# Gorgias

PLATO

c. 428–348 BC

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Γοργίας

*Translated from the Greek with AI (Claude) and edited*



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*Gorgias* · Plato (c. 428–348 BC)

Translated from the Greek with AI (Claude) and edited. Reading edition, Forage, September 2026. forage.com/plato/gorgias

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# INTRODUCTION

Gorgias of Leontini was the most famous teacher of public speaking in Greece. The dialogue opens just after he has given a display in Athens, and Socrates wants to know what exactly his art is, and what it is good for.

The conversation gets steadily angrier. Gorgias is polite; his pupil Polus insists that tyrants who can do whatever they like are enviable; Socrates answers that doing wrong is worse than suffering it, and that a wrongdoer is better off punished than not. Then Callicles, a rising politician, attacks the whole idea of justice: by nature, he says, the strong should have more, and the best life is one of unlimited appetite.

Socrates holds that rhetoric as practised is mere flattery, and that the only real statesman is the one who makes citizens better. The dialogue ends with a myth about the judgment of souls after death.

# Gorgias

*Athens, just after Gorgias has given a public display of his oratory.*
*Socrates questions Gorgias, Polus and Callicles about rhetoric, power and how one ought to live.*

CALLICLES 447a They say that's the way to take part in a war or a battle, Socrates.[1]

SOCRATES What? Have we come, as the saying goes, when the feast is over? Are we too late?

CALLICLES And a very elegant feast it was. Gorgias gave us a fine display of many things just a little while ago.[2]

SOCRATES Well, Callicles, the one to blame for that is Chaerephon here: he made us waste our time in the marketplace.[3]

CHAEREPHON 447b No harm done, Socrates. I'll make up for it too. Gorgias is a friend of mine, so he'll give us a display—now, if you like, or some other time, if you'd rather.

CALLICLES What's that, Chaerephon? Does Socrates want to hear Gorgias?

CHAEREPHON That's exactly what we're here for.

CALLICLES Then come to my house whenever you like. Gorgias is staying with me, and he'll give you a display.

1 Callicles, Gorgias' host, is an ambitious young Athenian known only from this dialogue.
2 Gorgias of Leontini, in Sicily, was the most celebrated teacher of rhetoric of his day; a "display" was a showpiece speech performed before an audience.
3 Chaerephon was Socrates' devoted, excitable friend, known from Aristophanes' *Clouds* and from Plato's *Apology*.

SOCRATES That's kind of you, Callicles. But would he be willing 447c to have a discussion with us? I want to find out from him what the power of the man's craft is, and what it is that he professes and teaches. As for the rest of the display, let him give it some other time, as you suggest.

CALLICLES There's nothing like asking him yourself, Socrates. In fact this was one part of his display: just now he was inviting anyone in the house to ask whatever he liked, and said he would answer every question.

SOCRATES That's splendid. Chaerephon, ask him.

CHAEREPHON Ask him what?

SOCRATES 447d Who he is.

CHAEREPHON What do you mean?

SOCRATES Well, if he happened to be a maker of shoes, he would presumably answer you that he was a shoemaker. Or don't you see what I mean?

CHAEREPHON I see, and I'll ask him. Tell me, Gorgias, is Callicles here telling the truth when he says you profess to answer any question anyone asks you?

GORGIAS 448a It's true, Chaerephon. Just now I was making that very claim, and I can tell you that no one has asked me anything new for many years.

CHAEREPHON Then I suppose you'll answer easily, Gorgias.

GORGIAS You're welcome to put that to the test, Chaerephon.

POLUS Yes, by Zeus—and if you like, Chaerephon, test me. I think Gorgias must be quite worn out; he's just been through a great deal.[4]

CHAEREPHON What, Polus? Do you think you'd answer better than Gorgias?

4 Polus, from Acragas in Sicily, was a young follower of Gorgias and the author of a handbook on rhetoric.

POLUS 448b What does that matter, as long as I answer well enough for you?

CHAEREPHON It doesn't. Since you want to, then, answer.

POLUS Ask.

CHAEREPHON All right, I'm asking. If Gorgias happened to be expert in the same craft as his brother Herodicus, what would we rightly call him? Wouldn't it be the same as we call his brother?[5]

POLUS Certainly.

CHAEREPHON So we'd be right to say he was a doctor.

POLUS Yes.

CHAEREPHON And if he were skilled in the same craft as Aristophon son of Aglaophon, or Aristophon's brother, what would be the right name for him?[6]

POLUS 448c A painter, obviously.

CHAEREPHON As it is, then, since he's an expert in some craft, what would be the right thing to call him?

POLUS Chaerephon, there are many crafts among human beings, discovered by experience out of experiences. For experience makes our life proceed by craft, and inexperience by chance. Of each of these, different people partake of different ones in different ways, and the best people partake of the best. Gorgias here is one of these, and he shares in the finest of the crafts.

SOCRATES 448d Well, Gorgias, Polus certainly seems splendidly equipped for speechmaking. But he isn't doing what he promised Chaerephon.[7]

GORGIAS How so, Socrates?

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5 This Herodicus, Gorgias' brother, was a physician.

6 Aristophon's brother was Polygnotus, the most famous painter of the fifth century BC.

7 Polus' name means "colt," and Socrates' word for him here plays on it; his answer parodies the jingling style of Gorgias' school.

SOCRATES He doesn't seem to me to be answering the question at all.

GORGIAS Well, you ask him, if you like.

SOCRATES No—not if you yourself are willing to answer. I'd much rather ask you. It's clear to me from what Polus has said that he has practiced what's called rhetoric more than conversation.

POLUS 448e Why is that, Socrates?

SOCRATES Because, Polus, when Chaerephon asked what craft Gorgias is expert in, you praised his craft as though someone were criticizing it, but you didn't answer what it is.

POLUS But didn't I answer that it was the finest?

### WHAT IS RHETORIC?

*Socrates asks Gorgias what his craft is and what a rhetorician should be called.*

SOCRATES You certainly did. But nobody is asking what Gorgias' craft is like; we're asking what it is, and what we ought to call Gorgias. Chaerephon laid out the earlier examples for you, and you answered him well 449a and briefly. Now tell us in the same way what the craft is and what we should call Gorgias. Or rather, Gorgias, you tell us yourself: what should we call you, as an expert in what craft?

GORGIAS Rhetoric, Socrates.

SOCRATES So we should call you a rhetorician?

GORGIAS A good one, Socrates, if you want to call me what I "boast myself to be," as Homer put it.

SOCRATES Yes, I do want to.

GORGIAS Then call me that.

SOCRATES 449b And shall we say you're able to make others rhetoricians too?

GORGIAS That's just what I profess—not only here but elsewhere too.

SOCRATES Then would you be willing, Gorgias, to carry on as we're talking now, one of us asking and the other answering, and to put off for another time lengthy speeches like the one Polus started on? Don't go back on your promise: be willing to answer the questions briefly.

GORGIAS Some answers, Socrates, can only be given at length. Even so, [449c] I'll try to make them as short as possible. In fact this is another of my claims: that no one could say the same things in fewer words than I can.

SOCRATES That's just what we need, Gorgias. Give me a display of exactly that—brevity—and save the long speeches for another time.

GORGIAS I will, and you'll say you've never heard anyone speak more concisely.

SOCRATES Come on, then. You say you're an expert in the craft of rhetoric [449d] and that you could make someone else a rhetorician too. What among the things that exist is rhetoric concerned with? Weaving, for instance, is concerned with making clothes, isn't it?

GORGIAS Yes.

SOCRATES And music with composing melodies?

GORGIAS Yes.

SOCRATES By Hera, Gorgias, I do admire your answers: you're answering as briefly as it's possible to be.

GORGIAS Yes, Socrates, I think I do it quite adequately.

SOCRATES Good. Now answer me in the same way about rhetoric: what among the things that exist is it knowledge about?

GORGIAS [449e] Speeches.

SOCRATES What sort of speeches, Gorgias? The ones that show the sick what regimen will make them well?

GORGIAS No.

SOCRATES So rhetoric isn't about all speeches.

GORGIAS Certainly not.

SOCRATES And yet it does make people able to speak.

GORGIAS Yes.

SOCRATES And to understand the things they speak about?

GORGIAS Of course.

SOCRATES Now, 450a the craft we mentioned just now, medicine —does it make people able to understand and speak about the sick?

GORGIAS It must.

SOCRATES Then medicine too, it seems, is about speeches.

GORGIAS Yes.

SOCRATES The ones about diseases?

GORGIAS Exactly.

SOCRATES And physical training is about speeches too—the ones about the good and bad condition of bodies?

GORGIAS Certainly.

SOCRATES And the other crafts, Gorgias, are the same way. 450b Each of them is about the speeches that concern the particular thing that it's the craft of.

GORGIAS Apparently.

SOCRATES Then why on earth don't you call the other crafts rhetoric, since they're about speeches, if you call this one rhetoric because it's about speeches?

GORGIAS Because, Socrates, the knowledge involved in the other crafts is, practically speaking, all about manual work and activities of that sort, whereas rhetoric has no such handiwork: all its activity and all its effect comes about through speech. 450c That's why I maintain that the craft of rhetoric is about speeches —and rightly, I claim.

SOCRATES Now, do I understand what sort of craft you mean to call it? Perhaps I'll soon know more clearly. But answer me: there are crafts, aren't there?

GORGIAS Yes.

SOCRATES Among all the crafts, I think, some consist mostly of work and need little speech, and some need none at all: their business could be carried out even in silence—painting, for example, and sculpture, and many others. It's crafts like these 450d that you seem to me to mean when you say rhetoric isn't concerned with them. Or not?

GORGIAS You've understood me perfectly, Socrates.

SOCRATES But there are other crafts that accomplish everything through speech, and need practically no action besides, or very little—arithmetic, say, and calculation and geometry, and draughts too, and many other crafts. Some of these involve about as much speech as action, but most involve more, and for them all their activity and all their 450e effect is achieved through speech. It seems to me you mean that rhetoric is one of these.

GORGIAS That's true.

SOCRATES And yet I don't think you mean to call any of these rhetoric—even though, going by your words, you did say that the craft whose effect comes through speech is rhetoric, and someone who wanted to make trouble in the discussion might take you up: "So you're saying arithmetic is rhetoric, Gorgias?" But I don't think you're calling either arithmetic or geometry rhetoric.

GORGIAS 451a You're right to think so, Socrates, and you take me fairly.

SOCRATES Come on, then, and finish the answer I asked for. Since rhetoric is one of the crafts that make heavy use of speech, and there are others like it too, try to say what rhetoric's effect through speech is concerned with. Suppose someone asked me about any of the crafts I just mentioned: "Socrates, what 451b is

the craft of arithmetic?" I'd tell him, as you did just now, that it's one of those whose effect comes through speech. And if he went on to ask, "One of those concerned with what?" I'd say it's knowledge of the even and the odd, however many of each there may be. And if he asked next, "And what craft do you call calculation?" I'd say this too is one of those whose whole effect is achieved by speech. And if he went on to ask, "Concerned with what?" I'd answer the way people draft motions in the Assembly: 451c "in other respects" calculation is like arithmetic—since it's about the same thing, the even and the odd—"but differs in this respect": calculation examines how the odd and even stand in quantity both to themselves and to each other. And if someone asked about astronomy, when I said that it too achieves everything by speech, and went on, "And what are the speeches of astronomy about, Socrates?" I'd say they're about the motion of the stars and the sun and the moon, and how they stand to one another in speed.

GORGIAS And you'd be right, Socrates.

SOCRATES 451d Now you do the same, Gorgias. Rhetoric is one of the crafts that accomplish and achieve everything by speech, isn't it?

GORGIAS That's so.

SOCRATES Then tell me: concerned with what? What is this thing among the things that exist that these speeches used by rhetoric are about?

GORGIAS The greatest of human affairs, Socrates, and the best.

SOCRATES But Gorgias, that's disputable too, what you're saying, 451e and still not at all clear. I expect you've heard people at drinking parties singing that song where they count off that the best thing is to be healthy, the second is to be good-looking, and the third, as the songwriter puts it, is to be rich without fraud.[8]

GORGIAS Yes, I've heard it. But what's your point?

8 This was a *skolion*, a traditional song sung in turn by guests at a drinking party.

SOCRATES 452a That the producers of the things the songwriter praised might suddenly stand before you—a doctor, a trainer and a businessman—and first the doctor might say, "Socrates, Gorgias is deceiving you. It isn't his craft that deals with the greatest good for human beings; it's mine." Then if I asked him, "And who are you, to say this?" he'd presumably say he was a doctor. "What do you mean, then? Is the product of your craft the greatest good?" "Of course, Socrates," he might well say, "it's health. And what good is greater 452b for human beings than health?" And if after him the trainer said, "I'd be amazed too, Socrates, if Gorgias could show you a greater good from his craft than I can from mine," I'd say to him as well, "And who are you, sir, and what is your product?" "A trainer," he'd say, "and my product is making people's bodies handsome and strong." After the trainer the businessman would speak, looking down on everybody, I imagine: 452c "Just consider, Socrates, whether you find any good greater than wealth, either with Gorgias or with anyone else at all." So we'd say to him, "Really? Are you a producer of that?" He'd say yes. "Being who?" "A businessman." "Well then, do you judge wealth to be the greatest good for human beings?" we'll say. "Of course," he'll say. "Well, Gorgias here disputes that: he claims his own craft is the cause of a greater good than yours," we'd say. Clearly his next question would be, "And what 452d is this good? Let Gorgias answer." So come on, Gorgias: consider yourself questioned both by them and by me, and answer. What is this thing that you say is the greatest good for human beings, and that you are the producer of?

GORGIAS The thing, Socrates, that truly is the greatest good, and the source both of freedom for people themselves and, for each person, of rule over others in his own city.

SOCRATES And what do you say that is?

## THE CRAFT OF PERSUASION

*Gorgias says rhetoric is the power to persuade by speech, and Socrates asks what kind of persuasion.*

GORGIAS [452e] Being able to persuade by speech—jurors in a court, councillors in the Council, assemblymen in the Assembly, and people in any other gathering that is a gathering of citizens. And with this power you'll have the doctor as your slave, and the trainer as your slave, and this businessman of yours will turn out to be making money for someone else, not for himself—for you, who are able to speak and persuade the masses.[9]

SOCRATES Now, Gorgias, I think you've come very close to showing [453a] what craft you take rhetoric to be. If I understand you, you're saying that rhetoric is a producer of persuasion, and its whole business and the sum of it comes down to this. Or can you say that rhetoric is able to do anything more than produce persuasion in the souls of its hearers?

GORGIAS Not at all, Socrates. I think you've defined it adequately. That is the sum of it.

SOCRATES Then listen, Gorgias. You can be sure that, as [453b] I'm convinced myself, if anyone ever has a discussion with someone else because he wants to know what the discussion is actually about, I'm one of those people. And I count you one too.

GORGIAS What of it, Socrates?

SOCRATES I'll tell you now. Rest assured that I don't clearly know what this persuasion from rhetoric is that you speak of, or what matters it is persuasion about. Still, I do have a suspicion about which persuasion I think you mean, and about what. Nonetheless I'll ask you what persuasion you mean that comes from [453c] rhetoric, and what it's about. Why, then, since I have a suspicion myself, will I ask you rather than say it myself? Not for your sake but for the argument's, so that it moves forward in the way

9 Athens was governed by the Assembly of all citizens, a Council of Five Hundred that prepared its business, and large popular juries.

that makes its subject clearest to us. Consider whether you think I'm right to press you with questions. Suppose I happened to ask you which of the painters Zeuxis is, and you told me, "The one who paints living things." Wouldn't I be right to ask you, "Which living things does he paint, and where?"[10]

GORGIAS Certainly.

SOCRATES 453d Because there are other painters as well, who paint many other living things?

GORGIAS Yes.

SOCRATES But if no one except Zeuxis painted, your answer would have been a good one?

GORGIAS Of course.

SOCRATES Come on, then, and tell me about rhetoric. Do you think rhetoric is the only craft that produces persuasion, or do other crafts too? Here's what I mean. When someone teaches anything at all, does he persuade people of what he teaches, or not?

GORGIAS Certainly he does, Socrates. He persuades more than anyone.

SOCRATES 453e Then let's go back to the same crafts we were talking about just now. Doesn't arithmetic teach us the facts about number—and so does the arithmetician?

GORGIAS Certainly.

SOCRATES And so it persuades too?

GORGIAS Yes.

SOCRATES So arithmetic is a producer of persuasion too?

GORGIAS Apparently.

SOCRATES Then if someone asks us what sort of persuasion, and about what, we'll presumably answer him: the teaching kind, about the even 454a and the odd, and how many there are. And we'll be able to show that all the other crafts we mentioned

10 Zeuxis of Heraclea was a celebrated painter of the late fifth century BC.

just now are producers of persuasion, and of what sort, and about what. Or not?

GORGIAS Yes.

SOCRATES So rhetoric isn't the only producer of persuasion.

GORGIAS That's true.

SOCRATES Well then, since it isn't the only one to accomplish this result, and others do too, we'd be right to go on and ask the speaker, as we did about the painter: "Of what sort of persuasion, and persuasion about what, is rhetoric the craft?" Or don't you think 454b it's fair to ask that further question?

GORGIAS I do.

SOCRATES Then answer, Gorgias, since you agree.

GORGIAS Well, Socrates, I mean the persuasion that takes place in the courts and in other crowds, as I said a moment ago, and it's about what is just and unjust.

SOCRATES I did suspect you meant this persuasion, Gorgias, and about these things. But don't be surprised if a little later I ask you something like this—something that seems obvious, 454c but I ask about it anyway. As I say, I'm asking so that the argument may be carried through in order—not for your sake, but so that we don't get into the habit of guessing and snatching each other's words away in advance. I want you to carry through your own views, on your own premises, however you like.

GORGIAS And I think you're quite right to do so, Socrates.

SOCRATES Come on, then, let's look at this too. Is there something you call "having learned"?

GORGIAS There is.

SOCRATES Well, and "having come to believe"?

GORGIAS 454d Yes.

SOCRATES Do you think having learned and having come to believe—learning and belief—are the same thing, or different?

GORGIAS I think they're different, Socrates.

SOCRATES And you're right. You can tell from this: if someone asked you, "Gorgias, is there such a thing as false belief and true belief?" you'd say there is, I think.

GORGIAS Yes.

SOCRATES Well, is there false knowledge and true knowledge?

GORGIAS Not at all.

SOCRATES Then it's clear they aren't the same.

GORGIAS That's true.

SOCRATES 454e And yet both those who have learned and those who have come to believe have been persuaded.

GORGIAS That's so.

SOCRATES Shall we propose, then, two kinds of persuasion: one that provides belief without knowing, and one that provides knowledge?

GORGIAS Certainly.

SOCRATES Then which persuasion does rhetoric produce in the courts and other crowds about what's just and unjust? The one that results in believing without knowing, or the one that results in knowing?

GORGIAS Obviously, Socrates, the one that results in believing.

SOCRATES So rhetoric, it seems, is a producer of persuasion 455a that brings belief but doesn't teach, about what's just and unjust.

GORGIAS Yes.

SOCRATES Then the rhetorician doesn't teach courts and other crowds about what's just and unjust; he only makes them believe. After all, he could hardly teach so large a crowd such important matters in a short time.

GORGIAS Certainly not.

SOCRATES Come on, then, let's see what we're actually saying about 455b rhetoric. For my part, I can't yet make out what I'm saying myself. When the city holds a meeting to choose doctors, or shipbuilders, or any other body of craftsmen, surely the rhet-

orician won't be the one to give advice then? Clearly in each choice it's the most skilled person who ought to be chosen. Nor will he advise when it's a matter of building walls or equipping harbors or dockyards: the master builders will. Nor again when there's a decision about choosing generals, or drawing up troops against the enemy, or 455c seizing positions: then the military experts will give advice, and the rhetoricians won't. Or what do you say about such cases, Gorgias? Since you claim both to be a rhetorician yourself and to make others rhetoricians, it's right to learn about your craft from you. And consider that I'm looking after your interests too. Perhaps someone in the house actually wants to become your pupil—I notice quite a few, in fact—who might be too embarrassed to question you. 455d So when I question you, consider yourself questioned by them as well: "What will we get, Gorgias, if we study with you? What will we be able to advise the city about? Only about what's just and unjust, or also about the things Socrates was just mentioning?" So try to answer them.

GORGIAS Well, Socrates, I'll try to reveal the whole power of rhetoric to you clearly—since you yourself have led the way so well. You know, of course, that these dockyards 455e and the walls of Athens and the equipping of the harbors came about on the advice of Themistocles, and some of it on the advice of Pericles—not on the advice of the craftsmen.[11]

SOCRATES So they say about Themistocles, Gorgias. As for Pericles, I heard him myself when he was advising us about the middle wall.[12]

11 Themistocles built up Athens' navy and fortifications in the 480s–470s BC; Pericles was the city's leading statesman from about 460 to his death in 429 BC.
12 The middle wall was one of the Long Walls linking Athens to its port, the Piraeus.

## THE POWER OF RHETORIC

*Gorgias boasts that rhetoric outdoes every expert and says teachers are not to blame for its misuse.*

GORGIAS 456a And whenever there's a choice of the kind you were just talking about, Socrates, you see that it's the rhetoricians who give the advice and whose proposals carry the day.

SOCRATES It's because I'm amazed at that, Gorgias, that I've been asking all this while what on earth the power of rhetoric is. When I look at it this way, it seems to me something supernatural in its magnitude.

GORGIAS If only you knew the whole of it, Socrates! It gathers up practically all powers and holds them under its sway. 456b I'll give you strong evidence. Many times I've gone with my brother and other doctors to visit one of their patients who wouldn't take his medicine or let the doctor cut or cauterize him, and when the doctor couldn't persuade him, I persuaded him—by no other craft than rhetoric. And I say that if a rhetorician and a doctor went into any city you like and had to compete in speeches before the Assembly or some other gathering over which of them should be chosen as doctor, the doctor 456c would be nowhere; the man able to speak would be chosen, if he wanted. And if he competed against any other craftsman whatever, the rhetorician would persuade them to choose him rather than anyone else. There's nothing the rhetorician couldn't speak about more persuasively before a crowd than any other craftsman at all. So that's how great the power of this craft is, and what it's like. Still, Socrates, one should use rhetoric the way one uses any other competitive skill. 456d With other competitive skills, too, one shouldn't use them against everyone just because one has learned boxing and all-in wrestling and fighting in armor, so as to be stronger than friend and foe alike. That's no reason to beat one's friends, or stab them and kill them. No, by Zeus, and if someone goes to the wrestling school, gets his body in good shape and becomes a boxer, and then beats his father

and mother or some other relative or friend, that's no reason to hate 456e the trainers and the teachers of fighting in armor and banish them from their cities. They passed on their skills to be used justly against enemies and wrongdoers, in self-defense, not as aggression. 457a It's the pupils who turn them around and use their strength and their craft wrongly. So it isn't the teachers who are wicked, and the craft isn't to blame or wicked on that account; it's those, I think, who don't use it rightly. The same argument applies to rhetoric too. The rhetorician is able to speak against anyone and on any subject, so as to be more persuasive before crowds 457b on, in short, anything he likes. But that's no more reason for him to rob the doctors of their reputation—just because he could do it—or the other craftsmen either. He should use rhetoric justly too, as with competitive skills. And if, I think, someone becomes a rhetorician and then does wrong with this power and this craft, it isn't the teacher who should be hated and banished from cities. He passed it on 457c to be used justly; the other man uses it the opposite way. So it's just to hate and banish and kill the one who uses it wrongly, not the one who taught him.

SOCRATES Gorgias, I think you too have had experience of many discussions and have noticed something like this in them: people can't easily define for one another whatever they set out to discuss, learn from and teach each other, 457d and so bring their conversation to an end. Instead, if they disagree about something and one says the other isn't speaking correctly or clearly, they get angry and think the other is speaking out of spite, because he wants to win and isn't looking into the question under discussion. Some of them end up parting in the most shameful way, heaping abuse on each other and saying and hearing such things that even the bystanders are annoyed on their own account for having thought such people worth 457e listening to. Why do I say this? Because I think what you're saying now isn't quite consistent or in tune with what you said at first about rhetoric. So I'm afraid to refute you, in case you suppose I'm speaking out of rivalry—not about the subject, to make

it clear, but against you. 458a So if you're the same sort of person as I am, I'd be glad to keep questioning you; if not, I'd let it go. And what sort of person am I? One of those who would be glad to be refuted if I say something untrue, and glad to refute someone else if he says something untrue—but no less glad to be refuted than to refute. I think being refuted is the greater good, just as it's a greater good to be rid of the greatest evil oneself than to rid someone else of it. For I think nothing is so great an evil for a person as false 458b belief about the things our discussion happens to be about now. So if you say you're that sort of person too, let's talk. But if you think we ought to drop it, let's say goodbye to it now and end the discussion.

GORGIAS Well, Socrates, I say I'm the sort of person you describe too. But perhaps we should also think about the people here. Quite a while ago, before you all came, I gave them a long display, and now we might drag things out a long way 458c if we have a discussion. So we should consider them too, in case we're keeping some of them who want to do something else.

CHAEREPHON You can hear the noise these gentlemen are making yourselves, Gorgias and Socrates: they want to hear anything you have to say. As for me, I hope I'm never so busy that I'd drop discussions like this, conducted like this, because something else was more important to do.

CALLICLES 458d By the gods, Chaerephon, I've been present at many discussions myself, and I don't know that I've ever enjoyed one as much as this. So as far as I'm concerned, even if you want to talk the whole day, you'll be doing me a favor.

SOCRATES Well, Callicles, nothing's stopping me, if Gorgias is willing.

GORGIAS It would be shameful of me after this, Socrates, not to be willing, when I myself invited anyone to ask whatever he liked. 458e So if these people agree, carry on the discussion and ask what you like.

SOCRATES Then listen, Gorgias, to what surprises me in what you've said. Perhaps you're right and I'm not understanding you

rightly. You say you can make someone a rhetorician if he wants to learn from you?

GORGIAS Yes.

SOCRATES So that he's persuasive about everything before a crowd—not by teaching but [459a] by persuading?

GORGIAS Certainly.

SOCRATES You said just now, you know, that even about health the rhetorician will be more persuasive than the doctor.

GORGIAS I did—before a crowd, at any rate.

SOCRATES And "before a crowd" means among those who don't know? Surely he won't be more persuasive than the doctor among those who do know.

GORGIAS That's true.

SOCRATES So if he's going to be more persuasive than the doctor, he becomes more persuasive than the one who knows?

GORGIAS Certainly [459b] he does.

SOCRATES Though he isn't a doctor, is he?

GORGIAS No.

SOCRATES And someone who isn't a doctor presumably lacks knowledge of what the doctor knows.

GORGIAS Obviously.

SOCRATES So the one who doesn't know will be more persuasive among those who don't know than the one who does know, when the rhetorician is more persuasive than the doctor. Is that what follows, or something else?

GORGIAS That's what follows in this case, yes.

SOCRATES And isn't the rhetorician, and rhetoric, in the same position with regard to all the other crafts too? It doesn't need to know how things actually are; it just needs to have found some [459c] device of persuasion so as to appear, to those who don't know, to know more than those who do.

GORGIAS But isn't that a great convenience, Socrates—to learn not the other crafts but just this one, and yet come off no worse than the craftsmen?

SOCRATES Whether the rhetorician comes off worse than the others or not because of this, we'll look into shortly, if it's relevant to our argument. But first let's consider this. Is 459d the rhetorician in the same position about what is just and unjust, shameful and fine, good and bad, as he is about health and the subjects of the other crafts? Does he not know these things themselves—what is good or bad, fine or shameful, just or unjust—but has devised persuasion about them, so that, not knowing, he seems to those who don't know 459e to know more than the one who does? Or must he know, and must the person who is going to learn rhetoric from you come to you already knowing these things? And if not, will you, the teacher of rhetoric, teach the person who comes to you none of these things—since that isn't your job—but make him seem to the many to know such things when he doesn't, and seem to be good when he isn't? Or will you be completely unable to teach him rhetoric unless he knows the truth about these things beforehand? How do matters stand, Gorgias? 460a And by Zeus, as you said just now, reveal rhetoric to us and tell us what on earth its power is.

GORGIAS Well, Socrates, I suppose if he happens not to know them, he'll learn these things from me too.

SOCRATES Hold it there—that's well said. If you make someone a rhetorician, he must know what is just and unjust, having learned it either beforehand or later from you.

GORGIAS 460b Certainly.

SOCRATES Well then: someone who has learned carpentry is a carpenter, isn't he?

GORGIAS Yes.

SOCRATES And someone who has learned music is a musician?

GORGIAS Yes.

SOCRATES And someone who has learned medicine is a doctor? And so on with the rest by the same reasoning: someone who has learned each thing is such as the knowledge of it makes him?

GORGIAS Certainly.

SOCRATES Then by this reasoning, someone who has learned what is just is just?

GORGIAS Absolutely, of course.

SOCRATES And the just man, I take it, does just things.

GORGIAS Yes.

SOCRATES 460c Then the rhetorician must be just, and the just man must want to do just things?

GORGIAS So it appears.

SOCRATES So the just man will never want to do wrong.

GORGIAS Necessarily.

SOCRATES And according to the argument, the rhetorician must be just.

GORGIAS Yes.

SOCRATES So the rhetorician will never want to do wrong.

GORGIAS Apparently not.

SOCRATES Now, do you remember saying a little earlier that we shouldn't blame 460d the trainers or banish them from our cities if a boxer uses his boxing, and uses it unjustly and does wrong—and in the same way, if the rhetorician uses rhetoric unjustly, we shouldn't blame his teacher or drive him out of the city, but the one who does wrong and doesn't use rhetoric rightly? Was that said or not?

GORGIAS It was.

SOCRATES But now 460e this same man, the rhetorician, turns out to be someone who would never do wrong. Or not?

GORGIAS So it appears.

SOCRATES And at the start of our discussion, Gorgias, it was said that rhetoric was about speeches—not those about the even and the odd, but those about the just and the unjust. Wasn't it?

GORGIAS Yes.

SOCRATES Well, when you said that then, I took it that rhetoric could never be an unjust thing, since it always makes its speeches about justice. But when a little later you said that the rhetorician [461a] might even use rhetoric unjustly, I was surprised, and thinking that what was being said didn't hang together, I said what I did then: that if you thought being refuted was a gain, as I do, it would be worth having the discussion, but if not, we should let it go. And now that we've looked into it, you can see for yourself that it's agreed, on the contrary, that the rhetorician can't use rhetoric unjustly or be willing to do wrong. So how these matters really stand—by the [461b] dog, Gorgias!—will take more than a short conversation to examine properly.[13]

### POLUS TAKES OVER

*Polus breaks in angrily and demands that Socrates say what he himself thinks rhetoric is.*

POLUS What's this, Socrates? Do you really believe what you're now saying about rhetoric? Or do you think—just because Gorgias was ashamed not to agree with you that the rhetorician also knows what's just and fine and good, and that if someone came to him without knowing these things he would teach them himself, and then, from this agreement perhaps, some contradiction turned up in the [461c] argument—the very thing you love, since you yourself led him into such questions (for who do you think would deny that he himself knows what's just and would teach it to others?)—well, dragging the argument into that sort of thing is thoroughly boorish.

SOCRATES Polus, my fine fellow, that's exactly why we deliberately acquire friends and sons: so that when we get older and

13 "By the dog" was Socrates' characteristic oath.

stumble, you younger people will be there to set our lives straight, in deeds and in words. And now, if Gorgias and I [461d] are stumbling in the argument, you're here—set us straight. It's only right that you should. And if you think anything we've agreed to was wrongly agreed, I'm willing to take back whatever you like, provided you observe just one thing for me.

POLUS What's that?

SOCRATES That you keep a lid on the long speeches, Polus, which you tried to use at the start.

POLUS What? Won't I be allowed to say as much as I like?

SOCRATES [461e] That would be hard on you, my good friend, if you came to Athens, where there's more freedom of speech than anywhere in Greece, and then you alone were denied it here. But look at it the other way: if you talk at length and won't answer the question, wouldn't it be hard on me in turn if I'm not allowed [462a] to go away and not listen to you? No—if you care at all about the argument we've had and want to set it straight, take back whatever you like, as I said just now, and take your turn asking and being asked, as Gorgias and I did, refuting and being refuted. You claim, I take it, that you know the same things Gorgias does, don't you?

POLUS I do.

SOCRATES And you too invite people to ask you whatever they like, each time, since you know how to answer?

POLUS Certainly.

SOCRATES [462b] Then now do whichever of these you like: ask or answer.

POLUS All right, I will. Answer me, Socrates. Since you think Gorgias is at a loss about rhetoric, what do you say it is?

SOCRATES Are you asking what craft I say it is?

POLUS I am.

SOCRATES None at all, in my view, Polus—to tell you the truth.

POLUS Well, what do you think rhetoric is?

SOCRATES The thing that you say, in the treatise 462c I read recently, produced craft.

POLUS What do you mean?

SOCRATES A sort of knack.[14]

POLUS So you think rhetoric is a knack?

SOCRATES I do, unless you say something else.

POLUS A knack for what?

SOCRATES For producing a certain gratification and pleasure.

POLUS Then don't you think rhetoric is a fine thing, being able to gratify people?

SOCRATES What, Polus? Have you already found out from me what I say 462d it is, so that you ask next whether I think it's fine?

POLUS Haven't I found out that you say it's a sort of knack?

SOCRATES Since you prize gratification, then, would you like to gratify me in a small way?

POLUS Sure.

SOCRATES Ask me now what craft I think cookery is.

POLUS All right, I'm asking: what craft is cookery?

SOCRATES None, Polus.

POLUS Then what? Tell me.

SOCRATES I'll tell you: a sort of knack.

POLUS For what? Tell me.

SOCRATES I'll tell you: for producing gratification and 462e pleasure, Polus.

POLUS So cookery and rhetoric are the same thing?

SOCRATES Not at all. But they're parts of the same practice.

POLUS What practice do you mean?

14 The word is the one Polus used for "experience" in his showpiece at 448c; Socrates turns it against him.

### RHETORIC AS FLATTERY

*Socrates calls rhetoric a knack, a part of flattery, and maps it against the real crafts.*

SOCRATES I'm afraid it may be rather rude to tell the truth. I hesitate to say it because of Gorgias, in case he thinks I'm making fun of his own practice. For my part, I don't know whether this is the rhetoric Gorgias [463a] practices—in fact nothing became clear to us just now from the discussion about what he thinks it is. But what I call rhetoric is a part of something that's not at all fine.

GORGIAS Of what, Socrates? Tell us—don't hold back on my account.

SOCRATES Well, Gorgias, it seems to me there's a practice that isn't a craft, but belongs to a soul that's good at guessing, bold, and naturally clever at dealing with people. The sum of it [463b] I call flattery. This practice seems to me to have many other parts, and one of them is cookery, which seems to be a craft but, as I argue, isn't a craft but a knack and a routine. Rhetoric too I call a part of it, and cosmetics as well, and sophistry—these four parts, for four kinds of thing. So if Polus wants to find out, let him find out. He hasn't [463c] yet found out what sort of part of flattery I say rhetoric is; he hasn't noticed that I haven't answered that yet, and he goes on to ask whether I don't think it's fine. But I won't answer him whether I think rhetoric is fine or shameful before I first answer what it is. That wouldn't be fair, Polus. If you do want to find out, ask what sort of part of flattery I say rhetoric is.

POLUS All right, I'm asking: answer what sort of part it is.

SOCRATES [463d] Would you understand if I answered? Rhetoric, on my account, is a phantom of a part of statesmanship.

POLUS Well? Do you call it fine or shameful?

SOCRATES Shameful—since I call bad things shameful—seeing that I have to answer you as though you already knew what I mean.

GORGIAS By Zeus, Socrates, even I don't understand what you mean.

SOCRATES 463e Naturally, Gorgias, since I'm not saying anything clear yet. But Polus here is young and quick.[15]

GORGIAS Well, never mind him. Tell me what you mean by saying rhetoric is a phantom of a part of statesmanship.

SOCRATES All right, I'll try to explain what rhetoric appears to me to be. If it turns out not to be this, Polus here 464a will refute me. I take it there's something you call body, and something you call soul?

GORGIAS Of course.

SOCRATES And do you think each of these has a good condition?

GORGIAS I do.

SOCRATES Well, and a condition that seems good but isn't? Here's the sort of thing I mean. Many people seem to be in good bodily condition, and no one could easily tell that they aren't, except a doctor or a trainer.

GORGIAS That's true.

SOCRATES I say there's something like this in the body and in the soul, which makes the body and the soul seem to be in good condition, 464b though they're no better off at all.

GORGIAS That's so.

SOCRATES Come on, then, and I'll show you more clearly what I mean, if I can. There being two things, I say there are two crafts. The one concerned with the soul I call statesmanship. The one concerned with the body I can't give you a single name for offhand, but while the care of the body is one thing, I say it has two parts, gymnastics and medicine. In statesmanship, legislation corresponds to gymnastics, and justice is the counterpart of medicine. 464c Each pair has something in common, since they

15 Again a play on Polus' name: a colt is young and skittish.

deal with the same thing—medicine with gymnastics, and justice with legislation—but even so they differ somewhat from each other. There being these four, then, which always care for what's best, two for the body and two for the soul, flattery—perceiving this, not knowing it, I mean, but by guesswork—has divided itself into four, slipped in under each of the parts, and pretends 464d to be the one it has slipped under. It cares nothing for what's best, but with whatever is most pleasant at the moment it hunts out folly and tricks it, so that it seems to be worth a great deal. Cookery has slipped in under medicine and pretends to know which foods are best for the body. So if a cook and a doctor had to compete before children, or before men as foolish as children, over which of them understands good and 464e bad foods, the doctor or the cook, the doctor would starve to death. So I call it flattery, and I say that this sort of thing is 465a shameful, Polus—I'm saying this to you—because it aims at the pleasant without the best. And I say it's not a craft but a knack, because it has no rational account, in applying what it applies, of what those things are by nature, and so it can't state the cause of each. And I don't call anything a craft that lacks a rational account. If you dispute any of this, I'm willing to give an account. 465b

So, as I say, cookery is flattery lurking under medicine. In the same way cosmetics lurks under gymnastics—a mischievous, deceptive, low and servile thing, deceiving with shapes and colors, smoothness and clothes, so that people take on a borrowed beauty and neglect their own, which comes through gymnastics. So, not to make a long speech, I'm willing to put it to you the way geometers do—by now 465c you may be able to follow: as cosmetics is to gymnastics, so sophistry is to legislation; and as cookery is to medicine, so rhetoric is to justice. And yet, as I say, while they are distinct by nature in this way, because they are so close, sophists and rhetoricians get jumbled together in the same field and about the same things, and neither do they themselves know what to make of themselves, nor do other people know what to make of them. And indeed, if the soul didn't gov-

ern the body, [465d] but the body governed itself, and cookery and medicine weren't examined and distinguished by the soul, but the body itself judged them, measuring by the gratifications it received, then the saying of Anaxagoras would be everywhere, my dear Polus—you're familiar with these things—"all things would be jumbled together," and there'd be no telling apart what was medicinal and healthy from what was cookery. So now you've heard what I say rhetoric is: the counterpart [465e] of cookery in the soul, as cookery is in the body. Perhaps I've done something odd: I wouldn't let you make long speeches, and I've gone on at some length myself.[16] But I deserve to be forgiven. When I spoke briefly you didn't understand, and you couldn't make any use of the answer I gave you; you needed an explanation. So if I too, [466a] when you answer, can't make use of what you say, you may stretch out a speech as well. But if I can, let me use it. That's only fair. And now, if you can make any use of this answer, use it.

### DO ORATORS HAVE GREAT POWER?

*Socrates argues that orators and tyrants do what seems best to them but not what they want.*

POLUS What do you say, then? You think rhetoric is flattery?

SOCRATES No—I said a part of flattery. Can't you remember, Polus, at your age? What'll you do when you're older?

POLUS Then do you think good rhetoricians are held in low regard in their cities, as flatterers?

SOCRATES [466b] Is that a question you're asking, or the start of some speech?

POLUS I'm asking.

SOCRATES I don't think they're regarded at all.

16 Anaxagoras of Clazomenae, a philosopher who lived in Athens, began his book with the words "all things were together."

POLUS What do you mean, not regarded? Don't they have the greatest power in their cities?

SOCRATES No—not if you mean that having power is something good for the one who has it.

POLUS That's certainly what I mean.

SOCRATES Then I think rhetoricians have the least power of anyone in the city.

POLUS What? Don't they, like tyrants, put to death 466c anyone they like, and confiscate property, and banish from their cities anyone they please?

SOCRATES By the dog, Polus, I really can't tell, with each thing you say, whether you're saying it yourself and declaring your own opinion, or asking me.

POLUS I'm asking you.

SOCRATES Very well, my friend. Then are you asking me two things at once?

POLUS How two?

SOCRATES Didn't you say just now something like, "Don't rhetoricians put to death 466d anyone they like, like tyrants, and confiscate property and drive out of their cities anyone they please?"

POLUS I did.

SOCRATES Then I tell you that these are two questions, and I'll answer you on both. I say, Polus, that both rhetoricians and tyrants have the least power in their cities, as I said just now. For they do practically nothing 466e they want to do—though they do whatever seems best to them.

POLUS Well, isn't that having great power?

SOCRATES Not according to Polus.

POLUS Not according to me? I certainly say it is!

SOCRATES By the—no, you don't, since you said that having great power is good for the one who has it.

POLUS Yes, I do say that.

SOCRATES Then do you think it's good if someone who has no sense does what seems best to him? And do you call that having great power?

POLUS No, I don't.

SOCRATES Then will you prove that rhetoricians have sense, and that 467a rhetoric is a craft and not flattery, by refuting me? If you leave me unrefuted, the rhetoricians who do what seems good to them in their cities, and the tyrants, will have gained nothing good by it. Power, you say, is a good; but doing what seems good to one without sense is—as you yourself agree—bad. Or not?

POLUS I agree.

SOCRATES So how could rhetoricians or tyrants have great power in their cities, unless Polus refutes Socrates and shows that they do what they want?

POLUS 467b Why, this fellow—

SOCRATES I say they don't do what they want. Go on, refute me.

POLUS Didn't you agree a moment ago—before this—that they do what seems best to them?

SOCRATES And I agree now too.

POLUS Then don't they do what they want?

SOCRATES I say not.

POLUS Even though they do what seems good to them?

SOCRATES I say so.

POLUS That's outrageous, Socrates—monstrous!

SOCRATES Don't abuse me, my peerless Polus—to address you 467c in your own style. If you're able to question me, show that I'm wrong; if not, answer yourself.[17]

17 Socrates mimics the alliterative, rhyming style of Polus and Gorgias.

POLUS All right, I'm willing to answer, so that I can find out what you mean.

SOCRATES Well then, do you think people want the thing they're doing at any given time, or the thing for the sake of which they do what they do? For example, those who take medicine from their doctors—do you think they want what they're doing, drinking the medicine and suffering, or that other thing, being healthy, for the sake of which they drink it?

POLUS Obviously 467d being healthy.

SOCRATES And similarly with those who go to sea and do other kinds of business: what they want isn't what they're doing at any given time—who wants to sail and run risks and have trouble?—but, I think, that for the sake of which they sail: being rich. It's for the sake of wealth that they sail.

POLUS Certainly.

SOCRATES Then isn't it the same with everything? If someone does something for the sake of something else, what he wants isn't the thing he's doing but the thing 467e for whose sake he's doing it?

POLUS Yes.

SOCRATES Now is there anything that exists that isn't either good or bad or in between—neither good nor bad?

POLUS No—everything must be one of those, Socrates.

SOCRATES And you say that wisdom and health and wealth and other things like that are good, and their opposites bad?

POLUS I do.

SOCRATES And by things that are neither good nor bad, do you mean things like this: things that sometimes share in the good, 468a sometimes in the bad, and sometimes in neither—sitting, for instance, and walking and running and sailing, or again stones and sticks and other things like that? Isn't that what you mean? Or is there something else you call neither good nor bad?

POLUS No, those are the ones.

SOCRATES Now when people do these in-between things, do they do them for the sake of the good things, or the good things for the sake of the in-between ones?

POLUS The [468b] in-between things for the sake of the good ones, surely.

SOCRATES So it's in pursuit of the good that we walk, when we walk, thinking it better; and when we stand still, the opposite, we stand still for the same reason—for the sake of the good. Isn't that so?

POLUS Yes.

SOCRATES And don't we also put someone to death, if we do, or banish him or confiscate his property, because we think it better for us to do these things than not?

POLUS Certainly.

SOCRATES So it's for the sake of the good that those who do all these things do them.

POLUS I agree.

SOCRATES And didn't we agree that when we do things for the sake of something, we don't want those things, [468c] but the thing for whose sake we do them?

POLUS Very much so.

SOCRATES Then we don't want to slaughter people, or banish them from cities, or confiscate their property, just like that. If these things are beneficial, we want to do them; if they're harmful, we don't. For we want the good things, as you say; what's neither good nor bad we don't want, and what's bad we don't want either. Isn't that right? Do you think I'm telling the truth, Polus, or not? Why don't you answer?

POLUS It's true.

SOCRATES [468d] Then if we agree on that, when someone—whether he's a tyrant or an orator—puts someone to death or banishes him from the city or confiscates his property, thinking

it better for himself when in fact it turns out to be worse, this man is surely doing what seems best to him. Isn't he?

POLUS Yes.

SOCRATES But is he also doing what he wants, if in fact these things turn out to be bad? Why don't you answer?

POLUS No, I don't think he's doing what he wants.

SOCRATES Is there any way, then, that such a man 468e has great power in that city, if having great power is something good, as you agreed?

POLUS There isn't.

SOCRATES So I was telling the truth when I said that it's possible for a man who does what seems best to him in a city not to have great power, and not to do what he wants.

POLUS As if you, Socrates, wouldn't welcome the freedom to do whatever seemed best to you in the city, rather than not! As if you don't envy it when you see someone putting to death whoever he thinks fit, or confiscating his property, or throwing him in chains!

SOCRATES Justly, you mean, or unjustly?

POLUS 469a Whichever way he does it, isn't it enviable either way?

SOCRATES Hush, Polus!

POLUS Why?

SOCRATES Because you shouldn't envy the unenviable, or the wretched. You should pity them.

POLUS What? Is that how you think it is with the people I'm talking about?

SOCRATES How could it not be?

POLUS So a man who puts to death whoever he thinks fit, and does it justly, seems to you wretched and pitiable?

SOCRATES No, not to me; but not enviable either.

POLUS Didn't you just say he was wretched?

### IS IT BETTER TO SUFFER INJUSTICE THAN TO DO IT?

*Socrates claims that doing injustice is the greatest evil, and Polus cites the tyrant Archelaus against him.*

SOCRATES 469b The one who kills unjustly, my friend—and pitiable besides. The one who kills justly is unenviable.

POLUS Surely it's the one who is put to death unjustly who's pitiable and wretched.

SOCRATES Less so than the one who kills him, Polus, and less so than the one who is put to death justly.

POLUS How on earth can that be, Socrates?

SOCRATES Like this: doing injustice happens to be the greatest of evils.

POLUS What, that's the greatest? Isn't suffering injustice worse?

SOCRATES Not in the least.

POLUS So you'd rather suffer injustice than do it?

SOCRATES 469c I'd rather neither. But if I had to either do injustice or suffer it, I would choose to suffer it rather than do it.

POLUS So you wouldn't welcome being a tyrant?

SOCRATES No—not if by being a tyrant you mean what I mean.

POLUS Well, I mean what I said just now: having the freedom in the city to do whatever seems best to you—killing, banishing, and doing everything just as you see fit.

SOCRATES My dear fellow, let me say my piece, and then take hold of the argument. 469d Suppose I tucked a dagger under my arm in a crowded marketplace and said to you: "Polus, I've just come into a marvelous sort of power, a tyranny. If I decide that any of these people you see here ought to die this very minute, the one I decide on will be dead. If I decide one of them ought to have his head broken, it'll be broken this very minute; if his cloak ought to be torn to shreds, it'll be torn. That's how 469e great my power is in this city." Now if you didn't believe me and I

showed you the dagger, you'd probably see it and say, "Socrates, on those terms everyone would have great power. By this method you could burn down any house you liked—yes, and the Athenian dockyards and warships and all the ships, public and private." So this isn't what having great power is after all—doing what seems best to you. Or do you think it is?

POLUS Not like that, no.

SOCRATES [470a] Can you tell me, then, why you find fault with that kind of power?

POLUS I can.

SOCRATES Why, then? Tell me.

POLUS Because the man who acts that way is bound to be punished.

SOCRATES And isn't being punished bad?

POLUS Certainly.

SOCRATES Well then, my remarkable friend, once again it appears to you that having great power is good if acting as one sees fit is accompanied by acting beneficially—and that, it seems, is what having great power is; if not, it's bad and amounts to having little power. [470b] But let's look at this too. Don't we agree that sometimes it's better to do the things we were just talking about—putting people to death, banishing them, confiscating their property—and sometimes not?

POLUS Certainly.

SOCRATES Then this, it seems, is agreed by both of us.

POLUS Yes.

SOCRATES When, then, do you say it's better to do these things? Tell me where you draw the line.

POLUS No, Socrates, you answer that question yourself.

SOCRATES [470c] All right, Polus, if you'd rather hear it from me: I say that when someone does these things justly it's better, and when he does them unjustly it's worse.

POLUS How hard you are to refute, Socrates! Why, couldn't even a child show that what you say isn't true?

SOCRATES Then I'll be very grateful to the child—and just as grateful to you, if you refute me and rid me of my nonsense. Don't grow tired of doing a friend a kindness; go on, refute me.

POLUS Well, Socrates, there's no need to refute you with ancient 470d history. The events of just the other day are enough to refute you and prove that many people who act unjustly are happy.

SOCRATES What events are those?

POLUS You see Archelaus, son of Perdiccas, ruling Macedonia, I take it?[18]

SOCRATES If I don't see it, I certainly hear of it.

POLUS Well, do you think he's happy or wretched?

SOCRATES I don't know, Polus. I've never met the man.

POLUS 470e What? You'd know if you'd met him, but otherwise you can't tell straight off that he's happy?

SOCRATES No, by Zeus, I can't.

POLUS Then obviously, Socrates, you'll say you don't know whether even the Great King is happy.[19]

SOCRATES And I'll be telling the truth. I don't know how he stands in education and justice.

POLUS What? Does happiness lie entirely in that?

SOCRATES Yes, as I say, Polus. I say that a fine and good man or woman is happy, and one who is unjust and wicked is wretched.

POLUS 471a So by your account this Archelaus is wretched?

SOCRATES Yes, my friend, if he's unjust.

POLUS Well, how could he not be unjust? He had no claim at all to the throne he now holds, since his mother was a slave belong-

18 Archelaus was king of Macedonia from about 413 to 399 BC; the dialogue is set during his reign.
19 The "Great King" was the Greeks' name for the king of Persia.

ing to Alcetas, Perdiccas' brother. By rights he was Alcetas' slave, and if he'd wanted to do what was just he'd have remained Alcetas' slave and been happy, by your account. As it is, he's become amazingly wretched, since he's committed the greatest injustices. 471b First he invited this very man, his master and uncle, on the pretext of restoring to him the throne Perdiccas had taken from him. He entertained him and got him drunk, together with his son Alexander—Archelaus' own cousin and about his age—and then he threw them both into a wagon, carried them off by night, cut their throats, and made away with them. And after committing these crimes he failed to notice that he'd become the most wretched of men, and felt no remorse. A little 471c later, instead of choosing to become happy by justly raising his brother—Perdiccas' legitimate son, a boy of about seven, to whom the throne rightfully belonged—and handing the throne over to him, he threw the boy into a well and drowned him, and then told the boy's mother, Cleopatra, that the boy had fallen in while chasing a goose and died. So now, of course, having committed the greatest crimes of anyone in Macedonia, he is the most wretched of all Macedonians rather than the happiest! And perhaps there's some Athenian, starting with you, 471d who would rather be any other Macedonian at all than Archelaus!

SOCRATES Even at the start of our discussion, Polus, I complimented you because I thought you were well trained in rhetoric but had neglected conversation. And now is this the argument that even a child could refute me with? Have I now been refuted by you, as you think, with this argument, when I claim that the man who does injustice isn't happy? How so, my good man? Why, I don't agree with a single thing you say.

POLUS 471e That's because you don't want to—you really think as I do.

SOCRATES My dear fellow, you're trying to refute me the orators' way, like people in the law courts who think they're refuting someone. There, too, one side thinks it's refuting the

other when it produces many reputable witnesses for its claims, while the man arguing the opposite produces just one, or none. But this kind of refutation is worth nothing when it comes to the 472a truth. A man can sometimes even be convicted by the false testimony of many people who seem to be somebody. And now, on what you're saying, nearly everyone, Athenians and foreigners alike, will agree with you, if you want to bring witnesses against me that what I say isn't true. If you like, Nicias son of Niceratus will testify for you, and his brothers with him, whose tripods stand in a row in the precinct of Dionysus. If you like, Aristocrates 472b son of Scellius, whose fine offering stands in turn in the shrine of Pythian Apollo. If you like, the whole house of Pericles, or any other family here you care to pick. But I, one man alone, don't agree with you. For you don't compel me; instead you produce a host of false witnesses against me and try to drive me out of my property, the truth.[20] But unless I produce you yourself as my one witness agreeing with what I say, I don't think I've achieved anything worth mentioning on the questions we're 472c discussing. Nor, I think, have you, unless I testify for you—just me, all alone—and you dismiss all these others. So there's this kind of refutation, as you and many others think; and there's another kind too, which I think is the right one. Let's set them side by side and see whether they differ. For what we disagree about is no small matter; it's just about the thing it's finest to know and most shameful not to know. In short, it comes down to knowing or not knowing who is happy and 472d who is not. To start with the point we're now discussing: you think a man can be blessedly happy while doing injustice and being unjust, since you think Archelaus is unjust but happy. Should we take it that this is your view?

POLUS Certainly.

20 Tripods were awarded to wealthy citizens who sponsored winning choruses and were set up as public monuments.

SOCRATES And I say that's impossible. That's one point of dispute. Very well. But will a man who does injustice be happy if he meets with justice and punishment?

POLUS Not in the least. In that case he'd be most wretched.

SOCRATES 472e But if the one who does injustice doesn't meet with justice, then by your account he'll be happy?

POLUS That's what I say.

SOCRATES But in my opinion, Polus, the man who does injustice, the unjust man, is wretched in any case—but more wretched if he doesn't pay the penalty and isn't punished for his wrongdoing, and less wretched if he does pay the penalty and meets with justice from gods and men.

POLUS 473a What absurd things you try to say, Socrates!

SOCRATES I'll try to get you to say the same things as me, my friend, since I count you a friend. For now, these are the points on which we differ—you look at them too. I said earlier, I think, that doing injustice is worse than suffering it.

POLUS Certainly.

SOCRATES And you said suffering it was worse.

POLUS Yes.

SOCRATES And I said that those who do injustice are wretched, and you refuted me.

POLUS Yes, by Zeus!

SOCRATES 473b So you think, Polus.

POLUS And I think truly.

SOCRATES Perhaps. And you, for your part, said that those who do injustice are happy, if they don't pay the penalty.

POLUS Absolutely.

SOCRATES And I say they're the most wretched, and those who do pay the penalty less so. Do you want to refute that too?

POLUS Why, that's even harder to refute than the other, Socrates!

SOCRATES Not harder, Polus—impossible. The truth is never refuted.

POLUS What do you mean? If a man is caught acting unjustly, plotting to make himself 473c tyrant, and once caught he's put on the rack, castrated, and has his eyes burned out; if he suffers many other great outrages of every kind himself, and sees his wife and children suffer them, and finally he's crucified or burned alive in pitch—this man will be happier than if he escaped, set himself up as tyrant, and lived out his life ruling the city and doing whatever he liked, envied and congratulated on his happiness by the 473d citizens and by foreigners too? Is that what you say is impossible to refute?

SOCRATES Now you're trying to scare me with bogeymen, my noble Polus, instead of refuting me; a moment ago you were calling witnesses. Still, remind me of one small thing: "unjustly plotting to make himself tyrant," did you say?

POLUS I did.

SOCRATES Then neither of them will ever be happier—neither the one who unjustly achieved the tyranny nor the one who pays the penalty. Of two wretched men, neither 473e could be happier. But the one who escapes and becomes tyrant is more wretched. What's this, Polus? You're laughing? Is this yet another form of refutation—when someone says something, laugh him down instead of refuting him?

POLUS Don't you think you've been refuted, Socrates, when you say things no human being would say? Just ask anyone here.

SOCRATES Polus, I'm not a politician. Last year, when I was chosen by lot for the Council and my tribe was presiding, and it was my job to put a question to the vote, 474a I made a laughing-stock of myself because I didn't know how. So don't tell me to put the question to the vote among the people here now. If you have no better refutation than these, then, as I suggested just

now, hand it over to me in my turn and try out the kind of refutation I think is called for. For I know how to produce one witness to what I say—the very person I'm talking with—and I let the many go their way. And I know how to put the question to the vote with one person; with the 474b many I don't even carry on a conversation. So see whether you'll be willing in your turn to submit to refutation by answering my questions.[21] For I think that I and you and everyone else believe that doing injustice is worse than suffering it, and not paying the penalty worse than paying it.

POLUS And I think that neither I nor anyone else believes it. Would you, then, rather suffer injustice than do it?

SOCRATES Yes, and so would you and everyone else.

POLUS Far from it. Neither I nor you nor anyone else would.

SOCRATES 474c Then won't you answer?

POLUS Certainly. In fact I'm eager to know what on earth you'll say.

SOCRATES Then tell me, so you'll find out, as though I were asking you from the beginning: which do you think is worse, Polus, doing injustice or suffering it?

POLUS Suffering it, I think.

SOCRATES And what about this: which is more shameful, doing injustice or suffering it? Answer.

POLUS Doing it.

SOCRATES Then it's also worse, if it's more shameful.

POLUS Not in the least.

SOCRATES I see. You don't 474d think, it seems, that fine and good are the same, or bad and shameful.

POLUS No, I don't.

SOCRATES Then what about this? All fine things—bodies, for instance, and colors and shapes and sounds and practices—do

you call them fine each time without reference to anything? Take fine bodies first: don't you say they're fine either with reference to their use, according to what each is useful for, or with reference to some pleasure, if in being looked at they delight those who look at them? Can you say anything besides these about the fineness of a body?

POLUS 474e I can't.

SOCRATES And isn't it the same with everything else—shapes and colors too: you call them fine either because of some pleasure or because of some benefit, or both?

POLUS I do.

SOCRATES And isn't it the same with sounds and everything that has to do with music?

POLUS Yes.

SOCRATES And certainly what has to do with laws and practices—the fine ones, surely, don't fall outside this: being either beneficial or pleasant or both.

POLUS 475a I don't think so.

SOCRATES And isn't it the same with the fineness of branches of learning?

POLUS Certainly. And that's a fine definition you're giving now, Socrates, when you define the fine by pleasure and good.

SOCRATES And the shameful by the opposite—pain and bad?

POLUS Necessarily.

SOCRATES So when one of two fine things is finer, it's finer because it exceeds in one of these or in both—either in pleasure or in benefit or in both.

POLUS Certainly.

21 Each of Athens' ten tribes took a turn presiding over the Council (the prytany), and one of its members chaired meetings and put motions to the vote.

SOCRATES And when one of two shameful things is [475b] more shameful, it will be more shameful because it exceeds either in pain or in badness. Isn't that necessarily so?

POLUS Yes.

SOCRATES Come, then: what was being said just now about doing and suffering injustice? Weren't you saying that suffering injustice is worse, but doing it more shameful?

POLUS I was.

SOCRATES Then if doing injustice is more shameful than suffering it, isn't it either more painful—and more shameful because it exceeds in pain—or because it exceeds in badness, or both? Isn't this necessary too?

POLUS Of course.

SOCRATES First, [475c] then, let's consider whether doing injustice exceeds suffering it in pain. Do those who do injustice feel more pain than those who suffer it?

POLUS Not at all, Socrates, not that.

SOCRATES Then it doesn't exceed in pain.

POLUS No, it doesn't.

SOCRATES And if not in pain, then it could no longer exceed in both.

POLUS Apparently not.

SOCRATES Then it's left to exceed in the other.

POLUS Yes.

SOCRATES In badness.

POLUS It seems so.

SOCRATES Then since it exceeds in badness, doing injustice would be worse than suffering it.

POLUS Clearly.

SOCRATES [475d] Now didn't most people, and you yourself, agree with us earlier that doing injustice is more shameful than suffering it?

POLUS Yes.

SOCRATES And now it's turned out to be worse.

POLUS It seems so.

SOCRATES Then would you welcome what's worse and more shameful rather than what's less so? Don't hesitate to answer, Polus—you won't come to any harm. Submit yourself nobly to the argument as you would to a doctor, and answer: [475e] say yes or no to what I ask.

POLUS No, I wouldn't welcome it, Socrates.

SOCRATES And would anyone else?

POLUS I don't think so—not on this argument, anyway.

SOCRATES Then I was telling the truth when I said that neither I nor you nor anyone else would rather do injustice than suffer it. For it happens to be worse.

POLUS Apparently.

### PAYING THE PENALTY

*Socrates argues that a wrongdoer is better off punished, as a sick man is better off treated.*

SOCRATES So you see, Polus, when one refutation is set beside the other, they're nothing alike. Everyone else agrees with you except me; but for me you alone are enough, just one [476a] man, agreeing and testifying; and I put the question to the vote with you alone and let the others go their way. Let that stand as it is. Next, let's consider the second point we disagreed about: whether paying the penalty for wrongdoing is the greatest of evils, as you thought, or whether not paying it is greater, as I for my part thought.

Let's look at it this way. Do you call paying the penalty and being justly punished for wrongdoing the same thing?

POLUS I do.

SOCRATES [476b] Then can you say that just things aren't all fine, insofar as they're just? Think it over before you answer.

POLUS No, I think they are, Socrates.

SOCRATES Now consider this too. If someone does something, must there also be something that has it done to it by the one doing it?

POLUS I think so.

SOCRATES And does it have done to it what the doer does, and of the same kind as what the doer does? What I mean is this: if someone strikes, must something be struck?

POLUS It must.

SOCRATES And if the [476c] striker strikes hard or fast, is what's struck struck in the same way?

POLUS Yes.

SOCRATES So what happens to the thing struck is of the same kind as what the striker does?

POLUS Certainly.

SOCRATES And again, if someone burns, must something be burned?

POLUS Of course.

SOCRATES And if he burns severely or painfully, is what's burned burned just as the burner burns it?

POLUS Certainly.

SOCRATES And isn't it the same account if someone cuts? Something is cut.

POLUS Yes.

SOCRATES And if the cut is large or deep or painful, the thing cut is cut with the same kind [476d] of cut as the cutter cuts?

POLUS Apparently.

SOCRATES Then, to sum up, see whether you agree to what I said just now about everything: whatever kind of thing the doer does, the one it's done to has the same kind of thing done to it.

POLUS Yes, I agree.

SOCRATES Given all that, is paying the penalty having something done to you, or doing something?

POLUS Necessarily it's having something done to you, Socrates.

SOCRATES By someone who does it?

POLUS Of course—by the one who punishes.

SOCRATES And does the one who punishes rightly 476e punish justly?

POLUS Yes.

SOCRATES Doing what's just, or not?

POLUS What's just.

SOCRATES Then the one being punished, when he pays the penalty, has something just done to him?

POLUS Apparently.

SOCRATES And we've agreed, I think, that just things are fine?

POLUS Certainly.

SOCRATES Then of these two, the one does something fine, and the other—the one being punished—has something fine done to him.

POLUS Yes.

SOCRATES 477a And if fine, then good? For it's either pleasant or beneficial.

POLUS Necessarily.

SOCRATES So the one who pays the penalty has something good done to him?

POLUS It seems so.

SOCRATES So he's benefited?

POLUS Yes.

SOCRATES Is it the benefit I suppose it is—does he become better in his soul, if he's justly punished?

POLUS That's likely.

SOCRATES So the one who pays the penalty is freed from badness of soul?

POLUS Yes.

SOCRATES Then is he freed from the greatest [477b] evil? Look at it this way. In the matter of a person's wealth, do you see any badness other than poverty?

POLUS No, just poverty.

SOCRATES And in the body's condition? Would you say its badness is weakness and disease and ugliness and so on?

POLUS I would.

SOCRATES And do you think there's a kind of wickedness in the soul too?

POLUS Of course.

SOCRATES And don't you call it injustice and ignorance and cowardice and so on?

POLUS Absolutely.

SOCRATES So for wealth [477c] and body and soul, three things, you've named three kinds of defect: poverty, disease, injustice?

POLUS Yes.

SOCRATES Which of these defects is most shameful, then? Isn't it injustice—in short, the soul's wickedness?

POLUS By far.

SOCRATES And if most shameful, also worst?

POLUS What do you mean, Socrates?

SOCRATES This: what's most shameful is always most shameful because it causes either the greatest pain or the greatest harm or both. That follows from what we agreed earlier.

POLUS Very much so.

SOCRATES And we've just [477d] agreed that injustice, and wickedness of soul generally, is most shameful?

POLUS Yes, we have.

SOCRATES Then either it's most distressing, and most shameful of these because it exceeds in distress, or it exceeds in harm, or both?

POLUS Necessarily.

SOCRATES Now is being unjust and intemperate and cowardly and ignorant more painful than being poor or sick?

POLUS I don't think so, Socrates, not from what we've said.

SOCRATES So it must be by some prodigiously great harm and astonishing badness that the wickedness of the soul exceeds [477e] the others and is most shameful of all—since it isn't by pain, on your account.

POLUS Apparently.

SOCRATES But surely what exceeds in the greatest harm would be the greatest evil there is.

POLUS Yes.

SOCRATES Then injustice and intemperance and the rest of the soul's wickedness are the greatest evil there is?

POLUS Apparently.

SOCRATES Now what craft frees us from poverty? Isn't it moneymaking?

POLUS Yes.

SOCRATES And from disease? Isn't it medicine?

POLUS [478a] Necessarily.

SOCRATES And from wickedness and injustice? If you're at a loss that way, look at it like this: where do we take people who are sick in body, and to whom?

POLUS To the doctors, Socrates.

SOCRATES And where do we take those who act unjustly and intemperately?

POLUS To the judges, you mean?

SOCRATES To pay the penalty?

POLUS I agree.

SOCRATES And don't those who punish rightly punish by using a kind of justice?

POLUS Clearly.

SOCRATES So moneymaking frees us from poverty, [478b] medicine from disease, and justice from intemperance and injustice.

POLUS Apparently.

SOCRATES Which of these things you mention is finest?

POLUS Which things do you mean?

SOCRATES Moneymaking, medicine, justice.

POLUS Justice is far superior, Socrates.

SOCRATES Then again, if it's finest, it produces either the most pleasure or the most benefit or both?

POLUS Yes.

SOCRATES Now is it pleasant to be given medical treatment? Do people enjoy being treated?

POLUS I don't think so.

SOCRATES But it's beneficial, isn't it?

POLUS [478c] Yes.

SOCRATES Because the patient is freed from a great evil, so that it pays to put up with the pain and be healthy.

POLUS Of course.

SOCRATES Then would a man be happiest where his body is concerned by being treated, or by not being sick in the first place?

POLUS Obviously by not being sick.

SOCRATES Because happiness, it seems, wasn't being freed from an evil, but never having it in the first place.

POLUS That's so.

SOCRATES 478d Well then, of two people who have something bad, whether in body or in soul, which is more wretched: the one who is treated and freed from the bad thing, or the one who isn't treated but keeps it?

POLUS The one who isn't treated, it seems to me.

SOCRATES And wasn't paying the penalty a release from the greatest evil, wickedness?

POLUS It was.

SOCRATES Because justice, I suppose, teaches people self-control and makes them more just; it turns out to be a medicine for wickedness.

POLUS Yes.

SOCRATES So the happiest is the one who has no badness in his soul, since that 478e has turned out to be the greatest of evils.

POLUS Clearly.

SOCRATES And second, I suppose, is the one who is freed from it.

POLUS It seems so.

SOCRATES And that was the one who is admonished and rebuked and pays the penalty.

POLUS Yes.

SOCRATES So the one who lives worst is the one who has injustice and isn't freed from it.

POLUS Apparently.

SOCRATES And isn't this in fact the man who commits the greatest wrongs and practices the greatest injustice, and then manages to avoid being admonished 479a or punished or paying the penalty—just as you say Archelaus has contrived to do, and the other tyrants and orators and potentates?

POLUS It seems so.

SOCRATES For what these people have managed, my excellent friend, is pretty much the same as if someone afflicted with the worst diseases managed not to pay the penalty to the doctors for his bodily faults, and not to be treated, because like a child he was afraid of being cauterized and cut, since 479b it hurts. Or don't you think so too?

POLUS I do.

SOCRATES Because he doesn't know, it seems, what health and bodily excellence are like. And from what we've now agreed, Polus, those who run away from justice are probably doing something similar: they see what's painful in it but are blind to what's beneficial, and don't realize how much more wretched than living with an unhealthy body it is to live with a soul that isn't healthy but rotten, unjust 479c and unholy. That's why they do everything they can to avoid paying the penalty and being freed from the greatest evil, providing themselves with money and friends and the ability to speak as persuasively as possible. But if what we've agreed is true, Polus, do you see what follows from the argument? Or would you like us to draw the conclusions together?

POLUS If you think so.

SOCRATES Doesn't it follow that injustice and doing 479d injustice are the greatest evil?

POLUS It seems so.

SOCRATES And paying the penalty turned out to be a release from this evil?

POLUS It looks that way.

SOCRATES And not paying it is a continuing in the evil?

POLUS Yes.

SOCRATES So doing injustice is second among evils in magnitude; but doing injustice and not paying the penalty is by its nature the greatest and first of all evils.

POLUS It seems so.

SOCRATES Now wasn't this what we disagreed about, my friend? You called Archelaus happy, the man who commits the greatest injustices [479e] and pays no penalty at all, while I thought the opposite: that whether it's Archelaus or anyone else at all who does injustice and doesn't pay the penalty, he deserves to be wretched beyond all other men; and that the one who does injustice is always more wretched than the one who suffers it, and the one who doesn't pay the penalty more wretched than the one who does. Wasn't that what I was saying?

POLUS Yes.

SOCRATES Then hasn't it been proved that what I said was true?

POLUS Apparently.

### WHAT RHETORIC IS GOOD FOR

*Socrates concludes that rhetoric is useful only for accusing oneself and one's friends.*

SOCRATES [480a] Very well. If this is true, Polus, what is the great use of rhetoric? For on what we've now agreed, a man should above all guard himself against doing injustice, since it will bring him quite enough evil. Isn't that so?

POLUS Certainly.

SOCRATES And if he does do injustice, he himself or anyone else he cares about, he should go of his own accord where he'll pay the penalty as quickly as possible—to the judge, as he would to a doctor— [480b] hurrying so that the disease of injustice doesn't become chronic and make his soul fester and turn incurable. Or what are we to say, Polus, if our earlier agreements stand? Isn't it necessary that this agrees with them only in this way and in no other?

POLUS Well, what else are we to say, Socrates?

SOCRATES So for defending oneself when one has done injustice, or when one's parents or friends or children or coun-

try do injustice, rhetoric is of no use to us at all, Polus—unless one 480c took it to be useful for the opposite purpose: that one should accuse oneself above all, and then one's family and whichever of one's friends happens to be doing injustice at the time; and not hide the wrongdoing but bring it into the open, so that the wrongdoer pays the penalty and becomes healthy; and force oneself and the others not to shrink back, but to submit with eyes shut, bravely, as to a doctor's cutting and cauterizing, pursuing what is good and fine and not counting the pain. If one's wrongdoing 480d deserves a flogging, one should submit to the flogging; if prison, to imprisonment; if a fine, pay it; if exile, go into exile; if death, die. One should be the first to accuse oneself and the rest of one's family, and use rhetoric for this: that by having their wrongdoings exposed they may be freed from the greatest evil, injustice. Are we to say this or not, Polus?

POLUS 480e It seems absurd to me, Socrates, though I suppose it agrees with what you said earlier.

SOCRATES Then either we must undo those conclusions as well, or this necessarily follows?

POLUS Yes, that is how it stands.

SOCRATES And to turn the other way round: suppose one ought to harm someone, whether an enemy or anyone else—provided only that one isn't being wronged by the enemy oneself, for that one must guard against—but if the enemy wrongs someone else, one must do everything in one's power, in both 481a action and speech, to see that he doesn't pay the penalty or come before the judge. And if he does come before the judge, one must contrive for the enemy to get away and not pay the penalty. If he's stolen a lot of gold, he shouldn't give it back but keep it and spend it on himself and his people, unjustly and godlessly. If his crimes deserve death, he shouldn't die—preferably never, but be immortal in his wickedness, or failing that, live 481b as long as possible in that condition. That's the sort of thing, Polus, that rhetoric seems useful for to me. For someone who isn't going to do injustice, its use doesn't seem to me to be great—if indeed it

has any use at all, since in our earlier discussion it turned out to have none whatever.

CALLICLES Tell me, Chaerephon, is Socrates serious about this, or is he joking?

CHAEREPHON He seems to me to be extraordinarily serious, Callicles. But there's nothing like asking him yourself.

CALLICLES By the gods, that's just what I want to do. Tell me, Socrates, [481c] are we to take you as serious just now, or joking? Because if you're serious and what you say happens to be true, wouldn't the life of us human beings be turned upside down? Wouldn't we be doing, it seems, the exact opposite of what we should?

SOCRATES Callicles, if human beings didn't share some common experience—if some had one experience and others another, and each of us had some private experience unlike everyone else's—it wouldn't be easy [481d] to show another person what one felt oneself. I say this because I notice that you and I are in fact in the same situation just now: we are both in love, and each of us with two loves—I with Alcibiades son of Clinias and with philosophy, and you with two, the Athenian people and Pyrilampes' son.[22] So I notice that every time, clever as you are, whatever your beloved says and however he says things are, you can't contradict him; you shift up [481e] and down. In the Assembly, if you say something and the Athenian people say it isn't so, you shift your ground and say what they want. And with Pyrilampes' handsome young son you're in just the same position. You can't oppose your beloved's wishes and words; so if anyone were amazed at how absurd the things are that you keep saying because of them, you'd probably tell him, if you wanted to tell the truth, that unless someone stops your [482a] beloved from saying these things, you'll never stop saying them either. So think that you must hear the same sort of thing from me, too. Don't be amazed that I say these things; instead, stop philosophy, my

22 Pyrilampes' son was named Demos—the same word as dēmos, "the people," which makes the pairing a pun.

beloved, from saying them. For she is the one, my dear friend, who says what you now hear from me, and she is far less fickle than my other beloved. That son of Clinias says one thing at one time and another at another; but philosophy always 482b says the same thing—and she says what you're now amazed at; you were there yourself when it was said. So either refute her, as I said just now, and show that doing injustice and not paying the penalty for it is not the worst of all evils; or, if you leave this unrefuted, by the dog, god of the Egyptians, Callicles won't agree with you, Callicles—he'll be out of tune with you all your life.[23] And yet I think, my good man, it's better for my lyre to be out of tune and jarring, or a chorus I'm sponsoring, 482c and for most people to disagree with me and contradict me, than for me, being one person, to be out of tune with myself and contradict myself.

### CALLICLES: THE RULE OF THE STRONGER BY NATURE

*Callicles says justice by nature means the stronger having more, and tells Socrates to give up philosophy.*

CALLICLES Socrates, you're swaggering about in these arguments like a real mob orator. And now you're haranguing us like this because Polus has fallen into the very same trap he accused Gorgias of falling into with you. He said, I think, that when you asked Gorgias whether, if someone came to him wanting to learn rhetoric 482d without knowing what's just, Gorgias would teach it to him, Gorgias was ashamed and said he would, because of people's habits—they'd be indignant if anyone said no. And because of that admission he was forced to contradict himself, which is just what you love. And Polus laughed at you then—rightly, in my view. But now he himself has had exactly the same thing happen to him. And that is exactly why I'm not impressed with Polus: he conceded to you that doing injustice is more shameful than suffering it. For 482e it was through this

23 Socrates' usual oath "by the dog," here tied to the dog-headed Egyptian god Anubis.

admission, in his turn, that you tied his legs up in the argument and muzzled him, because he was too ashamed to say what he thought. For you really do, Socrates, while claiming to pursue the truth, drag us into this sort of vulgar, crowd-pleasing stuff—things that aren't fine by nature, but by convention. For the most part these two are opposed to each other, nature and convention. So if someone is ashamed 483a and doesn't dare to say what he thinks, he's forced to contradict himself. And you've spotted this clever point and use it to play dirty in arguments: if someone speaks in terms of convention, you slip in questions in terms of nature; if he speaks of what belongs to nature, you ask about what belongs to convention.[24] Just so in this case, doing and suffering injustice: when Polus was speaking of what is more shameful by convention, you pursued the argument in terms of nature. For by nature everything that is worse is also more shameful—suffering injustice; but by convention doing it is. Indeed, 483b this experience, suffering injustice, isn't for a man at all, but for some slave who'd be better off dead than alive—someone who, when he's wronged and trampled on, can't stand up for himself or for anyone else he cares about. But I think the people who make the laws are the weaklings, the many. So they make the laws with an eye to themselves and their own advantage, and they hand out praise and 483c blame accordingly. They scare off the stronger types, the ones capable of having more, so that they won't have more than them; and they say that having more is shameful and unjust, and that doing injustice is this—seeking to have more than others. They're content, I think, to have an equal share, being second-rate themselves. That's why, by convention, this is called unjust and shameful—seeking to have more than the many—and they call it doing injustice. But nature herself, I think, reveals 483d that it is just for the better man to have more than the worse, and the more capable than the less capable. And nature shows in many places that this is so

24 Nature (physis) and convention (nomos, also "law" or "custom") was a famous contrast in fifth-century BC debate; Callicles uses it to set natural justice against man-made rules.

—among the other animals, and among human beings in whole cities and peoples—that this is how justice has been decided: that the stronger rules the weaker and has more. By what justice did Xerxes march against Greece, or his father against the Scythians? 483e One could name countless other cases like these. But I think these men act according to the nature of justice—yes, by Zeus, according to the law of nature, though perhaps not according to the one we lay down. We mold the best and strongest among us, taking them from youth like lion cubs, and by charms and spells we enslave them, 484a telling them that one should have an equal share and that this is what is fine and just.[25] But I think that if a man with a strong enough nature comes along, he'll shake all this off, break through it, and escape. He'll trample underfoot our rules and hocus-pocus and charms and all our laws that go against nature; he'll rise up, this slave of ours revealed as our master, and then 484b the justice of nature will blaze out. Pindar too, I think, makes the point I'm making in the song where he says that "Law, king of all, mortals and immortals"—and this law, he says, "leads on, making just the utmost violence with a sovereign hand. I take as proof the deeds of Heracles, since—unbought—" something like that; I don't know the song by heart. But he says that Heracles drove off Geryon's cattle without buying them and without Geryon giving them to him, 484c on the grounds that this is what is just by nature: that the cattle and all the other possessions of the worse and weaker belong to the better and stronger.[26]

That is the truth of it, and you'll recognize it if you move on to greater things and leave philosophy behind at last. For philosophy, Socrates, is a charming thing, if one engages in it in moderation at the right age; but if one spends more time on it than one should, it ruins a man. For even if someone is very gifted, if he goes on philosophizing well beyond that age, he's bound to

25 Xerxes invaded Greece in 480 BC; his father Darius led an expedition against the Scythians north of the Black Sea around 513 BC.
26 The lines are from a lost poem of Pindar (fifth century BC). For his tenth labor Heracles took the cattle of the monster Geryon by force.

end up without experience [484d] of all the things a man must be experienced in if he is to be a fine and good and well-regarded man. Such people become inexperienced in the laws of the city, and in the kind of speech one must use in dealing with people in business, private and public, and in human pleasures and desires—in short, they become utterly inexperienced in human character. So whenever they get involved in some private or political [484e] affair, they make themselves ridiculous—just as, I suppose, politicians are ridiculous whenever they get involved in your pursuits and arguments. What Euripides says turns out to be true: each man shines in this, and presses on toward this, "giving the greatest part of the day to it, where he happens to be at his best"; [485a] but wherever he's poor, he runs away from that and runs it down, and praises the other, out of partiality to himself, thinking that this way he's praising himself. But I think the most correct thing is to have a share of both.[27] It's a fine thing to have a share of philosophy so far as it serves education, and it isn't shameful for a young man to do philosophy. But when a man who's already older still does philosophy, the thing becomes ridiculous, Socrates. [485b] I feel toward people who do philosophy very much as I do toward people who lisp and play games. When I see a little child, for whom it's still fitting to talk like that, lisping and playing, I enjoy it; it seems charming to me, fitting for a freeborn child and suitable to its age. But when I hear a small child speaking clearly, it strikes me as something grating; it offends my ears and seems to me somehow slavish. And when [485c] one hears a grown man lisping or sees him playing games, it seems ridiculous, unmanly, and deserving of a beating. That's exactly how I feel toward people who do philosophy. When I see philosophy in a young man, I admire it; it seems fitting to me, and I consider this person freeborn, and one who doesn't do philosophy unfree, someone who'll never think himself worthy of any fine or noble [485d] deed. But when I

27 The quoted line and the later allusions to Zethus and Amphion come from Euripides' lost play *Antiope*, in which two brothers debated the active versus the contemplative life.

see an older man still doing philosophy and not giving it up, that man, Socrates, is asking for a thrashing by now. For as I was just saying, this man, however gifted he may be, is bound to become unmanly, avoiding the centers of the city and the marketplaces where, as the poet said, men become "preeminent"; he'll slink away and spend the rest of his life whispering in a corner with three or 485e four young men, never uttering anything free or great or worthy.[28] Now I feel quite friendly toward you, Socrates. So I seem to be feeling just what Euripides' Zethus, whom I mentioned, felt toward Amphion. For it occurs to me to say to you the same sort of thing he said to his brother: "You neglect, Socrates, what you ought to care for; you distort a soul so noble by nature with a boyish 486a guise; you couldn't rightly contribute a speech to the councils of justice, nor seize on what's plausible and persuasive, nor devise a bold plan on another's behalf." And yet, my dear Socrates—don't be annoyed with me; I'll say it out of goodwill toward you—don't you think it's shameful to be in the state I think you're in, you and the others who keep pressing ever further into philosophy? As it is, if someone took hold of you or anyone else like you and hauled you off to prison, claiming you'd done wrong when you hadn't, you know you wouldn't know what 486b to do with yourself. You'd be dizzy and gaping, with nothing to say. And when you came up before the court, facing some utterly worthless and wicked accuser, you'd be put to death if he chose to propose the death penalty for you. And yet how can this be wise, Socrates, "a craft that took a gifted man and made him worse," unable to help himself or save himself or anyone else from the greatest dangers, to be stripped by 486c his enemies of all his property, and to live simply without rights in the city? A man like that—if I may put it rather crudely—you can slap in the face and not pay the penalty for it. Take my advice, my good man: stop refuting, "practice the harmony of affairs," practice what will make you look intelligent, "leaving these subtleties to others," whether one should call them drivel or non-

28 "Preeminent" echoes Homer, *Iliad* 9.441, where the assembly is called the place where men become distinguished.

sense, "from which you'll dwell in empty houses." Emulate not men who refute these petty [486d] points, but those who have a livelihood and a reputation and many other good things.

SOCRATES If my soul happened to be made of gold, Callicles, don't you think I'd be delighted to find one of those stones they test gold on—the best one—so that I could apply my soul to it, and if it agreed with me that my soul had been well cared for, I'd know for certain that I was in good condition and needed no further test?[29]

CALLICLES [486e] What's the point of that question, Socrates?

SOCRATES I'll tell you. I think that in meeting you I've met with just such a godsend.

CALLICLES How so?

SOCRATES I know for certain that if you agree with me on the opinions my soul holds, then these are the very truth. For I realize [487a] that anyone who is going to test a soul adequately as to whether it lives rightly or not must have three things, all of which you have: knowledge, goodwill, and frankness. I meet many people who can't test me because they aren't wise, as you are. Others are wise, but aren't willing to tell me the truth because they don't care about me as you do. And our two visitors here, Gorgias and Polus, are wise and [487b] my friends, but rather lacking in frankness and more bashful than they should be. How could they not be? They've gone so far in bashfulness that out of shame each of them brings himself to contradict himself in front of a crowd of people—and on the most important matters. But you have all the qualities the others lack. You're well enough educated, as many Athenians would say, and you're well disposed toward me. [487c] What evidence am I using? I'll tell you. I know, Callicles, that the four of you have become partners in wisdom: you, Tisander of Aphidna, Andron son of Androtion, and Nausicydes of Cholarges. And I once overheard you deliber-

29 A touchstone was a dark stone on which gold was rubbed; the streak it left showed the gold's purity.

ating how far one should cultivate wisdom, and I know that some such view as this won out among you: that one shouldn't be eager to pursue philosophy to the point of precision; instead, you urged each other to be careful 487d not to become wiser than you should and be ruined without noticing it. So when I hear you giving me the same advice you gave your closest friends, that's enough evidence for me that you really are well disposed toward me. And as for your being the sort to speak frankly and not be ashamed, you say so yourself, and the speech you made a little while ago bears you out. So clearly this is how things stand now: 487e if you agree with me on anything in our discussion, it will have been adequately tested by you and me, and there will be no need to take it to any other test. For you would never have conceded it through lack of wisdom or excess of shame; nor again would you concede it to deceive me, since you're my friend, as you say yourself. So your agreement and mine will really have reached the final truth. And the finest of all inquiries, Callicles, is into the very things you reproached me for: what sort of man one should be, and what one should 488a pursue, and how far, both when older and when younger. For if I'm doing anything wrong in my own life, you can be sure I'm not going wrong willingly, but through my own ignorance. So since you've begun to admonish me, don't give up; show me adequately what it is I ought to pursue and how I might acquire it. And if you catch me agreeing with you now and later not doing what I agreed to, consider me a complete dolt and 488b never admonish me again, as a worthless fellow.

### WHO ARE THE STRONGER?

*Socrates presses Callicles to say whether the stronger are the many, the better, or the more intelligent.*

SOCRATES Go back to the beginning for me: what do you and Pindar say natural justice is? That the stronger should carry off by force the property of the weaker, the better rule the worse, and the superior have more than the inferior? You don't say

justice is something else, do you, or have I remembered correctly?

CALLICLES Well, that's what I said then, and it's what I say now.

SOCRATES Do you call the same person "better" and "stronger"? 488c I really couldn't make out back then what exactly you meant. Do you call the more powerful "stronger," and must the weaker obey the more powerful? That's what you seemed to be showing me then too, when you said that big cities attack small ones in accordance with natural justice because they are stronger and more powerful—as though stronger, more powerful and better were the same thing. Or is it possible to be better but weaker and feebler, and to be stronger but more wicked? Or is the 488d definition of the better and the stronger the same? Define this very point for me clearly: are the stronger, the better and the more powerful the same or different?

CALLICLES I'm telling you clearly: they're the same.

SOCRATES Now aren't the many stronger by nature than the one? They're the ones, after all, who make the laws against the one, as you yourself were saying just now.

CALLICLES Of course.

SOCRATES So the rules of the many are the rules of the stronger.

CALLICLES Certainly.

SOCRATES 488e And so the rules of the better? For by your account the stronger are far better.

CALLICLES Yes.

SOCRATES Then their rules are fine by nature, since they're the stronger?

CALLICLES I say so.

SOCRATES Now do the many believe, as you yourself were saying again just now, that it is just to have an equal share, and that doing injustice is more shameful 489a than suffering it? Is that so or not? And mind you don't get caught being ashamed yourself

this time. Do the many believe, or don't they, that having an equal share, not more, is just, and that doing injustice is more shameful than suffering it? Don't begrudge me an answer on this, Callicles, so that if you agree with me I can have it confirmed by you at last, since a man competent to judge will have agreed.

CALLICLES Well, the many do believe that.

SOCRATES So it isn't only by convention that doing injustice is more shameful than [489b] suffering it, or that having an equal share is just, but by nature too. It looks, then, as if what you said earlier wasn't true, and you were wrong to accuse me of saying that convention and nature are opposed—and that I, knowing this, play dirty in arguments: if someone speaks in terms of nature, I steer him to convention, and if in terms of convention, to nature.

CALLICLES This man will never stop talking drivel! Tell me, Socrates, aren't you ashamed, at your age, to go hunting after words, and [489c] to treat it as a windfall if someone slips up on a phrase? Do you imagine that by "stronger" I mean anything other than "better"? Haven't I been telling you for ages that I say the better and the stronger are the same? Or do you think I mean that if a rabble of slaves and all sorts of people gets together, people worth nothing except perhaps for their bodily strength, and they declare something, then that is the law?

SOCRATES Very well, Callicles, you wisest of men. Is that what you mean?

CALLICLES Absolutely.

SOCRATES [489d] Well, my remarkable friend, I've been guessing for some time myself that this sort of thing was what you meant by "stronger," and I keep questioning you because I'm eager to know clearly what you mean. For surely you don't think two people are better than one, or your slaves better than you because they're more powerful than you are. So start again from the beginning and tell me: what on earth do you mean by the better, since you don't mean the more powerful? And, my won-

derful friend, go easier on me with my first lessons, or I'll stop coming to your school.

CALLICLES 489e You're being ironic, Socrates.

SOCRATES No, by Zethus, Callicles—the one you made such ironic use of against me just now. But come, tell me: who do you say the better are?

CALLICLES The superior, of course.

SOCRATES Do you see that you yourself are uttering words and revealing nothing? Won't you say whether by the better and stronger you mean the more intelligent, or some other people?

CALLICLES Yes, by Zeus, those are the ones I mean—emphatically.

SOCRATES 490a So on your account one intelligent man is often stronger than ten thousand unintelligent ones, and he should rule and they be ruled, and the ruler should have more than those he rules. That's what you seem to me to mean—and I'm not hunting after phrases—if the one is stronger than the ten thousand.

CALLICLES Yes, that's what I mean. For this, I think, is what is just by nature: that the man who is better and more intelligent should both rule and have more than his inferiors.

SOCRATES 490b Hold it right there. What do you mean this time? Suppose we were gathered in the same place, as we are now, many of us together, and we had plenty of food and drink in common, and we were a mixed lot, some strong, some weak; and suppose one of us, being a doctor, were more intelligent about these things, but, as is likely, stronger than some and weaker than others. Won't this man, since he is more intelligent than us, be better and stronger in these matters?

CALLICLES Certainly.

SOCRATES 490c Should he then have more of this food than the rest of us, because he is better? Or should he, as the one in charge, distribute it all, but when it comes to consuming it and using it up on his own body, not take more than his share, if he

isn't to suffer for it, but have more than some and less than others? And if he happens to be the weakest of all, should the best man get the least of all, Callicles? Isn't that how it is, my good friend?

CALLICLES Food, you say, and drink and doctors and drivel! 490d That's not what I mean.

SOCRATES Don't you say the more intelligent man is better? Yes or no?

CALLICLES I do.

SOCRATES And that the better man should have more?

CALLICLES Not of food, at any rate, or drink.

SOCRATES I see. Perhaps of cloaks, then: the best weaver should have the biggest cloak and go around wrapped in the most and the finest?

CALLICLES Cloaks? What cloaks?

SOCRATES Well, when it comes to shoes, clearly the 490e man most intelligent and best in that field should have more. Perhaps the shoemaker should walk around wearing the biggest shoes, and the most of them.

CALLICLES Shoes? What shoes? You keep talking drivel.

SOCRATES Well, if you don't mean things like these, perhaps things like this: take a farmer, say, a man intelligent about the land, a fine, upstanding man. Perhaps he should have more seed than others and sow as much seed as possible on his own land.

CALLICLES How you keep saying the same things, Socrates!

SOCRATES Not only that, Callicles, but about the same things too.

CALLICLES 491a By the gods, you simply never stop going on about shoemakers and fullers and cooks and doctors, as if our discussion were about them!

SOCRATES Then will you tell me in what things the stronger and more intelligent man justly gets the advantage by having

more? Or will you neither put up with my suggestions nor say it yourself?

CALLICLES But I've been saying it for ages. First, by the stronger I don't mean shoemakers or cooks, but [491b] those who are intelligent about the city's affairs, about how it would be well run; and not only intelligent but courageous, capable of carrying out whatever they have in mind, and not flagging through softness of soul.

SOCRATES Do you see, my excellent Callicles, that you and I don't accuse each other of the same thing? You say I always say the same things, and you find fault with me for it. I say the opposite about you: that you never say the same things about the same subjects. At one moment you were defining the [491c] better and stronger as the more powerful, then as the more intelligent, and now you've turned up with something else again: according to you the stronger and better are some more courageous people. Come on, my good friend, tell me once and for all whom you mean by the better and stronger, and in what.

CALLICLES But I've already said: those who are intelligent about the city's affairs, and courageous. These are the ones [491d] who ought to rule the cities, and justice is this: that they have more than the others, the rulers more than the ruled.

SOCRATES What about over themselves, my friend? Are they rulers or ruled in some way?

CALLICLES What do you mean?

SOCRATES I mean each individual ruling himself. Or is there no need for that—ruling oneself—only for ruling others?

CALLICLES What do you mean, ruling himself?

### SELF-CONTROL AND APPETITE

*Callicles says the best life lets its desires grow as large as possible and satisfies them.*

SOCRATES Nothing complicated, just what most people mean: being self-controlled and master of oneself, ruling the pleasures and desires [491e] within oneself.

CALLICLES How charming you are! By the self-controlled you mean the simpletons.

SOCRATES Of course! Anyone at all can see that's not what I mean.

CALLICLES Oh, they very much are, Socrates. For how could a person be happy if he's a slave to anyone at all? No, what is fine and just by nature is this—and I'm telling you frankly now: the man who is going to live rightly must let his own desires grow as great as possible and not discipline them, [492a] and when they are as great as can be, he must be able to serve them through courage and understanding, and fill them with whatever his desire is for at any moment. But this, I think, isn't possible for the many. So they criticize people like that out of shame, hiding their own incapacity, and they say that intemperance is shameful, as I was saying earlier, enslaving those who are better by nature; and since they themselves can't provide fulfillment for their pleasures, they praise self-control [492b] and justice because of their own lack of manliness.[30] For those who were born the sons of kings, or were naturally capable of winning some office or tyranny or position of power for themselves—what in truth could be more shameful and worse for such people than self-control and justice? They could enjoy good things with nothing standing in their way, and yet they would bring in, as master over themselves, the law and the talk and the censure of the many! Or how could they fail to be made miserable [492c] by that

30 "Intemperance" (*akolasia*) literally means "not being disciplined" (*kolazein*); the argument plays on the link.

fine thing, justice and self-control, when they give no more to their own friends than to their enemies—and that while ruling in their own city? No, the truth, Socrates, which you claim to pursue, is this: luxury, intemperance and freedom, if they have the means behind them, are virtue and happiness; and the rest of it, all these pretty ornaments, these agreements people make against nature, are drivel and worth nothing.

SOCRATES 492d There's nothing ignoble, Callicles, about the frankness with which you pursue the argument. You're saying clearly now what other people think but aren't willing to say. So I beg you not to let up in any way, so that it may become truly plain how one should live. Tell me: you say that one mustn't discipline one's desires if one is to be the kind of person one should be, but let them grow as great as possible and provide them with fulfillment from any source whatever, and 492e that this is virtue?

CALLICLES That's what I say.

SOCRATES So it's wrong to call those who need nothing happy.

CALLICLES Yes—that way stones and corpses would be happiest of all.

### THE LEAKY JARS

*Socrates compares the intemperate soul to a leaky jar that can never be filled.*

SOCRATES But then even the life you describe is a strange and terrible one. I wouldn't be surprised, you know, if Euripides is telling the truth when he says, "Who knows if to live is to be dead, and to be dead is to live?" 493a Perhaps we really are dead. In fact I once heard one of the wise say that we are dead now, and that the body (*sōma*) is our tomb (*sēma*), and that the part of the soul where the desires are happens to be the kind of thing that can be talked round and swings up and down. And so some clever teller of stories, a Sicilian perhaps, or an Italian, played on the word: because this part is so persuadable (*pithanon*) and easily persuaded, he named it a jar (*pithos*); and the unintelli-

gent (*anoētoi*) he named the uninitiated (*amuētoi*). [493b] That part of the soul of the unintelligent where the desires are—its intemperate part, which can't hold tight—he likened to a leaky jar, because of its insatiability.[31] This man, Callicles, shows the opposite of what you say: that of those in Hades—by which he means the unseen (*aidēs*)—these would be the most miserable, the uninitiated, and they would carry water to the leaky jar in another leaky thing, a sieve. And by the sieve, as the man who told me [493c] said, he means the soul; he likened the soul of the unintelligent to a sieve because it is leaky, unable to hold anything because of its unreliability and forgetfulness. These things are, admittedly, rather strange; but they make clear what I want to show you, in the hope that I can somehow persuade you to change your mind and choose, instead of the insatiable and intemperate life, the orderly life that is satisfied and content with whatever it has at any time. Well, [493d] am I persuading you at all to change your mind and believe that the orderly are happier than the intemperate? Or, even if I tell many other stories like these, will you change your mind not a bit the more?

CALLICLES That last thing you said is nearer the truth, Socrates.

SOCRATES Come, then, let me give you another image from the same school as this one. Consider whether this is what you'd say about each of the two lives, the self-controlled and the intemperate. Suppose each of two men had many jars. One man's [493e] jars were sound and full, one of wine, one of honey, one of milk, and many others full of many things; and the sources of each of these were scarce and hard to come by, obtainable only with much hard labor. Now the one man, having filled his jars, would pour nothing more in and give them no further thought, but as far as they are concerned would be at peace. The other man, like the first, would have sources he could draw on, though with dif-

31 Socrates is playing on Greek puns (sōma/sēma, pithanon/pithos, anoētoi/amuētoi); southern Italy and Sicily were centers of Pythagorean and Orphic teaching about the soul.

ficulty; but his vessels would be leaky and rotten, and he'd be forced to keep filling them constantly, night and 494a day, or else suffer the most extreme pains. If each life is like this, do you say the life of the intemperate man is happier than that of the orderly one? By saying this, am I persuading you at all to concede that the orderly life is better than the intemperate one, or am I not?

CALLICLES You're not, Socrates. That man who has filled himself up has no pleasure left at all. That's what I was just saying: it's living like a stone, once he's 494b full, no longer feeling either joy or pain. No, living pleasantly lies in this: in having as much as possible flow in.

SOCRATES But if a lot flows in, then a lot must flow out too, and the holes for it to flow out must be pretty big?

CALLICLES Certainly.

SOCRATES Now it's the life of a plover you're describing, not that of a corpse or a stone. Tell me: do you mean something like being hungry and, when hungry, eating?[32]

CALLICLES I do.

SOCRATES 494c And being thirsty and, when thirsty, drinking?

CALLICLES I do—and having all the other desires, and being able to fill them and enjoy it, and so living happily.

SOCRATES Well done, my excellent friend! Keep on as you began, and mind you don't lose your nerve out of shame. And it seems I mustn't lose my nerve out of shame either. First tell me whether a man who has an itch and wants to scratch, with all the scratching he likes, can live happily spending his whole life scratching.

CALLICLES 494d How absurd you are, Socrates—a regular crowd-pleaser.

32 The plover (charadrios) was a bird proverbial for eating and excreting at the same time.

SOCRATES That's just how I shocked Polus and Gorgias, Callicles, and made them ashamed. But you won't be shocked, and you won't be ashamed: you're courageous. Just answer.

CALLICLES Then I say that even the man who scratches would live pleasantly.

SOCRATES And if pleasantly, then happily too?

CALLICLES Certainly.

SOCRATES 494e What if he itches only on his head—or what more shall I ask you? Think, Callicles, how you'll answer if someone asks you, one after another, about everything that goes along with this. And as the culmination of all such things, the life of men who seek to be the passive partner in sex with other men—isn't that terrible and shameful and miserable? Or will you dare to say that they are happy, if they have all they want in abundance?

CALLICLES Aren't you ashamed, Socrates, to lead the discussion to such things?

### ARE PLEASURE AND THE GOOD THE SAME?

*Socrates argues that pleasure and the good cannot be the same, since pleasure and pain cease together.*

SOCRATES Is it I who am leading it there, my noble friend, or the man who says so unreservedly that those who enjoy themselves, however they enjoy themselves, 495a are happy, and doesn't distinguish which pleasures are good and which bad? But even now, tell me: do you say that the pleasant and the good are the same, or is there something pleasant that isn't good?

CALLICLES So that my argument won't be inconsistent if I say they're different, I say they're the same.

SOCRATES You're wrecking your earlier statements, Callicles, and you'd no longer be investigating the truth with me properly if you're going to say things contrary to what you think.

CALLICLES 495b So are you, Socrates.

SOCRATES Well then, if I'm doing that, I'm not acting rightly either, any more than you are. But, my blessed friend, consider whether the good is really this: enjoying oneself in any way whatever. For if it is, the many shameful consequences just hinted at evidently follow, and many others besides.

CALLICLES So you think, Socrates.

SOCRATES And do you really insist on these things, Callicles?

CALLICLES I do.

SOCRATES 495c Shall we take up the argument, then, on the understanding that you're serious?

CALLICLES Absolutely.

SOCRATES Come on, then, since that's your view, draw this distinction for me. I suppose there's something you call knowledge?

CALLICLES There is.

SOCRATES And weren't you saying just now that there's such a thing as courage along with knowledge?

CALLICLES Yes, I was.

SOCRATES And you spoke of them as two, meaning that courage is something other than knowledge?

CALLICLES Very much so.

SOCRATES Well then: are pleasure and knowledge the same or different?

CALLICLES 495d Different, of course, you wisest of men.

SOCRATES And courage is different from pleasure too?

CALLICLES Of course.

SOCRATES Come, then, let's make sure we remember this: Callicles of Acharnae said that pleasant and good are the same,

but that knowledge and courage are different both from each other and from the good.[33]

CALLICLES And Socrates of Alopece doesn't agree with us on this. Or does he?

SOCRATES [495e] He doesn't agree. And I don't think Callicles will either, once he looks at himself properly. Tell me: don't you think that those who fare well are in the opposite condition to those who fare badly?

CALLICLES I do.

SOCRATES Then, if these are opposites, must it be with them as it is with health and sickness? For surely a person isn't healthy and sick at the same time, nor is he rid of health and sickness at the same time.

CALLICLES What do you mean?

SOCRATES Take any part of the body you like, for example, and [496a] consider. A person can be sick in the eyes, with what's called ophthalmia?

CALLICLES Of course.

SOCRATES Surely he isn't also healthy in those same eyes at the same time?

CALLICLES Not in any way.

SOCRATES And what about when he gets rid of the ophthalmia? Does he then get rid of the health of his eyes too, and in the end is he rid of both at once?

CALLICLES Not in the least.

SOCRATES That would be amazing, I think, [496b] and unreasonable, wouldn't it?

CALLICLES Very much so.

SOCRATES Rather, I think, he gets and loses each of them in turn?

33 Acharnae and Alopece were Attic demes (local districts); naming a citizen by his deme was the formal Athenian style.

CALLICLES I agree.

SOCRATES And strength and weakness likewise?

CALLICLES Yes.

SOCRATES And speed and slowness?

CALLICLES Certainly.

SOCRATES And good things and happiness, and their opposites, bad things and misery—does he get each in turn and get rid of each in turn?

CALLICLES Absolutely, of course.

SOCRATES [496c] So if we find things that a person is rid of at the same time and has at the same time, clearly these couldn't be the good and the bad. Do we agree on that? Think it over very carefully before you answer.

CALLICLES I agree with it wholeheartedly.

SOCRATES Go back, then, to what we agreed earlier. Did you say that being hungry is pleasant or painful? I mean being hungry itself.

CALLICLES Painful, I'd say. But eating when you're hungry I say is [496d] pleasant.

SOCRATES I see. But in any case being hungry itself is painful, isn't it?

CALLICLES Yes.

SOCRATES And being thirsty too?

CALLICLES Very much so.

SOCRATES Shall I ask any more questions, then, or do you agree that every lack and desire is painful?

CALLICLES I agree—just stop asking.

SOCRATES Very well. But drinking when thirsty—you say that's pleasant, don't you?

CALLICLES I do.

SOCRATES Now in what you're describing, being thirsty surely means being in pain?

CALLICLES [496e] Yes.

SOCRATES And drinking is a filling of the lack, and a pleasure?

CALLICLES Yes.

SOCRATES So you say that in drinking one enjoys oneself?

CALLICLES Very much.

SOCRATES When thirsty, that is.

CALLICLES I agree.

SOCRATES And in pain?

CALLICLES Yes.

SOCRATES Do you notice what follows—that you're saying someone enjoys himself and is in pain at the same time, when you speak of a thirsty person drinking? Or doesn't this happen at the same time and in the same place, whether of soul or body, as you like? I don't think it makes any difference. Is that so or not?

CALLICLES It is.

SOCRATES But you say it's impossible for someone faring well to be faring badly [497a] at the same time.

CALLICLES I do.

SOCRATES Yet you've agreed that it's possible to enjoy oneself while in pain.

CALLICLES Apparently.

SOCRATES So enjoying oneself isn't faring well, nor is being in pain faring badly; and so the pleasant turns out to be different from the good.

CALLICLES I don't know what clever tricks you're up to, Socrates.

SOCRATES You do know, Callicles; you're just playing coy. Go on a bit further—you know you're only playing the fool—so you can see what a wise man it is who [497b] lectures me. Doesn't each of us

stop being thirsty and stop feeling pleasure through drinking at the same time?

CALLICLES I don't know what you mean.

GORGIAS No, Callicles, don't do that. Answer, for our sakes too, so that the discussion can be brought to a finish.

CALLICLES But Socrates is always like this, Gorgias. He asks petty questions of little value and refutes people with them.

GORGIAS What difference does that make to you? It isn't your reputation at stake in any case, Callicles. Let Socrates refute you in whatever way he likes.

CALLICLES 497c Go on, then, ask your petty, narrow little questions, since that's what Gorgias wants.

SOCRATES You're a lucky man, Callicles, to have been initiated into the Greater Mysteries before the Lesser. I didn't think that was permitted. So answer from where you left off: doesn't each of us stop being thirsty and feeling pleasure at the same time?[34]

CALLICLES I agree.

SOCRATES And stop being hungry, and stop having the other desires and pleasures, at the same time?

CALLICLES That's so.

SOCRATES So we stop having pains 497d and pleasures at the same time?

CALLICLES Yes.

SOCRATES But we don't stop having good things and bad things at the same time, as you agreed. Or don't you agree now?

CALLICLES I do. So what?

SOCRATES So, my friend, good things don't turn out to be the same as pleasant ones, nor bad things the same as painful ones. For with one pair we stop having both at once, with the other we don't, since they are different. How, then, could pleasant things

34 At Eleusis near Athens, initiation into the Lesser Mysteries was the required preliminary to the Greater.

be the same as good ones, or painful things the same as bad? And if you like, look at it this way too (for I don't think you'll agree this way 497e either—but consider it): don't you call good people good because of the presence of good things, just as you call beautiful those in whom beauty is present?

CALLICLES I do.

SOCRATES Well, do you call foolish and cowardly men good? You didn't just now; you said it was the courageous and intelligent. Or aren't these the ones you call good?

CALLICLES Absolutely.

SOCRATES Well then, have you ever seen a child with no sense enjoying himself?

CALLICLES I have.

SOCRATES And have you never yet seen a man with no sense enjoying himself?

CALLICLES I suppose I have. But what of it?

SOCRATES 498a Nothing. Just answer.

CALLICLES I have.

SOCRATES Well, and a man with sense, in pain and enjoying himself?

CALLICLES Yes.

SOCRATES Which enjoy themselves and feel pain more, the intelligent or the foolish?

CALLICLES I don't think there's much difference.

SOCRATES That will do. Now, have you ever seen a cowardly man in war?

CALLICLES Of course.

SOCRATES Well, when the enemy withdrew, who seemed to you to enjoy it more, the cowards or the courageous?

CALLICLES Both, 498b it seemed to me, enjoyed it more; or if not, about equally.

SOCRATES It makes no difference. In any case the cowards enjoy themselves too?

CALLICLES Very much so.

SOCRATES And the foolish too, it seems.

CALLICLES Yes.

SOCRATES And when the enemy advance, do only the cowards feel pain, or the courageous too?

CALLICLES Both.

SOCRATES Equally?

CALLICLES The cowards more, perhaps.

SOCRATES And when the enemy withdraw, don't they enjoy it more?

CALLICLES Perhaps.

SOCRATES So the foolish and the intelligent, the cowardly and the courageous, feel pain and enjoyment about equally, [498c] as you say, but the cowards more than the courageous?

CALLICLES I agree.

SOCRATES But the intelligent and the courageous are good, and the cowardly and the foolish bad?

CALLICLES Yes.

SOCRATES So the good and the bad feel enjoyment and pain about equally?

CALLICLES I agree.

SOCRATES Then are the good and the bad about equally good and bad? Or are the bad even more good and bad?

CALLICLES [498d] By Zeus, I don't know what you mean.

SOCRATES Don't you know that you say the good are good by the presence of good things, and the bad bad by the presence of bad things? And that pleasures are the good things, and pains the bad?

CALLICLES I do.

SOCRATES So good things—pleasures—are present to those who are enjoying themselves, if they really are enjoying themselves?

CALLICLES Of course.

SOCRATES So since good things are present, those who enjoy themselves are good?

CALLICLES Yes.

SOCRATES Well, and aren't bad things—pains—present to those who are in pain?

CALLICLES They are.

SOCRATES 498e And it's by the presence of bad things, you say, that the bad are bad. Or don't you say so any more?

CALLICLES I do.

SOCRATES So whoever enjoys himself is good, and whoever is in pain is bad?

CALLICLES Certainly.

SOCRATES Those who do so more, more so; those who do so less, less so; and those who do so about equally, about equally?

CALLICLES Yes.

SOCRATES Now you say that the intelligent and the foolish, the cowardly and the courageous, enjoy themselves and feel pain about equally, or the cowards even more?

CALLICLES I do.

SOCRATES Then work out with me what follows for us from what we've agreed. For they say it's a fine thing 499a to say and examine fine things twice, even three times. We say the intelligent and courageous man is good, don't we?

CALLICLES Yes.

SOCRATES And the foolish and cowardly man bad?

CALLICLES Certainly.

SOCRATES And again, the one who enjoys himself good?

CALLICLES Yes.

SOCRATES And the one in pain bad?

CALLICLES Necessarily.

SOCRATES And the good man and the bad man feel pain and enjoyment alike, and perhaps the bad man even more?

CALLICLES Yes.

### BETTER AND WORSE PLEASURES

*Callicles admits some pleasures are better than others, and Socrates returns to the crafts that serve the good.*

SOCRATES Then doesn't the bad man turn out just as bad and good as the good man, or even more [499b] good? Isn't this what follows, along with those earlier points, if someone says that pleasant things and good things are the same? Isn't it necessary, Callicles?

CALLICLES I've been listening to you and agreeing for a long time now, Socrates, all the while noting that if anyone concedes you anything at all, even in jest, you seize on it gleefully, like a youngster. As if you really supposed that I—or anyone else at all—didn't believe that some pleasures are better and others worse!

SOCRATES Oh, Callicles, what a rogue you are! You're treating me [499c] like a child, saying at one moment that things are one way and at another that they're another, to deceive me. And yet I didn't think at the start that you would deliberately deceive me, since you were my friend. Now I see I was wrong, and it seems I must, as the old saying goes, make the best of what I have and accept what you give me. What you're saying now, it seems, is that some pleasures are good and some bad. Right?

CALLICLES [499d] Yes.

SOCRATES And the beneficial ones are good, and the harmful ones bad?

CALLICLES Certainly.

SOCRATES And the beneficial ones are those that do some good, and the bad ones those that do some harm?

CALLICLES I agree.

SOCRATES Now do you mean ones like these—the bodily pleasures, for example, that we were just talking about, in eating and drinking: those of them that produce health in the body, or strength, or some other excellence of the body, are good, and those that [499e] produce the opposite are bad?

CALLICLES Certainly.

SOCRATES And likewise with pains: some are useful and some harmful?

CALLICLES Of course.

SOCRATES So it's the useful pleasures and pains that one should choose and act on?

CALLICLES Certainly.

SOCRATES But not the harmful ones?

CALLICLES Obviously.

SOCRATES For Polus and I, if you remember, decided that everything should be done for the sake of good things. Do you share this view too, that the good is the goal of all actions, and that everything else should be done for its sake, [500a] and not it for the sake of everything else? Will you cast your vote with ours and make it three?

CALLICLES I will.

SOCRATES So the pleasant things too, like everything else, should be done for the sake of the good things, not the good for the sake of the pleasant.

CALLICLES Certainly.

SOCRATES Now is it up to just anyone to pick out which pleasant things are good and which bad, or does it take an expert in each case?

CALLICLES An expert.

SOCRATES Let's recall, then, what I happened to be saying to Polus and Gorgias. I said, if you remember, [500b] that there are

practices that go only as far as pleasure, providing that alone and ignorant of better and worse, and others that know what is good and what is bad. And among those concerned with pleasures I placed cookery, as a knack, not a craft, and among those concerned with the good, the craft of medicine. And by Zeus, god of friendship, Callicles, don't think you should play games with me, and don't answer whatever occurs to you, contrary to what you think; [500c] and don't take what I say as if I were playing, either. For you see that our discussion is about something that anyone with even a little sense would take more seriously than anything else: how one should live. Should it be the life you urge me toward, doing these so-called manly things—speaking before the people, practicing rhetoric, and engaging in politics the way you people do now? Or this life of philosophy? And how does the one differ from the other? Perhaps, [500d] then, it's best to do what I tried to do a moment ago: to draw distinctions, and once we've drawn them and agreed with each other whether these two lives really exist, to examine how they differ from each other and which of them one should live. But perhaps you don't yet know what I mean.

CALLICLES No, I don't.

SOCRATES Well, I'll put it more clearly. You and I have agreed that there is such a thing as good and such a thing as pleasant, and that the pleasant is different from the good, and that for each of them there is a practice and a preparation for obtaining it, the pursuit of the pleasant and the pursuit of the good—but first tell me whether [500e] you agree with this or not. Do you?

CALLICLES I agree.

SOCRATES Come, then, and agree with me explicitly on what I was saying to these men here, if you really thought I was speaking the truth then. I was saying, I think, that cookery doesn't seem to me a craft but a knack, [501a] whereas medicine is a craft. I said that the one, medicine, has investigated both the nature of what it treats and the cause of what it does, and can give an account of each of these; while the other, concerned with pleas-

ure, to which all its service is directed, goes about it quite without craft, having examined neither the nature of pleasure nor its cause, entirely without reason, having sorted out, you might say, nothing at all; by routine and knack it merely preserves the memory [501b] of what usually happens, and that is how it provides its pleasures. First consider whether you think this is adequately put, and whether there are also other such pursuits concerned with the soul: some based on craft, which have some forethought for what is best for the soul, and others that neglect this and, as in the other case, have examined only the soul's pleasure and how it might be produced, but neither consider which pleasures are better or worse nor care about anything except gratifying, [501c] whether for better or worse. For to me, Callicles, there do seem to be such things, and I say this sort of thing is flattery, whether it concerns the body or the soul or anything else whose pleasure someone serves without considering the better and the worse. Do you share our opinion on this, or do you contradict it?

CALLICLES I don't contradict it. I concede it, so that your argument can get finished, and to gratify Gorgias here.

SOCRATES [501d] Does this happen with one soul, but not with two or many?

CALLICLES No, with two and with many as well.

SOCRATES So it's also possible to gratify them in a crowd, all at once, without considering what is best?

CALLICLES I think so.

SOCRATES Can you say, then, which practices do this? Or rather, if you like, I'll ask, and when one seems to you to be of this kind, say yes, and when it doesn't, say no. [501e] First let's consider pipe-playing. Doesn't it seem to you to be of this kind, Callicles, pursuing only our pleasure and caring about nothing else?

CALLICLES It does to me.

SOCRATES And all similar practices too, such as lyre-playing in competitions?

CALLICLES Yes.

SOCRATES What about the training of choruses and the composition of dithyrambs? Doesn't that strike you as the same kind of thing? Or do you think Cinesias son of Meles cares at all about saying something that would make his listeners better, rather than what will [502a] gratify the crowd of spectators?[35]

CALLICLES That's obvious, Socrates, in Cinesias' case at least.

SOCRATES And what about his father Meles? Did he seem to you to sing to the lyre with his eye on what is best? Or did he not even aim at what is most pleasant? For his singing used to pain the audience. But consider: don't you think that all singing to the lyre, and the composition of dithyrambs, were invented for the sake of pleasure?

CALLICLES I do.

SOCRATES [502b] And what about that august and wonderful thing, the composition of tragedy—what is it so serious about? Is all its endeavor and seriousness, as you see it, only to gratify the spectators? Or does it also fight hard not to say something that is pleasant and gratifying to them but bad, and to say and sing something that happens to be unpleasant but beneficial, whether they enjoy it or not? Which way do you think the composition of tragedies is set up?

CALLICLES That's obvious, Socrates: it's geared more toward [502c] pleasure and gratifying the spectators.

SOCRATES And didn't we say just now, Callicles, that this sort of thing is flattery?

CALLICLES Certainly.

35 Cinesias was a composer of dithyrambs (choral songs to Dionysus) in the late fifth century BC, often mocked in comedy; his father Meles was a singer to the lyre.

SOCRATES Come, then: if someone stripped away from all poetry its melody, its rhythm and its meter, would what's left be anything but words?

CALLICLES It must be words.

SOCRATES And these words are spoken to a great crowd, a whole people?

CALLICLES I agree.

SOCRATES So poetry is a kind of public oratory.

CALLICLES [502d] Apparently.

SOCRATES And public oratory would be rhetoric. Or don't you think the poets practice rhetoric in the theaters?

CALLICLES I do.

SOCRATES So now we have found a kind of rhetoric addressed to a public made up of children and women and men alike, slaves and free—one we don't much admire, since we say it is a form of flattery.

CALLICLES Certainly.

### THE GOOD ORATOR AND ORDER

*Socrates asks whether any orator has made citizens better, and argues that goodness comes from order.*

SOCRATES Very well. And what about the rhetoric addressed to the people of Athens [502e] and to the other peoples in the cities, made up of free men—what on earth do we make of that? Do you think the orators always speak with a view to what is best, aiming at this, that the citizens become as good as possible through their speeches? Or are they, too, geared toward gratifying the citizens, neglecting the common good for their own private interest, and treating the people like children, trying only to gratify them, without caring in the least whether they will become better or worse [503a] as a result?

CALLICLES That's no longer a simple question you're asking. There are some who say what they say out of concern for the citizens, and there are also some of the kind you describe.

SOCRATES That's enough. For if this too is double, one part of it would presumably be flattery and shameful public oratory, and the other fine: working to make the citizens' souls as good as possible, and fighting hard to say what is best, whether the listeners find it more pleasant or less. 503b But you have never seen this kind of rhetoric. Or if you can name any orator like that, why haven't you told me who he is?

CALLICLES No, by Zeus, I can't name you anyone, not among today's orators, anyway.

SOCRATES Well, can you name anyone from the past thanks to whom the Athenians are held to have become better once he started speaking to them, when they had been worse before? I certainly don't know who that would be.

CALLICLES 503c What? Haven't you heard that Themistocles was a good man, and Cimon and Miltiades, and Pericles, who died recently, and whom you heard speak yourself?[36]

SOCRATES Yes, Callicles—if what you earlier called virtue is true virtue: filling up one's desires, both one's own and other people's. But if not that, but what we were forced to agree in the later discussion—that one should satisfy those desires whose fulfillment makes a person better, 503d and not those that make him worse, and that this is a kind of craft—I don't see how I can say that any of these men was that sort of man.

CALLICLES But if you look properly, you'll find one.

SOCRATES Let's see, then, looking at it calmly like this, whether any of them was like that. Come: the good man, who speaks with a view to what is best, won't say what he says at random, will he, but 503e with his eye on something? Just as all other craftsmen, each with his eye on his own work, don't select what they apply

36 Miltiades, victor at Marathon (490 BC), and his son Cimon were, like Themistocles and Pericles, leading Athenian statesmen of the fifth century BC.

to their work at random, but so that what they are making may take on a certain form. Look at painters, for example, if you like, or builders, shipwrights, all the other craftsmen, any of them you like: see how each puts each thing he places into a certain order, and compels one part to suit and fit another, until the 504a whole has been put together as an ordered and arranged thing. And both the other craftsmen and the ones we were just mentioning, those concerned with the body, trainers and doctors, surely give order and arrangement to the body. Do we agree that this is so or not?

CALLICLES Let it be so.

SOCRATES So a house that gets order and arrangement would be a good one, and one that gets disorder a bad one?

CALLICLES I agree.

SOCRATES And a ship likewise?

CALLICLES 504b Yes.

SOCRATES And we say the same about our bodies?

CALLICLES Certainly.

SOCRATES And what about the soul? Will it be good if it gets disorder, or if it gets order and some arrangement?

CALLICLES Given what we said before, we must agree to this too.

SOCRATES Now what is the name in the body for what comes from order and arrangement?

CALLICLES Health and strength, I suppose you mean.

SOCRATES 504c I do. And what, in turn, is the name for what arises in the soul from order and arrangement? Try to find the name and say it, as you did there.

CALLICLES Why don't you say it yourself, Socrates?

SOCRATES Well, if you prefer, I'll say it. But you, if you think I'm right, say so; and if not, refute me and don't let it pass. It seems to me that the name for the body's orderings is "healthy," and

from them health arises in it, and the rest of the body's excellence. Is that so or not?

CALLICLES It is.

SOCRATES [504d] And for the soul's orderings and arrangements the name is "lawful" and "law," from which people become law-abiding and orderly; and these are justice and self-control. Do you agree or not?

CALLICLES Let it be so.

SOCRATES So it is with his eye on these that our orator, the one who has craft and is good, will apply to souls whatever speeches he makes, and all his actions too; and if he gives a gift he will give it, and if he takes something away he will take it away, always with his mind on this: how justice may come to be in his fellow citizens' [504e] souls and injustice be removed, how self-control may be implanted and intemperance removed, how the rest of virtue may be implanted and vice depart. Do you concede this or not?

CALLICLES I concede it.

SOCRATES For what use is it, Callicles, to give a body that is sick and in bad condition lots of food, even the most pleasant, or drink, or anything else, when it won't benefit the body any more than the opposite would—or, by the right reckoning, will benefit it even less? Is that so?

CALLICLES [505a] Let it be so.

SOCRATES For I don't think it profits a person to live with his body in bad condition, since then he must also live badly. Or isn't that so?

CALLICLES Yes.

SOCRATES And doctors generally allow a healthy person to satisfy his desires—to eat as much as he wants when he's hungry, say, or drink when he's thirsty—but practically never allow a sick person to fill himself with what he desires? Do you concede that much too?

CALLICLES I do.

SOCRATES [505b] And with the soul, my excellent friend, isn't it the same way? As long as it is in a bad state, being foolish, intemperate, unjust and impious, one must keep it away from its desires and not allow it to do anything except what will make it better. Do you agree or not?

CALLICLES I agree.

SOCRATES For that way, presumably, it's better for the soul itself?

CALLICLES Certainly.

SOCRATES And keeping it away from what it desires is disciplining it?

CALLICLES Yes.

SOCRATES So being disciplined is better for the soul than intemperance, which you thought better just now.

CALLICLES [505c] I don't know what you're talking about, Socrates. Ask someone else.

SOCRATES This man won't put up with being benefited and himself undergoing the very thing our discussion is about: being disciplined.

CALLICLES I don't care at all about anything you say. I only gave you those answers for Gorgias' sake.

SOCRATES Very well. What shall we do, then? Break off the discussion halfway?

CALLICLES You decide.

SOCRATES But they say it isn't right to leave even stories halfway: [505d] one should put a head on them, so they don't go wandering around headless. So answer the rest too, so that our argument gets its head.

CALLICLES How pushy you are, Socrates! If you take my advice, you'll let this argument go, or else have your discussion with someone else.

SOCRATES Who else is willing, then? We really mustn't leave the argument unfinished.

CALLICLES Couldn't you go through the argument yourself, either talking on your own or answering your own questions?

SOCRATES 505e So that Epicharmus' line comes true of me, and I, being one man, prove equal to what "two men said before"? Still, it looks as if that's absolutely unavoidable. But if we do it this way, I think we should all be vying with one another to know what is true about the things we're discussing and what is false; for it is a common good for everyone that this be made clear. So I will go 506a through the argument as I think it stands. And if any of you thinks I'm agreeing with myself on things that aren't so, you must pull me up and refute me. For I'm not saying what I say as someone who knows; I'm searching together with you, so that if the one who disputes with me clearly has a point, I'll be the first to concede it. But I say this only if you think the argument should be finished. If you don't want that, let's drop it now and go away.[37]

GORGIAS Well, I don't think, Socrates, that we should 506b leave yet; you should go through the argument. And the others seem to me to think so too. I myself certainly want to hear you go through the rest yourself.

SOCRATES Well, Gorgias, I too would gladly have gone on discussing with Callicles here, until I had paid him back with Amphion's speech in return for Zethus'. But since you, Callicles, aren't willing to help finish the argument, at least listen to me and take me up if you think I'm saying something 506c wrong. And if you refute me, I won't be annoyed with you as you are with me; you'll be inscribed in my records as my greatest benefactor.[38]

CALLICLES Speak, my good man, and finish it yourself.

37 Epicharmus was a Sicilian comic poet of the early fifth century BC.
38 Greek cities honored benefactors by inscribing their names on public records.

### ORDER IN THE SOUL

*Socrates finishes the argument alone: the self-controlled soul is good and happy, the intemperate one wretched.*

SOCRATES Listen, then, as I take up the argument from the beginning. Are the pleasant and the good the same?—Not the same, as Callicles and I agreed.—Should the pleasant be done for the sake of the good, or the good for the sake of the pleasant?—The pleasant for the sake of the good.—And the pleasant is that by whose [506d] arrival we are pleased, and the good that by whose presence we are good?—Certainly.—But we are good, both we and everything else that is good, by the arrival of some virtue?—That seems to me necessary, Callicles.—But the virtue of each thing, whether of an implement or a body, or again of a soul or any living creature, doesn't come to be present in its finest form at random, but through the order, correctness and craft that are assigned to each of them. Is that so?—I say it is.— [506e] So the virtue of each thing is something ordered and arranged by order?—I would say so.—So it is a certain order, arising in each thing—each thing's own proper order—that makes each of the things there are good?—It seems so to me.—So a soul too that has its own order is better than a disorderly one?—Necessarily.—But the one that has order is orderly?—How could it not be?—And the orderly one [507a] is self-controlled?—Quite necessarily.—So the self-controlled soul is good. I can't say anything beyond this, my dear Callicles. If you can, teach me.

CALLICLES Speak, my good man.

SOCRATES I say, then, that if the self-controlled soul is good, the soul in the opposite condition to the self-controlled one is bad; and that, we saw, is the foolish and intemperate one.—Certainly.—And the self-controlled man would do what is fitting with regard to both gods and men; for he wouldn't be self-controlled if he did what isn't fitting?— [507b] That must be so.—And doing what is fitting with regard to men, he would be doing just things, and with regard to gods, pious things; and one who does

just and pious things must be just and pious.—That is so.—And indeed he must be courageous too. For it isn't the mark of a self-controlled man either to pursue or to avoid what isn't fitting, but to avoid and pursue what he should—things and people, pleasures and pains—and to stand firm and endure where he should. So it is quite [507c] necessary, Callicles, that the self-controlled man, being, as we have gone through, just and courageous and pious, is a perfectly good man; that the good man does well and finely whatever he does; and that the man who does well is blessed and happy, while the wicked man, who does badly, is miserable. And that would be the man in the opposite condition to the self-controlled one: the intemperate man you were praising.

So that is my position, and I say it's true. And if it is true, then anyone who wants to be happy [507d] must, it seems, pursue and practice self-control and run from intemperance as fast as each of our feet will carry us. Ideally he should arrange things so that he never needs to be disciplined; but if he does need it—he himself or anyone close to him, a private person or a city—then he must pay the penalty and be disciplined, if he's going to be happy. This, I think, is the target to keep your eyes on as you live: bend all your own efforts and the city's toward it, and act so that justice and self-control will be present [507e] in whoever is to be blessed—not letting your appetites be intemperate and trying to fill them, an endless evil, living the life of a bandit. A man like that could be dear neither to another human being nor to a god. He's incapable of partnership, and where there's no partnership there can be no friendship. The wise say, Callicles, that partnership and friendship, orderliness, self-control and justice hold heaven and [508a] earth, gods and men together, and that's why they call this whole universe a *kosmos*, an order, my friend, and not disorder or intemperance. But you don't seem to me to pay attention to these things, wise as you are. You've failed to notice that geometrical equality has great power among gods and men alike, and you think one ought to practice having more than

one's share. That's because you neglect geometry.[39] Well then. Either we have to refute this argument 508b and show that the happy aren't happy by possessing justice and self-control, nor the wretched wretched by possessing vice; or, if it's true, we have to consider what follows from it. What follows, Callicles, is everything I said before—the things you asked me whether I was saying in earnest, when I said that one must accuse oneself, one's son and one's friend if he does anything wrong, and use rhetoric for that purpose. And what you thought Polus conceded out of shame turns out to have been true: that doing injustice is worse than suffering it by just as much as 508c it's more shameful. And whoever is to be a rhetorician in the right way must, after all, be just and have knowledge of what is just—which Polus in turn said Gorgias agreed to out of shame.

That being so, let's look at what exactly it is you reproach me for, and whether it's fairly said or not: that I'm unable to help myself or any of my friends or family, or rescue them from the greatest dangers, but am at the mercy of anyone who pleases, like a man stripped of his rights at the mercy of whoever wants, 508d whether he wants to hit me on the jaw (to use that brash phrase of yours), or take my money, or throw me out of the city, or, last of all, kill me. And to be in that condition, by your account, is the most shameful thing of all.[40] What my own view is has been said many times already, but nothing stops it being said once more. I say, Callicles, that being hit on the jaw unjustly is not the most shameful thing, nor having my body 508e or my purse cut. It's more shameful and worse to hit and cut me and mine unjustly; and stealing, enslaving, housebreaking—in short, doing any wrong at all to me and mine—is worse and more shameful for the one who does the wrong than for me, the one who suffers it. These conclusions, which came to light back there in our earlier discussion, are held fast and bound, as I say

39 The Greek *kosmos* means both "order" and "world." The "wise" here are probably the Pythagoreans.

40 Citizens deprived of civic rights (*atimoi*) could not go to law, so anyone could assault them with impunity.

— [509a] if I may put it rather crudely—with arguments of iron and adamant; so it would seem, at least, as things stand. And unless you, or someone brasher than you, can untie them, no one who says anything other than what I'm saying now can be speaking well. For my account is always the same: I don't know how these things are, but of all the people I've ever talked with, as I have now, not one has been able to say otherwise without making himself ridiculous.

### PROTECTION AGAINST INJUSTICE

*Socrates asks what power protects against suffering injustice and whether saving one's life is what matters.*

SOCRATES So once again I lay it down [509b] that this is how things are. And if they are so, and injustice is the greatest of evils for the one who does it, and if there's something even greater than this greatest evil—doing injustice and not paying the penalty—then what kind of help would a person be truly ridiculous to be unable to give himself? Isn't it the help that will turn away the greatest harm from us? Surely it must be that the most shameful thing is to be unable to give this help to oneself or one's friends and family; second [509c] comes the inability to help against the second evil, third against the third, and so on. As great as each evil is by nature, so fine is it to be able to help against it, and so shameful to be unable. Is it so, Callicles, or otherwise?

CALLICLES Not otherwise.

SOCRATES Of the two, then, doing injustice and suffering it, we say doing injustice is the greater evil and suffering it the lesser. What should a person equip himself with, then, in order to help himself [509d] so as to have both these benefits, the one that comes from not doing injustice and the one that comes from not suffering it? Power or wish? Here's what I mean: will he avoid suffering injustice if he doesn't wish to suffer it, or if he equips himself with the power to avoid it?

CALLICLES That much is obvious: if he has the power.

SOCRATES And what about doing injustice? If he doesn't wish to do it, is that enough—he won't do it—or must he equip himself with some power and craft for [509e] this too, since unless he learns and practices them he'll do injustice? Why don't you answer me this one thing, Callicles: do you think Polus and I were rightly compelled to agree in our earlier discussion, or not, when we agreed that no one does injustice because he wants to, but that all who do injustice do it unwillingly?

CALLICLES [510a] Have it your way, Socrates, so you can finish your argument.

SOCRATES Then for this too, it seems, we have to equip ourselves with some power and craft, so that we won't do injustice.

CALLICLES Certainly.

SOCRATES So what is the craft of equipping oneself to suffer no injustice, or as little as possible? See whether you think what I think. I think it's this: one must either rule in the city oneself, or even be its tyrant, or else be a supporter of the regime in power.

CALLICLES You see, Socrates, how ready I am to praise you [510b] when you say something well? That, I think, was very well said.

SOCRATES Then see whether you think I'm right about this too. It seems to me that the closest friendship anyone can have is the one the wise men of old speak of: like is friend to like. Don't you think so too?

CALLICLES I do.

SOCRATES So where a savage, uneducated tyrant is in power, if there were someone in the city far better than he, the tyrant would surely fear him and could never be his friend with all [510c] his heart?

CALLICLES That's so.

SOCRATES Nor could someone far worse, either. The tyrant would despise him and never take him seriously as a friend.

CALLICLES That's true too.

SOCRATES The only friend worth mentioning left for such a man, then, is someone of like character, who blames and praises the same things, and is willing to be ruled and to submit to the ruler. This man will have great power [510d] in that city; no one will wrong him and get away with it. Isn't that so?

CALLICLES Yes.

SOCRATES So if one of the young men in that city were to think, "How could I gain great power and have no one wrong me?"—this, it seems, is the road for him: to train himself from his earliest youth to enjoy and dislike the same things as his master, and to contrive to be as much like him as possible. Isn't that so?

CALLICLES Yes.

SOCRATES And so he will have achieved not suffering injustice and having great [510e] power in the city, as you people say.

CALLICLES Certainly.

SOCRATES And not doing injustice as well? Or far from it, if he's going to be like his unjust ruler and have great influence with him? I, for one, think quite the opposite: that his preparation will be aimed at being able to do as much injustice as possible and not pay the penalty for it. Isn't that right?

CALLICLES Apparently.

SOCRATES [511a] Then the greatest evil will be his, with his soul corrupt and maimed by his imitation of the master and by his power.

CALLICLES I don't know how you manage to twist the arguments up and down every time, Socrates. Don't you know that this imitator will kill the man who doesn't imitate, if he wants to, and take away his property?

SOCRATES [511b] I know, my good Callicles—unless I'm deaf—since I've heard it so often, from you and from Polus just now, and from almost everyone else in the city. But you listen to me too: he'll kill him, yes, if he wants to, but it will be a bad man killing a fine and good one.

CALLICLES And isn't that exactly what makes it infuriating?

SOCRATES Not to a person with any sense, as our argument shows. Or do you think a man should make this his aim—to live as long as possible—and practice the crafts that always save us from 511c danger, like the one you tell me to practice, rhetoric, which keeps people safe in the law courts?

CALLICLES Yes, by Zeus, and I'm giving you sound advice.

SOCRATES Tell me, my excellent friend: do you think knowing how to swim is something grand?

CALLICLES No, by Zeus, I don't.

SOCRATES And yet that too saves people from death, when they get into a situation that calls for that knowledge. But if you think that one is trivial, I'll name 511d a greater one: the pilot's craft, which saves not just lives but bodies and property from the utmost dangers, just as rhetoric does. And this craft is modest and unassuming; it doesn't put on airs and strike poses as if it were achieving something magnificent. It achieves the same as courtroom pleading, yet if it brings someone safely here from Aegina, it charges, I believe, two obols; if from Egypt or the Black Sea, 511e at the very most—for this great service, having kept safe the things I just mentioned, the man himself and his children and property and wives, and landed them in the harbor—it charges two drachmas. And the man who has the craft and has accomplished all this gets off and strolls along the shore beside his ship with a modest air. He knows how to reckon, I suppose, that it's unclear which of his passengers he has helped by not letting them drown, and which he has harmed, knowing that he has landed them no 512a better than they were when they came aboard, in body or in soul.[41] His reckoning is this. It can't be that if someone gripped by serious, incurable diseases of the body didn't drown, that man is miserable for not having died and has got no benefit from the pilot, while if someone has

41 Aegina is an island a few hours' sail from Athens. An obol was a small coin; six obols made a drachma.

many incurable diseases in what is more precious than the body, the soul, that man ought to live, and the pilot will do him good by saving him, whether from the sea or from a law court or from anywhere else at all. [512b] No, he knows that it isn't better for a corrupt person to be alive, since he can only live badly.

That's why it isn't the custom for the pilot to give himself airs, though he saves us; nor, my remarkable friend, for the military engineer, who can sometimes save as much as a general—let alone a pilot—or anyone else, since there are times when he saves whole cities. You don't think he's in the same class as the courtroom speaker, do you? Yet if he chose to talk the way you people do, Callicles, glorifying [512c] his business, he'd bury you in words, arguing and urging that you must become engineers, as if nothing else counted; he'd have a strong enough case. But you despise him and his craft no less for that. You'd call him "engineer" as an insult, and you wouldn't want to give your daughter to his son, or take his daughter for yourself. And yet, given the grounds on which you praise your own pursuits, what fair reason do you have for despising the engineer and [512d] the others I just mentioned? I know you'd say you're a better man and come from better people. But if "better" isn't what I say it is, and virtue is simply this—saving oneself and one's property, whatever sort of person one happens to be—then your contempt for the engineer and the doctor and all the other crafts devised for the sake of saving becomes ridiculous. But look, my blessed friend: the noble and the good may be something other than saving and being saved. For surely a true man should let go of living for this or that length [512e] of time, and not cling to life. He should leave all that to the god, trust the women's saying that no one can escape his destiny, and then consider how he may live the time he has to live as well as possible. Is it by making [513a] himself like the regime of the place where he lives? In that case you must now become as like as possible to the Athenian people, if you're going to be dear to them and have great power in the city. See whether this is to your advantage and mine, my friend, so that we don't suffer what they say happens to the Thessalian women

who draw down the moon: our choice of this power in the city will cost us what we hold dearest.[42] But if you think anyone at all will teach you some craft of the kind that 513b will make you powerful in this city while you're unlike its regime, whether for better or for worse, then in my opinion you're badly advised, Callicles. You mustn't be an imitator; you must be like them by your very nature, if you're going to achieve anything genuine in the way of friendship with the Athenian people—and yes, by Zeus, with Pyrilampes' son as well. Whoever makes you most like them, then, will make you a statesman, as you want to be, and a rhetorician. For each group enjoys speeches made in its own 513c character and dislikes those made in someone else's—unless you have something else to say, my dear friend. Do we have any answer to this, Callicles?

CALLICLES I don't know how it is, Socrates, but I think you're right; and yet I feel what most people feel with you: I'm not really persuaded.

SOCRATES It's your love of the *dēmos*, Callicles, lodged in your soul, that resists me. But if we examine these same questions often, and better, 513d perhaps you'll be persuaded. Anyway, remember that we said there are two ways of caring for each thing, body and soul: one deals with it with a view to pleasure, the other with a view to what's best, not indulging it but fighting it. Weren't those the distinctions we drew then?

CALLICLES Certainly.

SOCRATES And the one aimed at pleasure is ignoble and turns out to be nothing but flattery, isn't it?

CALLICLES 513e Have it so, if you like.

SOCRATES Whereas the other aims at making the thing we care for, whether body or soul, as good as possible?

CALLICLES Certainly.

SOCRATES Then mustn't we set about caring for the city and its citizens in this way, by making the citizens themselves as good

as possible? Without this, as we found earlier, it's no use conferring any other benefit 514a on people, unless the minds of those who are to receive lots of money, or rule over others, or any other kind of power, are fine and good. Shall we say that's so?

CALLICLES Certainly, if you like it better that way.

SOCRATES Now suppose, Callicles, that we were urging each other on, meaning to take up public business, to building projects—the biggest structures, walls or dockyards or temples. Wouldn't we have had to examine ourselves and 514b scrutinize, first, whether we know the craft, the builder's craft, or not, and from whom we learned it? Would we have had to, or not?

CALLICLES Certainly.

SOCRATES And second, this: whether we'd ever put up a building privately, for one of our friends or for ourselves, and whether that building is handsome or ugly. And if on inquiry we found that our teachers had been good and 514c well regarded, and that we'd built many fine buildings together with our teachers, and many on our own after we'd left them—in that case it would make sense to go on to public works. But if we couldn't point to any teacher of ours, and had either no buildings or many worthless ones, then surely it would be foolish to attempt public works and urge each other on to them. Shall we say this is right 514d or not?

CALLICLES Certainly.

SOCRATES So too with everything else. In particular, if we were trying to take up public practice and urging each other on as competent doctors, I would surely have examined you, and you me: "Come now, by the gods, how is Socrates' own body for health? Has anyone else, slave or free, ever been rid of an illness thanks to Socrates?" And I suppose I'd have looked into other such questions about you. And if we found that no one 514e had become better in body because of us, foreigner or citizen, man

42 Thessalian witches were said to pull the moon from the sky, paying for it with their eyes or their children.

or woman—by Zeus, Callicles, wouldn't it be truly ridiculous for people to reach such a pitch of folly that, before doing a great deal as private individuals, however it turned out, and getting a great deal right, and training themselves properly in the craft, they would try, as the saying goes, to learn pottery on the wine jar, and try to practice publicly themselves and urge others like them to do the same? Don't you think it would be foolish to act like that?[43]

CALLICLES I do.

### PERICLES AND THE OLD STATESMEN

*Socrates argues that Pericles, Cimon, Miltiades and Themistocles did not make the Athenians better.*

SOCRATES [515a] But as it is, best of men, since you yourself are just beginning to take part in the city's affairs, and you're urging me to do the same and reproaching me for not doing it, shouldn't we examine each other? "Come, has Callicles ever made any of the citizens better? Is there anyone, formerly bad—unjust, intemperate and foolish—who has become fine and good thanks to Callicles, foreigner or citizen, slave or free?" Tell me, [515b] Callicles, if someone questions you on these points, what will you say? Whom will you claim to have made better by your company? Are you reluctant to answer—if there really is some achievement of yours from when you were still a private individual, before you set about public life?

CALLICLES You love to win, Socrates.

SOCRATES No, it isn't out of love of winning that I'm asking, but because I really want to know how you think one should conduct politics among us. When you come to the [515c] city's affairs, will you concern yourself with anything else for us than that we citizens should be as good as possible? Haven't we agreed many times already that this is what the statesman must do? Have we agreed or not? Answer. We have agreed—I'll answer for you. Well

43 A proverb for starting to learn a craft on its largest and hardest piece of work.

then, if this is what the good man must bring about for his own city, now think back and tell me about the men you mentioned a little earlier: do you still think they proved to be good citizens— 515d Pericles and Cimon and Miltiades and Themistocles?

CALLICLES I do.

SOCRATES Well, if they were good, then clearly each of them made the citizens better instead of worse. Did he or not?

CALLICLES Yes.

SOCRATES So when Pericles began speaking before the people, the Athenians were worse than when he made his last speeches?

CALLICLES Perhaps.

SOCRATES Not "perhaps," my excellent friend; it necessarily follows from what we've agreed, if he really was a good citizen.

CALLICLES 515e Well, what of it?

SOCRATES Nothing. But tell me this besides: are the Athenians said to have become better because of Pericles, or, quite the opposite, to have been corrupted by him? What I hear, at any rate, is that Pericles made the Athenians lazy, cowardly, chattering and greedy for money, by first putting them on public pay.[44]

CALLICLES You hear that from the men with the broken ears, Socrates.[45]

SOCRATES But this I don't just hear; I know it clearly, and so do you: at first Pericles was highly esteemed, and the Athenians passed no disgraceful sentence against him while they were worse. But once they'd been made fine and good 516a by him, at the end of Pericles' life, they convicted him of embezzlement and very nearly condemned him to death—obviously because they thought him a bad man.

CALLICLES So what? Did that make Pericles bad?

SOCRATES Well, someone in charge of donkeys or horses or cattle would certainly be thought bad if he were like that—if he

44 Pericles introduced pay for jurors, and later for other public duties.

took them over when they didn't kick him or butt him or bite him, and made them do all these things out of wildness. Or don't you think [516b] anyone in charge of any animal at all is bad if he takes them over gentler and makes them wilder than when he got them? Do you or not?

CALLICLES Certainly—to please you.

SOCRATES Then please me with this answer too: is man one of the animals as well, or not?

CALLICLES Of course he is.

SOCRATES And Pericles was in charge of men?

CALLICLES Yes.

SOCRATES Well then, shouldn't they, as we agreed just now, have become more just instead of more unjust under him, if [516c] he was in charge of them and was good at politics?

CALLICLES Certainly.

SOCRATES And the just are gentle, as Homer said. What do you say? Isn't that so?

CALLICLES Yes.

SOCRATES But he made them wilder than they were when he took them over—and wilder toward himself, the last person he'd have wanted.

CALLICLES Do you want me to agree with you?

SOCRATES If you think I'm telling the truth.

CALLICLES All right, let it be so.

SOCRATES And if wilder, then more unjust and worse?

CALLICLES [516d] Let it be so.

SOCRATES So Pericles wasn't good at politics, by this argument.

CALLICLES So you say.

SOCRATES By Zeus, and so do you, from what you agreed. Now tell me about Cimon in turn: didn't the very people he served

ostracize him, so they wouldn't have to hear his voice for ten years? And didn't they do the same to Themistocles, and punish him with exile besides? And Miltiades, the man of Marathon—didn't they vote to throw him into the pit, 516e and wouldn't he have gone in but for the presiding magistrate? Yet if these men had been good, as you say, they would never have suffered this. Good charioteers, surely, don't stay in the chariot at first and then get thrown out once they've trained their horses and become better charioteers themselves. That doesn't happen in driving chariots or in any other work. Or do you think it does?[46]

CALLICLES I don't.

SOCRATES So it seems our earlier statements were true, 517a that we know of no man who has proved good at politics in this city. You agreed that no one today is, but said some in the past were, and you picked out these men. But they turned out to be on a level with the men of today, so that if they were rhetoricians, they used neither true rhetoric—or they wouldn't have been thrown out—nor the flattering kind.

CALLICLES But really, Socrates, none of the men of today will ever come anywhere near achieving the kind of things that any of those men you care to 517b name achieved.

SOCRATES My strange friend, I don't fault them as servants of the city either. In fact they seem to me to have been better servants than those of today, and more able to supply the city with what it desired. But at redirecting its desires instead of giving way to them, persuading and compelling the citizens toward what would make them better, those men were practically no 517c different from these; and that's the only work of a good citizen. As for ships and walls and dockyards and plenty of other things like that, I agree with you that they were cleverer at providing them than these men are. We're doing something absurd, you

45 That is, admirers of Sparta, whose fondness for boxing left them with battered ears.

46 Ostracism was a vote that exiled a citizen for ten years; the pit (*barathron*) was a gully where condemned criminals were thrown.

and I, in this discussion: the whole time we've been talking, we keep going round and round to the same point, each not understanding what the other is saying. At any rate, I think you've agreed and recognized many times that there's a twofold business here, 517d concerning both body and soul. One side is servile: through it one can supply our bodies with food if they're hungry, drink if they're thirsty, and if they're cold, clothes, bedding, shoes—the things bodies come to desire. I'm deliberately using the same images with you, so that you'll understand more easily. Someone who supplies these things, as a retailer or a merchant or a producer of any of these very 517e things—a baker, a cook, a weaver, a cobbler, a tanner—may well, being such a person, seem both to himself and to others to be a caretaker of the body; no wonder, to anyone who doesn't know that besides all these there is a craft of gymnastics and one of medicine, which are really the care of the body. It is they that ought to rule over all these crafts and use their products, because they know what food or drink is good or bad for the body's 518a excellence, while all the others don't. That's why these other crafts, concerned as they are with the body, are fit for slaves, servile and unworthy of a free person, while gymnastics and medicine are by rights their mistresses. Now when I say the same holds for the soul, at times you seem to understand what I'm saying, and you agree as if you knew what I mean. But a little later you come along saying that there have been fine and good 518b citizens in the city, and when I ask who, the men you put forward in politics seem to me exactly like this—as if I asked you who had been or were good caretakers of bodies in gymnastics, and you told me in all seriousness, "Thearion the baker, and Mithaecus, who wrote the book on Sicilian cookery, and Sarambus the wine seller: these have been wonderful caretakers of bodies, the first 518c providing wonderful loaves, the second fine dishes, the third wine."[47] You might well be annoyed if I said to you, "My good man, you know nothing about gymnastics. You're telling me about servants and suppliers of appetites, people who under-

47 Well-known tradesmen of the day; Mithaecus was a famous Sicilian cook.

stand nothing fine and good about them. These people, if it so happens, will stuff and fatten people's bodies and be praised by them for it, and then destroy their original flesh as well. 518d And their victims, in their inexperience, won't blame those who feasted them as the cause of their illnesses and the loss of their original flesh. When their earlier overeating brings them illness a good while later—since it happened without regard for health—it's whoever happens to be with them then, giving some advice, that they'll blame and criticize and harm if they can, while the earlier ones, who were responsible for their troubles, 518e they'll praise." And you're doing just the same now, Callicles. You're praising men who feasted these people with all they desired. And people say those men made the city great; but that it's swollen and festering underneath 519a because of those men of old, they don't perceive. For without self-control and justice they've stuffed the city with harbors and dockyards and walls and tribute and suchlike rubbish. So when this attack of sickness comes, they'll blame the advisers who are around at the time and praise Themistocles and Cimon and Pericles, who were responsible for their troubles. And perhaps they'll lay hands on you, if you're not careful, and on my friend Alcibiades, when they lose what they had to begin with as well as 519b what they've acquired—though you two aren't responsible for their troubles, only perhaps accomplices. And yet I see a foolish thing happening now, and hear of it concerning the men of old.[48] For I notice that when the city deals with one of its politicians as a wrongdoer, they're indignant and complain that they're being treated terribly: after doing the city a great deal of good they're being unjustly destroyed by it—so they say. But the whole thing is false. For no leader of a city 519c could ever be unjustly destroyed by the very city he leads. Those who claim to be statesmen are probably in the same position as the sophists. The sophists, wise as they are in other respects, do this strange thing: they claim to be teachers of virtue, yet they often accuse their students of

48 Alcibiades, Socrates' brilliant and ambitious companion, later led Athens into disaster and turned against it.

wronging them by cheating them of their fees and not otherwise showing gratitude, 519d though they've been well treated by them. And what could be more illogical than this claim: that people who have become good and just, whose injustice has been removed by their teacher and who have come to possess justice, should do wrong through something they don't have? Don't you think this is strange, my friend? You've really forced me to make a public speech, Callicles, by refusing to answer.

CALLICLES And you couldn't speak unless someone answered you?

SOCRATES 519e It seems so. At any rate I'm stretching out my speeches at length now, since you won't answer me. But, my good man, tell me, in the name of Zeus, god of friendship: don't you think it's illogical for someone who claims to have made another person good to blame him for being bad, when he became and is good thanks to him?

CALLICLES I do.

SOCRATES Well, don't you hear people saying just that who claim to educate men in virtue?

CALLICLES 520a I do. But why would you talk about people who are worth nothing?

SOCRATES And what would you say about those who claim to lead the city and to care that it will be as good as possible, and then turn around and accuse it, whenever they get the chance, of being utterly bad? Do you think there's any difference between these and those? Sophist and rhetorician are the same thing, my blessed friend, or something close and very similar, as I was saying to Polus. But you, out of ignorance, 520b think the one, rhetoric, a splendid thing, and despise the other. In truth, sophistry is finer than rhetoric to the same degree that legislation is finer than the administration of justice, and gymnastics than medicine. And I used to think that public speakers and sophists, alone of all people, couldn't complain that the very thing they educate treats them badly, or else by that same argu-

ment they'd be accusing themselves at the same time of having done no good to those they claim to benefit. Isn't that so?

CALLICLES [520c] Certainly.

SOCRATES And they alone, surely, could afford to offer their service without a fee, as you'd expect, if what they said were true. Someone who has received a different service—say, he's become fast thanks to a trainer—might perhaps cheat the trainer of his gratitude, if the trainer offered it to him freely and didn't agree on a fee and collect [520d] the money as close as possible to the moment he imparted the speed. For it isn't through slowness, I think, that people do wrong, but through injustice. Right?

CALLICLES Yes.

SOCRATES So if someone removes this very thing, injustice, he need never fear being wronged; he alone can safely offer this service freely, if he really can make people good. Isn't that so?

CALLICLES I agree.

SOCRATES That's why, it seems, there's nothing shameful in taking money for other kinds of advice—about building, say, or the other crafts.

CALLICLES [520e] So it seems.

SOCRATES But about this activity—how one might become as good as possible and manage one's own household or city best—it's considered shameful to refuse to give advice unless someone pays you. Right?

CALLICLES Yes.

SOCRATES The reason is clear: this is the only kind of service that makes the one who receives it want to return the favor. So it seems a good sign if someone who has done this service is treated well in return, and if not, not. Is that how things are?

CALLICLES [521a] It is.

### THE TRUE POLITICAL CRAFT

*Socrates says he is one of the few who practice true politics, and would be tried like a doctor before children.*

SOCRATES So which kind of care of the city are you urging me toward? Spell it out for me. The kind that fights with the Athenians to make them as good as possible, like a doctor, or the kind that serves them and deals with them to please them? Tell me the truth, Callicles. You began by speaking frankly to me, so it's only right that you go on saying what you think. Speak well and nobly now.

CALLICLES Then I say: the kind that serves them.

SOCRATES [521b] So you're urging me, my most noble friend, to be a flatterer.

CALLICLES If you'd rather call it something even more contemptible, Socrates. Because if you don't do it—

SOCRATES Don't say what you've said so often, that anyone who wants to will kill me—or I'll have to say again, "Yes, a bad man killing a good one." And don't say he'll take away whatever I have—or I'll have to say again, "But when he's taken it he won't know what to do with it. Just as he took it from me unjustly, so [521c] he'll use it unjustly once he has it; and if unjustly, shamefully; and if shamefully, badly."

CALLICLES How confident you seem to me, Socrates, that none of this could happen to you—as if you lived out of harm's way and couldn't be hauled into court by some perhaps thoroughly wicked and worthless person.

SOCRATES Then I really would be a fool, Callicles, if I didn't think that in this city anything might happen to anyone. But this much I know well: if I do come into court facing one of [521d] those dangers you speak of, it will be some wicked man who brings me there—no decent man would haul an innocent person into court—and it would be no surprise if I were put to death. Do you want me to tell you why I expect this?

CALLICLES Certainly.

SOCRATES I think I'm one of a few Athenians—not to say the only one—who takes up the true political craft, and the only man of today who practices politics. So since the speeches I make on each occasion aren't aimed at gratification but at what's best, not at [521e] what's most pleasant, and since I'm not willing to do what you recommend, those clever tricks, I won't know what to say in court. The same thing I said to Polus applies to me: I'll be tried as a doctor would be tried before a jury of children, with a cook for prosecutor. Think about it: what could a man like that say in his defense, caught in that position, if someone accused him like this: "Children, this man has done all of you a great deal of harm. He ruins the youngest of you by cutting and burning, and [522a] he wastes you away and chokes you until you don't know what to do, giving you the bitterest drinks and forcing you to go hungry and thirsty. He's not like me—I used to feast you on plenty of sweet things of every kind." What do you think a doctor caught in such a bad spot could say? Or if he told the truth —"I did all this, children, for your health"—how loudly do you think jurors like that would shout him down? Pretty loudly, wouldn't they?

CALLICLES Perhaps. One has to think so.

SOCRATES So don't you think he'd be at a complete loss for what [522b] to say?

CALLICLES Certainly.

SOCRATES And I know the same sort of thing would happen to me if I came into court. I won't be able to point to pleasures I've provided them, which they regard as benefits and services—and I don't envy either those who provide them or those they're provided for. And if someone says that I corrupt the younger by leaving them at a loss, or abuse the older by speaking bitter words in private or in public, I won't be able to tell the truth —"Everything I say is just, [522c] gentlemen of the jury, and it's your good I'm working for"—or anything else. So I'll probably suffer whatever comes my way.

CALLICLES So do you think it's a good thing, Socrates, for a man in a city to be in this position, unable to help himself?

SOCRATES Yes, Callicles, provided he has that one thing you've agreed to many times: that he has helped himself by never having said or done anything unjust toward [522d] men or gods. For we've agreed many times that this is the most powerful kind of help one can give oneself. Now if someone proved me unable to give this help to myself or anyone else, I'd be ashamed to be proved so, whether before many or few, or alone by one person alone; and if I were put to death through this inability, I'd be upset. But if I died for lack of flattering rhetoric, I know well that you'd see me bear [522e] death easily. No one fears dying itself, unless he's utterly irrational and unmanly; it's doing injustice he fears. For to arrive in Hades with one's soul full of many injustices is the worst of all evils. If you like, I'm willing to tell you a story to show that this is so.

CALLICLES Well, since you've finished everything else, finish this too.

### THE MYTH OF JUDGMENT

*Socrates tells how souls are judged naked after death and punished or rewarded.*

SOCRATES [523a] Listen, then, as they say, to a very fine account. You'll think it's a myth, I suppose, but I think it's an account, since I'll tell you what I'm going to tell you as the truth. As Homer says, Zeus and Poseidon and Pluto divided the rule among themselves when they took it over from their father. Now in the time of Cronus there was this law concerning human beings, and it still holds among the gods, always and to this day: that whoever has lived his life justly and [523b] piously goes, when he dies, to the Isles of the Blessed, to live in complete happiness beyond the reach of evils; but whoever has lived unjustly and godlessly goes to the prison of retribution and punishment,

which they call Tartarus.[49] In the time of Cronus, and still recently under the rule of Zeus, these people had living judges judging them while alive, deciding their cases on the very day they were going to die. So the cases were decided badly. Pluto and the overseers from the Isles of the Blessed went and told Zeus that undeserving people were turning up 523c in both places. So Zeus said: Well, I'll put a stop to this. The cases are being judged badly now because, he said, those on trial are judged with their clothes on: they're judged while they're alive. So many, he said, who have wicked souls are dressed in handsome bodies and noble birth and wealth, and when the judgment comes, many witnesses come forward for them to testify that they've lived justly. 523d The judges are overawed by all this, and besides, they themselves judge with their clothes on, their own souls screened by eyes and ears and the whole body. All this stands in their way, their own coverings and those of the people on trial. So first, he said, they must be stopped from knowing their death in advance; for as things are they know it beforehand. Prometheus has already been told 523e to put a stop to that. Next, they must be judged stripped of all these things, for they must be judged when they're dead. The judge too must be naked, and dead, looking with his soul itself at the soul itself of each person the moment he dies, cut off from all his kin and with all that finery left behind on earth, so that the judgment may be just. Now I realized this before you did, and have made my own sons judges, two from Asia, Minos and Rhadamanthus, 524a and one from Europe, Aeacus. When they die, they will sit in judgment in the meadow, at the crossroads from which the two roads lead, one to the Isles of the Blessed and the other to Tartarus. Rhadamanthus will judge those who come from Asia, Aeacus those from Europe; and to Minos I'll give the privilege of the final decision if the other two are in doubt about anything, so

49 Cronus ruled the world before his son Zeus. Pluto is Hades, lord of the dead; the Isles of the Blessed lay at the ends of the earth.

that the judgment about people's journey may be as just as possible.[50]

This, Callicles, is what I've heard, and I believe 524b it's true. And from these stories I reckon that something like this follows. Death, it seems to me, is nothing other than the separation of two things, the soul and the body, from each other. And when they have been separated from each other, each of them keeps much the same condition it had when the person was alive: the body keeps its own nature, and the marks of how it was cared for and what happened to it, all 524c plainly visible. For instance, if someone's body was large by nature or by nurture or both while he lived, his corpse is large too when he dies; if he was fat, he's fat when dead too, and so on. And if he made a habit of wearing his hair long, his corpse has long hair too. Again, if someone was a rogue who'd been flogged and bore traces of the blows, scars on his body from whips or other wounds received in life, you can see his body has them when he's dead too. Or if someone's limbs were broken or twisted while he lived, 524d when he's dead these same things are plain to see. In a word, however the body had been shaped in life, those features remain visible after death too, all or most of them, for some time. And it seems to me, Callicles, that the same is true of the soul: once it's stripped of the body, everything in the soul is plain to see, both its natural features and the marks the person has acquired in his soul through the way he pursued each thing. So when they come before the judge—those from Asia 524e before Rhadamanthus—Rhadamanthus halts them and looks at each one's soul without knowing whose it is. Often he's laid hold of the Great King, or some other king or potentate, and seen that nothing in his soul is sound: it has been thoroughly flogged and is full of scars from 525a perjuries and injustice, which each of his actions has stamped on his soul; everything in it is crooked from lies and pretension, and nothing straight, because it was raised without truth. And he saw that from license and luxury and arrogance

50 Minos and Rhadamanthus were legendary kings of Crete, and Aeacus of Aegina; all three were sons of Zeus.

and lack of self-mastery in its actions, the soul was full of disproportion and ugliness. Seeing this, he sent it off in disgrace straight to the prison, where it is to go and endure the sufferings it deserves. 525b It's fitting for everyone who is being punished, if rightly punished by another, either to become better and be benefited, or to become an example to others, so that others, seeing him suffer whatever he suffers, may be afraid and become better. Those who are benefited, and pay the penalty at the hands of gods and humans, are those whose wrongs are curable; still, the benefit comes to them through pain and suffering, both here and in Hades, for there's no other way to be rid of injustice. 525c But those who have committed the worst wrongs, and through such crimes have become incurable, are the ones the examples are made from. They themselves no longer benefit at all, since they're incurable, but others benefit who see them suffering the greatest, most painful and most terrifying torments for their offenses for all time, simply hung up there in the prison in Hades as examples, a spectacle and a warning to every wrongdoer who arrives. 525d I say Archelaus will be one of them, if what Polus says is true, and anyone else who is that kind of tyrant. And I think most of these examples come from tyrants and kings and potentates and those who have run the affairs of cities, since because of their license they commit the greatest and most unholy wrongs. Homer too bears witness to this. It's kings and potentates he has depicted 525e being punished in Hades for all time: Tantalus and Sisyphus and Tityus. But Thersites, or any other private person who was wicked, no one has depicted as held fast in great punishments as incurable—because, I think, he didn't have the power; and that is why he was happier than those who did. No, Callicles, it's from among 526a the powerful that the exceedingly wicked come. Yet nothing prevents good men from arising among them too, and those who do deserve the highest admiration. For it's hard, Callicles, and deserves much praise, to live out one's life justly when one

has great license to do injustice.[51] Such people are few. There have been some, here and elsewhere, and I think there will be, men fine and good in this virtue, the virtue of justly 526b managing whatever is entrusted to them. One has become very famous, even among the rest of the Greeks: Aristides, son of Lysimachus. But most potentates, my excellent friend, turn out bad. So, as I was saying, when that Rhadamanthus gets someone like this, he knows nothing else about him, neither who he is nor who his people are, only that he's wicked. And seeing this, he sends him off to Tartarus, putting a mark on him to show whether he seems curable or incurable; and when he arrives there, 526c he suffers what he deserves.[52] Sometimes he sees another soul, one that has lived piously and with truth, a private person's or someone else's—most often, I say, Callicles, a philosopher's, who minded his own business and didn't meddle in others' during his life—and he admires it and sends it to the Isles of the Blessed. Aeacus does the same—each of them holds a staff as he judges—while Minos sits overseeing them, the only one holding a golden 526d scepter, as Homer's Odysseus says he saw him: "holding a golden scepter, giving judgment to the dead." As for me, Callicles, I'm persuaded by these accounts, and I'm considering how I can present my soul to the judge in the soundest possible health. So I'll say goodbye to the honors most people care about, and, practicing the truth, I'll try in all truth to be as good as I can, both in living and, when I die, 526e in dying. And I urge all other people too, as far as I can—and you in particular I urge in return—toward this life and this contest, which I say is worth all the contests here put together. And I reproach you, because you won't be able to help yourself when your trial and judgment come, the ones I was just describing. When you come before the judge, 527a the son of Aegina, and he takes hold of you and leads you off, you'll gape and your head will spin there no less than mine would here, and perhaps someone will even hit

51 In the *Odyssey* the great sinners Tantalus, Sisyphus and Tityus suffer in Hades; Thersites is the common soldier who jeers at the kings in the *Iliad*.
52 Aristides "the Just," Athenian statesman and general in the Persian Wars.

you on the jaw, to your disgrace, and treat you with every kind of contempt.[53]

Now perhaps you think this is told like an old wives' tale, and you despise it. And there would be nothing surprising in despising it if by searching we could somehow find something better and truer. But as it is, you see that the three of you, the wisest Greeks of today—you and Polus and 527b Gorgias—can't show that one should live any other life than this one, which is clearly to our advantage in that other world as well. Out of all these arguments, while the rest were refuted, this one alone stands firm: that one should beware of doing injustice more than of suffering it, and that above all a man should practice not seeming good but being good, in private and in public life; that if someone turns out bad in some respect, he must be punished, and that this is the second good after being just—becoming just and, 527c through punishment, paying the penalty; that one must avoid all flattery, of oneself and of others, of the few and of the many; and that one must always use rhetoric in this way, for what is just, and likewise every other activity. So be persuaded by me and follow me there, where once you've arrived you'll be happy both in life and after death, as the argument indicates. And let anyone despise you as a fool and abuse you, if he wants; yes, by Zeus, and have the courage to let him strike you that 527d dishonoring blow. You'll suffer nothing terrible if you really are fine and good, practicing virtue. And then, once we've practiced it together like this, we'll turn to politics, if that seems the thing to do, or deliberate about whatever else seems right to us, when we're better at deliberating than we are now. For it's shameful, in the state we now appear to be in, to swagger as if we were somebody, when we never think the same about the same things —and that about 527e the most important things; that's how far we've sunk in our lack of education. So let's use as our guide the argument that has now come to light, which shows us that this is the best way of life: to live and to die practicing justice and the rest of virtue. Let's follow this argument, then, and urge others

53 Aeacus, son of Zeus and the nymph Aegina.

to follow it too—not that one you believe in and urge on me. For it's worth nothing, Callicles.