of the soul and the manner in which this may be brought about, neither investigating which of the pleasures is better or worse, nor studying anything except the gratification alone, **501C** be it better or be it worse? Indeed, Callicles, I think these processes exist, and I declare that this sort of thing is flattery in relation to the body, or in relation to the soul, or anything whose pleasure one may care for, without having any concern for the better or the worse. Anyway, do you subscribe to the same opinion as we do on these issues, or do you disagree?

Cal: I don't agree, but I am going along with this so that you may conclude the discussion, and so that I may gratify Gorgias here.

Soc: **501D** And does this apply to a single soul, but not to two or many?

Cal: No, it applies to two or many.

Soc: Is it not also possible to gratify a gathering of souls, all at the same time, without considering what is best?

Cal: Yes, I think so.

Soc: Now, can you say what particular activities bring this about? But if you like, it is better that as I ask questions, you agree if the suggestion seems to you to belong to that category, but otherwise disagree. And first **501E** let us consider flute-playing. Does this not seem to you, Callicles, to be an activity of this kind, one that pursues only our pleasure and thinks of nothing else?

Cal: It seems so to me anyway.

Soc: Does not the same go for all activities of that sort, such as playing the cithara in competitions?

Cal: Yes.

Soc: What about the instruction of the dramatic choruses, or the composition of poetic verses? Is it not obvious to you that they are also like this? Or do you think Cinesias, son of Meles,[37] gives some consideration to how he may say the kind of thing that will enable his hearers to become better people, or instead how he is going to gratify **502A** the crowd of spectators?

Cal: Obviously the latter, Socrates, in the case of Cinesias anyway.

Soc: What about his father, Meles? Do you think he sang to the cithara with a view to what is best, or did the man even consider what is most pleasant? Indeed, his singing inflicted pain upon the spectators. But think about this. Does it seem to you that all singing to the cithara and all composition of poetic verses have been devised for the sake of pleasure?

[37] Cinesias was a poet who composed choral songs in honour of Dionysus. Meles was a famous cithara player but a very poor singer.

Cal: I think so.

Soc: [502B] But what about the solemn one herself, the wonder that is the composition of tragic verses, what is she intent upon? What in your view is her endeavour and intention? Is it only to gratify the spectators? Or in the case where something is pleasant and gratifying to them, but evil, does she engage in a struggle so as not to utter this? And if something happens to be unpleasant but beneficial, will she speak and sing this whether it delights them or not? Which of these two approaches does the composition of tragic verses seem to you to adopt?

Cal: Well, Socrates, it is obviously the latter, the one that is most intent on pleasure [502C] and the gratification of the spectators.

Soc: Did we not say just now that this sort of thing is flattery, Callicles?

Cal: Certainly.

Soc: Come now, if someone were to strip poetic composition of all its melody, rhythm and metre, would the residue turn out to be nothing but words?

Cal: Necessarily.

Soc: Are not those words spoken to a considerable crowd and to the populace?

Cal: I agree.

Soc: So poetic skill is a kind of public speaking.

Cal: [502D] So it appears.

Soc: Would it not be rhetorical public speaking, or do you think that the poets do not engage in rhetoric in the theatres?

Cal: I think they do.

Soc: So, we have now discovered a type of rhetoric directed to a kind of populace that consists of women and children alike, of men both enslaved and free, a rhetoric we do not greatly admire, for we assert that it is based on flattery.

Cal: Very much so.

Soc: So be it. But what about the rhetoric directed to the Athenian populace, and [502E] the other assemblies of free men in the cities? What exactly are we to make of it? Do the rhetoricians seem to you to speak always with regard to what is best, working out how the citizens may be as good as possible on account of their speeches? Or do these fellows aim at the gratification of the citizens, belittle the common good for the sake of their own private interest, and associate with the populace as though they were children, merely trying to gratify them, but thinking nothing of whether they will be better or worse as [503A] a result of all this?

Cal: This is no longer a simple question. There are some who say what they say out of concern for the citizens, but there are others of the sort you are describing.

Soc: That is sufficient. For if there are indeed two aspects to this, then I presume that one would be flattery and a disgraceful public speaking, while the other would be noble,

contriving that the souls of the citizens be as good as possible, and constantly striving to utter what is best, regardless of whether it be more pleasant or less pleasant to those who hear it. [503B] But this is a rhetoric you have never yet seen. Or if you are able to mention any rhetorician of this kind, why have you never told me who he is?

Cal: But, by Zeus, I cannot mention anyone to you, not among the contemporary rhetoricians anyway.

Soc: What about the older generation? Can you name anyone, on account of whom the Athenians are reputed to have become better after that person began speaking in public? Indeed I do not know who the person is.

Cal: [503C] Is that so? Do you not hear people say that Themistocles was a good man, Cimon too, and Miltiades, and Pericles himself who died recently, whom you yourself have heard?

Soc: Yes, Callicles, if what you described earlier is true excellence, the satisfaction of your own desires and those of others. However if this is not the case, and instead, as in the earlier discussion, we are compelled to agree that the satisfaction of some desires make a person better and these [503D] should be fulfilled, while others make him worse and should not be fulfilled, and there is a skill involved in this as we thought, can you still claim that any of those four men turned out to be someone with this sort of skill?

Cal: I cannot find any basis for saying so.

Soc: But if you search properly you will find one. So we should examine this in a calm manner, and see whether any of these men prove to be a person of this kind. Come on, would not the good man whose speech is aimed at what is best, say what he says [503E] not at random, but with something particular in view? Indeed he is just like the other artificers, each looking to their own work, selecting whatever they bring to bear not at random, but in such a way as to give a particular form to whatever they are working on. Take for example painters, builders, shipwrights and all the other artisans, any one of them you want. See how he places whatever he places in a particular order, and compels this [504A] to fit with that and to be in harmony, until he has wrought the entire into an organised and orderly entity. And the same goes for the other artificers, and those we mentioned earlier, the trainers and physicians who are concerned with the body, and presumably order and organise the body. Do we agree that this is the case or not?

Cal: Let this be the case.

Soc: Would a household possessing organisation and order be effective, and would a disorganised one be degenerate?

Cal: I agree.

Soc: Does not the same go for a ship?

Cal: [504B] Yes.

Soc: And do we also say this about our own bodies?

Cal: Very much so.

Soc: And what about the soul? Will it be effective when possessed of disorder, or when possessed of some organisation and order?

Cal: Based on what was said earlier, it is also necessary to accept this.

Soc: Now what is the name of the condition that arises in the body from organisation and order?

Cal: You probably mean health and strength.

Soc: [504C] I do. But what about the condition engendered in the soul from organisation and order? Try to find its name and state it as you did in the other case.

Cal: Why don't you state it yourself, Socrates?

Soc: Well, I shall say it if that is more pleasing to you, and you should agree if you think I am speaking truly. And if not you should refute me, and you should not yield to me. For I think that the name of this organisation of the body is 'healthiness', and from this health arises in it, and so do the other excellences of the body. Is this the case or is it not?

Cal: It is.

Soc: [504D] On the other hand, I think that the names of the organisation and order of the soul are lawfulness and law, and from these it becomes lawful and orderly, and these conditions are justice and self-control. Do you agree or not?

Cal: Be it so.

Soc: Then, looking towards these, this rhetorician who is skilled and good also brings the speeches he delivers, and all his actions too, to bear upon the souls. And when he bestows a gift he will bestow it, and when he confiscates something he will confiscate it, with his mind ever intent upon how justice [504E] may arise in the souls of his fellow citizens, and injustice may be banished; how sound-mindedness may be engendered, and indiscipline banished; how excellence in general may be engendered, and evils done away with. Do you agree or not?

Cal: I agree.

Soc: Indeed, what is the benefit, Callicles, in giving a person, sick in body, in a degenerate condition, a lot of food – even the most pleasant – or drink, or anything else that does not benefit him one bit more, and on the contrary may rightly be said to benefit him less? Is this so?

Cal: [505A] Be it so.

Soc: For in my view, it is not advantageous for a person to live with degeneracy of the body, since it is necessary under those circumstances to live in a degenerate manner. Or is this not so?

Cal: Yes.

Soc: Do not the physicians, for the most part, allow a person to satisfy his desires, such as eating as much as he wants when he is hungry and drinking when thirsty, as long as the

person is healthy? However when he is ill, they hardly allow him to be sated by the objects of his desire at all. Do you also agree with this?

Cal: I do.

Soc: **505B** And in the case of the soul, excellent man, is there not the same tendency? As long as it is corrupt, foolish, undisciplined, unjust and unholy, it needs to be shut away from the desires, and not be allowed to engage in any other activities apart from those whereby it will be made better. Do you agree or not?

Cal: I agree.

Soc: For presumably that is what is better for the soul herself?

Cal: Very much so.

Soc: Now, is the shutting away from what is desired equivalent to discipline?

Cal: Yes.

Soc: So being disciplined is better for the soul than the indiscipline which you were advocating a moment ago.

Cal: **505C** I don't know what you are talking about, Socrates. Just ask someone else.

Soc: This man cannot put up with being helped, and undergoing for himself the process with which our discussion is concerned – being disciplined.

Cal: Nor does anything you are saying interest me, and I gave you these answers to oblige Gorgias.

Soc: So be it. What shall we do now? We are cut off in mid-argument.[38]

Cal: Decide for yourself.

Soc: But they say that it is not lawful to leave off, **505D** even in the middle of stories. Rather, they should be given a conclusion so that they do not go about without a head. So you should also answer the remaining questions, so that our argument may acquire a head.

Cal: How forceful you are, Socrates! But if you take my advice you will bid farewell to this argument, or else you should converse with someone else.

Soc: Well, who else is willing? For we should not leave the argument incomplete.

Cal: Could you not work through the argument yourself, either speaking on your own behalf or responding to yourself?

Soc: **505E** So that the saying of Epicharmus may be fulfilled in me: 'The words that were spoken by two men, I, one man, must rise to delivering'.[39] Anyway, it seems to be absolutely necessary, so that is how we should do it then. I, for one, think that we should possess a thirst for victory when it comes to knowing what the truth is, and what is false, in relation to the matters we are discussing. Indeed it is a good, common to everyone, that this be made

[38] Not following Dodds' punctuation, who has this as a question.
[39] Epicharmus was a comic poet from Syracuse in Sicily. The source of the line quoted is unknown.

manifest. Now I shall proceed with the argument [506A] based upon how it seems to me. However, if any of you think I am agreeing with myself contrary to things that are, you should pull me up and refute me. For I am not really saying what I am saying as someone who has some comprehensive knowledge. No, I am seeking along with you, and so if someone who contradicts me proves to have a point, I shall be the first to go along with him. Yet I am asking all this assuming that the argument should be brought to a conclusion. However, if you do not wish to do so, let us bid it farewell at this stage and go our ways.

Gorg: Well, Socrates, I don't think we need to go our ways, [506B] but you need to work through the argument, and it appears to me that the others think so too. Indeed, I myself wish to hear you going through the remaining issues by yourself.

Soc: But of course, Gorgias, so do I, although I would gladly have conversed further with Callicles here, until I had given him the statement of Amphion in response to that of Zethus. However, Callicles, since you are not willing to conclude the argument, you should at least interject as you hear me, if you think I am expressing anything badly, [506C] and should you refute me. I shall not be angry with you as you were with me. Instead you will be inscribed as my greatest benefactor.

Cal: Speak on, good man, and finish it yourself.

Soc: Then hear me as I take up the argument from the beginning.

Are the pleasant and the good the same?

They are not the same, as Callicles and I have agreed.

Is the pleasant enacted for the sake of the good, or the good for the sake of the pleasant?

The pleasant for the sake of the good.

Is pleasure that from which, when it has arisen, [506D] we are pleased? And is good that from which, when it is present, we are good?

Very much so.

But of course we are good, and so too is everything else that is good, from some excellence that arises.

I think this is necessarily the case, Callicles.

And yet the excellence of anything, of an implement, a body, or indeed a soul, or of every living creature, does not best arise in a random manner, but through organisation, correctness, and a skill that has been assigned to each. Is this the case?

Yes, I agree.

[506E] So is the excellence of each, an arrangement and an ordering due to organisation?

I would say so.

Then each of the things that are, is rendered good by a certain order engendered in each, and particular to each.

So it seems to me anyway.

Then is a soul too, possessing its own order, better than a disordered one?

It must be.

But of course, the one possessed of order is orderly?

How could it not be?

And the orderly [507A] is sound-minded?

Most necessarily.

So the sound-minded soul is good.

Now dear friend, Callicles, I have nothing else to say in opposition to all this, however, if you have, teach it.

Cal: Speak on, my good man.

Soc: Well, I say that if the good soul is sound-minded, the one affected by the opposite of sound-mindedness is bad, and that is the one devoid of self-control and discipline.

Very much so.

And indeed, the sound-minded person would perform actions that are appropriate in relation both to gods and men, for those who perform inappropriate actions would not be exercising sound-mindedness. [507B]

This is necessarily the case.

And indeed, in relation to men, those who are performing appropriate actions would be performing just actions, and in relation to gods, holy actions, and the person who performs just and holy actions is necessarily just and holy.

This is so.

Then again, he is necessarily courageous too, for it is not the part of a sound-minded man either to pursue or flee from whatever is not appropriate. No, he should flee from and pursue whatever he ought to flee from or pursue, be they actions, persons, pleasures or pains, and endure steadfastly wherever he ought. Consequently, it is very necessary, [507C] Callicles, just as we were explaining, that the sound-minded man, being just, courageous and holy, be a perfectly good man. And the good man, whenever he acts, acts well and nobly, and he who acts well must be blessed and happy, while the corrupt man, acting in an evil manner, must be wretched. And this fellow, the undisciplined man whom you were praising, would be in an opposite condition to the sound-minded man.

So, I am setting down these principles in this manner, and I declare that they are true. And if this is true, then someone who wishes to be happy [507D] must, it seems, pursue and practise sound-mindedness, and each of us must flee from indiscipline as fast as his feet will carry him. And we should contrive as best we can not to be lacking in any discipline, and if it is lacking, either in ourselves, in any member of our household, in an individual, or in a city, then justice and discipline must be imposed if they are going to be happy. This, in my view anyway, is the vision one should look to in life, and all one's own efforts and those of the

city should be directed towards this, the manner in which justice and self-control [507E] will be available to the person who is to be blessed. This is how one should act, not allowing desires to be undisciplined, and endeavouring to satisfy them, an endless vexation, living the life of a thief. For a person of this sort would be friendly neither to god nor to another human being, for he is unable to commune, and to anyone devoid of communion there would be no friendship. And the wise declare, Callicles, that communion, friendship, orderliness, sound-mindedness and justice, hold heaven and earth, [508A] gods and men, together. And on account of this, my friend, they refer to the whole as an 'order', and not as a 'disorder' or 'indiscipline'. But I think you have not applied your mind to these matters, and although you are wise in this area, you are unaware that geometrical equality is a great power among both gods and men, and so because you neglect geometry, you think it necessary to practise taking more. So be it. Now we [508B] should either refute this argument, so that the happy are not happy due to the acquisition of justice and sound-mindedness, and the wretched are not wretched due to evil, or else if this argument is true, we should consider the consequences. All those consequences follow, Callicles, the ones you asked if I was serious about, when I said that one should prosecute oneself, one's son and one's friend, if they do anything wrong, and that rhetoric should be used for this. And the ones you thought that Polus conceded due to shame also turn out to be true. Doing injustice, insofar as it is more shameful [508C] than suffering injustice, is more base to that extent. And he who intends to be a rhetorician in the proper sense must also be just and knowledgeable in matters of justice, and have knowledge of all aspects of justice. That is what Polus, in turn, stated that Gorgias agreed to out of shame.

Now having established all this, let us consider the precise issue on which you censure me, and whether or not it is valid to assert that I am unable to assist either myself or any of my friends or family members, or deliver them from extreme dangers – that I am just like an outcast, subject to the whim of any random person who, to use that bold phrase of yours, wishes to slap [508D] me across the face, or to confiscate my property, or to expel me from the city, or ultimately to kill me. And according to your argument, to be in such a predicament is the most base condition of all. And although my argument has been stated many times already, there is no reason not to state it again. I deny, Callicles, that being slapped across the face unjustly is the most base experience possible, nor is having one's body [508E] or one's purse picked. No, striking me, or cutting me and what belongs to me, in an unjust manner is more base and more evil, and indeed stealing, enslaving, house-breaking, and in short any unjust action whatsoever towards me and mine is both more evil and more base for the perpetrator of the injustice than for me, the sufferer of the injustice. Once all this had become evident to us in this way earlier, in the previous discussions, it was fastened and secured by – if it is not too crude [509A] an expression – arguments of iron and adamant, or that is how they seem anyway. And if you, or someone more forceful than you, does not break them, anyone who says anything different from what I am now saying will be unable to speak properly. Indeed my argument is always the same. I myself do not know how these matters stand, however no one I have ever met, and no one today, is able to say otherwise without being ridiculous.

Now I, for my part, am proposing that this is how matters [509B] stand. Yet if this is the case for the doer of injustice, and injustice is the greatest of evils, and even greater than this greatest of evils, if that is possible, is doing injustice without paying a penalty, what assistance should a man, in truth, be able to provide to himself to avoid being ridiculous? Is it not the kind that averts the greatest harm? Yes, this really must be the assistance which it is utterly base not to be able to proffer either to oneself or to one's own friends and family members. The second worst baseness relates to the second [509C] worst harm, the third to the third worst, and so on. The beauty of being able to assist against each evil, and the baseness of being unable to assist, are proportional to the natural magnitude of each evil. Is this the case or is it otherwise, Callicles?

Cal: It is not otherwise.

Soc: So of the two, doing injustice and suffering injustice, we declare doing injustice to be the greatest evil, and suffering injustice to be the lesser. Now with what should a man be provided so that he may assist himself, and obtain both [509D] of these benefits, the one that comes from not acting unjustly, and the one that comes from not suffering injustice? Is it a power, or a wish? What I mean is this. If he does not wish to suffer injustice, will he not suffer injustice, or if he has been provided with the power of not suffering injustice, will he not suffer it?

Cal: Well, that's obvious anyway. The power would be needed.

Soc: And in the case of doing injustice? If he does not wish to act unjustly, is that sufficient to avoid acting unjustly? Or is some power needed for this [509E] too, and the provision of some skill which, unless it is learned and practised, he will act unjustly? Why do you not give me an answer to this question anyway, Callicles? Do you think that Polus and I were, or were not, compelled to agree in the right way in those earlier discussions, when we agreed that no one wishes to do injustice, but all those who do injustice do injustice unwillingly?[40]

Cal: [510A] I grant you that this is the case, Socrates, so that the argument may be concluded.

Soc: Then it seems that a power and a certain skill must be provided for this purpose too, so that we do not act unjustly.

Cal: Certainly.

Soc: Now what precisely is the skill of equipping ourselves to do no injustice, or the least possible? Decide whether your view is the same as mine. Indeed, it seems to me that one should either rule in the city oneself, even as a tyrant, or else be an associate of the existing constitution.

Cal: Observe, Socrates, how willing I am to praise you when you make a [510B] good point. Yes, I think that was a very good point.

Soc: Then decide whether you think this is nicely expressed too. It seems to me that one person is friend to another to the greatest extent possible on the basis stated by the ancients and the wise, 'like unto like'. Do you not think so too?

---

[40] See 467c5-468e5.

Cal: I do.

Soc: Therefore, wherever a crude and uneducated tyrant is ruler, and someone in the city is much better than this fellow, the tyrant would obviously fear him, and he would never become a friend to the tyrant with his entire mind. **510C**

Cal: This is so.

Soc: Nor, if someone was far inferior, would that man be his friend either. For the tyrant would despise him, and would never take him seriously as he would a friend.

Cal: That is also true.

Soc: There remains only one man deserving of the title 'friend' to such a person, someone of similar character, who censures and applauds the same things, and who is willing to be ruled and submit to his rulership. This fellow will wield great power in this **510D** city, and no one will treat him unjustly and get away with it. Is this not the case?

Cal: Yes.

Soc: So if one of the young people in this city were to think, "By what means may I acquire great power, and have no one treat me unjustly?" The way for him to do so it seems, is to accustom himself from his very youth to delight in, and to detest, the same things as the despot, and contrive that he be as like unto that fellow as possible. Is this not so?

Cal: Yes.

Soc: Then, according to your argument, immunity from unjust treatment and great power **510E** in the city will have been attained in this case.

Cal: Very much so.

Soc: Now, does this also apply to not acting unjustly? Or is this very different, since he is like the ruler who is unjust, and wields great power alongside him? Yes, I believe anyway that in this regard his contrivance will be the exact opposite, to be able to do as much injustice as possible, and not pay any penalty for acting unjustly. Is this so?

Cal: Apparently.

Soc: **511A** Therefore the greatest evil will befall him, being corrupted and mutilated in soul, through power and his imitation of the despot.

Cal: I don't know how you manage to continually twist the arguments this way and that Socrates. Do you not realise that this imitator will put anyone who does not imitate the tyrant to death, if he wishes, and confiscate his possessions?

Soc: **511B** I do realise that, good Callicles, unless I am deaf anyway, since I am hearing it constantly, from you and from Polus just now,[41] and from almost everyone else in the city. But you hear me. He will kill him, if he wishes, but as a degenerate person killing a good and noble person.

---

[41] See 466b1, 483b, 486bc.

Cal: Yes, isn't that what's most annoying?

Soc: Not to a man possessing intelligence, as the argument indicates. Or do you think that a man should contrive to live for as long as possible, and study those skills that preserve us always from danger, **511C** such as the one you also directed me to study, the rhetoric that keeps us safe in courts of law?

Cal: Yes, by Zeus, and I am giving you sound advice.

Soc: What about this, best of men? Do you also think the knowledge of swimming is something august?

Cal: By Zeus, I do not.

Soc: And yet it does save people from death whenever they end up in the sort of danger where this knowledge is needed. But if you think this is trivial, I will refer you to a more important **511D** knowledge than this, the piloting of ships, which saves not only souls but also bodies and property from extreme dangers, just as rhetoric does. It is unpretentious and orderly, and it does not strike self-important poses, as if engaged in some remarkable activity. But having engaged in the same activity as the courtroom advocates, getting you safely from Aegina[42] to here, it charges two obols[43] I think. And if it is a journey from Egypt or the Pontus,[44] **511E** for this enormous service, having given safe passage to everyone I have just mentioned – yourself, your children, your property and your womenfolk – and having landed them in the harbour, it charges two drachmas at the very most. And the person who possesses this skill, and has engaged in these activities, disembarks and walks about on shore beside his ship with a modest demeanour. Indeed, he understands enough to figure out that it is unclear which of the passengers he has benefited by not allowing them to be drowned at sea, and which of them he has harmed, knowing that he disembarked them **512A** no better either in body or soul than when he embarked them. He figures out therefore that on the one hand, if someone afflicted with serious, incurable bodily diseases does not drown, he is wretched because he did not die, and he is not benefited by the pilot. Yet on the other hand, if someone has numerous diseases of something more exalted than the body, namely the soul, and these are incurable, he reckons that this man's life is not worth living, and he will not be benefitting this man if he saves him from the sea, or a court-action, or anything else whatsoever. **512B** He knows rather that it is not better for a degenerate person to be alive, for he must perforce live badly.

For these reasons, it is not conventional for the pilot to give himself airs, even though he does save us. Nor for that matter, my wonderful friend, does the military mechanic who is sometimes able, no less than the general, not to mention the pilot or anyone else, to save people. Indeed on occasion he saves entire cities. You do not think he is comparable to a courtroom advocate, do you? And yet, if he were to speak after the manner of you people, Callicles, solemnising **512C** his profession, he would bury you with words, proclaiming and extolling the need to become mechanics, setting the other professions at naught, for he

[42] Aegina is an island south of Athens in the Saronic Gulf.
[43] There are six obols in a drachma.
[44] The Pontus is the region of northern Asia Minor including the south coast of the Black Sea.

would have a plausible argument. But you despise this man and his skill nonetheless, and you would call him 'mechanic' as a term of reproach, and you would not be prepared to give your daughter to his son, nor would you yourself accept that man's daughter. And yet, given the basis on which you praise your own profession, for what just reason do you despise the mechanic and the others **512D** you mentioned just now? I know you would claim to be better, and from better stock. But if 'better' is not what I say it is, and excellence is just saving yourself and your own possessions, regardless of the sort of person you happen to be, then your censure turns out to be laughable, be it of a mechanic, or a physician, or any other skills that have been devised in order to save people. But, blessed man, look again lest the noble and the good may be something else besides saving and being saved. For he who is truly a man must not be attached to life, and must give up the notion of living for a particular **512E** period of time. Rather, having turned these matters over to the god, and given credence to women who say that one should not flee from fate, he should consider this. In what way may a person best live the span of life that he will live? Should he assimilate himself **513A** to the constitution under which he abides? And should you now become as much like the Athenian populace as you can, if you are going to be beloved of them, and wield great power in the city? See if there is advantage in this for you and for me, my miraculous friend, so that we do not suffer the fate they impute to those women of Thessaly who pull down the moon,[45] and this choice of ours, this power in the city, be at the cost of all that is dearest to us. But if you believe that any person could bestow upon you the sort of skill that would make you **513B** extremely powerful in this city, while being unlike its constitution – perhaps better, perhaps worse – then in my view you have not been properly advised, Callicles. For you need to be not just their imitator, but like them in your own nature, if you are going to achieve anything genuine in friendship with the Athenian demos, or indeed, by Zeus, with Demos, the son of Pyrilampes. So whoever renders you most like unto them will make you a politician, in the way that you want to be a politician, and a rhetorician too. For every populace is delighted by speeches delivered after their own fashion, **513C** but they are troubled by anything alien to this. Do you have anything different to say my friend? Can we say anything against this, Callicles?

Cal: You seem to me – I do not know how – to be expressing this well, Socrates, but I have experienced what most people experience. I am not entirely persuaded by you.

Soc: The love of the populace residing in your soul is opposing me, Callicles, but if we consider these **513D** same issues more frequently, thoroughly, and better, you will be persuaded. But now you should recollect that we said there are two means of caring for anything, be it soul or body. One operates with pleasure as its aim; the other aims for the very best, does not engage in gratification, and is assertive. Is that not how we defined them at the time?[46]

Cal: Entirely so.

---

[45] There was a widespread belief that Thessalian witches caused eclipses and had to pay for their powers by the loss of a family member.
[46] See 500b.

Soc: Is not the one that aims at pleasure ignoble, amounting to nothing but flattery? Is this so?

Cal: **513E** Be it so, if you wish it so.

Soc: While the other, whether it happens to be body or soul that we are caring for, intends that it will be as good as possible.[47]

Cal: Entirely so.

Soc: Must we therefore take the city and the citizens in hand in this manner and care for them, making the citizens themselves as good as possible? For surely in the absence of this, as we found in our earlier discussions, there is no advantage in bestowing **514A** any other service whatsoever, when the understanding of those who are going to acquire a lot of money, or authority over something, or any other power at all, is not noble and good. Should we declare that this is so?

Cal: Entirely so, if it pleases you more.

Soc: Now, Callicles, suppose that we were embarking upon civic affairs, and we encouraged one another to engage in construction projects involving large structures such as walls, dockyards or temples. Would we need to examine ourselves, and find out **514B** firstly whether or not we had knowledge of this skill of construction, and from whom we learned it? Would we need to do this or not?

Cal: Entirely so.

Soc: And secondly, would we also have to find out whether we had ever constructed any structure at all, privately, either for one of our friends or for ourselves, and whether this structure was beautiful or ugly. And if we found through these deliberations that our teachers had been notable **514C** and good, and we had constructed many beautiful structures whilst with our teachers, and many indeed on our own after we left those teachers, under such circumstances it would make sense for us to embark upon public projects. However, if we were able neither to point out our own teachers, nor any structures at all, or a lot of worthless ones, it would then be stupid, I presume, to turn our hands to public projects, or encourage one another to do so. Should we assert that this is a correct **514D** formulation or not?

Cal: Entirely so.

Soc: Would this not also apply to all other situations, where having embarked upon public service, we might encourage one another to enter public service perhaps as properly qualified physicians, for instance? Presumably we would scrutinise one another – I, you, and you, me – asking, "Come on, Socrates. By the gods, where does your own body stand in respect of health? Has anyone else, slave or free, ever been quit of disease through the agency of Socrates?" And I think I would make other enquiries of that sort about you. And if we did not find anyone, citizen or stranger, man or woman, who had been improved **514E** in body through our agency, by Zeus, Callicles, would it not be laughable, in truth, if human

[47] Not accepting Dodds' emendation of the manuscript text at this point.

stupidity were to attain such a level that before practising on a private basis, often in a haphazard manner but often working systematically and exercising the skill properly, we were to encourage ourselves, and other people of this sort, to turn a hand to public service, and as the saying goes, attempt to learn pottery by working on a large vessel? Do you not think it would be stupid to act in this way?

Cal: I do.

Soc: [515A] But now, best of men, since you have just begun to engage in civic affairs, and since you are encouraging me and censuring me because I am not engaged in this, shall we not scrutinise one another? So come on, has Callicles already made any of our citizens better? Is there anyone who was previously degenerate, unjust, undisciplined and stupid, be he citizen or stranger, slave or free, who became noble and good through the agency of Callicles? Tell me, if [515B] anyone scrutinises you on these bases, Callicles, what will you say? What person will you claim to have made better through their association with you? Why are you reluctant to answer, if there really is some achievement of yours from your days as a private citizen, before you turned your hand to public service?

Cal: You have a thirst for victory, Socrates.

Soc: No, I am not asking out of a thirst for victory, but as someone who truly wishes to know the precise manner in which you think political activity should be conducted among us. Or, once you embark upon civic affairs [515C] among us, will you really care for anything else besides the issue of how we citizens may become as good as possible? Have we not agreed several times already that this is what a political man should do? Have we agreed or not? Please answer. I shall answer on your behalf. We have agreed. In that case, if this is the service a good man should furnish to his own city, recollect and tell me now about the men you mentioned a short while ago, Pericles, Cimon, Miltiades and Themistocles. Do you still think these men were [515D] good citizens?

Cal: I do.

Soc: Then, since they were good, it is obvious that each of them made the citizens better rather than worse. Did they do this or not?

Cal: Yes.

Soc: In that case, when Pericles began speaking in the Assembly, were the Athenians worse than when he delivered his final speeches?

Cal: Probably.

Soc: Surely, best of men, this is not probably, but necessarily the case, based on what we have agreed, if in fact Pericles was, at any rate, a good citizen.

Cal: [515E] What about it?

Soc: Nothing. But tell me this as well. Do the Athenians claim to have become better through the agency of Pericles, or quite the contrary, to have been corrupted by the man? Indeed, what I hear anyway is that Pericles turned the Athenians into lazy, cowardly, blabbering money-lovers by first instituting paid public service.

Cal: You have heard all this from admirers of Sparta, Socrates.

Soc: But there is something else that I do not just hear but know full well, and so do you: that Pericles was well regarded at first, and the Athenians levelled no charge of baseness against him when they were in a worse state. However, once they had become good and noble through his agency, **516A** towards the end of Pericles' life, they charged him with embezzlement, and indeed almost condemned him to death, on the obvious ground that he was corrupt.

Cal: What of it? Does it follow that Pericles was a bad person?

Soc: Yet it seems that someone who cares for donkeys or horses or oxen would be bad, if he were the sort of person who took charge of them when they neither trampled him nor gored him nor bit him, and turned them out so wild that they performed all these mischiefs. Or do you not think that any caretaker **516B** of any living creature whatsoever is bad, who takes charge of them when gentle and turns them out wilder than when he took them on? Do you think this or not?

Cal: Entirely so, just to gratify you.

Soc: Then you should also gratify me by answering this question. Is a human being also one of those living creatures, or is he not?

Cal: How could he not be?

Soc: And did Pericles not care for human beings?

Cal: Yes.

Soc: What now? Should they not have become more just rather than more unjust through his agency, based on what we have agreed a moment ago, if he **516C** really took charge of them as a man who was good in relation to civic affairs?

Cal: Entirely so.

Soc: Are not just people civilised, according to Homer?[48] But what do you say? Is this not the case?

Cal: Yes.

Soc: And yet Pericles rendered them more uncivilised than when he took charge of them, and these mischiefs were directed against himself, the last person he would have wanted it for.

Cal: Do you want me to agree with you?

Soc: If you think I am speaking the truth.

Cal: Well, let it be so.

Soc: Now, since they were more uncivilised, were they not more unjust and bad?

Cal: **516D** Be it so.

---

[48] The phrase 'kindly and god-fearing' is used three times in Homer's *Odyssey* (vi.120, ix.175, xiii.201).

Soc: So according to this argument, Pericles was not good at civic affairs.

Cal: You say he was not anyway.

Soc: By Zeus, even you said so, based on what you have agreed. But tell me again about Cimon. Did not the very people he was caring for ostracise him, so that they would not hear his voice for ten years? And did they not do the same things to Themistocles, and punish him with exile too? And they voted to cast Miltiades, the hero of Marathon, into the pit, [516E] and were it not for the presiding official he would have been thrown in. However, if these fellows were good men, as you claim, they would never have suffered those misfortunes. It is not the fate of good charioteers, that at the beginning of their careers they are not prone to fall out of the chariots, but when they have tended their horses, and have themselves become better charioteers, they are prone to fall out then. This is not the case, either in charioteering or in any other activity. Or do you think it is?

Cal: I do not.

Soc: So it seems that our previous statements were true. [517A] We know not a single man in this city who has become good in relation to civic affairs. You agree that there are none among the present generation, and although you selected those four men from the previous generation, they actually turned out to be on a par with the moderns. And so, if they were rhetoricians, they did not employ the true rhetoric, or they would not have been cast out, nor did they use the flattering kind either.

Cal: But surely, Socrates, none of today's men will ever accomplish anything like what was accomplished by anyone of those four you care to choose. [517B]

Soc: You extraordinary man! I am not criticising these fellows either, not as servants of the city anyway. No, they seem to me to have been of greater service than our contemporaries, and better able to provide the city with what it desired. However, when it came to redirecting those desires rather than pandering to them, persuading and compelling them to the one whereby the citizens were going to be better, in this respect these men of the past were, in a way, no different [517C] from those of the present day. Yet this is the sole task of a good citizen. But I agree with you, that in providing ships, walls and dockyards, and anything else like that, those men were more ingenious than these contemporaries of ours.

Now, you and I are engaging in comical behaviour in these arguments. For throughout our entire discussion, we are being borne around unceasingly to the same place, each ignorant of what the other is saying. So I believe you have agreed many times, and realised that this activity [517D] itself is something twofold, both in relation to the body and in relation to the soul. One aspect affords a service, by which it can provide food when our bodies are hungry, drink when they are thirsty, clothing, bedding and shoes when they are cold, or whatever else the bodies come to desire. And I am deliberately describing this to you based on the same illustrations, so that you may understand more easily. Now, if someone can provide these either as a retailer, a merchant, or as a manufacturer of any of these [517E] things themselves, being a baker or a cook or weaver or cobbler or tanner, it is little wonder that such a person seems, both to himself and others, to be an attendant of the body. Thus does it seem, to everyone who does not know, that besides all of these activities there is a particular

skill of gymnastics and medicine, which is the true attendance upon the body, and this indeed deserves to rule over all of those other skills, and make use of what they produce, because this skill knows what food and drink is useful or detrimental to the excellence of the body, **518A** while all the others are ignorant of this. Accordingly, those other skills are slavish, servile and devoid of freedom in their dealings with the body, while gymnastics and medicine are, in justice, their mistress.

Now, when I say that these same considerations also apply to the soul, you seem to me to understand, and on occasion you agree, as though you know what I mean. But then you come along a little later, claiming that there have been men in this city who were good and noble **518B** citizens. But once I ask you who they were, you offer as exemplars men engaged in civic affairs, just as if I were to ask you about gymnastic affairs, and which men had become good at this and are good attendants of our bodies, and you were to inform me, in all seriousness, that Thearion the bread-maker, and Mithaikos who wrote the book on Sicilian cookery, and Sarambos the wine merchant, prove themselves wonderful attendants upon our bodies, as these fellows provide **518C** us with wonderful bread in one case, and with food and wine in the other instances.

Perhaps you might get angry if I were to tell you, "My man, you understand nothing about gymnastics. You tell me of men who are servants and satisfiers of desires, while appreciating nothing good and noble about them, who stuff and fatten people's bodies in any way they can, destroy the natural flesh of the people too, and are praised for doing so. These people for their part, **518D** through inexperience, do not blame the banqueters for causing the diseases, and the wasting of their very flesh when disease arrives a long time later, brought on by the excess indulged without regard to the rules of health. No, they blame whoever happens to be around at the time, and who offers them any advice, and they would do these men harm if they could. And they praise **518E** the previous fellows who are responsible for the problems." And you are now behaving just like this, Callicles, praising men who have feasted these citizens by feeding them up on whatever they desired. Yes, they say that these men have made this city great. But they are not aware that it is bloated and festering because of those **519A** men of old. For, omitting sound-mindedness and justice, they have filled up the city with harbours and dockyards and walls and tribute-money and nonsense of that sort, yet whenever a bout of debilitation afflicts her, they blame the present-day advisers, and praise Themistocles and Cimon and Pericles, the men who caused the problems. And they will probably attack you if you are not careful, and my own companion, Alcibiades,[49] too, whenever they lose **519B** what they had to begin with, along with all they have acquired since. Not that you have direct responsibility for the problems, but perhaps you do share some responsibility.

What is more, I also see an absurd process going on these days, and I hear about it too in relation to the men of old. For I observe that whenever the city proceeds against one of its political men, on the grounds that he acted unjustly, they get angry, and complain bitterly because they are treated so terribly. They argue that having done so much good for the city, they are now being destroyed by it in an unjust manner. But this is a complete lie, for not

[49] Alcibiades was condemned to death in absentia after he had fled to Sparta.

one protector of a city [519C] could ever be destroyed by the very city that he was protecting. Indeed, the circumstances of those who make themselves out to be politicians, and those who set themselves up as sophists, are probably the same. In fact the sophists, though wise in other respects, engage in this strange process by which, having claimed to be teachers of excellence, they frequently accuse their own pupils of treating them unjustly, by withholding payment from them and failing to afford them any gratitude for being so well [519D] treated by them. Now what process could be more irrational than this description by which men, who have become good and just, whose injustice has been eradicated by their teacher, who have come to possess justice, behave unjustly on account of that which they do not possess? Does this not seem strange to you, my friend? In truth, Callicles, you have made it necessary for me to engage in mob oratory, through your reluctance to answer me.

Cal: But were you not the one who was unable to speak unless someone responded to you?

Soc: [519E] So it seemed, anyway. But now, since you are unwilling to answer me, I am protracting my utterances quite considerably. But, good man, tell me in the name of friendship, does it not seem irrational to you for someone who claims to have made someone else good to censure that person, because having become good through his agency, and still being good, he is an evildoer after all?

Cal: It seems so, to me anyway.

Soc: Do you not hear this sort of thing from those men who claim to educate people towards excellence?

Cal: [520A] I do. But what can you say about people who are worthless?

Soc: And what can you say about those who, whilst claiming to have taken charge of the city and cared for it, so that it will be as good as it possibly can be, turn around when circumstances dictate, and accuse it of being a gross evil doer? Do you think these fellows differ at all from the others? Sophist and rhetorician are the same, bless you, or nearly so, and very similar, just as I was saying to Polus.[50] But you, through ignorance, think that rhetoric is something glorious, [520B] and you despise the other activity. But in truth, to the extent that law-making is more noble than jurisprudence, and gymnastic than medicine, so too is sophistry more noble than rhetoric. And I for one believe that the popular speakers and sophists alone are not permitted to censure the very personage whom they educate, on the grounds that he is corrupt in his dealing with themselves, or else they would, by this same argument, be accusing themselves of not benefitting those whom they claim to benefit. Is this not so?

Cal: [520C] Entirely so.

Soc: And if what I said is true, I presume it is acceptable for them alone, so it seems, to bestow this service without a fee. For in the case of some other service, someone who has received the benefit might perhaps withhold the recompense. For instance, someone who has become a fast runner through the agency of a trainer might do so, if the trainer were to bestow the service without stipulating a fee, and arranging to get the money [520D] as soon as

---

[50] See 465c.

the swiftness had been bestowed. Yet it is certainly not on account of slowness, I presume, that people act unjustly, but on account of injustice. Is this so?

Cal: Yes.

Soc: Therefore, if someone eradicates this injustice itself, he should not fear that any injustice will ever befall him, and this service alone may be bestowed without any risk, if anyone is really able to make another person good. Is this not the case?

Cal: I agree.

Soc: So for these reasons, it seems there is no disgrace in taking money for giving advice on other matters, such as house-building or on other areas of expertise.

Cal: **520E** So it seems anyway.

Soc: And yet, when it comes to advising on how one may be as good as possible and best manage one's own household and city, it is regarded as a disgrace to refuse to give advice on this unless someone gives you money. Is this so?

Cal: Yes.

Soc: And the reason for this is, of course, that this is the only service that makes the recipient of the benefit desire to confer a benefit in return. Accordingly, it seems to be a good sign if someone who has conferred a benefit through this service is treated well in return, and it is not a good sign if he is not. Is this how matters stand?

Cal: **521A** It is.

Soc: Now, define which of these services to the city you are encouraging me to engage in, the one that struggles with the Athenians, like a physician, so that they will become as good as possible, or the one where I serve them and minister to their pleasure? Tell me the truth, Callicles, for it is right that since you were so frank with me in the beginning, you continue to say what you are thinking. So speak out truly and nobly.

Cal: Well then, I mean that you should act as their servant.

Soc: **521B** So, noblest of men, you are encouraging me to act as their flatterer.

Cal: Yes, if it pleases you to be so blunt, Socrates. Since if you do not engage in this ...

Soc: Please do not say what you have said many times, that whoever wishes will kill me, so that I, for my part, do not have to say that he will do so as an evil man killing a good man. Nor should you say that he will confiscate all my possessions, so that I, for my part, do not have to say that once he has confiscated them, he will not know how he should use them. Rather, having confiscated them from me in an unjust manner, he will make use of them in the unjust manner in which he acquired **521C** them, and if he uses them unjustly he uses them basely, and if he uses them basely he uses them badly.

Cal: You seem to me, Socrates, to believe that you will not suffer a single one of these misfortunes, as though you dwelt apart and could not be hauled into court, probably by some utterly corrupt and quite ordinary person.

Soc: Well, I am in truth a fool, Callicles, if I do not believe that in this city of ours anything can happen to anyone. However, I do know that if I were to end up in court facing one of these [521D] dangers you refer to, the one who prosecuted me would be an evildoer, for no worthy person would take an innocent man to court, and it would be nothing strange if I were put to death. Would you like me to tell you why I expect all this?

Cal: Entirely so.

Soc: I believe that I am one of few Athenians – I do not say I am the only one – who has taken to the true skill of civic affairs, and I am the only person these days who engages in civic affairs, since any words I ever speak are spoken, not with a view to gratification, but with a view to what is best rather than what is most pleasant. [521E] And, having no desire to engage in those subtleties that you recommend, I shall have nothing to say in the courtroom. And the same argument that I presented to Polus applies to me, for I shall be judged as a physician would be judged before a jury of children on the accusations of a cook. Yes, consider this. What defence would a person like this, trapped in these circumstances, make if someone were to accuse him, saying, "O children, this man here has inflicted many evils upon you, yes, on yourselves. And he maims the very youngest of you by cutting and burning, he induces distress by withering [522A] and choking you, gives you bitter potions and makes you go hungry and thirsty, unlike me who has feasted you sumptuously on a great variety of pleasant delights." What do you think a physician caught up in such an evil predicament would be able to say? And if he were to speak the truth that "Children, I have carried out all of these procedures for the sake of health", would there not be an enormous outcry from such jurors as those?

Cal: Probably. I should think so.

Soc: Do you not think he would be in utter perplexity as to what he should say? [522B]

Cal: Entirely so.

Soc: Now, I know that I too would find myself in such a predicament as this were I to be landed in court. Indeed, I would not even be able to recount any pleasures I have provided to them which these people regard as services or benefits, and I would envy neither those who provide them nor the people to whom they are provided. And if someone were to say that I corrupt the young people by reducing them to perplexity, or that I revile the older generation by speaking bitter words to them in public or in private, I would be unable to state the truth that "I say all this [522C] and I enact all this in a just manner, O gentlemen of the jury", to use your phrase, Callicles. And I would have nothing else to say either, and so I would suffer whatever fate might decree.

Cal: Well, Socrates, do you think a man who is unable to help himself when he is in this situation is well established in the city?

Soc: Yes, Callicles, if he possessed one quality which you have accepted on a number of occasions – if he has assisted himself not to be unjust, neither towards gods nor men, [522D] neither in word nor in deed. For we have agreed many times that this assistance to oneself is the most powerful. So, if someone were to convict me of being unable to help myself or

anyone else through this kind of assistance, I would be ashamed, whether I was convicted by many people, by a few, or one on one. And if I were to be put to death on account of this particular inability, I would be troubled by that. But if I were put to death because I lack the flattering kind of rhetoric, I know very well that you would see me bearing death **522E** lightly. For no one is afraid of dying itself, unless he is utterly irrational and cowardly. Rather he is afraid of acting unjustly. For the worst of all calamities is to arrive in Hades with one's soul full of injustices. And if you wish, I am prepared to give you an account indicating that this is the case.

Cal: Well, since you have concluded the other issues, conclude this too.

Soc: **523A** Then listen to a very beautiful narrative – as they say – one which I believe you may regard as a myth, but which I regard as an account, for whatever I am about to recount to you I shall recount as the truth. Indeed, as Homer explains, Zeus, Poseidon and Pluto made a distribution of the sovereignty, after they inherited it from their father.[51] Now there was a law relating to humanity from the time of Cronos, which had always been in place, and still is among the gods. Those people who have passed their lives in a just and holy manner, **523B** depart after they die to the Isles of the Blest to dwell in complete happiness far from evils, while those who have lived in an unjust and godless manner go to the prison-house of retribution and justice that they call Tartarus. But in the time of Cronos, and even more recently under the sovereignty of Zeus, their judges were alive, and they were judged whilst still alive, on the very day they were going to die, and so the cases were judged badly. Then both Pluto and the attendants from the Isles of the Blest went to Zeus, and reported that undeserving people were making their way to them **523C** in either place. So Zeus said, "Well, I shall stop this from happening. The cases are indeed being decided badly at present, for those who are judged are judged whilst fully clothed because they are judged whilst still living. So many people possessing degenerate souls are clothed in beautiful bodies, lineage and wealth, and once there is a trial, numerous witnesses appear on their behalf testifying that they have lived **523D** in a just manner. Now the judges are overwhelmed by all this, and what is more, they themselves are fully clothed as they make their judgements, having concealed their own souls behind eyes and ears and the entire body. All of these, both their own clothing and that of the people being judged, become a screen in front of them. So in the first place, he said, "Their foreknowledge of death must be stopped, for at present they know in advance. And so Prometheus **523E** has been instructed to put an end to this foreknowledge of theirs.[52] Hereafter they must be judged naked of all those additions, for judgement must be passed when they have died. And their judge must be naked, dead, immediately beholding their soul itself with his soul itself once each person has died, bereft of kindred, having left that entire order behind him on the earth, so that the judgement may be just. Now I, having recognised these issues before you did, have made judges of my own sons, two from Asia, Minos and Rhadamanthys, and one **524A** from Europe, Aeacus.[53] Accordingly, as soon as people die, they will pass judgement in the meadow, at the fork

---

[51] *Iliad* vx.187ff.
[52] Prometheus was the champion and benefactor of mankind to whom he gave fire. His name means forethought.
[53] Minos, Rhadamanthys and Aeacus were famous judges in their lifetimes who became judges in the Underworld after death.

from which two roads lead, one to the Isles of the Blest and the other to Tartarus. Rhadamanthys will judge those from Asia, Aeacus those from Europe, and I shall bestow seniority upon Minos to give a final judgement in case either of the others are in perplexity, so that the decision about the destination of human beings may be as just as possible."

Well, Callicles, this is what I have heard, and believe to be true, **524B** and on the basis of those accounts I conclude that certain consequences follow. It seems to me that death happens to be nothing else but the separation from one another of two entities, the soul and the body. And yet once they have been separated from one another, both of them retain their own condition, which is no worse than when the man was alive, and so the body retains its own nature, and all the care it was given, and all the afflictions it suffered, are **524C** plain to be seen. For instance, if someone's body was large either by nature or through nurture or both, the corpse of this man will be large once he has died, and if he was fat it will be fat when he is dead, and the same goes for the other characteristics. And what is more, if he had long hair his corpse will be longhaired, and if he was a rogue who merited whipping and he had the scars, the imprints of the blows on his body, either from whips or from other injuries during his life, one can see that the corpse also has these when he is dead. Or if someone's limbs were broken or deformed during his life, those same features will be in evidence when he has died. **524D** And in short, whatever bodily features he developed while he was alive will also be in evidence, all of them or most of them, for some time after he has died.

And so, Callicles, it seems to me that the same argument applies to the soul. Everything in the soul is plain to be seen once she has been stripped of the body, both the natural qualities, and the effects that the person retains in his soul due to the conduct of particular actions. Now, when they arrive in front of the judge, those from Asia stand before **524E** Rhadamanthys, and Rhadamanthys stops them and beholds the soul of each, not knowing whose soul it is. And very often, having come across the Great King, or some other king or potentate, he observes that there is nothing healthy in the soul, rather it bears the marks of scourging, and is full of scars which his own behaviour has imprinted upon his soul on account of oath breaking **525A** and injustices. Its ways are all crooked due to falsity and pretence, and nothing is straight because its nurture was devoid of truth. And he sees the soul full of distortion and deformity due to licence, luxury, insolence and unrestrained actions. Having seen this, he sends it away in dishonour straight to the confine, where on arrival it will await the afflictions that are appropriate to it.

525B It is proper that all who undergo punishment, and are punished by another in the correct manner, either become better and are benefited, or else act as examples to other people, so that others who see them being afflicted by whatever they suffer may become better out of fear. Now those who are benefited, and make retribution before gods and men, are the people who have engaged in transgressions that are curable. Nevertheless, it is through pain and suffering that the benefit comes to them, both here and in Hades, for they cannot be quit of **525C** injustice in any other way. However, those who have engaged in utterly unjust actions, and are rendered incurable on account of such injustices, are the ones who act as examples to others. These people themselves are no longer benefited at all, since they are incurable. But other people are benefited when they see them suffering the most enormous,

most painful and most fearful afflictions throughout eternity on account of their transgressions, simply hanging up as examples there, in Hades, in the prison-house, a spectacle and a warning to those unjust people who are continually arriving there. **525D** And if what Polus says is true, then I maintain that Archelaus will be one of these, as will anyone else who is a tyrant of that sort. And I believe most of these examples to other people have come from the ranks of tyrants, kings, potentates and those who administer the affairs of our cities, for these people, on account of their immense power, also engage in the most enormous and unholy transgressions. Homer bears witness to these claims when he represents kings and potentates as the ones who are punished throughout eternity in **525E** Hades – Tantalus and Sisyphus and Tityus.[54] But no one represents Thersites, or any other wrongdoer who is a private citizen, as being incurable and afflicted by these enormous punishments, for in my view he lacked the immense power, and so he is more fortunate than those who do possess power. Anyway, Callicles, the people who become extreme evil doers come indeed from the ranks of the powerful, **526A** yet there is nothing to prevent good men from arising among them too, and those who do arise deserve great admiration. Indeed, Callicles, it is difficult, and deserving of much praise, to live one's life in a just manner having come by an enormous power to act unjustly. Few people of this sort arise. And yet they have arisen, both here and elsewhere, and in my view there will be more of them, noble and good in this excellence of managing **526B** in a just manner whatever is entrusted to them. One even became extremely well respected among the other Greeks as well, Aristeides,[55] son of Lysimachus. But, best of men, most of the powerful people became corrupt.

Now as I was saying, once the judge Rhadamanthys gets hold of someone like this, he knows nothing else about him at all, neither who he is nor who he is descended from, except that he is an evil doer. And having discerned this, he dispatches him to Tartarus with a mark indicating whether he is regarded as curable or incurable, and when he arrives there he suffers whatever **526C** is appropriate. But sometimes when he looks upon another soul that has lived a holy life in company with truth, belonging to a private citizen or someone else, especially, or so I assert anyway, Callicles, the soul of a philosopher who has performed his own duties and has not been excessively active throughout his life, he is delighted and despatches it to the Isles of the Blest. Aeacus also engages in the same activities, both of them holding a staff, but Minos sits and oversees them, he alone holding a **526D** sceptre of gold, as Homer's Odysseus says that he saw him

holding a golden sceptre, passing judgements upon the dead.[56]

Now then, Callicles, I have been persuaded by these accounts, and I give consideration to how I might present my soul to the judge in the healthiest possible condition. So having bid farewell to the honours so prized by humanity, practising the truth, I shall endeavour to live my life being as good as I can actually be, and when I die to die in the same manner. **526E** And to the best of my ability I encourage all other people as well, and indeed I exhort you in

[54] The punishments of Tantalus, Sisyphus and Tityus are described in Homer's *Odyssey* xi.576-600.
[55] Aristides was an Athenian politician and general. Nicknamed 'the Just', he was a leader of the Athenian resistance against the Persian invasion.
[56] *Odyssey* xi.569.

return towards this life and this struggle, which I assert exceeds all the struggles of this world. And I censure you, because you will be unable to assist yourself whenever you come to the trial and the judgement I have just described. Rather, having arrived in front of that judge, the son of Aegina, [527A] once he has hold of you and is controlling you, you will gape and you will be dizzy in that place, just as much as I am in this place, and someone will probably slap you contemptuously on the face and splatter you all over with mud.

Well then, perhaps these descriptions seem to you just like a myth an old woman might recount, and you despise them. And it would be no surprise if we were to despise them, if in our search we were somehow able to discover something better and truer than them. But now you see that the three of you, yourself, Polus and Gorgias, [527B] who really are the wisest Greeks of the present day, are unable to prove that one should live any other life than this one, a life which also turns out to be profitable in the hereafter. But in the midst of all these assertions, the others having been refuted, this proposition alone is left undisturbed: that it is necessary to be more wary of doing injustice than of suffering injustice; and it is all the more important for a man to work at being good, both in private and in public, rather than seeming good; and if he becomes bad in some respect he should be punished. And this good, becoming good and paying a penalty by being punished, [527C] stands in second place after being good. And all flattery concerning yourself or concerning others, be they few or be they many, must be shunned, and rhetoric should be used in this manner, always directed to the just, and so should every other activity.

So heed me, and follow me to a place where, on arrival, you will be happy both in life and after death, as the argument indicates. And let someone despise you as a fool and splatter you with mud if he wants to. Yes, by Zeus, and be bold enough to let him strike you that contemptuousv[527D] blow, for nothing terrible will befall you if you really are noble and good, practising excellence. And after we have practised together in this way, then at that stage, if we deem it useful, we shall contribute to civic affairs, or we shall deliberate upon whatever issues occur to us, as we shall be better equipped to deliberate than we are now. Indeed it is quite disgraceful, given our present condition, that we disport ourselves in a youthful fashion as if we amounted to something, we who are in such an ill-educated state that we never, ever, hold the same views on the same issues, even on issues of the utmost importance. [527E] So let us use the argument that has now been revealed to us, just like a guide. It has indicated to us that this way of life is best: to live and to die in the practice of justice and all other excellence. So let us follow this, and encourage others to do so, and not that way of life that you believe in and encourage upon me, for that is worth nothing, Callicles.

End