PLATO

The Republic

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Contents

THE REPUBLIC

Book 1[1]

327 I went down to the Piraeus yesterday with Glaucon the son of Ariston, to offer a prayer to the goddess.[2] Also I wanted to watch the festival, to see how they would conduct it, since this was the first time it was being cel-
ebrated.[3] The parade of Athenians struck me as excellent, and the show put on by the Thracians was every bit as impressive, I thought. We offered our prayers, watched the festival, and then started off on our journey back
b to town. We were already on our way home when we were spotted by Polemarchus the son of Cephalus. He got his slave to run after us and tell us to wait for him. The slave tugged at my cloak from behind, and said, 'Polemarchus says you are to wait.' I turned round, and asked him where his master was.

'There he is,' he said, 'coming along behind you. Wait for him.'

'We will,' said Glaucon.

c In a few moments Polemarchus reached us, with Glaucon's brother Adeimantus, Niceratus the son of Nicias, and a few others. They had been watching the procession, apparently. And Polemarchus said, 'It looks as if you're all on your way back to the city, Socrates. You're not staying, then?'

[1] It has been traditional since antiquity to divide the *Republic* into ten 'books'. Each book corresponds to a single roll of papyrus, the format in which Plato's writings were archived, distributed, and read in the ancient world. We do not know whether the division into ten books was made by Plato himself or by a later editor. The numbers and letters in the margin follow the pagination of the sixteenth-century edition of Plato by Stephanus. It is the pagination normally used to circumvent differences of format among subsequent editions and translations.

[2] Bendis, as we are eventually told at the end of Book 1 (354a).

[3] We can date this occasion only to a window of time between 431 and 411 BC.

'That's a pretty good guess,' I replied.

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

'Yes.'

'Well, then,' he said, 'you must either get the better of all these people, or else stay here.'

'There is another possibility,' I said. 'We might persuade you that you should let us go.'

'And do you really think you could persuade us,' he said, 'if we refused to listen?'

'Of course not,' said Glaucon.

'In that case, make your decision on the assumption that we are *not* going to listen.'

328 'Haven't you heard about the torch race?' Adeimantus added. 'This evening, on horseback, in honour of the goddess?'

'On horseback?' I said. 'That's something new. Do you mean a relay race on horseback, passing torches from one to another?'

'Yes,' said Polemarchus. 'And they're going to have an all-night ceremony as well, which should be worth watching. We can go out and watch
b it after dinner. There'll be lots of young people there. We can spend some time with them, and talk to them. Do stay. Please say "yes."'

'It looks as if we shall have to,' said Glaucon.

'If that's your decision,' I said, 'we shall.'

So we went back to Polemarchus' house, where we found Polemarchus' brothers Lysias and Euthydemus – as well as Thrasymachus of Chalcedon, Charmantides from the deme[4] of Paeania, and Cleitophon the son of Aristonymus. Also there, in the house, was Polemarchus' father
c Cephalus. It was a long time since I had seen him, and I found him much aged. He was wearing a garland, and sitting on a sort of cushioned stool. He had just been conducting a sacrifice in the courtyard.[5] There was a circle of stools round him, so we sat down with him.

As soon as he saw me, Cephalus started to make me welcome. 'You don't often come down to visit us in the Piraeus, Socrates,' he said. 'You should, though. If I were still strong enough to make the journey up to
d town without difficulty, there would be no need for you to come here. We would go to you. But as things are, you should come more often. I can assure you, speaking for myself, that the more the pleasures of the body

[4] The territory of Athens and its surrounding countryside was subdivided into districts called 'demes', each with some degree of self-government.

[5] Cephalus' garland is an item of sacrificial uniform.

fade, the greater become one's desire and taste for conversation. So do please spend some time with these young men. Do come here and visit us. Regard us as your friends – as your family, even.'

e 'With pleasure, Cephalus,' I replied. 'I love talking to the very old. It's as if they're a long way ahead of us on a road which we too are probably going to have to travel. I feel we should learn from them what the road is like – whether it's steep and rough going, or gentle and easy. In particular, I'd very much like to hear how it strikes you, now that you've actually reached the time of life which the poets call "old age, the threshold."[6] What is your report on it? Would you call it a difficult time of life?'

329 'I'll tell you exactly how it strikes me, Socrates. There's a group of us who meet fairly often. We're all about the same age, so we're following the words of the old proverb.[7] When we meet, most of them start complaining; they say they miss the things they used to enjoy when they were young, and they recall their sexual exploits, their drinking, their feasting, and everything connected with those pleasures. They get upset, as if they'd suffered some great loss – as if then they had led a wonderful life,

b whereas now they're not alive at all. Some of them also complain about the lack of respect shown by their families towards old age, and under this heading they recite a litany of grievances against old age. I think they're putting the blame in the wrong place, Socrates. If old age were to blame, then not only would I have felt the same way about old age, but so would everyone else who has ever reached this age. And yet I've met several people who are not like this – most notably Sophocles the poet. I was there

c once when someone asked him, "How is your sex life, Sophocles? Are you still capable of making love to a woman?" "Don't talk about it, my good sir," was Sophocles' reply. "It is with the greatest relief that I have escaped it. Like escaping from a fierce and frenzied master." I thought that a good reply at the time, and I still think it a good one now. Old age is altogether a time of great peace and freedom from that sort of thing.

d 'When our appetites fade, and loosen their grip on us, then what happens is exactly what Sophocles was talking about. It is a final release from a bunch of insane masters. Both in this, and in your relations with your family, there is only one thing responsible, and that is not old age, but your character. For those who are civilised and contented, then even

[6] That is, the threshold of death. The phrase is common in Homer and other epic poets.

[7] The proverb runs, literally, 'People of the same age please each other' and has no exact proverbial match in English – but compare 'birds of a feather flock together'.

old age is only a slight burden. Otherwise – for those who are not like this – both old age and youth prove hard to cope with.'

I was very impressed by what he said, and I wanted him to go on
e talking. So I prompted him further: 'I suspect most people don't believe you, Cephalus, when you say that. They think it is not your character which makes old age easy for you, but the fact that you have plenty of money. The rich, they say, have many consolations.'

'You're right,' he said. 'They don't believe me. And there's some truth in what they say. But not as much truth as they think. Themistocles'
330 famous saying is very much to the point here. A man from Seriphus started making disparaging remarks about him, and telling him that his fame was due not to his own merits, but to those of his city. Themistocles' reply was that though he himself would never have been famous if he had been born in Seriphus, neither would the other man have been if he had been born in Athens. The same applies to those who are not rich, and who find old age hard to bear. In poverty, even the right temperament will not find old age altogether easy, whereas the wrong temperament, even with the aid of wealth, will never be at peace with itself.'

'Did you inherit most of the money you possess, Cephalus?' I asked. 'Or did you add to what you inherited?'

b 'Did I add to it, Socrates? When it comes to making money, I'm somewhere between my grandfather and my father. My grandfather – my namesake – inherited about as much wealth as I now possess, and increased it many times. My father Lysanias reduced it to even less than it is now. I shall be happy if I can leave these boys not less, but a little bit more, than I inherited.'

c 'The reason I asked,' I said, 'is that you've never struck me as being particularly fond of money. And that's generally the attitude of those who haven't made it themselves. Compared with most people, self-made men are doubly fond of their money. Those who have made a fortune are devoted to their money in the first place because it is their own creation – just as poets love their poems, or fathers love their children – and in the second place for what they can do with it, just like anyone else. This makes them very poor company, since they can see no value in anything except money.'

'You're right,' he said.

d 'Yes,' I said. 'But I have another question for you. What would you say is the greatest benefit you have derived from your possession of great wealth?'

'One which many people might not be inclined to believe, if I told them. But you can take my word for it, Socrates, that when you are confronted by the thought of your own death, you are visited by fear and anxiety about things which never troubled you before. The stories told about what happens in Hades, that anyone who is unjust here will have to
e pay for it there – stories you once laughed at – begin to trouble your mind. You wonder if they may be true. You start seeing that world for yourself, either through the infirmity of old age, or because you are already in some way closer to it. Suddenly you are full of suspicion and fear; you start calculating and considering whether you've done anyone any sort of injustice. And if you find many acts of injustice in your own life, you keep
331 waking in a panic in the middle of the night, the way children do. You live in a state of apprehension. The person with nothing on his conscience, by contrast, has fine and pleasant hopes – a nurse to his old age, as Pindar puts it. He found just the right words for it, Socrates, when he said that anyone who lives his life in righteousness and purity will find that

> Sweet hope, old age's nurse, which chiefly guides
> Men's wayward minds, accompanies his heart
> And so protects him.[8]

He's right – couldn't be more right. And that's why I attach the greatest
b importance to the possession of money. Not for everyone, but for those of good character. If you want to avoid defrauding people, or lying to them, however reluctantly, or going to the world below in a state of terror after failing to pay what you owe – whether sacrifices to a god, or money to a man – then the possession of money contributes in no small measure to this end. Of course it has many other uses as well, but weighing one thing against another I would rate this as one of the most important uses of money, in the eyes of anyone with any sense.'

c 'That's admirably put, Cephalus,' I said. 'But since you've brought up the subject of justice, can we say, quite simply, that it is truthfulness, and returning anything you may have received from anyone else? Or is it sometimes right to behave in these ways, and sometimes wrong? Let me give you an example. Suppose you borrowed some weapons from a friend when he was in his right mind. Suppose he later went mad, and then asked for them back again. Everyone would agree, I imagine, that you shouldn't give them back to him, and that anyone who did give them back

[8] The poem from which this quotation comes has been lost.

– or who was even prepared to be completely truthful to someone in this condition – would not be doing the right thing.'

d 'Correct,' he said.

'This is not the definition of justice, then – that it is telling the truth, and returning what you have been given.'

'Yes, it is, Socrates,' Polemarchus interrupted. 'At least, it is if we are to believe Simonides.'

'I'd just like to say,' Cephalus put in, 'that this is where I hand the discussion over to you. It's time I was doing something about the sacrifices.'

'Well, am I not Polemarchus, your heir?'

'You certainly are,' he replied with a laugh, and went off to his sacrifices.

e 'Tell me then,' I said, 'you who have inherited the argument, what does Simonides say about justice that you think is correct?'

'That it is just to pay everyone what is owed to him.[9] That's what he says, and I think he's right.'

'Well,' I said, 'Simonides is a wise and inspired man. It is certainly not easy to disagree with him. But what on earth does he mean by this remark? You may well know, Polemarchus. I have no idea. He obviously doesn't mean what we were talking about just now. If one person gives something to another for safe keeping, and then asks for it back when he
332 is not in his right mind, Simonides doesn't mean that the other person should give it to him. And yet I imagine the thing which was given for safe keeping *is* owed to the person who gave it, isn't it?'

'Yes.'

'In that situation – when someone goes out of his mind, and then asks for it back – isn't returning it completely out of the question?'

'Yes, it is.'

'That isn't what Simonides means, apparently, when he says that it is just to pay back what is owed, or due.'

'No, it certainly isn't,' he said. 'What he thinks is due to friends is to do them good, not harm.'

'I understand,' I replied. 'If one person gives back to another money
b which the other has given him for safe keeping, he is not giving what is due if his returning it and the other's receiving it are harmful, and if the two of them are friends. Isn't that what you think Simonides means?'

'Yes, it is.'

[9] Not a sentiment that is found in the little that survives of Simonides' poetry.

'What about enemies? Should you give them whatever is in fact due to them?"'

'You certainly should,' he said. 'And what is due between enemies is what is appropriate – something harmful.'

'Simonides was speaking as a poet, then, apparently, and disguising his
c definition of justice. What he meant, it seems, was that justice was giving any individual what was appropriate for him, but he called it "what was owed."'

'Yes, that must have been what he meant.'

'Suppose, then, one of us had said to him: "Simonides, take the art or skill which is called medicine. What does it give that is due and appropriate, and to what does it give it?" What do you think his answer would have been?'

'Obviously,' he replied, 'he would have said it gives the body drugs and food and drink.'

'And the art of cookery? What does it give that is due and appropriate, and to what does it give it?'

d 'It gives flavour to cooked food.'

'Very well. Then what about the art or skill which we would call justice? What does it give, and to what does it give it?'

'Well, if we are to follow the previous definitions, Socrates, it gives benefits and injuries to friends and enemies.'

'Does he mean, then, that helping your friends and harming your enemies is justice?'

'I think so.'

'All right. When people are unwell, when it's a question of sickness and health, who is best at helping them if they are friends and harming them if they are enemies?'

'A doctor.'

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

'A ship's captain.'

'What about the just man? In what activity, and for what purpose, is he the one best able to treat his friends well and his enemies badly?'

'In war and alliances, I think.'

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

'True.'

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

'No.'

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

'No, I'm sure it doesn't.'

'Justice is something useful even in peacetime, then?'

333 'Yes, it is.'

'But then so is agriculture, isn't it?'

'Yes.'

'For producing crops.'

'Yes.'

'And shoemaking?'

'Yes, that's useful.'

'For producing shoes, you would say, presumably.'

'Of course.'

'What about justice, then? When you say it's useful in peacetime, what is it useful *for*? What does it produce?'

'Contracts, Socrates.'

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

'I mean partnerships.'

b 'All right. Is the just man a good and useful partner when it comes to making moves in draughts?[10] Or would someone who plays draughts be more use?'

'Someone who plays draughts would be more use.'

'And when it comes to bricklaying, or building in stone, is the just man a more useful and better partner than a builder?'

'Of course not.'

'Well, in what kind of partnership is the just man a better partner than a lyre player, in the way a lyre player is better at playing the notes?'

'In partnerships involving money, I think.'

'Unless by any chance, Polemarchus, it's a question of putting the
c money to some use – if you have to buy or sell a horse jointly, for a sum of money. In that case, I imagine, someone who knows about horses is more use, isn't he?'

'Apparently.'

'And for buying or selling a ship, you'd want a shipbuilder or ship's captain.'

[10] 'Draughts' (American 'checkers') is a translation of convenience. The Greek word *petteia* seems to have applied to several board-games. The group includes but is not limited to strategic games of battle and capture.

'So it seems.'

'In what situation, then, requiring the joint use of silver or gold, is the just man more useful than anyone else?'

'When there's a need to deposit money, and have it kept safe.'

'You mean when there's no need to put it to any use. You just want it to stay where it is?'

'That's right.'

'So it's when money is useless that justice is useful for dealing with
d it?'[11]

'It looks like it.'

'And a pruning-knife? When you want to keep it safe, then justice is useful, both in public life and in private life. But when you want to use it, then the art of viticulture is what you want?'

'Apparently.'

'And are you going to say the same about a shield or a lyre? That justice is useful when you need to keep them safe and not use them? But that when you do need to use them, then you want the soldier's art and the art of music?'

'I shall have to say that.'

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

'I suppose so.'

e 'In that case, my friend, justice might not seem to be of any great importance, if its only use is when things are useless. But let's look at a different question. In a fight – a boxing match, possibly, or a fight of some other sort – isn't the person who is cleverest at delivering a blow also the cleverest at guarding against one?'

'He certainly is.'

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

'Yes, I think so.'

334 'And in warfare, the man who is good at guarding a military camp is also good at deception. He can steal the enemies' plans, or defeat their undertakings by stealth.'

'Certainly.'

'So whenever someone is clever at guarding something, he will also be clever at stealing it.'

[11] Money deposited with bankers or in temple treasuries did not gain interest.

'It looks like it.'

'So if the just man is clever at looking after money, he is also clever at stealing it.'

'Well, that's what the argument suggests,' he said.

'Then the just man, it seems, has turned out to be a kind of thief. You're
b probably thinking of Homer. He praises Autolycus, Odysseus' grandfather on his mother's side, and says that

> In swearing oaths and thieving he surpassed
> All men.[12]

Justice, according to you and Homer and Simonides, is apparently a kind of art of stealing – but with a view to helping one's friends and harming one's enemies. Wasn't that what you said?'

'No, I certainly didn't,' he said. 'Though personally, I can't any longer remember what I did say. But one thing I do think still, and that is that justice is treating your friends well and your enemies badly.'

c 'By friends do you mean the people each individual believes to be good, or those who really are good, even if he doesn't realise it? And the same with enemies?'

'In all probability,' he replied, 'people will like those they think are good, and dislike those they think are no good.'

'And do people ever make mistakes in this? Do they often think people are good when they are not, and vice versa?'

'Yes, they do make mistakes.'

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

'They certainly are.'

d 'Is it nonetheless right for these people, when this happens, to treat well those who are no good, and to treat the good badly?'

'It looks like it.'

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

'True.'

'So according to your argument it is right to harm those who do no wrong.'

'Impossible, Socrates. It looks as if the argument is no good.'

'Then it must be right,' I said, 'to treat the unjust badly, and the just well.'

[12] *Odyssey* 19.395–396. Autolycus was a notorious trickster; his name includes the word for 'wolf'. The reference in 'swearing oaths' is to perjury for profit.

'That sounds better.'

'In that case, Polemarchus, there are many people for whom it will turn
e out, if their judgment of people has been mistaken, that it is right to treat their friends badly, since their friends are no good – and their enemies well, since their enemies are good. In those circumstances we shall end up saying the exact opposite of the definition we quoted from Simonides.'

'Yes,' he said. 'It certainly can turn out like that. Let's change our definition. We're probably not defining friend and enemy correctly.'

'How *are* we defining them, Polemarchus?'

'We said that the person who seemed to be good was a friend.'

'And now? How do you want to change that definition?'

335 'If someone both seems to be good and is, let's call him a friend. If he seems to be, but isn't really, let's say that he seems to be a friend, but isn't really a friend. And let the same definition apply to an enemy.'

'On this definition, it appears, the good man will be a friend, and the one who is no good will be an enemy.'

'Yes.'

'Do you want us to make an addition to our definition of justice? Our first definition was that it was just to help a friend and harm an enemy. Do you want us now to add to that, and say that it is just to help a friend if he is good, and harm an enemy if he is bad?'

b 'Yes,' he said, 'I think that would be an excellent definition.'

'But is it really in the nature of a just man,' I asked, 'to treat anyone in the world badly?'

'It certainly is,' he said. 'He should treat badly those who are no good – his enemies.'

'If you treat a horse badly, does it become better or worse?'

'Worse.'

'Worse by the standard we use to judge dogs, or the standard we use to judge horses?'

'The standard we use to judge horses.'

'And dogs the same? If you treat *them* badly, they become worse by the standard we use to judge dogs, not horses?'

'They must do.'

c 'What about humans, my friend? Are we to say, in the same way, that if they are treated badly they become worse by the standard we use to judge human excellence?'

'Certainly.'

'But isn't justice a human excellence?'[13]

'Again, it must be.'

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

'It looks like it.'

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

'No, that's impossible.'

'Can horsemen make people unskilled with horses by means of horsemanship?'

'No.'

d 'And can the just make people unjust by means of justice? Or in general, can the good use human excellence to make people bad?'

'No, that's impossible.'

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

'Yes.'

'Nor is it the property of dryness to make things wet, but of its opposite.'

'Yes.'

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

'Apparently.'

'And the just man is good?'

'Yes.'

'In that case, Polemarchus, it is not the property of the just man to treat his friend or anyone else badly. It is the property of his opposite, the unjust man.'

'I think you're absolutely right, Socrates,' he said.

e 'So if anyone says it is just to give everyone what is due to him, and if he means by this that what is due from the just man is harm to his enemies, and help to his friends, then whoever said this was not a wise man. What he said was wrong, since we have clearly seen that it is not right to treat anyone badly under any circumstances.'

'I agree,' he said.

'Shall we take up arms, then, you and I together, if anyone claims that this is what was said by Simonides, or Bias, or Pittacus, or any other of those wise and blessedly happy men?'

[13] The Greek could also mean 'isn't justice human excellence?'

'I certainly shall,' he said. 'I'm ready to play my part in the battle.'

336 'Do you know,' I asked, 'who I think was responsible for the saying that it is just to treat one's friends well, and one's enemies badly?'

'Who?'

'I think it was Periander, or Perdiccas, or Xerxes, or Ismenias the Theban, or some other rich man who thought he had great power.'

'You're absolutely right,' he said.

'Well, then,' I said, 'since this definition of justice – and of what is just – is clearly not right either, what other definition of it might be given?'

b Even in the middle of our conversation Thrasymachus had repeatedly tried to take control of the discussion, but each time he had been prevented by those sitting round us, who wanted to hear the discussion through to the end. But when we reached this stopping-place in the argument, as I asked this question, he was incapable of remaining silent any longer. He gathered himself and sprang at us, like a wild beast at its prey. Polemarchus and I were alarmed and dismayed.

c Speaking up loud and clear, Thrasymachus said: 'What's this nonsense that has got into you two, Socrates? Why be so obliging? Why keep giving way to one other? If you really want to know what justice is, then stop simply asking questions, and scoring points by proving that any answer given by anyone else is wrong. You know perfectly well it's easier to ask questions than to give answers. Come on, why don't you give some d answers yourself? Tell us what *you* say justice is. And don't go telling us that it's what's necessary, or what's beneficial, or what's advantageous, or what's profitable, or what's good for you. I won't take any of that stuff. No. Tell us please, quite clearly, exactly what you mean.'

I was dismayed by this intervention. I looked at him, and started to panic. And I'm sure, if I hadn't looked at the wolf before he looked at me, I'd have been struck dumb.[14] As it was, though, I had in fact looked at him e first – at the point where he began to be infuriated by the discussion. As a result, I was able to answer. 'Don't be angry with us, Thrasymachus,' I said, with some apprehension. 'If Polemarchus and I are making mistakes in our examination of the arguments, I assure you we're not making them on purpose. If we were looking for gold, we wouldn't deliberately give way to one another in our search, and so destroy our chances of finding it. So since what we are actually looking for is justice, a thing more valuable than a large quantity of gold, you can't imagine we are so stupid as to

[14] This was a popular superstition that became proverbial (as in our 'Cat got your tongue?').

make concessions to one another, and not be determined to bring it as clearly as possible into view. Believe us, my friend. The trouble is, we lack
337 the ability. So when you clever people see our efforts, pity is really a far more appropriate reaction than annoyance.'

This brought an unpleasant laugh from Thrasymachus. 'Oh my god,' he said, 'I knew it. The famous modesty of Socrates. I predicted it. I told these people you'd refuse to give any answers, that you'd pretend to be modest, that you'd do anything to avoid answering, if anyone asked you a question.'

'Clever of you, Thrasymachus. Clever enough to know what would
b happen if you were to ask someone what twelve was, but then give him a warning before he answered: "Now look here, don't go telling us that twelve is twice six, or three times four, or six times two, or four times three. I'm not going to take any nonsense of that sort from you." It was obvious to you, I imagine, that if you asked the question in that way, no one could possibly answer it. Suppose the person you were asking had objected: "What do you mean, Thrasymachus? Am I not to give any of the answers you have forbidden? Even if one of them is in fact true? Am I to give you some answer which is not the truth? Or what?" What would your reply have been to his objection?'

c 'Oh, yes,' he said. 'Such a close analogy!'

'I don't see what's wrong with it,' I said. 'But even if it isn't close, it may still seem to be, to the person being asked the question. Do you think that will stop him giving the answer he thinks is right, whether we forbid him to or not?'

'Is that just what you're going to do now? Are you going to give one of the answers I told you not to give?'

'It wouldn't surprise me,' I said, 'if on reflection I came to that conclusion.'

'What if I give you an answer about justice which is quite different from
d all those other answers, a much better answer than those? What do you think should be your penalty?'[15]

'Well, obviously, the penalty appropriate to someone who doesn't know. He should learn, I take it, from the person who does know.'

'You innocent,' said Thrasymachus. 'No, you must do more than learn. You must pay me some money as well.'

'Very well. As soon as I have any, I will.'

[15] In Athenian legal procedure a defendant found guilty was given the opportunity to propose to the jury a penalty different from that demanded by his accuser.

'You do have some,' said Glaucon. 'If it's money you're worried about, Thrasymachus, go ahead and speak. We will all pay up for Socrates.'

e 'I'll bet you will,' he said. 'Anything to allow Socrates to play his usual trick – not answer the question himself, but wait for someone else to answer it, and then take what he says and try to prove it wrong.'

'Really, my dear fellow!' I said. 'How could *anyone* answer the question if for a start he didn't know the answer – didn't so much as claim to know it – and on top of that, even supposing he *did* have some idea on the subject, if he'd been told by a man of some authority not to say any of the
338 things he thought? No, it makes much more sense for you to speak. You're the one who claims to know the answer and have something to say. So please, as a favour to me, don't keep your answer to yourself. Give Glaucon here and the others the benefit of your knowledge.'

After this appeal, Glaucon and the rest begged him to do as I asked. Thrasymachus clearly wanted to speak, to gain credit for the excellent answer he thought he had ready. But he pretended to argue, pretended
b that he wanted me to be the one to answer. Finally he agreed, saying: 'There's the wisdom of Socrates for you. He refuses to do any teaching himself, just goes around learning from others, without so much as a thank you.'

'That I learn from others, Thrasymachus, is true. But when you say I give them no thanks, you are wrong. I give all the thanks in my power. And what is in my power is merely praise, since I have no money. How enthusiastic I can be, if I approve of what somebody says, you are about to find out, when you give your answer. I'm sure it will be a good one.'

c 'Hear it, then,' he said. 'I say that justice is simply what is good for the stronger. Well, where's all that praise? You're not going to give it, are you?'

'Yes, I will – as soon as I understand what you mean. At the moment I still don't know. What is good for the stronger, you say, is just. What do you mean by that, Thrasymachus? If Polydamas the all-in wrestler is stronger than us, and eating beef is good for building his body, you presumably
d don't mean that this food is also good – and right[16] – for us who are weaker than him.'

'Socrates, you're beneath contempt. You're taking what I said in the way which makes it easiest to misrepresent my meaning.'

'Not at all, my friend. But you'll have to tell me more clearly what you mean.'

[16] 'Right' and 'just' both translate the Greek *dikaion*.

'All right,' he said. 'You must be aware that some cities are tyrannies, some are democracies, and others aristocracies?'

'Of course.'

'And what is in control in each city is the ruling power?'

'Yes.'

e 'Every ruling power makes laws for its own good. A democracy makes democratic laws, a tyranny tyrannical laws, and so on. In making these laws, they make it clear that what is good for them, the rulers, is what is just for their subjects. If anyone disobeys, they punish him for breaking
339 the law and acting unjustly. That's what I mean, "my friend," when I say that in all cities the same thing is just, namely what is good for the ruling authority. This, I take it, is where the power lies, and the result is, for anyone who looks at it in the right way, that the same thing is just everywhere – what is good for the stronger.'

'*Now* I understand what you mean,' I said, 'though whether or not it is true remains to be seen. So even your answer, Thrasymachus, is that what is good for a person is just, though that was an answer you told me firmly not to give. But you add the qualification "for the stronger."'

b 'A trivial addition, you may say.'

'That's not yet clear. It may well be an important one. What *is* clear is that we must examine whether what you say is true. Like you, I agree that justice is something that is good for a person, but while you qualify it as what is good for the stronger, I'm not so sure. We should examine the question.'

'Go on, then. Examine it.'

'I shall,' I said. 'Tell me, don't you also say that it is right for subjects to obey their rulers?'

'I do.'

c 'And are they infallible, the rulers in all these cities? Or are they capable of making mistakes?'

'They are certainly, I imagine, capable of making mistakes.'

'So when they set about enacting laws, do they enact some correctly, but a certain number incorrectly?'

'In my opinion, yes.'

'And "correctly" is enacting laws which are in their own interest, and "incorrectly" is enacting laws which are against their own interest? Is that what you mean?'

'Yes.'

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

'Of course.'

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

'What *do* you mean?' he said.

'I mean what you mean, I think. Let's look at it more closely. Haven't we agreed that the rulers, in giving orders to their subjects to do anything, sometimes make mistakes about what is in their own best interest, but that it is just for the subjects to carry out whatever orders their rulers give them? Isn't that what we have agreed?'

e 'Yes,' he said. 'I accept that.'

'Then you must also accept,' I said, 'that we have agreed it is just to do things which are not good for the rulers and the stronger, when the rulers inadvertently issue orders which are harmful to themselves, and you say it is just for their subjects to carry out the orders of their rulers. In that situation, most wise Thrasymachus, isn't the inevitable result that it is just to do the exact opposite of what you say? After all, the weaker have been ordered to do what is *not* good for the stronger.'

340 'Indeed they have, Socrates,' said Polemarchus. 'No question about it.'

'No question at all,' Cleitophon interrupted, 'if you are acting as a witness for Socrates.'

'Who needs a witness?' said Polemarchus. 'Thrasymachus himself agrees that rulers sometimes issue orders which are bad for themselves, but that it is right for their subjects to carry out these orders.'

'Yes, Polemarchus, because carrying out orders issued by rulers was what Thrasymachus defined as just.'

'Yes, Cleitophon, but in his definition he also said that what was good
b for the stronger was just. He gave both those definitions, and then went on to agree that those who are stronger sometimes tell those who are weaker, their subjects, to do what is bad for them, the stronger. It follows from these admissions that what is good for those who are stronger would be no more just than what is not good for them.'

'When he talked about what was good for the stronger,' said Cleitophon, 'he meant what the stronger thought was good for him. This is what the weaker must do, and that was his definition of justice.'

'Those weren't the words he used,' said Polemarchus.

c 'It's neither here nor there, Polemarchus,' I said. 'If those are the words

Thrasymachus is using now, let's take it in that sense. Tell me, Thrasymachus. Was that how you wanted to define justice, as what the stronger *thinks* is good for him, whether it really is good or not? Is that what we should take you to be saying?'

'Certainly not,' he said. 'Do you imagine I regard a person who makes a mistake, at the moment when he is making the mistake, as stronger?'

'That's certainly what I *thought* you meant, when you agreed that
d rulers are not infallible, that they sometimes make mistakes.'

'You're always trying to trick people, Socrates, in the way you argue. I mean, if someone makes a mistake in treating the sick, do you call him a doctor by virtue of the actual mistake? Or an accountant who makes a mistake, at the precise moment when he is making his mistake, by virtue *of* this mistake? No, I think that's just the form of words we use. We say "the doctor made a mistake," "the accountant made a mistake," "the
e teacher made a mistake." But the reality, I think, is that none of them, to the extent that he *is* what we call him, ever makes a mistake. In precise language, since you like speaking precisely, no one who exercises a skill ever makes a mistake. People who make mistakes make them because their knowledge fails them, at which point they are not exercising their skill. The result is that no one skilled, no wise man, no ruler, at the moment
341 when he is being a ruler, ever makes a mistake – though everyone would say "the doctor made a mistake" or "the ruler made a mistake." That's how you must take the answer I gave you just now. But the most precise answer is in fact that the ruler, to the extent that he *is* a ruler, does not make mistakes; and since he does not make mistakes, he *does* enact what is best for him, and this is what his subject must carry out. So as I said originally, my definition is that it is just to do what is good for the stronger.'

'Very well, Thrasymachus,' I said. 'So you think I'm a trickster, do you?'

'I certainly do.'

'You think I've been asking the questions I *have* been asking with the deliberate intention of winning the argument unfairly?'

'I'm quite sure of it. It won't do you any good, though. You can't use unfair arguments without my noticing, and once I notice what you are up
b to, you don't have the resources to defeat me in open argument.'

'As if I'd even dream of trying! But since we don't want this situation to arise again, could you make one thing clear? When you say it is right for the weaker to do what is good for the stronger, do you mean the ruler

and the stronger in normal usage, or in the precise sense you were talking about just now?'

'I mean the ruler in the most precise sense possible,' he said. 'There you are. Do your worst. I make no special pleas. Try your tricks if you can. But you won't be able to.'

c 'Do you think I'm crazy? Do you think I want to beard the lion, and start playing tricks on Thrasymachus?'

'You certainly had a try just now, though you weren't much good at that either.'

'Well,' I said. 'Enough of all this. Now tell me. You were talking just now about the doctor in the precise sense. Is he a businessman? Or a healer of the sick? And make sure it's the true doctor you are talking about.'

'He's a healer of the sick.'

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

d 'A master of sailors.'

'It's not an objection, I take it, that he sails in the ship. Nor is he for that reason to be called a sailor, since the title "ship's captain" does not depend on his sailing, but on his art or skill, and his authority over the sailors.'

'True,' he said.

'And for each of these, is there something which is good for him?'[17]

'Certainly.'

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

'Yes, it does.'

'For each of these skills, then, is there anything else which is good for it, apart from being as perfect as possible?'

'I don't understand your question.'

e 'Suppose you asked me if it was enough for the body to be the body, or whether it needed something else. I would reply: "It certainly does need something else. That's the reason why the art of medicine has come to be invented, because the body is defective, and therefore not self-sufficient. So the art of medicine was developed to provide it with the things which were good for it." Do you think I'd be right in giving that answer, or not?'

'Yes, I think you'd be right.'

[17] The reference could be either to the doctor and captain or to the sick and the sailors. So Thrasymachus could understand Socrates' next question as referring to the advantages that the artisan derives from his art.

342 'What about medicine itself? Is that defective? Does any art or skill, for that matter, stand in need of some virtue or excellence, in the way that eyes need sight and ears need hearing, and sight and hearing require an art or skill to preside over them, an art or skill which will think about and provide what is good for them? Is there any defect in the actual art or skill itself? Does each art or skill need a further art or skill, which will think about what is good for it? And this one which is thinking about it, does it in its turn need another of the same kind, and so on indefinitely, or does
b it think for itself about what is good for it? Or does no art or skill have any need either of itself or of any other art or skill, for thinking about what is good for it in the light of its own defects? And is this because no art or skill contains any defect or fault, and because it is not appropriate for an art or skill to pursue the good of anything other than that of which it is the art or skill? Isn't any art or skill itself, in the precise sense, without fault or blemish if it is correct – so long as it is entirely what it is? And when you answer, use words in the precise sense you were talking about. Is it as I have described, or not?'

'It is as you have described,' he said. 'Apparently.'

c 'In that case,' I said, 'the art of medicine does not think about what is good for the art of medicine, but what is good for the body.'

'Yes.'

'And horsemanship does not think about what is good for horsemanship, but what is good for horses. Nor does any art or skill think about what is good for itself – it has no need to. No, it thinks about what is good for the thing of which it is the art or skill.'

'Apparently.'

'But surely, Thrasymachus, arts and skills control, and have power over, the objects of which they are the arts and skills.'

He conceded this, though with great reluctance.

'In which case, there is no branch of knowledge which thinks about, or prescribes, what is good for the stronger, but only what is good for the weaker, for what is under its control.'

d He agreed to this too, in the end, though he tried to resist it. And when he did agree, I continued: 'Isn't it a fact that no doctor, to the extent that he is a doctor, thinks about or prescribes what is good for the doctor? No, he thinks about what is good for the patient. After all, it was agreed that a doctor, in the precise sense, is responsible for bodies; he's not a businessman. Isn't that what was agreed?'

Thrasymachus assented.

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

‘Yes, that was agreed.’

‘So a ship’s captain or commander of this type will not think about or prescribe what is good for the ship’s captain, but what is good for the sailor, for the person under his command.’

He agreed, though reluctantly.

‘And so, Thrasymachus,’ I said, ‘no one in any position of authority, to the extent that he *is* in authority, thinks about or prescribes what is good for himself, but only what is good for the person or thing under his authority – for whose benefit he himself exercises his art or skill. Everything he says, and everything he does, is said or done with this person or thing in mind, with a view to what is good and appropriate for the person or thing under his authority.’

343 At this point in the argument it was obvious to everyone that the definition of justice had changed into its opposite. Thrasymachus didn’t try to answer. Instead he said: ‘Tell me, Socrates, have you got a nanny?’

‘I beg your pardon,’ I said in some surprise. ‘Shouldn’t you be answering the question rather than asking things like that?’

‘She takes no notice of your runny nose,’ he said, ‘and doesn’t wipe it clean when it needs it. She can’t even get you to tell the sheep from the shepherd.’

‘What makes you say that?’

b ‘You seem to imagine that shepherds, or herdsmen, are thinking about the good of their sheep or their cattle – that they are fattening them up and looking after them with some other end in view than the good of their masters and themselves. In particular, you don’t seem to realise that rulers in cities – rulers in the true sense – regard their subjects as their sheep, and that the only thing they’re interested in, day and night, is what benefit c they themselves are going to derive from them.[18] Such an expert are you in the just and justice, and in the unjust and injustice, that you haven’t even grasped that justice and the just are actually what is good for someone else – good for the stronger, the ruler – while for the one who obeys and follows, they mean harm to himself. Injustice is the opposite.

[18] The comparison of ruler to shepherd goes back to Homer, who calls the supreme king Agamemnon ‘shepherd of the peoples’, using the term in a benign sense. Plato will develop the comparison beyond the confines of Book 1, in the relationship between the rulers of the ideal city and their sheepdog-like auxiliaries (440d, 459e). It is also important in the political theory of his *Statesman* or *Politicus* (271d–272b, 275a).

It rules over those who are truly simple-minded, the just, and its subjects do what is good for that other person – the one who is stronger. They serve
d him, and make him happy. They don't make themselves happy at all.

'You can't avoid the conclusion, my simple-minded Socrates, that a just man comes off worse than an unjust in every situation. Take contracts, for a start, where a just man goes into partnership with an unjust. When the partnership is dissolved, you'll never find the just man better off than the unjust. No, he'll be worse off. Or think about public life. When there are special levies to be paid *to* the state, the just man contributes more, and the unjust man less, from the same resources.[19] When there are distributions to be made *by* the state, the just man receives
e nothing, while the unjust man makes a fortune. Or suppose each of them holds some public office. The outcome for the just man, even if he suffers no other loss,[20] is that his own financial position deteriorates, since he cannot attend to it, while the fact that he is a just man stops him getting anything from public funds. On top of this, he becomes very unpopular with his friends and acquaintances when he refuses to act unjustly in order to do them a favour. The outcome for the unjust man is the exact
344 opposite. I mean, of course, the man I was describing just now, the man who has the ability to be selfish on a large scale. He's the one to think about, if you want to assess the extent to which it is better for him, as a private individual, to be unjust than just.

'The easiest place of all to see it is if you look at the most complete form of injustice, the one which brings the greatest happiness to the person who practises it, and the greatest misery to those who experience it, those who would not be prepared to practise it themselves. By this I mean tyranny, which takes other people's possessions – things which are sacred and things which are not – both in secret and by open force. It does
b this not piecemeal but wholesale, though anyone who is caught committing one of these crimes on its own is punished and altogether disgraced. Temple-robbers,[21] kidnappers, burglars, pickpockets and thieves, if they

[19] The *eisphora* was an emergency levy on capital wealth for military purposes. There was no investigative bureaucracy to conduct audits.

[20] At Athens public offices were generally held by ordinary citizens in frequent rotation rather than being the province of career politicians or bureaucrats. Most were unpaid committee work. At the end of their term of office, magistrates submitted their records to public scrutiny. Charges against them and complaints from any citizen were considered by a special board and often led to penalties.

[21] Temples were not only sacred places but depositories of wealth. They served the function of treasuries and, in some cases, banks.

carry out individual acts of wrongdoing, are known by the names of their crimes. But those who seize and enslave the citizens themselves, and not just their property, are not called by these terms of reproach. They are called blessed and happy, both by their fellow-citizens and by
c everyone else who hears about the wholesale injustice they have practised. Those who condemn injustice do so not through fear of practising it, but through fear of experiencing it. There you are, Socrates. Injustice is a thing which is stronger, more free and more powerful than justice, so long as it is practised on a large enough scale. So as I said in the first place,[22] justice is in fact what is good for the stronger, whereas injustice is what is profitable and good for oneself.'

d Thrasymachus was planning to leave after this outburst, having deluged our ears, like some bath attendant, with this long, relentless explanation. But the people who were there wouldn't let him go. They forced him to stay and justify what he had said. And I too, for my part, was most insistent. 'My dear Thrasymachus,' I said to him, 'you can't be intending to chuck a speech like that at us, and then go away without properly telling us, or finding out, whether or not that is how things are.
e Do you think it's a trivial matter, this definition we are after? Far from it. We are trying to define the whole conduct of life – how each of us can live his life in the most profitable way.'

'Have I said anything to suggest that I disagree?' Thrasymachus asked.

'It doesn't *look* as if you agree,' I said. 'Either that or you have no concern for us, and don't care whether we live better or worse lives as a
345 result of our ignorance of what you claim to know. Please, my friend, enlighten us as well. It will be no bad investment for you to do a favour to a gathering as large as we are. For my own part, I have to say that I'm not convinced. I don't think injustice is something more profitable than justice, even if it's given a free hand and not prevented from doing what it wants. No, my friend, let him be unjust, let him have the power to act unjustly, whether in secret or in open warfare, still the unjust man cannot convince *me* that injustice is something more profitable than justice.
b Maybe someone else here feels the same. I may not be the only one. So please be so good as to convince us fully that valuing justice more than injustice is not the right strategy for us.'

'How am I to persuade you?' he asked. 'If you're not convinced by what I said just now, what more can I do for you? Do you want me to sit here and cram the argument in with a spoon?'

[22] 338e.

'God forbid,' I replied. 'No, but in the first place, if you say something, then stick by what you have said. Or if you change your ground, then do
c so openly. Don't try to do it without our noticing. At the moment, Thrasymachus, if we can take another look at our earlier discussion, you can see that though you started off by defining the doctor in the true sense, you didn't then think it necessary to keep strictly to the shepherd in the true sense. So you don't think of the shepherd, to the extent that he is a shepherd, as tending his flocks with a view to what is best for the sheep. You think he has a view to his own enjoyment – like a guest who has been invited out to dinner – or possibly again a view to their sale, like a busi-
d nessman, not a shepherd. The art of being a shepherd, however, is surely not concerned with anything other than making the best provision for what is under its direction. The question of its own excellence, I take it, is sufficiently provided for so long as it fully meets the requirements of the shepherd's art. That is why I thought, a moment ago,[23] that we must necessarily be agreed that any power or authority, to the extent that it is a
e power or authority, thinks about what is best only for what is under its control and in its care – and that applies to power or authority both in public life and in private life. You, on the other hand, think that rulers of cities – rulers in the precise sense – are keen to be rulers, don't you?'

'No,' he said. 'I don't *think* so. I'm quite sure of it.'

'What about other forms of power or authority, Thrasymachus? You must have observed that no one is prepared to exercise them of his own free will. They ask for pay, in the belief that the benefit from their power or authority will come not to them, but to those over whom they exercise
346 it. Tell me this. Don't we say that what makes each individual one of these arts or skills different from the others is the fact that it has a different function? And please be good enough to say what you really believe. That will help us to get somewhere.'

'Yes, that's what makes each one different,' he said.

'And does each one bring us its own individual benefit, rather than all bringing the same benefit? Does medicine bring health, for example, seamanship safety at sea, and so on?'

'Yes.'

b 'And does the art of earning a living[24] bring payment? Is this its function? Or are you saying that medicine and seamanship are the same?

[23] 342a–e.

[24] This sounds as odd in the Greek as it does in English. The word Socrates uses for it is probably a neologism.

Using words in their precise sense, please, as you instructed, if someone while acting as ship's captain recovers his health because sea voyages are good for him, is that any reason for you to call seamanship medicine?'

'Certainly not,' he said.

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

'Certainly not.'

'Nor do you call medicine the art of earning a living, do you, if someone earns a living practising medicine?'

c He agreed.

'Right. Now, we agreed that each art or skill brought its own individual benefit?'

'What if we did?'

'Well, if there's any benefit which all practitioners of arts or skills receive alike, then clearly they're all making use of something else in addition, something which is the same for all of them, and benefits all of them.'

'It looks that way.'

'We say that they all have the practitioner's ability to benefit by earning a living, and that they do this by practising the art of earning a living in addition to their own.'

He conceded this, though unwillingly.

d 'In which case, none of them receives this benefit – earning a living – from his own art or skill. No, if we look at it in the precise sense, first medicine produces health, and then earning a living produces payment. First the art of building produces a house, and then earning a living comes along afterwards and produces payment. And the same with all the other arts or skills. Each performs its own function, and benefits the object of which it is the art or skill. If there is no payment in addition, does the practitioner get any benefit from his art or skill?'

'Apparently not,' he said.

e 'Does he then do no good when he works for nothing?'

'No, I should think he does do some good.'

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

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

'Can you explain that, Socrates?' said Glaucon. 'I can see what you mean by the two forms of payment. But the penalty you refer to, and how you can put it in the category of a payment, that I don't understand.'

b 'Then you don't understand the payment the best rulers receive – the one which persuades the most suitable people to rule, when they *are* prepared to rule. You're aware, aren't you, that ambition and greed are regarded as, and indeed are, things to be ashamed of?'

'Yes, I am.'

'Well, that's the reason,' I said, 'why the good are not prepared to rule in return for money or prestige. They don't want to make a legitimate profit from their power, and be called mercenary. Nor do they want to make use of their power to take money secretly, and be called thieves. They won't rule for the prestige, because they're not ambitious. So if
c they're going to agree to rule, there must be some additional compulsion on them, some penalty. That's probably why it has always been regarded as a disgrace for people to seek office voluntarily, rather than waiting until they are forced to seek it. As for the penalty, it consists principally in being ruled by someone worse, if they refuse to rule themselves. I think it's this fear which makes decent people rule, when they *do* rule, and these are the circumstances in which they seek power. They don't believe that they are entering upon something good, or that it will bring them any benefit.
d They approach it as something unavoidable, and because they have no one better than themselves, or as good as themselves, to whom they can delegate the job. If there were ever a city of good men, there would probably be as much competition *not* to rule as there is among us to rule. That would be the proof that it really is not in the nature of the true ruler to think about what is good for himself, but only about what is good for his subject. The result would be that anyone with any sense would choose to let someone else do good to him, rather than go to a lot of trouble doing
e good to others.[25] This is where I completely disagree with Thrasymachus

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

when he says that justice is what is good for the stronger. But we'll have another look at that question some other time. Much more important, I think, is what Thrasymachus is saying now, that the life of the unjust is better than the life of the just. What about you, Glaucon? Which do you choose? Which view do you regard as most accurate?'

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

348 'Did you listen just now,' I said, 'to Thrasymachus' catalogue of the advantages in the life of the unjust?'

'Yes, I did,' he replied. 'But I don't find them convincing.'

'Do you want us to try and find some way of persuading him that he is wrong?'

'Of course I do,' he said.

'Well,' I said, 'if we make a speech in opposition to his speech, setting out the arguments in parallel, and saying what advantages there are, by contrast, in being just, and if he then speaks again, and then we make a second speech, we shall need to keep count of the advantages, and
b measure them, as we both make our pairs of speeches. And we shall need judges of some sort, to come to a decision between us. But if we look at the question, as we did just now, on the basis of agreement with one another, we shall ourselves be at one and the same time both judges and advocates.'[26]

'We shall indeed.'

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

'The second way,' he said.

'Come on, then, Thrasymachus,' I said. 'Let's go back to the beginning, and you can give us our answers. Is it your claim that perfect injustice is more profitable than perfect justice?'

c 'That certainly is my claim, and I've told you why.'

'Very well, let me ask you a question about injustice and justice. Presumably you'd call one of them a virtue and the other a vice?'

'Of course.'

'You'd call justice a virtue, and injustice a vice?'

'Socrates, you're an innocent,' he said. 'Am I *likely* to say that, if I claim that injustice pays and justice doesn't?'[27]

[26] In some types of court-case the litigants were entitled to interleave two speeches each. This ABAB pattern is preserved for us in the *Tetralogies* of Antiphon.

[27] 'Virtue' as a translation of *aretē* must be understood to combine the connotation of superior functionality (as when e.g. a house is said to 'have the great virtue' of being cool in summer and warm in winter) with that of moral rectitude. Hence

'Then what *do* you call them?'

'The opposite,' he said.

'You call justice a vice?'

'No, I call it noble simplicity.'

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

'No, I call it common sense.'

'And you really think, Thrasymachus, that the unjust are wise and good?'

'Yes, if you mean those who are capable of perfect injustice, who can bring cities and nations under their control. You probably think I'm talking about snatching handbags. Mind you,' he added, 'even stealing handbags can be quite profitable, if you can get away with it. But it's trivial compared with the injustice I was describing just now.'

e 'Yes, I know which sort you mean,' I said. 'But I *was* surprised, before that, by your putting injustice with goodness and wisdom, and justice with their opposites.'

'Well, that's certainly where I do put them.'

'That's a much more awkward proposition, my friend. It makes it hard to know what to say. If you said that injustice was profitable, but nevertheless admitted, as most people do, that it was wickedness, or something to be ashamed of, we would be able to make some reply along conventional lines. As it is, however, you're obviously going to say that it is good and
349 strong, and credit it with all the qualities which we used to attribute to justice, since you didn't shrink from classifying it with goodness and wisdom.'

'That's an accurate prediction,' he said.

'Still, we mustn't hesitate, in our discussion, to pursue the object of our enquiry for as long as I take you to be saying what you think. My impression is, Thrasymachus, that this time you're not just trying to provoke us, but genuinely saying what you really believe about the truth of the matter.'

'Does it matter to you whether I really believe it or not? Why don't you try and disprove what I say?'

b 'No, it doesn't matter,' I replied. 'Now, I have a further question, on top of the ones I've asked already. Do you think one just man would be at all prepared to try and outdo another just man?'

footnote 27 (*cont.*)
Thrasymachus is reluctant to describe injustice – that masterful trait – as anything but a virtue. Hence too in the arguments at 335c and 353b–c the word is translated 'excellence'.

'No. If he did, he wouldn't be the polite simpleton we know him to be.'

'How about the just action?'

'No, he wouldn't try to do outdo the just action either,' he said.

'Would he think it right to outdo an unjust man? Would he think that was just, or would he think it was unjust?'

'He'd think it just and right – but he wouldn't be able to.'

c 'That isn't my question,' I said. 'My question is this. Does the just man think it wrong to outdo another just man? Does he refuse to do this, but think it right to outdo an unjust man?'

'Yes, he does.'

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

'Of course he does. He thinks it right to outdo *everyone*.'

'Good. So the unjust man will try to outdo an unjust man and an unjust action, and will strive to take the largest share of everything for himself?'[28]

'Yes, he will.'

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

d is like him, but only what is unlike him, whereas the unjust man tries to outdo both what is like him and what is unlike him.'

'Admirably put.'

'The unjust man is wise and good, while the just man is neither of these things.'

'Right again,' he said. 'Well done.'

'And is the unjust man also like the wise and good, and the just man unlike?'

'Since the unjust man *is* wise and good, how could he not also be *like* the wise and good? And how could the just man not be unlike?'

'Good. So each of them *is* what he is like.'

'What else?'

e 'Well, Thrasymachus, do you agree that one person is musical and another unmusical?'

'I do.'

'Which of them do you think knows what he is doing, and which doesn't?'

[28] The verbal phrase translated as 'to outdo' literally means 'to have more', from which derives the range of meanings 'to be greedy', 'to take unfair advantage', as well as simply 'to have the advantage' in a situation, without connotations of unfairness. All these senses are brought into play in this argument. Thrasymachus introduced the term into the discussion at 344a when he described the unjust ruler as one who was capable of being 'selfish on a large scale'.

'I imagine I'd say the musical one knows, and the unmusical one doesn't.'

'Where the musical one knows, he is good, and where the unmusical one doesn't know, he is bad, would you say?'

'Yes.'

'What about someone with medical knowledge? Is that the same?'

'Yes, it is.'

'Do you think, then, my friend, that a musician tuning a lyre would want to outdo another musician – would think it right to get the better of him – in tightening and loosening the strings?'

'No, I don't.'

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

'He'd be bound to.'

'How about someone with medical knowledge? In prescribing food and drink, do you think he'd want to outdo a medical man or medical practice?'

'Of course not.'

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

'Yes.'

'Do you think it's the same for every branch of knowledge and ignorance? Do you think there is ever any knowledgeable person who would deliberately choose, either in action or in speech, to do more than another knowledgeable person would do? Wouldn't he do the same as someone like himself would do in the same situation?'

'I'm inclined to think that must be right,' he said.

b 'What about the person who is not knowledgeable? Wouldn't he try to outdo both equally – the person with knowledge *and* the person without knowledge?'

'He might.'

'And the knowledgeable person is wise?'

'Yes.'

'And the wise person is good?'

'Yes.'

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

'Apparently,' he said.

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