PLATO

Republic

Translated from the New Standard Greek Text, with Introduction, by

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Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.
Indianapolis/Cambridge
SOCRATES: The tyrannical man himself remains to be investigated: how he evolves from a democratic one, what he is like once he has come to exist, and whether the way he lives is wretched or blessedly happy.

ADEIMANTUS: Yes, he still remains.

SOCRATES: Do you know what else I still miss?

ADEIMANTUS: What?

SOCRATES: I do not think we have adequately distinguished the nature and number of our appetites. And if that subject is not adequately dealt with, our investigation will lack clarity.

ADEIMANTUS: Well, isn’t now as fine a time as any?

SOCRATES: It certainly is. So, consider what I want to look at in them. It is this: among unnecessary pleasures and appetites, there are some that seem to me to be lawless. These are probably present in all of us, but they are held in check by the laws and by our better appetites allied with reason. In a few people they have been eliminated entirely or only a few weak ones remain, while in others they are stronger and more numerous.

ADEIMANTUS: Which ones do you mean?

SOCRATES: The ones that wake up when we are asleep, whenever the rest of the soul—the rational, gentle, and ruling element—slumbers. Then the bestial and savage part, full of food or drink, comes alive, casts off sleep, and seeks to go and gratify its own characteristic instincts. You know it will dare to do anything in such a state, released and freed from all shame and wisdom. In fantasy, it does not shrink from trying to have sex with a mother or with anyone else—man, god, or beast. It will commit any foul murder, and there is no food it refuses to eat. In a word, it does not refrain from anything, no matter how foolish or shameful.

ADEIMANTUS: That’s absolutely true.

SOCRATES: On the other hand, I suppose someone who keeps himself healthy and temperate will awaken his rational element before going to

1 A topic briefly discussed at 558d4–559d2.
sleep and feast it on fine arguments and investigations, which he has brought to an agreed conclusion within himself. As for the appetitive element, he neither starves nor overfeeds it, so it will slumber and not disturb the best element with its pleasure or pain but will leave it alone, just by itself and pure, to investigate and reach out for the perception of something—whether past, present, or future—that it does not know. He soothes the spirited element in a similar way and does not get angry and fall asleep with his spirit still aroused. And when he has calmed these two elements and stimulated the third, in which wisdom resides, he takes his rest. You know this is the state in which he most readily grasps the truth and in which the visions appearing in his dreams are least lawless.

ADEIMANTUS: I completely agree.

SOCRATES: Well, we have been led a bit astray and said a bit too much. What we want to pay attention to is this: there are appetites of a terrible, savage, and lawless kind in everyone—even in those of us who seem to be entirely moderate. This surely becomes clear in sleep. Do you think I am talking sense? Do you agree with me?

ADEIMANTUS: Yes, I do agree.

SOCRATES: Now, recall what we said the democratic man is like. He was the result, we presumed, of a childhood upbringing by a thrifty father who honored only appetites that made money and despised the unnecessary ones whose objects are amusement and showing off. Isn’t that right?

ADEIMANTUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And by associating with more sophisticated men who are full of the appetites we just described, he starts to indulge in every kind of arrogance and adopt their kind of behavior, because of his hatred of his father’s thrift. But, since he has a better nature than his corrupters, he is pulled in both directions and settles in the middle between their two ways of life. And enjoying each in what he takes to be moderation, he lives a life that is neither illiberal nor lawless, transformed now from an oligarch to a democrat.

ADEIMANTUS: Yes, that was—and still is—our belief about someone like that.

SOCRATES: Suppose, then, that this man has now in turn become older and has a son who is also brought up in his father’s way of life.

ADEIMANTUS: I will.

SOCRATES: Suppose, too, that the same things happen to him as happened to his father: he is led into all the kinds of lawlessness that those leading him call total freedom. His father and the rest of his family come to the aid of

2 558c–562a2.
the appetites that are in the middle, while the others help the opposite ones. And when these terrible enchanters and tyrant-makers have no hope of keeping hold of the young man in any other way, they contrive to implant a powerful passion in him as the popular leader of those idle and profligate appetites—a sort-of great, winged drone. Or do you think passion is ever anything else in such people?

ADEIMANTUS: I certainly do not think it is.

SOCRATES: And when the other appetites come buzzing around—filled with incense, perfumes, wreaths, wine, and all the other pleasures found in such company, they feed the drone, make it grow as large as possible, and plant the sting of longing in it. Then this popular leader of the soul adopts madness as its bodyguard and is stung to frenzy. If it finds any beliefs or appetites in the man that are regarded as good or are still moved by shame, it destroys them and throws them out, until it has purged him of temperance and filled him with imported madness.

ADEIMANTUS: You have perfectly described how a tyrannical man comes to exist.

SOCRATES: Is that, then, why Passion has long been called a tyrant?

ADEIMANTUS: Probably so.

SOCRATES: And hasn’t a drunken man, my friend, something of a tyrannical cast of mind, too?

ADEIMANTUS: He has.

SOCRATES: And of course someone who is mad and deranged attempts to rule not only human beings, but gods as well, and expects to be able to rule them.

ADEIMANTUS: Of course.

SOCRATES: A man becomes tyrannical in the precise sense, then, you marvelous fellow, when his nature or his practices or both together lead him to drunkenness, passion, and melancholia.

ADEIMANTUS: Absolutely.

SOCRATES: So, that, it seems, is how a tyrannical man comes to exist. Now, what is his life like?

ADEIMANTUS: Why don’t you tell me, as askers of riddles usually do?

SOCRATES: I will tell you. You see, I think someone in whom the tyrant of Passion dwells, and in whom it serves as captain of everything in the soul, next goes in for festivals, revelries, luxuries, girlfriends, and all that sort of thing.

ADEIMANTUS: Inevitably.
SOCRATES: And don’t lots of terrible appetites sprout up each day and night beside it, creating needs for all sorts of things?

ADEIMANTUS: Indeed, they do.

SOCRATES: So, any income someone like that has is soon spent.

ADEIMANTUS: Of course.

SOCRATES: And the next thing, surely, is borrowing and expenditure of capital.

ADEIMANTUS: What else?

SOCRATES: And when everything is gone, won’t the violent crowd of appetites that have nested within him inevitably shout in protest? And when people of this sort are driven by the stings of these other appetites, but particularly of Passion itself, which leads all the others as if they were its bodyguard, stung to frenzy, don’t they look to see who possesses anything that can be taken from him by deceit or force?

ADEIMANTUS: Certainly.

SOCRATES: He must take it from every source, then, or live in great suffering and pain.

ADEIMANTUS: He must.

SOCRATES: And just as the late-coming pleasures within him do better than the older ones and steal away their satisfactions, won’t he himself, young as he is, think he deserves to do better than his father and mother? And if he has spent his own share, won’t he try to take some of his father’s wealth by converting it to his own use?

ADEIMANTUS: Of course.

SOCRATES: And if his parents resist him, won’t he first try to steal it and deceive them?

ADEIMANTUS: Certainly.

SOCRATES: And if he cannot, won’t he next try to seize it by force?

ADEIMANTUS: I suppose so.

SOCRATES: And if, you amazing man, the old man and woman stand their ground and put up a fight, would he take care and be reluctant to act like a tyrant?

ADEIMANTUS: I am not very optimistic about the parents of someone like that!

SOCRATES: But in the name of Zeus, Adeimantus, do you really think that for the sake of his latest love, an unnecessary girlfriend, he would strike his

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3 See Glossary of Terms s.v. do better.
mother, who is his oldest and necessary friend? Or that for the sake of his latest and unnecessary boyfriend, who is in the bloom of youth, he would strike his aged and necessary father, the oldest of his friends, who is no longer in the bloom of youth? Or that he would enslave his parents to them, if he brought them into the same house?

ADEIMANTUS: Yes, by Zeus, he would.

SOCRATES: It seems to be a great blessing to produce a tyrannical son!

ADEIMANTUS: It certainly does!

SOCRATES: What happens to someone like that when the possessions of his father and mother give out and the swarm of pleasures now inside him has grown dense? Won’t he first try to break into someone’s house or snatch the cloak of someone walking late at night? Next, won’t he try to clean out some temple? And in the course of all that, his old childhood beliefs about fine or shameful things—beliefs that are accounted just—are mastered by the new ones that have been released from slavery and, as the bodyguard of Passion, hold sway along with it. These are the ones that used to be freed in sleep as a dream, when he himself, since he was still subject to the laws and his father, had a democratic constitution within him. But under the tyranny of Passion, what he used to become occasionally in his dreams he has now become permanently while awake, and so there is no terrible murder, no food, and no act from which he will refrain. On the contrary, Passion lives like a tyrant within him in complete anarchy and lawlessness, as his sole ruler, and drives him, as if he were a city, to dare anything that will provide sustenance for itself and the unruly mob around it—some of which have come in from the outside as a result of his bad associates, while others have come from within, freed and let loose by his own bad habits. Isn’t this the life such a man leads?

ADEIMANTUS: It is.

SOCRATES: And if there are only a few men like that in a city, and the majority of the others are temperate, they emigrate in order to become the bodyguard of some other tyrant or serve as paid auxiliaries if there happens to be a war somewhere. But if they chance to live in a time of peace and calm, they stay right there in the city and cause lots of little evils.

ADEIMANTUS: What sort of evils do you mean?

SOCRATES: They steal, break into houses, snatch purses, steal clothes, rob temples, and kidnap people. Sometimes, if they are capable speakers, they become sycophants and bear false witness and accept bribes.4

ADEIMANTUS: You mean they are small evils—provided there are only a few such people.

4 See Glossary of Terms s.v. sycophants.
SOCRATES: Yes. After all, small evils are small by comparison to big ones. And when it comes to producing corruption and misery in a city, all these evils together do not—as the saying goes—come within a mile of a tyrant. But when you get a large number of these people and their followers in a city, and they become aware of their numbers, they are the ones who—together with the foolishness of the people—create the tyrant out of the one among them who has in his soul the greatest and strongest tyrant of all.

ADEIMANTUS: Naturally, since he would be the most tyrannical.

SOCRATES: That's if they submit willingly. But if the city doesn't put itself in his hands, then just as he once chastised his mother and father, he will now punish his fatherland in the same way, if he can, bringing in new friends and making and keeping his once beloved motherland—as the Cretans call it—or fatherland their slaves. And that is surely the end at which the appetites of a man like that aim.

ADEIMANTUS: It most certainly is.

SOCRATES: So, isn't this what such men are like in private life, before they start to rule? In the first place, don't they associate with flatterers who are ready to do anything to serve them? Or, if they need something from someone themselves, won't they grovel and willingly engage in any sort of posturing, the way slaves do? But once they get what they need, isn't it a different story altogether?

ADEIMANTUS: Yes, completely different.

SOCRATES: So, those with a tyrannical nature live their entire lives without ever being friends with anyone, always masters to one man or slaves to another, but never getting a taste of freedom or true friendship.

ADEIMANTUS: Exactly.

SOCRATES: Wouldn't we be right to call people like that untrustworthy?

ADEIMANTUS: Of course.

SOCRATES: And as unjust as anyone can be—assuming we were right in our earlier conclusions about what justice is like.

ADEIMANTUS: And we certainly were right.

SOCRATES: Let's sum up the worst type of man, then. He is surely the one who, when awake, is like the dreaming person we described earlier.  

ADEIMANTUS: Exactly.

SOCRATES: And he evolves from someone who, since he is by nature most tyrannical, achieves sole rule. And the longer he lives as tyrant, the more like that he becomes.

5 See 571c–d.
Inevitably," said Glauc, taking over the argument.

SOCRATES: Well, then, won't the one who is plainly worst also be plainly most wretched? And the one who for the longest time is most a tyrant, won't he also be most wretched for the longest time, if truth be told? Though the views of the masses on the subject are naturally also many.

GLAUCON: All that, at any rate, must be true.

SOCRATES: Doesn't a tyrannical man correspond to and most resemble a city ruled by a tyrant, a democratic man a democratically ruled city, and similarly with the others?

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: And the comparison between city and city, as regards their virtue and happiness, isn't it the same as the comparison between man and man?

GLAUCON: Certainly.

SOCRATES: As regards virtue, then, how does a city ruled by a tyrant compare to a city of the sort we described first that is ruled by a king?

GLAUCON: They are absolute opposites: one is the best, and the other is the worst.

SOCRATES: I won't ask you which is which, since it is obvious. But as regards happiness and wretchedness, is your judgment the same or different? And let's not become dazzled by looking at the tyrant—since he is just one man—or at the few who surround him. Instead, as is necessary, let's go in and study the city as a whole and, when we have gone down and looked into every corner, only then present what we believe.

GLAUCON: That's a good suggestion. And it is clear to everyone that there is no city more wretched than a tyrannical one and none happier than one ruled by a king.

SOCRATES: Would it also be right, then, to suggest the same thing about the men—that the only fit judge of them is someone who can, in thought, go down into a man's character and discern it—not someone who sees it from the outside, the way a child does, and is dazzled by the façade that tyrants adopt for the outside world, but someone who discerns it adequately? And what if I were to assume that the person we must all listen to is the one who has this capacity to judge; who has lived in the same house as a tyrant and witnessed his behavior at home; who has seen how he deals with each member of his household, when he can best be observed stripped of his tragic costume; and who has also seen how he deals with

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6 Literally, the many.
7 I.e., the façade referred to earlier. Greek tragedies often had tyrants as characters.
public dangers? Shouldn’t we ask the one who has seen all that to tell us how the tyrant compares to the others with respect to happiness and wretchedness?

GLAUCON: That’s also a very good suggestion.

SOCRATES: Then, in order to have someone to answer our questions, do you want us to pretend that we are among the ones who can make such a judgment, and that we have met tyrannical people already?8

GLAUCON: I certainly do.

SOCRATES: Come on, then, and examine the matter like this for me. Bearing in mind the resemblance between the city and the man, examine each in turn and describe its condition.

GLAUCON: What kinds of things do you want me to describe?

SOCRATES: Describe the city first. Would you say that a tyrannical city is free or enslaved?

GLAUCON: As enslaved as it is possible to be.

SOCRATES: Yet you can surely see masters and free people in it.

GLAUCON: I can certainly see a small group of people like that. But pretty much the whole population, and the best part of it, is shamefully and wretchedly enslaved.

SOCRATES: If a man and his city are similar, then, mustn’t the same structure exist in him, too? Mustn’t his soul be full of slavery and illiberality, with those same parts of it enslaved, while a small part, the most wicked and most insane, is master?

GLAUCON: It must.

SOCRATES: Will you describe such a soul as enslaved, then, or as free?

GLAUCON: Enslaved, of course.

SOCRATES: And, to go back, isn’t the enslaved, tyrannical city least able to do what it wishes?

GLAUCON: By far the least.

SOCRATES: So, a tyrannical soul will also least do what it wishes—I am talking about the soul as a whole—and will be full of disorder and regret, since it is always forcibly driven by a gadfly.

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: Rich or poor? Which must a tyrannical city be?

GLAUCON: Poor.

8 Plato spent time with Dionysus I, tyrant of Sicily.
SOCRATES: So, a tyrannical soul, too, must always be poor and insatiable.

GLAUCON: It must.

SOCRATES: What about fear? Mustn’t a city of this sort and a man of this sort be filled with it?

GLAUCON: They certainly must.

SOCRATES: And do you think you will find more wailing, groaning, lamenting, or painful suffering in any other city?

GLAUCON: No.

SOCRATES: What about in a man? Do you think such things are more common in anyone than in this tyrannical man, maddened by his appetites and passions?

GLAUCON: How could I?

SOCRATES: I imagine it is in view of all these things, then, as well as others like them, that you judged this city to be the most wretched of cities.

GLAUCON: And wasn’t I right?

SOCRATES: Yes, of course. But how, again, do you describe the tyrannical man in view of these same things?

GLAUCON: He is by far the most wretched of them all.

SOCRATES: There your description is no longer right.

GLAUCON: How so?

SOCRATES: This man, I think, is not yet the most wretched.

GLAUCON: Then who is?

SOCRATES: Presumably, you will regard this next one as even more wretched.

GLAUCON: What one?

SOCRATES: The tyrannical man who does not live out his life as a private individual, but is unlucky, in that some misfortune gives him the opportunity of becoming an actual tyrant.

GLAUCON: On the basis of what we have already said, I infer that what you are saying is true.

SOCRATES: Yes. But it is not good enough to believe these claims; one must carefully examine someone like that by means of argument. After all, the investigation concerns the most important thing—a good life and a bad one. 9

GLAUCON: That’s absolutely right.

9 See 344e1–3.
Happiness, Virtue, and Vice

SOCRATES: So, consider, then, whether there is anything in what I say. You see, I think we should investigate him on the basis of the following.

GLAUCON: What?

SOCRATES: On the basis of each and every one of the wealthy private citizens in our cities who own many slaves. For they resemble a tyrant in ruling over many, although the number ruled by the tyrant is different.

GLAUCON: It is different.

SOCRATES: You know, then, that these people feel secure and do not fear their slaves.

GLAUCON: Of what have they to be afraid, after all?

SOCRATES: Nothing. But do you know why?

GLAUCON: Yes. Because the whole city is ready to defend each of its private citizens.

SOCRATES: That’s right. But now, suppose some god were to lift one of these men, who has fifty or more slaves, out of the city, and put him down—with his wife, his children, his slaves, and his other property—in a deserted place, where no free men could come to his assistance? Can you imagine the sort and amount of fear he would feel that he and his wife and children would be killed by his slaves?

GLAUCON: It would be huge, if you ask me.

SOCRATES: Wouldn’t he at that point be compelled to start fawning on some of his slaves, promising them all sorts of things and setting them free—even though there was nothing he wanted to do less—and wouldn’t he turn out to be a flatterer of slaves?

GLAUCON: He would have to be. Otherwise, he would be killed.

SOCRATES: Now, suppose the god were to settle many other neighbors around him who would not tolerate anyone claiming to be master of another, but if they caught such a person, would inflict the most extreme punishments on him?

GLAUCON: I suppose he would be in even worse trouble, since he would be surrounded by nothing but enemies.

SOCRATES: So, isn’t this, then, the kind of prison in which the tyrant is held—the one whose nature we have described, filled with multifarious fears and passions? Though his soul is really greedy, he is the only one in the city who cannot go abroad or look at the sights at which other free people yearn to look. Instead, he is mostly stuck in house, living like a woman, envying any other citizen who goes abroad and sees some good thing.

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10 See 451d7 note.
GLAUCON: Absolutely.

SOCRATES: Isn’t such a harvest of evils, then, a measure of the difference between a tyrannical man who is badly governed politically on the inside—whom you judged just now to be most wretched—and one who does not live out his life as a private individual, but is compelled by some chance to become an actual tyrant and try to rule others, when he cannot even master himself? It is as if someone with a body that is sick and cannot master itself were compelled, not to spend his life in private pursuits, but to compete and fight with other bodies.

GLAUCON: That’s exactly what he is like. Your description is absolutely true, Socrates.

SOCRATES: And so, my dear Glaucon, isn’t his condition completely wretched, and isn’t the life of a tyrant even harsher than the one you judged to be harshest?

GLAUCON: It certainly is.

SOCRATES: So, in truth, then, and whatever some people may think, a real tyrant is really a slave to the worst sorts of fawning and slavery, and a flatterer of the worst kind of people. He is so far from satisfying his appetites in any way that he is in the greatest need of most things and truly poor—as is apparent if one knows how to look at a whole soul. He is full of fear throughout his life and overflowing with convulsions and pains, if in fact his condition is like that of the city he rules. And it is like it, isn’t it?

GLAUCON: Yes, of course.

SOCRATES: And, in addition, shouldn’t we also attribute to the man the qualities we mentioned earlier? We said that he is inevitably envious, untrustworthy, unjust, friendless, impious, and a host and nurse to every kind of vice; that ruling makes him even more so than before; and that, as a consequence, he is extremely unfortunate and goes on to make those near him so.

GLAUCON: No one with any sense could possibly contradict that.

SOCRATES: Come on, then, and tell me now at last, like the judge who makes the final decision, who you believe is first in happiness and who second, and judge the others similarly, making five altogether—kingly, timocratic, oligarchic, democratic, tyrannical.

GLAUCON: That’s an easy judgment. You see, I rank them in the order of their appearance, just as if they were choruses, both in virtue and vice and in happiness and its opposite.

11 The reference is to the way plays were judged at dramatic festivals in Athens. A herald announced the results.
SOCRATES: Shall we, then, hire a herald, or shall I myself announce that the son of Ariston\textsuperscript{12} has given as his verdict that the best and most just is the most happy, and that he is the one who is most kingly and rules like a king over himself; whereas the worst and most unjust is the most wretched, and he, again, is the one who, because he is most tyrannical, is the greatest tyrant over himself and his city?

GLAUCON: You have announced it!

SOCRATES: And shall I add that it holds whether or not their characters remain hidden from all human beings and gods\textsuperscript{13}

GLAUCON: Do add it.

SOCRATES: Well, then, that is one of our demonstrations. But look at this second one and see if you think there is anything in it.

GLAUCON: What is it?

SOCRATES: In just the way a city is divided into three classes, the soul of each person is also divided in three. That is the reason I think there is another demonstration.

GLAUCON: What is it?

SOCRATES: The following. It seems to me that the three also have three kinds of pleasure, one peculiar to each. The same holds of appetites and kinds of rule.

GLAUCON: How do you mean?

SOCRATES: One element, we say, is that with which a person learns; another, that with which he feels anger. As for the third, because it is multiform, we had no one special name for it but named it after the biggest and strongest thing it has in it. I mean we called it the appetitive element because of the intensity of its appetites for food, drink, sex, and all the things that go along with them. We also called it the money-loving element,\textsuperscript{14} because such appetites are most easily satisfied by means of money.

GLAUCON: And we were right.

SOCRATES: So, if we said its pleasure and love are for profit, wouldn't that best bring it together under one heading for the purposes of our argument and make clear to us what we mean when we speak of this part of the soul? And would we be right in calling it money-loving and profit-loving?

GLAUCON: I think so, anyway.

\textsuperscript{12} Glaucon, but also, perhaps, his brother Plato.

\textsuperscript{13} See 367e1–5, 612a8–b5.

\textsuperscript{14} At 553c5.
SOCRATES: What about the spirited element? Don’t we say that its whole aim is always mastery, victory, and high repute?

GLAUCON: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Then wouldn’t it strike the right note for us to call it victory-loving and honor-loving?

GLAUCON: The absolutely right one.

SOCRATES: But surely it is clear to everyone that the element we learn with is always wholly straining to know where the truth lies, and that of the three it cares least for money and reputation.

GLAUCON: By far the least.

SOCRATES: Wouldn’t it be appropriate, then, for us to call it learning-loving and philosophic?

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: And doesn’t it rule in some people’s souls, while one of the others—whichever it happens to be—rules in other people’s?

GLAUCON: Yes.

SOCRATES: And isn’t that why we say there are three primary types of people, philosophic, victory-loving, and profit-loving?

GLAUCON: Absolutely.

SOCRATES: And also three kinds of pleasure, one assigned to each of them?

GLAUCON: Exactly.

SOCRATES: You realize, then, that if you chose to ask each of these three types of people in turn to tell you which of their lives is most pleasant, each would give the highest praise to his own? Won’t the moneymaker say that, compared to that of making a profit, the pleasures of being honored or of learning are worthless unless there is something in them that makes money?

GLAUCON: True.

SOCRATES: What about the honor-lover? Doesn’t he think the pleasure of making money is vulgar, while the pleasure of learning—except to the extent that learning brings honor—is smoke and nonsense?

GLAUCON: He does.

SOCRATES: As for the philosopher, what do you suppose he thinks of the other pleasures in comparison to that of knowing where the truth lies and always enjoying some variety of it while he is learning? Won’t he think they are far behind? And won’t he call them really necessary, since he would have no need for them if they were not necessary for life?

15 See 559a1–b7.
GLAUCON: He will. We can be sure of that.

SOCRATES: Since the pleasures of each kind and the lives themselves dispute with one another—not about which life is finer or more shameful or better or worse—but about which is more pleasant and less painful, how are we to know which of them is speaking the absolute truth? GLAUCON: I have no idea how to answer that.

SOCRATES: Consider the matter this way: how should we judge things if we want to judge them well? Isn’t it by experience, knowledge, and argument? Or could someone have better criteria than these?

GLAUCON: No, of course not.

SOCRATES: Consider, then. Of the three types of men, which has most experience of the pleasures we mentioned? Do you think the profit-lover learns what the truth itself is like, or has more experience of the pleasure of knowing, than the philosopher does of making a profit?

GLAUCON: There is a big difference between them. You see, the latter has to have tasted the other kinds of pleasure beginning from childhood. But it is not necessary for the profit-lover to taste or experience how sweet is the pleasure of learning the nature of the things that are—and even if he were eager to, he could not easily do so.

SOCRATES: So, the philosopher is far superior to the profit-lover in his experience of both kinds of pleasures.

GLAUCON: Very far superior.

SOCRATES: What about compared to the honor-lover? Is he more inexperienced in the pleasure of being honored than the latter is in the pleasure of knowing?

GLAUCON: No. Honor comes to all of them, provided they accomplish their several aims. For the rich man, too, is honored by many people, as well as are the courageous and the wise ones. So, all have experienced what the pleasure of being honored is like. But the pleasure pertaining to the sight of what is cannot be tasted by anyone except the philosopher.

SOCRATES: So, as far as experience goes, then, he is the finest judge among the three types of men.

GLAUCON: By far.

SOCRATES: And he alone will have gained his experience with the help of knowledge.

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: Moreover, the tool that should be used to judge is not the tool of the profit-lover or the honor-lover, but of the philosopher.
GLAUCON: What one is that?

SOCRATES: Surely we said that judgment should be made by means of arguments. Didn’t we?

GLAUCON: Yes.

SOCRATES: And arguments are, above all, his tool.

GLAUCON: Absolutely.

SOCRATES: If the things being judged were best judged by means of wealth and profit, the praise and criticism of the profit-lover would necessarily be closest to the truth.

GLAUCON: It would indeed.

SOCRATES: And if by means of honor, victory, and courage, wouldn’t it be those of the honor-lover and victory-lover?

GLAUCON: Clearly.

SOCRATES: But since it is by means of experience, knowledge, and argument?

GLAUCON: The praise of the philosopher and argument-lover must be closest to the truth.

SOCRATES: So, of the three pleasures, then, the most pleasant would be that of the part of the soul with which we learn, and the one of us in whom it rules has the most pleasant life.

GLAUCON: How could it be otherwise? The knowledgeable person at least praises with authority when he praises his own life.

SOCRATES: What life and pleasure does the judge say are in second place?

GLAUCON: Clearly, those of the warrior and honor-lover, since they are closer to his own than those of the moneymaker.

SOCRATES: Then those of the profit-lover come last, apparently.

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: Well, then, that makes two in a row. And twice the just person has defeated the unjust one. Now comes the third, which is dedicated in Olympic fashion to our savior, Olympian Zeus. Observe, then, that the other pleasures—apart from that of the knowledgeable person—are neither entirely true nor pure. On the contrary, they are like some sort of illusionist painting, as I think I have heard some wise person say. Yet, if that were true, it would be the greatest and most decisive of the overthrows.

The first toast at a banquet was to the Olympian Zeus, the third to our savior, Zeus. By combining both in a single form of address, Plato seems to be emphasizing the importance of this final proof.
Happiness, Virtue, and Vice

GLAUCON: By far the greatest. But what exactly do you mean?

SOCRATES: I will find out, if you answer the questions while I ask them.

GLAUCON: Start asking, then.

SOCRATES: Tell me, then, don’t we say that pain is the opposite of pleasure?

GLAUCON: Yes.

SOCRATES: Isn’t there also a state of feeling neither enjoyment nor pain?

GLAUCON: There is.

SOCRATES: Isn’t it in the middle between these two, a sort of quiet state of
the soul where they are concerned? Or wouldn’t you describe it that way?

GLAUCON: I would.

SOCRATES: So then do you recall the sorts of things ill people say when
they are ill?

GLAUCON: Which ones?

SOCRATES: That nothing is more pleasant than being healthy, but they had
not realized it was most pleasant until they fell ill.

GLAUCON: I do remember that.

SOCRATES: Don’t you also hear people who are in great pain saying that
nothing is more pleasant than the cessation of one’s suffering?

GLAUCON: I do.

SOCRATES: And there are many similar circumstances, I presume, in
which you see people in pain praising not enjoyment, but freedom from
pain, and respite from that sort of thing, as most pleasant.

GLAUCON: Yes. For at such times, the respite presumably becomes pleas-
ant enough to content them.

SOCRATES: And when someone ceases to enjoy something, this respite
from pleasure will be painful.

GLAUCON: Presumably.

SOCRATES: So, the quiet state we just now described as being in between
the two will sometimes be both pain and pleasure.

GLAUCON: Apparently.

SOCRATES: And is it possible for what is neither to become both?

GLAUCON: Not in my view.

SOCRATES: Furthermore, when what is pleasant and what is painful arise
in the soul, they are both a sort of motion, aren’t they?

GLAUCON: Yes.
SOCRATES: And didn’t we see just now that what is neither painful nor pleasant is a respite and in the middle between the two?

GLAUCON: Yes, we did.

SOCRATES: How can it be right, then, to think that the absence of pain is pleasant or the absence of enjoyment painful?

GLAUCON: There’s no way it can be.

SOCRATES: So, it is not right. But when the quiet state is next to what is painful, it appears pleasant; and when it is next to what is pleasant, it appears painful. And there is nothing sound in these illusions as far as the truth about pleasure is concerned. On the contrary, they are a sort of sorcery.

GLAUCON: That’s what the argument suggests, at any rate.

SOCRATES: Well, then, take a look at pleasures that do not derive from pains, so that you won’t be likely to think that, in their case, it is the nature of pleasure to be just the cessation of pain or of pain to be just the cessation of pleasure.

GLAUCON: Where am I to look? What pleasures do you mean?

SOCRATES: There are lots of others, but you might especially want to think about the pleasures of smell. You see, without being preceded by pain, they suddenly become incredibly intense. And when they cease, they leave no pain behind.

GLAUCON: That’s absolutely true.

SOCRATES: So, let’s not be persuaded that pure pleasure is relief from pain, or pure pain relief from pleasure.

GLAUCON: No, let’s not.

SOCRATES: However, of the so-called pleasures that reach the soul through the body, pretty much the greatest number—and the most intense ones, too—are of that kind: they are some sort of relief from pains.

GLAUCON: Yes, they are.

SOCRATES: And aren’t those pleasures and pains of anticipation, which arise from the expectation of future pleasures or pains, of the same kind?

GLAUCON: They are.

SOCRATES: Do you know what they are like and what they most resemble?

GLAUCON: What?

SOCRATES: Do you think there is such a thing in the natural world as an up, a down, and a middle?

GLAUCON: I do.
Happiness, Virtue, and Vice

SOCRATES: Don’t you imagine, then, that if someone were brought from down below to the middle, he would think anything other than that he was moving upward? And if he stood at the middle and saw where he had come from, could he possibly think he was anywhere other than the upper region, since he hadn’t seen the one that is truly up above?

GLAUCON: By Zeus, I do not see how he could think anything else.

SOCRATES: But if he were brought back again, wouldn’t he think he was being brought down? And wouldn’t he be thinking the truth?

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: And wouldn’t all this happen to him because he is inexperienced in what is truly and really up, middle, and down?

GLAUCON: Clearly.

SOCRATES: Would it surprise you, then, if those who are inexperienced in the truth have unsound beliefs about lots of other things as well—that they are so disposed toward pleasure, pain, and the middle state that, whenever they descend to the painful, they think the truth and really are in pain; but that, when they ascend from the painful to the middle state, they firmly think they have reached fulfillment and pleasure? Like people who compare black to gray without having experienced white, don’t they compare pain to painlessness while being inexperienced in pleasure, and so get deceived?

GLAUCON: No, by Zeus, it would not surprise me! In fact, I would be very surprised if it were not like that.

SOCRATES: Think of it this way, then: Aren’t hunger, thirst, and the like some sort of emptiness related to the state of the body?

GLAUCON: They are.

SOCRATES: And isn’t foolishness and lack of knowledge, in turn, some sort of emptiness related to the state of the soul?

GLAUCON: It certainly is.

SOCRATES: Aren’t people filled when they take in nourishment or gain understanding?

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: Does the truer filling belong to what is less or to what is more?

GLAUCON: Clearly, it belongs to what is more.

SOCRATES: Which of the two types, then, partakes more of pure being? The sorts belonging to bread, drink, relishes, and nourishment in general? Or the kind belonging to true belief, knowledge, understanding, and, in sum, to all of virtue? Judge it this way: what belongs to what is always the same, immortal, and true, is itself of that sort, and comes to be in something
of that sort—it is more, don’t you think, than what belongs to what is never the same and mortal, is itself of that kind, and comes to be in something of that kind?

GLAUCON: Far more. What belongs to what is always the same is far superior.

SOCRATES: And does the being of what is always the same partake any more of being than of knowledge?\(^{17}\)

GLAUCON: Not at all.

SOCRATES: What about of truth?

GLAUCON: Not of it, either.

SOCRATES: And if less of truth, less of being, too?

GLAUCON: Necessarily.

SOCRATES: Isn’t it generally true that the types concerned with the care of the body partake less in truth and being than do those concerned with the care of the soul?

GLAUCON: Yes, much less.

SOCRATES: Don’t you think the same holds of the body in comparison to the soul?

GLAUCON: I do.

SOCRATES: Then isn’t what is filled with things that are more, and is itself more, more really filled than what is filled with things that are less, and is itself less?

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: So, then, if being filled with what is appropriate to our nature is pleasant, what is more filled with things that are more is more really and truly caused to enjoy a more true pleasure; whereas what partakes of things that are less is less truly and surely filled and partakes of a less trustworthy and less true pleasure.

GLAUCON: That’s absolutely inevitable.

SOCRATES: So, those who lack experience of knowledge or virtue, but are always occupied with feasts and the like, are brought down, apparently, and then back up to the middle state; and wander in this way throughout their lives, never reaching beyond this to what is truly higher up, never looking up at it or brought up to it, never filled with what really is, and never tasting any stable or pure pleasure. On the contrary, they are always looking downward like cattle and, with their heads bent over the earth or the dinner table, they feed, fatten, and fornicate. And, in order to do better than

\(^{17}\) See 477a2–4.
others in these things, they kick and butt with iron horns and hooves, killing each other, because their desires are insatiable. For they aren’t using things that are to fill the part of themselves that is a thing that is, and a leak-proof vessel.

GLAUCON: You have described the life of “the many,” Socrates, just like an oracle!

SOCRATES: So, isn’t it necessary, then, for these people to live with pleasures that are mixed with pains, mere phantoms and illusionist paintings of true pleasures? And aren’t they so colored by their juxtaposition with one another that they appear intense, beget mad passions for themselves in the foolish, and are fought over—as Stesichorus tells us the phantom of Helen was fought over at Troy—through ignorance of the truth?

GLAUCON: Something like that must be what happens.

SOCRATES: Mustn’t similar things happen to someone who succeeds in satisfying the spirited element? Mustn’t his love of honor be so colored by envy, his love of victory by violence, and his spiritedness by peevishness, that he pursues the satisfactions of honor, victory, and spiritedness without rational calculation or understanding?

GLAUCON: The same sorts of things must happen with regard to that element, too.

SOCRATES: Can’t we confidently assert, then, that, even where the desires of the profit-loving and honor-loving parts are concerned, those that follow knowledge and argument, and pursue with their help the pleasures that wisdom prescribes, will attain—to the degree that they can attain true pleasure at all—the truest pleasures, because they follow truth, and those that are most their own; if, indeed, what is the best for each thing is also what is most its own?

GLAUCON: But that, of course, is what is most its own.

SOCRATES: So, when the entire soul follows the philosophic element and does not engage in faction, the result is that each element does its own work and is just; and, in particular, each enjoys its own pleasures, the best pleasures and—to the degree possible—the truest.

18 See 372e2–373e7.

19 Stegnon: contrasted in the Gorgias (493a1–b3) with the “leaking jar” in which the appetites are located.

20 According to the story, Stesichorus wrote a poem defaming Helen and was punished by being struck with blindness. His sight was restored when he added a verse to the poem in which he claimed that it was a phantom of Helen and not Helen herself who was at Troy. See Phaedrus 243a.

21 Envy, violence, and peevishness are all painful conditions that enhance the honor-lover’s pleasures through contrast.
GLAUCON: Absolutely.

SOCRATES: So, when one of the other parts gains mastery, the result is that it cannot discover its own pleasure and compels the other parts to pursue an alien, and not a true pleasure.

GLAUCON: Yes.

SOCRATES: And wouldn’t what is most distant from philosophy and reason be most likely to produce that result?

GLAUCON: By far.

SOCRATES: And isn’t what is most distant from reason the very thing that is most distant from law and order?

GLAUCON: Clearly.

SOCRATES: And wasn’t it made evident that the passionate and tyrannical appetites are most distant?

GLAUCON: By far the most.

SOCRATES: And the kingly and orderly ones least distant?

GLAUCON: Yes.

SOCRATES: Then the tyrant, I suppose, will be most distant from a true pleasure that is his own, while the king will be least distant.

GLAUCON: It is inevitable.

SOCRATES: And so, the tyrant will live most unpleasantly and the king most pleasantly.

GLAUCON: It is absolutely inevitable.

SOCRATES: Do you know, then, how much more unpleasant the tyrant’s life is than the king’s?

GLAUCON: Not unless you tell me.

SOCRATES: There are, it seems, three pleasures: one genuine and two illegitimate. The tyrant is at the extreme end of the illegitimate ones, since he flees both law and reason and lives with a bodyguard of slavish pleasures. But it is not at all easy to say just how inferior he is—except perhaps as follows.

GLAUCON: How?

SOCRATES: The tyrant is somehow at a third remove from the oligarch, since the democrat was in the middle between them.22

GLAUCON: Yes.

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22 Third because the Greeks always counted the first as well as the last member of a series. The day after tomorrow was the third day.
Happiness, Virtue, and Vice

SOCRATES: Won’t he also live with a phantom of pleasure, then, that, as regards truth, is at a third remove from that other—if what we said before is true?

GLAUCON: He will.

SOCRATES: But the oligarch, in turn, is at a third remove from the king, if we assume king and aristocrat to be the same.

GLAUCON: Yes, third.

SOCRATES: So a tyrant is removed from true pleasure by a numerical value of three times three.

GLAUCON: Apparently.

SOCRATES: So, on the basis of the size of this numerical value, it seems the phantom of the tyrant’s pleasure is a plane figure.

GLAUCON: Exactly.

SOCRATES: On the basis of its square and cube, in that case, it becomes clear how far removed it is.

GLAUCON: Clear to someone skilled in calculation, anyway!

SOCRATES: Turning it the other way around, then, if someone wants to say how far the king is removed from the tyrant in terms of true pleasure, he will find, if he completes the calculation, that he lives 729 times more pleasantly, while the tyrant lives the same number of times more painfully.

GLAUCON: That’s an extraordinary calculation of the difference between the two men—the just one and the unjust one—in terms of their pleasure and pain!

23 Because the timocrat is between them.

24 Socrates’ mathematics is difficult to follow. He seems to have something like this in mind: the tyrant’s pleasure is a two-dimensional image (a plane figure) of the true, three-dimensional pleasure of the philosopher. Hence, if a one-unit square represents the degree of closeness to true pleasure of an image nine times removed from it, true pleasure should be represented by a nine-unit cube. It follows that the king lives 729 times more pleasantly than the tyrant. However, in order to reach the significant number 729—there are 729 days and nights in a year of 364 twenty-four-hour days and 729 months in the “great year” recognized by the Pythagorean philosopher Philolaus—Socrates has had to make two rather fast moves. First, he illegitimately capitalizes on the Greek manner of counting series in order to count the oligarch twice, once as the last term in his first series (tyrant, democrat, oligarch) and again as the first term in his second series (oligarch, timocrat, king). Second, he multiplies the number of times the tyrant is removed from the oligarch by the number of times the oligarch is removed from the king, when he should have added them. In fact, the tyrant is only five times removed from the king, and so lives only 125 times less pleasantly!
Book 9

SOCRATES: And yet it is a number that is both true and appropriate to human lives—if indeed days, nights, months, and years are appropriate to them.

GLAUCON: And of course they are appropriate.

SOCRATES: If the victory of the good and just person over the bad and unjust one in terms of pleasure is as great as that, won’t his victory in terms of its grace, beauty, and virtue be extraordinarily greater?

GLAUCON: Extraordinarily greater, indeed, by Zeus!

SOCRATES: All right, then. Since we have reached this point in the argument, let’s return to the first things we mentioned that led us here. I think someone said that doing injustice profits a completely unjust person who is believed to be just. Wasn’t that the claim?25

GLAUCON: Yes, it was.

SOCRATES: Let’s discuss it with its proponent, then, since we have now agreed on the respective effects of doing unjust and doing just things.26

GLAUCON: How?

SOCRATES: By fashioning an image of the soul in words, so that the one who said that will know what he was saying.

GLAUCON: What sort of image?

SOCRATES: One of those creatures that ancient legends say used to exist. The Chimera, Scylla, Cerberus, and the numerous other cases where many different kinds are said to have grown together into one.

GLAUCON: Yes, they do describe such things.

SOCRATES: Well, then, fashion a single species of complex, many-headed beast, with a ring of tame and savage animal heads that it can grow and change at will.

GLAUCON: That’s a task for a clever fashioner of images!27 Still, since language is easier to fashion than wax and the like, consider the fashioning done.

SOCRATES: Now, fashion another single species—of lion—and a single one of human being. But make the first much the largest and the second, second in size.

GLAUCON: That’s easier—the fashioning is done.

SOCRATES: Now, join the three in one, so that that they somehow grow together naturally.

26 See 358b4–7, 367e1–5.
27 See 596b12–e4.
GLAUCON: They are joined.

SOCRATES: Then fashion around the outside the image of one of them, that of the human being, so that to anyone who cannot see what is inside, but sees only the outer shell, it will look like a single creature, a human being.

GLAUCON: The surrounding shell has been fashioned.

SOCRATES: When someone claims, then, that it profits this human being to do injustice, but that doing what is just brings no advantage, let's tell him that he is saying nothing other than that it profits him to feed well and strengthen the multiform beast, as well as the lion and everything that pertains to the lion; to starve and weaken the human being, so that he is dragged along wherever either of the other two leads; and not to accustom the two to one another or make them friends, but leave them to bite and fight and devour one another.

GLAUCON: Yes, that's exactly what someone who praises doing injustice is saying.

SOCRATES: On the other hand, wouldn't someone who claims that what is just is profitable be saying we should do and say what will give the inner human being the greatest mastery over the human being, to get him to take care of the many-headed beast like a farmer, feeding and domesticating the gentle heads and preventing the savage ones from growing; to make the lion's nature his ally; and to care for all in common, bringing them up in such a way that they will be friends with each other and with himself?

GLAUCON: Yes, that's exactly what someone who praises justice is saying.

SOCRATES: From every point of view, then, the one who praises what is just speaks truly while the one who praises what is unjust speaks falsely. For whether we consider pleasure or good reputation or advantage, the one who praises the just tells the truth while the one who condemns it has nothing sound to say and condemns with no knowledge of what he is condemning.

GLAUCON: None at all, in my opinion.

SOCRATES: Then let's persuade him gently—after all, he is not getting it wrong intentionally—by questioning him as follows: “Bless you, but shouldn't we claim that this is also the basis of the conventional views about what is fine and what is shameful: what is fine is what subordinates the beastlike elements in our nature to the human one—or better, perhaps, to the divine, whereas what is shameful is what enslaves the tame element to the savage”? Will he agree, or what?

GLAUCON: He will if he takes my advice.

SOCRATES: Is there anyone, then, in light of this argument, who profits by acquiring gold unjustly, if the result is something like this: in taking the
Book 9

gold, he simultaneously enslaves the best element in himself to the most wicked? If he got the gold by enslaving his son or daughter to savage and evil men, it would not profit him, no matter how much he got for doing it. So, if he ruthlessly enslaves the most divine element in himself to the most godless and polluted, how could he fail to be wretched, when he accepts golden gifts in return for a far more terrible destruction than that of Eriphyle, who took the necklace in return for her husband's soul?28

GLAUCON: A much more terrible one. I will answer for him.

SOCRATES: And don't you think intemperance has long been condemned for reasons of this sort; that it is because of vices like it that that terrible creature, the large and multiform beast, is given more freedom than it should be?

GLAUCON: Clearly.

SOCRATES: And aren't stubbornness and peevishness condemned because they inharmoniously increase and stretch the lionlike and snakelike29 element?

GLAUCON: Certainly.

SOCRATES: And aren't luxury and softness condemned for slackening and loosening this same part, because that produces cowardice in it?

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: And aren't flattery and illiberality condemned because they subject this same spirited element to the moblike beast, allow it to be showered with abuse for the sake of money and the latter's insatiability, and habituate it from youth to be an ape instead of a lion?

GLAUCON: Yes, indeed.

SOCRATES: Why do you think someone is reproached for menial work or handicraft? Or shall we say that it is for no other reason than because the best element is naturally weak in him, so that it cannot rule the beasts within him, but can only serve them and learn what flatters them?

GLAUCON: Apparently.

28 Eriphyle was bribed by Polynices to persuade her husband, Amphiaras, to take part in an attack on Thebes. He was killed, and she was murdered by her son in revenge. See Odyssey 11.326–7.

29 The snakelike element hasn't been previously mentioned, although it may be included in "all that pertains to" the lion (588e6). It symbolizes some of the meaner components of the spirited part, such as peevishness, which it would be unnatural to attribute to the noble lion. Snakes were thought to guard shrines and other sacred places. Including a snakelike element in the part of the soul dominant in guardians is, therefore, somewhat natural.
SOCRATES: In order to ensure, then, that someone like that is also ruled by something similar to what rules the best person, we say that he should be the slave of that best person who has the divine ruler within himself. It is not to harm the slave that we say he should be ruled, as Thrasymachus supposed was true of all subjects, but because it is better for everyone to be ruled by a divine and wise ruler—preferably one that is his own and that he has inside himself; otherwise one imposed on him from outside, so that we may all be as alike and as friendly as possible, because we are all captained by the same thing.

GLAUCON: Yes, that’s right.

SOCRATES: This is clearly the aim of the law as well, which is the ally of everyone in the city. It is also our aim in ruling our children. We do not allow them to be free until we establish a constitution in them as in a city. That is to say, we take care of their best part with the similar one in ourselves and equip them with a guardian and ruler similar to our own to take our place. Only then do we set them free.

GLAUCON: Yes, that’s clearly so.

SOCRATES: How, then, will we claim, Glaucon, and on the basis of what argument, that it profits someone to do injustice, or what is intemperate, or some shameful thing that will make him worse, even if it brings more money or power of some other sort?

GLAUCON: There’s no way we can.

SOCRATES: Or how can we claim that it profits him to be undetected in his injustice and not pay the penalty? I mean, doesn’t the one who remains undetected become even worse, while in the one who is discovered and punished, the bestial element is calmed and tamed and the gentle one freed? Doesn’t his entire soul, when it returns to its best nature and acquires temperance and justice along with wisdom, achieve a condition that is as more honorable than that of a body when it acquires strength and beauty along with health, as a soul is more honorable than a body?

GLAUCON: Absolutely.

SOCRATES: Won’t anyone with any sense, then, give everything he has to achieve it as long as he lives? First, won’t he honor the studies that produce it and not honor the others?

GLAUCON: Clearly.

SOCRATES: Second, as regards the condition and nurture of his body, not only will he not give himself over to bestial and irrational pleasure, and live turned in that direction; but he won’t make health his aim nor give precedence to the ways of becoming strong or healthy or beautiful, unless he is also going to become temperate as a result of them. On the contrary, it is
clear that he will always be tuning the harmony of his body for the sake of the concord of his soul.

GLAUCON: He certainly will, if indeed he is going to be truly musical.

SOCRATES: Won’t he also keep order and concord in his acquisition of money? He won’t be dazzled, will he, by what the masses regard as blessed happiness, and—by increasing the size of his wealth without limit—acquire an unlimited number of evils?

GLAUCON: Not in my view.

SOCRATES: On the contrary, he will keep his eye fixed on the constitution within him and guard against disturbing anything there either with too much money or with too little. Captaining himself in that way, he will increase and spend his wealth, as far as possible by reference to it.

GLAUCON: That’s exactly what he will do.

SOCRATES: Where honors are concerned, too, he will keep his eye on the same thing. He will willingly share in and taste those he believes will make him better. But those that might overthrow the established condition of his soul, he will avoid, both in private and in public.

GLAUCON: So, he won’t be willing to take part in politics, then, if that is what he cares about.

SOCRATES: Yes, by the dog, in his own city, he certainly will. But he may not be willing to do so in his fatherland, unless some divine good luck chances to be his.

GLAUCON: I understand. You mean in the city we have just been founding and describing; the one that exists in words, since I do not think it exists anywhere on earth.

SOCRATES: But there may perhaps be a model of it in the heavens for anyone who wishes to look at it and to found himself on the basis of what he sees. It makes no difference at all whether it exists anywhere or ever will. You see, he would take part in the politics of it alone, and of no other.

GLAUCON: That’s probably right.
SOCRATES: You know that there are many other things about our city that make me think we were entirely right in founding it as we did, but I am particularly thinking of poetry when I say that.

GLAUCON: What about it?

SOCRATES: Our refusal to admit any of it that is imitative. Indeed, the need not to admit it seems even more evident, in my view, now that we have distinguished the elements in the soul from one another.

GLAUCON: How do you mean?

SOCRATES: Between ourselves—for you won’t denounce me to the tragic poets or any of the other imitative ones—I think all such poetry is likely to corrupt the mind of those of its hearers who do not have the knowledge of what it is really like as a drug to counteract it.

GLAUCON: What do you have in mind in saying that?

SOCRATES: I will have to tell you, even though a sort of reverential love I have had for Homer since childhood makes me hesitate to speak. You see, he seems to have been the first teacher and leader of all these fine tragedians. All the same, a man should not be honored more than the truth. So, as I say, I will have to tell you.

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: Listen, then—or rather, answer my questions.

GLAUCON: Ask away.

SOCRATES: Could you tell me what imitation in general is? You see, I do not entirely understand what it is supposed to be.

GLAUCON: So is it likely that I will?

SOCRATES: There would be nothing strange in that, since there are many things the shortsighted see before the sharp-eyed!

GLAUCON: That’s right. But with you present, I could not possibly be very eager to speak out even if there were something I saw. So, you will have to do the looking yourself.
Socrates: Do you want us to begin our investigation with the following point, then, in accordance with our usual procedure? I mean, as you know, we usually posit some one particular form in connection with each set of many things to which we apply the same name.¹ Or don’t you understand?

Glaucion: I do.

Socrates: Then in the present case, too, let’s take any set of many things you like. For example, there are, if you like, many couches and tables.

Glaucion: Of course.

Socrates: But the forms connected to these manufactured items are surely just two, one of a couch and one of a table.

Glaucion: Yes.

Socrates: Don’t we usually say, too, that the craftsman who makes each manufactured item looks toward the form when he makes the couches or the tables we use, and similarly with other things? For surely no craftsman makes the form itself—

Glaucion: How could he?

Socrates: Well, now, see what you would call this craftsman?

Glaucion: Which?

Socrates: The one who makes everything each individual handicraftsman makes.

Glaucion: That’s an amazingly clever man you are talking about!

Socrates: Wait a minute and you will have even more reason to say that! You see, this same handicraftsman is able to make not only every manufactured item, but he also makes all the plants that grow from the earth, and produces all the animals, including himself; and, in addition, he produces earth and sky and gods and everything in the sky, and everything in Hades beneath the earth.

Glaucion: You are talking about a wholly amazing sophist!

Socrates: You do not believe me? Tell me, do you think such a craftsman is completely impossible? Or do you think there is a way in which a maker of all these things could exist, and a way in which he could not? Don’t you see there is a certain way in which even you yourself could make all of them?

Glaucion: What way is that?

Socrates: It is not difficult. On the contrary, it is a sort of craftsmanship that is widely available and quick—and quickest of all, I suppose, if you are

¹ See 478e7–480a13, 507b2–7.
willing to take a mirror and turn it around in all directions. That way you will quickly make the sun and the things in the sky; you will quickly make the earth, yourself and the other animals, manufactured items, plants, and everything else that was mentioned just now.

GLAUCON: Yes, their appearances, but certainly not the things themselves as they truly are.

SOCRATES: Right! You attack the argument at just the right place. For I think the painter is also one of these craftsmen, isn’t he?

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: But you will say, I think, that he does not make the things he makes as they truly are—even though there is a certain way in which the painter also makes a couch. Isn’t that right?

GLAUCON: Yes, he also makes the appearance of one.

SOCRATES: What about the couch-maker? Didn’t you just say that he does not make the form—which we say is what a couch is—but only a particular couch?

GLAUCON: Yes, I did say that.

SOCRATES: Now, if he does not make what it is, he is not making what is, but something that is like what is, but is not. So, if someone were to say that the product of a couch-maker or any other handicraftsman completely is, he probably would not be speaking the truth?

GLAUCON: That, at any rate, is what those who occupy themselves with such arguments would think.

SOCRATES: So we should not be surprised if it also turns out to be somewhat dim in comparison to the truth.

GLAUCON: No, we should not.

SOCRATES: Would you like us, then, to use these same examples to search for that imitator of ours and what he really is?

GLAUCON: I would, if you would.

SOCRATES: Well, then, we have these three sorts of couches. One, that is in nature, which I think we would say a god makes. Or is it someone else?

GLAUCON: No one, I suppose.

SOCRATES: One the carpenter makes.

GLAUCON: Yes.

2 See Glossary of Terms s.v. what it is.

3 I.e., that is in its nature a couch. See 597c2 and 490b3.
SOCRATES: And one the painter makes. Isn’t that so?

GLAUCON: It is.

SOCRATES: So painter, carpenter, and god—these three oversee three kinds of couches?

GLAUCON: Yes, three.

SOCRATES: Now, the god, either because he did not want to, or because it was somehow necessary for him not to make more than one that is in its nature a couch, made only the one that is what a couch itself is. Two or more of these have not been naturally developed by the god and never will be naturally developed.

GLAUCON: Why is that?

SOCRATES: Because, if he were to make only two, one would again come to light whose form they in turn would both possess, and it would be what a couch itself is, not the two.

GLAUCON: That’s right.

SOCRATES: The god knew this, I suppose, and, wishing to be the real maker of the real couch and not just some particular maker of some particular couch, naturally developed the one that is in its nature unique.

GLAUCON: Probably so.

SOCRATES: Would you like us to call him its natural maker, then, or something like that?

GLAUCON: It would be right to do so, at any rate, since it is by nature that he has made it and all the others.

SOCRATES: What about the carpenter? Shouldn’t we call him the craftsman who makes a couch?

GLAUCON: Yes.

SOCRATES: And should we call a painter, too, a craftsman and maker of such a thing?

GLAUCON: Certainly not.

SOCRATES: In that case, what is it you say he is, of a couch?

GLAUCON: In my view, the most reasonable thing to call him is this: he is an imitator of what the others are craftsmen of.

SOCRATES: All right. So the one whose product is three removed from the natural one, you call an imitator?

GLAUCON: Certainly.

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4 See 490b3, 532b1.
SOCRATES: So the tragedian too, if indeed he is an imitator, will be someone who is by his nature third from king and truth, and so will all the other imitators.

GLAUCON: It looks that way.

SOCRATES: We are agreed about the imitator, then. Now, tell me this about the painter: in each case, do you think it is what each thing itself is in its nature that he is trying to imitate, or the products of the craftsmen?

GLAUCON: Those of the craftsmen.

SOCRATES: As they are, or as they appear to be? You have still to make that distinction.

GLAUCON: How do you mean?

SOCRATES: This: if you look at a couch from the side or the front or from anywhere else, does it differ in any way from itself? Or, while not differing at all, does it appear different? And similarly with the others?

GLAUCON: The latter. It appears different, but is not different at all.

SOCRATES: Then consider this very point: at what does painting aim in each case? To imitate what is as it is? Or what appears as it appears? Is it an imitation of an illusion, or of truth?

GLAUCON: Of an illusion.

SOCRATES: So, imitation is surely far removed from the truth. And the reason that it produces everything, it seems, is that it grasps only a small part of each thing—and that is an illusion. For example, the painter, we say, can paint us a cobbler, a carpenter, or any other craftsman, even though he knows nothing about these crafts. All the same, if he is a good painter, by painting a carpenter and displaying him at a distance, he might deceive children and foolish adults into thinking it truly is a carpenter.

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: In fact, my friend, I imagine that what we must bear in mind in all these cases is this: when someone tells us he has met a human being who knows every craft as well as everything else anyone knows, and that there is nothing of which he does not have a more exact knowledge than anyone else, we should assume we are talking to a naïve fellow. He has been deceived, it seems, by an encounter with some sort of sorcerer or imitator, whom he therefore considers to be all-wise. But that is because of his own inability to distinguish between knowledge, lack of knowledge, and imitation.

GLAUCON: That is absolutely true.

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5 God is called king at Laws 10.904a6.
SOCRATES: Well, then, we must next consider tragedy and its leader, Homer, since we hear from some that these men know every craft, everything relevant to human virtue and vice, and even all about divine matters. They claim, you see, that if a good poet is to write beautiful poetry about the things he writes about, he must have knowledge of them when he writes, or else he would be unable to. We should consider, then, whether those who tell us this have been deceived by their encounters with these imitators and do not realize, when they see their works, that they are three removes from what is, and are easy to produce without knowledge of the truth. For they produce illusions, not things that are. Or whether there is something in what they say, and good poets really do have knowledge of the things about which the masses think they speak so well.

GLAUCON: We certainly must consider that.

SOCRATES: Do you think, then, that if someone could make both what is imitated and its image, he would allow himself to take making images seriously, and put it at the forefront of his life as the best ability he had?

GLAUCON: No, I do not.

SOCRATES: But if he truly had knowledge of what he imitates, I suppose he would take deeds much more seriously than their imitations, would try to leave behind many beautiful deeds as his own memorials, and would be much more eager to be the subject of a eulogy than the author of one.

GLAUCON: I suppose so. I mean, these things certainly are not equal either in honor or in benefit.

SOCRATES: Let’s not demand an account, then, of the other things from Homer or any other poet. Let’s not ask if any of them is a doctor or only an imitator of what doctors say; or which people any of the poets, old or new, has reportedly made healthy, as Asclepius did; or which students of medicine he left behind, as Asclepius did his sons. And let’s not ask them about the other crafts either, but leave them aside. When it comes, however, to the most important and most beautiful things of which Homer undertakes to speak—warfare, generalship, city government, and a person’s education—surely, it is fair to question him as follows: “My dear Homer, if you are not third removed from the truth about virtue, and are not the sort of craftsman of an image, which is what we defined an imitator to be, but if you are even in second place and capable of knowing what practices make people better or worse in private or in public life, tell us which cities are better governed because of you, as the Lacedaemonians are because of Lycurgus, and as many others—big and small—are because of many other men. What city gives you credit for having proved to be a good lawgiver who benefited it? Italy and Sicily give it to Charondas, and we give it to Solon. Who gives it to you?” Will he be able to name one?
Art in Kallipolis

GLAUCON: I suppose not. At any rate, none is mentioned even by the Homeridae themselves.6

SOCRATES: Then is any war in Homer’s time remembered that was well fought because of his leadership or advice?

GLAUCON: None at all.

SOCRATES: Then as you would expect in the case of a man wise in deeds, are we told of his many ingenious inventions in the crafts or other activities, as we are about Thales of Miletus and Anacharsis the Scythian?

GLAUCON: There’s nothing of that sort.

SOCRATES: Then if there is nothing of a public nature, is Homer said to have been a leader, during his own lifetime, in the education of people who loved associating with him and passed on a Homeric way of life to those who came later? Is he like Pythagoras, who was himself particularly loved for this reason, and whose followers even today still seem to be conspicuous for a way of life they call Pythagorean?

GLAUCON: Again, we are told nothing of this kind. Indeed, Socrates, Creophylus, the companion of Homer, would presumably seem even more ridiculous than his name7 suggests as an example of such education, if the story told about Homer is true. You see, we are told that while he was alive, Creophylus completely neglected him.

SOCRATES: Yes, we are told that. But, Glaucon, if Homer had really been able to educate people and make them better, if he had been able, not to imitate such matters but to know about them, wouldn’t he have had many companions who honored and loved him? Protagoras of Abdera, Prodicus of Ceos, and a great many others are able to convince anyone who associates with them in private that he wouldn’t be able to manage his household or city unless they themselves supervised his education, and they are so intensely loved because of this wisdom of theirs that their disciples do everything except carry them around on their shoulders. Are we to believe, then, that if Homer had been able to help people become virtuous, his companions would have allowed either him or Hesiod to wander around as rhapsodes, and wouldn’t have clung far tighter to them than to gold and compelled them to come home and live with them? And if persuasion failed, wouldn’t they have followed them wherever they went until they had received sufficient education?

GLAUCON: I think what you say is entirely true, Socrates.

6 The rhapsodes and poets who recited and expounded Homer throughout the Greek world.

7 It derives from two words, kreas (meat) and phylon (race or kind). A modern equivalent might be “meathead.”
SOCRATES: Are we to conclude, then, that all poets, beginning with Homer, imitate images of virtue and of all the other things they write about, and have no grasp of the truth? Although, as we were saying just now, a painter will make what seems to be a shoemaker to those who know as little about shoemaking as he does himself, but who look at things in terms of their colors and shapes.8

GLAUCON: That’s right.

SOCRATES: Similarly, I suppose, we will say that the poet uses words and phrases to paint colored pictures of each of the crafts, even though he knows only how to imitate them; so that others like himself, who look at things in terms of words, will think he speaks extremely well about shoemaking or generalship or anything else, provided he speaks with meter, rhythm, and harmony. That is how great a natural spell these things cast. For if a poet’s works are stripped of their musical colorings and spoken just by themselves, I think you know what they look like. You have surely seen them.

GLAUCON: I certainly have.

SOCRATES: Don’t they resemble the faces of those who are young but not really beautiful, after the bloom of youth has left them?

GLAUCON: Absolutely.

SOCRATES: Come on, then, consider this: the maker of an image—the imitator—knows nothing, we say, about what is, but only about what appears. Isn’t that so?

GLAUCON: Yes.

SOCRATES: Then let’s not leave the story half-told. Let’s look at the whole thing.

GLAUCON: Go on.

SOCRATES: A painter, we say, will paint reins and a bit?

GLAUCON: Yes.

SOCRATES: But it is the saddler and the blacksmith who make them?

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: Does the painter know what the reins and bit should be like, then? Or do not even their makers—the saddler and the blacksmith—know this, but only the one who knows how to use them, the horseman?

GLAUCON: That’s absolutely true.

SOCRATES: So, won’t we say that the same holds for everything?

8 See 476b4–8.
GLAUCON: What?

SOCRATES: That for each thing there are these three crafts: one that will use, one that will make, one that will imitate?

GLAUCON: Yes.

SOCRATES: Then aren’t the virtue, goodness, and correctness of each manufactured item, living creature, and activity related to nothing but the use for which each is made or naturally developed?

GLAUCON: They are.

SOCRATES: So it is entirely necessary, then, that the user of each thing has the most experience of it, and that he inform the maker about what the good and bad points are in the actual use of the thing he uses. For example, it is the flute player, I take it, who informs the flute-maker about which flutes respond well in actual playing, and prescribes how they should be made, while the maker obeys him.

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: Doesn’t the one who knows give information, then, about good and bad flutes, whereas the other, by relying on him, makes them?

GLAUCON: Yes.

SOCRATES: So, as regards the same manufactured item, its maker—through associating with the one who knows and having to listen to the one who knows—has correct belief about its good and bad qualities, while its user has knowledge.

GLAUCON: Exactly.

SOCRATES: What about the imitator? Will he, on the basis of using the things he paints, have knowledge of whether they are good and correct or not? Or will he have correct belief through having to associate with the one who knows and being told how he should paint them?

GLAUCON: Neither.

SOCRATES: So an imitator has neither knowledge nor correct belief about whether the things he makes are good or bad.

GLAUCON: Apparently not.

SOCRATES: How well situated the poetic imitator is, then, in relation to wisdom about the subjects of his poems!

GLAUCON: He isn’t really.

SOCRATES: And yet he will go on imitating all the same, even though he does not know in what way each thing is good or bad. On the contrary, whatever appears good to the masses who know nothing—that, it seems, is what he will imitate.
GLAUCON: What else?
SOCRATES: Apparently, then, we are fairly well agreed on the following: that the imitator knows nothing worth mentioning about the things he imitates, but that imitation is a kind of game, not something to be taken seriously; and that tragic poets, whether in iambic or epic verse, are as imitative as they could possibly be.

GLAUCON: Absolutely.

SOCRATES: In the name of Zeus, then, this business of imitation is concerned with what is third removed from the truth. Isn’t that right?

GLAUCON: Yes.

SOCRATES: Now, then, on which of the elements in a human being does it have its effect?

GLAUCON: What sort of element do you mean?

SOCRATES: This sort: the same object, viewed from nearby, does not appear the same size, I presume, as when viewed from a distance.

GLAUCON: No, it does not.

SOCRATES: And the same things appear bent and straight when seen in water or out of it, or concave and convex because sight is misled by colors; and every other similar sort of confusion is clearly present in our soul. It is because it exploits this weakness in our nature that illusionist painting is nothing short of sorcery, and neither are jugglery or many other similar sorts of trickery.

GLAUCON: True.

SOCRATES: And haven’t measuring, counting, and weighing proved to be most welcome assistants in these cases, ensuring that what appears bigger or smaller or more numerous or heavier does not rule within us, but rather what has calculated or measured or even weighed?

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: And that is the task of the soul’s rational element?

GLAUCON: Yes, of it.

SOCRATES: But quite often, when it has measured and indicates that some things are larger or smaller than others, or the same size, the opposite simultaneously appears to hold of these same things.

GLAUCON: Yes.

SOCRATES: And didn’t we say that it is impossible for the same thing to believe opposites about the same thing at the same time?9

9 436b8–c1.
GLAUCON: Yes, and we were right to say it.

SOCRATES: So, the element in the soul that believes contrary to the measurements and the one that believes in accord with the measurements could not be the same.

GLAUCON: No, they could not.

SOCRATES: But the one that puts its trust in measurement and calculation would be the best element in the soul.

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: So the one that opposes it would be one of the inferior parts in us.

GLAUCON: Necessarily.

SOCRATES: That, then, was what I wanted to get agreement about when I said that painting—and imitation as a whole—are far from the truth when they produce their work; and moreover that imitation really consorts with an element in us that is far from wisdom, and that nothing healthy or true can come from their relationship or friendship.

GLAUCON: That's absolutely right.

SOCRATES: So, imitation is an inferior thing that consorts with another inferior thing to produce inferior offspring.

GLAUCON: So it seems.

SOCRATES: Does this apply only to the imitation that is visible, or also to the one that is audible—the one we call poetry?

GLAUCON: It probably applies to that as well.

SOCRATES: Well, let's not rely solely on a probable analogy with painting. Instead, let's also go directly again to the very element in our mind with which poetic imitation consorts and see whether it is inferior or excellent.

GLAUCON: Yes, we should.

SOCRATES: Then let's put it as follows. Imitative poetry, we say, imitates human beings acting under compulsion or voluntarily, who, as a result of these actions, believe they are doing either well or badly, and so experience either pain or enjoyment in all these situations. Does it imitate anything apart from these?

GLAUCON: Not a thing.

SOCRATES: So, is a human being of one mind in all these circumstances then? Or, just as in the case of visible representation, where he was split into factions and had opposite beliefs in him about the same things at the same time, is he also split into factions and at war with himself in matters of action? But I am reminded that there is really no need now for us to reach
agreement on this question. You see, in our earlier arguments, we were sufficiently agreed about all that when we said that our soul is filled with myriad opposites of that sort at the same time.\textsuperscript{10}

GLAUCON: And rightly so.

SOCRATES: Yes, it was right. But we omitted something then that I now think we must discuss.

GLAUCON: What’s that?

SOCRATES: When a good man suffers some stroke of bad luck, such as the loss of a son or something else he values very highly, we also said in our earlier arguments, as you know, that he will bear it more easily than others.\textsuperscript{11}

GLAUCON: We certainly did.

SOCRATES: Now, let’s consider this: will he not grieve at all? Or, since that is impossible, will he be somehow measured in the face of pain?

GLAUCON: The latter is probably closer to the truth.

SOCRATES: Now, tell me this about him: do you think he will be more likely to fight and resist pain when he is seen by his equals, or when he is just by himself in a solitary place?

GLAUCON: He’s sure to fight it far more when he is being seen.

SOCRATES: But when he is alone, I imagine, he will venture to say many things he would be ashamed if someone else heard, and to do many things he would not want anyone else to see him doing.

GLAUCON: That’s right.

SOCRATES: And isn’t it reason and law that tell him to resist, while what urges him to give in to the pains is the feeling itself?

GLAUCON: True.

SOCRATES: And when there are opposite impulses in a human being in relation to the same thing at the same time, we say that there must be two elements in him.

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: Isn’t one part ready to be persuaded to follow the law, wherever the law leads?

GLAUCON: Can you explain how?

SOCRATES: The law says, as you know, that it is best to keep as quiet as possible in misfortunes and not get irritated, since what is really good or bad in such things is not clear. There is nothing to be gained by taking

\textsuperscript{10} 439c2–441c7.

\textsuperscript{11} 387d4–e4.
them hard, nor is any aspect of human affairs worth getting very serious
about. And the very thing whose aid we need as quickly as possible in such
circumstances is the one our grieving hinders.

GLAUCON: Which do you mean?

SOCRATES: The capacity to deliberate about what has happened and, as
with the fall of the dice, to arrange our affairs, given what has befallen us,
in whatever way reason determines would be best. Instead of acting like
children who have fallen over, and who hold on to the hurt part and spend
their time wailing, we should always accustom our souls to turn as quickly
as possible to curing and raising up the part that has suffered a fall and is
sick, so as to banish lamentation by means of medicine.

GLAUCON: That would be the most correct way to deal with bad luck,
anyway.

SOCRATES: So it is the best element, we say, that is willing to follow this
rational calculation.

GLAUCON: Clearly.

SOCRATES: As for the part that leads us to recollections of our suffering
and to lamentations, and is insatiable for these things, won’t we say that it is
the element that lacks reason, is idle, and is a friend of cowardice?

GLAUCON: We certainly will.

SOCRATES: Now, this element—the one that gets irritated—admits of
much complex imitation; whereas the wise and quiet character, which
always remains pretty much the same, is neither easy to imitate nor easy to
understand when imitated—especially not at a festival where multifarious
people are gathered together in theaters. For the experience being imitated
is alien to them.

GLAUCON: Absolutely.

SOCRATES: The imitative poet, then, clearly does not naturally relate to
this best element in the soul, and his wisdom is not directed to pleasing it—
not if he is going to attain a good reputation with the masses—but to the
irritable and complex character, because it is easy to imitate.

GLAUCON: Clearly.

SOCRATES: So, it would at last be right to take him and place him beside
the painter as his counterpart. For he is like the latter in producing things
that are inferior as regards truth, and is also similar to him in associating
with the other element in souls, not with the best one. So, we would also at
last be justified in not admitting him into a city that is to be well governed.
You see, he arouses and nourishes this element in the soul and, by making it
strong, destroys the rational one—just as someone in a city who makes
wicked people strong, by handing the city over to them, ruins the better ones. Similarly, we will say an imitative poet produces a bad constitution in the soul of each individual by making images that are very far removed from the truth and by gratifying the element in it that lacks understanding and cannot distinguish bigger from smaller, but believes the same things to be now large, now small.12

GLAUCON: He does, indeed.

SOCRATES: But we haven’t yet brought our chief charge against imitation. For its power to corrupt all but a very few good people is surely an altogether terrible one.

GLAUCON: It certainly is, if it really can do that.

SOCRATES: Listen and consider. When even the best of us hear Homer, or some other tragic poet, imitating one of the heroes in a state of grief and making a long speech of lamentation, or even chanting and beating his breast, you know we enjoy it and give ourselves over to it. We suffer along with the hero and take his sufferings seriously. And we praise the one who affects us most in this way as a good poet.

GLAUCON: Of course I know.

SOCRATES: But when one of us suffers a personal loss, you also realize we do the opposite: we pride ourselves if we are able to keep quiet and endure it, in the belief that that is what a man does, whereas what we praised before is what a woman does.

GLAUCON: I do realize that.

SOCRATES: Is praise of that sort rightly bestowed, then? Is it right to look at the sort of man we would be, not honored, but rather ashamed to resemble, and instead of being disgusted by what we see to enjoy and praise it?

GLAUCON: No, by Zeus, that does not seem reasonable.

SOCRATES: Yes, it does. At least, it does if you look at it in the following way.

GLAUCON: How?

SOCRATES: If you reflect as follows: what is forcibly kept in check in our personal misfortunes and has an insatiable hunger for weeping and lamenting—since that is what it has a natural appetite for—is the very factor that gets satisfaction and enjoyment from the poets. Second, our naturally best element, since it has not been adequately educated by reason or habit, relaxes its guard over the lamenting one, since it is watching the sufferings of somebody else and thinks there is no shame involved for it in praising and pitying another purportedly good man who grieves excessively. On the

12 See 523b9–524a5.
Art in Kallipolis

contrary, it thinks that to be a clear profit—I mean the pleasure it gets. And it would not want to be deprived of it by despising the whole poem. You see, I think only a few people are able to calculate that the enjoyment of other people’s sufferings is inevitably transferred to one’s own, since, when pity is nourished and strengthened by the former, it is not easily suppressed in the case of one’s own sufferings.

GLAUCON: That’s absolutely true.

SOCRATES: Doesn’t the same argument also apply to humor? You see, if there are jokes you would be ashamed to tell yourself, but that you very much enjoy when you hear them imitated in a comedy or even in private, and that you don’t hate as something bad, aren’t you doing the same as with the things you pity? For the element in you that wanted to tell the jokes, but which you held back by means of reason because you were afraid of being reputed a buffoon, you now release; and having made it strong in that way, you have been led unawares into becoming a comedian in your own life.

GLAUCON: Exactly.

SOCRATES: And in the case of sexual desires, anger, and all the appetites, pains, and pleasures in the soul, which we say accompany every action of ours, the effect of poetic imitation on us is the same. I mean, it nurtures and waters them when they should be dried up, and establishes them as rulers in us when—if we are to become better and happier rather than worse and more wretched—they should be ruled.

GLAUCON: I cannot disagree with you.

SOCRATES: In that case, Glaucion, when you meet admirers of Homer—who tell us that this is the poet who educated Greece, and that for the management of human affairs and education in them, one should take up his works and learn them and live guided by this poet in the arrangement of one’s whole life—you should befriend and welcome them, since they are the best they are capable of being. And you should agree that Homer is the most poetic of the tragedians and the first among them. Nonetheless, be aware that hymns to the gods and eulogies of good people are the only poetry we can admit into our city. For if you admit the honeyed Muse, whether in lyric or epic poetry, pleasure and pain will be kings in your city instead of law and the thing that has always been generally believed to be best—reason.

GLAUCON: That’s absolutely true.

SOCRATES: Let that, then, be our defense for our return to the topic of poetry, which shows that, given her nature, we were right to banish her from the city earlier, since our argument compelled us. But let’s also tell her—in case we are charged with some harshness and boorishness—that there is an ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy. For such expressions as “the
bitch yelping at its master” and “howling,” and “great in the empty elo-
cquence of fools,” and “control by a mob of the omni-wise,” and “the subtle thinkers who are beggars all,” and countless others are signs of this old opposition. 13 All the same, let it be said that, if the imitative poetry that aims at pleasure has any argument to show it should have a place in a well-governed city, we would gladly welcome it back, since we are well aware of being charmed by it ourselves. Still, it is not pious to betray what one believes to be the truth. What about you, my friend; aren’t you also charmed by it, especially when it is through Homer that you look at it?

GLAUCON: Very.

SOCRATES: Isn’t it just, then, for her to reenter in that way, when she has defended herself in lyric or some other meter?

GLAUCON: Yes, indeed.

SOCRATES: Then we will surely allow her defenders—the ones who are not poets themselves, but lovers of poetry—to argue without meter on her behalf, showing that she gives not only pleasure but also benefit both to constitutions and to human life. Indeed, we will listen to them graciously, since we would certainly profit if poetry were shown to be not only pleasant but also beneficial.

GLAUCON: How could we fail to profit?

SOCRATES: But if it is not, my dear comrade, we will behave like men who have fallen in love. If they do not believe their passion is beneficial, hard though it is, they nonetheless stay away. And we too, because of the passion for this sort of poetry implanted in us by our upbringing in those fine constitutions, are well disposed to have her appear in the best and truest light. But as long as she is not able to produce such a defense, then whenever we listen to her, we will chant to ourselves the argument we just now put forward as a counter-charm to prevent us from slipping back into the childish passion that the masses have. For we have come to see that such poetry is not to be taken seriously, as a serious undertaking that grasps truth; but that anyone who listens to it should be careful, if he is concerned about the constitution within him, and should believe what we have said about poetry.

GLAUCON: I completely agree.

SOCRATES: It is a great struggle, my dear Glaucon, greater than people think, to become good rather than bad. So, we must not be tempted by

13 Philosophers, such as Xenophanes and Heraclitus, attacked Homer and Hesiod for their immoral tales about the gods. Poets, such as Aristophanes in his Clouds, attacked philosophers for subverting traditional ethical and religious values. The sources of these particular quotations, however, are unknown.
honor, money, or any sort of office whatever—not even by poetry!—into thinking that it is worthwhile to neglect justice and the rest of virtue.

GLAUCON: I agree with you on the basis of what we have said. And so, I think, would anyone else.

SOCRATES: And yet the greatest rewards of virtue, and the prizes proposed for it, have not been discussed.

GLAUCON: You must have something incredibly great in mind, if it is greater than those already mentioned!

SOCRATES: In a short period of time, could anything really great come to pass? I mean, the entire period from childhood to old age is surely short when compared to the whole of time.

GLAUCON: It's a mere nothing.

SOCRATES: Well, then, do you think an immortal thing should be seriously concerned with that period rather than the whole of time?

GLAUCON: I suppose not, but what exactly do you have in mind by that?

SOCRATES: Haven't you realized that our souls are immortal and never destroyed?

*He looked at me and said in amazement:*

No, by Zeus, I have not. But are you really in a position to assert that?

SOCRATES: I certainly ought to be, and I think you are, too. There is nothing difficult about it.

GLAUCON: There is for me. So I would be glad to hear from you about this non-difficult topic!

SOCRATES: Listen then.

GLAUCON: All you have to do is speak!

SOCRATES: Do you think there is a good and a bad?

GLAUCON: I do.

SOCRATES: And do you think about them the same way I do?

GLAUCON: What way?

SOCRATES: What destroys and corrupts coincides entirely with the bad, while what preserves and benefits coincides entirely with the good.

GLAUCON: I do.

SOCRATES: And do you think there is a good and a bad for each thing, such as ophthalmia for the eyes, sickness for the whole body, blight for grain, rot for wood, rust for iron and bronze, and, as I say, a natural badness and sickness for nearly everything?
GLAUCON: I certainly do.

SOCRATES: And when one of them attaches itself to something, doesn’t it make the thing to which it attaches itself deficient? And in the end, doesn’t it break it down completely and destroy it?

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: So the badness natural to each thing—the deficiency peculiar to each—destroys it, but if that does not destroy it, there is nothing else left to destroy it. For obviously the good will never destroy anything, and again what is neither good nor bad won’t either.

GLAUCON: How could it?

SOCRATES: So if we discover something, the badness of which causes it to deteriorate but cannot break it down and destroy it, won’t we immediately know that something with such a nature cannot be destroyed after all?

GLAUCON: That seems reasonable.

SOCRATES: Well, then, what about the soul? Isn’t there something that makes it bad?

GLAUCON: Certainly. All the things we were discussing earlier: injustice, intemperance, cowardice, and ignorance.

SOCRATES: Do any of these break it down and destroy it? Think about it, so we are not deceived into believing that when an unjust and foolish person is caught, he is destroyed by injustice, which is a deficiency in a soul. Instead, let’s proceed this way: just as the body’s deficiency, which is disease, wastes and destroys a body, and brings it to the point of not being a body at all, so all the things we mentioned just now reach the point of not being when their own peculiar badness attaches itself to them, is present in them, and destroys them. Isn’t that so?

GLAUCON: Yes.

SOCRATES: Come on, then, and look at the soul in the same way. When injustice and the rest of vices are present in it, does their presence in it and attachment to it corrupt and wither it until they bring it to the point of death and separate it from the body?

GLAUCON: No, they never do that.

SOCRATES: But surely it is unreasonable to suppose that a thing is destroyed by something else’s deficiency and not by its own?

GLAUCON: It is unreasonable.

SOCRATES: Think about it, Glaucon. We do not even believe that a body would be destroyed by the deficiency belonging to foods, whether it is staleness, rottenness, or anything else. But if the foods’ own deficiency
induces bodily deterioration, we will say the body was destroyed through them by its own badness, which is disease. But we will never admit that the body is destroyed by the deficiency belonging to foods—since they and the body are different things—except when external badness induces the natural badness.

GLAUCON: That’s absolutely right.

SOCRATES: By the same argument, then, if the body’s deficiency does not induce a soul’s own deficiency in a soul, we will never admit that a soul is destroyed by external badness in the absence of its own peculiar deficiency—one thing by another’s badness.

GLAUCON: Yes, that’s reasonable.

SOCRATES: Well, then, let’s refute these arguments and show that what we said was not right. Or, so long as they remain unrefuted, let’s never say that the soul even comes close to being destroyed by a fever or any other disease, or by killing for that matter—not even if one were to cut the entire body up into the very smallest pieces—until someone demonstrates to us that these conditions of the body make the soul itself more unjust and more impious. But when an external badness is present, while its own particular badness is absent, let’s not allow anyone to say that a soul or anything else whatever is destroyed.

GLAUCON: But you may be sure no one will ever prove that the souls of the dying are made more unjust by death!

SOCRATES: But suppose someone dares to come to grips with our argument and—simply in order to avoid having to agree that our souls are immortal—dares to say that a dying man does become worse and more unjust. We are sure to reply that if what he says is true, injustice must be as deadly as a disease to those who have it, and that those who catch it must die because of its own deadly nature—with the worst cases dying quickly and the less serious ones more slowly—and not as now in fact happens, where the unjust are put to death because of their injustice by others who inflict the penalty.

GLAUCON: By Zeus, injustice won’t seem so altogether terrible if it will be deadly to the person who contracts it, since then it would be an escape from evils! But I am more inclined to think that it will be shown to be entirely the opposite—something that kills others if it can, but makes its possessor very lively indeed—and not just lively, but positively sleepless! That’s how far it is, in my view, from being deadly.

SOCRATES: You are right. After all, if its own deficiency—its own badness—is not enough to kill and destroy the soul, an evil designed for the destruction of something else will hardly destroy the soul, or anything else except what it is designed to destroy.
Book 10

GLAUCON: “Hardly” is right, it seems.

SOCRATES: Then when something is not destroyed by a single bad thing—whether its own or an external one—clearly it must always exist. And if it always exists, it is immortal.

GLAUCON: It must be.

SOCRATES: Well, then, let’s assume it to be so. And if it is so, you realize that the same ones will always exist. I mean, they surely could not become fewer in number if none is destroyed, or more numerous either. For if anything immortal is increased, you know that the increase would have to come from the mortal, and then everything would end up being immortal.

GLAUCON: True.

SOCRATES: Then we must not think such a thing—for our argument does not allow it. And we must not think, either, that the soul in its truest nature is full of multicolored variety and dissimilarity and conflict with itself.

GLAUCON: How do you mean?

SOCRATES: It is not easy for something to be immortal when it is composed of many elements and is not composed in the most beautiful way—which is how the soul now seemed to us.

GLAUCON: It probably isn’t.

SOCRATES: Yet both our recent argument and others as well require us to accept that the soul is immortal. But what it is like in truth, seen as it should be, not maimed by its partnership with the body and other bad things, which is how we see it now, what it is like when it has become pure—that we can adequately see only by means of rational calculation. And you will find it to be a much more beautiful thing than we thought and get a much clearer view of all the cases of justice and injustice and of all the other things that we have so far discussed. So far, what we have said about the soul is true of it as it appears at present. But the condition we have seen it in is like that of all the sea god Glaucus, whose original nature cannot easily be made out by those who catch glimpses of him, because some of the original parts of his body have been broken off, others have been worn away and altogether mutilated by the waves, and other things—shells, seaweeds, and rocks—have grown into him, so that he looks more like any wild beast than what he naturally was. Such, too, is the condition of the soul when we see it beset by myriad bad things. But, Glaucon, we should be looking in another direction.

GLAUCON: Where?

14 Ancient paintings may have represented Glaucus in the way Plato describes him here. His name appears in the accusative (Glaukon), suggesting a play on Glacon (Glaukôn).
The Consequences of Justice and Injustice

SOCRATES: To its love of wisdom. We must keep in mind what it grasps and the kinds of things with which it longs to associate, because it is akin to what is divine and immortal and what always exists, and what it would become if it followed this longing with its whole being and if that impulse lifted it out of the sea in which it now is, and struck off the rocks and shells that, because it now feasts on earth, have grown around it in a wild, earthy, and stony profusion as a result of those so-called happy feastings. And then you would see its true nature, whether multiform or uniform, or somehow some other way. But we have given a pretty good account now, I think, of what its condition is and what form it takes in human life.

GLAUCON: We certainly have.

SOCRATES: In the course of our discussion, then, did we respond to the other points, without having to invoke the rewards and reputations of justice, as you all said Homer and Hesiod did? Instead, haven’t we found that justice itself is the best thing for the soul itself, and that the soul should do what is just, whether it has Gyges’ ring or not, or even the cap of Hades as well.

GLAUCON: That’s absolutely true. We have.

SOCRATES: So, Glaucon, isn’t it now at last unobjectionable, in addition, also to give back to justice and the rest of virtue both the kind and quantity of wages they bring to the soul, both from human beings and from gods, both during life and after death?

GLAUCON: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Then will you give me back what you borrowed from me in the course of the discussion?

GLAUCON: What in particular?

SOCRATES: I granted you that the just man should seem unjust and the unjust one just. For you thought that even if it would be impossible for these things to remain hidden from both gods and human beings, all the same, it had to be granted for the sake of argument, so that justice itself could be judged in relation to injustice itself. Don’t you remember?

15 Philosophia.
16 See 519a8–b5.
17 Eite polueidês eite monoeidês: having many elements or only one.
18 The reference is to the challenge posed by Glaucon and Adeimantus at 357a1–367e5. But they, of course, are renewing the challenge posed by Thrasymachus in Book 1 (see 358b1–c1).
19 The ring of Gyges is discussed at 359c6–360c5. The cap of Hades also made its wearer invisible.
20 See 360e1–361d3, 367b2–e5.
GLAUCON: I would be unjust if I didn’t!

SOCRATES: Well, then, since they have now been judged, I ask on behalf of justice for a return of the reputation it in fact has among gods and human beings; and that we agree that it does indeed have such a reputation, and so may carry off the prizes it gains for someone by making him seem just; since we have already seen that it does give the good things that come from being just, and does not deceive those who really possess it.

GLAUCON: That’s a just request.

SOCRATES: Then won’t you first give this back, that it certainly does not remain hidden from the gods what each of the two is like?

GLAUCON: We will.

SOCRATES: But if it does not remain hidden, one would be loved by the gods and one hated, as we agreed at the beginning.21

GLAUCON: That’s right.

SOCRATES: And won’t we also agree that everything that comes to the one who is loved by gods—insofar as it comes from the gods themselves—is the best possible, unless it is some unavoidable bad thing due to him for an earlier mistake?22

GLAUCON: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Similarly, we must suppose that if a just man falls into poverty or disease or some of the other things that seem bad, it will end well for him during his lifetime or even in death. For surely the gods at least will never neglect anyone who eagerly wishes to become just and, by practicing virtue, to make himself as much like a god as a human being can.

GLAUCON: It is certainly reasonable to think that a man of that sort won’t be neglected by one who is like him.

SOCRATES: And mustn’t we think the opposite of the unjust one?

GLAUCON: Definitely.

SOCRATES: Those, then, are the sorts of prizes that come from the gods to the just man.

GLAUCON: That’s certainly what I believe.

SOCRATES: What about from human beings? What does a just man get from them? If we are to assert what is really the case, isn’t it this? Aren’t clever but unjust men precisely like runners who run well on the first leg but not on the return one?23 They leap away sharply at first, but in the end

21 352a10–b2, 363a5–e4.
22 A foreshadowing of the doctrine of reincarnation introduced below.
23 The race is a sprint from one end of the stadium to the other and back.
The Myth of Er

they become ridiculous and, heads drooping, run off the field uncrowned. True runners, on the other hand, make it to the end, collect the prizes, and are crowned as victors. And isn’t it also generally what happens to just people? Toward the end of each course of action and association and of life as a whole, don’t they enjoy a good reputation and collect the prizes that come from human beings?

GLAUCON: Of course.

SOCRATES: Will you then allow me to say about them what you said about the unjust? For I will claim that it is the just who, when they are old enough, hold the ruling offices in their city if they choose, marry from whatever family they choose, and give their children in marriage to whomever they please. Indeed, all the things that you said about the others, I now say about these. As for the unjust, the majority of them, even if they remain hidden when they are young, are caught by the end of the race and ridiculed, and, by the time they get old, have become wretched and are showered with abuse by foreigners and citizens, beaten with whips, and made to suffer those punishments you rightly described as crude, such as racking and burning. Imagine I have claimed that they suffer all such things. Well, as I say, see if you will stand for it.

GLAUCON: Of course I will. What you say is right.

SOCRATES: Well, then, while the just man is alive, these are the sorts of prizes, wages, and gifts he receives from gods and human beings, in addition to those good things that justice itself provides.

GLAUCON: Fine and secure ones they are, too!

SOCRATES: Well, they are nothing in number or size compared to those that await each man after death. We must hear about them, too, so that, by hearing them, each of these men may get back in full what he is owed by the argument.

GLAUCON: Please describe them, then, since there are not many things it would be more pleasant to hear.

SOCRATES: Well, it is not an Alcinous–story I am going to tell you, but that of a brave man called Er, the son of Armenias, by race a Pamphylian.25

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24 361d7–362c8.

25 Books 9–11 of the Odyssey were traditionally referred to as Alkinou apologoi, the tales of Alcinous. Included among them is the story in Book 11 of Odyssey's descent into Hades. Since the word translated by "brave" is alkinou, which is very similar to Alkinou, some sort of pun seems to be involved. The following is one attractive way to interpret it. Alkinou might be taken as a compound of alkê (strength) + nous (understanding) and alkinou as a compound of alkê + Moua (a Muse). Socrates would then be saying something like: it isn’t a tale that shows strength of understanding that I’m going to tell but one that shows the strength of the Muse of storytelling.
Book 10

Once upon a time, he was killed in battle. On the tenth day, when the rest of the dead were picked up, they were already putrefying, but he was picked up still quite sound. When he had been taken home and was lying on the pyre before his funeral on the twelfth day, he revived and, after reviving, told what he had seen in the other world.

He said that when his soul had departed, it traveled together with many others and came to a daimonic place, where there were two adjacent openings in the earth and two in the heavens above and opposite them. Judges were seated between these. And, when they had made their judgments, they told the just to go to the right up through the heavens, with signs of the judgments attached to their fronts. But the unjust they told to travel to the left and down. And they too had on their backs signs of all their deeds. When he himself came forward, they said that he was to be a messenger to human beings to tell them about the things happening there, and they told him to listen to and look at everything in the place.

Through one of the openings in the heavens and one in the earth, he saw souls departing after judgment had been passed on them. Through the other two, they were arriving. From the one in the earth they came up parched and dusty, while from the one in the heavens they came down pure. And the ones that had just arrived seemed to have come from a long journey, and went off gladly to the meadow, like a crowd going to a festival, and set up camp there. Those that knew one another exchanged greetings and those coming up from the earth asked the others about the things up there, while those from the heavens asked about the others’ experiences. They told their stories to one another, the former weeping and lamenting as they recollected all they had suffered and seen on their journey below the earth—which lasted a thousand years—and the ones from heaven telling, in turn, about their happy experiences and the inconceivably beautiful sights they had seen.

To tell it all, Glaucon, would take a long time. But the gist, he said, was this: for all the unjust things they had done and for all the people they had wronged, they had paid the penalty for every one in turn, ten times over for each. That is to say, they paid for each injustice once in every hundred years of their journey, so that, on the assumption that a hundred years is roughly the length of a human life, they paid a tenfold penalty for each injustice. For example, if some of them had caused many deaths or had betrayed cities or armies and reduced them to slavery, or had taken part in other evil-doing, they would receive ten times the pain for each of them. On the other hand, if they had done good deeds and become just and pious, they received commensurate awards.

He said some other things about the stillborn and those who lived for only a short time, but they are not worth recounting. And he told of even...
greater wages for impiety or piety toward gods or parents, and for murder. He said he was there, you see, when someone asked where the great Ardiaius was. This Ardiaius had been a tyrant in a city in Pamphylia just a thousand years before that, and was said to have killed his aged father and older brother and committed many other impious deeds as well. He said the one who was asked responded: “He has not come here and never will. For in fact this, too, was one of the terrible sights we saw. When we were near the mouth, about to come up after all our sufferings were over, we suddenly saw Ardiaius together with some others, almost all of whom were tyrants—although there were also some private individuals among them who had committed great crimes. They thought that they were about to go up, but the mouth would not let them through. Instead, it roared whenever one of these incurably bad people, or anyone else who had not paid a sufficient penalty, tried to go up. At that location, there were savage men, all fiery to look at, standing by, paying attention to the sound, who grabbed some of these people and led them away. But in the case of Ardiaius and others, they bound their feet, hands, and neck and threw them down and flayed them. They dragged them along the road outside, lacerating them on thorn bushes. They explained to those who were passing by at the time why they were being dragged away, and said that they were to be thrown into Tartarus. He said that of the many and multifarious fears they experienced there, the greatest each of them had was that the sound would be heard as he came up, and that each was very pleased when it was silent as he went up. Such then were the penalties and punishments, and the rewards that were their counterparts.

When each group had spent seven days in the meadow, on the eighth they had to move on from there and continue their journey. In four days, they came to a place where they could see stretching from above, through the whole heaven and earth, a straight beam of light, like a column, very closely resembling a rainbow, but brighter and more pure. They reached the beam after traveling another day’s journey. And there, in the middle of the light, they saw stretching from the heavens the ends of its bonds—for this light is what binds the heavens, like the cables underneath a trireme, thus holding the entire revolving thing together. From those ends hangs the spindle of Necessity, by means of which all the revolving things are turned. Its shaft and hook were adamant, while its whorl was adamant mixed with materials of other kinds. The nature of the whorl was as follows. Its shape was like the ones here on Earth, but from Er’s description, we must think of it as being like this: in one large whorl, hollow and scooped out, lay another just like it, only smaller, that fitted into it exactly, the way nested bowls fit together; and similarly a third and a fourth, and four others. For

27 *Sphondulon*: the circular weight that twirls a spindle in weaving.
there were eight whorls altogether, lying inside one another, with their rims appearing as circles from above, while from the back they formed one continuous whorl around the shaft, which is driven right through the center of the eighth.

Now, the first or outermost whorl had the broadest circular rim, that of the sixth was second, third was that of the fourth, fourth that of the eighth, fifth that of the seventh, sixth that of the fifth, seventh that of the third, and eighth that of the second. That of the largest was spangled; that of the seventh was brightest; that of the eighth took its color from the seventh’s shining on it; that of the second and fifth were very similar to one another, being yellower than the rest; the third was the whitest in color; the fourth was reddish; and the sixth was second in whiteness.

The spindle as a whole revolved at the same speed, but within the revolving whole the seven inner circles gently revolved in the opposite direction to the whole. Of these, the eighth moved fastest; second, and at the same speed as one another, were the seventh, sixth, and fifth; third, it seemed to them, in the speed of its counter-revolution, was the fourth; fourth was the third; and fifth the second.28

The spindle revolved on the lap of Necessity. On top of each of its circles stood a Siren, who was carried around by its rotation, emitting a single sound, one single note. And from all eight in concord, a single harmony was produced. And there were three other women seated around it equidistant from one another, each on a throne. They were the daughters of Necessity, the Fates, dressed in white with garlands on their heads—Lachesis, Clotho, and Atropos—and they sang to the accompaniment of the Sirens’ harmony, Lachesis singing of the past, Clotho of the present, and Atropos of the future. Clotho, using her right hand, touched the outer circles of light.

28 Plato’s description of the beam of light and the spindle is difficult. He compares the light to hypozomata, or the ropes that bind a trireme together. These ropes seem to have girded the trireme from stem to stern and to have entered it at both places. Within the trireme, they were connected to some sort of twisting device that allowed them to be tightened when the water caused them to stretch and become slack. The spindle of Necessity seems to be just such a twisting device. Hence, the extremities of the light’s bonds must enter into the universe just as the hypozomata enter the trireme, and the spindle must be attached to these extremities, so that its spinning tightens the light and holds the universe together. The light is thus like two rainbows around the universe (or the whorl of the spindle), whose ends enter the universe and are attached to the spindle. The upper half of the whorl of the spindle consists of concentric hemispheres that fit into one another, with their lips or rims fitting together in a single plane. The outer hemisphere is that of the fixed stars; the second is the orbit of Saturn; the third of Jupiter; the fourth of Mars; the fifth of Mercury; the sixth of Venus; the seventh of the sun; and the eighth of the moon. The earth is in the center. The hemispheres are transparent and the width of their rims is the distance of the heavenly bodies from one another. A convincing discussion is J. S. Morrison, “Parmenides and Er.” The Journal of Hellenic Studies (1955) 75: 59–68.
circumference of the spindle and helped it turn, pausing from time to time; Atropos, with her left, did the same to the inner ones; and Lachesis used each hand in turn to touch both.

When the souls arrived, they had to go straight to Lachesis. A sort of spokesman first arranged them in ranks; then, taking lots and models of lives from the lap of Lachesis, he mounted a high platform, and said:

"The word of Lachesis, maiden daughter of Necessity! Ephemeral souls. The beginning of another death-bringing cycle for mortal-kind! Your daimon will not be assigned to you by lot; you will choose him. The one who has the first lot will be the first to choose a life to which he will be bound by necessity. Virtue has no master: as he honors or dishonors it, so shall each of you have more or less of it. Responsibility lies with the chooser; the god is blameless."

After saying that, the spokesman threw the lots out among them all, and each picked up the one that fell next to him—except for Er, who was not allowed. And to the one who picked it up, it was clear what number he had drawn. After that again the spokesman placed the models of lives on the ground before them—many more of them than those who were present. They were multifarious: all animal lives were there, as well as all human lives. There were tyrannies among them, some life-long, others ending halfway through in poverty, exile, and beggary. There were lives of famous men—some famous for the beauty of their appearance or for their other strengths or athletic prowess, others for their nobility and the virtues of their ancestors, and also some infamous in these respects—and similarly for women. But the structure of the soul was not included, because with the choice of a different life it would inevitably become different. But all the other qualities were mixed with each other and with wealth or poverty, sickness or health, or the states in between.

Here, it seems, my dear Glaucon, a human being faces the greatest danger of all, and because of that each must, to the neglect of all other subjects, take care above all else to be a seeker and student of that subject which will enable him to learn and discover who will give him the ability and the knowledge to distinguish a good life from a bad, so that he will always and in any circumstances choose the better one from among those that are possible. He must calculate the effect of all the things we have mentioned just now, both jointly and severally, on the virtue of a life, so as to know what the good and bad effects of beauty are when it is mixed with wealth or poverty and this or that state of the soul; what the effects are of high and low birth, private lives and ruling offices, physical strength and weaknesses, ease and difficulties in learning, and all the things that are either naturally part of the soul or can be acquired by it, when they are mixed with one another. On the basis of all that he will be able, by considering the nature of things, to make a right choice of his soul’s life."
of the soul, to reason out which life is better and which worse and choose accordingly, calling worse the one that will lead the soul to become more unjust, and better the one that leads it to become more just. Everything else he will ignore. For we have seen that this is the best way to choose, whether in life or death.

Holding this belief with adamantine determination, he must go down to Hades, so that even there he won't be dazzled by wealth and other such evils, and won't rush into tyrannies or other similar practices and so commit irreparable evils, and suffer even greater ones; but instead will know to choose the middle life in such circumstances, and avoid either of the extremes, both in this life, so far as is possible, and in the whole of the life to come. For this is how a human being becomes happiest.

At that point our messenger from the other world also reported that the spokesman said this: “Even for the one who comes last, if he chooses wisely and lives earnestly, there is a satisfactory life available, not a bad one. Let not the first to choose be careless, nor the last discouraged.”

When the spokesman had told them that, Er said, the one who drew the first lot came up and immediately chose the greatest tyranny. In his foolishness and greed, you see, he chose it without adequately examining everything, and did not notice that it involved being fated to eat his own children, among other evils. When he examined the life at leisure, however, he beat his breast and bemoaned his choice, ignoring the warning of the spokesman. For he did not blame himself for these evils, but chance, daemons, and everything except himself. He was one of those who had come down from heaven, having lived his previous life in an orderly constitution, sharing in virtue through habit but without philosophy.

Generally speaking, not the least number of the people caught out in this way were souls who came from heaven, and so were untrained in sufferings. The majority of those from the earth, on the other hand, because they had suffered themselves and had seen others doing so, were in no rush to make their choices. Because of that, and also because of the chance of the lottery, there was an exchange of evils and goods for most of the souls. Yet, if a person, whenever he came to the life that is here, always practiced philosophy in a sound manner, and if the fall of the lot did not put his choice of life among the last, it is likely, from what was reported by Er about the next world, that not only will he be happy here, but also that his journey from here to there and back again will not be underground and rough, but smooth and through the heavens.

30 See 364d3, 576d8.
31 Tetagonê politeia: see 500c2 where the forms the philosopher looks to in designing the constitution of Kallipolis are also said to be orderly.
32 See 364d3, 516c7.
He said it was a sight worth seeing how the various souls chose their lives, since seeing it caused pity, ridicule, and surprise. For the most part, their choice reflected the character of their former life. He saw the soul that had once belonged to Orpheus, he said, choosing a swan’s life: he hated the female sex because of his death at their hands, and so was unwilling to be conceived in a woman and born.\footnote{According to one myth, Orpheus was killed and dismembered by Thracian women, or Maenads.} He saw the soul of Thamyris choosing a nightingale’s life, a swan changing to the choice of a human life, and other musical animals doing the same. The twentieth soul chose the life of a lion. It was that of Ajax, son of Telamon, who avoided human life because he remembered the judgment about the armor.\footnote{Ajax thought that he deserved to be awarded the armor of the dead Achilles, but instead it was awarded to Odysseus. Ajax was maddened by this injustice and later killed himself because of the terrible things he had done while mad.} The next was that of Agamemnon, which also hated the human race on account of what it suffered, and so changed to the life of an eagle. Allotted a place in the middle, the soul of Atalanta, when it saw the great honors of a male athlete, unable to pass them by, chose his life. After her, he saw the soul of Epeius, son of Panopeus, taking on the nature of a craftswoman. Further on, among the last, he saw the soul of the ridiculous Thersites clothing itself as an ape.

Now it chanced that Odysseus’ soul drew the last lot of all, and came to make its choice. Remembering its former sufferings, it rejected love of honor, and went around for a long time looking for the life of a private individual who did his own work, and with difficulty it found one lying off somewhere neglected by the others. When it saw it, it said that it would have done the same even if it had drawn the first-place lot, and chose it gladly. Similarly, souls went from the other animals into human beings, or into one another; the unjust changing into savage animals, the just into tame ones; and every sort of mixture occurred.

When all the souls had chosen lives, in the same allotted order they went forward to Lachesis. She assigned to each the daimon it had chosen, as guardian of its life and fulfiller of its choices. This daimon first led the soul under the hand of Clotho as it turned the revolving spindle, thus ratifying the allotted fate it had chosen. After receiving her touch, he led the soul to the spinning of Atropos, to make the spun fate irreversible. Then, without turning around, it went under the throne of Necessity. When it had passed through that, and when the others had also passed through, they all traveled to the plain of Lethe, through burning and choking and terrible heat, for it was empty of trees and earthy vegetation. They camped, since evening was coming on, beside the river of forgetfulness, whose water no vessel can hold. All of them had to drink a certain measure of this water. But those not saved by wisdom drank more than the measure. And as each of them...
Book 10

drank, he forgot everything. When they were asleep and midnight came, there was a clap of thunder and an earthquake, and they were suddenly carried away from there, this way and that, up to their births, like shooting stars. But Er himself was prevented from drinking the water. Yet how or where he had come back to his body, he did not know, but suddenly recovering his sight he now saw himself lying on the pyre at dawn.

And so, Glaucon, his story was saved and not lost; and it would save us, too, if we were persuaded by it, since we would safely cross the river Lethe with our souls undefiled. But if we are persuaded by me, we will believe that the soul is immortal and able to endure every evil and also every good, and always hold to the upward path, practicing justice with wisdom every way we can, so that we will be friends to ourselves and to the gods, both while we remain here on Earth and when we receive the rewards of justice, and go around like victors in the games collecting prizes; and so both in this life and on the thousand-year journey we have described, we will fare well.
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