THE REPUBLIC OF PLATO

TRANSLATED WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY

FRANCIS MACDONALD CORNFORD
LITT.D., F.B.A.
Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge

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PART IV (Books VIII–IX)

THE DECLINE OF SOCIETY AND OF THE SOUL. COMPARISON OF THE JUST AND UNJUST LIVES

At the outset of Part II Socrates was challenged to set side by side the perfectly just and the perfectly unjust man and to show that, apart from external rewards and reputation, justice is better both for its own sake and for the happiness it brings to its possessor. In Part III he has completed his picture of the ideal state where justice would flourish, and of the ideal man, the philosophic Ruler, whose soul is ordered on an analogous pattern. It remains to describe the ideally evil condition of society and of the individual soul. This is an inverted economy, in which the basest elements of human nature have set up an absolute despotism or 'tyranny' over the higher, the very negation of that principle of justice whereby each element, by doing its proper work, contributes to the well-being of the whole.

As in the earlier part what was really a logical analysis of society was cast into the more vivid form of an historical development, so here, instead of directly confronting the best condition with the worst, Plato imagines a gradual decline through intermediate forms of constitution and types of character, arranged, on psychological grounds, in an order of merit, not in the order in which Greek political society had normally evolved.[1] Each of the constitutions he describes is animated by a certain spirit, the outcome of some tendency in human nature, nowhere existing in pure isolation, but capable of being portrayed as dominant in a corresponding type of individual. Every type is to be found in every society; but where one type prevails in numbers and influence the political constitution will exhibit its characteristic traits on a larger scale.

[1] Barker, however, notes that 'the communes of mediaeval Italy exactly followed Plato's sequence: the oligarchical *commune* either succumbed before the democratic *popolo*, or admitted it to a share in the government; and in either case a division of classes still survived, acute enough to paralyse the State and ultimately introduce a tyranny, open or concealed' (*Greek Political Theory*, 245).

CHAPTER XXIX (VIII. 543 A–550 C)

THE FALL OF THE IDEAL STATE. TIMOCRACY AND THE TIMOCRATIC MAN

'In the infinity of time, past or future' the Ideal State may never have existed or be destined to exist (499 C, p. 207 f.); *but if we suppose it realised, nothing in this world of mortality and change can last for ever. Most students of history would admit that the flow and ebb of collective vitality which accompany the rise and fall of successive forms of culture has not yet been explained. Aware that here is an equally unanswerable question, Plato veils his account in poetical and even mock-heroic language, hinting at some predestined correspondence between the cycle of life in animals and plants and the periodicity of the heavenly bodies. The wisest of Rulers, entrusted with the regulation of marriage and childbirth, may well fail to understand and observe this principle, and then children will be born who are worse than their parents. The decline of society will set in with the outbreak of dissension within the ruling order. This is at all times the cause of revolution.*

The first degenerate form of constitution is called Timocracy, a state in which the ambitious man's love of honour (timé), *the motive of the 'spirited' part, usurps the rule of reason. Plato expressly regards this principle as exemplified in Spartan institutions, from which he had borrowed several features in prescribing the mode of life of his Auxiliaries (Chap. X). But at Sparta private property had nourished the secret growth of avarice, intellect was distrusted, and an exaggerated cult of military efficiency aimed at holding down a population of helots. (Aristotle describes Spartan and Cretan institutions in the* Politics, Bk. ii. Chap. 9-10.) *This type of state might emerge, if Plato's Auxiliaries should begin to oust the philosophic Rulers from supreme control. The history and character of the timocratic individual closely reflect those of the state.*

The argument here goes back to the point, at the beginning of

Chapter XV, where Socrates professed to be 'within sight of the clearest possible proof' of the superiority of the just life to the unjust—the proof which will be given at the end of this Part. The whole of Part III, the central and most important section of the Republic, *is treated as if it were a digression.*

VERY well, I continued. So far, then, Glaucon, we agree that in a state destined to reach the height of good government wives and children must be held in common; men and women must have the same education throughout and share all pursuits, warlike or peaceful; and those who have proved themselves the best both in philosophy and in war are to be kings among them. Further, the Rulers, as soon as they are appointed, will lead the soldiers and settle them in quarters such as we prescribed, common to all, with nothing private about them; and besides these dwellings we agreed, if you remember, how far they should have anything they could call their own.

Yes, I remember we thought they should have no property in the ordinary sense, but, as Guardians in training for war, they should receive as wages from the other citizens enough to keep them for the year while they fulfilled their duty of watching over the community, themselves included.

That is right. But when we had done with those matters, we went off into the digression which has brought us to this point. Let us go back now into our old path. Where did we leave it?

That is easy to remember. You were talking, very much as you are now, as if your description of the state were complete, and telling us that such a constitution and the corresponding type of man were what you would call good; although, as it now appears, you had it in your power to tell of a state and an individual of a still higher quality.[1] But at any rate you said that, if this constitution were right, all others must be wrong, mentioning, if I remember, four varieties as worth considering with an eye to their defects. We were also to look at all the corresponding types of individual character, decide which was the best and which the worst,

[1] Plato speaks as if the account of the philosophic ruler had brought out the full merits of the ideal state outlined in the earlier part.

and then consider whether or not the best is also the happiest, the worst the most miserable. I was asking what these four constitutions were, when Polemarchus and Adeimantus interrupted us; and so you entered on the discussion which has brought us to this point.

Your memory is very accurate, I replied.

Let us be like wrestlers, then, who go back to the same grip after an indecisive fall. If I repeat my question, try to give me the answer you were going to make.

I will do my best.

Well, I am just as eager to hear what are the four types of government you meant.

There is no difficulty about that; they are the types which have names in common use. First there is the constitution of Crete and Sparta, which is so commonly admired; second and next in esteem oligarchy, as it is called, a constitution fraught with many evils; next follows its antagonist, democracy; then despotism, which is thought so glorious and goes beyond them all as the fourth and final disease of society. Can you mention any other type of government, I mean any that is obviously a distinct species? There are, of course, types like hereditary monarchy, and states where the highest offices can be bought;[1] but these are rather intermediate forms, to be found quite as frequently outside Greece as within it.

True, one hears of many strange varieties.

Do you see, then, that there must be as many types of human character as there are forms of government? Constitutions cannot come out of stocks and stones; they must result from the preponderance of certain characters which draw the rest of the community in their wake. So if there are five forms of government, there must be five kinds of mental constitution among individuals.

Naturally.

Now we have already described the man whom we regard as in the full sense good and just and who corresponds to aristocracy, the government of the best. We have next to consider the inferior types: the competitive and ambitious temperament, answering to

[1] This was so at Carthage, according to Aristotle, *Pol.* 1273 a 36, and Polybius vi. 56, 4. Plato confines himself to Greek institutions.

the Spartan constitution, and then the oligarchic, democratic, and despotic characters, in order that, by setting the extreme examples in contrast, we may finally answer the question how pure justice and pure injustice stand in respect of the happiness or misery they bring, and so decide to pursue the one or the other, according as we listen to Thrasymachus or to the argument we are now developing.

Yes, that is the next thing to be done.

When we were studying moral qualities earlier, we began with the state, because they stood out more clearly there than in the individual. On the same principle we had better now take, in each case, the constitution first, and then, in the light of our results, examine the corresponding character. We shall start with the constitution dominated by motives of ambition—it has no name in common use that I know of; let us call it timarchy or timocracy—and then go on to oligarchy and democracy, and lastly visit a state under despotic government and look into the despot's soul. We ought then to be in a position to decide the question before us.

Yes, such a systematic review should give us the materials for judgement.

Come then, let us try to explain how the government of the best might give place to a timocracy. Is it not a simple fact that in any form of government revolution always starts from the outbreak of internal dissension in the ruling class? The constitution cannot be upset so long as that class is of one mind, however small it may be.[1]

That is true.

Then how, Glaucon, will trouble begin in our commonwealth? How will our Auxiliaries and Rulers come to be divided against each other or among themselves? Shall we, like Homer, invoke the Muses to tell us 'how first division came,' and imagine them amusing themselves at our expense by talking in high-flown language, as one teases a child with a pretence of being in earnest?

What have they to say?

Something of this sort. 'Hard as it may be for a state so framed

[1] This principle was asserted earlier at 465 B, p. 166.

to be shaken, yet, since all that comes into being must decay, even a fabric like this will not endure for ever, but will suffer dissolution. In this manner: not only for plants that grow in the earth, but also for all creatures that move thereon, there are seasons of fruitfulness and unfruitfulness for soul and body alike, which come whenever a certain cycle is completed, in a period[1] short or long according to the length of life of each species. For your own race, the rulers you have bred for your commonwealth, wise as they are, will not be able, by observation and reckoning, to hit upon the times propitious or otherwise for birth; some day the moment will slip by and they will beget children out of due season. For the divine creature there is a period embraced by a perfect number;[2] while for the human there is a geometrical number determining the better or worse quality of the births.[3] When your Guardians, from ignorance of this, bring together brides and bridegrooms out of season, their children will not be well-endowed or fortunate. The best of these may be appointed by the elder generation; but when they succeed to their fathers' authority as Guardians, being un-

[1] This period has been taken to be the period of gestation, at the end of which the seed of the living creature ('soul and body') either comes successfully to birth or miscarries. Aristotle (*On the Generation of Animals*, iv. 10, 777 b 16) remarks: 'In all animals the time of gestation and development and the length of life aim at being measured by naturally complete periods. By a natural period I mean, e.g. a day and night, a month, a year, and the greater times measured by these, and also the periods (phases) of the moon.'

[2] The 'divine creature' is the visible universe, which is called a 'created god' in the cosmological myth of the *Timaeus*. The perfect number is probably the number of days in a Great Year, which is completed when all the heavenly bodies come back to the same relative positions (*Tim.* 39 D).

[3] The extremely obscure description of this number, which has been variously interpreted, is omitted. Ancient evidence points to some relation between two numbers, both ultimately based on the factors 3, 4, 5, representing the sides of the 'Pythagorean' or 'zoogonic' right-angled triangle. (1) One is $216 = 3^3 + 4^3 + 5^3 = 6^3$. This was called the 'psychogonic cube,' as expressing the number of days in the gestation period of the seven-months' child. The period of the nine-months' child was obtained by adding $60 = 3 \times 4 \times 5$. (2) The other number is $12{,}960{,}000 = 3{,}600^2 = (3 \times 4 \times 5)^4$, the number of days in a Great Year, reckoned as 36,000 solar years of 360 days each. If Plato does describe two numbers, and not (as some hold) the second only, he has not explained how the two should be brought into relation. The serious idea behind this seemingly fanciful passage is the affinity and correspondence of macrocosm and microcosm and the embodiment of mathematical principles in both.

worthy, they will begin to neglect us and to think too lightly first of the cultivation of the mind, and then of bodily training, so that your young men will come to be worse educated. Then Rulers appointed from among them will fail in their duty as Guardians to try the mettle of your citizens, those breeds of gold and silver, brass and iron that Hesiod told of;[1] and when the silver is alloyed with iron and the gold with brass, diversity, inequality, and disharmony will beget, as they always must, enmity and war. Such, everywhere, is the birth and lineage of civil strife.'

Yes, we will take that as a true answer to our question.

How could it be otherwise, when it comes from the Muses?

And what will they go on to tell us?

Once civil strife is born, the two parties begin to pull different ways: the breed of iron and brass towards money-making and the possession of house and land, silver and gold; while the other two, wanting no other wealth than the gold and silver in the composition of their souls, try to draw them towards virtue and the ancient ways. But the violence of their contention ends in a compromise: they agree to distribute land and houses for private ownership; they enslave their own people who formerly lived as free men under their guardianship and gave them maintenance; and, holding them as serfs and menials, devote themselves to war and to keeping these subjects under watch and ward.

I agree: that is how the transition begins.

And this form of government will be midway between the rule of the best and oligarchy,[2] will it not?

Yes.

Such being the transition, how will the state be governed after the change? Obviously, as intermediate between the earlier constitution and oligarchy, it will resemble each of these in some respects and have some features of its own.

True.

[1] Cf. the allegory at 415 A ff., p. 106 f.

[2] By oligarchy, as will appear in the next chapter, Plato means government by the rich, plutocracy. The first step towards this is taken when the ruling order begins to acquire private property.

It will be like the earlier constitution in several ways. Authority will be respected; the fighting class will abstain from any form of business, farming, or handicrafts; they will keep up their common meals and give their time to physical training and martial exercises.

Yes.

On the other hand, it will have some peculiar characteristics. It will be afraid to admit intellectuals to office. The men of that quality now at its disposal will no longer be single-minded and sincere; it will prefer simpler characters with plenty of spirit, better suited for war than for peace. War will be its constant occupation, and military tricks and stratagems will be greatly admired.

Yes.

At the same time, men of this kind will resemble the ruling class of an oligarchy in being avaricious, cherishing furtively a passionate regard for gold and silver; for they will now have private homes where they can hoard their treasure in secret and live ensconced in a nest of their own, lavishing their riches on their women or whom they please. They will also be miserly, prizing the money they may not openly acquire, though prodigal enough of other people's wealth for the satisfaction of their desires. They will enjoy their pleasures in secret, like truant children, in defiance of the law; because they have been educated not by gentle influence but under compulsion, cultivating the body in preference to the mind and caring nothing for the spirit of genuine culture which seeks truth by the discourse of reason.

The society you describe is certainly a mixture of good and evil.

Yes, it is a mixture; but, thanks to the predominance of the spirited part of our nature, it has one most conspicuous feature: ambition and the passion to excel.

Quite so.

Such, then, is the origin and character of this form of government. We have given only an outline, for no more finished picture is needed for the purpose of setting before our eyes the perfect types of just and unjust men. It would be an endless task to go through all the forms of government and of human character without omitting any detail.

True.

And now what of the corresponding individual? How does he come into being, and what is he like?

I imagine, said Adeimantus, his desire to excel, so far as that goes, would make him rather like Glaucon.

Perhaps, said I; but in other ways the likeness fails. He must be more self-willed than Glaucon and rather uncultivated, though fond of music; one who will listen readily, but is no speaker. Not having a properly educated man's consciousness of superiority to slaves, he will treat them harshly; though he will be civil to free men, and very obedient to those in authority. Ambitious for office, he will base his claims, not on any gifts of speech, but on his exploits in war and the soldierly qualities he has acquired through his devotion to athletics and hunting. In his youth he will despise money, but the older he grows the more he will care for it, because of the touch of avarice in his nature; and besides his character is not thoroughly sound, for lack of the only safeguard that can preserve it throughout life, a thoughtful and cultivated mind.[1]

Quite true.

If that is the sort of young man whose character reflects a timocratical régime, his history will be something like this. He may be the son of an excellent father who, living in an ill-governed state, holds aloof from public life because he would sooner forgo some of his rights than take part in the scramble for office or be troubled with going to law. His son's character begins to take shape when he hears his mother complaining that she is slighted by the other women because her husband has no official post. She sees too that he cares little for money, and is indifferent to all the scurrilous battle of words that goes on in the Assembly and the law-courts; and she finds him always absorbed in his thoughts, without much regard for her, or disregard either. Nursing all these grievances, she tells her son that his father is not much of a man and far too easy-going, and has all the other weaknesses that the wives of such men are fond of harping on.

Yes, we hear plenty of these feminine complaints.

Besides, as you know, servants who are esteemed loyal to the

[1] This speech represents an Athenian's view of a typical Spartan.

family sometimes talk privately to the sons in the same way. If they see the father taking no action against a swindler or a defaulting debtor, they urge the son, when he is grown up, to stand up for his rights and be more of a man than his father. When the boy goes out, he sees and hears the same sort of thing: one man is made light of as a fool for minding his own business, whereas another who has a finger in every pie is praised and respected. All this experience affects the young man, and on the other hand he listens to his father's conversation and can see at close quarters how his way of life compares with other people's; and so he is pulled both ways. His father tends the growth of reason in his soul, while the rest of the world is fostering the other two elements, ambition and appetite. By temperament he is not a bad man, but he has fallen into bad company, and the two contrary influences result in a compromise: he gives himself up to the control of the middle principle of high-spirited emulation and becomes an arrogant and ambitious man.

That is a good account of his history, I think.

So now we have an idea of the second form of government and the corresponding individual.

Yes.

CHAPTER XXX (VIII. 550 C–555 B)

OLIGARCHY (PLUTOCRACY) AND THE OLIGARCHIC MAN

In Timocracy the illegitimate institution of private property for the Guardians stimulated ambition, under cover of which the still lower passion for wealth was released from the control of reason. The love of money is the most reputable motive characterizing the third element in human nature, the 'multifarious' group of appetites for the satisfactions, necessary or unnecessary, which money can buy. Oligarchy, the 'government of the few,' or, as Xenophon (Mem. iv, 6, 12) *calls it, Plutocracy, is the constitution which results when power passes into the hands of men for whom wealth is the end of life. The state now suffers a further loss of unity by the out-*

break of that class war of rich against poor which Plato sought to avert by denying all private property to the ruling order and limiting the acquisition of wealth by tradesmen and farmers (*Chap. XI*, p. 112). *The plutocrat, as a mere consumer of goods, is compared to the drone; and when he has squandered his money he sinks into the dangerous class of paupers and criminals* (*sting-drones*).

In the oligarchic individual, the drone-like appetites have gained some ground against reason; but they are still held in check by the dominant passion for wealth, which calls for an outward respectability.

SHALL we go on then, as Aeschylus might say, to tell of 'another man, matched with another state,'[1] or rather keep to our plan of taking the state first?

By all means.

Then I suppose the next type of constitution will be oligarchy.

What sort of régime do you mean?

The one which is based on a property qualification, where the rich are in power and the poor man cannot hold office.

I see.

We must start, then, by describing the transition from timocracy to oligarchy. No one could fail to see how that happens. The downfall of timocracy is due to the flow of gold into those private stores we spoke of. In finding new ways of spending their money, men begin by stretching the law for that purpose, until they and their wives obey it no longer. Then, as each keeps an envious eye on his neighbour, their rivalry infects the great mass of them; and as they go to further lengths in the pursuit of riches, the more they value money and the less they care for virtue. Virtue and wealth are balanced against one another in the scales; as the rich rise in social esteem, the virtuous sink. These changes of valuation, moreover, are always reflected in practice. So at last the competitive spirit of ambition in these men gives way to the passion for gain; they despise the poor man and promote to power the rich, who

[1] Alludes to the messenger's descriptions of the champions who appeared before the gates of Thebes in Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*.

wins all their praise and admiration. At this point they fix by statute the qualification for privilege in an oligarchy, an amount of wealth which varies with the strength of the oligarchical principle; no one may hold office whose property falls below the prescribed sum. This measure is carried through by armed force, unless they have already set up their constitution by terrorism. That, then, is how an oligarchy comes to be established.

Yes, said Adeimantus; but what is the character of this régime, and what are the defects we said it would have?

In the first place, I replied, the principle on which it limits privilege. How would it be, if the captain of a ship were appointed on a property qualification, and a poor man could never get a command, though he might know much more about seamanship?

The voyage would be likely to end in disaster.

Is not the same true of any position of authority? Or is the government of a state an exception?

Anything but an exception, inasmuch as a state is the hardest thing to govern and the most important.

So this is one serious fault of oligarchy.

Evidently.

Is it any less serious that such a state must lose its unity and become two, one of the poor, the other of the rich, living together and always plotting against each other?

Quite as serious.

Another thing to its discredit is that they may well be unable to carry on a war. Either they must call out the common people or not. If they do, they will have more to fear from the armed multitude than from the enemy; and if they do not, in the day of battle these oligarchs will find themselves only too literally a government of the few. Also, their avarice will make them unwilling to pay war-taxes.

True.

And again, is it right that the same persons should combine many occupations, agriculture, business, and soldiering? We condemned that practice some time ago.

No, not at all right.

Worst of all, a man is allowed to sell all he has to another and

then to go on living in a community where he plays no part as tradesman or artisan or as a soldier capable of providing his own equipment; he is only what they call a pauper. This is an evil which first becomes possible under an oligarchy, or at least there is nothing to prevent it; otherwise there would not be some men excessively wealthy and others destitute.

True.

Now think of this pauper in his earlier days when he was well off. By spending his money, was he doing any more good to the community in those useful ways I mentioned? He seemed to belong to the ruling class, but really he was neither ruling the state nor serving it; he was a mere consumer of goods. His house might be compared to one of those cells in the honeycomb where a drone is bred to be the plague of the hive. Some drones can fly, and these were all created without stings; others, which cannot fly, are of two sorts: some have formidable stings, the rest have none.[1] In society, the stingless drones end as beggars in their old age; the ones which have stings become what is known as the criminal class. It follows that, in any community where beggars are to be seen, there are also thieves and pickpockets and temple-robbers and other such artists in crime concealed somewhere about the place. And you will certainly see beggars in any state governed by an oligarchy.

Yes, nearly everywhere, outside the ruling class.

Then we may assume that there are also plenty of drones with stings, criminals whom the government takes care to hold down by force; and we shall conclude that they are bred by lack of education, bad upbringing, and a vicious form of government.

Yes.

Such, then, is the character of a state ruled by an oligarchy. It has all these evils and perhaps more.

Very likely.

[1] Aristotle, *Hist. Anim.* ix. 40, describes drones as living on the honey made by the working bees. If the king-bee dies, drones are said to be reared by the workers in their own cells and to become more spirited; hence they are called sting-drones, though they really have no stings, but only the wish to use such weapons. Drones and robber-bees, if caught damaging the work of the other bees, are killed or driven from the hive.

We have finished, then, with the constitution known as oligarchy, where power is held on a property qualification, and we may turn now to the history and character of the corresponding individual.

Yes, let us do so.

The transition from the timocratic type to the oligarchical happens somewhat in this way. The timocratical man has a son, who at first emulates his father and follows in his steps. Then suddenly he sees him come up against society, like a ship striking a sunken rock, and founder with all his possessions; he may have held some high office or command and then have been brought to trial by informers and put to death or banished or outlawed with the loss of all his property.

All this might well happen.

The son is terror-stricken at the sight of this ruin, in which his own fortunes are involved. At once that spirit of eager ambition which hitherto ruled in his heart is thrust headlong from the throne. Humbled by poverty, he turns to earning his living and, little by little, through hard work and petty savings, scrapes together a fortune. And now he will instal another spirit on the vacant throne, the money-loving spirit of sensual appetite, like an eastern monarch with diadem and golden chain and scimitar girt at his side. At its footstool, on either hand, will crouch the two slaves he has forced into subjection: Reason, whose thought is now confined to calculating how money may breed more money, and Ambition, suffered to admire and value nothing but wealth and its possessors and to excel in nothing but the struggle to gain money by any and every means.

There is no swifter and surer way by which an ambitious young man may be transformed into a lover of money.

Is this, then, our oligarchical type?

Well, at any rate, the type from which he has developed corresponded to the constitution from which oligarchy arose.

Let us see, then, whether he will not have the same sort of character. The first point of resemblance is that he values wealth above everything. Another is that he is niggardly and a worker who satisfies only his necessary wants and will go to no further expense; his other desires he keeps in subjection as leading no-

where. There is something squalid about him, with his way of always expecting to make a profit and add to his hoard—the sort of person who is much admired by the vulgar. Surely there is a likeness here to the state under an oligarchy?

I think there is, especially in the way that money is valued above everything.

Because, I suspect, he has never thought of cultivating his mind.

Never; or he would not have promoted the blind god of Wealth [1] to lead the dance.

Good; and here is another point. As a consequence of his lack of education, appetites will spring up in him, comparable to those drones in society whom we classified as either beggars or criminals, though his habitual carefulness will keep them in check. If you want to see his criminal tendencies at work, you must look to any occasions, such as the guardianship of orphans, where he has a chance to be dishonest without risk. It will then be clear that in his other business relations, where his apparent honesty gives him a good reputation, he is only exercising a sort of enforced moderation. The base desires are there, not tamed by a reasonable conviction that it is wrong to gratify them, but only held down under stress of fear, which makes him tremble for the safety of his whole fortune. Moreover, you may generally be sure of discovering these drone-like appetites whenever men of this sort have other people's money to spend.

That is very true.

Such a man, then, will not be single-minded but torn in two by internal conflict, though his better desires will usually keep the upper hand over the worse. Hence he presents a more decent appearance than many; but the genuine virtue of a soul in peace and harmony with itself will be utterly beyond his reach.

I agree.

Further, his stinginess weakens him as a competitor for any personal success or honourable distinction. He is unwilling to spend his money in a struggle for that sort of renown, being afraid to stir up his expensive desires by calling upon them to second his

[1] Plutus is blind in Aristophanes' play of that name and elsewhere.

ambition. So, like a true oligarch, fighting with only a small part of his forces, he is usually beaten and remains a rich man.

Quite so.

Have we any further doubts, then, about the likeness between a state under an oligarchy and this parsimonious money-getter?

None at all.

CHAPTER XXXI (VIII. 555 B–562 A)

DEMOCRACY AND THE DEMOCRATIC MAN

The type of democracy whose defects Plato has in view could exist only in a small city-state like Athens. It was not the rule of the majority through elected representatives, but was based on the theory that every adult male citizen had an equal right to take a personal part in the government through the Assembly and the law-courts and was capable of holding any office. (It must be remembered that more than half the population were either slaves with no civic rights or resident aliens.) At Athens the members of the Council of five hundred, which prepared the business and carried out the resolutions of the Assembly, were appointed by lot from among the candidates who presented themselves. The Assembly was nominally the whole body of citizens over eighteen, a quorum of 6,000 *being required for certain purposes. It was the sovereign administrative power, though it could not alter the constitutional laws, under whose impersonal sovereignty the Greek citizen conceived himself to live, without the co-operation of another popular judicial body, the* Heliaea, *composed nominally of all citizens over thirty who had taken an oath to observe the constitution and been declared by the nine Archons to be duly qualified. The ideals of Athenian democracy are set down in the Funeral Speech of Pericles* (Thuc. ii, 35). *In Plato's view, the direct rule of the many violated the fundamental principle of 'justice,' that men, being born with different capacities, should do only the work*

for which they are fitted. Fitness to govern is, he has argued, the last achievement of the highest natures.

Oligarchy, by making wealth the end of life and failing to check the accumulation of property in a few hands and the ravages of usury, so weakens itself that the poor see their opportunity to wrest power from the degenerate rich.

In the democratic temperament the principle of freedom and equal rights for all is applied to the whole mob of appetites in the lowest part of the soul. Ignoring the distinction between the necessary, profitable desires, indulged by the thrifty plutocrat without loss of respectability, and the unnecessary, prodigal desires, the democratic man gives himself up to the pleasure of the moment, everything by turns and nothing long.

In a later dialogue, The Statesman, *Plato regards even the more lawless type of democracy as superior to oligarchy, though not to timocracy.*

DEMOCRACY, I suppose, should come next. A study of its rise and character should help us to recognize the democratic type of man and set him beside the others for judgement.

Certainly that course would fit in with our plan.

If the aim of life in an oligarchy is to become as rich as possible, that insatiable craving would bring about the transition to democracy. In this way: since the power of the ruling class is due to its wealth, they will not want to have laws restraining prodigal young men from ruining themselves by extravagance. They will hope to lend these spendthrifts money on their property and buy it up, so as to become richer and more influential than ever. We can see at once that a society cannot hold wealth in honour and at the same time establish a proper self-control in its citizens. One or the other must be sacrificed.

Yes, that is fairly obvious.

In an oligarchy, then, this neglect to curb riotous living sometimes reduces to poverty men of a not ungenerous nature. They settle down in idleness, some of them burdened with debt, some disfranchised, some both at once; and these drones are armed and can sting. Hating the men who have acquired their property and

conspiring against them and the rest of society, they long for a revolution. Meanwhile the usurers, intent upon their own business, seem unaware of their existence; they are too busy planting their own stings into any fresh victim who offers them an opening to inject the poison of their money; and while they multiply their capital by usury, they are also multiplying the drones and the paupers. When the danger threatens to break out, they will do nothing to quench the flames, either in the way we mentioned, by forbidding a man to do what he likes with his own, or by the next best remedy, which would be a law enforcing a respect for right conduct. If it were enacted that, in general, voluntary contracts for a loan should be made at the lender's risk,[1] there would be less of this shameless pursuit of wealth and a scantier crop of those evils I have just described.

Quite true.

But, as things are, this is the plight to which the rulers of an oligarchy, for all these reasons, reduce their subjects. As for themselves, luxurious indolence of body and mind makes their young men too lazy and effeminate to resist pleasure or to endure pain; and the fathers, neglecting everything but money, have no higher ideals in life than the poor. Such being the condition of rulers and subjects, what will happen when they are thrown together, perhaps as fellow-travellers by sea or land to some festival or on a campaign, and can observe one another's demeanour in a moment of danger? The rich will have no chance to feel superior to the poor. On the contrary, the poor man, lean and sunburnt, may find himself posted in battle beside one who, thanks to his wealth and indoor life, is panting under his burden of fat and showing every mark of distress. 'Such men,' he will think, 'are rich because we are cowards'; and when he and his friends meet in private, the word will go round: 'These men are no good: they are at our mercy.'

Yes, that is sure to happen.

This state, then, is in the same precarious condition as a person

[1] At *Laws* 742 E, Plato proposes a law: 'No one shall deposit money with anyone he does not trust, nor lend at interest, since it is permissible for the borrower to refuse entirely to pay back either interest or principal' (trans. R. G. Bury).

so unhealthy that the least shock from outside will upset the balance or, even without that, internal disorder will break out. It falls sick and is at war with itself on the slightest occasion, as soon as one party or the other calls in allies from a neighbouring oligarchy or democracy; and sometimes civil war begins with no help from without.

Quite true.

And when the poor win, the result is a democracy. They kill some of the opposite party, banish others, and grant the rest an equal share in civil rights and government, officials being usually appointed by lot.

Yes, that is how a democracy comes to be established, whether by force of arms or because the other party is terrorized into giving way.

Now what is the character of this new régime? Obviously the way they govern themselves will throw light on the democratic type of man.

No doubt.

First of all, they are free. Liberty and free speech are rife everywhere; anyone is allowed to do what he likes.

Yes, so we are told.

That being so, every man will arrange his own manner of life to suit his pleasure. The result will be a greater variety of individuals than under any other constitution. So it may be the finest of all, with its variegated pattern of all sorts of characters. Many people may think it the best, just as women and children might admire a mixture of colours of every shade in the pattern of a dress. At any rate if we are in search of a constitution, here is a good place to look for one. A democracy is so free that it contains a sample of every kind; and perhaps anyone who intends to found a state, as we have been doing, ought first to visit this emporium of constitutions and choose the model he likes best.

He will find plenty to choose from.

Here, too, you are not obliged to be in authority, however competent you may be, or to submit to authority, if you do not like it; you need not fight when your fellow citizens are at war, nor

remain at peace when they do, unless you want peace; and though you may have no legal right to hold office or sit on juries, you will do so all the same if the fancy takes you. A wonderfully pleasant life, surely, for the moment.

For the moment, no doubt.

There is a charm, too, in the forgiving spirit shown by some who have been sentenced by the courts. In a democracy you must have seen how men condemned to death or exile stay on and go about in public, and no one takes any more notice than he would of a spirit that walked invisible. There is so much tolerance and superiority to petty considerations; such a contempt for all those fine principles we laid down in founding our commonwealth, as when we said that only a very exceptional nature could turn out a good man, if he had not played as a child among things of beauty and given himself only to creditable pursuits. A democracy tramples all such notions under foot; with a magnificent indifference to the sort of life a man has led before he enters politics, it will promote to honour anyone who merely calls himself the people's friend.

Magnificent indeed.

These then, and such as these, are the features of a democracy, an agreeable form of anarchy with plenty of variety and an equality of a peculiar kind for equals and unequals alike.

All that is notoriously true.

Now consider the corresponding individual character. Or shall we take his origin first, as we did in the case of the constitution?

Yes.

I imagine him as the son of our miserly oligarch, brought up under his father's eye and in his father's ways. So he too will enforce a firm control over all such pleasures as lead to expense rather than profit—unnecessary pleasures, as they have been called. But, before going farther, shall we draw the distinction between necessary and unnecessary appetites, so as not to argue in the dark?[1]

Please do so.

[1] A classification of appetites is needed because oligarchy, democracy, and despotism are based on the supremacy of three sorts of appetite: (1) the necessary, (2) the unnecessary and spendthrift, and (3) the lawless, distinguished later at 571 A, p. 297 ff.

There are appetites which cannot be got rid of, and there are all those which it does us good to fulfil. Our nature cannot help seeking to satisfy both these kinds; so they may fairly be described as necessary. On the other hand, 'unnecessary' would be the right name for all appetites which can be got rid of by early training and which do us no good and in some cases do harm. Let us take an example of each kind, so as to form a general idea of them. The desire to eat enough plain food—just bread and meat—to keep in health and good condition may be called necessary. In the case of bread the necessity is twofold, since it not only does us good but is indispensable to life; whereas meat is only necessary in so far as it helps to keep us in good condition. Beyond these simple needs the desire for a whole variety of luxuries is unnecessary. Most people can get rid of it by early discipline and education; and it is as prejudicial to intelligence and self-control as it is to bodily health. Further, these unnecessary appetites might be called expensive, whereas the necessary ones are rather profitable, as helping a man to do his work. The same distinctions could be drawn in the case of sexual appetite and all the rest.

Yes.

Now, when we were speaking just now of drones, we meant the sort of man who is under the sway of a host of unnecessary pleasures and appetites, in contrast with our miserly oligarch, over whom the necessary desires are in control. Accordingly, we can now go back to describe how the democratic type develops from the oligarchical. I imagine it usually happens in this way. When a young man, bred, as we were saying, in a stingy and uncultivated home, has once tasted the honey of the drones and keeps company with those dangerous and cunning creatures, who know how to purvey pleasures in all their multitudinous variety, then the oligarchical constitution of his soul begins to turn into a democracy. The corresponding revolution was effected in the state by one of the two factions calling in the help of partisans from outside. In the same way one of the conflicting sets of desires in the soul of this youth will be reinforced from without by a group of kindred passions; and if the resistance of the oligarchical faction in him is strengthened by remonstrances and reproaches coming from his

father, perhaps, or his friends, the opposing parties will soon be battling within him. In some cases the democratic interest yields to the oligarchical: a sense of shame gains a footing in the young man's soul, and some appetites are crushed, others banished, until order is restored.

Yes, that happens sometimes.

But then again, perhaps, owing to the father's having no idea how to bring up his son, another brood of desires, akin to those which were banished, are secretly nursed up until they become numerous and strong. These draw the young man back into clandestine commerce with his old associates, and between them they breed a whole multitude. In the end, they seize the citadel of the young man's soul, finding it unguarded by the trusty sentinels which keep watch over the minds of men favoured by heaven. Knowledge, right principles, true thoughts, are not at their post; and the place lies open to the assault of false and presumptuous notions. So he turns again to those lotus-eaters and now throws in his lot with them openly. If his family send reinforcements to the support of his thrifty instincts, the impostors who have seized the royal fortress shut the gates upon them, and will not even come to parley with the fatherly counsels of individual friends. In the internal conflict they gain the day; modesty and self-control, dishonoured and insulted as the weaknesses of an unmanly fool, are thrust out into exile; and the whole crew of unprofitable desires take a hand in banishing moderation and frugality, which, as they will have it, are nothing but churlish meanness. So they take possession of the soul which they have swept clean, as if purified for initiation into higher mysteries; and nothing remains but to marshal the great procession[1] bringing home Insolence, Anarchy, Waste, and Impudence, those resplendent divinities crowned with garlands, whose praises they sing under flattering names: Insolence they call good breeding, Anarchy freedom, Waste magnificence, and Impudence a manly spirit. Is not that a fair account of the revolution which gives free rein to unnecessary and harmful pleasures in a

[1] Using once more the imagery of the Eleusinian Mysteries, Plato alludes to the evening procession which conducted the image of Iacchus from Athens home to Eleusis.

young man brought up in the satisfaction only of the necessary desires?

Yes, it is a vivid description.

In his life thenceforward he spends as much time and pains and money on his superfluous pleasures as on the necessary ones. If he is lucky enough not to be carried beyond all bounds, the tumult may begin to subside as he grows older. Then perhaps he may recall some of the banished virtues and cease to give himself up entirely to the passions which ousted them; and now he will set all his pleasures on a footing of equality, denying to none its equal rights and maintenance, and allowing each in turn, as it presents itself, to succeed, as if by the chance of the lot, to the government of his soul until it is satisfied. When he is told that some pleasures should be sought and valued as arising from desires of a higher order, others chastised and enslaved because the desires are base, he will shut the gates of the citadel against the messengers of truth, shaking his head and declaring that one appetite is as good as another and all must have their equal rights. So he spends his days indulging the pleasure of the moment, now intoxicated with wine and music, and then taking to a spare diet and drinking nothing but water; one day in hard training, the next doing nothing at all, the third apparently immersed in study. Every now and then he takes a part in politics, leaping to his feet to say or do whatever comes into his head. Or he will set out to rival someone he admires, a soldier it may be, or, if the fancy takes him, a man of business. His life is subject to no order or restraint, and he has no wish to change an existence which he calls pleasant, free, and happy.

That well describes the life of one whose motto is liberty and equality.

Yes, and his character contains the same fine variety of pattern that we found in the democratic state; it is as multifarious as that epitome of all types of constitution. Many a man, and many a woman too, will find in it something to envy. So we may see in him the counterpart of democracy, and call him the democratic man.

We may.

CHAPTER XXXII (VIII. 562 A–IX. 576 B)

DESPOTISM AND THE DESPOTIC MAN

The Greeks called an absolute, unconstitutional ruler a 'tyrant,' but the word by no means always bore the sinister associations which are now gathering round its modern equivalent, the once honourable name of 'dictator.' A tyrant might be, like Peisistratus at Athens, a comparatively benevolent champion of the common people against the oppression of a landed aristocracy; but then, as now, Acton's saying was true: 'all power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely.' Little as Plato valued what he has described as democratic liberty, no democrat could surpass him in detestation of the despotism which is the triumph of injustice and the very negation of the liberty he did believe in.

Democratic anarchy, carried to the extreme, divides society into three classes: a growing number of ruined spendthrift and desperadoes; the capitalists, quietly amassing wealth; and the mass of country people, working their own small farms and uninterested in politics. The most unscrupulous 'drones' lead an attack upon property, which drives the capitalists in self-defence to form a reactionary party. The people then put forward a champion who, having tasted blood, is fated to become a human wolf, the enemy of mankind. Threatened with assassination, he successfully demands a bodyguard or private army, seizes absolute power, and makes the people his slaves. This account of the rise of despotism is adapted to Plato's psychological standpoint, rather than to the normal course of Greek history. At Athens, for example, the 'tyranny' of Peisistratus broke the power of the landed nobility and prepared the way for democracy. On the other hand democracy sometimes passed into despotism, as at Syracuse in Plato's time.

A picture follows of the miserable condition to which the despot is driven to reduce himself by murdering his opponents and possible rivals, till he is left with only scoundrels for company and

loathed by the people when they realize how they have been enslaved.

In the individual soul despotism means the dominion of one among those unlawful appetites whose existence, even in decent people, is revealed in dreams. The democratic man allowed equal rights to all his desires; but this balance is easily destroyed by the growth of a master passion, which will gradually enslave every other element in the soul. So at last the portrait of the perfectly unjust man is completed for comparison with the perfectly just philosopher-king.

Now there remains only the most admired of all constitutions and characters—despotism and the despot. How does despotism arise? That it comes out of democracy is fairly clear. Does the change take place in the same sort of way as the change from oligarchy to democracy? Oligarchy was established by men with a certain aim in life: the good they sought was wealth, and it was the insatiable appetite for money-making to the neglect of everything else that proved its undoing. Is democracy likewise ruined by greed for what it conceives to be the supreme good?

What good do you mean?

Liberty. In a democratic country you will be told that liberty is its noblest possession, which makes it the only fit place for a free spirit to live in.

True; that is often said.

Well then, as I was saying, perhaps the insatiable desire for this good to the neglect of everything else may transform a democracy and lead to a demand for despotism. A democratic state may fall under the influence of unprincipled leaders, ready to minister to its thirst for liberty with too deep draughts of this heady wine; and then, if its rulers are not complaisant enough to give it unstinted freedom, they will be arraigned as accursed oligarchs and punished. Law-abiding citizens will be insulted as nonentities who hug their chains; and all praise and honour will be bestowed, both publicly and in private, on rulers who behave like subjects and subjects who behave like rulers. In such a state the spirit of liberty is bound to go to all lengths.

Inevitably.

It will make its way into the home, until at last the very animals catch the infection of anarchy. The parent falls into the habit of behaving like the child, and the child like the parent: the father is afraid of his sons, and they show no fear or respect for their parents, in order to assert their freedom. Citizens, resident aliens, and strangers from abroad are all on an equal footing. To descend to smaller matters, the schoolmaster timidly flatters his pupils, and the pupils make light of their masters as well as of their attendants. Generally speaking, the young copy their elders, argue with them, and will not do as they are told; while the old, anxious not to be thought disagreeable tyrants, imitate the young and condescend to enter into their jokes and amusements. The full measure of popular liberty is reached when the slaves of both sexes are quite as free as the owners who paid for them; and I had almost forgotten to mention the spirit of freedom and equality in the mutual relations of men and women.

Well, to quote Aeschylus, we may as well speak 'the word that rises to our lips.'

Certainly; so I will. No one who had not seen it would believe how much more freedom the domestic animals enjoy in a democracy than elsewhere. The very dogs behave as if the proverb 'like mistress, like maid' applied to them; and the horses and donkeys catch the habit of walking down the street with all the dignity of freemen, running into anyone they meet who does not get out of their way. The whole place is simply bursting with the spirit of liberty.

No need to tell me that. I have often suffered from it on my way out of the town.

Putting all these items together, you can see the result: the citizens become so sensitive that they resent the slightest application of control as intolerable tyranny, and in their resolve to have no master they end by disregarding even the law, written or unwritten.

Yes, I know that only too well.

Such then, I should say, is the seed, so full of fair promise, from which springs despotism.

Promising indeed. But what is the next stage?

The same disease that destroyed oligarchy breaks out again here, with all the more force because of the prevailing licence, and enslaves democracy. The truth is that, in the constitution of society, quite as much as in the weather or in plants and animals, any excess brings about an equally violent reaction. So the only outcome of too much freedom is likely to be excessive subjection, in the state or in the individual; which means that the culmination of liberty in democracy is precisely what prepares the way for the cruellest extreme of servitude under a despot. But I think you were asking rather about the nature of that disease which afflicts democracy in common with oligarchy and reduces it to slavery.

Yes, I was.

What I had in mind was that set of idle spendthrifts, among whom the bolder spirits take the lead. We compared these leaders, if you remember, to drones armed with stings, the stingless drones being their less enterprising followers. In any society where these two groups appear they create disorder, as phlegm and bile do in the body. Hence the lawgiver, as a good physician of the body politic, should take measures in advance, no less than the prudent bee-keeper who tries to forestall the appearance of drones, or, failing that, cuts them out, cells and all, as quickly as he can.

Quite true.

Then, to gain a clearer view of our problem, let us suppose the democratic commonwealth to be divided into three parts, as in fact it is. One consists of the drones we have just described. Bred by the spirit of licence, in a democracy this class is no less numerous and much more energetic than in an oligarchy, where it is despised and kept out of office and so remains weak for lack of exercise. But in a democracy it furnishes all the leaders, with a few exceptions; its keenest members make the speeches and transact the business, while the other drones settle on the benches round, humming applause to drown any opposition. Thus nearly the whole management of the commonwealth is in its hands.

Quite true.

Meanwhile, a second group is constantly emerging from the mass. Where everyone is bent upon making money, the steadiest characters tend to amass the greatest wealth. Here is a very con-

venient source from which the drones can draw an abundance of honey.

No doubt; they cannot squeeze any out of men of small means.

'The rich,' I believe, is what they call this class which provides provender for the drones.

Yes.

The third class will be the 'people,' comprising all the peasantry who work their own farms, with few possessions and no interest in politics. In a democracy this is the largest class and, when once assembled, its power is supreme.

Yes, but it will not often meet, unless it gets some share of the honey.

Well, it always does get its share, when the leaders are distributing to the people what they have taken from the well-to-do, always provided they can keep the lion's share for themselves.[1] The plundered rich are driven to defend themselves in debate before the Assembly and by any measures they can compass; and then, even if they have no revolutionary designs, the other party accuse them of plotting against the people and of being reactionary oligarchs. At last, when they see the people unwittingly misled by such denunciation into attempts to treat them unjustly, then, whether they wish it or not, they become reactionaries in good earnest. There is no help for it; the poison is injected by the sting of those drones we spoke of. Then follow impeachments and trials, in which each party arraigns the other.

Quite so.

And the people always put forward a single champion of their interests, whom they nurse to greatness. Here, plainly enough, is the root from which despotism invariably springs.[2]

Yes.

[1] Pericles had introduced the payment of a small fee to enable country people to come to Athens for service on juries. This was later increased to an amount compensating for the loss of a day's work. After the Peloponnesian War, citizens were paid for attending the Assembly. There were also distributions of surplus revenue, corn-doles, and payments for festivals.

[2] Aristotle (*Politics*, v. 5) observes that in the old days most despots had risen from being demagogues. Cf. Herod. iii. 82.

How does the transformation of the people's champion into a despot begin? You have heard the legend they tell of the shrine of Lycaean Zeus in Arcadia: how one who tastes a single piece of human flesh mixed in with the flesh of the sacrificial victims is fated to be changed into a wolf. In the same way the people's champion, finding himself in full control of the mob, may not scruple to shed a brother's blood; dragging him before a tribunal with the usual unjust charges, he may foully murder him, blotting out a man's life and tasting kindred blood with unhallowed tongue and lips; he may send men to death or exile with hinted promises of debts to be cancelled and estates to be redistributed. Is it not thenceforth his inevitable fate either to be destroyed by his enemies or to seize absolute power and be transformed from a human being into a wolf?

It is.

Here, then, we have the party-leader in the civil war against property. If he is banished, and then returns from exile in despite of his enemies, he will come back a finished despot. If they cannot procure his banishment or death by denouncing him to the state, they will conspire to assassinate him. Then comes the notorious device of all who have reached this stage in the despot's career, the request for a bodyguard to keep the people's champion safe for them. The request is granted, because the people, in their alarm on his account, have no fear for themselves.

Quite true.

This is a terrifying sight for the man of property, who is charged with being not merely rich but the people's enemy. He will follow the oracle's advice to Croesus,

> To flee by Hermus' pebbly shore,
> Dreading the coward's shame no more.[1]

Well, he would have little chance to dread it a second time.

True; if he is caught, no doubt he will be done to death; whereas our champion himself does not, like Hector's charioteer,[2] 'measure his towering length in dust,' but on the contrary, overthrows a host

[1] Herodotus, i. 55.

[2] *Iliad*, xvi. 776.

of rivals and stands erect in the chariot of the state, no longer protector of the people, but its absolute master.

Yes, it must come to that.

And now shall we describe the happy condition of the man and of the country which harbours a creature of this stamp?

By all means.

In the early days he has a smile and a greeting for everyone he meets; disclaims any absolute power; makes large promises to his friends and to the public; sets about the relief of debtors and the distribution of land to the people and to his supporters; and assumes a mild and gracious air towards everybody. But as soon as he has disembarrassed himself of his exiled enemies by coming to terms with some and destroying others, he begins stirring up one war after another, in order that the people may feel their need of a leader, and also be so impoverished by taxation that they will be forced to think of nothing but winning their daily bread, instead of plotting against him. Moreover, if he suspects some of cherishing thoughts of freedom and not submitting to his rule, he will find a pretext for putting them at the enemy's mercy and so making away with them. For all these reasons a despot must be constantly provoking wars.

He must.

This course will lead to his being hated by his countrymen more and more. Also, the bolder spirits among those who have helped him to power and now hold positions of influence will begin to speak their mind to him and among themselves and to criticize his policy. If the despot is to maintain his rule, he must gradually make away with all these malcontents, until he has not a friend or an enemy left who is of any account. He will need to keep a sharp eye open for anyone who is courageous or high-minded or intelligent or rich; it is his happy fate to be at war with all such, whether he likes it or not, and to lay his plans against them until he has purged the commonwealth.[1]

[1] At *Gorg.* 510 B Socrates remarks that a despot cannot make friends with his betters, whom he will fear, or with his inferiors, whom he will despise, but only with men of like character, who will truckle to him. In *Ep.* vii 332 C Plato says

A fine sort of purgation!

Yes, the exact opposite of the medical procedure, which removes the worst elements in the bodily condition and leaves the best.

There seems to be no choice, if he is to hold his power.

No; he is confined to the happy alternatives of living with people most of whom are good for nothing and who hate him into the bargain, or not living at all. And the greater the loathing these actions inspire in his countrymen, the more he will need trustworthy recruits to strengthen his bodyguard. Where will he turn to find men on whom he can rely?

They will come flocking of their own accord, if he offers enough pay.

Foreigners of all sorts, you mean—yet another swarm of drones. But why not draw upon the home supply? He could rob the citizens of their slaves, emancipate them, and enroll them in his bodyguard.

No doubt they would be the most faithful adherents he could find.

What an enviable condition for the despot, to put his trust in such friends as these, when he has made away with his earlier supporters! He will, of course, be the admiration of all this band of new-made citizens, whose company he will enjoy when every decent person shuns him with loathing. It is not for nothing that the tragic drama is thought to be a storehouse of wisdom, and above all Euripides, whose profundity of thought appears in the remark that 'despots grow wise by converse with the wise,' meaning no doubt by the wise these associates we have described.

Yes, and Euripides praises absolute power as godlike, with much more to the same effect. So do the other poets.[1]

That being so, the tragedians will give a further proof of their wisdom if they will excuse us and all states whose constitution resembles ours, when we deny them admittance on the ground that they sing the praises of despotism. At the same time, I expect

that Dionysius I was too clever to trust anyone, and 'there is no surer sign of moral character than the lack of trustworthy friends.'

[1] The ancients often quote lines from the tragedians, as many people now quote Shakespeare, without regard to the context or the fact that a dramatist is not responsible for all the sentiments expressed by his characters.

they will go the round of other states, where they will hire actors with fine sonorous voices to sway the inclination of the assembled crowd towards a despotic or a democratic constitution. Naturally they are honoured and well paid for these services, by despots chiefly, and in a less degree by democracies. But the higher they mount up the scale of commonwealths, the more their reputation flags, like a climber who gives in for lack of breath. However, we are wandering from our subject. Let us go back to the despot's army. How is he to maintain this fine, ever-shifting array of non-descripts?

No doubt he will spend any treasure there may be in the temples,[1] so long as it will last, as well as the property of his victims, thus lightening the war-taxes imposed on the people.

And when that source fails?

Clearly he will support himself, with his boon-companions, minions, and mistresses, from his parent's estate.

I understand: the despot and his comrades will be maintained by the common people which gave him birth.

Inevitably.

But how if the people resent this and say it is not right for the father to support his grown-up son—it ought to be the other way about; they did not bring him into being and set him up in order that, when he had grown great, they should be the slaves of their own slaves and support them together with their master and the rest of his rabble; he was to be the champion to set them free from the rich and the so-called upper class. Suppose they now order him and his partisans to leave the country, as a father might drive his son out of the house along with his riotous friends?

Then, to be sure, the people will learn what sort of a creature it has bred and nursed to greatness in its bosom, until now the child is too strong for the parent to drive out.

Do you mean that the despot will dare to lay violent hands on this father of his and beat him if he resists?

Yes, when once he has disarmed him.

So the despot is a parricide, with no pity for the weakness of

[1] In the ancient world temples were to some extent used like banks for the safe deposit of valuables, since robbery would involve the additional guilt of sacrilege.

age. Here, it seems, is absolutism openly avowed. The people, as they say, have escaped the smoke only to fall into the fire, exchanging service to free men for the tyranny of slaves. That freedom which knew no bounds must now put on the livery of the most harsh and bitter servitude, where the slave has become the master.

Yes, that is what happens.

May we say, then, that we have now sufficiently described the transition from democracy to despotism, and what despotism is like when once established?

Yes, quite sufficiently.

Last comes the man of despotic character. It remains to ask how he develops from the democratic type, what he is like, and whether his life is one of happiness or of misery.

Yes.

Here I feel the need to define, more fully than we have so far done, the number and nature of the appetites. Otherwise it will not be so easy to see our way to a conclusion.

Well, it is not too late.

Quite so. Now, about the appetites, here is the point I want to make plain. Among the unnecessary pleasures and desires,[1] some, I should say, are unlawful. Probably they are innate in everyone; but when they are disciplined by law and by the higher desires with the aid of reason, they can in some people be got rid of entirely, or at least left few and feeble, although in others they will be comparatively strong and numerous.

What kind of desires do you mean?

Those which bestir themselves in dreams, when the gentler part of the soul slumbers and the control of reason is withdrawn; then the wild beast in us, full-fed with meat or drink, becomes rampant and shakes off sleep to go in quest of what will gratify its own instincts. As you know, it will cast away all shame and prudence at such moments and stick at nothing. In phantasy it will not shrink from intercourse with a mother or anyone else, man, god,

[1] Distinguished at 558 D, p. 284 f.

or brute, or from forbidden food or any deed of blood. In a word, it will go to any length of shamelessness and folly.

Quite true.

It is otherwise with a man sound in body and mind, who, before he goes to sleep, awakens the reason within him to feed on high thoughts and questionings in collected meditation. If he has neither starved nor surfeited his appetites, so that, lulled to rest, no delights or griefs of theirs may trouble that better part, but leave it free to reach out, in pure and independent thought, after some new knowledge of things past, present, or to come; if, likewise, he has soothed his passions so as not to fall asleep with his anger roused against any man; if, in fact, he does not take his rest until he has quieted two of the three elements in his soul and awakened the third wherein wisdom dwells, then he is in a fair way to grasp the truth of things, and the visions of his dreams will not be unlawful. However, we have been carried away from our point, which is that in every one of us, even those who seem most respectable, there exist desires, terrible in their untamed lawlessness, which reveal themselves in dreams. Do you agree?

I do.

Remember, then, our account of the democratic man, how his character was shaped by his early training under a parsimonious father, who respected only the businesslike desires, dismissing the unnecessary ones as concerned with frivolous embellishments. Then, associating with more sophisticated people who were a prey to those lawless appetites we have just described, he fell into their ways, and hatred of his father's miserliness drove him into every sort of extravagance. But, having a better disposition than his corrupters, he came to a compromise between the two conflicting ways of life, making the best of both with what he called moderation and avoiding alike the meanness of the one and the licence of the other. So the oligarchical man was transformed into the democratic type.

Yes, I hold by that description.

Now imagine him grown old in his turn, with a young son bred in his ways, who is exposed to the same influences, drawn towards the utter lawlessness which his seducers call perfect free-

dom, while on the other side his father and friends lend their support to the compromise. When those terrible wizards who would conjure up an absolute ruler in the young man's soul begin to doubt the power of their spells, in the last resort they contrive to engender in him a master passion, to champion the mob of idle appetites which are for dividing among themselves all available plunder—a passion that can only be compared to a great winged drone. Like a swarm buzzing round this creature, the other desires come laden with incense and perfumes, garlands and wine, feeding its growth to the full on the pleasures of a dissolute life, until they have implanted the sting of a longing that cannot be satisfied.[1] Then at last this passion, as leader of the soul, takes madness for the captain of its guard and breaks out in frenzy; if it can lay hold upon any thoughts or desires that are of good report and still capable of shame, it kills them or drives them forth, until it has purged the soul of all sobriety and called in the partisans of madness to fill the vacant place.

That is a complete picture of how the despotic character develops.

Is not this the reason why lust has long since been called a tyrant? A drunken man, too, has something of this tyrannical spirit; and so has the lunatic who dreams that he can lord it over all mankind and heaven besides. Thus, when nature or habit or both have combined the traits of drunkenness, lust, and lunacy, then you have the perfect specimen of the despotic man.

Quite true.

Such, then, being his origin and character, what will his life be like?

I give it up. You must tell me.

I will. When a master passion is enthroned in absolute dominion over every part of the soul, feasting and revelling with courtesans and all such delights will become the order of the day. And every day and night a formidable crop of fresh appetites springs up,

[1] The winged drone, it will be remembered, is naturally stingless (552 c, p. 277). The word translated by 'passion' is *Eros*, and *Eros* was commonly pictured with wings.

whose numerous demands quickly consume whatever income there may be. Soon he will be borrowing and trenching on his capital; and when all resources fail, the lusty brood of appetites will crowd about him clamouring. Goaded on to frenzy by them and above all by that ruling passion to which they serve as a sort of bodyguard, he will look out for any man of property whom he can rob by fraud or violence. Money he must have, no matter how, if he is not to suffer torments.

All that is inevitable.

Now, just as a succession of new pleasures asserted themselves in his soul at the expense of the older ones, so this young man will claim the right to live at his parents' expense and help himself to their property when his own portion is spent. If they resist, he will first try to cheat them; and failing that, he will rob them by force. If the old people still hold out, will any scruple restrain him from behaving like a despot?

I should not have much hope for the parents of such a son.

And yet consider, Adeimantus: his father and mother have been bound to him by the closest ties all his life; and now that they are old and faded, would he really be ready to beat them for the sake of the charms of some new-found mistress or favourite who has no sort of claim on him? Is he going to bring these creatures under the same roof and let them lord it over his parents?

I believe he would.

It is no very enviable lot, then, to give birth to a despotic son.

It is not.

And now suppose that his parents' resources begin to fail, while his appetites for new pleasures have mustered into a great swarm in his soul; he will begin by breaking into someone's house or robbing a traveller by night, and go on to sweep some temple clean of its treasures. Meanwhile, the old approved beliefs about right and wrong which he had as a child will be overpowered by thoughts, once held in subjection, but now emancipated to second that master passion whose bodyguard they form. In his democratic days when he was still under the control of his father and of the laws, they broke loose only in sleep; but now that this passion has set up an absolute dominion, he has become for

all his waking life the man he used to be from time to time in his dreams, ready to shed blood or eat forbidden food or do any dreadful deed. The desire that lives in him as sole ruler in a waste of lawless disrule will drive him, as a tyrant would drive his country, into any desperate venture which promises to maintain it with its horde of followers, some of whom evil communication has brought in from without, while others have been released from bondage by the same evil practices within. Is that a fair account of his manner of life?

Yes.

If there are a few such characters in a country where most men are law-abiding, they will go elsewhere to join some despot's bodyguard or serve as mercenaries in any war that is toward. In quiet times of peace, they stay at home and commit crimes on a small scale, as thieves, burglars, pickpockets, temple-robbers, kidnappers; or, if they have a ready tongue, they may take to selling their services as informers and false witnesses.

Such crimes will be a small matter, you mean, so long as the criminals are few in number.

Small is a relative term; and all of them put together do not, as they say, come within sight of the degradation and misery of society under a despot. When the number of such criminals and their hangers-on increases and they become aware of their strength, then it is they who, helped by the folly of the common people, create the despot out of that one among their number whose soul is itself under the most tyrannical despotism.

Yes, such a state of mind would naturally be his best qualification.

All goes smoothly if men are ready to submit. But the country may resist; and then, just as he began by calling his father and mother to order, so now he will discipline his once loved fatherland, or motherland as the Cretans call it, and see that it shall live in subjection to the new-found partisans he has called in to enslave it. So this man's desires come to their fulfilment.

Yes, that is true.

In private life, before they gain power, men of this stamp either consort with none but parasites ready to do them any service, or,

if they have a favour to beg, they will not hesitate themselves to cringe and posture in simulated friendliness, which soon cools off when their end is gained. So, throughout life, the despotic character has not a friend in the world; he is sometimes master, sometimes slave, but never knows true friendship or freedom. There is no faithfulness in him; and, if we were right in our notion of justice, he is the perfect example of the unjust man.

Certainly.

CHAPTER XXXIII (IX. 576 B–588 A)

THE JUST AND UNJUST LIVES COMPARED IN RESPECT OF HAPPINESS

By tracing the portraits of the philosopher-king and of the despot, Socrates has now set in contrast the ideally just man and the ideally unjust, in response to the original demand of Glaucon and Adeimantus (Chap. V). It remains to point out which life is the happiest. Three arguments are advanced.

(1) *The man whose soul is under the despotism of a master passion is the unhappiest by three tests of well-being: freedom, wealth, and security from fear. His unlimited licence to 'do what he likes' is not genuine freedom, which consists in doing what the true, i.e. the reasonable, self wills for the good of the whole man. (In the* Gorgias 466 ff. *Socrates argues against Polus that the autocrat is least of all men able to do what he wills in this sense.) No man is rich whose desires can never be satisfied. The despot, moreover, as the enemy of mankind, must live haunted by fear.*

(2) *When the two lives are compared in respect of pleasantness, the best judge is the philosopher, who alone has experienced the peculiar pleasures of all three parts of the soul, and whose experience is supported by insight and reasoning. (It appears here, more clearly than elsewhere, that each part of the soul has its characteristic desire, and that desires are defined by differences in their objects. This fits in with the suggestion at* 485 D (p. 191)

that desire is a single fund of energy which can be turned from one object to another 'like a stream diverted into another bed.')

(3) *The third proof turns on the distinction between pure or positive pleasure and pleasure which is illusory because exaggerated by contrast with a preceding pain of want. Thus the pleasure of eating is enhanced by the pain of hunger which it relieves; and this is said to be true of most sensual pleasures, but not* (*it is implied*) *of the pleasures enjoyed by the soul independently of the body. Intellectual satisfactions are also more real, in proportion as the mind and the truth it feeds on are more real than the body and its earthly food. The despot, being enslaved to the lowest of all desires and appetites, is at the farthest remove from the pure and real pleasures accessible to the philosophic ruler.* (*The distinctions between true and false, or pure and mixed, pleasures are drawn in greater detail in the* Philebus.)

To sum up, then: this worst type of man is he who behaves in waking life as we said men do in their dreams. The born despot who gains absolute power must come to this, and the longer he lives as a tyrant, the more this character grows upon him.

Inevitably, said Glaucon, who now took his turn to answer.

Now shall we find that the lowest depth of wickedness goes with the lowest depth of unhappiness, and that the misery of the despot is really in proportion to the extent and duration of his power, though the mass of mankind may hold many different opinions?

Yes, that much is certain.

It is true, is it not? that each type of individual—the despotic, the democratic, and so on—resembles the state with the corresponding type of constitution, and will be good and happy in a corresponding degree.

Yes, of course.

In point of excellence, then, how does a state under a despotism compare with the one governed by kings, such as we first described?

They are at opposite extremes: the best and the worst.

I shall not ask which is which, for that is obvious. Is your esti-

mate the same with respect to their degrees of happiness or misery? We must not let our eyes be dazzled by fixing them only on the despot himself and some few of his supporters; we should not decide until we have looked into every corner and inspected the life of the whole community.

That is a fair demand. Everyone must see that a state is most wretched under a despot and happiest under a true king.

And in judging between the corresponding individuals, is it not equally fair to demand the verdict of one who is not dazzled, like a child, by the outward pomp and parade of absolute power, but whose understanding can enter into a man's heart and see all that goes on within? Should we not all do well to listen to such a competent judge, if he had also lived under the same roof and witnessed the despot's behaviour, not only in the emergencies of public life, but towards intimates in his own household, where he can best be seen stripped of his theatrical garb? We might then ask for a report on the happiness or misery of the despot as compared with the rest of the world.

Yes, that would be perfectly fair.

Shall we, then, make believe that we ourselves are qualified to judge from having been in contact with despots, so that we may have someone to answer our questions? [1]

By all means.

Bearing in mind, then, the analogy between state and individual, you shall tell me what you think of the condition of each in turn. To begin with the state: is it free under a despot, or enslaved?

Utterly enslaved.

And yet you see it contains some who are masters and free men.

Yes, a few; but almost the whole of it, including the most respectable part, is degraded to a miserable slavery.

If the individual, then, is analogous to the state, we shall find the same order of things in him: a soul labouring under the meanest servitude, the best elements in it being enslaved, while a small

[1] Plato, it is generally agreed, here implies that he himself is qualified to judge by his experience of living at the court of Dionysius I of Syracuse on his first visit to the West in 388/7 B.C. Introd., p. xxv.

part, which is also the most frenzied and corrupt, plays the master. Would you call such a condition of the soul freedom or slavery?

Slavery, of course.

And just as a state enslaved to a tyrant cannot do what it really wishes, so neither can a soul under a similar tyranny do what it wishes as a whole. Goaded on against its will by the sting of desire, it will be filled with confusion and remorse. Like the corresponding state, it must always be poverty-stricken, unsatisfied, and haunted by fear. Nowhere else will there be so much lamentation, groaning, and anguish as in a country under a despotism, and in a soul maddened by the tyranny of passion and lust.

It cannot be otherwise.

These, I think, were the considerations that made you judge such a state to be the most unhappy of all.

Was I not right?

Certainly. But, in view of the same facts, what would you say of the despotic type of individual?

That he is by far the most miserable of men.

There I think you are wrong. You will perhaps agree that there is a still lower depth of misery, to be found in a man of this temperament who has not the good fortune to remain in a private station but is thrust by circumstance into the position of an actual despot.

Judging by what we have said already, I should think that must be true.

Yes; but this is the most important of all questions, the choice between a good and an evil life; and we must be content with nothing short of a reasoned conviction. Am I right in thinking that some light may be gained from considering those wealthy private individuals who own a large number of slaves? In that respect they are like the despot, though his subjects are still more numerous. Now, as you know, they do not live in terror of their servants.

No; what have they to fear?

Nothing. But do you see why?

Yes; it is because the individual is protected by the whole community.

True; but imagine a man owning fifty or more slaves, miraculously caught up with his wife and children and planted, along with all his household goods and servants, in some desert place where there were no freemen to come to his rescue. Would he not be horribly afraid that his servants would make away with him and his family? He would be driven to fawn upon some of the slaves with liberal promises and give them their freedom, much against his will. So he would become a parasite, dependent on his own henchmen.

That would be his only way to escape destruction.

Moreover, the place he was transported to might be surrounded by neighbours who would not tolerate the claims of one man to lord it over others, but would retaliate fiercely on anyone they caught in such an attempt.

In that case he would be in still more desperate straits, hemmed in on all sides by enemies.

Is not that a picture of the prison to which the despot is confined? His nature is such as we have described, infested with all manner of fears and lusts. However curious he may be, he alone can never travel abroad to attend the great festivals which every freeman wants to witness, but must live like a woman ensconced in the recesses of his house, envying his countrymen who can leave their homes to see what is worth seeing in foreign lands. You spoke just now of the despotic character, ill governed in his own soul, as the most miserable of men; but these disadvantages I have mentioned add to his wretchedness when he is driven by ill luck out of his private station to become an actual despot and undertake to rule others when he is not his own master. You might as well force a paralytic to leave the sheltered life of an invalid and spend his days in fighting or in trials of physical strength.

Quite true, Socrates; that is a fair comparison.

So the despot's condition, my dear Glaucon, is supremely wretched, even harder than the life you pronounced the hardest of all. Whatever people may think, the actual tyrant is really the most abject slave, a parasite of the vilest scoundrels. Never able to satisfy his desires, he is always in need, and, to an eye that sees a soul in its entirety, he will seem the poorest of the poor.

His condition is like that of the country he governs, haunted throughout life by terrors and convulsed with anguish. Add to this what we said before, that power is bound to exaggerate every fault and make him ever more envious, treacherous, unjust, friendless, impure, harbouring every vice in his bosom, and hence only less of a calamity to all about him than he is to himself.

No man of sense will dispute that.

Then the time has come for you, as the final judge in this competition, to decide who stands first in point of happiness and to arrange in order all our five types of character, the kingly, the timocratic, the oligarchic, the democratic, the despotic.

The decision is easy. In respect both of goodness and of happiness I range them in the order in which they have entered the lists.

Shall we hire a herald, then, or shall I myself proclaim that, in the judgement of the son of Ariston, the happiest man is he who is first in goodness and justice, namely the true king who is also king over himself; and the most miserable is that lowest example of injustice and vice, the born despot whose tyranny prevails in his own soul and also over his country.

Yes, you may proclaim that.

May I add that it would make no difference if the true character of both should remain unknown to heaven and to mankind?

You may.

Very well, said I; that may stand as one of our proofs. But I want to consider a second one, which can, I think, be based on our division of the soul into three parts, corresponding to the three orders in the state. Each part seems to me to have its own form of pleasure and its peculiar desire; and any one of the three may govern the soul.

How do you mean?

There was the part with which a man gains knowledge and understanding, and another whereby he shows spirit. The third was so multifarious that we could find no single appropriate name; we called it after its chief and most powerful characteristic 'appetite,' because of the intensity of all the appetites connected with eating and drinking and sex and so on. We also called it money-loving,

because money is the principal means of satisfying desires of this kind. Gain is the source of its pleasures and the object of its affection; so 'money-loving' or 'gain-loving' might be the best single expression to sum up the nature of this part of the soul for the purpose of our discussion.

I agree.

The spirited element, again, we think of as wholly bent upon winning power and victory and a good name. So we might call it honour-loving or ambitious.

Very suitably.

Whereas the part whereby we gain knowledge and understanding is least of all concerned with wealth or reputation. Obviously its sole endeavour is to know the truth, and we may speak of it as loving knowledge and philosophic.

Quite so.

And the human soul is sometimes governed by this principle, sometimes by one of the other two, as the case may be. Hence we recognise three main classes of men, the philosophic, the ambitious, and the lovers of gain. So there will also be three corresponding forms of pleasure.

Certainly.

Now, if you choose to ask men of these three types, which of their lives is the pleasantest, each in turn will praise his own above the rest. The man of business will say that, as compared with profit-making, the pleasures of winning a high reputation or of learning are worthless, except in so far as they bring in money. The ambitious man will despise the pleasure derived from money as vulgar, and the pleasure of learning, if it does not bring fame, as moonshine. The philosopher, again, will think that the satisfaction of knowing the truth and always gaining fresh understanding is beyond all comparison with those other pleasures, which he will call 'necessary' in the fullest sense; for he would have no use for them, if they were not unavoidable. In this dispute about the pleasures of each class and as to which of the three lives as a whole is not merely better and nobler but actually pleasanter or less painful, how is one to know whose judgement is the truest?

I am not prepared to say.

Well, think of it in this way. What is required for a sound judgement? Can it rest on any better foundation than experience, or insight, or reasoning?

Surely not.

Take experience, then. Which of our three men has the fullest acquaintance with all the pleasures we have mentioned? Has the lover of gain such an understanding of the truth as to know by experience the pleasure of knowledge better than the philosopher knows the pleasure of gain?

No, all the advantage lies with the philosopher, who cannot help experiencing both the other kinds of pleasure from childhood up; whereas the lover of gain is under no necessity to taste the sweetness of understanding the truth of things; rather he would not find it easy to gain that experience, however hard he should try.

In experience of both sorts of pleasure, then, the philosopher has the advantage over the lover of gain. How does he compare with the ambitious man? Is he less well acquainted with the pleasures of honour than the other is with the pleasures of wisdom?

No, honour comes to them all, if they accomplish their several purposes; the rich man is esteemed by many people, and so are the brave man and the wise. So the pleasure of being honoured is familiar to them all; but only the philosopher can know how sweet it is to contemplate the truth.

Then, so far as experience goes, he is the best judge of the three.

Yes, by far.

And the only one in whom experience is seconded by insight.[1]

Yes.

Further, we agreed that the decision must be reached by means of reasoning; and this is peculiarly the tool of the philosopher, not of the money-lover or of the ambitious man.

No doubt.

Now, if wealth and profit were the most satisfactory criteria, the judgements of value passed by the lover of gain would be nearest to the truth; and if honour, courage, and success were the test,

[1] Insight or intelligence will help him to learn more from a less amount of experience.

the best judge would be the man who lives for honour and victory; but since the tests are experience, insight, and reasoning—?

The truest values must be those approved by the philosopher, who uses reason for the pursuit of wisdom.

Of the three kinds of pleasure, then, the sweetest will belong to that part of the soul whereby we gain understanding and knowledge, and the man in whom that part predominates will have the pleasantest life.

It must be so; in praising his own life the wise man speaks with authority.

What life or form of pleasure will this judge rank second?

Obviously, that of the warlike and ambitious temperament. It comes nearer than the business man's to his own.

And the pleasure of gain will come last, it seems.

Surely.

So now the just man has scored a second victory over the unjust. There remains the third round, for which the wrestlers at the Great Games invoke Olympian Zeus, the Preserver;[1] and a fall in this bout should be decisive. I seem to have heard some wise man say that only the pleasures of intelligence are entirely true and pure; all the others are illusory.

That should settle the matter. But what does it mean?

I shall discover the meaning, if you will help me by answering my questions. We speak of pain as the contrary of pleasure. Is there not also a neutral state between the two, in which the mind feels neither pleasure nor pain, but is as it were at rest from both?

Yes.

Well, you must have heard people say, when they are ill, that nothing is pleasanter than to be well, though they never knew it until they were ill; and people in great pain will tell you that relief from pain is the greatest pleasure in the world. There are many such cases in which you find the sufferer saying that the

[1] At banquets the third libation was offered to Zeus the Preserver. This passage seems to imply that competitors at the Olympic Games had a corresponding custom. Plato is fond of quoting the phrase 'the third (libation) to the Preserver,' where his arguments culminate at the third stage.

height of pleasure is not positive enjoyment, but the peace which comes with the absence of pain.

Yes; I suppose at such moments the state of rest becomes pleasurable and all that can be desired.

In the same way, then, when enjoyment comes to an end, the cessation of pleasure will be painful.

I suppose so.

If so, that state of rest which, we said, lies between pleasure and pain, will be sometimes one, sometimes the other. But if it is neither of the two, how can it become both?

I do not think it can.

And besides, both pleasure and pain are processes of change[1] which take place in the mind, are they not? whereas the neutral condition appeared to be a state of rest between the two. So can it be right to regard the absence of pain as pleasant or the absence of enjoyment as painful?

No, it cannot.

It follows, then, that the state of rest is not really either pleasant or painful, but only appears so in these cases by contrast. There is no soundness in these appearances; by the standard of true pleasure they are a sort of imposture.

That seems to be the conclusion.

You might be tempted, in these instances, to suppose that pleasure is the same thing as relief from pain, and pain the same as the cessation of pleasure; but, as an instance to the contrary, consider pleasures which do not follow on pain. There are plenty of them; the best example is the pleasures of smell. These occur suddenly with extraordinary intensity; they are not preceded by any pain and they leave no pain behind when they cease.

Quite true.

We are not to be persuaded, then, that relief from pain is the same thing as pure pleasure, or cessation of pleasure the same as pure pain.

No.

On the other hand, the class of pleasures which do involve some

[1] Plato is thinking specially of pleasures, like that of satisfying hunger, which accompany the physical process of restoring the normal (neutral) state, which has been depleted with accompanying pain.

sort of relief from pain may be said to include the great majority and the most intense of all the pleasures, so called, which reach the mind by way of the body; and the same description applies to the pleasures or pains of anticipation which precede them.

Yes.

Here is an analogy, to illustrate their nature. You think of the world as divided into an upper region and a lower, with a centre between them.[1] Now if a person were transported from below to the centre, he would be sure to think he was moving 'upwards'; and when he was stationed at the centre and looking in the direction he had come from, he would imagine he was in the upper region, if he had never seen the part which is really above the centre. And supposing he were transported back again, he would think he was travelling 'downwards,' and this time he would be right. His mistake would be due to his ignorance of the real distinctions between the upper and lower regions and the centre.

Clearly.

You will not be surprised, then, if people whose ignorance of truth and reality gives them many unsound ideas, are similarly confused about pleasure and pain and the intermediate state. When the movement is towards a painful condition, they are right in believing that the pain is real; but when they are passing from a state of pain to the neutral point, they are firmly convinced that they are approaching the pleasure of complete satisfaction. In their ignorance of true pleasure, they are deceived by the contrast between pain and the absence of pain, just as one who had never seen white might be deceived by the contrast between black and grey.

Certainly; I should be much more surprised if it were not so.

Then look at it in this way. As hunger and thirst are states of bodily inanition, which can be replenished by food, so ignorance and unwisdom in the soul are an emptiness to be filled by gaining understanding. Of the two sorts of nourishment, will not the more real yield the truer satisfaction?

Clearly.

Which kind of nourishment, then, has the higher claim to pure

[1] A popular view, adopted for purposes of illustration here, but corrected at *Timaeus* 62 c.

reality—food-stuffs like bread and meat and drink, or such things as true belief, knowledge, reason, and in a word all the excellences of the mind? You may decide by asking yourself whether something which is closely connected with the unchanging and immortal world of truth and itself shares that nature together with the thing in which it exists, has more or less reality than something which, like the thing which contains it, belongs to a world of mortality and perpetual change.

No doubt it is much more real.

And a higher or lower degree of reality goes with a greater or less measure of knowledge and so of truth?[1]

Necessarily.

And is there not, to speak generally, less of truth and reality in the things which serve the needs of the body than in those which feed the soul?

Much less.

And, again, less in the body itself than in the soul?

Certainly.

And in proportion as the sustenance and the thing sustained by it are more real, the satisfaction itself is a more real satisfaction.

Of course.

Accordingly, if the appropriate satisfaction of natural needs constitutes pleasure, there will be more real enjoyment of true pleasure in such a case; whereas in the opposite case the satisfaction is not so genuine or secure and the pleasure is less true and trustworthy.

Inevitably.

To conclude, then: those who have no experience of wisdom and virtue and spend their whole time in feasting and self-indul-

[1] The text here is corrupt and much disputed. With the slight change of εἰ to ἦ at 585 c 12 the MS. text can be literally rendered as follows: 'And does the substance of an always unchanging thing partake any more of reality than of knowledge?—No.—Or of truth?—No. (In other words, the substance of an always unchanging thing partakes of knowledge and so of truth *just as much as* it does of reality.) ἦ δὲ (sc. οὐσία) ἀληθείας ἧττον (μετέχει), οὐ καὶ οὐσίας (ἧττον μετέχει); And does not the substance which partakes less of truth, also partake less of reality?—Necessarily.' ('To partake of knowledge' here seems to mean 'to be knowable.')

gence are all their lives, as it were, fluctuating downwards from the central point and back to it again, but never rise beyond it into the true upper region, to which they have not lifted their eyes. Never really satisfied with real nourishment, the pleasure they taste is uncertain and impure. Bent over their tables, they feed like cattle with stooping heads and eyes fixed upon the ground; so they grow fat and breed, and in their greedy struggle kick and butt one another to death with horns and hoofs of steel, because they can never satisfy with unreal nourishment that part of themselves which is itself unreal and incapable of lasting satisfaction.

Your description of the way most people live is quite in the oracular style, Socrates.

Does it not follow that the pleasures of such a life are illusory phantoms of real pleasure, in which pleasure and pain are so combined that each takes its colour and apparent intensity by contrast with the other? Hence the frenzied desire they implant in the breasts of fools, who fight for them as Stesichorus says the combatants at Troy fought, in their blindness, for a phantom Helen.[1]

Yes, that is bound to be so.

Take, again, the satisfaction of the spirited element in our nature. Must not that be no less illusory, when a man seeks, at all costs, to gratify his ambition by envy, his love of victory by violence, and his ill-temper by outbursts of passion, without sense or reason?

It must.

What then? May we boldly assert that all the desires both of the gain-loving and of the ambitious part of our nature will win the truest pleasures of which they are capable, if they accept the guidance of knowledge and reason and pursue only those pleasures which wisdom approves? Such pleasures will be true, because truth is their guide, and will also be proper to their nature, if it is a

[1] At *Phaedrus* 243 A Plato refers to the legend that the poet Stesichorus, divinely punished with blindness for defaming Helen, regained his sight only by writing a recantation declaring that she never went to Troy, but was all the while in Egypt. Euripides' *Helen* is based on this story.

fact that a thing always finds in what is best for it something akin to its real self.

Well, that is certainly a fact.

To conclude, then, each part of the soul will not only do its own work and be just when the whole soul, with no inward conflict, follows the guidance of the wisdom-loving part, but it also will enjoy the pleasures that are proper to it and the best and truest of which it is capable;[1] whereas if either of the other two parts gains the upper hand, besides failing to find its own proper pleasure, it will force the others to pursue a false pleasure uncongenial to their nature.

Yes.

Now would not these evil effects be most of all produced by the elements farthest removed from philosophy and reason, that is to say, from subordination to law? Such, we have seen, are the lustful and despotic appetites; whereas the orderly and kingly desires stand nearest to the controlling reason. Accordingly, the despot is at the farthest remove from the true pleasure proper to man's nature, and his life is the least pleasant, in contrast with the king's, who stands at the opposite extreme. Have you any notion how much less pleasant it is?

No, tell me.

There are, it seems, three kinds of pleasure, one genuine and two spurious.[2] The despot, in his flight from law and reason, goes beyond the bounds even of the spurious kinds, to surround himself with pleasures comparable to a bodyguard of slaves.[3] The measure of his inferiority can hardly be expressed, unless perhaps in this way. The despot, you remember, was at the third remove from the oligarch; for the democratic man came between. If that was right, the pleasure he enjoys will be a phantom three times less real than the oligarch's. And the oligarch himself was third in rank below the king, if we identify kingship with the rule of the best.

[1] Note that Plato does not hold that lower desires should be altogether suppressed or mortified.

[2] Corresponding to the three parts of the soul and to the king, the timocrat, and the oligarch.

[3] As described at 573 D, p. 299 f.

So the number representing the distance that separates this phantom pleasure of the despot from reality will be three times three; and when that number is squared and cubed, calculation will show how great the interval becomes. Conversely, you will find that, in respect of truth and reality, the kingly life is seven hundred and twenty-nine times the pleasanter, and the despot's more painful by the same amount.[1]

I feel quite overwhelmed by your estimate of the difference between the just and unjust man, on the score of pleasure and pain.

All the same, my figure is correct and applicable to the lives of men as surely as the reckoning of days and nights, months, and years.[2] And if the good and just man is so far superior to the bad and unjust in point of pleasure, there is no saying by how much more his life will surpass the other's in grace, nobility, and virtue.

I entirely agree.

CHAPTER XXXIV (IX. 588 B–592 B)

JUSTICE, NOT INJUSTICE, IS PROFITABLE

Socrates now gives the final answer to Thrasymachus' contention, restated in Glaucon's opening speech at 360 E ff., p. 45, *that injustice pays when it goes unpunished. The question of rewards and punishments after death, expressly excluded at the outset, is still reserved for the closing myth in Chapter XL.*

[1] The translation here simplifies the text, which is perhaps intentionally obscure. It is not explained why 9 is to be raised to the third power, 729. J. A. Stewart, *Myths of Plato,* 349, notes the importance attached later to this number, which is the square of 27 as well as the cube of 9. Plutarch makes it the number of the Sun (*de anim. proc.* 31), which stands for Reason (*nous*) in *de fac. in orbe lunae,* 28.

[2] According to Censorinus *de die nat.* 18-19 (Diels-Kranz, *Vors.*[6] 44 A 22) the Pythagorean Philolaus reckoned 364½ days (and presumably the same number of nights) to the year, and $2 \times 364\frac{1}{2} = 729$. This may explain 'days and nights.' He had also a 'great year' of 729 months. These numerical correspondences between macrocosm and microcosm, which seem to us fantastic, may not be literally meant but they cannot have been mere nonsense to Plato.

This chapter ends with a doubt whether the ideal state can ever be founded on earth. There is more hope that, here and there, some man may come near to realizing the ideal of justice in the economy of his own soul. Plato had before him the example of Socrates himself, the one man he knew who seemed to have found complete happiness in 'living well.'

GOOD, said I. And now that the argument has brought us to this point, let us recall something that was said at the outset, namely, if I remember aright, that wrongdoing is profitable when a man is completely unjust but has a reputation for justice.

Yes, that position was stated.

Well, we are now agreed about the real meaning and consequences of doing wrong as well as of doing right, and the time has come to point out to anyone who maintains that position what his statement implies. We may do so by likening the soul to one of those many fabulous monsters said to have existed long ago, such as the Chimaera or Scylla or Cerberus, which combined the forms of several creatures in one. Imagine, to begin with, the figure of a multifarious and many-headed beast, girt round with heads of animals, tame and wild, which it can grow out of itself and transform at will.

That would tax the skill of a sculptor; but luckily the stuff of imagination is easier to mould than wax.

Now add two other forms, a lion and a man. The many-headed beast is to be the largest by far, and the lion next to it in size. Then join them in such a way that the three somehow grow together into one. Lastly, mould the outside into the likeness of one of them, the man, so that, to eyes which cannot see inside the outward sheath, the whole may look like a single creature, a human being.

Very well. What then?

We can now reply to anyone who says that for this human creature wrongdoing pays and there is nothing to be gained by doing right. This simply means, we shall tell him, that it pays to feed up and strengthen the composite beast and all that belongs to the lion, and to starve the man till he is so enfeebled that the

other two can drag him whither they will, and he cannot bring them to live together in peace, but must leave them to bite and struggle and devour one another. On the other hand, to declare that justice pays is to assert that all our words and actions should tend towards giving the man within us complete mastery over the whole human creature, and letting him take the many-headed beast under his care and tame its wildness, like the gardener who trains his cherished plants while he checks the growth of weeds. He should enlist the lion as his ally, and, caring for all alike, should foster their growth by first reconciling them to one another and to himself.

Yes, such are the implications when justice or injustice is commended.

From every point of view, then, whether of pleasure or reputation or advantage, one who praises justice speaks the truth; he who disparages it does not know what it is that he idly condemns.

I agree; he has no conception.

But his error is not wilful; so let us reason with him gently. We will ask him on what grounds conduct has come to be approved or disapproved by law and custom. Is it not according as conduct tends to subdue the brutish parts of our nature to the human—perhaps I should rather say to the divine in us—or to enslave our humanity to the savagery of the beast? Will he agree?

Yes, if he has any regard for my opinion.

On that showing, then, can it profit a man to take money unjustly, if he is thereby enslaving the best part of his nature to the vilest? No amount of money could make it worth his while to sell a son or daughter as slaves into the hands of cruel and evil men; and when it is a matter of ruthlessly subjugating all that is most godlike in himself to whatsoever is most ungodly and despicable, is not the wretch taking a bribe far more disastrous than the necklace Eriphyle took as the price of her husband's life? [1]

Far more, said Glaucon, if I may answer on his behalf.

You will agree, too, with the reasons why certain faults have

[1] Eriphyle was bribed with a necklace by Polynices to persuade her husband, the seer Amphiaraos, to become one of the seven champions who made war on Thebes and of whom all but one lost their lives.

always been condemned: profligacy, because it gives too much licence to the multiform monster; self-will and ill temper, when the lion and serpent[1] part of us is strengthened till its sinews are overstrung: luxury and effeminacy, because they relax those sinews till the heart grows faint; flattery and meanness, in that the heart's high spirit is subordinated to the turbulent beast, and for the sake of money to gratify the creature's insatiable greed the lion is browbeaten and schooled from youth up to become an ape. Why, again, is mechanical toil discredited as debasing? Is it not simply when the highest thing in a man's nature is naturally so weak that it cannot control the animal parts but can only learn how to pamper them?

I suppose so.

Then, if we say that people of this sort ought to be subject to the highest type of man, we intend that the subject should be governed, not, as Thrasymachus thought, to his own detriment, but on the same principle as his superior, who is himself governed by the divine element within him. It is better for everyone, we believe, to be subject to a power of godlike wisdom residing within himself, or, failing that, imposed from without, in order that all of us, being under one guidance, may be so far as possible equal and united. This, moreover, is plainly the intention of the law in lending its support to every member of the community, and also of the government of children; for we allow them to go free only when we have established in each one of them as it were a constitutional ruler, whom we have trained to take over the guardianship from the same principle in ourselves.

True.

On what ground, then, can we say that it is profitable for a man to be unjust or self-indulgent or to do any disgraceful act which will make him a worse man, though he may gain money and power? Or how can it profit the wrongdoer to escape detection and punishment? He will only grow still worse; whereas if he is found out, chastisement will tame the brute in him and lay it to rest, while the gentler part is set free; and thus the entire soul, restored to its native soundness, will gain, in the temperance and

[1] The serpent, perhaps a symbol of cunning, occurs here only (if the text is sound).

righteousness which wisdom brings, a condition more precious than the strength and beauty which health brings to the body, in proportion as the soul itself surpasses the body in worth. To this end the man of understanding will bend all his powers through life, prizing in the first place those studies only which will fashion these qualities in his soul; and, so far from abandoning the care of his bodily condition to the irrational pleasures of the brute and setting his face in that direction, he will not even make health his chief object. Health, strength, and beauty he will value only in so far as they bring soundness of mind, and you will find him keeping his bodily frame in tune always for the sake of the resulting concord in the soul.

Yes, if he is to have true music in him.

And in the matter of acquiring wealth he will order his life in harmony with the same purpose. He will not be carried away by the vulgar notion of happiness into heaping up an unbounded store which would bring him endless troubles. Rather, in adding to or spending his substance, he will, to the best of his power, be guided by watchful care that neither want nor abundance may unsettle the constitution set up in his soul. Again, in accepting power and honours he will keep the same end in view, ready to enjoy any position in public or private life which he thinks will make him a better man, and avoiding any that would break down the established order within him.

Then, if that is his chief concern, he will have no wish to take part in politics.

Indeed he will, in the politics of his own commonwealth, though not perhaps in those of his country, unless some miraculous chance should come about.

I understand, said Glaucon: you mean this commonwealth we have been founding in the realm of discourse; for I think it nowhere exists on earth.

No, I replied; but perhaps there is a pattern set up in the heavens[1] for one who desires to see it and, seeing it, to found one in

[1] 'The heavens' probably means the visible order (cosmos) of the universe (sometimes called 'the heaven') and in particular of the heavenly bodies, which preserves the stars from wrong and manifests, though imperfectly, the divine order which the

himself. But whether it exists anywhere or ever will exist is no matter; for this is the only commonwealth in whose politics he can ever take part.

I suspect you are right.

philosopher tries to reproduce in himself (500 B ff., p. 208 f. Cf. the account of the Astronomer-Guardians in *Laws* xii. 965 ff.). The word has not the Christian associations of 'heaven' or of the kingdom of heaven. But this passage inspired both Stoics and Christians with the idea of the City of God.

PART V (Book X, 595 A–608 B)

THE QUARREL BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND POETRY

The attack on poetry in this Part has the air of an appendix, only superficially linked with the preceding and following context. Possibly the strictures on dramatic poetry in Chapter IX had become known [1] and provoked criticism to which Plato wished to reply. In discussing the early education of the Guardians he began by limiting the dramatic recitations of school-children to the impersonation (*mimesis*) of appropriate types of character and forbidding the realistic imitation (also *mimesis*) of animals' cries and lifeless noises. Then, somewhat unexpectedly, he proposed to banish altogether from his commonwealth all poetry which did not conform to these standards, in terms which suggested the complete exclusion of tragedy and comedy (p. 85).

The excuse for returning to the subject of poetry is that, since that earlier passage, we have had (1) the metaphysical distinction of the intelligible world of Forms known to the philosopher and the sensible world which alone is recognized by the lover of sights and sounds (Chapters XIX and XXIV); and (2) the analysis of the soul into three elements (Chapter XIII). These furnish the basis for a wider attack (1) on poetry and art in general as far removed from any apprehension of reality and (2) on dramatic poetry as psychologically injurious.

CHAPTER XXXV (X. 595 A–602 B)

HOW REPRESENTATION IN ART IS RELATED TO TRUTH

Readers who take this chapter as stating, for its own sake, an aesthetic theory of the nature of art are surprised and shocked: the

[1] Since books were not printed or published at a fixed date, MS. copies of parts of a long work might be circulated privately and pass out of the author's control. In the *Parmenides* Zeno complains that this had happened to an early treatise of his own, which he would have preferred to suppress.

point of view seems as perverse, and even stupid, as Tolstoy's in What is Art? *The main object of attack, however, is the claim, currently made by sophists and professional reciters of the Homeric poems,*[1] *that Homer in particular, and in a less degree the tragedians, were masters of all technical knowledge, from wagon-building or chariot-driving to strategy, and also moral and religious guides to the conduct of life.*[2] *As such, the poet becomes the rival of the philosopher as conceived by Plato, and the study of poetry an alternative to the severe intellectual training of the Academy. If wisdom is to be gained only through knowledge of the real world of Forms disclosed by Dialectic, the claim that the poet can educate mankind to virtue must be as hollow as the pretence that the artist knows all about shoemaking because he can paint a life-like picture of a shoemaker. How much knowledge of ultimate values does the poet need in order to paint in words his pictures of human life?*

The painter is taken first by way of illustration. A picture of a bed is a two-dimensional representation of the appearance of a solid object seen at a certain angle. The object itself is only a particular bed, which, as a part of the material world, is not a wholly real thing, since it comes into being and perishes and is perpetually changing; it belongs to the realm of Becoming characterized in Chapter XIX. This actual bed, however, is nearer to reality than the picture, because it is one of many embodiments of the essential nature common to all beds. Beds can be made of wood or iron or canvas and may vary indefinitely in size, shape, colour, etc. But they cannot be called beds at all unless they serve the purpose of a bed, a thing designed to be slept on. This purpose, however hard to define, may be called the essence or Form of Bed, and in Plato's view it is the unique and unvarying reality which must be, however imperfectly, embodied in any bed, and is in one sense the meaning of the word 'Bed.' (Plato speaks here of this essential Bed as 'in the nature of things,' i.e. in the real world of Forms, and as made by a god, though the Forms are elsewhere described as not made by

[1] Such as Ion in Plato's dialogue of that name.

[2] In Xenophon's *Symposium*, iii. 5, Niceratus says his father made him learn all Homer by heart in order that he might become a good man.

anyone, but eternal, and there is a difficulty in supposing eternal Forms of the products of human workmanship. These points, however, need not be pressed. The bed was perhaps chosen for illustrative purposes because beds are obviously made by a practical craftsman, whom Plato wishes to contrast with the fine artist, whereas the maker of natural objects, the divine Demiurge of the Timaeus, *is a mythical figure who could not be introduced without a long explanation.) The upshot is that the artist's picture of a bed is at two removes from the essential Form. It is only as it were a mirror-image of a sensible thing, which itself is only one embodiment (with many accidental features) of the real Form, the object of knowledge.*

Poetry is like a picture in words, a representation of life. However skilfully executed, it is no evidence that the poet really possessed the knowledge required for the right conduct of actual life. This knowledge is not to be gained by studying his portraits of heroic characters, any more than we can learn how to drive a chariot or conduct a campaign from his descriptions of a chariot-race or of the Trojan war. Socrates' examination of the poets had convinced him that they worked, not with conscious intelligence, but from inspiration, like seers and oracle-mongers who do not understand the meaning of the fine language they use (Apology, 22 B).

In this chapter mimesis *has a wider sense than dramatic impersonation: the nearest English word is 'representation,' applicable to many forms of fine art. The usual rendering 'imitation' is misleading. We do not say that Garrick, still less that Shakespeare, imitated the character of Hamlet; or that Raphael imitated Julius II; or that the Passion music imitates religious emotion. In all these cases* mimesis *would be used. The substantive* mimetes *can be rendered in this context by 'artist.' On the other hand,* mimesis *does also mean 'imitation,' and this encourages the suggestion that tragic acting is on a level with mimicry and that fine art in general is no more than a copying of external appearances. The view that a work of art is an image or likeness* (eikon) *of some original, or holds a mirror up to nature, became prominent towards the end of the fifth century together with the realistic drama of Euripides and*

the illusionistic painting of Zeuxis. Plato's attack adopts this theory. The art which claims to be 'realistic' is, in his view, as far as possible from reality. See T. B. L. Webster, 'Greek Theories of Art and Literature down to 400 B.C.,' Classical Quarterly, xxxiii (1939), 166.

INDEED, I continued, our commonwealth has many features which make me think it was based on very sound principles, especially our rule not on any account to admit the poetry of dramatic representation.[1] Now that we have distinguished the several parts of the soul, it seems to me clearer than ever that such poetry must be firmly excluded.

What makes you say so?

Between ourselves—for you will not denounce me to the tragedians and the other dramatists—poetry of that sort seems to be injurious to minds which do not possess the antidote in a knowledge of its real nature.

What have you in mind?

I must speak out, in spite of a certain affection and reverence I have had from a child for Homer, who seems to have been the original master and guide of all this imposing company of tragic poets.[2] However, no man must be honoured above the truth; so, as I say, I must speak my mind.

Do, by all means.

Listen then, or rather let me ask you a question. Can you tell me what is meant by representation in general? I have no very clear notion myself.

So you expect me to have one!

Why not? It is not always the keenest eye that is the first to see something.

[1] At 398 A (p. 85) Plato seemed to exclude all dramatic poetry because this contains no narrative but involves the impersonation (*mimesis*) of all types of character, good or bad; whereas epic, for instance, can limit speeches in character to the representation of virtuous or heroic types. He will now argue that all poetry and other forms of art are essentially *mimesis*. The meaning of the word is obviously enlarged where he speaks just below of 'representation in general.'

[2] The plots of Greek tragedy were normally stories borrowed from epic poetry. Hence Homer was spoken of as the first tragic poet.

True; but when you are there I should not be very desirous to tell what I saw, however plainly. You must use your own eyes.

Well then, shall we proceed as usual and begin by assuming the existence of a single essential nature or Form for every set of things which we call by the same name? Do you understand?

I do.

Then let us take any set of things you choose. For instance there are any number of beds or of tables, but only two Forms, one of Bed and one of Table.

Yes.

And we are in the habit of saying that the craftsman, when he makes the beds or tables we use or whatever it may be, has before his mind the Form [1] of one or other of these pieces of furniture. The Form itself is, of course, not the work of any craftsman. How could it be?

It could not.

Now what name would you give to a craftsman who can produce all the things made by every sort of workman?

He would need to have very remarkable powers!

Wait a moment, and you will have even better reason to say so. For, besides producing any kind of artificial thing, this same craftsman can create all plants and animals, himself included, and earth and sky and gods and the heavenly bodies and all the things under the earth in Hades.

That sounds like a miraculous feat of virtuosity.

Are you incredulous? Tell me, do you think there could be no such craftsman at all, or that there might be someone who could create all these things in one sense, though not in another? [2] Do you not see that you could do it yourself, in a way?

In what way, I should like to know.

[1] 'Form' does not mean 'shape,' but the essential properties which constitute what the thing, by definition, is.

[2] The divine Demiurge of the creation-myth in the *Timaeus* is pictured as fashioning the whole visible world after the likeness of the eternal Forms, which he does not create but uses as models. He is thus the maker of natural objects, corresponding to the carpenter who makes artificial objects; and both, as makers of actual things, are superior to the painter or poet, who makes all things only 'in a way,' by creating mere semblances like images in a mirror.

There is no difficulty; in fact there are several ways in which the thing can be done quite quickly. The quickest perhaps would be to take a mirror and turn it round in all directions. In a very short time you could produce sun and stars and earth and yourself and all the other animals and plants and lifeless objects which we mentioned just now.

Yes, in appearance, but not the actual things.

Quite so; you are helping out my argument. My notion is that a painter is a craftsman of that kind. You may say that the things he produces are not real; but there is a sense in which he too does produce a bed.

Yes, the appearance of one.

And what of the carpenter? Were you not saying just now that he only makes a particular bed, not what we call the Form or essential nature of Bed?

Yes, I was.

If so, what he makes is not the reality, but only something that resembles it. It would not be right to call the work of a carpenter or of any other handicraftsman a perfectly real thing, would it?

Not in the view of people accustomed to thinking on these lines.[1]

We must not be surprised, then, if even an actual bed is a somewhat shadowy thing as compared with reality.

True.

Now shall we make use of this example to throw light on our question as to the true nature of this artist who represents things? We have here three sorts of bed: one which exists in the nature of things and which, I imagine, we could only describe as a product of divine workmanship; another made by the carpenter; and a third by the painter. So the three kinds of bed belong respectively to the domains of these three: painter, carpenter, and god.

Yes.

Now the god made only one ideal or essential Bed, whether by choice or because he was under some necessity not to make more

[1] Familiar with the Platonic doctrine, as opposed to current materialism, which regards the beds we sleep on as real things and the Platonic Form as a mere 'abstraction' or notion existing only in our minds.

than one; at any rate two or more were not created, nor could they possibly come into being.

Why not?

Because, if he made even so many as two, then once more a single ideal Bed would make its appearance, whose character those two would share; and that one, not the two, would be the essential Bed. Knowing this, the god, wishing to be the real maker of a real Bed, not a particular manufacturer of one particular bed, created one which is essentially unique.

So it appears.

Shall we call him, then, the author of the true nature of Bed, or something of that sort?

Certainly he deserves the name, since all his works constitute the real nature of things.

And we may call the carpenter the manufacturer of a bed?

Yes.

Can we say the same of the painter?

Certainly not.

Then what is he, with reference to a bed?

I think it would be fairest to describe him as the artist who represents the things which the other two make.

Very well, said I; so the work of the artist is at the third remove from the essential nature of the thing?

Exactly.

The tragic poet, too, is an artist who represents things; so this will apply to him: he and all other artists are, as it were, third in succession from the throne of truth.[1]

Just so.

We are in agreement, then, about the artist. But now tell me about our painter: which do you think he is trying to represent—the reality that exists in the nature of things, or the products of the craftsman?

The products of the craftsman.

[1] Jowett and Campbell quote from Dante Virgil's description of human art as the 'grandchild of God,' since art is said to copy nature, and nature is the child of God: *si che vostr' arte a Dio quasi è nipote,* Inferno xi. 105.

As they are, or as they appear? You have still to draw that distinction.[1]

How do you mean?

I mean: you may look at a bed or any other object from straight in front or slantwise or at any angle. Is there then any difference in the bed itself, or does it merely look different?

It only looks different.

Well, that is the point. Does painting aim at reproducing any actual object as it is, or the appearance of it as it looks? In other words, is it a representation of the truth or of a semblance?

Of a semblance.

The art of representation, then, is a long way from reality; and apparently the reason why there is nothing it cannot reproduce is that it grasps only a small part of any object, and that only an image. Your painter, for example, will paint us a shoemaker, a carpenter, or other workman, without understanding any one of their crafts;[2] and yet, if he were a good painter, he might deceive a child or a simple-minded person into thinking his picture was a real carpenter, if he showed it them at some distance.

No doubt.

But I think there is one view we should take in all such cases. Whenever someone announces that he has met with a person who is master of every trade and knows more about every subject than any specialist, we should reply that he is a simple fellow who has apparently fallen in with some illusionist and been tricked into thinking him omniscient, because of his own inability to discriminate between knowledge and ignorance and the representation of appearances.

Quite true.

Then it is now time to consider the tragic poets and their master, Homer, because we are sometimes told that they understand

[1] The distinction is needed to exclude another possible sense of *mimesis*, the production of a complete replica.

[2] Knowledge of carpentry is the essence of the carpenter, what makes him a carpenter. The painter could not reproduce this knowledge in his picture, even if he possessed it himself. This may sound absurd as an objection to art, but Plato is thinking rather of the application to the poet, for whom it was claimed that he both possessed technical and moral knowledge and reproduced it in his work.

not only all technical matters but also all about human conduct, good or bad, and about religion; for, to write well, a good poet, so they say, must know his subject; otherwise he could not write about it. We must ask whether these people have not been deluded by meeting with artists who can represent appearances, and in contemplating the poets' work have failed to see that it is at the third remove from reality, nothing more than semblances, easy to produce with no knowledge of the truth. Or is there something in what they say? Have the good poets a real mastery of the matters on which the public thinks they discourse so well?

It is a question we ought to look into.

Well then, if a man were able actually to do the things he represents as well as to produce images of them, do you believe he would seriously give himself up to making these images and take that as a completely satisfying object in life? I should imagine that, if he had a real understanding of the actions he represents, he would far sooner devote himself to performing them in fact. The memorials he would try to leave after him would be noble deeds, and he would be more eager to be the hero whose praises are sung than the poet who sings them.

Yes, I agree; he would do more good in that way and win a greater name.

Here is a question, then, that we may fairly put to Homer or to any other poet. We will leave out of account all mere matters of technical skill: we will not ask them to explain, for instance, why it is that, if they have a knowledge of medicine and not merely the art of reproducing the way physicians talk, there is no record of any poet, ancient or modern, curing patients and bequeathing his knowledge to a school of medicine, as Asclepius did. But when Homer undertakes to tell us about matters of the highest importance, such as the conduct of war, statesmanship, or education, we have a right to inquire into his competence. 'Dear Homer,' we shall say, 'we have defined the artist as one who produces images at the third remove from reality. If your knowledge of all that concerns human excellence was really such as to raise you above him to the second rank, and you could tell what courses

of conduct will make men better or worse as individuals or as citizens, can you name any country which was better governed thanks to your efforts? Many states, great and small, have owed much to a good lawgiver, such as Lycurgus at Sparta, Charondas in Italy and Sicily, and our own Solon. Can you tell us of any that acknowledges a like debt to you?'

I should say not, Glaucon replied. The most devout admirers of Homer make no such claim.

Well, do we hear of any war in Homer's day being won under his command or thanks to his advice?

No.

Or of a number of ingenious inventions and technical contrivances, which would show that he was a man of practical ability like Thales of Miletus or Anacharsis the Scythian? [1]

Nothing of the sort.

Well, if there is no mention of public services, do we hear of Homer in his own lifetime presiding, like Pythagoras, over a band of intimate disciples who loved him for the inspiration of his society and handed down a Homeric way of life, like the way of life which the Pythagoreans called after their founder and which to this day distinguishes them from the rest of the world?

No; on the contrary, Homer's friend with the absurd name, Creophylus,[2] would look even more absurd when considered as a product of the poet's training, if the story is true that he completely neglected Homer during his lifetime.

Yes, so they say. But what do you think, Glaucon? If Homer had really possessed the knowledge qualifying him to educate people and make them better men, instead of merely giving us a poetical representation of such matters, would he not have attracted a host of disciples to love and revere him? After all, any number of private teachers like Protagoras of Abdera and Prodicus

[1] Thales (early sixth cent.) made a fortune out of a corner in oil-mills when his knowledge of the stars enabled him to predict a large olive harvest, thus proving that wise men could be rich if they chose (Aristotle, *Politics*, i. 11). Anacharsis was said to have invented the anchor and the potter's wheel (Diog. Laert. i. 105).

[2] Creophylus' name is supposed to be derived from two words meaning 'flesh' and 'tribe.' He is said to have been an epic poet from Chios.

of Ceos[1] have succeeded in convincing their contemporaries that they will never be fit to manage affairs of state or their own households unless these masters superintend their education; and for this wisdom they are so passionately admired that their pupils are all but ready to carry them about on their shoulders. Can we suppose that Homer's contemporaries, or Hesiod's, would have left them to wander about reciting their poems, if they had really been capable of helping their hearers to be better men? Surely they would sooner have parted with their money and tried to make the poets settle down at home; or failing that, they would have danced attendance on them wherever they went, until they had learnt from them all they could.

I believe you are quite right, Socrates.

We may conclude, then, that all poetry, from Homer onwards, consists in representing a semblance of its subject, whatever it may be, including any kind of human excellence, with no grasp of the reality. We were speaking just now of the painter who can produce what looks like a shoemaker to the spectator who, being as ignorant of shoemaking as he is himself, judges only by form and colour. In the same way the poet, knowing nothing more than how to represent appearances, can paint in words his picture of any craftsman so as to impress an audience which is equally ignorant and judges only by the form of expression; the inherent charm of metre, rhythm, and musical setting is enough to make them think he has discoursed admirably about generalship or shoemaking or any other technical subject. Strip what the poet has to say of its poetical colouring, and I think you must have seen what it comes to in plain prose. It is like a face which was never really handsome, when it has lost the fresh bloom of youth.

Quite so.

Here is a further point, then. The artist, we say, this maker of images, knows nothing of the reality, but only the appearance. But that is only half the story. An artist can paint a bit and bridle, while the smith and the leather-worker can make them. Does the painter understand the proper form which bit and bridle ought to

[1] Two of the most famous Sophists of the fifth century. Plato's *Protagoras* gives a vivid picture of them on a visit to a rich patron at Athens.

have? Is it not rather true that not even the craftsmen who make them know that, but only the horseman who understands their use?[1]

Quite true.

May we not say generally that there are three arts concerned with any object—the art of using it, the art of making it, and the art of representing it?

Yes.

And that the excellence or beauty or rightness of any implement or living creature or action has reference to the use for which it is made or designed by nature?[2]

Yes.

It follows, then, that the user must know most about the performance of the thing he uses and must report on its good or bad points to the maker. The flute-player, for example, will tell the instrument-maker how well his flutes serve the player's purpose, and the other will submit to be instructed about how they should be made. So the man who uses any implement will speak of its merits and defects with knowledge, whereas the maker will take his word and possess no more than a correct belief, which he is obliged to obtain by listening to the man who knows.

Quite so.

But what of the artist? Has he either knowledge or correct belief? Does he know from direct experience of the subjects he portrays whether his representations are good and right or not? Has he even gained a correct belief by being obliged to listen to someone who does know and can tell him how they ought to be represented?

No, he has neither.

If the artist, then, has neither knowledge nor even a correct belief about the soundness of his work, what becomes of the poet's wisdom in respect of the subjects of his poetry?

[1] In the *Parmenides* (127 A) Plato's half-brother Antiphon, who had transferred his interest from philosophy to horses, is discovered instructing a smith about making a bit. Ancient craftsmen were far less specialized than ours. A blacksmith and a cobbler to-day might need instructions from a jockey.

[2] This recalls the association of a thing's peculiar excellence or 'virtue' with its function, 352 D, p. 37 f.

It will not amount to much.

And yet he will go on with his work, without knowing in what way any of his representations is sound or unsound. He must, apparently, be reproducing only what pleases the taste or wins the approval of the ignorant multitude.[1]

Yes, what else can he do?

We seem, then, so far to be pretty well agreed that the artist knows nothing worth mentioning about the subjects he represents, and that art is a form of play, not to be taken seriously. This description, moreover, applies above all to tragic poetry, whether in epic or dramatic form.

Exactly.[2]

CHAPTER XXXVI (x. 602 c–605 c)

DRAMATIC POETRY APPEALS TO THE EMOTIONS, NOT TO THE REASON

The psychological objections to poetry in this and the following chapter are based on the earlier division of the soul into three parts, and apply especially to the drama and the element of dramatic impersonation in epic poetry. The appeal of dramatic poetry is not to the reason but to a lower part, the emotions, which, like the senses, are subject to illusions. As optical and other such illusions can be corrected by the calculating and reflective part (logistikon) *which ascertains the true facts by measurement, so illusory exaggerations of feeling should be corrected by reflection. But the dramatist is concerned rather to rouse sympathetic emotion than to check its excesses, and while we enter into the joys or sorrows of a*

[1] Living in the world of appearances, the poet reproduces only 'the many conventional notions of the mass of mankind about what is beautiful or honourable or just' (479 D, p. 188).

[2] It should now be clear that this chapter is not concerned with aesthetic criticism, but with extravagant claims for the poets as moral teachers. It may leave the impression that Plato has been irritated by some contemporary controversy, and is overstating his case with a slightly malicious delight in paradox. At p. 341 he speaks of all this Part as a 'defence' of his earlier exclusion of poetry.

hero on the stage, the reason is held in abeyance. Thus drama is as far removed as visual art from true reality and from wisdom.

BUT now look here, said I; the content of this poetical representation is something at the third remove from reality, is it not?

Yes.

On what part of our human nature, then, does it produce its effect?

What sort of part do you mean?

Let me explain by an analogy. An object seen at a distance does not, of course, look the same size as when it is close at hand; a straight stick looks bent when part of it is under water; and the same thing appears concave or convex to an eye misled by colours. Every sort of confusion like these is to be found in our minds; and it is this weakness in our nature that is exploited, with a quite magical effect, by many tricks of illusion, like scene-painting and conjuring.

True.

But satisfactory means have been found for dispelling these illusions by measuring, counting, and weighing. We are no longer at the mercy of apparent differences of size and quantity and weight; the faculty which has done the counting and measuring or weighing takes control instead. And this can only be the work of the calculating or reasoning element in the soul.

True.

And when this faculty has done its measuring and announced that one quantity is greater than, or equal to, another, we often find that there is an appearance which contradicts it. Now, as we have said, it is impossible for the same part of the soul to hold two contradictory beliefs at the same time. Hence the part which agrees with the measurements must be a different part from the one which goes against them; and its confidence in measurement and calculation is a proof of its being the highest part; the other which contradicts it must be an inferior one.

It must.

This, then, was the conclusion I had in view when I said that paintings and works of art in general are far removed from reality,

and that the element in our nature which is accessible to art and responds to its advances is equally far from wisdom. The offspring of a connexion thus formed on no true or sound basis must be as inferior as the parents. This will be true not only of visual art, but of art addressed to the ear, poetry as we call it.

Naturally.

Then, instead of trusting merely to the analogy from painting, let us directly consider that part of the mind to which the dramatic element in poetry [1] appeals, and see how much claim it has to serious worth. We can put the question in this way. Drama, we say, represents the acts and fortunes of human beings. It is wholly concerned with what they do, voluntarily or against their will, and how they fare, with the consequences which they regard as happy or otherwise, and with their feelings of joy and sorrow in all these experiences. That is all, is it not?

Yes.

And in all these experiences has a man an undivided mind? Is there not an internal conflict which sets him at odds with himself in his conduct, much as we were saying that the conflict of visual impressions leads him to make contradictory judgements? However, I need not ask that question; for, now I come to think of it, we have already agreed [2] that innumerable conflicts of this sort are constantly occurring in the mind. But there is a further point to be considered now. We have said [3] that a man of high character will bear any stroke of fortune, such as the loss of a son or of anything else he holds dear, with more equanimity than most people. We may now ask: will he feel no pain, or is that impossible? Will he not rather observe due measure in his grief?

Yes, that is nearer the truth.

Now tell me: will he be more likely to struggle with his grief and resist it when he is under the eyes of his fellows or when he is alone?

[1] That ἡ τῆς ποιήσεως μιμητική is here once more restricted to drama and the dramatic element in other poetry is clear from the definition of its content as 'the acts and fortunes of human beings' (πράττειν means both 'to act' and 'to fare' well or ill).

[2] In the analysis of the conflict of motives at 439 C ff., p. 136.

[3] At 387 D, p. 77.

He will be far more restrained in the presence of others.

Yes; when he is by himself he will not be ashamed to do and say much that he would not like anyone to see or hear.

Quite so.

What encourages him to resist his grief is the lawful authority of reason, while the impulse to give way comes from the feeling itself; and, as we said, the presence of contradictory impulses proves that two distinct elements in his nature must be involved. One of them is law-abiding, prepared to listen to the authority which declares that it is best to bear misfortune as quietly as possible without resentment, for several reasons: it is never certain that misfortune may not be a blessing; nothing is gained by chafing at it; nothing human is matter for great concern; and, finally, grief hinders us from calling in the help we most urgently need. By this I mean reflection on what has happened, letting reason decide on the best move in the game of life that the fall of the dice permits. Instead of behaving like a child who goes on shrieking after a fall and hugging the wounded part, we should accustom the mind to set itself at once to raise up the fallen and cure the hurt, banishing lamentation with a healing touch.

Certainly that is the right way to deal with misfortune.

And if, as we think, the part of us which is ready to act upon these reflections is the highest, that other part which impels us to dwell upon our sufferings and can never have enough of grieving over them is unreasonable, craven, and faint-hearted.

Yes.

Now this fretful temper gives scope for a great diversity of dramatic representation; whereas the calm and wise character in its unvarying constancy is not easy to represent, nor when represented is it readily understood, especially by a promiscuous gathering in a theatre, since it is foreign to their own habit of mind. Obviously, then, this steadfast disposition does not naturally attract the dramatic poet, and his skill is not designed to find favour with it. If he is to have a popular success, he must address himself to the fretful type with its rich variety of material for representation.

Obviously.

We have, then, a fair case against the poet and we may set him

down as the counterpart of the painter, whom he resembles in two ways: his creations are poor things by the standard of truth and reality, and his appeal is not to the highest part of the soul, but to one which is equally inferior. So we shall be justified in not admitting him into a well-ordered commonwealth, because he stimulates and strengthens an element which threatens to undermine the reason. As a country may be given over into the power of its worst citizens while the better sort are ruined, so, we shall say, the dramatic poet sets up a vicious form of government in the individual soul: he gratifies that senseless part which cannot distinguish great and small, but regards the same things as now one, now the other; and he is an image-maker whose images are phantoms far removed from reality.

Quite true.

CHAPTER XXXVII (x. 605 c–608 b)

THE EFFECT OF DRAMATIC POETRY ON CHARACTER

A further psychological objection is that dramatic poetry, tragic or comic, by encouraging the sympathetic indulgence of emotions which we are ashamed to give way to in our own lives, undermines the character. If poetry cannot be defended from this charge, it must be restricted to celebrating the praises of the gods and of good men.

But, I continued, the heaviest count in our indictment is still to come. Dramatic poetry has a most formidable power of corrupting even men of high character, with a few exceptions.

Formidable indeed, if it can do that.

Let me put the case for you to judge. When we listen to some hero in Homer or on the tragic stage moaning over his sorrows in a long tirade, or to a chorus beating their breasts as they chant a lament, you know how the best of us enjoy giving ourselves up to follow the performance with eager sympathy. The more a poet

can move our feelings in this way, the better we think him. And yet when the sorrow is our own, we pride ourselves on being able to bear it quietly like a man, condemning the behaviour we admired in the theatre as womanish. Can it be right that the spectacle of a man behaving as one would scorn and blush to behave oneself should be admired and enjoyed, instead of filling us with disgust?

No, it really does not seem reasonable.

It does not, if you reflect that the poet ministers to the satisfaction of that very part of our nature whose instinctive hunger to have its fill of tears and lamentations is forcibly restrained in the case of our own misfortunes. Meanwhile the noblest part of us, insufficiently schooled by reason or habit, has relaxed its watch over these querulous feelings, with the excuse that the sufferings we are contemplating are not our own and it is no shame to us to admire and pity a man with some pretensions to a noble character, though his grief may be excessive. The enjoyment itself seems a clear gain, which we cannot bring ourselves to forfeit by disdaining the whole poem. Few, I believe, are capable of reflecting that to enter into another's feelings must have an effect on our own: the emotions of pity our sympathy has strengthened will not be easy to restrain when we are suffering ourselves.

That is very true.

Does not the same principle apply to humour as well as to pathos? You are doing the same thing if, in listening at a comic performance or in ordinary life to buffooneries which you would be ashamed to indulge in yourself, you thoroughly enjoy them instead of being disgusted with their ribaldry. There is in you an impulse to play the clown, which you have held in restraint from a reasonable fear of being set down as a buffoon; but now you have given it rein, and by encouraging its impudence at the theatre you may be unconsciously carried away into playing the comedian in your private life. Similar effects are produced by poetic representation of love and anger and all those desires and feelings of pleasure or pain which accompany our every action. It waters the growth of passions which should be allowed to wither away

and sets them up in control, although the goodness and happiness of our lives depend on their being held in subjection.

I cannot but agree with you.

If so, Glaucon, when you meet with admirers of Homer who tell you that he has been the educator of Hellas and that on questions of human conduct and culture he deserves to be constantly studied as a guide by whom to regulate your whole life, it is well to give a friendly hearing to such people, as entirely well-meaning according to their lights, and you may acknowledge Homer to be the first and greatest of the tragic poets; but you must be quite sure that we can admit into our commonwealth only the poetry which celebrates the praises of the gods and of good men. If you go further and admit the honeyed muse in epic or in lyric verse, then pleasure and pain will usurp the sovereignty of law and of the principles always recognized by common consent as the best.

Quite true.

So now, since we have recurred to the subject of poetry, let this be our defence: it stands to reason that we could not but banish such an influence from our commonwealth. But, lest poetry should convict us of being harsh and unmannerly, let us tell her further that there is a long-standing quarrel between poetry and philosophy. There are countless tokens of this old antagonism, such as the lines which speak of 'the cur which at his master yelps,' or 'one mighty in the vain talk of fools' or 'the throng of all-too-sapient heads,' or 'subtle thinkers all in rags.'[1] None the less, be it declared that, if the dramatic poetry whose end is to give pleasure can show good reason why it should exist in a well-governed society, we for our part should welcome it back, being ourselves conscious of its charm; only it would be a sin to betray what we believe to be the truth. You too, my friend, must have felt this charm, above all when poetry speaks through Homer's lips.

I have indeed.

It is fair, then, that before returning from exile poetry should publish her defence in lyric verse or some other measure; and I

[1] The source of these poetical attacks on philosophy is unknown. The earliest philosophers to denounce Homer and Hesiod had been Xenophanes and Heraclitus, about the beginning of the fifth century.

suppose we should allow her champions who love poetry but are not poets to plead for her in prose, that she is no mere source of pleasure but a benefit to society and to human life. We shall listen favourably; for we shall clearly be the gainers, if that can be proved.

Undoubtedly.

But if it cannot, then we must take a lesson from the lover who renounces at any cost a passion which he finds is doing him no good. The love for poetry of this kind, bred in us by our own much admired institutions, will make us kindly disposed to believe in her genuine worth; but so long as she cannot make good her defence we shall, as we listen, rehearse to ourselves the reasons we have just given, as a counter-charm to save us from relapsing into a passion which most people have never outgrown. We shall reiterate that such poetry has no serious claim to be valued as an apprehension of truth. One who lends an ear to it should rather beware of endangering the order established in his soul, and would do well to accept the view of poetry which we have expressed.

I entirely agree.

Yes, Glaucon; for much is at stake, more than most people suppose: it is a choice between becoming a good man or a bad; and poetry, no more than wealth or power or honours, should tempt us to be careless of justice and virtue.

Your argument has convinced me, as I think it would anyone else.

PART VI (Book X, 608 c–end)

IMMORTALITY AND THE REWARDS OF JUSTICE

Socrates now passes abruptly to claim for justice those rewards, in this life and after death, which it was originally agreed to exclude until the nature of justice and injustice and their inherent effects on the soul should have been defined. By the end of Part IV it had been shown that perfect justice would mean complete happiness, and perfect injustice the extreme of misery. Socrates, having thus met the challenge of Glaucon and Adeimantus by recommending justice purely for its own sake, is now entitled to bring in the question of external rewards. He first supports the immortality of the soul by a new proof. Then he argues that, on the whole, justice does pay in this life. Finally, the rewards and punishments which may await the soul in the unseen world and in other lives on earth are pictured in a myth illustrating the doctrine of reincarnation.

CHAPTER XXXVIII (x. 608 c–612 a)

A PROOF OF IMMORTALITY

The arguments for immortality in the Phaedo *are here supplemented by a proof based on the idea that everything has some peculiar evil or vicious condition which tends to destroy it. This is the opposite of its peculiar excellence or goodness* (areté), *which is defined by its function* (353 b, 601 d, pp. 38 f., 333 f.), *and can be thought of as constituting its essential nature. The soul's peculiar evil is moral evil or vice; and if anything could destroy the soul, it would be this denial of its true being. Vice, however, does not, in fact, cause death. The dissolution of the body is caused by the body's peculiar evils, and these cannot touch the soul.*

The soul has been described earlier as having several 'parts'; but we are not to think of it as like a material thing made up of parts into which it can be broken up and so destroyed. Both Plato and Aristotle hold that the reason (nous) *is man's true self and indestructible essence. It seems to be suggested here that conjunction with the body entails the accretion of desires and functions indispensable to mortal life, but that these 'forms' or 'aspects' of soul disappear with the death of the body, provided that the soul has been 'purified' by devotion to the pursuit of wisdom.*

And yet, said I, we have not so far described the chief wages of virtue or the greatest prize it can hope to win.

It is hard to conceive any greater than those you have already spoken of.

Can there be anything great in a short span of time? And, as compared with all time, the whole of this life from childhood to old age is short enough.

Indeed it is nothing.

Well, ought not an immortal thing to be more seriously concerned with all time than with so brief a span?

No doubt; but what do you mean by that?

Are you not aware that our soul is immortal and never perishes?

Glaucon looked at me in astonishment. Indeed I am not, he replied. Are you prepared to assert that?

I ought to be; and so, I think, ought you. There is no difficulty.

There is for me; but if you find it so easy a matter, I should like to hear your account.

You shall. When you speak of a certain thing as 'a good,' and of another as 'an evil,' do you agree with me in thinking of the evil as always being the thing which corrupts and destroys, and of the good as that which benefits and preserves?

Yes.

And would you say that everything has its peculiar evil as well as its good, for instance, ophthalmia for the eyes, disease for the body in general, mildew for grain, rot for timber, rust for iron and copper—and, as I say, that almost anything has some special

evil or malady, which impairs the thing it attacks and ends by breaking it up and destroying it altogether?

Yes, no doubt.

Everything, then, is destroyed by its own peculiar evil or corruption; or if that will not destroy it, there is at any rate nothing else that can bring it to an end; for clearly what is good for it will never destroy it, nor yet what is neither good nor evil. Hence if we find that there is a thing whose peculiar evil does indeed deprave it but cannot bring about its utter dissolution, shall we not at once be sure that it is by nature indestructible?

That seems likely.

What of the soul, then? Has it not some special evil which depraves it?

Certainly; there are all the vices we have been speaking of, injustice, intemperance, cowardice, ignorance.

And does any of these vices work its complete destruction? We must be careful here not to be misled into supposing that when a wicked and foolish man is found out, he has been destroyed by his wickedness, which is a depraved condition of his soul. Think of it rather in this way. It is true of the body, is it not? that physical evil, namely disease, wastes and destroys it until it is no longer a body at all, and all the other things we instanced are annihilated by the pervading corruption of the evil which peculiarly besets them. Now is it true in the same way of the soul that injustice and other forms of vice, by besetting and pervading it, waste it away in corruption until they sever it from the body and bring about its death? [1]

No, certainly not.

On the other hand, it would be unreasonable to suppose that a thing which cannot be destroyed by its own vice should be destroyed by the vicious condition of something else. Observe that we should not think it proper to say of the body that it was destroyed simply by the badness of its food, which might be rotten

[1] In the *Phaedo* death is defined as the separation of the soul from the body. The definition is consistent with the indestructibility of soul, which Socrates there tries to prove; but another speaker voices the popular fear that the escaping soul may dissolve into air like smoke. Such would be the death of the soul here contemplated.

or mouldy; only when such food has induced a bad condition of the body itself do we say that the body is destroyed by its own diseased state, occasioned by the bad food. The body is one thing, the food another; and we shall not allow that the evil belonging to that other thing can ever destroy the body, unless it engenders the body's own peculiar evil. By the same reasoning, if bodily evil does not engender in the soul the soul's peculiar evil, we must never allow that the soul is destroyed merely by an evil peculiar to something else.

That is reasonable.

Either, then, we must prove this argument unsound, or, so long as it stands unrefuted, we must deny that fever or any other disease or even slaughtering the body and cutting it to atoms can effect anything towards the destruction of the soul, until it can be shown that the soul itself becomes more wicked and impure because the body suffers in those ways. We shall not allow anyone to say that the soul or anything else perishes merely through the occurrence in another thing of that other thing's peculiar evil.

Well, no one will ever prove that death makes the dying man's soul more wicked.

No; and if anyone does venture to challenge our argument and try to escape the conclusion that souls are immortal by asserting that a dying man does become wickeder, we shall argue that, if what he says is true, wickedness must be a sort of fatal disease with a power of its own to kill those who catch it, quickly or slowly according to the severity of the attack; instead of being merely the occasion of their death, which is in fact caused by other people who punish them for their crimes.

Yes, if that were so, surely there would be nothing very terrible about wickedness, for a fatal attack would be the end of all troubles. But I think we shall find that, on the contrary, it brings about the death of other people to the best of its power, and, far from being deadly to the wicked man himself, it makes him very much alive and fills him with an unsleeping energy.

You are right. For if its own evil and depravity cannot kill the soul, it is hardly likely that an evil designed for the destruction

of a different thing will destroy the soul or anything but its own proper object. So, since the soul is not destroyed by any evil, either its own or another's, clearly it must be a thing that exists for ever, and is consequently immortal.

That follows.

Let us take this, then, as proved. And if it is so, there must always be the same number of souls in existence. For if none perishes, their number cannot grow less; nor yet can it be increased, since any increase of the immortal must come from the mortal, and then all things would end by being immortal.[1]

True.

Well, reason forbids us to imagine that conclusion. And again, we must not think of the soul, in her truest nature, as full of diversity and unlikeness and perpetually at variance with herself.

In what way do you mean?

We were thinking just now[2] of the soul as composed of a number of parts not put together in the most satisfactory way; and such a composite thing could hardly be everlasting.

Probably not.

Well then, that the soul is immortal is established beyond doubt by our recent argument and the other proofs;[3] but to understand her real nature, we must look at her, not as we see her now, marred by association with the body and other evils, but when she has regained that pure condition which the eye of reason can discern; you will then find her to be a far lovelier thing and will distinguish more clearly justice and injustice and all the qualities we have discussed. Our description of the soul is true of her present appearance; but we have seen her afflicted by countless evils,

[1] In the *Phaedo* similar reasoning is employed to support the doctrine of reincarnation: if the soul at death passes into the state of 'being dead,' i.e. existing apart from the body, and if there is no return journey, the stock of souls must finally be exhausted and life on earth would come to an end. Plato, like any other Greek, would regard the creation of a new soul out of nothing as impossible. But elsewhere it is part of the same doctrine that the purified soul *can* escape from the wheel of birth to dwell with the gods for ever.

[2] At 603 D, p. 337 f., and in the descriptions of injustice (444 B, p. 142) and of the unjust man (Chap. XXXIV).

[3] Probably a reference to the *Phaedo*.

like the sea-god Glaucus,[1] whose original form can hardly be discerned, because parts of his body have been broken off or crushed and altogether marred by the waves, and the clinging overgrowth of weed and rock and shell has made him more like some monster than his natural self. But we must rather fix our eyes, Glaucon, on her love of wisdom and note how she seeks to apprehend and hold converse with the divine, immortal, and everlasting world to which she is akin, and what she would become if her affections were entirely set on following the impulse that would lift her out of the sea in which she is now sunken, and disencumber her of all that wild profusion of rock and shell, . hose earthy substance has encrusted her, because she seeks what men call happiness by making earth her food. Then one might see her true nature, whatever it may be, whether manifold or simple. For the moment we have described—sufficiently, as I think—the aspects shown by the soul in the experiences of human life.

True, he replied.

CHAPTER XXXIX (x. 612 A–613 E)

THE REWARDS OF JUSTICE IN THIS LIFE

Before considering the fate of the soul after death, Socrates expresses a belief in the moral government of the world, which accounts for the sufferings of the righteous as due to offences in a former life. They are not to be attributed to the gods (*cf.* 379 C, p. 71). *He also appeals to experience of life as showing that, on the whole, honesty is good policy. It is not true, as Thrasymachus maintained* (343 D, p. 25), *that the unjust always has the best of it.*

AND now, I continued, we have fulfilled the conditions of the argument; in particular, we have not introduced those rewards

[1] Glaucus, it was said, saw a fish which he had caught and laid on a certain herb come to life. He ate the herb became immortal, and sprang into the sea.

which, as you two complained,[1] Homer and Hesiod hold out to men who have acquired a reputation for justice. We have found that, apart from all such consequences, justice is the best thing for the soul, which should do what is right, whether or not it possess the ring of Gyges and the cap of invisibility besides. Accordingly, there can now be no objection to our crediting justice and virtue in general with a full measure of those due rewards which they win for the soul from gods and men, both during life and after death.

I quite agree.

Then you must let me take back the concession I made when you asked me to grant, for the sake of argument, that the just man should have the reputation of being unjust, and the unjust man of being just. It might be impossible, you said, that heaven and mankind should be so deceived, but you wished that justice and injustice simply in themselves should be confronted for judgement. That judgement has now been given; and I must ask you in return to allow justice to enjoy the estimation in which it is actually held among gods and men. We have seen that justice never defrauds its possessor of the blessings that come of being really just. Let us now add the prizes which fall to those whose justice is apparent to all.

That is a fair demand.

You will concede, then, to begin with, that neither of the two characters is hidden from the sight of the gods, who will accordingly, as we agreed at the outset,[2] favour the just and hate the unjust. And the favourite of heaven may expect, in the fullest measure, all the blessings that heaven can give, save perhaps for some suffering entailed by offences in a former life. So we must suppose that, if the righteous man is afflicted with poverty or sickness or any other seeming evil, all this will come to some good for him in the end, either in this life or after death. For the gods, surely, can never be regardless of one who sets his heart on being just and making himself by the practice of virtue as like a god as man may.

[1] In Adeimantus' opening speech, 363 A, p. 48.

[2] In the argument with Thrasymachus at 352 B, p. 36.

No, naturally they would not neglect one who is like themselves.

And must we not think the opposite of the unjust man?

Most certainly.

Such, then, are the prizes which the just man wins from the gods. What may he expect from mankind? If we look at the facts, is it not true that the clever rogue is like the runner who runs well for the first half of the course, but flags before reaching the goal: he is quick off the mark, but ends in disgrace and slinks away crestfallen and uncrowned. The crown is the prize of the really good runner who perseveres to the end. Is it not usually so with the just, that towards the close of any course of action or of their dealings with other people or of life itself they win a good name and bear off the prize from the hands of their fellows?

Yes, that is true.

Will you allow me, then, to say now of the just all that you said yourself of the unjust: that when they are advanced in years they will hold positions of authority in their own country if they so desire, ally themselves in marriage to any family they choose, and so forth? Of the unjust, on the other hand, I will say that most of them, though they may go undetected in their youth, are caught and disgraced at the end of their course; in old age their misery is insulted by citizen and stranger alike; they are beaten and suffer all those torments which you truly called unmentionable: I need not repeat them. May I say all this?

Yes; it is a fair statement.

CHAPTER XL (X. 613 E–END)

THE REWARDS OF JUSTICE AFTER DEATH. THE MYTH OF ER

Several other dialogues (Gorgias, Phaedo, Phaedrus) *describe the fate of the soul before birth and after death in the poetical imagery of myth, since no certain knowledge is attainable, but Plato believed that the indestructible soul must reap the consequences of its*

deeds, good or bad. Unlike Dante, he leaves the scenery and topography of the other world fluid and vague. Probably some details are borrowed from dramatic representations or tableaux vivants *shown to initiates in Orphic and other Mysteries.*[1] *Features common to Plato's myths and to Empedocles' religious poem, Pindar's* Dirges, *Orphic amulets found in graves, and Virgil's sixth* Aeneid, *point to a common source, which may have been an Orphic apocalypse, a* Descent of Orpheus to Hades. *They include the divine origin of the soul; its fall to be incarnated in a cycle of births as a penalty for former sins; the guardian genius; the judgement after death; the torments of the unjust and the happiness of the just in the millennial intervals between incarnations; the hope of final deliverance for the purified; and certain topographical features: the Meadow (probably adapted from the Homeric Meadow of Asphodel); the two Ways to right and left; the waters of Lethe (or of Unmindfulness,* Ameles) *and of Memory.*

A new feature, interpolated by Plato, is the vision of the structure of the universe, in which the 'pattern set up in the heavens' (592 B, p. 320) *is revealed to the souls before they choose a new life. Plato's universe is spherical. At the circumference the fixed stars revolve in* 24 *hours from East to West, with a motion which carries with it all the contents of the world. Within the sphere are* (1) *the seven planets, including Sun and Moon, which all have also a contrary motion from West to East along the Zodiac. Their speeds differ. The Moon finishes its course in a month; the Sun, Venus, and Mercury in a year; while Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn have an additional motion ('counter-revolution,'* 617 B) *which slows them down so that Mars takes nearly* 2 *years, Jupiter about* 12, *and Saturn nearly* 30. (2) *The Earth at the centre rotates daily on its axis (which is also the axis of the universe) so as exactly to counteract the daily rotation in the opposite sense of the whole universe, with the result that the earth is at rest in absolute space,*

[1] Gilbert Murray, 'The Conception of Another Life,' *Edin. Rev.*, 1914, reprinted in *Stoic, Christian and Humanist*, 1940. A learned and sober account of Orphism will be found in W. K. C. Guthrie's *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, 1935. Dieterich's *Nekyia* contains a study of the eschatological myths.

while the heavenly bodies revolve round it. (This interpretation of Plato's astronomy is explained and defended in F. M. Cornford, Plato's Cosmology, 1937.)

What the souls actually see in their vision is not the universe itself, but a model,[1] *a primitive orrery in a form roughly resembling a spindle, with its shaft round which at the lower end is fastened a solid hemispherical whorl. In the orrery the shaft represents the axis of the universe and the whorl consists of* 8 *hollow concentric hemispheres, fitted into one another 'like a nest of bowls,' and capable of moving separately. It is as if the upper halves of* 8 *concentric spheres had been cut away so that the internal 'works' might be seen. The rims of the bowls appear as forming a continuous flat surface; they represent the equator of the sphere of fixed stars and, inside that, the orbits of the* 7 *planets. The souls see the Spindle resting on the knees of Necessity. The whole mechanism is turned by the Fates, Clotho (the Spinner), Lachesis (She who allots), and Atropos (the Inflexible). Sirens sing eight notes at consonant intervals forming the structure of a scale* (harmonia), *which represents the Pythagorean 'music of the spheres.'*

All this imagery is, of course, mythical and symbolic. The underlying doctrine is that in human life there is an element of necessity or chance, but also an element of free choice, which makes us, and not Heaven, responsible for the good and evil in our lives.

Such then, I went on, are the prizes, rewards, and gifts that the just man may expect at the hands of gods and men in his lifetime, in addition to those other blessings which come simply from being just.

Yes, the rewards are splendid and sure.

These, however, are as nothing, in number or in greatness, when compared with the recompense awaiting the just and the unjust after death. This must now be told, in order that each may be paid in full what the argument shows to be his due.

[1] So J. A. Stewart, *Myths of Plato,* 165: 'a vision within the larger vision of the whole Myth of Er.' It appears that there were no diagrams in Plato's MSS.; so he sometimes helps the reader to imagine a complicated structure by reference to a

Go on; there are not many things I would sooner hear about.

My story will not be like Odysseus' tale to Alcinous;[1] but its hero was a valiant man, Er, the son of Armenius, a native of Pamphylia, who was killed in battle. When the dead were taken up for burial ten days later, his body alone was found undecayed. They carried him home, and two days afterwards were going to bury him, when he came to life again as he lay on the funeral pyre. He then told what he had seen in the other world.

He said that, when the soul had left his body, he journeyed with many others until they came to a marvellous place, where there were two openings side by side in the earth, and opposite them two others in the sky above. Between them sat Judges,[2] who, after each sentence given, bade the just take the way to the right upwards through the sky, first binding on them in front tokens signifying the judgement passed upon them. The unjust were commanded to take the downward road to the left, and these bore evidence of all their deeds fastened on their backs. When Er himself drew near, they told him that he was to carry tidings of the other world to mankind, and he must now listen and observe all that went on in that place. Accordingly he saw the souls which had been judged departing by one of the openings in the sky and one of those in the earth; while at the other two openings souls were coming up out of the earth travel-stained and dusty, or down from the sky clean and bright. Each company, as if they had come on a long journey, seemed glad to turn aside into the Meadow, where they encamped like pilgrims at a festival. Greetings passed between acquaintances, and as either party questioned the other of what had befallen them, some wept as they sorrowfully recounted all that they had seen and suffered on their journey

familiar object, such as the fish-trap in *Timaeus* 78 B. But here, of course, the Spindle is also symbolic.

[1] Odysseus' recital of his adventures to Alcinous, King of Phaeacia, fills four books of the *Odyssey*, including Odysseus' voyage to the realm of the dead, which Plato would reject as a misleading picture of the after-life. It became proverbial for a long story.

[2] In the myth of the Judgement of the Dead in the *Gorgias*, 523 E, Minos, Rhadamanthys, and Aeacus give judgement 'in the Meadow at the parting of the two ways, one to the Islands of the Blest, the other to Tartarus.'

under the earth, which had lasted a thousand years;[1] while others spoke of the joys of heaven and sights of inconceivable beauty. There was much, Glaucon, that would take too long to tell; but the sum, he said, was this. For every wrong done to any man sinners had in due course paid the penalty ten times over, that is to say, once in each hundred years, such being the span of human life, in order that the punishment for every offence might be tenfold. Thus, all who have been guilty of bringing many to death or slavery by betraying their country or their comrades in arms, or have taken part in any other iniquity, suffer tenfold torments for each crime; while deeds of kindness and a just and sinless life are rewarded in the same measure. Concerning infants who die at birth or live but a short time he had more to say, not worthy of mention.[2]

The wages earned by honouring the gods and parents, or by dishonouring them and by doing murder, were even greater. He was standing by when one spirit asked another, 'Where is Ardiaeus the Great?' This Ardiaeus had been despot in some city of Pamphylia just a thousand years before, and, among many other wicked deeds, he was said to have killed his old father and his elder brother. The answer was: 'He has not come back hither, nor will he ever come. This was one of the terrible sights we saw. When our sufferings were ended and we were near the mouth, ready to pass upwards, suddenly we saw Ardiaeus and others with him. Most of them were despots, but there were some private persons who had been great sinners. They thought that at last they were going to mount upwards, but the mouth would not admit them; it bellowed whenever one whose wickedness was incurable or who had not paid the penalty in full tried to go up.[3] Then certain fierce and fiery-looking men, who stood by and knew what

[1] This figure, probably taken from some Orphic or Pythagorean source, is repeated by Virgil, *Aeneid*, vi. 748.

[2] This suggests that a limbo for infants was a feature of the Orphic apocalypse. It appears in *Aeneid* vi. 426 ff., discussed by Cumont, *After-Life in Roman Paganism*, 128 ff.

[3] So in Virgil, *Georgic* iv. 493, a roar is heard when Orpheus, returning from Hades with Eurydice, looks back, and Eurydice vanishes.

the sound meant, seized some and carried them away; but Ardiaeus and others they bound hand and foot and neck and flinging them down flayed them. They dragged them along the wayside, carding their flesh like wool with thorns and telling all who passed by why this was done to them and that they were being taken to be cast into Tartarus. We had gone through many terrors of every sort, but none so great as the fear each man felt lest the sound should come as he went up; and when it was not heard, his joy was great.' Such were the judgements and penalties, and the blessings received were in corresponding measure.

Now when each company had spent seven days in the Meadow, on the eighth they had to rise up and journey on. And on the fourth day afterwards they came to a place whence they could see a straight shaft of light, like a pillar, stretching from above throughout heaven and earth, more like the rainbow than anything else, but brighter and purer. To this they came after a day's journey, and there, at the middle of the light, they saw stretching from heaven the extremities of its chains; for this light binds the heavens, holding together all the revolving firmament, like the undergirths of a ship of war.[1]

And from the extremities stretched the Spindle of Necessity, by means of which all the circles revolve. The shaft of the Spindle and the hook were of adamant, and the whorl partly of adamant and partly of other substances. The whorl was of this fashion. In shape it was like an ordinary whorl; but from Er's account we must imagine it as a large whorl with the inside completely scooped out, and within it a second smaller whorl, and a third and a fourth and four more, fitting into one another like a nest of bowls. For there were in all eight whorls, set one within another, with their rims showing above as circles and making up the continuous surface of a single whorl round the shaft, which pierces right through the centre of the eighth. The circle forming the rim of the

[1] Undergirths were ropes or braces used, either as fixtures or as temporary expedients, to strengthen a ship's hull. Acts xxvii. 17: 'they used helps, undergirding the ship.' It is disputed whether the bond holding the universe together is simply the straight axial shaft or a circular band of light, suggested by the Milky Way, girdling the heaven of Fixed Stars.

first and outermost whorl (Fixed Stars) is the broadest;[1] next in breadth is the sixth (Venus); then the fourth (Mars); then the eighth (Moon); then the seventh (Sun); then the fifth (Mercury); then the third (Jupiter); and the second (Saturn) is narrowest of all. The rim of the largest whorl (Fixed Stars) was spangled; the seventh (Sun) brightest; the eighth (Moon) coloured by the reflected light of the seventh; the second and fifth (Saturn, Mercury) like each other and yellower; the third (Jupiter) whitest; the fourth (Mars) somewhat ruddy; the sixth (Venus) second in whiteness. The Spindle revolved as a whole with one motion; but, within the whole as it turned, the seven inner circles revolved slowly in the opposite direction; and of these the eighth (Moon) moved most swiftly; second in speed and all moving together, the seventh, sixth, and fifth (Sun, Venus, Mercury); next in speed moved the fourth (Mars) with what appeared to them to be a counter-revolution;[2] next the third (Jupiter), and slowest of all the second (Saturn).

The Spindle turned on the knees of Necessity. Upon each of its circles stood a Siren, who was carried round with its movement, uttering a single sound on one note, so that all the eight made up the concords of a single scale.[3] Round about, at equal distances,

[1] The breadth of the rims is most simply explained as standing for the supposed distances of the orbits from each other. Thus the breadth of the outermost rim would be the distance between the Fixed Stars and Saturn. The names of the planets are given in the *Epinomis*, which was either Plato's latest work or composed by an immediate pupil: Aphrodite (Venus), Hermes (Mercury), Ares (Mars), Zeus (Jupiter), Kronos (Saturn). It is there implied that the Greeks took these names from the Syrians, substituting for Syrian gods the Greek gods identified with them.

[2] I understand this motion to be a self-motion of the three outer planets, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, slowing down the 'contrary motion' shared by all the planets, so that these three fall farther and farther behind the Sun-Venus-Mercury group and *appear* to be moving in the opposite sense with a 'counter-revolution,' though really moving more slowly in the same sense. See *Plato's Cosmology*, 88.

[3] Aristotle, *de caelo* ii. 9: 'It seems to some thinkers [Pythagoreans] that bodies so great must inevitably produce a sound by their movement: even bodies on the earth do so . . . and as for the sun and the moon, and the stars, so many in number and enormous in size, all moving at a tremendous speed, it is incredible that they should fail to produce a noise of surpassing loudness. Taking this as their hypothesis, and also that the speeds of the stars, judged by their distances, are in the ratios of the musical consonances, they affirm that the sound of the stars as they revolve is concordant. To meet the difficulty that none of us is aware of this

were seated, each on a throne, the three daughters of Necessity, the Fates, robed in white with garlands on their heads, Lachesis, Clotho, and Atropos, chanting to the Sirens' music, Lachesis of things past, Clotho of the present, and Atropos of things to come. And from time to time Clotho lays her right hand on the outer rim of the Spindle and helps to turn it, while Atropos turns the inner circles likewise with her left, and Lachesis with either hand takes hold of inner and outer alternately.

The souls, as soon as they came, were required to go before Lachesis. An Interpreter first marshalled them in order; and then, having taken from the lap of Lachesis a number of lots and samples of lives, he mounted on a high platform and said:

'The word of Lachesis, maiden daughter of Necessity. Souls of a day, here shall begin a new round of earthly life, to end in death. No guardian spirit will cast lots for you,[1] but you shall choose your own destiny. Let him to whom the first lot falls choose first a life to which he will be bound of necessity. But Virtue owns no master: as a man honours or dishonours her, so shall he have more of her or less. The blame is his who chooses; Heaven is blameless.'[2]

With these words the Interpreter scattered the lots among them all. Each took up the lot which fell at his feet and showed what number he had drawn; only Er himself was forbidden to take one. Then the Interpreter laid on the ground before them the sample lives, many more than the persons there. They were of every sort: lives of all living creatures, as well as of all conditions of men. Among them were lives of despots, some continuing in power to the end, others ruined in mid course and ending in pov-

sound, they account for it by saying that the sound is with us right from birth and has thus no contrasting silence to show it up; for voice and silence are perceived by contrast with each other, and so all mankind is undergoing an experience like that of a coppersmith, who becomes by long habit indifferent to the din around him' (trans. W. K. C. Guthrie). Aristotle refutes this theory.

[1] The idea that the *daemon* (guardian spirit, genius, personified destiny) has an individual allotted to it as its portion appears in Lysias, *Epitaphius* 78, Theocritus iv. 40, and Plato's *Phaedo* (myth) 107 D.

[2] These last words 'became a kind of rallying-cry among the champions of the freedom of the will in the early Christian era' (Adam). They are inscribed on a bust of Plato of the first century B.C. found at Tibur.

erty, exile, or beggary. There were lives of men renowned for beauty of form and for strength and prowess, or for distinguished birth and ancestry; also lives of unknown men; and of women likewise. All these qualities were variously combined with one another and with wealth or poverty, health or sickness, or intermediate conditions; but in none of these lives was there anything to determine the condition of the soul, because the soul must needs change its character according as it chooses one life or another.

Here, it seems, my dear Glaucon, a man's whole fortunes are at stake. On this account each one of us should lay aside all other learning, to study only how he may discover one who can give him the knowledge enabling him to distinguish the good life from the evil, and always and everywhere to choose the best within his reach, taking into account all these qualities we have mentioned and how, separately or in combination, they affect the goodness of life. Thus he will seek to understand what is the effect, for good or evil, of beauty combined with wealth or with poverty and with this or that condition of the soul, or of any combination of high or low birth, public or private station, strength or weakness, quickness of wit or slowness, and any other qualities of mind, native or acquired; until, as the outcome of all these calculations, he is able to choose between the worse and the better life with reference to the constitution of the soul, calling a life worse or better according as it leads to the soul becoming more unjust or more just. All else he will leave out of account; for, as we have seen, this is the supreme choice for a man, both while he lives and after death. Accordingly, when he goes into the house of death he should hold this faith like adamant, that there too he may not be dazzled by wealth and such-like evils, or fling himself into the life of a despot or other evil-doer, to work irremediable harm and suffer yet worse things himself, but may know how to choose always the middle course that avoids both extremes, not only in this life, so far as he may, but in every future existence; for there lies the greatest happiness for man.

To return to the report of the messenger from the other world. The Interpreter then said: 'Even for the last comer, if he choose with discretion, there is left in store a life with which, if he will

live strenuously, he may be content and not unhappy. Let not the first be heedless in his choice, nor the last be disheartened.'

After these words, he who had drawn the first lot at once seized upon the most absolute despotism he could find. In his thoughtless greed he was not careful to examine the life he chose at every point, and he did not see the many evils it contained and that he was fated to devour his own children; but when he had time to look more closely, he began to beat his breast and bewail his choice, forgetting the warning proclaimed by the Interpreter; for he laid the blame on fortune, the decrees of the gods, anything rather than himself. He was one of those who had come down from heaven, having spent his former life in a well-ordered commonwealth and become virtuous from habit without pursuing wisdom. It might indeed be said that not the least part of those who were caught in this way were of the company which had come from heaven, because they were not disciplined by suffering; whereas most of those who had come up out of the earth, having suffered themselves and seen others suffer, were not hasty in making their choice. For this reason, and also because of the chance of the lot, most of the souls changed from a good life to an evil, or from an evil life to a good. Yet, if upon every return to earthly life a man seeks wisdom with his whole heart, and if the lot so fall that he is not among the last to choose, then this report gives good hope that he will not only be happy here, but will journey to the other world and back again hither, not by the rough road underground, but by the smooth path through the heavens.

It was indeed, said Er, a sight worth seeing, how the souls severally chose their lives—a sight to move pity and laughter and astonishment; for the choice was mostly governed by the habits of their former life. He saw one soul choosing the life of a swan; this had once been the soul of Orpheus, which so hated all womankind because of his death at their hands that it would not consent to be born of woman.[1] And he saw the soul of Thamyras[2]

[1] Orpheus was torn in pieces by the Maenads, the women-worshippers of Dionysus.

[2] Another singer, who was deprived of sight and of the gift of song for challenging the Muses to a contest.

take the life of a nightingale, and a swan choose to be changed into a man, and other musical creatures do the same. The soul which drew the twentieth lot took a lion's life; this had been Ajax, the son of Telamon, who shrank from being born as a man, remembering the judgement concerning the arms of Achilles.[1] After him came the soul of Agamemnon,[2] who also hated mankind because of his sufferings and took in exchange the life of an eagle. Atalanta's[3] soul drew a lot about half-way through. She took the life of an athlete, which she could not pass over when she saw the great honours he would win. After her he saw the soul of Epeius,[4] son of Panopeus, passing into the form of a craftswoman; and far off, among the last, the buffoon Thersites' soul clothing itself in the body of an ape. It so happened that the last choice of all fell to the soul of Odysseus, whose ambition was so abated by memory of his former labours that he went about for a long time looking for a life of quiet obscurity. When at last he found it lying somewhere neglected by all the rest, he chose it gladly, saying that he would have done the same if his lot had come first. Other souls in like manner passed from beasts into men and into one another, the unjust changing into the wild creatures, the just into the tame, in every sort of combination.

Now when all the souls had chosen their lives, they went in the order of their lots to Lachesis; and she gave each into the charge of the guardian genius he had chosen, to escort him through life and fulfil his choice. The genius led the soul first to Clotho, under her hand as it turned the whirling Spindle, thus ratifying the portion which the man had chosen when his lot was cast. And, after touching her, he led it next to the spinning of Atropos, thus making the thread of destiny irreversible. Thence, without looking back, he passed under the throne of Necessity. And when he and all the

[1] After Achilles' death a contest between Ajax and Odysseus for his arms ended in the defeat and suicide of Ajax. The first mention is in *Odyssey* xi. 543, where the soul of Ajax, summoned from Hades, will not speak to Odysseus.

[2] The conqueror of Troy, murdered by his wife Clytemnestra on his return home.

[3] Atalanta's suitors had to race with her for her hand and were killed if defeated. Milanion won by dropping three golden apples given him by Aphrodite, which Atalanta paused to pick up.

[4] Maker of the wooden horse in which the Greek chieftains entered Troy.

rest had passed beyond the throne, they journeyed together to the Plain of Lethe through terrible stifling heat; for the plain is bare of trees and of all plants that grow on the earth. When evening came, they encamped beside the River of Unmindfulness, whose water no vessel can hold. All are required to drink a certain measure of this water, and some have not the wisdom to save them from drinking more. Every man as he drinks forgets everything. When they had fallen asleep, at midnight there was thunder and an earthquake, and in a moment they were carried up, this way and that, to their birth, like shooting stars. Er himself was not allowed to drink of the water. How and by what means he came back to the body he knew not; but suddenly he opened his eyes and found himself lying on the funeral pyre at dawn.

And so, Glaucon, the tale was saved from perishing; and if we will listen, it may save us, and all will be well when we cross the river of Lethe. Also we shall not defile our souls; but, if you will believe with me that the soul is immortal and able to endure all good and ill, we shall keep always to the upward way and in all things pursue justice with the help of wisdom. Then we shall be at peace with Heaven and with ourselves, both during our sojourn here and when, like victors in the Games collecting gifts from their friends, we receive the prize of justice; and so, not here only, but in the journey of a thousand years of which I have told you, we shall fare well.

εὖ πράττωμεν