

Plato's *Republic*

Book VIII

Translated by David Horan

Persons in the dialogue: Socrates, Glaucon, Adeimantus, Polemarchus, Cephalus, Thrasymachus, Cleitophon, and others

^{543A} “So there it is. This has now been agreed, Glaucon. For a city to be governed at its very best, women are to be shared, children are to be shared, and all education too. And in like manner, all activities are to be shared, both in war and in peace, and those among them who turn out best in philosophy and in warfare too, are to be their kings.”

“This was agreed,” said he.

^{543B} “And indeed we also accepted that once the rulers are in place, they will take the soldiers in hand and settle them in living arrangements of the sort we have already described, which are common to all, with nothing private to anyone. And as well as such living arrangements, we also agreed upon the sort of possessions they will have, as you may recall.”

“Yes,” said he, “I recall. We thought that none of them should acquire any of the possessions that everyone else has nowadays. Rather, like warrior athletes and guardians, they must care for themselves and for the rest of the city, ^{543C} accepting their guardians’ pay for the year from the others, to sustain them in their work.”¹

“You are right,” said I, “but come on. Now that we have concluded this, let us remember where we digressed from, so that we may proceed along the same course once more.”

“That is not difficult,” said he. “You presented your arguments about the city then, much as you are doing now, as though the exposition was complete.² You proposed a city, saying that a city like the one you had described was good, and so was the man who resembled it, ^{543D} even though, it seems, you were able to speak of a still more beautiful city ^{544A} and a more beautiful man too. But in any case, you were saying that if this city is right, the others are in error, and you maintained, as I recall, that there are four other forms of government besides this one. You said these would be worth describing, to see their particular errors, and the kinds of people who resemble these forms, and having agreed upon who is the most excellent and who is the worst man, we might then investigate whether the most excellent person is happiest, and the worst is most wretched, or whether the situation is otherwise. And when I was asking you which four forms of government ^{544B} you meant, Polemarchus and

¹ See 414d ff.

² See 445c–e.

Adeimantus interrupted at that stage,³ and so it was that you took up the argument again and arrived here.”

“That is right,” said I. “You have remembered this very well.”

“So then, like a wrestler, offer me the same hold once more, and in response to my same question try to say what you were about to say at the time.”

“I shall, if I am able to,” said I.

“And indeed,” said he, “I am also anxious to learn for myself what four forms of government you were referring to then.”

^{544C} “That is not difficult,” said I, “so listen. The forms I am referring to are those that have names. First is the one that most people praise, your Cretan or Spartan form. Second to arise, and second too in terms of praise, is the one called oligarchy, a form of government full of evils aplenty. Next comes the adversary of this form, democracy. And then there is noble tyranny, set apart from all the others, the fourth and last disease of the city. Or can you think of any other form of government of any type that constitutes ^{544D} another obvious form? Indeed dynasties, purchased kingships, and other forms of government of this sort are presumably something intermediate between these four, and they are to be found no less among the Barbarians than among the Greeks.”

“Yes,” said he, “many unusual forms are spoken of.”

“Now,” said I, “do you know that there must be as many types of human character as there are forms of government? Or do you think that forms of government come into existence from oak or from rock,⁴ and not ^{544E} from the characters of the people in the cities which, in a sense, exert their influence, and pull everything else in their direction.”

“Yes,” said he, “that is where they come from and not from anywhere else at all.”

“In that case, if there are five types of cities, there would also be five conditions of individual souls.”

“Indeed.”

“Well now, we have already described the person who resembles the aristocracy, whom we rightly declare to be good and just.”

^{545A} “We have.”

“Now after this should we not describe the lesser men – first the ambitious fellow who loves honour and corresponds to the Spartan form of government, then the oligarchic man, the democratic, and finally the tyrannical? Would this not enable us to look at the most unjust man, alongside the most just man, and complete our enquiry as to where exactly pure justice stands relative to pure injustice, in relation to the happiness or wretchedness ^{545B} of their

³ See 449b ff.

⁴ See *Odyssey* xix.163.

possessor, so that we could either be persuaded by Thrasymachus and pursue injustice, or accept the argument that is now emerging, and pursue justice?”

“Yes,” said he, “that is what we should do. Entirely so.”

“Well now, we began this process by considering the characters of the various forms of government, where they are more obvious, prior to considering those of the individuals. So should we proceed in a similar way now, and consider first the form of government that loves honour? In our language I have no other name to call it except timocracy or timarchy, and in relation to this we shall consider the man who resembles it. Then after that we shall consider the oligarchy and the oligarchic man. ^{545C} And after looking at the democracy, we shall behold the democratic man. And arriving at the fourth city, the tyrannical one, and looking at that, and at the tyrannical soul too, we shall try to become competent judges of the issues we have put forward.”

“Well,” said he, “if we proceed in this way, our perspective and our judgement would surely be reasonable.”

“Come on then,” said I. “Let us try to describe the way in which timocracy would arise from aristocracy. Or is it simply that ^{545D} change in any form of government comes from the part of it that exercises authority, whenever faction arises in that particular part, whereas if it is of one mind, even if it is very small, no disturbance is possible?”

“Yes, indeed so.”

“So Glaucon,” said I, “how shall this city of ours be disturbed, and in what way shall our auxiliaries and our rulers develop factions against one another, and against themselves? Or would you prefer that we copy Homer, and pray to the Muses to tell us how faction ^{545E} first came about,⁵ and we could declare that they are playing with us, like children, speaking lightly but in a tragic style, pretending to be serious by speaking in a lofty manner?”

“How?”

^{546A} “As follows. Although it is difficult to disturb a city that has been constituted in this way, nevertheless, since destruction is the lot of anything that has come into being, even something constituted like this will not endure for all time. It too will be dissolved, and its dissolution will be as follows. Not alone for the plants in the earth, but also among the animals on the earth, there is productiveness and sterility of their souls and bodies as they run their circular course and complete their cycles, which are short for those who are short-lived, and longer for the long-lived. But for your ^{546B} race, although the people whom you educated as leaders of the city are wise, they will be unable by calculation combined with sense experience, to hit upon the best time for bringing children to birth, and for not bearing children. This will evade them, and they will on occasion bring forth children when they should not.

“Now, divine birth has a cycle that the perfect number encompasses. But for a human being the number is the first in which root and square increases, having comprehended three

⁵ This is based on *Iliad* xvi.112–113.

distances and four limits of whatever brings about likenesses and unlikenesses, waxings ^{546C} and wanings, renders all things mutually agreeable and expressible towards one another. Of these four, three yoked together with five yields two harmonies when increased threefold. The first is equal, an equal number of times, one hundred times this amount. The other is equal in length on one side, but it is oblong on the other side of one hundred squares of rational diameters of five diminished by one each; or if of irrational diameters, by two, on the other of one hundred cubes of three.

“This entire geometrical number is lord of anything like this,⁶ of better and worse births. And whenever our guardians, in ^{546D} ignorance of this, make brides cohabit with bridegrooms inappropriately, their children will be neither well developed nor fortunate. And although their predecessors will install the best of them in power, nevertheless, being unworthy, when their turn comes to rule and exercise the powers of their fathers they will begin, as guardians, firstly to pay little heed to us Muses by regarding our realm of music as less important, and secondly they will neglect the realm of gymnastics too, and so your own young people will become less musical. From these, ^{546E} rulers will be installed who cannot exercise much guardianship when it comes to testing ^{547A} for the races of Hesiod,⁷ and of your people too,⁸ the gold, silver, bronze and iron. The indiscriminate mixing of iron with silver, and of bronze with gold, will produce dissimilarity and an inappropriate inconsistency, which always beget war and enmity wherever they arise. So we should declare that ‘such is the lineage’ of faction,⁹ whenever and wherever it occurs.”

“And we shall declare,” said he, “that they have answered correctly.”

“As they must,” said I, “since they are Muses.”

^{547B} “Well then,” said he, “what shall the Muses say next?”

“Once faction had arisen,” said I, “both races began to exert their influence, the iron and brass kinds drawing the city towards the acquisition of money, land and property, gold and silver, while the gold and silver kinds, for their part – since these are not in poverty but are naturally wealthy of soul – led in the direction of excellence and the ancient order. As they struggled violently in opposite directions, they eventually agreed to compromise, distribute land and property for themselves, and make these private. ^{547C} With this, they enslaved those they had previously guarded as free men, friends and supporters, by treating them as serfs and underlings, while they themselves attended to warfare and guarding themselves against their former friends.”

“I think,” said he, “that this is how the change comes about.”

“Would not this form of government,” said I, “be something in between aristocracy and oligarchy?”

⁶ This text is difficult, and there is general disagreement about the value of Plato’s ‘entire geometrical number’. The most frequent value suggested is 216, but 3,600 and 12,960,000 have also been mooted.

⁷ See *Works and Days* 109–202.

⁸ See 415a ff.

⁹ See *Iliad* vi.211.

“Very much so.”

“Well that is how it will change, but once it has changed, how will it be administered? Or is it obvious ^{547D} that in some respects it will imitate the previous form of government, and in other respects the oligarchy, since it is in between them, and that it will also have something that is particular to itself?”

“Quite so,” said he.

“In the respect given to its rulers; the fact that its military class refrains from working the land, and from skilled labour, and from other sorts of money making; in its provision of common meals, and the attention it pays to physical exercise and military competition; in everything of this sort, will it not imitate the previous form?”

“Yes.”

^{547E} “Will not the features, that for the most part are particular to itself, be its fear of admitting the wise to positions of authority, since it no longer has people of this sort who are straightforward and sincere, rather than complicated? Will it not also prefer spirited types who are simpler, more fitted by nature for war than peace, ^{548A} who attach value to its tactics and strategies? And will it not spend all its time waging war?”

“Yes.”

“And yet,” said I, “people like this will have a longing for money, just like those in the oligarchies, harbouring a concealed but fierce reverence for gold and silver because they have storehouses and private treasuries in which to keep it all hidden; and enclosures too, houses which are really private nests in which they spend their money, ^{548B} lavishing it extravagantly on women, and on many others, whomever they please.”

“Very true,” said he.

“And they will also be miserly with money since they revere it and may not acquire it openly. Yet because of desire they love spending other people’s money, and enjoying their pleasures in secret, running away from the law like boys from their father, having been educated by force rather than persuasion, because they paid no heed to the true Muse who accompanies argument and philosophy, ^{548C} and had more respect for gymnastics than for music.”

“You are,” said he, “most certainly describing a form of government that is a mixture of good and bad.”

“Yes, it is mixed,” said I, “but what is most distinctive about it is one particular feature. Due to the dominance of spiritedness in it, it is ambitious and loves honour.”

“Most certainly,” said he.

“Well,” said I, “this form of government would arise in this way, and this is what it would be like. This is just a verbal sketch providing an outline without the detail, ^{548D} because a sketch will indeed be enough to reveal the most just person, and the most unjust. But to describe all

forms of government and all their characters, omitting nothing, would be an inordinately lengthy undertaking.”

“That is right,” said he.

“Now, what about the man who corresponds to this form of government? How did he arise, and what sort of person is he?”

“I think,” said Adeimantus, “that when it comes to ambition at any rate he is quite like Glaucon here.”

^{548E} “Well, in that respect,” said I, “perhaps you are right, but in other respects his nature is different.”

“In what respects?”

“He must be more stubborn,” said I, “and less musical even though he loves music, and despite being a good listener he is not at all ^{549A} eloquent. And he would be aggressive towards slaves rather than merely looking down upon them, as an adequately educated person would do. Yet he would be gentle towards free men, and highly respectful towards those in authority. He himself loves authority, and he loves honour, and he is worthy of authority, not because of what he says or anything of that sort, but because of his achievements on the battlefield and in military affairs generally, being fond of physical exercise and of hunting.”

“Yes,” said he, “this is the character of that form of government.”

“Would not a person like this,” said I, “despise ^{549B} money when young, but grow more and more fond of it the older he gets, because he has a share of this money-loving nature and is no longer directed towards excellence, purely and simply, because he has been deprived of its very best guardian?”

“What is that?” asked Adeimantus.

“Reason,” said I, “combined with music, which alone, once engendered, dwells as the lifelong preserver of excellence for whoever possesses it.”

“Very good,” said he.

“So that is what the young timocrat is like,” said I. “He is just like this sort of city.”

“Yes, indeed.”

^{549C} “Now this person arises somewhat as follows,” said I. “Sometimes he is the young son of a good father who is living in a city that is not well run. His father shuns the honours, positions of authority, legal disputes and all business of that sort, and he is willing to accept loss of status to avoid trouble.”

“And how,” he asked, “does he become timocratic?”

“Whenever,” said I, “in the first place, he hears his mother being annoyed at the fact that her husband is not one of the rulers, and that she is losing status among the other women as a result. ^{549D} She sees that he is not particularly serious about money, and does not fight or

engage in slander, either in private or in the law-courts or public gatherings, but is indifferent to everything like this. She notices that he is constantly turned in on himself, does not show her much respect, and does not disrespect her either. And she gets annoyed at all this and tells her son that his father is unmanly, and extremely neglectful, and she repeats all the other expressions of this sort that women like to use when speaking of such men.”

^{549E} “Yes,” said Adeimantus, “there are lots of them. That is what they are like.”

“And you know,” said I, “that the servants of such men, the ones that seem well-intentioned, sometimes say this sort of thing secretly to the sons. And if they see someone owing money to his father, or someone doing him some other injustice, someone whom the father will not pursue, they exhort him to take revenge on all such people ^{550A} when he becomes a man, and be more of a man than his father. And when he goes out, he hears and sees other things of this sort. Those who do what belongs to themselves in the city¹⁰ are called simple-minded and are held in little regard, while those who do not are honoured and praised. Then the young man, seeing and hearing all this, and also hearing the words of his father, and seeing his father’s actions from close up, alongside those of everyone else, is dragged in both ^{550B} directions: his father encouraging and fostering the rational element in his soul, while the others foster the appetitive and spirited elements. Because he is not, by nature, a bad man, but has fallen into bad company of others, he is pulled by both of these, ends up in the middle, hands over the authority within himself to the middle element of ambition and spiritedness, and becomes a high-spirited man who loves honour.”

“I think,” said he, “that you have described the origin of this fellow quite accurately.”

^{550C} “In that case,” said I, “we have our second form of government, and the corresponding man too.”

“We have, indeed,” said he.

“After this, should we, as Aeschylus says, speak of ‘another man set before another city’¹¹ or, according to our procedure, speak of the city first?”

“Yes, certainly,” said he.

“And the form of government that comes after this one would, I think, be oligarchy.”

“Well,” said he, “what kind of constitution do you call oligarchy?”

“The one that is based on a property qualification,” said I, “in which the rich rule, and the poor man has no share of authority.”

^{550D} “I understand,” said he.

“Should we not say how the change from timocracy to oligarchy first begins?”

“Yes.”

¹⁰ See 433a–b.

¹¹ Possibly an adaptation of *Seven Against Thebes* 451.

“And indeed,” said I, “even to the blind, it is obvious how this changes.”

“How?”

“That treasury,” said I, “private to each, filled with gold, is what destroys a form of government of this sort. For in the first place they invent various extravagances for themselves, and divert the laws to this end by disobeying them themselves, and their wives do likewise.”

“Quite likely,” said he.

^{550E} “Next, I imagine, they start watching each other, and by entering into rivalry they eventually make almost everyone else behave just like themselves.”

“That is likely.”

“And thereafter,” said I, “as they proceed further with their moneymaking, the more honour they assign to wealth, the less honour they assign to excellence. Or is this not how excellence contrasts with wealth, as if they were each being weighed on a balance that is constantly inclining in opposite directions?”

“Very much so,” said he.

^{551A} “So, when wealth and the wealthy people are honoured in a city, excellence and the good people are shown less honour.”

“Evidently.”

“But whatever is honoured constantly is practised, and whatever is dishonoured is neglected.”

“Just so.”

“Then, instead of being ambitious men who love honour, they finally become men who love money and moneymaking. They praise the wealthy man, and they are in awe of him, and put him in positions of authority, while they dishonour the poor man.”

“Absolutely.”

“And at that stage, they pass a law that defines the oligarchical form of government. They prescribe ^{551B} a particular sum of money, which is more when it is more of an oligarchy, less when it is less so, and they decree that anyone whose property falls short of the prescribed valuation may have no involvement in ruling the city. They bring this about either through force of arms, or else they will establish a form of government like this through fear. Is this not so?”

“Yes, this is so.”

“Well then, this is what we might call its establishment.”

“Yes,” said he. “But what is the manner of this form of government, and what defects do we say it possesses?”

^{551C} “Well firstly,” said I, “consider its own defining characteristic and what it is like. What if helmsmen for ships were to be appointed based upon a property qualification, and the poor man was never given the role, even if he was a better helmsman?”

“Their sea voyage,” said he, “would be terrible.”

“Does not the same also apply to the control of anything else at all?”

“Yes, I think so.”

“Except a city,” said I. “Or does this also apply to a city?”

“Very much so,” said he, “to a city most of all, since the rule of a city is so difficult and important.”

^{551D} “Then oligarchy would possess this one significant defect.”

“Apparently.”

“What about this? Is the following defect any less significant?”

“Which one?”

“The fact that such a city is not one, but necessarily two: a city of poor folk and a city of wealthy people, living in the same place but always scheming against one another.”

“By Zeus,” said he, “that is not a less significant defect!”

“And indeed, it is not good that they are unlikely to be able to wage a war, because that compels them either to arm the general population, ^{551E} and then be more afraid of them than of the enemy, or not to arm them and thus be true oligarchs, a few rulers alone on the battlefield. And at the same time, they are unwilling to contribute to military expenditure because they love money so much.”

“Not good, indeed.”

“And what about the aspect we criticised a while ago? What about the fact that people have lots of different roles? Under such a form of government, the same people simultaneously engage in agriculture, ^{552A} make money, and fight in wars. Do you think this is all right?”

“No, not at all.”

“Then let us see if such a form of government is the first to tolerate the greatest of all these evils.”

“Which is?”

“Allowing someone to sell everything he has, and allowing someone else to take possession of this. Having sold everything, the man may live on in the city without any role as a businessman, a craftsman, a cavalryman, ^{552B} or an infantry-man. They call him poor, a man without means.”

“It is the first to tolerate this,” said he.

“This sort of thing certainly will not be prohibited in oligarchies, or else some people could not be excessively wealthy while others are in total poverty.”

“That is right.”

“Think about this too. When he was still wealthy, was this fellow of any more benefit to the city in the various roles we have described? Or did he seem to be one of the rulers of the city, when in truth he was neither a ruler nor an underling, but a mere spender of anything that was available?”

^{552C} “That is it,” said he. “He seemed to be something else, but he was nothing more than a spendthrift.”

“Would you like us to declare,” said I, “that just as a drone is born in a cell of honeycomb, a pestilence to the hive, so too is a man like this, born in a private dwelling house, a drone and a pestilence to the city?”

“Yes certainly, Socrates,” said he.

“Now, Adeimantus, although the god made all the winged drones without any stings, did he not make some of the drones that go by foot stingless, and others with terrible stings? Is it not the case that those who remain beggars to the very end belong to the stingless ^{522D} sort, while all the so-called evildoers are from the drones which have stings?”

“Very true,” said he.

“So it is evident,” said I, “that in any city where you see beggars, there are thieves and cutpurses somewhere in the vicinity, hidden away, temple robbers too, and artificers of all sorts of evil deeds.”

“That is evident,” said he.

“What about this? Do you not see beggars in the oligarchical cities?”

“Yes,” said he, “almost everyone apart from those in authority are beggars.”

^{552E} “Should we not presume then,” said I, “that there are also lots of evildoers in these cities, complete with stings, whom the rulers deliberately restrain by force?”

“We should presume so,” said he.

“Well then, shall we declare that people like this arise there because of ill-education, bad upbringing, and the evil foundations of this form of government?”

“We shall.”

“In that case then, the oligarchical city would be something of this sort, and would have as many evils as this, and perhaps even more.”

“That just about sums it up,” said he.

^{553A} “Then,” said I, “we have dealt with this form of government too, the one they call oligarchy, the one having rulers appointed on the basis of a property qualification. Next, we

should consider the person who resembles this, how he arises, and what he is like once he has arisen.”

“Yes, certainly,” said he.

“Does not the change from that timocratic type to the oligarchic type take place, for the most part, as follows?”

“How?”

“It happens when a son, born to a timocratic man, emulates his father at first and follows in that man’s footsteps. Then he sees him suddenly dashed ^{553B} against the city, like a ship against a reef, his property and the man himself being lost overboard. Perhaps he was serving as a general, or exercising some other important position of authority, and then ended up in court because of damaging allegations by false informers, and was put to death, or exiled, or lost his civil rights and had all his property confiscated.”

“Quite likely,” said he.

“And the son, my friend, seeing all this, suffering its consequences, and losing all his property, is presumably afraid, and immediately thrusts any love of honour, and that spiritedness too, from the throne ^{553C} in his own soul. Humbled by poverty, he turns to moneymaking, and greedily, gradually, by being thrifty and working hard, he gets some money together. Now do you not think someone like this, at that stage, would install the appetitive element with its love of money on that throne, turn this into the Great King within himself, and deck it out with tiaras, necklets and ceremonial swords?”

“I do,” said he.

^{553D} “And I presume that he seats the rational and the spirited elements on the ground on either side, beneath that king, as his slaves. He would not allow the rational element to work out or consider anything except how to turn smaller sums of money into larger ones. And he would not allow the spirited element to hold anything in awe, or to have any respect for anything apart from wealth and wealthy people, or to take pride in anything at all except the acquisition of wealth, and anything that brings this about.”

“There is,” said he, “no other transformation of a young man ^{553E} who loves honour into one who loves money that is as swift and sure as this.”

“So, is this fellow our oligarchical man?” I asked.

“Well at any rate, the transformation of this fellow starts with a man who resembles the timocracy, the form that turns into oligarchy.”

“Let us investigate whether he himself resembles the oligarchy.”

^{554A} “Let us investigate it.”

“Would he not resemble it firstly by assigning the utmost importance to money?”

“Of course.”

“And indeed, by being miserly and diligent, satisfying only the most necessary of his desires without making provision for any other expenditure, and enslaving the other desires because they are unprofitable.”

“Yes, certainly.”

“He is a squalid fellow,” said I, “a man who builds up a fortune by making a profit out of everything, the sort of man that most people praise. ^{554B} Would not this person be the one who resembles a form of government like oligarchy?”

“Well, I think so,” said he. “At any rate, money is what this city honours most, and so does a man like this.”

“Yes,” said I, “presumably because a man like this has not paid attention to education.”

“It seems not,” said he, “or else he would not have installed blind wealth as the leader of his chorus, and honoured this most.”¹²

“Nicely explained,” said I, “but consider this. Should we not state that because of his lack of education, drone-like desires arise in him – the desires of the beggar ^{554C} in some cases, those of the evildoer in others – but these are restrained by his other concern?”

“Indeed,” said he, “very much so.”

“Now,” said I, “do you know where you will see the evil deeds of these people, if you look?”

“Where?” he asked.

“In their guardianship of orphans, and any other opportunity like this that arises, where they get unrestricted licence to act unjustly.”

“True.”

“So, is it not obvious from this that in the other business dealings, those in which a man like this is well-regarded and seems to be acting justly, he is forcibly restraining other bad innate desires by some moderation of his own ^{554D} devising? He does not persuade them that it is better not to do this, nor does he tame them by reason, but by compulsion and fear, because he is afraid of losing the rest of his property.”

“Yes, entirely so,” said he.

“And by Zeus, my friend,” said I, “once they have the opportunity to spend other people’s money, you will find that the drone-like desires are present in most of them.”

“Yes,” said he, “with great intensity.”

“So a man like this would not be free of internal factions, nor would he be one person, but ^{554E} somehow double, although his better desires would, for the most part, prevail over his worse desires.”

¹² Plutus, the god of wealth, was depicted by Aristophanes as having been blinded.

“Quite so.”

“Because of this, I believe, such a person would be more respectable than many others. But the true excellence of the even-minded and harmonious soul would escape him by some distance.”

“I think so.”

^{555A} “And indeed this miserly fellow, as a private citizen, is a poor competitor when it comes to any civic ambition or love of noble achievements, as he is not prepared to spend money for the sake of good reputation, or on any rivalries of this sort. He is afraid to awaken the desires that make him spend money, and summon them to join the battle and fulfil his ambition. So he fights like a true oligarch with only a few of his own resources, loses most of the time, but remains wealthy.”

“Very much so,” said he.

“Now,” said I, “are we still in any doubt that the miserly money-maker corresponds to the oligarchical ^{555B} city, and resembles it?”

“Not at all,” said he.

“Then we should, it seems, consider the democracy next – the manner in which it arises, and what it is like once it has arisen. This will allow us to recognise the character of the man who is like this, and judge him alongside the others.”

“Well we would at least be proceeding much as we did earlier,” said he.

“Does not the change from oligarchy to democracy come about, somehow, because of this insatiable desire for what is presented as good, this need to become as wealthy as possible?” I asked.

“How so?”

^{555C} “Since the rulers hold office in that city because they have acquired so much wealth, they are, I think, unwilling to restrict by law any young people who are becoming unrestrained, and prevent them from spending and wasting all they possess. This enables them to buy up the property of such young folk, and also to lend money on security of the property, thus becoming even wealthier and more privileged than before.”

“More than anything.”

“Now, is it not obvious already that in a city it is impossible to have reverence for wealth, and sufficient sound-mindedness among the citizens, at the same time? Is it not necessary ^{555D} rather to neglect one or the other?”

“Yes,” said he, “that is fairly obvious.”

“In fact, when they neglect this in the oligarchies, and encourage unrestrained behaviours, good people are sometimes forced into poverty.”

“Very much so.”

“So these people, I imagine, sit there in the city, complete with stings, in armed array, some of them in debt, some of them deprived of their rights, some in both predicaments. They hate and conspire against those who took their possessions, and against everyone else too, ^{555E} and they are passionate for revolution.”

“That is right.”

“And yet the money-makers, keeping their heads down, and without even seeming to notice these people, insert their silver, injuring anyone else who does not consistently resist them. And they recover their original sum, many times over ^{556A} in interest, and cause the drone and the beggar to multiply in the city.”

“Yes,” said he, “why would they not multiply?”

“Nor,” said I, “are they willing to extinguish an evil of this sort, as it blazes up in the city, by restricting a person’s right to do what he likes with his own property, nor again will they undo such arrangements by another law.”

“What law do you mean?”

“A law that is second best after that, one that compels the citizens to pay attention to excellence. For if it were decreed that a person enters into ^{556B} most voluntary contracts at his own risk, there would be less shameless money-making in the city, and fewer evils like those we have been describing would spring up there.”

“Much fewer,” said he.

“But as matters stand,” said I, “for all sorts of reasons such as those we have given, the rulers of the city put their subjects in this predicament. As for themselves and their own kindred, do they not make the young folk delicate, averse to hard work be it physical or mental, too soft ^{556C} to withstand pleasures or pains, and lazy too?”

“Indeed.”

“And do they not turn themselves into money-makers who neglect everything else besides this, caring no more for excellence than the poor people do?”

“Yes, no more than that.”

“Then, under such an arrangement, whenever the rulers and their subjects come into contact with one another, either on a journey or in some other communal activities such as a festival, or on a military campaign as shipmates or fellow soldiers, and when they see one another facing actual dangers, ^{556D} the poor are no longer held in contempt by the wealthy folk at all. Indeed very often the poor man, lean and sunburnt, stationed in battle beside a wealthy man who has been reared in the shade, with far more flesh than he needs, sees this rich fellow out of breath and in total confusion. So, do you not think he will then conclude that such people are wealthy due to some failing on the part of the poor, and when the poor get together in private, will they not proclaim ^{556E} to one another that ‘These men are good for nothing. They are ours for the taking’.”

“I know quite well,” said he, “that that is what they will do.”

“Is it not like an unhealthy body that needs only the slightest external influence to tip it into disease, and is sometimes in conflict with itself, without any external influence? Will not a city that is in the same condition as that unhealthy body become diseased at the slightest prompting, and fight against itself? Perhaps one group might bring in allies from an oligarchic state, or the others might bring them in from a democratic state, and there may sometimes be conflict even without any external influence.”

^{557A} “Yes, emphatically so.”

“Then democracy, I imagine, comes about when the poor, having won their victory, execute some of their opponents, exile others, and grant an equal involvement in civic affairs and in positions of authority to those who remain. And positions of authority in the city are, for the most part, assigned by lot.”

“This is indeed how the democracy is established,” said he, “whether it happens through force of arms, or the others withdraw out of fear.”

“Well then,” said I, “in what way do these people live their lives, and what will a form of government of this sort ^{557B} be like? For it is obvious that a man like this will prove to be a democratic man.”

“That is obvious,” said he.

“Well in the first place, are they not free, and does not the city become full of freedom, and unrestricted speech, with license for anyone there to do what he likes?”

“So they say, anyway,” said he.

“And wherever there is license, it is obvious that each person would make individual arrangements for his own life there, an arrangement that pleases him.”

“That is obvious.”

^{557C} “So under this form of government especially, I imagine, an enormous variety of people of all sorts would arise.”

“Inevitably.”

“Perhaps,” said I, “it is the most beautiful of all the forms of government. Just like a many coloured robe, embroidered with flowers of all sorts, this city, decked out with characters of all sorts, would prove to be the most beautiful one there is. Indeed it is quite likely,” said I, “that most people, just like children and women when they see decorated objects, would decide that this form of government is the most beautiful one.”

“Very much so,” said he.

“And indeed, my friend,” said I, “it is somehow quite appropriate to search for a form of government in this one.”

^{557D} “Why is that?”

“Because it contains forms of government of every kind, on account of the licence that it allows. Indeed, anyone who intends to arrange a city, as we have been doing just now, should really go to one that is governed democratically, and select whatever arrangement pleases him, as if he was entering a general market selling forms of government of all sorts, to make his selection and found his city accordingly.”

“Well,” said he, “there would surely be no shortage of examples to choose from.”

^{557E} “There is no compulsion to exercise authority in this city, even if you are qualified to do so,” said I, “or indeed to be subject to authority if you do not feel like it, or to go to war in time of war, or to observe the peace when everyone else does so, if you do not want peace. What is more, if some law is preventing you from holding office or being on a jury, you may hold office or serve on the jury anyway, if it suits you to do so. Now is this not a ^{558A} divinely pleasant and sweet way of carrying on, for a while?”

“For a while, perhaps,” said he.

“And what about the calmness of those who have ended up in court? Is that not nice? Or have you never seen people who have been sentenced to death or exile under a form of government like this, remaining on in the city nevertheless, and going about in public. Or how a convicted person stalks about the place unheeded and unseen by anyone, like a ghost?”

“This happens a lot,” said he.

“And note the tolerance of this form of government, and its lack of any attention to detail. It despises ^{558B} anything we were so serious about when we were founding our city, and said that unless someone had an exceptional nature he would never become a good man, unless he were to play in the midst of beauty from his earliest childhood, and engage in pursuits of a similar sort thereafter. See how high-mindedly it tramples upon all this, pays no heed to the sort of pursuits someone engaged in before they got involved in public life, but honours him as long as he declares that he is well disposed towards the people.”

“How utterly noble,” said he.

^{558C} “So democracy would, it seems, have these qualities and others akin to these,” said I. “It is a pleasant form of government, anarchic and variegated, that bestows some equality on equals and un-equals alike.”

“Yes,” said he, “what you say is all very recognisable.”

“Then,” said I, “think carefully about what the corresponding person will be like. Or should we first consider how he arises, just as we did with the form of government?”

“Yes,” said he.

“Well, would it not happen in the following way? The miserly oligarchic man might have ^{558D} a son, I imagine, who has been brought up in the habits of his father.”

“Yes, why not?”

“Then the son too would forcibly control any pleasures within him that are conducive to spending money rather than making it, the pleasures that are referred to as unnecessary.”

“Obviously,” said he.

“Now,” said I, “so that we do not discuss this in an obscure manner, do you first want to distinguish between the desires that are necessary, and those that are not?”

“I do,” said he.

“Well, desires which we would be unable to divert, ^{558E} and those whose fulfilment benefits us, may we justifiably refer to these as necessary? In fact it is necessary for us, by our very nature, to pursue both of these. Is this not so?”

“Very much so.”

^{559A} “Then we may justifiably use the word ‘necessary’ to refer to these.”

“Justifiably.”

“What about those which someone may be rid of, through practice from his earliest years, which do not do him any good when they are present, and can indeed do the opposite? If we declare that all these are unnecessary, would we be right to say so?”

“Right indeed.”

“Then should we pick an example of each, so that we may grasp what they are, in rough outline?”

“We should do that.”

“Would not the desire to eat, just to maintain health and wellbeing, the desire ^{559B} just for bread and for relish, be necessary?”

“I believe so.”

“The desire for bread is presumably necessary for both reasons: it is beneficial, and it can bring our lives to an end if we do not satisfy it.”

“Yes.”

“Whereas the desire for relish is necessary insofar as it confers some benefit in terms of wellbeing.”

“Yes, certainly.”

“What about desire that goes beyond these, desire for different things to eat besides this sort of food, desire that is capable of being eliminated from most people by restraint and education from their earlier years, and is harmful to the body and harmful to the soul’s intelligence and soundness of mind? May this correctly ^{559C} be referred to as not necessary?”

“Most correctly.”

“Now, should we not say that these desires are conducive to spending money, and the others to making money because they are useful in relation to work?”

“Indeed.”

“And shall we say the same about sexual desires and the others?”

“The same.”

“Now, is it not the case that the fellow we called a drone just now, this man, according to us, is full of pleasures and desires of this sort, and is ruled by the unnecessary ones, while the miserly oligarchic type is ruled by the necessary ones?”

“Yes, indeed.”

^{559D} “Well,” said I, “let us go back again and say how the democratic type arises from the oligarchic. It seems to me to happen, in general, as follows.”

“How?”

“Whenever a young man, brought up in the manner we just described, ill-educated and miserly, being a mere drone, gets a taste of honey, and keeps company with wild, clever creatures who are able to ply him with a whole variety of pleasures of all sorts and types – this, you may safely assume, ^{559E} is the source of the change from the oligarchic system within himself to the democratic one.”

“It must be,” said he, “very much so.”

“Well then, just as the city changed when an external alliance came to the aid of one of its parts, like supporting like, so too does not the young man change when some form of external desire comes in turn to the aid of similar, corresponding, kindred desires within himself?”

“Entirely so.”

“And I presume that if some alliance provides assistance, in turn, to the oligarchic element within him, either from his father’s circle, or any other ^{560A} relations who are censuring and criticising him, then faction, and counter faction, and internal warfare against himself, arises.”

“Indeed.”

“And sometimes, I imagine, the democratic element yields to the oligarchic, and some of the desires are destroyed while others are expelled, some shame arises in the soul of the young man, and its good order is restored once again.”

“Yes, this sometimes happens,” said he.

“At other times I believe, other desires, akin to those that have been expelled, arise in their place, because the father lacks knowledge of proper nurture, and these can become numerous ^{560B} and strong.”

“Yes,” said he. “That is what is inclined to happen.”

“Do they not drag him back into the same bad company, and by getting together in secret give birth to a rabble?”

“Indeed.”

“Then finally, I believe, they seize the citadel of the young man’s soul, having noticed that it is devoid of understanding, noble pursuits, and words of truth, which are of course the very best watchmen and guardians in the minds of men whom the gods love.”

^{560C} “Much the best,” said he.

“False and arrogant arguments and opinions then rush up and seize the self-same citadel of a man like this, usurping the place of the true ones.”

“With great energy,” said he.

“So, does he not go back once more to those Lotus Eaters, and live openly among them this time? And if any assistance from the relatives arrives to help the miserly aspect of his soul, do not those arrogant words close the gates in the walls of the kingly element within him, refuse to allow the alliance itself ^{560D} to get through, or to accept the words of private persons who are older and wiser as ambassadors? They themselves do battle and prevail. Shame they rename as silliness, and they thrust it out as an exile, showing it no respect. Sound-mindedness they rename as unmanliness, and having trampled it in the mud, they cast this out too. Is it not the case that they convince him that measure, and orderly expenditure, are crude restraints on freedom, and with the help of lots of useless desires, they drive these beyond the frontier?”

“They do indeed.”

“And once they have somehow emptied and purged the soul they have occupied, ^{560E} and are initiating with magnificent rites, they proceed at that stage to reinstate insolence, anarchy, wastefulness and shamelessness, in a blaze of light, accompanied by a vast procession, crowning them with garlands, singing their praises and calling them by sweet names. They refer to insolence as good education, anarchy as freedom, wastefulness as magnificence, ^{561A} and shamelessness as courage. Is this not somehow the way,” said I, “that he changes, as a young man, from being reared on the necessary desires to the liberation and licence that goes with unnecessary and unprofitable pleasures?”

“Yes,” said he, “that’s very clear.”

“After all this, I imagine, a person like this lives on, spending money, effort and time on the necessary and unnecessary pleasures in equal measure. But if he is fortunate, and his frenzy ^{561B} does not go beyond all bounds, and he gets a bit older too, then once the great inner tumult has passed he may readmit some parts that he had expelled, and not give himself over entirely to the new arrivals. He proceeds to place the various pleasures on some sort of equal footing, handing authority over himself to any pleasure that comes along, in a sort of lottery, until it is satisfied, then he moves on to another, cherishing them all equally and showing no disrespect to any of them.”

“Yes, certainly.”

“And he does not accept true argument,” said I, “nor admit it into that citadel, when someone says that there are pleasures that belong to noble ^{561C} and good desires, and others that belong to base desires, and that the former should be pursued and honoured, while the others are to be restrained and kept in subjection. No, he shakes his head at all such arguments, and declares that these pleasures are all much the same, and equally worthy of honour.”

“Yes, indeed,” said he, “that is his position, and that is what he would do.”

“And that is how he passes his life,” said I, “from day to day, gratifying whatever desire comes along. At one moment he is a drunkard, charmed by sweet music; ^{561D} next he becomes a water-drinker and goes on a diet; then he starts exercising, but he soon gets lazy and completely careless; and after that he seems to be engaged in philosophy. He often turns to politics, jumping up and saying or doing whatever occurs to him; and if he ever develops an admiration for military folk, he takes himself off in that direction; or he might admire business people and go that way instead. There is no order in his life, nor any compulsion to do anything, and yet he calls this life pleasant, free and blessed, and he holds to this through and through.”

^{561E} “You have,” said he, “given a comprehensive description of a ‘legal equality man’.”

“And I think,” said I, “that he is a man of great variety, full of character traits aplenty, and this fellow, just like that city, is the fair and many-coloured one. Most men and women would admire his life, which contains so many models for systems of government and personal traits.”

“Yes,” he said, “that is him.”

^{562A} “Well now, should we have aligned a person like this with the democracy, as a man who may correctly be referred to as democratic?”

“We should,” said he.

“Then,” said I, “all that is left for us to describe is the most beautiful form of government, and the most beautiful man: tyranny and the tyrant.”

“Certainly,” said he.

“Come on then, my dear friend, what does the manner of tyranny prove to be? Indeed, it is quite obvious that it develops out of a democracy.”

“It is.”

“Now, does tyranny arise from democracy in somewhat the same manner as democracy arose from oligarchy?”

“In what manner?”

^{562B} “The good that they proposed,” said I, “which is the very basis of the oligarchy, was wealth. Is this not so?”

“Yes.”

“Well, the insatiable desire for wealth, and the disregard of everything else in favour of making money, destroyed the oligarchy.”

“True,” said he.

“And whatever democracy defines as good, and the insatiable desire for this, is what breaks the democracy apart, is it not?”

“What, according to you, does it define as good?”

“Freedom,” said I. “For you would surely hear it said in the democratically governed city, ^{562C} that this is its most precious possession, and that’s why it is the only city worth living in for anyone who is free by nature.”

“Yes, indeed,” said he. “That is what is said, and it is said often.”

“Well then,” said I, “as I was just about to say, the insatiable desire for this sort of thing, to the neglect of everything else, changes this form of government too, and puts it in a position where it needs tyranny.”

“How so?” he asked.

“This happens, I believe, whenever a democratically governed city with a thirst for freedom gets leaders who behave like bad ^{562D} wine pourers. The city gets intoxicated by drinking too much unadulterated freedom, and unless the rulers are very obliging and provide the city with a lot of freedom, it punishes them and accuses them of being despicable oligarchs.”

“Yes,” said he, “that is what it does.”

“And,” said I, “it hurls insults at those who are obedient to their rulers, for being willing slaves and mere nobodies. But in private, and publicly too, it praises and honours any rulers who are like the subjects, and any subjects who are like rulers. Now, is it not inevitable that freedom in a city like this would extend to everything?”

^{562E} “How could it do otherwise?”

“And this,” said I, “must also seep down into private households, my friend, until finally the anarchy springs up even among the wild beasts.”

“How are we saying this happens?” he asked.

“We would say, for example,” said I, “that a father gets accustomed to behaving like a child, and is afraid of his sons. A son behaves like a father, and feels neither shame nor fear ^{563A} before his parents, so that he may, of course, be free. A foreigner residing in the city has equal status with a citizen, and a citizen has equal status with a foreigner, and the same applies to a visitor.”

“Indeed,” said he, “that is what happens.”

“It does,” said I, “and there are other trivial examples. A teacher in such a situation fears and flatters the pupils, while the pupils belittle their teachers and whoever else is put in charge of them. And the young become like their elders in all respects, competing with them in word and deed, while the elders come down to the level of ^{563B} the young folk by being full of banter and wit, imitating the young, for fear of seeming disagreeable or oppressive.”

“Very much so,” said he.

“And yet, my friend,” said I, “freedom in such a city reaches its extreme when slaves, male and female, are just as free as those who buy them. And I almost forgot to mention how much equality and freedom there is among women in relation to men, and among men in relation to women.”

^{563C} “Should we not follow Aeschylus,” said he, “and say ‘whatever now comes to our lips’?”

“Certainly,” said I, “and accordingly I say that unless he had experienced it first hand, no one would believe how much freer the domesticated animals are in this city than in any other. Indeed, it is literally the case that, as the proverb says, ‘the bitches become just like their mistresses’. And indeed, horses and donkeys get used to going about with total freedom and solemnity, bumping into anyone they happen to meet on the road who doesn’t get out of their way, and everything else becomes just as full of freedom.”

^{563D} “You are describing my own dream,” said he. “I experience this myself when I am making my way out into the countryside.”

“And,” said I, “the outcome of all of these factors combined together is the observable softness it produces in the souls of the citizens. Consequently, if anyone tries to introduce any subjugation to any authority at all, they get angry and cannot stand it. Indeed, I am sure you recognise that in the end they don’t even pay attention to the laws, written or unwritten, so that no one ^{563E} may have any authority whatsoever over them.”

“Yes,” said he, “I know quite well.”

“Well, my friend,” said I, “this, in my view, is the beautiful and high-spirited source from which a tyranny springs up.”

“High-spirited indeed,” said he. “But what happens after this?”

“The same disease,” said I, “that developed in the oligarchy and destroyed it, also develops in the democracy, but it is more pervasive and more virulent on account of the licence it allows, and it dominates the democracy completely. In fact, anything that is done to excess tends to reciprocate with an enormous corresponding change in the opposite direction, in seasons, in plants ^{564A} and in human bodies, and especially in forms of government.”

“Quite likely,” said he.

“Indeed, the excessive freedom seems to transform simply into excessive slavery, in the individual and in the city.”

“Yes, quite likely.”

“Then,” said I, “it is likely that tyranny arises from no other form of government besides democracy. From the very pinnacle of freedom comes the most extensive and savage slavery.”

“Yes,” said he, “that is reasonable.”

“But I do not think that is what you were asking,” said I. “I think you asked what kind of disease develops identically in an oligarchy ^{564B} and in a democracy too and reduces it to slavery.”

“True,” said he.

“Well,” said I, “I was referring to that class of idle, spendthrift men, the most courageous of whom take the lead while the less vigorous among them follow. These we compare to drones, some having stings, others stingless.”

“And rightly so,” said he.

“Well,” said I, “these two cause trouble in any city when they arise there. ^{564C} They are like phlegm and bile in the body which a good physician, and a lawgiver in the case of a city, must be careful about from afar, just as careful as a wise beekeeper, so that ideally they do not arise in the first place, and then if they do arise they are cut out as quickly as possible, along with the wax that surrounds them.”

“Yes, by Zeus,” said he, “entirely so.”

“Well,” said I, “to see what we want to see with greater precision, let us proceed in the following way.”

“In what way?”

“Let us use the argument to divide the democratically governed city into three, which ^{564D} is how matters actually stand. One part is presumably this drone-like class that develops there, no less than it does in an oligarchy, because there is so much licence.”

“So it does.”

“But this class is much fiercer in a democracy than in an oligarchy.”

“How so?”

“In the oligarchy it gets no exercise and doesn’t get strong, because it is not respected, and it is excluded from positions of authority. But in the democracy, with few exceptions, this is presumably the dominant class, and the fiercest part of it is vocal and active, while the rest gather about the speaker’s platform, sit there buzzing, and will not stand for any opposition. ^{564E} Consequently, with few exceptions, everything in such a form of government is managed by this class.”

“Very much so,” said he.

“And another distinct part always emerges from the general population as follows.”

“In what way?”

“Presumably, if everyone is involved in making money, those who are by nature most orderly generally become wealthier than everyone else.”

“Quite likely.”

“Well, that is where the drones find most honey, and it is easiest to extract from there.”

“Yes,” said he. “How could someone extract it from the others who have so little? “

“Then, I imagine, wealthy people like this are called ‘the drones’ feeding-ground’.”

“Pretty much,” said he.

^{565A} “The ‘People’ would be the third class, consisting of easy-going types, those who work their own land and do not own a lot. They constitute the most numerous and most powerful group in a democracy when they gather in an assembly.”

“That is right,” said he, “but they are not inclined to do this very often unless they get a share of the honey.”

“Do they not always get a share,” said I, “as much as the people in charge are able to spare, since they confiscate property from those who have it, distribute some to the people, but hold on to most of it themselves?”

^{565B} “Yes,” said he, “that is indeed how they get a share.”

“In that case, I imagine, those whose property is being confiscated are compelled to put up a defence by speaking in the assembly, and by taking whatever action they can.”

“Inevitably.”

“Then an accusation against them is made by those on the other side, and even though they have no desire for revolution, they are accused of conspiring against the people and acting like oligarchs.”

“Indeed.”

“Finally, they see that the people are trying to do them an injustice, not intentionally but out of ignorance, because they have been deceived by various ^{565C} slanderers. And at this stage they really do become oligarchs, whether they wish to do so or not. They are acting against their will, but the drone is stinging them and that is what produces this evil too.”

“Yes, exactly.”

“Then the two sides launch impeachments, lawsuits, and court cases against one another.”

“Very much so.”

“And in such a situation are not the people always inclined to put forward one person in particular as their own protector, whom they nurture and turn into a great man?”

“That is what they are inclined to do.”

“So this much is obvious,” said I. “Whenever a tyrant ^{565D} springs up, the root from which he springs is a protectorate, and nothing else.”

“Yes, that is quite obvious.”

“So, what is the origin of the change from protector to tyrant? Or is it obvious that this happens once the protector begins to do the same thing as the fellow in the story about the sanctuary of Lycean Zeus¹³ in Arcadia?”

“What story?” he asked.

“The story is that someone who tastes one piece of the innards of a human being, chopped up and mixed with the innards of other sacrificial animals, must necessarily turn into a wolf. Or have you not heard the account?”

^{565E} “I have.”

“Now, does not someone who has become a protector of the people do something like this? Does he not take control of a faithful mob and show no restraint, even to shed the blood of his own people, making unjust accusations, the mob’s usual favourites? And does he not drag someone into court and commit murder, doing away with a man’s life, tasting the blood of his own kin with defiled lips and tongue? Does he not banish people, slay ^{566A} them, and hint at the cancellation of debts and the redistribution of land? Now, is it not inevitable that such a person, after all this, is destined either to be destroyed by his enemies or to become a tyrant, and transform from a man to a wolf?”

“Quite inevitable,” said he.

“Then this fellow,” said I, “turns out to be someone who is at odds with those who own the wealth.”

“He does.”

“Now, if he is expelled and then returns in defiance of his enemies, will he not return as a finished tyrant?”

“Evidently.”

“But if they are unable to expel him, or to have him killed by spreading slander ^{566B} in the city, they conspire to have him slain in secret and die a violent death.”

“Yes,” said he, “that is what tends to happen.”

“Then comes the request of the tyrant, all too familiar, the one that they all come up with at this stage. They ask the people for some bodyguards, so that the saviour of the people may be kept safe for them.”

“Indeed so,” said he.

¹³ The wolf-Zeus.

“And they grant his request, I believe, because they are afraid on his behalf, although they are confident about their own situation.”

“Yes, indeed.”

^{566C} “Now, when the man with money sees and all this, a man who besides having money is accused of hating the common people, then, my friend, as the oracle given to Croesus says,

He flees along the shore of many pebbled Hermus

He abides not, nor is he ashamed to be a coward.”¹⁴

“Indeed,” said he, “he will not get a second chance to be ashamed.”

“And I imagine,” said I, “that he is done to death if he gets caught.”

“Inevitably.”

“And yet that protector of the people does not of course lie fallen, ‘a great man brought down in his greatness’.¹⁵ ^{566D} No, he overthrows numerous adversaries, and stands in the controlling position of the city, a complete tyrant rather than a mere protector.”

“It must be so,” said he.

“Should we,” said I, “give an account of the happiness of this man, and of the city in which such a creature has arisen?”

“Yes, certainly,” said he. “Let us give the account.”

“Well,” said I, “initially, in the early days, does he not have a smile, and a warm greeting for anyone he meets? Does he not deny that he is a tyrant, ^{566E} and make lots of promises in private and in public, free people from their debts, and distribute land to the people and to his own circle, and does he not pretend to be kind and gentle to everyone?”

“He must,” said he.

“And yet I believe once he is reconciled with some of his enemies in exile, and has destroyed the others, and all is quiet in that regard, he sets about waging some war or other constantly, so that the people will be in need of a leader.”

“Quite likely.”

^{567A} “He does this so that they will also be impoverished by paying taxes, forced to focus upon their day-to-day needs, and be less inclined to conspire against him.”

“Obviously.”

“And if he suspects that some people with exalted notions of freedom will not accept his authority, I believe he can come up with a pretext to destroy these people, by handing them

¹⁴ See Herodotus 1.55. Croesus was a king of Lydia who was noted for his wealth. He asked the oracle at Delphi whether his reign would be long.

¹⁵ See *Iliad* xvi.776.

over to the enemy. So, for all these reasons it is imperative that a tyrant stirs up war continuously.”

“Imperative.”

“And because he behaves like this, must he not expect to be increasingly hated by the citizens?”

“How can he not expect that?”

^{567B} “And will not some of those who helped him to power, and are in power themselves, speak frankly to him and to one another, criticising the things that are happening – those who are brave enough to do so at any rate.”

“Quite likely.”

“So, the tyrant needs to do away with all these people secretly if he is to have authority, until finally there is no one left, friend or foe, who is of any use to him.”

“Evidently.”

“So he must keep a sharp eye out to see who is courageous, who has a great mind, who is intelligent, ^{567C} and who is wealthy. And such is his blessedness that whether he likes it or not, he must be an enemy to all these people, and conspire against them, until such time as he cleanses the city.”

“A fine cleansing that is,” said he.

“Yes,” said I, “it is the exact opposite of what physicians do to bodies. They remove the worst and leave the best, but the tyrant does the opposite.”

“Yes,” said he. “It seems he needs to do this if he is to rule the city.”

^{567D} “So he is bound,” said I, “by a blessed necessity, which directs him either to live alongside people who are for the most part quite ordinary, or else not live at all.”

“He is,” said he.

“Now, is it not the case that the more he is hated by the citizens for doing all this, the greater his need for more bodyguards who are more trustworthy?”

“He has no alternative.”

“So who are these trustworthy people? And where will he source them from?”

“Lots of them will fly in of their own accord,” said he, “once he comes up with the money.”

“By the dog,” said I, “I think you are referring ^{567E} to some more drones, foreign ones this time, of all varieties.”

“Yes,” said I. “I think that is true.”

“What about local ones? Would he be at all reluctant to take the slaves away from the citizens, set them free, and then make them part of his own circle of bodyguards?”

“He will be very keen to do so,” he said, “since men like this will be extremely loyal to him.”

“What a blessed thing this tyranny is,” said I, “if it relies upon such people as ^{568A} trusted friends, having done away with their predecessors.”

“But of course he relies on people like this,” said he.

“And these companions of his admire him, of course,” said I. “And the new citizens associate with him, while the respectable citizens hate him and avoid him.”

“What else could they do?”

“It is no wonder,” said I, “that tragedy is generally thought to be wise, and Euripides is thought to excel in it.”

“Why so?”

“Because he uttered the following maxim, born of cogent thought: ‘tyrants are wise, ^{568B} by associating with the wise’. And he meant of course that these people, with whom the tyrant is associating, are wise people.”

“And,” said he, “he praises the tyranny as the equal of the gods, and he himself says much else besides, as do the other poets.”

“And that,” said I, “is why the tragic poets, being wise, forgive us, and those with a form of government similar to ours, for not admitting them because they are advocates of tyranny.”

^{568C} “I think,” said he, “that the more civilised among them do forgive us.”

“And yet, I believe, they go around the other cities, and by gathering crowds and paying for the services of good voices that are loud and persuasive, they influence those regimes in the direction of tyranny or democracy.”

“They do indeed.”

“And besides this, will they not receive payment and be honoured too, mostly, as seems likely, by tyrannical regimes, and to a lesser extent by democracies? But the higher they climb along the ascending scale of systems of government, the more their honour ^{568D} starts to flag, as if it were unable to go any further because it was out of breath.”

“Yes, indeed.”

“But we have digressed here,” said I. “Let us go back to that noble, numerous, variegated and ever-changing army of the tyrant, and say how it is supported.”

“Obviously,” said he, “if there are sacred treasures in the city’s temples, he will spend these for as long as the proceeds from their sale is sufficient, ^{568E} and make the people contribute less.”

“And what happens when this runs out?”

“Obviously,” said he, “he himself, his fellow drinkers and his companions, both male and female, will be supported from his father’s estate.”

“I understand,” said I. “The people who brought forth this tyrant will support the man himself and his companions too.”

“They need to,” said he, “very much so.”

“What are you saying?” I asked. “What if the people get angry and say that it is unjust for a grown-up son to be supported by his father, and that it should be the other way around – the father should be supported by the son? That was not why they created him ^{569A} and put him in place, so that when he had grown up the people would then be enslaved by their own slaves, and end up supporting him, along with the slaves and a rabble of others too. They wanted to be liberated from the wealthy classes, and the so-called ‘noble and good’ people in their own city, with him as their protector. What if they now order him to get out of the city, himself and his companions, like a father driving an errant son out of the house, along with a rabble of revellers?”

^{569B} “By Zeus,” said he, “the people would then realise what sort of beast they had brought forth, embraced and encouraged. They are now the weaker party driving out someone stronger.”

“What do you mean?” said I. “Would the tyrant dare to do violence to his father, and aim a blow at him if he was not compliant?”

“Yes,” said he, “after he had disarmed him.”

“You are saying,” said I, “that the tyrant is a parricide, and a harsh nurturer of the aged, and it seems that this would indeed be undisguised tyranny. And, as the saying goes, in fleeing from the smoke of slavery ^{569C} to free men, the people would have fallen into the fire of total subjugation to slaves. Instead of that vast and immoderate freedom, they have donned a new robe, the harshest and most bitter slavery, slavery to slaves.”

“Yes, that is what happens,” said he, “very much so.”

“Well then,” said I, “would it be appropriate for us to claim that we have given a sufficiently detailed account of how tyranny follows after democracy, and what it is like then?”

“Sufficiently detailed indeed,” said he.

End Book VIII