

## PLATO GORGIAS

447A-448C	Introductory Conversation
448D-461B	Socrates and Gorgias
461B-481B	Socrates and Polus
481B-486D	Callicles' Interruption and Speech
486D-523A	Socrates and Callicles
523A-527E	Socrates' Concluding Speech

### Note

There are five people involved in the dialogue. Socrates arrives with an old friend and follower, Chaerephon, at a house in Athens where a distinguished guest, Gorgias, is accompanied by a younger associate, Polus. The former two are native Athenians, the latter two from Sicily. The fifth person, who greets Socrates on his arrival, unlike the other four, is entirely unknown outside this dialogue. He may be one of the handful of fictional characters in Plato's dialogues, or more likely, as a young man entering on a public career at a chaotic period in Athenian political life, he simply disappeared. There may or may not be significance in the fact that his name ("famed for visible excellence") resembles Plato's given name, which was Aristocles ("famed for highest excellence"). Callicles eventually becomes the primary participant in the conversation with Socrates. He also speaks the dialogue's first words.

---

447A *Callicles*: In war and battle, Socrates, this is the way to do your part, they say.

*Socrates*: Oh my. Did we show up too late—after the feast, as the saying goes?

*Callicles*: And very much of a stylish feast at that, because Gorgias laid out a display of many beautiful things for us a little while ago.

*Socrates*: Well, *Callicles*, *Chaerephon* here is to blame for that, since he made us waste our time in the marketplace.

B *Chaerephon*: It's no big thing, *Socrates*, since I'll provide the cure too, because Gorgias is a friend of mine. So he'll put on a display for us now, if that seems good, or some other time if you want.

*Callicles*: What, *Chaerephon*? Does *Socrates* have a desire to hear Gorgias?

*Chaerephon*: That's the very thing we're here for, in fact.

*Callicles*: Then come to my place whenever you want, because Gorgias is stopping off with me, and he'll give a display for you.

C *Socrates*: That's good of you to say, *Callicles*, but would he be willing to have a conversation with us? Because I want to find out from him what power belongs to the man's art,<sup>1</sup> and what it is that he lays claim to and teaches; as for the other thing, the display, let him do that some other time, as you say.

*Callicles*: There's nothing like asking the man himself, *Socrates*, because this too was one part of his display. At any rate, he was just now urging any of the people inside to ask whatever they might want, and saying he'd give an answer on every subject.

*Socrates*: Beautiful! *Chaerephon*, you ask him.

*Chaerephon*: What am I going to ask?

D *Socrates*: Who he is.

*Chaerephon*: How do you mean?

*Socrates*: The same way, if he happened to be a craftsman who made shoes, he'd presumably answer you that he's a leatherworker—or don't you understand how I mean it?

*Chaerephon*: I do understand, and I'll ask him. Tell me, *Gorgias*, is *Callicles* here telling the truth, that you claim to answer whatever anyone asks you?

*Gorgias*: It's true, *Chaerephon*; I was just now making that very claim, and I tell you, for many years, no one has ever asked me anything new.

*Chaerephon*: Then I suppose you give answers with ease, *Gorgias*.

*Gorgias*: It's open to you to put that to the test, *Chaerephon*.

*Polus*: If that's what you want, *Chaerephon*, test me, by Zeus! *Gorgias* seems to me to be worn out, since he's just gone through a lot of answers.

*Chaerephon*: What, *Polus*? Do you suppose you'd give answers more beautifully than *Gorgias* would?

*Polus*: What does that matter, as long as I answer well enough for you?

*Chaerephon*: It doesn't. Since you want to, then, you answer.

*Polus*: Ask.

*Chaerephon*: I'm asking: if *Gorgias* happened to be knowledgeable in the same art his brother *Herodicus* is, what would we justly name him? Wouldn't it be the same as that one?

*Polus*: Certainly.

*Chaerephon*: Therefore we'd be speaking beautifully in declaring him to be a doctor.

*Polus*: Yes.

*Chaerephon*: But if he were experienced in the same art as *Aristophon*, the son of *Aglaophon*, or as *his* brother, what would we rightly call him?

*Polus*: A painter, obviously.

*Chaerephon*: But as it is, since he's knowledgeable in some art, by calling him what would we be calling him rightly?

*Polus*: There are many arts among human beings, *Chaerephon*, that have been discovered experientially from experiences, for experience makes our lifespan pass along the path of art, but inexperience along the path of chance. And of the sorts of arts, various people partake of various ones in various ways, the best partaking of the best. *Gorgias* here is one of these, and partakes of the most beautiful<sup>2</sup> of the arts.

1 The Greek word translated "art" (*technē*) is a common one; its meaning ordinarily includes three elements, and refers to any sort of know-how that involves some theoretical understanding, some practical skill at carrying it out, and some experience with particulars to guide its application. The first two examples given below, shoemaking and doctoring, give an idea of the span of things it takes in, but it is even wider, and can apply to ditch-digging at one extreme and the theory of numerical ratios (as exhibited in Book VII of Euclid's *Elements*) at the other. *Socrates* will later raise a question about what activities deserve to be called arts, and one should not prejudice or preempt that discussion by translating it as "science" or "craft"; it is truer to the text, and not difficult, to accustom ourselves to recapture the general sense that was once present in English in phrases like fine arts, useful arts, liberal arts, arts of understanding, and so on. Some notion of an artful approach to achieving one's ends underlies all such phrases, and conveys to us the living meaning of an English word very close to this Greek word; meanings directly grasped in this way are prior to any attempts at definition.

2 *Polus* introduces the highest term of praise, by calling *Gorgias's* art best not only in the sense of what is most excellent (*ariston*) but of that which visibly displays the standard of excellence. The excellence of something beautiful is spelled out by *Socrates* below (474D-475B) as its being especially well suited to the pleasure of another or to its own ends. In the latter sense, a beautiful body is visibly well formed to be the kind of thing it is, and a beautiful action or activity is manifestly an end in itself, capable of no higher justification. As something beautiful (*kalon*) evokes admiration, its opposite (*aischron*) evokes shame. (See the note to 458D.) Translators tend to shy away from translating *kalon* in the natural way as "beautiful" in the belief that it now connotes only a bodily appearance related to pleasure, but the English word has not lost the full range of meaning present in the Greek, as evidenced whenever we say "that was a beautiful thing to do." The word translators most often resort to is "fair," as in the obsolete English usage found in Dryden's line "None but the brave deserves the fair." This sidesteps such translators' embarrassment with the word "beautiful," but affords no opportunity to think about the beauty of actions.

D  
*Socrates:* Polus appears to be beautifully prepared for speeches, Gorgias, but he's not doing what he'd promised Chaerephon.  
*Gorgias:* What's that, Socrates?  
*Socrates:* He doesn't appear to me to be answering what was asked at all.

*Gorgias:* Then you ask him, if you want.

*Socrates:* Not if it's possible that you yourself want to answer; it would be much pleasanter to ask you instead, because it's clear to me even from what he's said that Polus has taken more care over what's called rhetoric than over engaging in conversation.

*Polus:* How's that, Socrates?

*Socrates:* Because, Polus, when Chaerephon asked what art Gorgias is knowledgeable in, you praised his art as though someone was blaming it, but you didn't answer what it is.

*Polus:* Well, didn't I answer that it was the most beautiful one?

*Socrates:* You sure did. But no one asked what *sort* of thing Gorgias's art might be, but *what* it is, and what one ought to call Gorgias. The same way Chaerephon set out examples for you before, and you answered him beautifully and with few words, now too say in that way what the art is and what we should call Gorgias. Or rather, Gorgias, tell us yourself what we should call you, for being knowledgeable in what art.

*Gorgias:* Rhetoric, Socrates.

*Socrates:* Then we should call you a rhetorician?

*Gorgias:* A good one too, Socrates, if you want to call me what I "flaunt myself to be," as Homer says.

*Socrates:* I do want to.

*Gorgias:* Then call me that.

*Socrates:* And shall we say that you're capable of making others rhetoricians too?

*Gorgias:* I make exactly that claim, not only here but also in other places.

*Socrates:* Then would you be willing, Gorgias, to go on conversing the way we are now, one asking questions and the other answering, and put off to another time this length of speeches that Polus started? But don't make a lie out of what you're promising; just be willing to answer what's asked with one short reply at a time.

*Gorgias:* There are some answers, Socrates, that are necessarily made with long speeches, but still, I'll try anyway to be as brief as possible. Because even this is also one of the things I claim, that no one could say the same things in fewer words than I.

*Socrates:* That's what's needed, Gorgias: make a display for me of this very thing, brief talk, and the lengthy talk some other time.

*Gorgias:* That's just what I'll do, and you'll say you've heard no briefer talker.

*Socrates:* Then let's get to it: you claim you're knowledgeable in the art of rhetoric and could make another person a rhetorician too. What exactly, among the things there are, is rhetoric about? The same way weaving is about cloth-working—isn't it?

*Gorgias:* Yes.

*Socrates:* And music is about tune-making?

*Gorgias:* Yes.

*Socrates:* By Hera, Gorgias, I marvel at your answers, the way you answer in the fewest possible words.

*Gorgias:* Yes, Socrates, I guess I do a pretty fair job of that.

*Socrates:* You put it well. Come, then, and tell me about rhetoric the same way: which of the things there are is it a knowledge of?

*Gorgias:* Of speeches.

*Socrates:* What sort of them, Gorgias? The ones that point out to sick people how to lead their lives so they can become healthy?

*Gorgias:* No.

*Socrates:* So rhetoric *isn't* about all speeches.

*Gorgias:* No indeed.

*Socrates:* But it does make people capable of speaking.

*Gorgias:* Yes.

*Socrates:* So does it also make them have sound judgments about the things they're speaking of?

*Gorgias:* How could it not?

*Socrates:* Well, does the medical art that was just now mentioned make people be capable of having sound judgments and speaking about sick people?

*Gorgias:* Necessarily.

*Socrates:* So it looks like the medical art is also about speeches.

*Gorgias:* Yes.

*Socrates:* The ones that have to do with diseases?

*Gorgias:* Especially those.

*Socrates:* And so the art of gymnastic training is also about speeches, the ones having to do with good and bad condition in bodies?

*Gorgias:* Quite so.

*Socrates:* And surely Gorgias, the rest of the arts are the same way; each of them is about just those speeches that have to do with the subject matter concerning which it is the art.

*Gorgias:* So it appears.

*Socrates:* So why in the world don't you call the rest of the arts rhetorical, since they're about speeches, if indeed you call that art which is about speeches rhetoric?

*Gorgias:* Because, Socrates, all the knowledge involved in the rest of the arts, one may say, is about handicrafts and actions of that sort, while in rhetoric there is no such work of handicraft, but its whole action and exertion of mastery are by means of speeches. For these

reasons I hold that the art of rhetoric, rightly speaking, is about speeches, as I claim.

*Socrates:* But am I understanding what sort of art you want to call it, then? Maybe I'll get to know it more clearly. Just answer me this: we have arts, right?

*Gorgias:* Yes.

*Socrates:* And among all the arts, I suppose the major part of some of them consists of working and they need little speech—some of them none—but what pertains to the art could be accomplished even in silence, as with painting and sculpture and many others. It's arts such as these that you seem to me to be speaking of as those you claim rhetoric has no concern with; isn't that it?

*Gorgias:* You draw the inference quite beautifully, Socrates.

*Socrates:* But there are others among the arts that accomplish everything by means of speech,<sup>3</sup> and have, one may say, either no additional need of work, or very little, such as arithmetic, the study of numerical ratios,<sup>4</sup> geometry, and even checkers, as well as many other arts, of which some have the speeches about equal in number to the actions, while many have more speeches, and with them absolutely all the action and exertion of mastery are by means of speeches. You seem to me to be saying that rhetoric is one of the arts of this kind.

*Gorgias:* What you say is true.

*Socrates:* But I don't suppose you want to call any of those rhetoric, even though you said it that way in your wording—that the art that has its exertion of mastery by means of speech is rhetoric—and if someone wanted to wanted to be picky about *your* speeches he might come back with "Therefore, Gorgias, you're saying arithmetic is rhetoric?" But I don't suppose you mean either arithmetic or geometry is rhetoric.

3 This contrast with arts that use little speech introduces into the dialogue the word *logos* in the singular. It is a word with a vast array of possible meanings, but here it takes its primary sense from its relation to the plural. The speeches made by rhetoricians occur in a medium that connects the speaker and hearers, and that medium is speech. The contrast between *logoi* plural and the single *logos* will soon become emphatic as the crux of the difference between Gorgias and Socrates. For this reason, this translation attempts to render *logos* as "speech" virtually always, even in phrases such as *katon logos* or *logon dittoni*, conventionally translated, respectively, as "according to the argument" and "giving an account." One exception is the mathematical meaning of *logos* mentioned in the next footnote.

4 The last phrase translates *logistiké* which other translations render as "calculation." In later Greek authors, it did routinely refer to the art of calculation, the application of the theoretical side of arithmetic, but this is not the distinction Socrates makes just below. Consistently in Plato's writings, *logistiké* and *arithmetiké* are both understood as arts that span theory and practice, as discussed in the note to 447C above. This is shown by Jacob Klein in *Greek Mathematical Thought and the Origin of Algebra* (MIT Press, 1968, Chap. 3). In mathematics, the word *logos* means ratio; the use here of the example of *logistiké* puts together the notions of art and *logoi* in a way very different from what Gorgias had in mind.

*Gorgias:* Your supposition is right, Socrates, and your comeback is 451A  
just.

*Socrates:* Come on now, you too finish off the answer to what I asked. Since rhetoric happens to be one among those arts that use speech for the most part, while others also happen to be of that sort, try to tell what it is about which rhetoric has its exertion of mastery in words.<sup>5</sup> It's the same as if someone were to ask me, about any one of the arts whatever that we were just now speaking of, "What is the art of arithmetic, Socrates?" I'd tell him, just the way you did just now, that it's one of the arts that have their exertion of mastery by means of speech. And if he were to go on and ask me, "The one among them that's about *what*?" I'd tell him that it's the one among them that's about the even and the odd, and exactly how much each is. And if he were to ask in turn, "What art do you call the study of numerical ratios?" I'd tell him that this is one of those that exert all their mastery through speech. And if he were to go on and ask me, "The one about *what*?" I'd tell him, like people drafting a motion in the assembly, that whereas in other respects the study of numerical ratios corresponds to the art of arithmetic—since they're about the same thing, the even and the odd—they differ to this extent, that the study of numerical ratios studies the way the odd and the even are related to themselves and to one another in multitude. And if someone were to ask about astronomy, and if, when I said that it too exerts its mastery in all respects by speech, he were to say, "What are the speeches of astronomy about, Socrates?" I'd tell him that they're about the way the motions of the stars, the sun, and the moon are related to one another in speed.

*Gorgias:* And you'd be quite right in saying it, Socrates.

*Socrates:* You come on then too, Gorgias. Rhetoric is precisely one of the arts that accomplish everything and exert all their mastery by speech, isn't it? 451B

*Gorgias:* That it is.

*Socrates:* So tell me, the one among them that's about *what*? What is it, among the things there are, that these speeches that rhetoric employs are about?

*Gorgias:* The greatest of human concerns, Socrates, and the best.

*Socrates:* But, Gorgias, even in this you're saying something open to dispute, and it's still not clear at all. I imagine you've heard people at drinking parties singing that round-song in which they count them off, singing that "having your health is best, being beauti-

5 Reading this speech as an actor or director would, one might suspect that there is a pause at this point, and that Socrates proceeds as he does only after Gorgias has failed to reply. It's worth thinking about this in connection with the growing length of some of Socrates' speeches. There are similar moments with Polus below, in 468C and D, and another in Plato's *Meno* just before 75A: *Meno*, who there fails to reply, is another admirer of Gorgias who endorses his opinions.

ful second best, and third best," according to the composer of the round, "being rich without being crooked."

*Gorgias:* I've heard it, but what's your point in saying this?

452A

*Socrates:* That if the craftsmen responsible for these things the poet praises in the round-song were standing here right now, a doctor

and a trainer and a businessman, the doctor might say, first, "Socrates, Gorgias is fooling you, because his art isn't about the greatest good for human beings; mine is." If I were then to ask him, "Who are you to say so?" he'd probably say that he's a doctor.

B

"And what are you saying? That the work of your art is the greatest good?" He'd probably reply, "How could it not be, Socrates? It's health. What greater good is there for human beings than health?" And if, after him, the trainer in turn were to say, "I'd be surprised myself as well, Socrates, if Gorgias has a greater good to show you from his art than I have from mine," I'd say back to him

C

too, "And who are you, fellow? What's your job?" "A trainer," he'd reply, "and my job is to make human beings beautiful and strong in body." And after the trainer, the businessman would speak, having complete disdain for everyone: "Just consider, Socrates, whether anything that's a greater good than wealth shows itself to you, around either Gorgias or anyone else at all." We'd say to him, "What? Are you a craftsman responsible for that?" He'd say

D

so, "Who are you?" "A businessman." "What?" we'd say, "do you judge wealth to be the greatest good for human beings?" "How could it be otherwise?" he'll reply. "And yet Gorgias here contends that the art at his disposal is a cause of a greater good than yours," we'd say. It's obvious that after that he'd reply, "And what is this good? Let Gorgias answer." So come on, Gorgias, make believe you've been asked by them and by me, and answer what this is that you claim is the greatest good for human beings, and claim that you're a craftsman of.

*Gorgias:* It's the very thing that is in truth the greatest good, Socrates, and the thing that's responsible not only for being free for human beings themselves but also for their ruling others, each in his own city.

*Socrates:* So what are you saying that is?

E

*Gorgias:* I'm saying it's being able to persuade people by speeches, jurors in a lawcourt, legislators in a council chamber, and those assembled in a deliberative assembly and in every other gathering, whatever civic gathering may occur. And in fact, with this power you'll have the doctor as a slave, and the trainer as a slave, and that businessman will be shown up as doing business for someone else and not for himself, namely for you, the one with the power to speak and persuade the multitudes.

*Socrates:* Now, Gorgias, you seem to me to have come closest to revealing rhetoric for the sort of art you take it to be, and if I'm under-

standing at all, you're saying that rhetoric is a crafter of persuasion, and the whole concern and sum total of it ends with that. Or do you have anything further to say that rhetoric has the power to do beyond producing in its hearers persuasion in the soul?

*Gorgias:* Nothing whatever, Socrates; you seem to me to be defining it sufficiently, because that is the sum total of it.

*Socrates:* Then listen, Gorgias, because you can be sure about me, as I persuade myself, that if anyone engages in conversation with someone else wanting to know the very thing that our speech is about, I too am one of these, and I consider you to be one also.

*Gorgias:* What about it, then, Socrates?

*Socrates:* I'll tell you right now. You can be sure that I don't know clearly

what in the world the persuasion you speak of as coming from rhetoric is, or what things the persuasion is about, even though I have a suspicion of what I imagine you're speaking of and what it's about. Nevertheless, I'll ask you what in the world you say the persuasion that comes from rhetoric is and what things it's about. Now for what purpose am I going to ask you and not say it myself, when I have my own suspicion? It's not for your sake but for the sake of our speech, in order that it might move forward in a way that would make whatever is being spoken of evident to us as much as possible. Now consider whether I seem to you to be questioning you justly: the same way as if I happened to ask you who Zeuxis is among painters, and you told me that he was a painter of living figures, wouldn't it be just if I were to ask you what sort of living figures he was a painter of and where?

*Gorgias:* Very much so.

*Socrates:* And for this reason, that there are also other figure painters who paint lots of different figures?

D

*Gorgias:* Yes.

*Socrates:* But if no one other than Zeuxis was a painter, your answer would have been beautifully put?

*Gorgias:* How could it not?

*Socrates:* Come on and tell me about rhetoric, then. Does it seem to you that only rhetoric produces persuasion or that other arts do too? I mean something like this: when anyone teaches any subject whatever, does the one who teaches it persuade? Or do you think he doesn't?

*Gorgias:* Oh no, Socrates; persuading is what he does most of all.

*Socrates:* Then let's go back to the same arts we were speaking of just now. Don't arithmetic and the person skilled at arithmetic teach us as many things as have to do with number?

E

*Gorgias:* Very much so.

*Socrates:* Then they also persuade?

*Gorgias:* Yes.

*Socrates:* Therefore arithmetic too is a crafter of persuasion?

454A

*Gorgias*: So it appears.

*Socrates*: Then if someone should ask us what sort of persuasion, and about what, presumably we'd answer him that it's of the instructive sort, about how much the even and odd are. And with all the other arts we were just now speaking of, we'll be able to demonstrate that they're crafters of persuasion, and what sort they are, and about what, isn't that so?

*Gorgias*: Yes.

*Socrates*: Therefore it's not only rhetoric that's a crafter of persuasion.

*Gorgias*: You're speaking the truth.

*Socrates*: Then since not only it accomplishes this work, but other arts do too, we might justly go on to ask the person speaking, as we did about the painter: Of what sort of persuasion, and of persuasion about what, is rhetoric the art? Or doesn't it seem to you to be a just thing to go on asking?

*Gorgias*: It does to me.

*Socrates*: So answer, *Gorgias*, seeing as how it seems that way to you too.

*Gorgias*: Well then, *Socrates*, I say it's the art of that persuasion that goes on in lawcourts and in other crowds, as I was in fact saying just now, and that's about those things that are just and unjust.

*Socrates*: I suspected as well that you were speaking of that persuasion and about those topics, *Gorgias*, but don't be surprised if I ask you some other question of that sort a little later, that seems to be obvious, but I go ahead and ask it anyway. Because exactly as I'm saying, I'm asking for the sake of carrying our speech to completion in an orderly way, not for your sake but so that we don't get in the habit of guessing and snatching up the things said by one another too quickly, in order that, in whatever way you want, you might carry the things said by yourself to a conclusion that follows what's been set down.

*Gorgias*: And it seems to me you're doing so quite rightly, *Socrates*.

*Socrates*: Come on, then, and let's examine this point: do you call a certain condition "having learned?"

*Gorgias*: I call something that.

*Socrates*: And what about "having believed?"

D *Gorgias*: I do.

*Socrates*: And do they seem to you to be the same thing—having learned and having believed, or learning and belief—or different?

*Gorgias*: I certainly imagine they're different, *Socrates*.

*Socrates*: You're imagining it beautifully, and you'll recognize that from this: if someone were to ask you, "*Gorgias*, is there a false belief as well as a true one?" I imagine you'd say there is.

*Gorgias*: Yes.

*Socrates*: And what about this? Is there a false knowledge as well as a true one?

*Gorgias*: By no means.

*Socrates*: Therefore it's obvious that they're not the same.

*Gorgias*: You're speaking the truth.

*Socrates*: But surely those who've learned something are persuaded of it, and so are those who've come to believe something.

*Gorgias*: These things are so.

*Socrates*: Then do you want us to posit two forms of persuasion, one that provides belief without knowing, another that provides knowledge?

*Gorgias*: Very much so.

*Socrates*: Then which sort of persuasion does rhetoric produce in lawcourts and other crowds about things that are just and unjust? Is it the one from which believing comes without knowing, or from which knowing comes?

*Gorgias*: It's obvious, I presume, *Socrates*, that it's the sort from which believing comes.

*Socrates*: Therefore it looks like rhetoric is a crafter not of persuasion that teaches but of persuasion into belief about what's just and unjust.

455A

*Gorgias*: Yes.

*Socrates*: And therefore the rhetorician is not someone who teaches the lawcourts and other crowds about things that are just and unjust, but only someone who's persuasive, since presumably he wouldn't be able to teach so big a crowd in so little time about such great matters.

*Gorgias*: Certainly not.

*Socrates*: Come on then, let's see what in the world we're in fact saying about rhetoric, because I can't even tell yet what I'm saying myself.

B

Whenever there's a meeting in the city for choosing doctors or shipbuilders or any other confraternity of public workers, is there any doubt that the rhetorician won't be giving any advice then? Because it's obvious that in each choice, it's necessary to choose the person most skilled at the art. And he won't when it's about building walls either, or about equipping harbors and shipyards, but the engineers will. And also not when there's a deliberation about choosing generals, or about some battle plan against enemies, or about capturing territory; skilled military men will give advice then, but not rhetoricians. What do you say about things like that, *Gorgias*? Since you yourself claim to be a rhetorician, and to make other people rhetoricians, it's a good idea to find out the things that have to do with your art from you. And regard me now as keenly promoting your interest, because probably someone among those in the place happens to want to become a student of yours, since I notice some, quite a few even, who'd probably be shy about asking

C

D you. So when you're asked the question by me, regard it as also being asked by them: "What will we get out of it, Gorgias, if we associate with you? What will we be able to give advice to the city about? Will it only be about just and unjust, or also about the things Socrates was just talking about?" So try to give them an answer.

E *Gorgias*: I will try, then, Socrates, to reveal the whole power of rhetoric to you clearly, and you yourself have pointed the way beautifully. Because you know, I presume, that these shipyards and walls of the Athenians, and the equipage of their harbors, came about thanks to the advice of Themistocles, and some to that of Pericles, and not thanks to the workmen.

*Socrates*: So it's said, Gorgias, in the case of Themistocles. I myself heard Pericles when he was giving us advice about the wall down the middle.<sup>6</sup>

456A *Gorgias*: And whenever there's any choice about the things you were just speaking of, Socrates, you see that the rhetoricians are the ones who give the advice and carry the motions about these issues.

*Socrates*: It's from being amazed at these things too, Gorgias, that I've been asking all along what in the world the power of rhetoric is. Because when I look at it this way, the greatness of it has the appearance of some supernatural power.

B *Gorgias*: Oh, if you knew it all, Socrates—that it holds all powers, if I may put it so, rounded up in subjection to itself. I'll tell you a big sign of this: often before now I've gone along with my brother and with other doctors to some sick person who wasn't willing to drink his medicine, or to allow the doctor to do any cutting or burning, and when the doctor wasn't able to be persuasive I did persuade him, with no art other than rhetoric. And I tell you, if a rhetorically skilled man and a doctor went into any city you want, and had to compete in speech in the assembly or in any other gathering over which of the two should be chosen as a doctor, the doctor would clearly get nowhere, and the one with the power to speak would be chosen if he wanted to. And whatever other sort of workman he might be in competition with, the rhetorician would be more persuasive than anyone else whatsoever at getting himself chosen. Because there is nothing at all about which the rhetorician would not speak more persuasively among a multitude than any of the other workmen whatsoever. So that's how great the power of the

6 Themistocles and Pericles were political figures who held the highest elected office in Athens. Thucydides (*The Peloponnesian War*, Bk. 1, Ch. 93) credits the former

with making Athens a naval power by recognizing the potential of the Piraeus as a port, and persuading the citizens to protect it with a pair of long walls extending at an angle from the city to the sea. The latter persuaded them to add a third wall some years afterward, within and parallel to the long wall to Piraeus, to produce a fortified military road, then later argued that they had nothing to fear from war with Sparta. A speech by Pericles on this subject on the brink of the Peloponnesian War is recounted by Thucydides in 1, 139–146.

D art is, and what it's like. Mind you, Socrates, rhetoric has to be used like every other skilled combat. Because one ought not to make use of another combat skill against all people either, just on account of the fact that one has learned boxing or no-holds-barred wrestling or fighting in armor so well as to be overpowering to friends and enemies alike—one doesn't have to go around hitting and killing one's friends just for that reason. By Zeus, suppose somebody who's gone regularly to a wrestling school, has his body in good shape, and has become a skilled boxer, should then hit his father and mother, or any of his other relations or friends; that wouldn't be any reason why one should hate the trainers or those who teach people to fight in armor, or should throw them out of the cities. They passed on the skills to be used in a just manner against enemies and people who do injustice, by those who are defending themselves, not starting anything, and those who pervert their strength and their art aren't using them rightly. Their teachers aren't the ones who are corrupt, and the art is not to blame and is not corrupt on that account; by my thinking, it's the ones who don't use it rightly. Now the same argument also applies to rhetoric, because the rhetorician is in fact capable of speaking against everyone and about everything in such a way as to be more persuasive among the multitudes about in a word, whatever he wants. But there's not one bit more reason on that account why he has to steal the doctors' reputation—just because he has the power to do that—or the reputation of any other workman; he has to use his rhetoric justly too, the same as a combat skill. By my thinking, if somebody who's become rhetorically skilled should then do injustice with this power and art, it's not right to hate the teacher and throw him out of the cities. He passed it on for use in a just manner; the other person is using it the opposite way. The just thing is to hate the person who doesn't use it rightly, and to exile him or put him to death, but not his teacher.

C *Socrates*: I imagine that you're experienced too, Gorgias, with lots of speeches, and that you've noticed this fact about them, that people are not easily able to delineate what they're trying to converse with one another about, and to learn and to teach themselves, and settle their interchanges in that way, but if they disagree about something and one claims the other isn't speaking rightly or isn't speaking clearly, they get angry and imagine the person is speaking out of malice against themselves, from a desire to come out on top, rather than inquiring after the thing that's in front of them in their speech. Some of them end up breaking things off in the ugliest way, with name-calling, and after saying and hearing the sort of things that make even the other people present sorry on their own behalf that they deigned to be an audience to such persons. Now what's my point in saying these things? It's because you seem to me now to

458A

be saying things that don't entirely follow from or harmonize with the things you were saying at first about rhetoric. So I'm afraid to refute you, in case you might get the idea that I'm speaking not from a desire to get on top of the matter at hand by making it clear but to come out on top of you. So if you're the same sort of person I am, I'd be glad to go on questioning you, but if not I'd let it go. And what sort of person am I? One who's glad to be refuted if I say anything that's not true, and glad to do the refuting if anyone says anything that's not true, and no less glad to be refuted than to do the refuting. Because I consider that a greater good, insofar as it's a greater good to be set free oneself from the greatest evil than to set someone else free, since I can imagine no evil as being so great for a human being as a false opinion about precisely those things that our speech is now about. So if you too claim to be that sort of person, let's have a conversation, but if it seems we need to let it go, let's tell it goodbye right now, and call off our speech.

**B** *Gorgias*: I do indeed claim that I myself am the sort of person you indicate, Socrates; maybe we should give some thought to the preference of those present, though. Because I tell you, before you two even got here, I gave those present a display of many things for a long time, and now we'll be drawing things out too far if we have a conversation. It's only right to consider their preference too, so we don't detain any of them who want to do something else.

*Chaerephon*: Well, Gorgias and Socrates, you yourselves hear the racket these men are making, because they want to hear anything you might say. And for my own part, far be it from me to be so busy that doing *anything* else becomes more important than speeches of this sort spoken in this way, for me to pass them up.

**D** *Callicles*: By the gods, Chaerephon, I too have been present at many speeches before now, and I don't know when I've ever enjoyed myself so much as right now. So for me, even if you want to go on with the conversation all day long, you'll be doing me a favor.

*Socrates*: Well, Callicles, nothing on my side prevents it, so long as Gorgias is willing.

*Gorgias*: It would be a shameful<sup>7</sup> thing indeed after that, Socrates, for me not to be willing, when I myself promised that anyone could ask whatever he wants. So if that seems good to these people here, go on with the conversation and ask whatever you want.

**E** *Socrates*: Listen, then, Gorgias, to what I'm surprised at in the things said by you. Because it may well be that you're speaking rightly and I just don't get it rightly. You claim you're able to make someone a rhetorician if he wants to learn from you?

*Gorgias*: Yes.

<sup>7</sup> The superlative of this same word (*aischron*) was translated "ugliest" just above (457D). One might almost translate it the same way here: "It would be ugly of me indeed..."

459A

*Socrates*: So as to be persuasive in a crowd about all subjects, not teaching but persuading?

*Gorgias*: Quite so.

*Socrates*: You were surely saying just now that the rhetorician will be more persuasive about what's healthy than the doctor.

*Gorgias*: I was saying he would be—in a crowd, anyway.

*Socrates*: And the "in a crowd" amounts to this: among the ignorant? Since presumably he won't be more persuasive than the doctor among those who have knowledge.

*Gorgias*: You're speaking the truth.

*Socrates*: So if he'll be more persuasive than the doctor, he becomes more persuasive than the one who has knowledge?

*Gorgias*: Quite.

*Socrates*: Even though he's not a doctor, right?

*Gorgias*: Yes.

*Socrates*: But presumably someone who's not a doctor is lacking in knowledge of the things the doctor is knowledgeable about.

*Gorgias*: Clearly.

*Socrates*: Therefore, every time the rhetorician is more persuasive than the doctor, the one without knowledge will be more persuasive among people without knowledge. Is that what follows, or something else?

*Gorgias*: In this case, anyway, that does follow.

*Socrates*: But the rhetorician is in the same condition with respect to all the other arts too, and so is rhetoric. There's no need at all for it to know how things stand with the subjects themselves; it just needs to have discovered some contrivance of persuasion to make it appear to those who don't know that it knows more than those who do know.

*Gorgias*: Well doesn't that make it a lot easier, Socrates, for someone who hasn't learned the rest of the arts but just this one to be no worse off than the artisans?

*Socrates*: Whether the rhetorician is worse off or not worse off than the others for being in that condition, we'll look into shortly, if it has any bearing on our speech, but for now let's examine this first: is the rhetorician in exactly the same condition with respect to the just and the unjust, the shameful and the beautiful, the good and the bad, as he is with respect to the healthy and the other matters belonging to the other arts, that he doesn't know them, what's good or what's bad, what's beautiful or what's shameful or just or unjust, but contrives persuasion about them so that without knowing he seems, among those who don't know, to know more than the one who does know? Or is it a necessity to know them, and does the person who's going to learn rhetoric from you have to arrive knowing these things already? And if the one who arrives doesn't know them, are you, as the teacher of rhetoric, going to teach him

E

D

C

B



nothing about these things—because it's not your job—and are you going to make him seem among the masses to know such things when he doesn't know them, and seem to be good when he isn't? Or will you be totally unable to teach him rhetoric, if he doesn't already know the truth about these things? How does it go with things like that, Gorgias? And in front of Zeus, make the revelation you were just now saying you would, and tell us what in the world the power of rhetoric is.

*Gorgias:* Well, I suppose, Socrates, if he doesn't happen to know these things, he'll learn them too from me.

*Socrates:* Hold it right there, because you're putting it beautifully. If you make someone a rhetorician, it's a necessity for him to know the things that are just and unjust, either beforehand, or afterward by learning them from you.

**B** *Gorgias:* Quite so.

*Socrates:* What about this? Someone who's learned matters of carpentry is a carpenter, is he not?

*Gorgias:* Yes.

*Socrates:* And someone who's learned matters of music is a musician?

*Gorgias:* Yes.

*Socrates:* And someone who's learned matters of doctoring is a doctor, and so on for the rest? According to our same speech, each one who's learned each thing is the sort of person his knowledge turns him into?

*Gorgias:* Quite so.

*Socrates:* So according to our same speech, it's also the case that someone who's learned matters of justice is just?

*Gorgias:* Totally so, I presume.

*Socrates:* And presumably the just person does just things.

*Gorgias:* Yes.

**C** *Socrates:* Then it's a necessity that the rhetorician is just, and that a just person wants to do just things?

*Gorgias:* So it appears.

*Socrates:* Therefore the just person will never want to do injustice.

*Gorgias:* Necessarily.

*Socrates:* And from our speech it's a necessity that the rhetorician is just?

*Gorgias:* Yes.

*Socrates:* Therefore the rhetorician will never want to do injustice.

*Gorgias:* It appears not, anyway.

**D** *Socrates:* Well do you remember saying a little while ago that one ought not to lay the blame on the trainers, or throw them out of the cities, if a boxer uses his boxing skill and commits injustice, and so in the same way if a rhetorician uses his rhetorical skill unjustly one ought not to lay the blame on the person who taught him or exile

him from the city, but the person who's doing the injustice and isn't using his rhetoric rightly? Were those things said or not?

*Gorgias:* They were said.

**E** *Socrates:* But now it's shown that this same person, the rhetorician, never does injustice, isn't that so?

*Gorgias:* So it appears.

*Socrates:* And in the first speeches that were made, Gorgias, it was said that rhetoric would be about speeches not on the even and the odd but on the just and the unjust, is that right?

*Gorgias:* Yes.

*Socrates:* So in view of that, when you said those things then, I assumed that rhetoric, which always makes speeches about justice, could never be an unjust thing. But since you were saying a little later that the rhetorician might also use his rhetoric unjustly, I got so surprised, thinking the things that had been said weren't in harmony, that I made those statements to the effect that if you would count it a gain to be refuted, the way I would, it would be worthwhile to have a conversation, but if not, to tell it goodbye. And now further along, when we've examined it, you see for yourself that we agree once again that the rhetorician is incapable of using his rhetoric unjustly or of being willing to do injustice. What in the world is going on with these things, Gorgias—by the dog!<sup>8</sup>—is something it will take no small communal effort to look into adequately from all angles.

**B** *Polus:* What gives, Socrates? Do you really think about rhetoric the way you're now talking about it? Or do you imagine—because Gorgias was ashamed not to grant you that the rhetorically skilled man knows the things that are just and beautiful and good, or if someone came not knowing them on his own, he'd teach him himself, and then from this concession maybe some contradiction ended up in his speeches, just what you love, when you yourself were leading him on with such questions!—well who do you imagine would deny either that he knew what's just or that he'd teach it to others? But it's terribly uncouth to draw the talk into such matters.

**C** *Socrates:* Polus, you most beautifully-mannered gentleman, surely it is with good reason that we get ourselves companions and sons, so when we ourselves have gotten too old and go off the straight and narrow, you youngsters standing by can straighten our lives out again in our deeds and in our speeches as well. And now if in any respect Gorgias and I have gone out of bounds in our speeches, you stand by and do set us straight—it's the just thing for you to

**D**

<sup>8</sup> This was an oath frequently used by Socrates in Plato's dialogues, but rarely found elsewhere. At 482B below, he reveals that the dog in question is Anubis, an Egyptian god corresponding to the Greek god Hermes. Eva Brann (*The Music of the Republic*, Paul Dry Press, 2004, pp. 118–119) argues that it is particularly the role of Hermes as guide of Heracles that the oath invokes, for the truly Herculean labor of self-examination.

do—and on your say-so, I'm willing take back whatever you want from among the things that have been agreed, if any of them seem to you not beautiful things to have agreed to, as long as you'll guard against just one thing for me.

*Polus:* What do you mean by that?

*Socrates:* That you keep a limit, Polus, on that lengthy speaking that you tried to use at first.

*Polus:* What? Won't I have the right to say as much as I want?

*Socrates:* You'd certainly be suffering something dreadful, most excellent fellow, when you've come to Athens, where there's the greatest right to speak in Greece, if you alone were then to fail to get that here. But just put it a different way: if you're speaking at length and aren't willing to answer what you're asked, wouldn't I be suffering something dreadful on my side if I'm not going to have the right to go away and not listen to you? But if anything said in our speech troubles you, and you want to straighten it out, then speak the way I did just now, putting it a different way that seems good to you, and by asking and answering questions in your turn the way Gorgias and I did, refute and be refuted. Because presumably you claim to know the same things Gorgias does, isn't that right?

*Polus:* I do.

*Socrates:* And do you also urge people on each occasion to ask you whatever anyone wants, claiming to know how to answer?

*Polus:* Very much so.

*Socrates:* Now, then, do whichever of these two things you want: ask or answer.

*Polus:* I'll do just that. Answer me, Socrates: what do you claim rhetoric is, since Gorgias seems to you to have no clue about it?

*Socrates:* Are you asking me what sort of art I claim it is?

*Polus:* I am.

*Socrates:* None at all, it seems to me, Polus, to tell you the truth.

*Polus:* Then what does rhetoric seem to you to be?

*Socrates:* A thing that you claim, in the book I was reading recently, makes art.

*Polus:* What's that you're talking about?

*Socrates:* A certain kind of experience, I'd say.

*Polus:* So rhetoric seems to you to be experience?

*Socrates:* It does to me, unless you say it's something else.

*Polus:* Experience at what?

*Socrates:* At bringing about a certain gratification and pleasure.

*Polus:* So rhetoric seems to you to be a beautiful thing, then, since it's able to gratify people?

*Socrates:* What's this, Polus? Have you already learned from me what I claim it is, so you can ask the question that follows that, about whether it doesn't seem to me to be beautiful?

*Polus:* Well haven't I found out that you claim it's a certain kind of experience?

*Socrates:* Then since you have a high regard for gratifying, would you like to gratify me in a small way?

*Polus:* I would.

*Socrates:* Ask me now about the cooking of tasty food,<sup>9</sup> what sort of art that seems to me to be.

*Polus:* I ask you, then: what sort of art is cooking tasty food?

*Socrates:* None at all, Polus. Say "But what is it?"

*Polus:* I say it.

*Socrates:* A certain kind of experience. Say "At what?"

*Polus:* I say it.

*Socrates:* At bringing about gratification and pleasure, Polus.

*Polus:* So cooking tasty food is the same thing as rhetoric?

*Socrates:* Not at all, just a part of the same pursuit.

*Polus:* What's that you're speaking of?

*Socrates:* Telling the truth might be too uncouth: for Gorgias' sake, I'm reluctant to say it, in case he imagines I'm making fun of his pursuit. But I don't really know whether this is the rhetoric Gorgias pursues—from our speech just now nothing became clear to us about what in the world he thinks it is—but what I call rhetoric is part of a certain matter that's not one of the beautiful things.

*Gorgias:* Part of what, Socrates? Speak; don't be ashamed on my account.

*Socrates:* Well it seems to me, Gorgias, that it's not an artful pursuit at all, but belongs to a soul that's good at guessing, brave, and clever by nature at dealing with people. The crux of it I call pandering. It seems to me that there are many other parts of this pursuit as well, and that one of them is cooking tasty food, which seems to be an art, but, the way my speech has it, isn't art but a matter of experience and repetition. I call rhetoric a part of this too, as well as cosmetology and sophistry, these four parts to deal with four matters. Now if Polus wants to learn something, let him learn it, because he hasn't learned yet what kind of part of pandering I claim rhetoric is, but without noticing that I haven't answered that yet, he goes on to ask whether I consider it a beautiful thing. But I'm not going to answer him whether I consider rhetoric to be a beautiful thing or a shameful one before I first answer what it is. That wouldn't be a just thing, Polus. If you do want to learn it though, ask what kind of part of pandering I claim rhetoric is.

*Polus:* I'm asking: answer what kind of part it is.

<sup>9</sup> The Greek word means the preparation of *opsa*, all the things other than bread that people eat. Some of the older British translations settled on translating the word as "cooking," for its belittling tone, or chose "pastry cooking," to draw upon that especially British form of passion for empty calories.

D *Socrates*: Now would you understand it when I've answered? By my speech, rhetoric is a simulation of a part of politics.

*Polus*: What about it, then? Are you saying it's beautiful or shameful?

*Socrates*: Shameful, I call it—I do call bad things shameful—since I'm obliged to answer you as if you already knew what I'm talking about.

*Gorgias*: By Zeus, Socrates! I don't understand what you're talking about myself.

*Socrates*: That's likely, Gorgias, because I'm not saying anything clear yet, but this Polus is a headstrong young thing.

*Gorgias*: Pay no attention to him, then, and tell me how you mean that rhetoric is a simulation of a part of politics.

*Socrates*: I'll just try to put into words what rhetoric appears to me to be, and if that's not exactly what it is, Polus here will refute me. You call something a body, presumably, and something a soul?

*Gorgias*: How could it be otherwise?

*Socrates*: And do you imagine that there's a certain good condition for each of these?

*Gorgias*: I do.

*Socrates*: And what about this? Is there something that seems to be good condition but isn't? I mean this sort of thing, for example: there are many people who seem to have their bodies in good shape, whom someone other than a doctor or a gymnastic trainer could not easily detect are not in good condition.

*Gorgias*: You're telling the truth.

*Socrates*: I'm speaking of that sort of thing as being present both in a body and in a soul, which makes the body and the soul seem to be in good condition, but not be so any the more.

*Gorgias*: There are such things.

*Socrates*: Come along, then, and if I have the power, I'll display to you more clearly what I mean. Since there's a pair of matters of concern, I say there are two arts; the one applying to the soul I call politics, and while I'm not able to give you a name that way for the one applying to the body, I say that ministering to the body is one thing with two parts, gymnastic training and doctoring. In politics, there's lawmaking in place of gymnastic training, and justice corresponding to doctoring. Now each of the two pairings overlaps within itself, inasmuch as its parts are concerned with the same thing, doctoring overlapping with gymnastic training and justice with lawmaking; all the same, they differ from one another in a certain way. So there are these four, which always minister to what's best, the one pair to the body, the other to the soul; the aptitude for pandering, noticing this—not by discernment, I mean, but by guesswork—dividing itself up four ways and slipping into the guise of each of the parts, passes itself off as being that very

thing it has slipped its way into; it has no concern at all for what's best, but using what's most pleasant in each case, sets a trap for foolishness and entices it, with the result that it seems to be of the highest worth. So cooking tasty food has slipped into the guise of doctoring, and passes itself off as knowing the best foods for the body, so that, if there had to be a contest between a cook and a doctor among children, or among men as foolish as children, over which of the two has an understanding of desirable and worthless foods, the doctor or the cook, the doctor would die of starvation. So I call it pandering, and I claim that sort of thing is shameful, Polus—yes, I'm saying this to you—because it makes guesses about what's pleasant in the absence of what's best. And I say it's not art but a matter of experience, because it has no speech to give about the nature of the things it makes use of or what it uses them on, whatever they may be, and therefore it can't state the cause of any of them. I don't call any proceeding that's irrational an art. But if you want to take issue with these things, I'm willing to submit to the test of speech.

So as I say, cooking tasty food is pandering disguised as doctoring, and in this same manner, the guise of gymnastic training is worn by cosmetology, a harmful, deceitful, low-class thing unfit for free people, that tricks people by shaping, coloring, smoothing, and clothing, so as to make them wrap an extraneous beauty around themselves, to the neglect of the native kind that comes through gymnastic exercise. Now to avoid making a long speech, I'm willing to say it for you the way geometers do, since you're probably already following this, that as cosmetology is to gymnastic training, so is cooking tasty food to doctoring—or more precisely, like this: as cosmetology is to gymnastic training, so is sophistry to lawmaking, and as cooking tasty food is to doctoring, so is rhetoric to justice. However, as I say, while these things differ in this way by nature, since they're closely akin, sophists and rhetoricians get mixed together in the same place dealing with the same subjects, and they themselves have no more notion of what use they are than other people have about them. In fact, if the soul wasn't in charge of the body but the body depended on itself, and cooking tasty food and doctoring weren't overviewed and distinguished by the soul, but the body itself did the judging, evaluating the things pertaining to itself by the gratifications they gave, then, Polus my friend, the saying of Anaxagoras<sup>10</sup>—since you're experienced with these things—would be very apt: all things would be mixed up together

10 A philosopher who wrote that all material things contain all natures, and are named for whatever predominates in the mixture. He claimed that Intellect alone is unmixed, and orders all things, but according to Socrates (*Phaedo* 97B-99D), he made no use of that claim in any account of causes.

in the same place, with health-restoring and health-promoting and tasty things being indistinguishable.

E So you've heard what I claim rhetoric is, the counterpart for the soul of cooking tasty food, working the way that does on the body. Now maybe I've done something absurd, since, when I'm not letting you speak in long speeches, I've drawn out a copious speech myself. But it's something I deserve to have your forgiveness for, because you weren't understanding me when I spoke briefly, and you were unable to make any use at all of the answer that I gave you and needed a detailed explanation. So if I too have no way to make use of something you answer, then you too draw out your speech, but if I have a way, then let me make use of it; that's the just thing. And now, if you have any way to make use of this answer, make use of it.

466A Polus: So what are you claiming? Rhetoric seems to you to be pandering?

Socrates: Well, I said it's a part of pandering. Can't you remember at your age, Polus? What will you do later?

Polus: So the good rhetoricians seem to you to be regarded in their cities as disreputable panders?

B Socrates: Are you asking this as a question or stating it as the beginning of some speech?

Polus: I'm asking.

Socrates: To me, they don't seem to be regarded period.

Polus: How not regarded? Don't they have the greatest power in their cities?

Socrates: No, not if you mean that having power is a good thing for the one who has it.

Polus: That's exactly what I do mean.

Socrates: Then it seems to me the rhetoricians have the least amount of power in the city.

C Polus: What? Don't they put to death anyone they want, the same as tyrants, and seize property, and expel anyone it seems good to them from the cities.

Socrates: By the dog, Polus, I truly can't decide about any of the things you say whether you're saying them yourself and exposing your own opinion, or asking me.

Polus: Well, I'm asking you.

Socrates: Okay, my friend, in that case, are you asking me two questions at the same time?

Polus: How two?

D Socrates: Weren't you just saying something to this effect: "Don't the rhetoricians put to death anyone they want, the same as tyrants, and seize property, and force anyone it seems good to them out of the cities?"

Polus: I was.

Socrates: Then I say to you that these are two questions, and I'll give you an answer for both. Because I claim, Polus, that both the rhetoricians and the tyrants have the smallest amount of power in their cities, as I was saying just now, since they do next to nothing of what they want, although they do whatever seems to them to be best.

Polus: So isn't that having great power?

Socrates: No, not as Polus claims anyway.

Polus: I claim it's not? I claim it is.

Socrates: By the—no you don't, since you claim that having great power is a good thing for the one who has it.

Polus: I do claim that.

Socrates: So do you imagine it's a good thing if someone does these things that seem to him to be best when he doesn't have any sense? And that's what you call having great power?

Polus: Not I.

Socrates: Then will you demonstrate that rhetoricians have sense and that rhetoric is an art and not pandering by refuting me? But if you leave me unrefuted, the rhetoricians who do what seems good to them in their cities, and the tyrants as well, will have attained nothing good by that. But power is a good thing, as you claim, while you also agree that doing what seems good without sense is a bad thing—don't you?

Polus: I do.

Socrates: So how can rhetoricians or tyrants have great power in their cities unless Socrates has been refuted by Polus and they do what they want?

Polus: This man—

Socrates: I claim they don't do what they want; just refute me.

Polus: Weren't you just agreeing that they do what seems to them to be best?

Socrates: I agree to it now too.

Polus: Then don't they do what they want?

Socrates: I claim they don't.

Polus: When they do what seems good to them?

Socrates: That's what I claim.

Polus: You're making appalling and monstrous statements, Socrates. Socrates: Don't cast aspersions, drollest Polus—so that I might give you a salutation in your own style. But if you have things to ask me, display the fact that I'm mistaken, and if you don't, answer questions yourself.

Polus: I'm quite willing to answer questions, so I can know what you're talking about too.

Socrates: Then does it seem to you that human beings want that thing which they do on each occasion, or that for the sake of which they do the thing which they do? Take for example people who drink medicines they get from doctors; do they seem to you to want that

very thing which they're doing, drinking medicine and having the unpleasantness of it, or do they want that thing, being healthy, for the sake of which they're drinking it?

*Polus:* It's obvious that it's the being healthy.

*Socrates:* Then too, take the case of people who make voyages and engage in other money-making business: what they want is not that which they do on each occasion. (Who wants to go to sea and take risks and have trouble?) Instead, I imagine they want that for the sake of which they go to sea, to get rich, because it's for the sake of riches that they make the voyages.

*Polus:* Certainly.

*Socrates:* So is it any other way with everything as well? If anyone does anything for the sake of something, he wants not that thing which he does but that for the sake of which he does it?

*Polus:* Yes.

*Socrates:* Now of the things there are, is there any which is not either good or bad or in between, namely neither good nor bad?

*Polus:* That's a great necessity, Socrates.

*Socrates:* And do you say that wisdom and health and riches and other things of that sort are good, and that the opposites of these are bad?

*Polus:* I do.

*Socrates:* And do you say that things that are neither good nor bad are the ones that sometimes have a share of good, sometimes a share of bad, and sometimes of neither, such as sitting and walking and running and voyaging, and also such as stones and sticks and other things like that? Aren't these the things you mean? Or are there some other things you call neither good nor bad?

*Polus:* No, it's those.

*Socrates:* Well, do people do these in-between things for the sake of the good ones whenever they do them, or the good for the sake of the in-between?

*Polus:* Presumably the in-between for the sake of the good.

*Socrates:* Therefore it's in pursuit of the good that we walk whenever we walk, imagining it to be better, and on the other hand stand still whenever we stand still, for the sake of the same thing, the good, isn't that right?

*Polus:* Yes.

*Socrates:* Then also we put people to death, if we do put anyone to death, and exile people and seize property, imagining it's better for us to do these things than not to?

*Polus:* Certainly.

*Socrates:* Therefore those who do these things do them for the sake of the good?

*Polus:* I affirm that.

*Socrates:* And we've agreed that the things people do for the sake of something are not the things they want, but they want that for the sake of which they do them?

*Polus:* Most assuredly.

*Socrates:* Therefore we don't simply want to slaughter people or throw them out of our cities or seize their property in that sense, but if these things might be beneficial we want to do them, and when they're harmful we don't want to. Because, as you affirm, it's the good things that we want, while we don't want the ones that are neither good nor bad or the bad ones. Is that right? Do I seem to you to be telling the truth, Polus, or not? Why don't you answer?

*Polus:* It's true.

*Socrates:* Then if we're in agreement about these things, if anyone puts someone to death or exiles him from a city or seizes his property, whether he's a tyrant or a rhetorician, imagining that it's better for himself when it happens to be worse, that person is doing what seems good to him, right?

*Polus:* Yes.

*Socrates:* Well is he also doing what he wants, if these things happen to be bad? Why don't you answer?

*Polus:* He sure doesn't seem to me to be doing what he wants.

*Socrates:* So is there any way such a person can have great power in that city, if, by your own admission, having great power is something good?

*Polus:* There's not.

*Socrates:* Therefore I was telling the truth when I said that it's possible for a human being to do what seems good to him in a city without having great power and without doing what he wants.

*Polus:* Yeah, right, Socrates, as if you wouldn't accept free rein to do what seemed good to you in the city rather than not, and wouldn't be envious when you saw someone putting to death anyone that seemed good to him or seizing his property or locking him up.

*Socrates:* Justly, you mean, or unjustly?

*Polus:* Whichever way he might do it! Isn't he someone to envy either way?

*Socrates:* Watch what you say, Polus.

*Polus:* Why's that?

*Socrates:* Because one shouldn't envy those who are unenviable or miserable but pity them.

*Polus:* What? Is that the condition the people I'm talking about seem to you to be in?

*Socrates:* How could it be any other way?

*Polus:* Then whoever puts to death anyone it seems good to him, and puts him to death justly, seems to you to be miserable and pathetic?

*Socrates:* Not to me, but not enviable either.

468A

B

C

D

E

469A

**B** *Polus*: Weren't you claiming just now that he's miserable?

*Socrates*: The one who puts someone to death unjustly is, my comrade, and pathetic on top of it; the one who does so justly is not to be envied.

*Polus*: I'd suppose it's the one who's put to death unjustly—whose pathetic and miserable.

*Socrates*: Less so than the one who puts him to death, *Polus*, and less so than someone whose justly put to death.

*Polus*: How can that be, *Socrates*?

*Socrates*: In this way, that the greatest of evils is committing injustice.

*Polus*: That's the greatest? Isn't suffering injustice a greater one?

*Socrates*: That least of all.

*Polus*: So you'd rather suffer injustice than commit it?

*Socrates*: I wouldn't want to do either one, but if it were necessary either to commit injustice or suffer it, I'd choose to suffer it rather than commit it.

*Polus*: So you wouldn't accept being a tyrant?

*Socrates*: Not if you mean the same thing by being a tyrant that I do.

*Polus*: I mean the very thing I was speaking of just now, having free rein to do whatever seems good to oneself in one's city, putting to death and exiling people and doing it all as one takes the notion.

*Socrates*: You blessed fellow! I'll just describe something; you can make objections. If I were in the marketplace when it was crowded, and took a dagger from under my sleeve and said to you, "*Polus*, an amazing and tyrannical power has just come over me, so if it seems to me that any of these people you see here really ought to die this very moment, that person—whomever I see fit—will be dead; and if it seems to me that any of them should have his head split open, it will be thoroughly split open this very moment, or his cloak will be ripped to pieces if that seems good. That's how great my power in this city is." And if you were incredulous and I showed you the dagger, when you saw it you might perhaps say,

"Everybody could have great power that way, *Socrates*, since by that method any house that seemed good to you could be burned down, as well as the Athenian shipyards and warships, and the whole fleet, both public and private." But then that's not having great power, just doing what seems good to oneself, or does it seem so to you?

*Polus*: No, certainly not the way you describe it.

*Socrates*: Then can you tell me why you find fault with that sort of power?

*Polus*: I can.

*Socrates*: Why do you, exactly? Tell me.

*Polus*: Because it's inevitable that someone who acts that way will be punished.

*Socrates*: And isn't being punished a bad thing?

*Polus*: Very much so.

*Socrates*: Well then, you amazing fellow, you've come back around and now it appears to you that if it ends up working out advantageously for the person who does what seems good, it's a good thing, and that, it looks like, is having great power; but if it doesn't end up that way, it's a bad thing, and that's having scant power. But let's consider this point as well: would we do anything other than agree that sometimes it's better to do those things we were just talking about—putting people to death and forcing them into exile and seizing their property—but sometimes it's not?

*Polus*: That's certainly the case.

*Socrates*: So it looks like this is a point of agreement on both your side and mine.

*Polus*: Yes.

*Socrates*: When, then, do you claim it's better to do these things? Tell me what line you'd draw.

*Polus*: You answer that, *Socrates*.

*Socrates*: Well then, *Polus*, if it pleases you more to hear it from me, I claim that whenever someone does those things justly, it's better, and whenever he does them unjustly, it's worse.

*Polus*: Wow, it's a tough thing to refute you, *Socrates*. Even a child could come up with a refutation showing that you're not speaking the truth, couldn't he?

*Socrates*: Then I'd be most grateful to the child, and equally so to you, if you refute me and rescue me from my fatuousness. And see to it that you don't get tired of doing a favor for a man whose your friend, but refute me.

*Polus*: Well, *Socrates*, there's certainly no need to go back to ancient goings-on to refute you. Why, those things that happened just yesterday or the day before are enough to prove you wrong and to demonstrate that lots of unjust people are happy.

*Socrates*: What sorts of things are those?

*Polus*: I suppose you see Archelaus,<sup>11</sup> that son of Perdiccas, ruling over Macedonia.

*Socrates*: If not, at least I hear it.

*Polus*: Well, does he seem to you to be happy or miserable?

*Socrates*: I don't know, *Polus*; I've never been around the man.

*Polus*: What? You need to be around him to tell? You can't tell otherwise, here and now, that he's happy?

*Socrates*: I certainly can't, by Zeus.

<sup>11</sup> As *Polus* spells out in lurid detail below, Archelaus came to power by violence. He sought to legitimize his rule by inviting prominent Athenians to pay him visits. Euripides and others had gone, but *Socrates* had refused the invitation. The phrase Great King used below was the Greeks' way of referring to the supreme and absolute ruler of the vast Persian empire.

*Polus*: Obviously, Socrates, you'll claim next that you can't even tell whether the Great King is happy.

*Socrates*: And I'll be telling the truth, because I don't know how he's doing in education and justice.

*Polus*: What? That's where all happiness is?

*Socrates*: That's what I say, anyway, *Polus*, since I claim that a man or woman with the beauty of goodness<sup>2</sup> is happy, and one who's unjust and corrupt is miserable.

471A *Polus*: So on your say-so, this Archelaus is miserable?

*Socrates*: If indeed he's unjust, my friend.

- Polus*: Well how could he not be unjust? He had no right at all to the ruling position he now holds, since his mother was a slave of Perdiccas's brother Alcetas; so according to what's just he was Alcetas's slave, and if he wanted to do the just thing he'd be slaving away for Alcetas, and be happy by your speech. And how amazingly miserable he's become now, since he's committed the greatest injustices. First, he sent for this very master and uncle of his, as if to give him back the ruling position Perdiccas had robbed him of, and entertained him and his son, Alexander—his own cousin, and about his own age—as guests, and when he'd gotten them drunk, he bundled them into a cart, hauled them away after dark, slit both their throats, and hid their bodies. He failed to notice that committing these injustices had made him utterly miserable, and they caused him no regret; and a little later he had no wish to become happy by bringing up his brother, Perdiccas's legitimate son, a boy of about seven to whom the ruling position would have come as a matter of justice, and restoring the rule to him, but flung him into a well and drowned him, and told the boy's mother Cleopatra that he fell in and died chasing after a goose. So now assuredly, inasmuch as he's committed the greatest injustices of anyone in Macedonia, he's the most miserable person of all the Macedonians, not the happiest, and maybe among the Athenians there's someone, you to start with, who'd prefer to become any other Macedonian at all rather than Archelaus.
- D *Socrates*: Right at the beginning of our speeches, *Polus*, I commended you, saying that it seems to me you've been well educated for rhetoric, but that you haven't paid attention to conversing. And now this is the speech, is it, by which a child could refute me? You imagine that I've now been refuted by you by this speech, for declaring that the person who commits injustice is not happy? On what basis, my good man? Why, I don't agree with a single one of the things you're claiming.

12 *Kalos kagathos*, literally "beautiful and good," was a standard phrase used by the Athenian aristocracy to express its opinion of itself. Socrates transforms that usage here and in other dialogues by taking the meaning of the words seriously, and by taking the phrase as applying equally to women.

*Polus*: You don't want to, since the way it seems to you is the way I say it is.

- Socrates*: You blessed fellow, you're trying to refute me rhetorically, doing what people in the lawcourts consider refuting. There too, those on one side have the impression they're refuting those on the other when they bring up lots of well-regarded witnesses in favor of the speeches they're making, while the opposing speaker brings up maybe one or none. But that sort of refutation is worth nothing for getting at truth; at times someone can even be destroyed by large numbers of false witnesses who seem to have something to them. Now too, for the things you're talking about, little short of everybody, Athenians and foreigners alike, will join you in saying the same things, if you want to bring up witnesses against me to say I'm not telling the truth. Nicias the son of Niceratus, and his brothers along with him, will be witnesses on your side, if you want, they whose tripods are standing in a row at the temple of Dionysus, and if you want, so will Aristocrates the son of Scellias, who dedicated that beautiful offering at the temple of Pythian Apollo, or, if you want, there's the whole household of Pericles or any other family you want to pick from those around here.<sup>13</sup> But I, who happen to be one person, do not agree with you. You can't force me to, although by bringing in many false witnesses against me you're trying to oust me from my birthright, which is the truth. But if I don't bring you yourself forward as one witness to agree with the things I'm saying, I consider myself as having accomplished nothing worth speaking of in regard to the things our speech may be about. And I consider that you haven't either unless I, only one though I am, am a witness for your side, and you let go of all these others. So there's that one style of refutation, as you and many others imagine, and there's another, which I for my part envision. Now that we've set them alongside one another, let's examine whether there's any difference between them. Because the things about which we're in dispute happen to be no small matters at all, but just about the ones it's most beautiful to have knowledge about, and most shameful to lack it, since what they boil down to is recognizing or being ignorant of who's happy and who's not. First of all, the immediate issue, the one with which our speech is now concerned, is that you regard a man who commits injustice and is unjust as being able to be blessedly happy, if indeed you regard
- D

13 The examples Socrates chooses reflect the diversity of Athenian political styles. Nicias was a traditionalist, Aristocrates an oligarch, and Pericles a leader of the democracy. Even the two temples mentioned point to the diversity of Athenian styles of worship, with the Apollonian and Dionysian observances resembling something like a high-church/low-church distinction, though both sorts were incorporated into the common public celebrations each year. The offerings dedicated at temples were a way of showing off wealth and laying claim to prestige. *Polus* can look in any direction, Socrates grants, and find the "opinion leaders" of Athens on his side.

Archelaus as being unjust but happy. There's no other way for us to think you consider the matter, is there?

Polus: None at all.

Socrates: But I claim that's impossible. That's one thing we're in dispute about, then. Okay: say the unjust person will be happy. Will that still be the case if he gets his just due and punishment?

Polus: Then least of all, that way he'd be the most miserable.

Socrates: So therefore, by your speech, if someone who commits injustice doesn't get his just due he *will* be happy.

Polus: So I claim.

Socrates: Well, by my opinion, Polus, someone who commits injustice and is unjust is thoroughly miserable, but still more miserable if he doesn't pay a just penalty and get punishment when he commits injustice, and less miserable if he pays a just penalty and gets his just due from gods and humans.

473A Polus: Well, Socrates, the things you're trying to say are bizarre anyway.

Socrates: And I'll also try to make you say the same things with me, my comrade—because I consider you a friend. Now, then, these are the things we differ about; you examine them too. I believe I said in the earlier discussion that committing injustice is worse than suffering it.

Polus: You certainly did.

Socrates: And you said suffering it is.

Polus: Yes.

Socrates: And I claimed that those who commit injustice are miserable, and got refuted by you.

Polus: By Zeus, yes!

Socrates: So you imagine, Polus,

Polus: Imagining what's true.

Socrates: Maybe. But you said in turn that those who commit injustice are happy, if they don't pay a just penalty.

Polus: Very much so.

Socrates: While I'm claiming they're the most miserable, and the ones who pay a just penalty are less so. Do you want to refute that too?

Polus: Oh, yeah, Socrates; that's even harder to refute than the other thing.

Socrates: Not only that, Polus; it's impossible. The truth never gets refuted.

C Polus: What are you talking about? If a fellow gets caught committing an injustice, plotting a tyranny, say, and after he's caught is broken on the rack and castrated and has his eyes burned out, and after suffering many other severe mutilations of all sorts himself and watching his children and wife suffer them, he's at last nailed up on stakes or covered in tar and set on fire, that guy's going to be

happier than if he got away with it and was set up as tyrant and lived out his life ruling over the city, doing whatever he wanted, being envied and considered happy by his fellow citizens and everyone else, foreigners and all? That's what you're saying is impossible to refute?

Socrates: This time, Polus you high-class fellow, instead of refuting me you're scaring me with bogeymen; last time you were citing witnesses. But leaving that aside, help me remember a little something. "If he were committing an injustice, plotting a tyranny, say," were you saying that?

Polus: I was.

Socrates: Then neither one of them is ever going to be any happier than the other one, neither the one who achieved the tyranny by committing injustice nor the one who paid the just penalty—out of a pair of miserable people, there couldn't be a *happier* one—but the one who gets away with it and becomes a tyrant will certainly be more miserable. What's this, Polus? You're laughing? Is this still another form of refutation, when someone says something, to laugh it down without refuting it?

Polus: Wouldn't you assume you've been refuted, Socrates, when you say things of a sort that no human being would lay claim to? Just ask any of the people here.

Socrates: I'm not a politician,<sup>14</sup> Polus. Last year, in fact, when I was chosen by lot to be on the council, and, since my tribe held the presidency, I had to put a question up for votes, I came in for some laughter—I didn't know how to put it to a vote. So don't urge me now either to take the votes of the people around us, but if you have no better refutation than that, then as I was just now saying, give it up for me to take a turn, and test out a refutation of the sort I imagine it ought to be. Because as I say, I know how to bring forward a witness who's one person, the very one with whom the speech with me is taking place, but I let the many witnesses go, and I know how to take the vote of one person, but with many I don't even have a conversation. See, then, whether you'll be willing in your turn to give a chance for a refutation by answering my questions. Because I imagine that you and I and the rest of humankind believe it's worse to commit injustice than to suffer it, and worse not to pay one's just due than to pay it.

Polus: And I say neither I nor any other human being believes that. You'd choose then to suffer injustice rather than commit it?

Socrates: And so would you and everybody else.

<sup>14</sup> This assertion should be compared with one Socrates makes below, in 521D. The allusion he goes on to make here is a classic example of Socrates' self-effacing irony. As he describes more fully in the *Apology* (32B–C), Socrates had refused, at risk of imprisonment or even death, to permit a vote on an illegal motion to put a group of generals on trial *en masse* for not bringing back the bodies of the dead after a naval battle.



*Polus*: Not by a long shot; neither I nor you nor anyone else would.

*Socrates*: So you'll answer?

*Polus*: Certainly, because I can't wait to find out what in the world you're going to say.

*Socrates*: Well, so you can find out, tell me, as though I were asking it to start with: which seems worse to you, *Polus*, committing injustice or suffering it?

*Polus*: To me, suffering it.

κλεισθῶ

*Socrates*: But what about this? Which seems uglier,<sup>15</sup> committing injustice or suffering it?

*Polus*: Committing it.

*Socrates*: So it's also worse, if it's an uglier thing?

*Polus*: Not in the least.

*Socrates*: I understand. Very likely you believe beautiful and good aren't the same thing, and bad and ugly aren't either.

*Polus*: Certainly not.

*Socrates*: But what about this? With all beautiful things, such as bodies, colors, shapes, sounds, pursuits, is there nothing you're looking to when you call them beautiful in each case? For instance, in the case of beautiful bodies first, don't you say that they're beautiful either as a result of the fitness each has for some end it's fitted to, or as a result of some pleasure, if upon being beheld they cause the beholders to feel delight? Do you have anything to say about beautiful bodies that goes beyond these things?

*Polus*: I don't.

*Socrates*: So is it that way with everything else too, and do you refer to shapes and colors as beautiful either on account of some pleasure or on account of contributing to an end or both?

*Polus*: I do.

*Socrates*: And is it the same way with sounds and with everything that has to do with music?

*Polus*: Yes.

*Socrates*: And the things that have to do with laws and pursuits, beautiful ones that is, presumably don't go beyond these bounds, of being beneficial<sup>16</sup> or pleasant or both.

*Polus*: It doesn't seem so to me.

*Socrates*: And is the beauty of learnable things of the same sort?

475A

15 See the footnote to 458D. The ugly scene described in 457D, behavior that makes people cringe just to watch it, that occasions the first use of any form of the word *aischron* in the dialogue, is perhaps a suitable model to display the kind of ugliness of actions that becomes synonymous with shameful. It is important to judge whether *Polus*'s answer to this question expresses an honest opinion. Callicles will claim later (482E) that *Polus* is experiencing shame about telling the truth in public.

16 *Socrates* has gotten to this criterion of the beautiful in three steps, from (visible) fitness to an end (*chreia*), to the quality of contributing to an end (*ophelia*), to being beneficial (*ophelimos*).

*Polus*: Quite so, and now at any rate you're laying things out beautifully, *Socrates*, in defining the beautiful by pleasure and good.

*Socrates*: And the ugly by the opposites, pain and bad?

*Polus*: Of necessity.

*Socrates*: Therefore, whenever one of a pair of beautiful things is the more beautiful, it's more beautiful by means of one or the other, or both, of this pair, by means of either pleasure or contributing to an end, or both.

*Polus*: Certainly.

*Socrates*: And whenever one of a pair of ugly things is the more ugly, it will be uglier by exceeding in either pain or badness—isn't that a necessity?

*Polus*: Yes.

*Socrates*: Now then, what was being said just now about committing injustice and suffering it? Didn't you say that suffering injustice is worse but committing it is uglier?

*Polus*: That's what I said.

*Socrates*: So if committing injustice is uglier than suffering it, then either it's more painful, and it would be uglier by exceeding in pain, or it's uglier by exceeding in badness, or in both? Isn't that too a necessity?

*Polus*: How could it not be?

*Socrates*: First, then, let's consider this: does committing injustice exceed suffering it in pain, and do people who commit injustice suffer more pain than those who suffer injustice?

*Polus*: That's not the way it is at all, *Socrates*.

*Socrates*: Therefore it doesn't exceed it in pain, at least.

*Polus*: It sure doesn't.

*Socrates*: So if it doesn't exceed it in pain, it couldn't exceed it in both ways either.

*Polus*: It doesn't appear that it could.

*Socrates*: So what's left is that it exceeds it in the other way.

*Polus*: Yes.

*Socrates*: In badness.

*Polus*: It looks that way.

*Socrates*: So by exceeding it in badness, committing injustice would be worse than suffering it.

*Polus*: Evidently it would.

*Socrates*: And isn't it the case that it's agreed by most human beings,<sup>17</sup> as it was agreed by you with us a while ago, that committing injustice is an uglier thing than suffering it?

*Polus*: Yes.

*Socrates*: And it's come to light that it's worse.

*Polus*: It looks that way.

17 Note that it was *Polus* who earlier (471C-D, 473E) set himself up as an authority on what most people believe.

D

C

B

E

*Socrates:* Well, would you prefer what's worse and uglier when it's more so rather than less? Don't shy away from answering. Polus, you won't get hurt. Just answer with some class by submitting to the speech as you would to doctor, and either concur in what I'm asking or deny it.

*Polus:* I certainly wouldn't prefer it, Socrates.

*Socrates:* Would any other human being?

*Polus:* It doesn't seem so to me from this speech anyway.

*Socrates:* Therefore what I was saying is true, that neither I nor you nor any other human being would prefer to commit injustice rather than suffer it, precisely because it's a worse thing.

476A

*Socrates:* So you see, Polus, when refutation and refutation are laid out side by side, there's no resemblance at all, but in your case everybody else agrees except me, and in my case it's good enough that you alone, though you're only one person, are in agreement and stand as a witness, and I put the question up to your vote alone and dismiss everyone else. So let that be the way that point goes. Next let's examine the second thing we were in dispute about, whether it's the greatest of evils for someone who commits injustice to pay a just penalty, as you imagined, or a greater one for him not to pay it, as I imagined instead. Let's consider it this way: do you call paying a just penalty when one commits injustice the same thing as being justly disciplined?

B

*Polus:* I do.

*Socrates:* Well, can you say that it's not the case that all just things are beautiful to the extent that they're just? Tell me after you've thought it over carefully.

*Polus:* No, Socrates, it seems to me they are.

*Socrates:* Then consider this too: if anyone does anything, is it necessary for there also to be something it's done to by the one who's doing it?

*Polus:* It seems that way to me.

*Socrates:* And is it also necessary for what the doer does to the thing it's done to be of such a sort as the doer does? I mean something like this: if someone hits, it's necessary for something to be hit?

*Polus:* It's necessary.

*Socrates:* And if the one doing the hitting hits hard or quickly, that's also the way the thing that's hit is hit?

*Polus:* Yes.

*Socrates:* Therefore what happens to the thing that's hit is of the sort that the one doing the hitting makes it?

*Polus:* Certainly.

*Socrates:* And if anyone does any burning, it's necessary for something to be burned?

*Polus:* How could it be otherwise?

GOR

*Socrates:* And if he burns in a severe or painful way, what's burned burned the way the one doing the burning burns it?

*Polus:* Certainly.

*Socrates:* And if someone cuts, the same speech applies? Because something is cut.

*Polus:* Yes.

*Socrates:* And if he makes the cut big or deep or painful, the thing cut is cut with the sort of cut by which the cutter cuts it?

*Polus:* So it appears.

*Socrates:* So putting it together, see if you agree with what was said just before, that for everything, the way the doer does something is the way it's done to the thing it's done to.

*Polus:* I do agree.

*Socrates:* Now with these things agreed, is paying a just penalty having something done to one, or doing something?

*Polus:* By necessity, Socrates, it's having something.

*Socrates:* And done by someone who does it?

*Polus:* How could it not be? By the one doing the disciplining, of course.

*Socrates:* And someone who disciplines rightly disciplines justly?

*Polus:* Yes.

*Socrates:* Doing things that are just, or not?

*Polus:* Things that are just.

*Socrates:* So the one who's disciplined by paying a just penalty has just things done to him?

*Polus:* So it appears.

*Socrates:* And it's agreed, presumably, that just things are beautiful?

*Polus:* Certainly.

*Socrates:* Therefore, one of these people does beautiful things, and the other, the one who's disciplined, has beautiful things done to him.

*Polus:* Yes.

*Socrates:* And if they're beautiful things, they're good things? Because they're either pleasant or beneficial.

*Polus:* That's a necessity.

*Socrates:* Therefore, someone who pays a just penalty has good things done to him?

*Polus:* It looks like it.

*Socrates:* Therefore he's benefited?

*Polus:* Yes.

*Socrates:* By contributing to the end I suspect it does—that he becomes better in his soul if he's justly disciplined?

*Polus:* Likely so.

*Socrates:* Therefore someone who pays a just penalty is set free from badness of soul?

*Polus:* Yes.

**E** *Socrates:* Well, would you prefer what's worse and uglier when it's more so rather than less? Don't shy away from answering, Polus; you won't get hurt. Just answer with some class by submitting to the speech as you would to doctor, and either concur in what I'm asking or deny it.

*Polus:* I certainly wouldn't prefer it, Socrates.

*Socrates:* Would any other human being?

*Polus:* It doesn't seem so to me from this speech anyway.

*Socrates:* Therefore what I was saying is true, that neither I nor you nor any other human being would prefer to commit injustice rather than suffer it, precisely because it's a worse thing.

*Polus:* So it appears.

**476A**  
*Socrates:* So you see, Polus, when refutation and refutation are laid out side by side, there's no resemblance at all, but in your case everybody else agrees except me, and in my case it's good enough that you alone, though you're only one person, are in agreement and stand as a witness, and I put the question up to your vote alone and dismiss everyone else. So let that be the way that point goes. Next let's examine the second thing we were in dispute about, whether it's the greatest of evils for someone who commits injustice to pay a just penalty, as you imagined, or a greater one for him not to pay it, as I imagined instead. Let's consider it this way: do you call paying a just penalty when one commits injustice the same thing as being justly disciplined?

*Polus:* I do.

**B**  
*Socrates:* Well, can you say that it's not the case that all just things are beautiful to the extent that they're just? Tell me after you've thought it over carefully.

*Polus:* No, Socrates, it seems to me they are.

*Socrates:* Then consider this too: if anyone does anything, is it necessary for there also to be something it's done to by the one who's doing it?

*Polus:* It seems that way to me.

*Socrates:* And is it also necessary for what the doer does to the thing it's done to to be of such a sort as the doer does? I mean something like this: if someone hits, it's necessary for something to be hit?

*Polus:* It's necessary.

**C**  
*Socrates:* And if the one doing the hitting hits hard or quickly, that's also the way the thing that's hit is hit?

*Polus:* Yes.

*Socrates:* Therefore what happens to the thing that's hit is of the sort that the one doing the hitting makes it?

*Polus:* Certainly.

*Socrates:* And if anyone does any burning, it's necessary for something to be burned?

*Polus:* How could it be otherwise?

*Socrates:* And if he burns in a severe or painful way, what's burned is burned the way the one doing the burning burns it?

*Polus:* Certainly.

*Socrates:* And if someone cuts, the same speech applies? Because something is cut.

*Polus:* Yes.

*Socrates:* And if he makes the cut big or deep or painful, the thing cut is cut with the sort of cut by which the cutter cuts it?

*Polus:* So it appears.

*Socrates:* So putting it together, see if you agree with what was said just before, that for everything, the way the doer does something is the way it's done to the thing it's done to.

*Polus:* I do agree.

*Socrates:* Now with these things agreed, is paying a just penalty having something done to one, or doing something?

*Polus:* By necessity, Socrates, it's having something done to one.

*Socrates:* And done by someone who does it?

*Polus:* How could it not be? By the one doing the disciplining, of course.

*Socrates:* And someone who disciplines rightly disciplines justly?

*Polus:* Yes.

*Socrates:* Doing things that are just, or not?

*Polus:* Things that are just.

*Socrates:* So the one who's disciplined by paying a just penalty has just things done to him?

*Polus:* So it appears.

*Socrates:* And it's agreed, presumably, that just things are beautiful?

*Polus:* Certainly.

*Socrates:* Therefore, one of these people does beautiful things, and the other, the one who's disciplined, has beautiful things done to him.

*Polus:* Yes.

*Socrates:* And if they're beautiful things, they're good things? Because they're either pleasant or beneficial.

*Polus:* That's a necessity.

*Socrates:* Therefore, someone who pays a just penalty has good things done to him?

*Polus:* It looks like it.

*Socrates:* Therefore he's benefited?

*Polus:* Yes.

*Socrates:* By contributing to the end I suspect it does—that he becomes better in his soul if he's justly disciplined?

*Polus:* Likely so.

*Socrates:* Therefore someone who pays a just penalty is set free from badness of soul?

*Polus:* Yes.

**B** *Socrates:* And thus set free from the greatest evil? Look at it this way: do you observe any sort of badness in the monetary possessions a human being is equipped with other than poverty?

*Polus:* No, only poverty.

*Socrates:* What about in the body he's equipped with? Would you claim its badness to be weakness, disease, ugliness, and that sort of thing?

*Polus:* I would.

*Socrates:* And do you believe there's also some bad condition in a soul?

*Polus:* Of course.

*Socrates:* And don't you call this injustice, stupidity, cowardice, and that sort of thing?

*Polus:* Quite so.

**C** *Socrates:* So for monetary possessions, body, and soul, which are three things, you've mentioned a trio of bad conditions—poverty, disease, and injustice?

*Polus:* Yes.

*Socrates:* Then which of these bad conditions is the ugliest? Isn't it injustice, and bad condition of the soul altogether?

*Polus:* By a long way.

*Socrates:* So if it's the ugliest, it's also the worst?

*Polus:* How do you mean that, Socrates?

*Socrates:* Like this: from the things that were agreed in what went before, what's ugliest is always ugliest by having in it the greatest pain or harm or both.

*Polus:* Most assuredly.

**D** *Socrates:* And just now it was agreed by us that injustice, and the bad condition of a soul in totality, is the ugliest thing?

*Polus:* It was indeed agreed.

*Socrates:* Then either it's the most grievously painful, and is the ugliest of these by exceeding in grievous pain, or it exceeds in harmfulness or in both?

*Polus:* That's a necessity.

*Socrates:* Well, is it more painful to be unjust, dissipated, cowardly, and stupid than it is to be poor and sick?

*Polus:* It certainly doesn't seem that way to me, Socrates.

**E** *Socrates:* Therefore it's from exceeding the others in some harm that's prodigiously great and astounding bad that the bad condition of the soul is the ugliest of them all, since, as your speech has it, it doesn't exceed them in painfulness.

*Polus:* So it appears, at least on the basis of these things.<sup>18</sup>

*Socrates:* But presumably what exceeds in the greatest harm would be the greatest evil among the things there are.

*Polus:* Yes.

*Socrates:* Therefore injustice and inability to control oneself, and the rest of the bad condition of a soul, make up the greatest evil in the things there are?

*Polus:* So it appears.

*Socrates:* Now which art sets one free from poverty? Isn't it skill at business?

*Polus:* Yes.

*Socrates:* And which from disease? Isn't it doctoring?

*Polus:* Necessarily.

*Socrates:* And which from badness and injustice? If you're not equipped to say right off, consider it this way: where and to whom do we take people who are sick in their bodies?

*Polus:* To doctors, Socrates.

*Socrates:* And where do we take those who commit acts of injustice and dissipation?

*Polus:* Do you mean to judge?

*Socrates:* And that's so they pay a just penalty?

*Polus:* I'd say so.

*Socrates:* And isn't it by using a certain art of justice that those who discipline them discipline them rightly?

*Polus:* Clearly so.

*Socrates:* Therefore, skill at business sets people free from poverty, doctoring from disease, and justice from the inability to control oneself and from injustice.

*Polus:* So it appears.

*Socrates:* So which of these things is the most beautiful?

*Polus:* What things are you talking about?

*Socrates:* Skill at business, doctoring, justice.

*Polus:* Justice stands out by far, Socrates.

*Socrates:* So then in turn, if it's the most beautiful, it produces either the greatest pleasure or the greatest contribution to an end, or both?

*Polus:* Yes.

*Socrates:* Well, is it pleasant to get cured, and do those who are being cured enjoy it?

*Polus:* It doesn't seem so to me.

*Socrates:* But it certainly is beneficial, right?

*Polus:* Yes.

*Socrates:* Because one is set free from a great evil, so that it pays off to endure the pain and be healthy.

*Polus:* Of course.

*Socrates:* And would a human being be happiest in this condition as far as his body's concerned, being cured, or not being sick in the first place?

<sup>18</sup> The last phrase is transposed from the end of *Polus's* previous reply, in accord with a nineteenth-century editor's conjecture. Consistently through this whole section, it is only the logical conclusions that *Polus* seeks to distance himself from, not any of the separate pieces of evidence from which they follow.

*Polus:* Obviously not being sick.

*Socrates:* Because it seems likely that happiness never was a release from an evil, but avoiding acquiring it in the first place.

*Polus:* That's what it is.

*Socrates:* What about this? Of a pair of people who have an evil in either body or soul, which is the more miserable, one who gets cured and is set free from the evil, or one who isn't cured and has it?

*Polus:* It appears to me it's the one who isn't cured.

*Socrates:* And paying the just penalty was a release from the greatest evil, the bad condition of a soul?

*Polus:* It was.

*Socrates:* Presumably because the judicial process moderates people and makes them more just, and acts as a medical art for the bad condition of a soul.

*Polus:* Yes.

*Socrates:* Therefore the happiest person is the one who has no evil in his soul, since that showed itself to be the greatest of evils.

*Polus:* Clearly so.

*Socrates:* And presumably the second happiest is the one who's set free from it.

*Polus:* It looks like it.

*Socrates:* And that was the person who's reprimanded and chastised, and pays a just penalty.

*Polus:* Yes.

*Socrates:* Therefore it's the person who has a bad condition of the soul and isn't set free from it who lives the worst life.

*Polus:* So it appears.

*Socrates:* And this is precisely the person who, while committing the greatest unjust acts and making use of the greatest injustice, so arranges things that he's not reprimanded or disciplined and doesn't pay the just penalty, the very way you claim Archelaus made his provisions, and the other tyrants and rhetoricians and dictators?

*Polus:* It looks like it.

*Socrates:* I suppose, most excellent fellow, it's because these are people who've arranged things in pretty much the same way as if someone suffering from the greatest diseases would arrange not to pay the doctors the just penalty for his mistreatment of his body, and not get cured, being afraid of the burning and cutting, as if he were a child, because it hurt. Doesn't it seem that way to you?

*Polus:* To me, it does.

*Socrates:* It looks as though he'd be ignorant of what the health and virtue of a body are like. Because, based on the things that are now agreed by us, Polus, people who seek to escape justice are liable to be doing the same sort of thing, looking to the painfulness of it but being blind to the way it contributes to an end, and ignorant of how

much more miserable than living with an unhealthy body: it is to live with a soul that's not healthy but decayed, unjust, and impious; that's why they do everything to avoid paying the just penalty and not be set free from the greatest evil, equipping themselves with money and friends and the means to be as persuasive as possible at speaking. But if what we've agreed is true, Polus, do you notice the conclusions that follow from our speech? Or do you want us to gather them up?

*Polus:* Only if you intend to in any case.

*Socrates:* Well, does it follow that injustice and committing unjust acts are the greatest evil?

*Polus:* So it appears, anyway.

*Socrates:* And paying the just penalty showed itself to be a release from that evil?

*Polus:* It's liable to be.

*Socrates:* But not paying it is clinging to the evil?

*Polus:* Yes.

*Socrates:* Therefore committing unjust acts is second in magnitude among evils; what is by nature the first and greatest of all evils is for the person who commits unjust acts not to pay the just penalty.

*Polus:* It looks like it.

*Socrates:* Well, my friend, wasn't it on this point that we were in dispute, when you regarded Archelaus as happy for committing the greatest unjust acts and paying no penalty at all, and I imagined the opposite, that if either Archelaus or anyone else at all among human beings did not pay the just penalty when he committed injustice, it would be his lot to be miserable to a degree surpassing the rest of humankind, and that the person who commits injustice is always more miserable than the one who has injustice done to him, and the person who doesn't pay a just penalty is always more miserable than the one who pays it? Weren't these things said by me?

*Polus:* Yes.

*Socrates:* And hasn't it been demonstrated that they were said truly?

*Polus:* So it appears.

*Socrates:* Okay. Now if these things are true, Polus, what great use is there for rhetoric? Because, based on the things now agreed, one ought to guard himself most of all against committing injustice, seeing as how he'd get plenty enough evil out of it, isn't that so?

*Polus:* Quite so.

*Socrates:* But if he does commit injustice, either himself or anyone else he cares about, he ought to go willingly to the place where he'll pay the just penalty as quickly as possible, hurrying to the judge as he would to the doctor, so the disease of injustice won't become chronic and make his soul fester with hidden sores and be incurable. What else can we say about it, Polus, if the things we said before are still

agreed to by us? Isn't it a necessity that these things be this way and no other if they're to harmonize with those others?

*Polus*: Yeah—what assertion can we make, Socrates?

*Socrates*: Therefore, for making a defense of one's own injustice, or that of one's parents or comrades or children or fatherland, when it commits injustice, rhetoric is of no use to us, Polus, unless someone were to take it the opposite way—that one ought most of all to bring accusations against oneself, and in the next place against his relatives and against whomever else among those dear to him happens at any time to commit injustice, and not hide the unjust deed but bring it out into the open so he can pay the just penalty and become healthy; that he ought to force himself and the others not to be cowards but to close their eyes and submit to it in good and brave fashion, as they would to a doctor to cut or burn them, pursuing what's good and beautiful without taking account of the pain; that if the injustice he's committed deserves lashes, he ought to take his beating, if imprisonment, submit to being locked up, if a fine, pay it, if exile, go away, if death, die, being himself the first to accuse himself and the rest of his relatives and using his rhetoric for that, so that when their injustices have become manifest they may be set free from the greatest evil, injustice. Shall we assert that or deny it, Polus?

*Polus*: It seems crazy to me, Socrates, but all the same, you know, it agrees with the earlier statements.

*Socrates*: So either those things have to be refuted or it's necessary for these to follow?

*Polus*: Yes—that's the way it is.

*Socrates*: But also, turning it around the opposite way, if it's right to do harm to anyone, an enemy or whomever, as long as it's not oneself suffering, the injustice from the enemy—that's something that still needs to be guarded against—but if it's someone else that the enemy is treating unjustly, one needs to be prepared in every way, by using deeds and speeches, to make sure he doesn't pay the just penalty or even come before a judge. And if he does come before one, a means needs to be contrived for the enemy to get away and not pay the just penalty; and if he's plundered a lot of gold, for him not to give it back but keep it and spend it on himself and those around him, unjustly and in a godless way, or if he's committed injustices deserving death, for him not to be put to death, best of all not ever, so he'll be immortal while being corrupt, but if not that, so he'll live the longest possible time being that way. It's for things like that, Polus, that rhetoric seems to me to be useful, since for someone who has no intention of committing injustice there doesn't seem to be any great use for it, if in fact there's any use at all, since in the previous discussion, anyway, no way for it to be of use showed up anywhere.

*Callicles*: Tell me, Chaerephon, is Socrates serious about these things or is he playing games?

*Chaerephon*: It seems to me, Callicles, that he's prodigiously serious. However, there's nothing like asking the man himself.<sup>19</sup>

*Callicles*: By the gods, that's just what I'm bursting to do! Tell me, Socrates, should we take you as being serious now or playing games? Because if you *are* serious, and if these things that you're saying turn out to be true, would our life as human beings not be turned upside down, and would we not, as it seems, be doing everything that's opposite to what we ought to do?

*Socrates*: If human beings didn't have any experience that was the same, Callicles—one for one sort of people, another for others—but one of us had some private experience apart from the rest, it wouldn't be easy to make one's own experience known to anyone else. What I have in mind in saying this is that you and I now happen to be experiencing something that's the same: we're a pair of lovers, each of us in love with two things, I with Alcibiades, Cleinias' son, and with philosophy, you with a pair of Demuses, the Athenian populace and Pyrilampes' son.<sup>20</sup> Now I notice that, even though you're formidably clever, you don't have the ability on any occasion to contradict anything your darlings say, whatever they may claim is the case, but you keep turning yourself upside down. When you say something in the assembly, if the Athenian populace denies that it's the case, you turn around and say what it wants, and other things like that happen to you around that beautiful young son of Pyrilampes. Because you aren't able to oppose the intentions and speeches of your darlings, so if, any time you were saying the things you do on account of them, anyone was surprised at how bizarre they were, maybe, if you wanted to tell the truth, you'd tell him that unless someone makes your darlings stop saying these things, you won't ever stop saying them either. So accept the fact that you have to hear other things things like that from me too, and don't be surprised that I'm saying these things, but stop my darling, philosophy, from saying them. Because, dear

<sup>19</sup> Chaerephon gives Callicles back his own words from 447C. This has the effect of separating the dialogue into two main sections. In the first, Gorgias was challenged to defend the power of his rhetorical skill; now Socrates has to stand up to a challenge to the seriousness of his philosophical pursuit. It is the primary commitments of the two men's lives that are under scrutiny and under attack.

<sup>20</sup> Sexual attachments between older, usually married, men and younger men were common and even fashionable in Greece at the time. A conventional view of the practice may be found in Plato's *Symposium* in the speech of Pausanias (180C-185C). Later in that dialogue (212D-223A), Alcibiades reveals that he and Socrates had two different ideas about what was going on between them. Alcibiades was gifted and handsome, and later played a disastrous role in Athens' political fortunes. The name of Callicles' beloved, Demus, was also the word for "populace," the lower order of society that held the ultimate power in democratic Athens. Demus was a relative of Plato's, and was reputed to be handsome and not very bright.

B comrade, what you're hearing now from me is what she always says, and she's much less capricious with me than other darlings. That son of Cleinias is taken over by different speeches at different times, but philosophy by the same ones always; she says the things you're now surprised at, and you were even present yourself while they were being said. So either refute her, as I was saying just now, by showing that committing injustice without paying the just penalty for committing it is *not* the ultimate extreme of all evils, or else, if you leave that unrefuted, then by the dog, the god of the Egyptians, Callicles, *Callicles* won't agree with you; he'll be out of tune in every bit of his life. And yet I imagine, most excellent fellow, I'd be better off with my lyre inharmonious and out of tune, or a chorus that I'd sponsored in public, or with masses of people disagreeing with me and saying things that contradict me, than with me, one person, being out of harmony with myself and saying contradictory things.

C *Callicles*: Socrates, you seem to me to be full of brash talk in your speeches like the true demagogue you are, and you're demagoguing up these things now because Polus has had the very same experience happen to him that he accused Gorgias of having had with you. Because he said, I believe, that when Gorgias was asked by you whether, when someone came to him wanting to learn rhetoric but not knowing what's just, he'd teach him, Gorgias was ashamed and claimed he'd teach him, on account of people's habit of taking offense if anyone wouldn't say that. So on account of that concession, he was forced to say things in contradiction with himself, and you just loved that. Polus laughed at you then, and rightly as it seemed to me, but now he himself has had this same experience happen to him all over again. And I don't think highly of Polus on this very issue, that he went along with you in saying that committing injustice is an uglier thing than suffering it, because it's from that concession in turn that, having gotten himself wrong-footed by you, he got his mouth gagged in the midst of his speeches, since he was ashamed to say what he was thinking. The reality of it is, Socrates, that while claiming to be pursuing the truth, you lead things into such disgusting demagoguery about what's beautiful not by nature but by convention. For the most part, these things are the opposites of each other—nature and convention. So if someone is ashamed and doesn't have the nerve to say what he's thinking, he's forced to say contradictory things. And it's exactly by understanding this ingenious trick that you do the damage in your speeches: if anyone says things according to convention, you respond with a question about things according to nature, and if he says natural things, you question him about conventional ones. And that's just the way it went in these present statements about committing and suffering injustice; when Polus

B spoke of what was an uglier thing according to convention, you went after his speech in accord with nature. Because by nature, everything is uglier that's also worse, as suffering injustice is, but committing it is uglier by convention. This suffering of injustice isn't an experience that belongs to a *man* at all, but to some slave who's better off dead than alive, anyone who's subjected to injustice and insults and isn't able on his own to defend himself or anyone else he cares about. But I imagine those who make the laws<sup>21</sup> are weak people, and the majority. It's with a view to themselves and what's advantageous to them that they make the laws, praise the things they praise, and blame the things they blame; to intimidate the more vigorous among humankind, the ones with the power to have more, and prevent them from having more than they do, they say that getting too much is an ugly and unjust thing, and that that's what committing injustice is, striving to have more than other people, since they themselves are well pleased to have an equality when they're inferior.

C So for these reasons, this striving to have more than most people do is spoken of by convention as unjust and ugly, and people call it committing injustice. But nature itself, I should think, declares that the very thing that's just is for the one who's better to have more than the one who's worse, and the more powerful more than the less powerful. It's obvious in many areas that these things are the case, both among the other animals and among whole cities and tribes of human beings—that what's just is decided this way: by the stronger's ruling the weaker and having more. Otherwise, what sort of justice was Xerxes going by when he led an army against Greece, or his father against the Scythians?<sup>22</sup> Or take the tens of thousands of other such examples one might speak of. I should think these people in these cases are acting in accord with nature—the nature of justice—and yes, by Zeus!, in accord with law too—the law of nature<sup>23</sup>—though maybe not in accord with the one we make. We mold the best and most vigorous among ourselves

21 The word for convention (or custom) is the same as the word for law (*nomos*); one might translate the phrase "those who set up the conventions." The tacit legislation of approval and disapproval may be the strongest pressure by which any group of people controls its members.

22 Xerxes, the Great King of Persia, personally led a campaign against Greece in 480 BC with hordes of fighters, so many that he appeared to have brought all Asia into Europe. His father Darius had similarly led a large invasion to the east into the interior of what is now Russia. (See Herodotus, *History*, Book IV, Chapters 1-142, and all of Bks. VII and VIII.) The odd thing about Callicles' choice of these two examples from among the tens of thousands he claims there are is that both were failures.

23 This is the first known use of this phrase in literature. Callicles intends it as a surprising juxtaposition of terms conventionally regarded as contradictory, a paradox comparable to that in Heraclitus' fragment 62 (Diels numbering), "immortals are mortal; mortals are immortal."

484A

by catching them young, as people do with lions, and make slaves of them by casting spells and bewitching them,<sup>24</sup> telling them they should have an equal position and that this is what's beautiful and good. But I imagine that if a man having a strong enough nature came along, he'd shake off all these things, break out, and escape, trampling underfoot all our writings and charms and enchantments and laws, all contrary to nature, and our slave would rise up and reveal himself as our master, and there what's just by nature would shine forth. And it seems to me the very things I'm saying were pointed out by Pindar in the ode in which he says that

Law is king of all,  
Mortals and immortals,

and that this, he claims,

Brings with it the most extreme violence, justifying it  
By its supreme hand; I take as proof  
The deeds of Heracles, for, without purchase money...

he says something to that effect—I don't know the poem—but he says that he drove off the cattle that he hadn't been sold and Geryon hadn't given him, since this was by nature the just thing, for cattle and all other possessions of worse and lesser people to belong to the one who's superior and greater.<sup>25</sup>

So that's how the truth is, and you'll recognize it if you go on to greater things and leave philosophy aside from here on out. Because I'll tell you, Socrates, philosophy is a charming thing if someone dabbles in it to a modest extent at the right time of life, but if he wastes more time on it than is fitting, that's the downfall of human beings. Even if one is very gifted by nature, if he engages in philosophy much past the right time in life, it's inevitable for him to end up unacquainted with all the things one needs to be acquainted with if he's going to be a fine figure of a man<sup>26</sup> and one who'll be well thought of. Such people end up unacquainted with the laws that apply to the city, with the kinds of speech one has to use to negotiate with people in private and public business, and with the pleasures and desires belonging to humankind; in short,

24 The three vivid and uncommon verbs used here for molding, casting spells, and bewitching are all forms of words used near each other in one of the two speeches of Gorgias of any length that we possess, the *Encomium of Helen* (Sections 10-11), in a passage extolling the power of rhetoric.

25 We have only a fragment of the poem, but we have enough to know that Callicles breaks off before revealing that Heracles was driving the cattle off to Eurystheus, his king, a lesser man than himself to whom he was in subjection through the trickery of the goddess Hera, and for whom he had to perform his twelve famous labors. Pindar probably means that the theft was justified not because night made it right, but because a decree of Zeus was an unbreakable law, binding even upon Zeus himself.

26 *Kalos kagathos anēr*; see the note to 470E.

they end up totally unacquainted with people's characters. So whenever they venture into action of any private or political kind, they make laughingstocks of themselves, the same way, I imagine, the politicians are laughingstocks when they in turn venture into *your* pastimes and speeches. It turns out to be the way Euripides says,<sup>27</sup>

Each is a shining light in that, presses on to that,  
Gives the greatest part of the day to that,  
At which he happens to be his best,

but what he's no good at, he keeps away from and runs down, while he praises the other pursuit from his good opinion of himself, thinking of that as a way to praise himself. But I imagine the thing that's most right is to get something of both. It's a beautiful thing to get just enough of philosophy for the sake of an education, and there's no shame in engaging in philosophy when one's a young man; but when a person who's already along in age still pursues philosophy the matter becomes ridiculous, Socrates, and I feel toward those pursuing philosophy very similarly to the way I feel about people who talk baby talk and act playful. Whenever I see a child, for whom it's appropriate to talk that way, talking baby talk and playing around, I enjoy it and it appears charming to me, free-spirited, and suited to the child's age, and when I hear a little child talking distinctly, it seems to me to be a piercing thing that grates on my ears—it seems to me to be something fit for a slave; but when one hears a man talking baby talk, or sees him playing around, it appears ridiculous and unmanly, and something that deserves a beating. Now this is the same way I feel also toward those who pursue philosophy. I admire philosophy when I see it in a young adolescent, and it seems fitting to me, and I consider him to be a free-spirited person, while one who doesn't engage in philosophy is unfit for freedom and will never consider himself worthy of any beautiful or noble deed; but when I see someone along in age still pursuing philosophy and not giving it up, it seems to me that at that point, Socrates, that man needs a beating. Because as I was saying just now, even if that person is very gifted by nature, he's bound to become unmanly by keeping out of his

27 This is the first of several references in the dialogue to Euripides' lost play *Antiope*, of which many fragments survive. It concerns the twins Amphion and Zethus, the former a musician, the latter an outdoor type who cultivated his strength. The lines here seem to be Amphion's response to his brother's reproaches, of which we will hear much more. When a crisis needing action came, the two brothers prevailed together, and Amphion's music charmed the stones around Thebes into forming a wall as a lasting protection for them and those they cared for. Since Socrates' first response when Callicles stops speaking contains a reference to stones, he probably means to bring that aspect of the story to mind in his hearers, and stones will become an important metaphor later in the dialogue.



E city's centers and marketplaces, in which the poet<sup>28</sup> says men gain "highest distinction"; it's his lot to spend the rest of his life slunk away in a corner, whispering with three or four teenagers, and never utter a thing that's free or great or rises to the occasion.

But I'm pretty friendly toward you, Socrates, so I'm probably feeling now the way Euripides' Zethus, whom I mentioned, did toward Amphion. And it occurs to me to speak some such words to you as the former did to his brother, saying "You're being neglectful, Socrates, of things you ought to be paying attention to, and though you're blessed with a soul so noble in nature, you put it on display in the shape of some teenager, and you could neither add to the counsels of justice a speech rightly made, nor declaim in ringing tones anything probable or persuasive, nor advise any striking new plan for anyone else." And yet, Socrates my friend—and don't get mad at me, because I'm speaking with your good in mind—doesn't it seem shameful to you to be in the condition I imagine you're in, along with the others who are always pushing far on into philosophy? Why if anyone were to grab you now, or anyone else at all of your sort, and drag you off to prison, claiming you'd committed an injustice when you'd committed none, you know that you'd have no clue how to handle yourself, but your head would swim and your mouth would hang open while you had nothing to say, and when hauled into court, even if your accuser happened to be someone of the lowest and most corrupt sort, you'd be put to death if he wanted to set death as your penalty. So "how wise can that be," Socrates, "any art that took a gifted mortal and made him worse off," when he has no power either to help himself or to save either himself or anyone else at all from the greatest dangers, left to be stripped by his enemies of all he has and is, to live in his city as someone literally worthless? To say it a little crudely, anyone is free to slap such a person upside the head without paying any penalty. But good fellow, take my advice, stop your retfiting, "train yourself in the beautiful music" of practical life, and train where "you will be reputed to have good sense; let others keep these fancy subtleties," whether one ought to call them frivolities or nonsense, "from which you'll come to dwell in vacant rooms." Don't seek to rival men who engage in refutation over these minuscule matters, but those who have the means of life, and good repute, and an abundance of other good things.

D *Socrates*: If I happened to have a soul made of gold, Callicles, don't you imagine I'd be well pleased to find one of those stones people rub against gold to test it, the best one, so that if I went ahead and applied my soul to it, and it confirmed to me that it had been nur-

tured in a beautiful way, I'd know for sure at that point that I was in good enough shape and had no need of any other test?

*Callicles*: For what purpose, exactly, are you asking that, Socrates?

*Socrates*: I'll tell you right now: I'm thinking that in meeting up with you, I've run into just such a stroke of luck.

*Callicles*: How so?

*Socrates*: I know for sure that if you agree with me about things my soul holds as opinions, then without more ado these things are the exact truth, because I realize that anyone who's going to test adequately whether a soul is living rightly or not needs, after all, to have three things, all of which you have: knowledge, goodwill, and frankness. Now I meet up with lots of people who are unable to test me because they aren't wise the way you are, while others are wise, but aren't willing to tell me the truth because they don't care about me the way you do, and as for our two visitors, Gorgias and Polus, though the pair of them are wise and are my friends, they're too lacking in frankness and too susceptible to feelings of shame—more so than is right and proper. How can that not be the case, when the pair of them are so far advanced in shame that, from being ashamed, each one himself has the audacity, himself, to contradict himself to his own face, in the face of many people,<sup>29</sup> and about the greatest matters at that! But you do have all these things the others don't have, because you've received what many of the Athenians would assert is an adequate education, and you are well-intentioned toward me. What evidence do I draw on for that? I'll tell you. I know, Callicles, that there are four of you who've become a partnership in wisdom—you, Tisander of Aphidna, Androtion's son Andron, and Nausicydes of Cholargos—and I once overheard you deliberating about how far a training in wisdom should be taken. I know that an opinion of the following sort prevailed among you, that one shouldn't be eager to go on in philosophy to achieve any precision, but you urged one another to be cautious not to become excessively wise beyond what's right and proper, in order that you not ruin yourselves without realizing it. Now since I hear you giving the same advice to me as to your closest companions, that's sufficient evidence to me that you're truly well-intentioned toward me. And surely, as for the fact that you're the sort to speak frankly and not be ashamed, you claim this yourself and the speech you made a little while ago backs you up. So it's clear that this is how it stands right now about these matters: if you agree with me on any point

<sup>29</sup> The words "from...people" attempt to capture the style of *dia to aischunesthai toima*

*hakateros auton autos handi enantia legon emantion pollon anthropon*, a more resonating echo of Gorgias's manner of speaking than Polus's repetitions of the word "various" in 448C, and a bit of rhetorical one-upmanship directed at Callicles. When the latter said (482D-483A) that Polus contradicted himself out of shame, he pounded repetitively at the words "nature" and "convention," and in 483E he jammed the same two words together into a paradoxical pairing as Socrates does here with audacity and shame.

in our speeches, then without more ado that point will have been sufficiently established by me and you together, and there won't be any need to take it up again for any further test. Because you would never have gone along with it from either a lack of wisdom or an overabundance of shame, and you wouldn't have gone along with it to deceive me either, since you're my friend, you say so yourself. In reality, then, our agreement, yours and mine, will contain the complete fulfillment of truth. And the inquiry into those things for which you reproached me, Callicles, is the most beautiful one of all, concerning the sort of person a man ought to be, and what he ought to pursue, and to what extent, both when he's older and when he's younger. Because you can be assured of this, that if I'm acting in any way that's not right in my own life, I'm not slipping up willingly but from my ignorance. So in just the way you began to rebuke me, don't give up, but make it sufficiently plain to me what this is that I need to pursue, and by what means I could get hold of it; and once I've agreed with you now, if you catch me at a later time not doing those things I agreed to, consider me a complete imbecile, and don't give me any more rebukes ever again, since I wouldn't be deserving of any.

But take it from the beginning again for me. How does it go, what you and Pindar claim is the just thing by nature? That the one who's greater should carry off the things that belong to those who are lesser, and the superior should rule the inferior, and the better should have more than the worse? You don't say what's just is anything else but that, or am I remembering rightly?

Callicles: That's exactly what I was saying then, and also what I say now.

Socrates: And is it the same person you're calling "superior" and "greater"? Because I really couldn't understand then what in the world you mean, whether you're calling stronger people greater, and saying those who are weaker have to obey someone who's stronger, which is the sort of thing it seems to me you were pointing to then, that for big cities to attack little ones is just by nature because they're greater and stronger, since the greater and stronger and better are the same thing; is it possible to be superior while being lesser and weaker, and to be greater while being more depraved, or is the definition of superior and greater the same? Distinguish that exact point for me clearly: are the greater, the superior, and the stronger the same or different?

Callicles: Well, I'm telling you clearly that they're the same.

Socrates: So according to nature, is the multitude greater than a single person? They're the ones who impose laws on that one person, as you were also saying just now.

Callicles: How could they not be?

Socrates: Therefore the things regarded as lawful by the multitude come from those who are greater?

Callicles: Quite so.

Socrates: So they come from those who are superior? For presumably according to your speech the greater are the superior.

Callicles: Yes.

Socrates: So the things they regard as lawful are beautiful according to nature, since they come from those who are greater?

Callicles: I'm claiming that.

Socrates: Well isn't it this way of considering things that the multitude regards as lawful, as you were saying just now as well, that having an equal position is just, and committing injustice is an uglier thing than suffering it? Is that so or not? And watch out here that you too don't get caught feeling ashamed. Do the masses customarily hold, or do they not, that it's just to have an equal position and not to have more, and that it's an uglier thing to commit injustice than to suffer it? Don't be grudging about answering me that, Callicles, so that if you agree with me, I'll have it established by you right away, as something that's been agreed to by a man competent to resolve the matter.

Callicles: Well, the masses do customarily think that way.

Socrates: Therefore it's not only by convention that committing injustice is an uglier thing than suffering it, or that having an equal position is just, but by nature as well. So you're liable to have been saying something that's not true in your earlier remarks, and there's a chance that your accusation against me wasn't correct when you were saying that convention and nature are opposed, and that I'm aware of that and do the damage in my speeches by leading things over to convention if anyone speaks in accordance with nature, and over to nature if anyone speaks in accordance with convention.

Callicles: This man here just won't stop spewing nonsense. Tell me, Socrates, aren't you ashamed at your age to be catching at words, and if anyone slips up in his phrasing, to make a stroke of luck out of that? Do you imagine that I mean anything else by "being greater" than "being superior"? Haven't I been saying all along that I claim the superior person and the greater person are the same? Or do you imagine I mean that if a motley collection of slaves and every sort of human being who's worth nothing except for maybe being strong in body, gets together and declares something, that these are lawful things?

Socrates: Oho, superlatively wise Callicles, that's what you're saying?

Callicles: Very much so.

Socrates: Well, you strange fellow, I too have been guessing all along myself that you mean something like that by "the greater," and I've been asking questions tenaciously to know clearly what you do

mean. Because, presumably, you don't consider two people superior to one, or your slaves superior to you just because they're stronger than you are. But tell me again from the beginning, what in the world *do you mean* by "the superior" since they aren't the stronger? And, you amazing fellow, give me my preparatory schooling in a more gentle way, or else I might stop going to you for lessons.

*Callicles:* You're being ironic, Socrates.

*Socrates:* Am I really, Callicles, by Zethus,<sup>30</sup> whom you made use of just now to heap a lot of irony on me? Just come on and tell me, who do you say are the superior people?

*Callicles:* I say they're the better ones.

*Socrates:* And do you see that you yourself are speaking mere words and making nothing clear? Won't you say whether, by people who are superior and greater, you mean those who are smarter or somebody else?

*Callicles:* Yes, by Zeus, I mean exactly them, emphatically so.

*Socrates:* Therefore, by your speech, one person who's smart is often greater than tens of thousands who aren't, and it's right for that person to rule and the others to be ruled, and for the ruler to have more than those he rules. Because that's what it seems to me you want to say—and I'm not catching at your phrasing—if the one person is greater than the tens of thousands.

*Callicles:* That's exactly what I'm saying, because I should think that's the thing that's just by nature, for the one who's superior and smarter to be the ruler and to have more than the inferior people.

*Socrates:* Hold it right there. What in the world do you mean now? If many of us are congregated in the same place, as we are now, and a lot of food and drink belongs to us in common, but we're people of all sorts, some strong, some weak, and one of us is smarter about these matters since he's a doctor, while he, as is likely, is stronger than some and weaker than others, does anything else follow than that he, being smarter than we are, will be superior and greater on these matters?

*Callicles:* Of course that follows.

*Socrates:* Then does he have to get more of that food than we do because he's superior, or should he hand it all out by virtue of ruling, but in

30 Socrates puts a twist in the name of Zeus to swear by the character Callicles was quoting in 485E-486D. The word irony did not yet have full range of use it later came to have, partly as a result of reflection on the depth of the way Socrates commonly spoke. The Greek word for irony applied especially to the gracious modesty of his frequent pretenses of ignorance, but there was more than mere politeness in that attitude, which was rooted in an underlying conviction that all of us need to recognize our ignorance if we're ever to make any progress toward understanding. Callicles, with a superficially similar ironic tone, had adopted a pose of giving friendly advice for Socrates' own good. Socrates is saying, in effect, "If you want me to drop my mask, you have to drop yours."

the consumption and use of it not take an excess of it into his own body, if he doesn't want to pay the penalty for that, but get more than some people and less than others? And if by chance he's the weakest of all, is it right for the most superior person to have the least, Callicles? Isn't that how it is, good fellow?

*Callicles:* You're talking food and drink and doctors and nonsense.

That's not what I mean.

*Socrates:* Aren't you saying the smarter person is superior? Declare yes or no.

*Callicles:* I am.

*Socrates:* But not that the superior person should have more?

*Callicles:* Not more food and drink anyway.

*Socrates:* I understand. Maybe clothes, then, and the most skillful weaver should have his cloak the biggest, and have the most of them, and go around wearing the most beautiful ones?

*Callicles:* What have clothes got to do with anything?

*Socrates:* But as for shoes, it's clear that the person who's the smartest and most superior on that score ought to get more. Maybe the one who cuts the leather should walk around with the biggest shoes on his feet, and have the most of them.

*Callicles:* What have shoes got to do with anything? You keep on talking nonsense.

*Socrates:* Well then, if you don't mean things of that sort, maybe you mean things like this: a man skilled at farming, say, who's intelligent about the land, and a fine figure of a man—maybe he should get more of the seed, and use as much seed as possible on his own land.

*Callicles:* You do go on, always saying the same things, Socrates.

*Socrates:* Not only that, Callicles, but about the same things too.

*Callicles:* By the gods! You're literally always talking nonsense about leather workers and drycleaners and cooks and doctors, as if our speech had anything to do with them.

*Socrates:* Then will you tell me who it does have to do with? What is it that the greater and smarter person, who has more, justly gets more of? Or are you neither going to let me make suggestions nor say it yourself?

*Callicles:* But I am saying it, and have been all along. In the first place, the greater people I'm talking about are those who aren't leather workers or cooks but are smart about practical matters having to do with the city, about the way they might be well managed, and they're not only smart but also manly, capable of accomplishing what they intend and not get fainthearted on account of softness in the soul.

*Socrates:* Most superior Callicles, do you see how the things you blame me for are not the same ones I blame you for? You claim I'm always saying the same things and make that a reproach against me, but I

C claim the opposite about you, that you never say the same things about the same things, but at one time you define the superior and greater people as the stronger ones, and then in turn as the smarter, but now again you've come up with something else: it's some sort of "manlier" people who are being described by you as the superior and better ones. But, good fellow, say who in the world you mean by the superior and greater people, and in connection with what, and get it over with.

D *Callicles:* But I've said it's those who are smarter about practical matters having to do with the city, and more manly. They're fit to rule the cities, and that's the thing that's just, for them, the rulers, to have more in comparison with the others, the ruled.

*Socrates:* What about in comparison with themselves, my friend?

*Callicles:* What about *what*?

*Socrates:* Rulers or ruled?

*Callicles:* How do you mean?

*Socrates:* I'm talking about each one himself ruling over himself—or is there no need for that, for one to rule oneself, just to rule others?

*Callicles:* What do mean by someone's ruling himself?

E *Socrates:* Nothing elaborate, just what most people do: being moderate and in control of oneself, ruling over the pleasures and desires in oneself.

*Callicles:* How droll you are. By "moderate" people you're talking about stupid ones.

*Socrates:* How's that? There's no one at all who wouldn't recognize that that's *not* what I'm saying.

492A *Callicles:* You most emphatically are, Socrates. How could a human being become happy if he's enslaved to anyone at all? This, I now tell you frankly, is what's beautiful and just according to nature: that someone who's going to live rightly needs to let his own desires be the greatest possible and not discipline them but be up to the task of ministering to them when they're the greatest they can be, by being manly and smart, and always providing satisfaction of whatever the desire happens to be for. But I imagine this isn't possible for most people, which is why they censure people of that sort, out of shame, to cover up their own powerlessness, and they claim self-indulgence is an ugly thing, doing exactly what I was saying before, enslaving those human beings who are superior by nature; and since they themselves lack the power to provide for the satisfaction of their own pleasures, they praise moderation and justice because of their own lack of manliness. Because, for all those who have the advantage from the start either of being kings' sons, or of being capable by their own nature of providing themselves with some ruling position, a tyrannical or a place in a dictatorial group, what could be truly more shameful and a greater evil than moderation and justice in such people, who, since they can enjoy

good things with no one to stand in their way, would themselves be imposing as a slavemaster over themselves the law, the word, and the censure of the masses of humanity? How could they not become miserable under the thumb of that lovely thing that consists of justice and moderation, when they can pass out nothing more to their friends than to their enemies, and that's happening while they're the rulers in their own cities? But in truth, Socrates, and that's what you claim to be pursuing, it's like this: luxury and self-indulgence and freedom, if they have force to defend them—that's what virtue and happiness are—and everything else is window dressing, agreements made by people in contravention of nature, and worthless nonsense.

D *Socrates:* The frank way you go through things in your speech is certainly not lacking in nobility, Callicles, because you're now saying clearly what other people think but are unwilling to say. So I beg of you not to let up in any way, so that it may genuinely become crystal clear how one ought to live. And tell me, you're claiming that one's desires ought not to be disciplined if one is to be the sort of person he ought to be, but he should provide satisfaction for them from wherever he can get it after he's let them be as great as possible, and that this is virtue?

E

*Callicles:* That's what I'm claiming.

*Socrates:* Therefore it's not rightly said that people are happy when they're in want of nothing?

*Callicles:* No, because in that case stones and corpses would be happy.

*Socrates:* Yes, but the life of the people you're talking about is pretty strange too, and I wouldn't be at all surprised if Euripides was telling the truth in the lines where he said,

Who knows whether to be alive is to be dead,  
And to be dead is to be alive?

Maybe in reality we're the ones who are dead, because once in fact I heard from someone, one of the wise people, that we're now dead and the body is our tomb,<sup>31</sup> while that part of the soul that our desires are in happens to be the sort of thing that can be per-

493A

31 "The body, a tomb" (*sôma sêma*) was a Pythagorean saying, which would have been especially current in the Greek cities of Italy and Sicily. The lines of Euripides above are from a lost play. The fable below is Socrates' own invention, starting from the words *pitheios* (easy to persuade) and *pitheos* (vat or urn) and incorporating a pun on *amêlios* (uninitiated, from *muê-o*; leaky, from *mu-o*): Socrates had a habit of referring to unspecified wise men and women when he was about to make up a parable (see Plato's *Meno*, 81A-D, and *Phaedrus* 252B-C, 274C-275C). Because the word *pitheios* meant "persuasive" (as above at 457A, 458E, etc.) as well as "easily persuadable" the image here unites the two halves of the dialogue, alluding to Gorgias's opinion of his own power and Callicles' vision of human happiness as two sides of one human weakness.

suaded around and turn upside down, and so some elaborately clever man—maybe some Sicilian or Italian—told a fable about this, and with a play on words he named this part, because it's easily persuadable and quick to turn, an urn, and named unintelligent people uninitiates, and he said that the self-indulgent element in this part of the soul, where the desires are in unintelligent people, since it's not water-tight, would be an urn full of holes, making that image of its insatiability. So just the opposite of you, Callicles, this man indicates that the most miserable ones in the realm of Hades—by which I mean the invisible<sup>32</sup> place—would be these uninitiates, and he says they'd be carrying water to the hole-filled urn with another thing similarly full of holes, a sieve. And he meant the sieve, in turn, as the one who told it to me said, to be the soul, and he likened the soul of the unintelligent to a sieve as a soul full of holes, since it's powerless to keep anything in because of its unsteadiness of belief and its forgetfulness. And while these things are getting on for being fairly absurd, they make clear what I want to get across to you, in any way I possibly can, to persuade you to change course, and instead of a life in an insatiable and dissipated condition, to choose a life in an orderly condition that's always in a state of sufficiency and contentment with the things it has. But am I persuading you at all and are you changing to the opinion that orderly people are happier than self-indulgent ones, or would you not change course any the more even if I were to tell you lots of other fables of this kind?

*Callicles:* What you've said now is more the truth, Socrates.

*Socrates:* Come on anyway, I'll relate to you another image from the same school as the present one. See if you mean something like this about the life of each of the two, that of the moderate and that of the self-indulgent person: suppose each one of the pair had a lot of urns, and one of the two had his intact and full, one of wine, one of honey, one of milk, and many others filled with many things, and the influx of each of these things was meager and hard to come by, and took a lot of hard work to provide. Now one of the two people, once he's got them filled, wouldn't pipe in any more or worry about it, but would stay tranquil as far as those things are concerned; for the other person, the influx would be just as possible and just as difficult to provide as for the first, but his containers are full of holes and decayed, and he'd be forced to keep filling them constantly, night and day, or be afflicted with the extremity of pain. If that's the sort of life each one has, do you say it would be a happier one for the self-indulgent person than for the orderly one? Am I persuading you at all by saying these things, to accept

494A

32 The word for "invisible" in the masculine and feminine nominative, differs from Hades' name only by the position of the accent. This was a common pun; what Socrates means by it here emerges in the myth he tells at the end of the dialogue (523-527).

along with me that the orderly life is better than the self-indulgent one, or am I not persuading you?

*Callicles:* You're not persuading me, Socrates, because there's no longer any pleasure at all for the person who's filled up, and that's what I was just now saying is living like a stone, when one has been filled and isn't feeling any more joy or pain. But living pleasantly consists in this: in having the greatest possible amount flowing in.

*Socrates:* Well isn't it a necessity, if there's a lot flowing in, for there also to be a lot that's running out, and for there to be some big holes for the outflows?

*Callicles:* Of course.

*Socrates:* Then you're talking now about some sort of life of a plover<sup>33</sup> instead of a life of a corpse or a stone. And tell me, are you talking, for example, about something like being hungry, and eating when you're hungry?

*Callicles:* I am.

*Socrates:* And being thirsty, and drinking when you're thirsty?

*Callicles:* I'm saying also that someone who has all the rest of the desires and has the power to fulfill them lives happily in enjoying them.

*Socrates:* Great, you superlative fellow! Now go on to the end in just the way you've begun, and don't be ashamed. And it looks like I'd better not hold back out of shame either. First of all, then, tell me whether someone who has an itch and wants to rub it, and be uninhibited in his rubbing and spend his life rubbing away at it, is living happily.

*Callicles:* How outrageous you are, Socrates, an absolute demagogue.

*Socrates:* Well sure, Callicles, and I shocked Polus and Gorgias and made them ashamed, but you won't be shocked and you won't be ashamed because you're manly. So just answer.

*Callicles:* Well, I claim that even the person who's rubbing himself would be living pleasantly.

*Socrates:* And if pleasantly, then happily too?

*Callicles:* Of course.

*Socrates:* Is that if it's only his head he's rubbing—or what else shall I ask you? See what you'll answer, Callicles, if someone asks you one step at a time about all the things that follow from these. And what brings these sorts of things to a head is the life of kept

33 The particular species of plover Socrates apparently has in mind is a shore bird with the habit of emitting a stream of excrement while it's feeding.

boys<sup>34</sup>—isn't that a dreadful and ugly and miserable life? Or will you have the nerve to say these people are happy too, if they get what they want unstintingly?

*Callicles*: Aren't you ashamed to be leading our talk into such things, Socrates?

*Socrates*: Am I really the one leading them there, you noble fellow, or is it the person who's claiming in this unrestrained way that people who have pleasure, however they have pleasure, are happy, and doesn't distinguish which sorts of pleasures are good and bad? But go on and say that now too: do you claim the pleasant and the good are the same thing, or is there any pleasant thing that isn't good?

*Callicles*: In order that my speech may not be inconsistent if I claim they're different, I claim they're the same.

*Socrates*: You're undermining your first speeches, Callicles, and you couldn't any longer adequately assess the way things are along with me, if you're going to say things contrary to the way they seem to you yourself.

**B**  
*Callicles*: You do that too, Socrates.

*Socrates*: Then I'm not doing the right thing, if I'm doing that, and neither are you. But consider this, you blessedly happy fellow, that the good may not be having pleasure in any and every way, since these many ugly things implied just now would be obvious consequences if that's the way it is, and lots of others.

*Callicles*: The way you imagine it, Socrates.

*Socrates*: And you, Callicles, insist that this is how it really is?

*Callicles*: I do.

**C**  
*Socrates*: Shall we therefore take up the speech as something you're serious about?

*Callicles*: Most emphatically.

*Socrates*: So come on then, since it seems that way, and delineate the following for me: presumably you call something knowledge?

*Callicles*: I do.

*Socrates*: And weren't you saying just now that there can be a certain manliness along with knowledge?

*Callicles*: I was saying that.

*Socrates*: And did you mean these as anything other than two things, manliness a different thing from knowledge?

*Callicles*: Emphatically so.

*Socrates*: And what about this? Are pleasure and knowledge the same or different?

*Callicles*: Unquestionably different, you paragon of wisdom.

*Socrates*: And manliness is also different from pleasure?

*Callicles*: How could it not be?

*Socrates*: Come on then, so we may memorialize these things: Callicles the Acharnian<sup>35</sup> says pleasant and good are the same thing but knowledge and manliness are different from each other and from the good.

*Callicles*: And Socrates from Alopecce does not agree with these things, or does he agree?

*Socrates*: He does not agree, and I imagine that Callicles won't either when he comes to see himself rightly. But tell me, don't you regard people who are doing well as having an experience opposite to that of people who are doing badly?

*Callicles*: I do.

*Socrates*: Well then, if these are experiences opposite to each other, isn't it a necessity that people be in the same condition with regard to them as they are with regard to health and sickness? Because, presumably, a human being can't be healthy and sick at the same time, or be getting rid of health and sickness at the same time.

*Callicles*: How do you mean?

*Socrates*: Take any part of the body you want as an example and consider it. Presumably a human being gets sick in the eyes, and the name for that is eye-inflammation?

*Callicles*: Certainly.

*Socrates*: And doubtless he's not also healthy at the same time in those same eyes?

*Callicles*: In no way whatsoever.

*Socrates*: And what about when he's getting over his eye-inflammation? Is he getting rid of the health of his eyes too at that time, and does he end up rid of both at the same time?

*Callicles*: Not in the least.

*Socrates*: Because I imagine that would be a surprising and unaccountable thing to happen, wouldn't it?

*Callicles*: Emphatically so.

*Socrates*: Instead, I imagine, he's getting and losing each of the two in turn?

*Callicles*: I'd say so.

*Socrates*: So it's also the same way with strength and weakness?

*Callicles*: Yes.

*Socrates*: And speed and slowness?

*Callicles*: Quite so.

*Socrates*: And as for good things and happiness, and their opposites, bad things and misery, does one get and get rid of each pair in turn?

<sup>34</sup> Catantines, perhaps something close to "sex slaves," would not include privileged young men like Demus or Alcibiades (see 481D) and note) who might attract lovers. Since this moment in the dialogue corresponds to those at which Gorgias and Polus succumbed to shame, it is important to decide whether Callicles' resistance to the example is caused by the directness of the sexual reference, by the idea of a life narrowed to a single form of pleasure, by any suggestion of approval of the passivity and unmanliness of the boys in question, or by some combination of these.

<sup>35</sup> Socrates, as though drawing up a legal affidavit, includes the district of Athens Callicles lives in.

*Callicles*: Totally, no doubt about it.

C *Socrates*: Therefore, if we discover certain things that a human being gets rid of at the same time and has at the same time, it's clear that these things at any rate could not be the good and the bad. Are we agreed on that? Think it over very carefully and then answer.

*Callicles*: Oh, it's extraordinary how much I agree.

*Socrates*: Now go back to the things that were agreed earlier. You were speaking of being hungry—as something pleasant or painful? I mean being hungry itself.

*Callicles*: I say it's painful, though eating when one is hungry is pleasant.

D *Socrates*: Me too; I understand. But being hungry itself at any rate is a painful thing, isn't it?

*Callicles*: I'd say so.

*Socrates*: And being thirsty too?

*Callicles*: Emphatically so.

*Socrates*: So shall I keep asking about more cases, or do you agree that all lack and desire are painful?

*Callicles*: I agree; don't keep asking.

*Socrates*: Okay. And are you claiming anything other than that it's a pleasant thing to drink when one is thirsty?

*Callicles*: That's what I'm claiming.

*Socrates*: And by this "when one is thirsty," presumably you mean when one is in pain?

E *Callicles*: Yes.

*Socrates*: And drinking is a filling up of the lack, and a pleasure?

*Callicles*: Yes.

*Socrates*: So you're saying one is having pleasure during the drinking?

*Callicles*: Very much so.

*Socrates*: When one is thirsty?

*Callicles*: So I claim.

*Socrates*: When one is in pain?

*Callicles*: Yes.

*Socrates*: So do you see what follows, that you're saying that someone who's in pain has pleasure at the same time when you speak of drinking when one is thirsty? Or does this not happen at the same time in the same place—whether soul or body, as you prefer, since I imagine it makes no difference—is this how it is or not?

*Callicles*: It is.

497A *Socrates*: But surely you claim it's impossible for someone who's doing well to be doing badly at the same time.

*Callicles*: I do claim that.

*Socrates*: But you've agreed that it's possible to have pleasure while one is in pain.

*Callicles*: So it appears.

*Socrates*: Therefore to have pleasure is not to be doing well, and to be in pain is not to be doing badly, and so it turns out that the pleasant is different from the good.

*Callicles*: I don't know what kind of tricky arguments you're making,

*Socrates*.

*Socrates*: You know, *Callicles*, but you're playing dumb. Just continue on to the next step.

*Callicles*: Why do you keep being so asinine?

B *Socrates*: So you'll know how wise you're being to rebuke me. Doesn't each of us stop being thirsty at the same time he stops feeling pleasure at drinking?

*Callicles*: I don't know what you mean.

*Gorgias*: None of that, *Callicles*. Just answer him, for our sakes too, so that the speeches may be brought to an end.

*Callicles*: But *Socrates* is always like this, *Gorgias*. He asks little questions of little importance and makes a refutation out of them.

*Gorgias*: But what difference does that make to you? There's nothing here that's a matter of your honor, *Callicles*. Just submit to *Socrates*, to refute you however he wants.

C *Callicles*: Go on and ask these shriveled little questions of yours, since that's the way *Gorgias* likes it.

*Socrates*: You are a happy one, *Callicles*, to be initiated into the great mysteries<sup>36</sup> before the small ones; I didn't imagine it was permitted.

Answer where you left off, then, whether each of us doesn't stop being thirsty and having pleasure at the same time.

*Callicles*: I'd say so.

*Socrates*: And does one also cease from hunger and from the other desires at the same time as from the pleasures?

*Callicles*: That's how it is.

D *Socrates*: And so one ceases from pains and pleasures at the same time?

*Callicles*: Yes.

*Socrates*: But surely, as you agreed, one does *not* cease from good things at the same time as from bad; do you not agree with that now?

*Callicles*: I do; so what?

*Socrates*: So, my friend, good things turn out *not* to be the same as pleasant ones, and bad things not the same as painful ones, because one ceases from the one pair at the same time but not from the other pair, indicating that they're different. How, then, could pleasant things be the same as good or painful things be the same as bad?

But if you'd like, examine it in this way as well, because I imagine it's not conceded by you on that ground. Consider: don't you call

36 The reference is to the stages of initiation into the Eleusinian religious rites. The word "mystery" is derived from the word for initiation, the same word that, with a negative prefix, had the second meaning "leaky" in the image of the urns above (493A).

good people good because of the presence of good things, just as you call people beautiful because beauty is present in them?

*Callicles:* I do.

*Socrates:* And what about this? Do you call good men foolish and cowardly? You didn't just now at any rate, but were saying they're the manly and smart ones. Or do you not call them good?

*Callicles:* Very much so.

*Socrates:* Well, haven't you ever seen a foolish child having pleasure?

*Callicles:* I have.

*Socrates:* But you've never seen a foolish man having pleasure?

*Callicles:* I imagine I have, but what about it?

498A *Socrates:* Nothing; just answer.

*Callicles:* I've seen that.

*Socrates:* What about a person with good sense being in pain or having pleasure?

*Callicles:* I'd say so.

*Socrates:* And which ones have more pleasure and more pain, the smart ones or the stupid ones?

*Callicles:* I imagine there's not a lot of difference.

*Socrates:* Well, even that's sufficient. Now in war, have you ever seen a man be a coward?

*Callicles:* How could I not?

*Socrates:* And what about when the enemies went away? Which ones seemed to you to enjoy it more, the cowards or the manly ones?

*Callicles:* Both sorts seemed to me to enjoy it; maybe the former more, or if not, pretty much the same.

*Socrates:* It makes no difference. So the cowards have pleasure too?

*Callicles:* Emphatically so.

*Socrates:* And it's likely the stupid people do too.

*Callicles:* Yes.

*Socrates:* And when the enemies come toward them, are the cowards the only ones pained at that, or the manly ones too?

*Callicles:* Both sorts.

*Socrates:* To a similar degree?

*Callicles:* Maybe the cowards more.

*Socrates:* But when they go away the cowards don't feel more pleasure?

*Callicles:* Maybe they do.

C *Socrates:* So the stupid ones and the smart ones, and the cowards and manly ones, feel pain and pleasure about the same, as you claim, but the cowards more than the manly ones?

*Callicles:* I'd say so.

*Socrates:* But surely the smart and manly ones are good, and the cowardly and stupid ones are bad?

*Callicles:* Yes.

*Socrates:* Therefore, good and bad people feel pleasure and pain about equally?

*Callicles:* I'd say so.

*Socrates:* Well, are good and bad people about equally good and bad?

Or are the bad ones in fact even more good?

*Callicles:* By Zeus, I don't know what you're talking about!

*Socrates:* You don't know that you're claiming that good people are good by the presence of good things, and bad people are bad by the presence of bad things, and that pleasures are the good things and pains the bad things?

*Callicles:* I do.

*Socrates:* So then good things are present in people who are having pleasure, so long as they're having pleasure?

*Callicles:* Of course.

*Socrates:* So then, because good things are present in them, people who are having pleasure are good?

*Callicles:* Yes.

*Socrates:* And what about this? Aren't bad things, pains, present in people who are in pain?

*Callicles:* They're present.

*Socrates:* But it's by the presence of bad things that you claim bad people are bad—or do you no longer claim that?

*Callicles:* I do.

*Socrates:* Therefore, those who have pleasure are good, and those who are in pain are bad?

*Callicles:* Certainly.

*Socrates:* And those who are more so are more that way, those less so less, and those about the same about the same?

*Callicles:* Yes.

*Socrates:* And you claim that smart and stupid people, and cowards and manly ones, have pleasure and pain to about the same degree, or else the cowards even more so?

*Callicles:* I do.

*Socrates:* Then in cooperation with me, gather up what follows from the things agreed to by us, because people say it's a beautiful thing to say beautiful things even two or three times over, and to examine them too. We claim that a smart and manly person is good, don't we?

*Callicles:* Yes.

*Socrates:* And a stupid and cowardly person is bad?

*Callicles:* Very much so.

*Socrates:* And also that someone who's having pleasure is good?

*Callicles:* Yes.

*Socrates:* And someone who's having pain is bad?

*Callicles:* That's a necessity.



*Socrates:* And the good person and the bad have pain and pleasure to a similar degree, or maybe the bad person more?

*Callicles:* Yes.

**B** *Socrates:* So then a bad person turns out to be bad and good to a similar degree as a good person, or to be even more good? Don't these things, as well as those previous ones, follow if anyone claims that pleasant things and good things are the same? Isn't that a necessity, Callicles?

*Callicles:* You know, all the time I've been listening to you, Socrates, responding with agreement, I've been taking note of how, if anyone gives in to you on any point, even as a joke, you hang on to it with glee the way teenagers would. As if you could imagine that I or anyone else at all of humankind didn't consider some pleasures better and others worse!

**C** *Socrates:* Ohoho, Callicles, what an amoralist<sup>37</sup> fellow you are! You're treating me just like a child, declaring the same things are now one way, now another, to play tricks on me. And yet never did I imagine from the start that I'd be tricked by you on purpose, thinking you were my friend. But now I've been duped, and it seems necessary for me, as the old saying goes, to make the best of what's at hand, and take whatever is given by you. So what you're now saying, it seems, is that some particular pleasures are good but others are bad—is that it?

**D** *Callicles:* Yes.

*Socrates:* And that the beneficial ones good and the harmful ones are bad?

*Callicles:* Of course.

*Socrates:* And those that do something good are beneficial, while those that do something bad are bad pleasures?

*Callicles:* I'd say so.

**E** *Socrates:* Now do you mean, say, those sorts of pleasures we were just talking about that apply to the body, those involved in eating and drinking, and that the ones that produce health in the body, or strength, or some other excellence of the body, are good, but the ones that produce effects opposite to these are bad?

*Callicles:* Certainly.

*Socrates:* And the same way with pains, some are worthwhile and others worthless?

*Callicles:* Of course.

*Socrates:* And so the worthwhile pleasures and pains are to be chosen and taken on?

*Callicles:* Certainly.

*Socrates:* But not the worthless ones?

*Callicles:* Obviously not.

*Socrates:* Because it seemed to us, no doubt, that all actions are to be undertaken for the sake of good things, if you recall, to Polus and me that is. Does it seem that way to you too in common with us, that the good is the end of all actions and that one ought to undertake all other things for its sake and not it for the sake of anything else? Do you cast your vote along with us too from a third precinct?

*Callicles:* I do.

*Socrates:* Therefore one ought to take on everything else, even pleasures, for the sake of good things, and not good things for the sake of pleasures.

*Callicles:* Certainly.

*Socrates:* And is it in every man's power to pick out from among pleasant things which sorts are good and which sorts bad, or is there a need for someone with an art for each case?

*Callicles:* Someone with an art.

*Socrates:* Then let's recall again precisely those things I happened to be saying to Polus and Gorgias, because, if you remember, I was saying that there could be some arrangements that extend as far as pleasure and provide that very thing alone, ignorant of what's better and worse, while others discern that there's a good and a bad. And among those concerned with pleasures, I placed cooking—a matter of experience but not of art—while among those concerned with the good I placed the art of doctoring. Now in the name of Friendship, Callicles, don't imagine it's right for you yourself to joke with me, don't answer something at random contrary to the way things seem, and don't take what comes from me either as though I were joking. Make sure you see that our speeches are concerned with this matter—and what matter should any human being with even a little bit of sense be more serious about than this?—of the way one ought to live one's life: whether it's the way you exhort me toward, of doing those things befitting a *man*, speaking among the populace, training in rhetoric, and getting into politics in this way that you people engage in it nowadays, or this life spent in philosophy and whatever it is about this life that differs from that one. So maybe it's best to set them out in contrast, as I tried to do a little while ago, and once we've set them in contrast and agreed with each other whether there is this twofold division of lives, to examine what is to be distinguished from each other in the pair, and which of the pair is to be lived. But maybe you don't yet know what I mean.

**C**

**B**

**D**

*Callicles:* I sure don't.

<sup>37</sup> The Greek word is *panourgos*, one who'll do anything, in the sense of stop at nothing. The word has a certain grandeur, equivalent to the bravado of Callicles' long speech, in which he announced his disdain for all the rules and restrictions society imposes on its natural superior, but in the context of Callicles' condescending rebuke of Socrates for being petty and childish in the argument, the choice of word carries a weight of irony, since Callicles has presented himself as someone above any sort of deception himself. The self-proclaimed amoralist has been caught weaseling out of his own brave words.

**Socrates:** Then I'll tell you more clearly. Since you and I have agreed that there's something good and something pleasant, and what's pleasant is a different thing from what's good, and that there's a certain way of attending to each of the two and arranging to get hold of it, one hunting for what's pleasant and the other for what's good—but first assent to just this point for me, or deny it. Do you assent?

**Callicles:** That's how I'd say it is.

**Socrates:** Come then, and agree with me on the things I was also saying to these folks here, if I seemed to you to be speaking the truth then. I believe I was saying that cooking tasty food didn't seem to me to be an art but a matter of experience, while as for doctoring, I was saying that it looked into the nature of the person it ministers to and the cause of the things it does, and has a speech to give about these things; that's doctoring, but the other is about pleasure, on which all its ministrations is focused, and the way it goes after that is completely lacking in art, since it isn't looking into the nature or cause of pleasure at all, and totally devoid of speech, since it makes virtually no distinctions, merely keeping a memory of what usually happens by routine and experience, which are the means by which it provides pleasures. First, then, consider whether it seems to you that this is said adequately, and whether there are also certain other similar concerns dealing with the soul, artful ones that have some forethought for what's best in regard to the soul, and other ones that have contempt for that, but, again as in the other case, they've looked only into the soul's pleasure for how it might come to it, but as for which of the pleasures are better or worse, they don't look into that or bother themselves about anything, for better or for worse, other than the mere gratifying. Because, Callicles, it seems to me there are things of this sort, and I claim such a thing is pander- ing, in the case of both the body and the soul, and of anything else whatever, if one ministers to pleasure in disregard of what's better and worse. So do you put in together with us in the same opinion about these things, or do you challenge it?

**Callicles:** Not I. I go along with it so the speech may be brought to an end by you, and I may gratify Gorgias here.

**Socrates:** And is this so for one soul but not for two or many?

**Callicles:** No, for two and for many as well.

**Socrates:** And is it possible to gratify masses of people at the same time without looking out for what's best?

**Callicles:** I imagine so.

**Socrates:** Then can you say what endeavors do that? Or rather, if you like, when I ask about them, say yes if something seems to be one of these or say no if it doesn't. First let's consider flute playing. Doesn't it seem to you to be one of the endeavors of this sort, Cal-

icles—one that pursues only our pleasure and gives no thought to anything else?

**Callicles:** It seems that way to me.

**Socrates:** And everything like that as well, such as harp playing in competitions?

**Callicles:** Yes.

**Socrates:** And what about the designing of choreography and the composition of dithyrambs?<sup>38</sup> Isn't it obvious to you that they're of that sort? Or do you think Meles' son Cinesias gives any thought to how he says anything so that his hearers could become better from it, rather than how he's going to gratify the crowd of spectators?

**Callicles:** That's certainly clear, Socrates, at least as far as Cinesias is concerned.

**Socrates:** And what about his father Meles? Did he seem to you to be looking toward what's best in singing with his harp? Or in his case, was he not even looking to what's most pleasant, since when he sang it was a pain to the audience? But just consider whether all singing with the harp and composing of dithyrambs doesn't seem to you to have been devised for the sake of pleasure.

**Callicles:** To me it does.

**Socrates:** And what about that awesome and wondrous thing, the composition of tragic poetry? What is it so solemn about? Does its effort and seriousness seem to you only to go into gratifying its spectators or, if there's something that's pleasant and gratifying to them, but debasing, does it also struggle to find a way not to say that, while if there happens to be something unpleasing but beneficial, will it speak and sing that, whether people get any enjoyment from it or not? In which way does the composing of tragic poetry seem to you to turn its efforts?

**Callicles:** This at least is definitely clear, Socrates, that it exerts itself more toward pleasure and gratifying the spectators.

**Socrates:** And it's such a thing, Callicles, that we were claiming just now is pandering?

**Callicles:** Quite so.

**Socrates:** Come along, then: if one peels away the melody and rhythm and meter from all poetry, does what's left turn out to be anything other than speeches?

**Callicles:** That's a necessity.

**Socrates:** And these speeches are spoken to a big crowd and populace?

<sup>38</sup> Dithyrambic poetry was chanted by a group of dancers as part of the worship of Dionysus. The examples Socrates gives form a progression. The flute (an instrument resembling our recorders) was part of the customary entertainment at dinner parties. Competitive playing of the *kithara*, an instrument larger than a lyre but smaller than modern concert harps, took place at public festivals. The dithyramb, less sedate than other choral odes such as the nomos in honor of Apollo, evolved by stages into the tragedy.

501A

502A

*Callicles:* I'd say so.

*Socrates:* Therefore poetry is a certain kind of public speaking?

*Callicles:* So it appears.

*Socrates:* And it would be rhetorical public speaking—or don't the poets seem to you to use rhetoric in the theaters?

*Callicles:* To me they do.

*Socrates:* Therefore we've now discovered a kind of rhetoric directed to a populace of a sort that consists of children, women, and men together, slaves as well as free, a kind that we don't quite respect, since we declare it to be pandering.

*Callicles:* Quite so.

**E**  
*Socrates:* Okay. What about the rhetoric directed to the Athenian populace or to the other populations of free men in the cities? What in the world do we make of that? Do rhetoricians seem to you to be speaking always with a view to what's best, aiming at that with their speeches so the citizens will be the best they can possibly be, or do they too exert themselves toward gratifying the citizens, and place a low value on the common good for the sake their own private interest, talking to the populace like they were children, trying only to gratify them without giving any thought to whether they'll be better or worse from that?

*Callicles:* This is no longer a simple question you're asking, because there are some who say the things they say out of care for the citizens, and some who are the sort you're speaking of.

*Socrates:* That's good enough, because if this is also twofold, one part of it would presumably be an ugly pandering and demagoguery while the other would be a beautiful thing, turning its efforts to the way the souls of the citizens would be the best they can possibly be, and struggling to say the best things, whether they're more pleasing or more unpleasant to those who hear them. But you've never seen this sort of rhetoric; or if you have any such rhetorician to mention, why haven't you told me who it is too?

*Callicles:* But by Zeus, I don't have a single one to mention to you, at least among the rhetoricians of today.

*Socrates:* What about those of the old days? Do you have any to mention through whom the Athenians are held to have become better, from the time he first started his public speaking, when they'd been worse in the preceding time? Because I don't know who that would be.

**C**  
*Callicles:* What about Themistocles? Don't you hear that he was a good man, and also Cimon and Miltiades<sup>39</sup> and that very Pericles who died recently and whom you even heard speak?

*Socrates:* Yes, Callicles, if what you were saying virtue is before is true virtue, namely satisfying the desires of oneself and of others;

if it's not that, but it's what we were compelled to agree it is later in our speech—fulfilling those desires whose satisfaction makes a human being better and not those that make him worse, and there's a certain art to this—I certainly couldn't say how any of these was that sort of man.

*Callicles:* But if you do a beautiful job of searching, you'll find out.<sup>40</sup>

*Socrates:* So by considering it without anxiety, as we are, let's see whether any of these people was of that sort. Come along then: the good man, whose speech is directed to what's best, wouldn't say the things he does in a random way, would he, but with his eye on some end? It's the same way as with all the other craftsmen: each one looks to his own work and brings to bear on it not what he chooses at random, but what will make what he works on have a certain form to it. For instance, if you want to look at painters, housebuilders, shipbuilders, all the rest of the craftsmen, whichever one of them you want, each of them puts each thing he handles into some arrangement and constrains one thing to be suited to and harmonious with another until the sum of them all is organized into an end result that's arranged and ordered. And so do the other craftsmen as well, even the ones we were just talking about who deal with the body, the trainers and doctors; presumably they give the body order and arrangement. Do we agree that this is how it is or not?

*Callicles:* Let it be so.

*Socrates:* Therefore, a house that attains an arrangement and ordering would be a serviceable one, but one that falls into disarray would be in a deplorable state?

*Callicles:* I'd say so.

*Socrates:* And the same way with a ship?

*Callicles:* Yes.

*Socrates:* And do we claim it's the same with our bodies?

*Callicles:* Certainly.

*Socrates:* And what about the soul? Will it be serviceable if it falls into disarray, or rather if it attains a certain arrangement and ordering?

*Callicles:* Based on the previous things, it's necessary to agree with this too.

*Socrates:* And in the body, what's the word for what comes from its arrangement and ordering?

39 Miltiades and his son Cimon were the most influential political and military leaders in Athens between the time of Themistocles and that of Pericles. The four of them presided over a half-century or so of vast expansion of Athenian power and wealth.

40 There is inconsistency in the manuscripts here, and disagreement among editors. Dodds, the editor whose version this translation generally follows, puts this line at the end of Socrates' speech, but it is not Socrates who thinks high repute in the political realm would always be a sign of virtue. The assignment of speakers followed here is that of Burnet, which gives the sequence "I can't... You will... Let us."

*Callicles*: You're probably speaking of health and strength.

*Socrates*: I am. And what in turn for what comes into the soul from its arrangement and ordering? Try to find and state the word as in the former case.

*Callicles*: Why not say it yourself, Socrates?

*Socrates*: Well, if that's more pleasing to you, I'll state it, but if I seem to you to say it beautifully, you say so, and if not, refute me and don't let me get away with it. Because it seems to me that the word for arrangements of the body is "healthy," and that from them health comes to be present in it, as well as the rest of the virtue of the body. Is that so or not?

*Callicles*: It is.

*D Socrates*: And for the arrangements and orderings of the soul, it's "law-abiding" and law, from which souls become law-abiding and orderly. And these conditions are justice and moderation. Do you say so or not?

*Callicles*: Let it be so.

*E Socrates*: Then that rhetorician, the one who's artful and good, will be looking toward these things and will bring them to bear on our souls in the speeches he makes and in all his actions. And if he gives us any gift or takes anything from us, he'll give it or take it having his thoughts on this: on how justice may be brought into the souls of his fellow-citizens and injustice may be eliminated, on how moderation may be brought in and self-indulgence eliminated, and how the rest of virtue may be brought in and vice expelled. Do you go along with that or not?

*Callicles*: I go along with it.

*Socrates*: Because what benefit is there, *Callicles*, in giving a diseased body that's in deplorable shape a lot of the most pleasant foods or drinks or anything else whatever when there's no way that's going to make it any better off, or on the contrary, on a just account of the matter, will make it even worse off? Is that how it is?

505A

*Callicles*: Let it be so.

*Socrates*: Because I don't imagine it's any profit for a human being to live with a deplorable body, since in that way it's a necessity for him also to live a deplorable life. Or isn't that so?

*Callicles*: Yes.

*Socrates*: So fulfilling one's desires, such as eating or drinking as much as one wants when hungry or thirsty, is something the doctors allow, for the most part, when someone is healthy, but when he's sick they allow him to fill up on things he desires, in a word, never, do you go along with that or not?

*Callicles*: I do.

*B Socrates*: And concerning the soul, most excellent fellow, isn't it the same way? As long as it's in a worthless condition, and is thoughtless and self-indulgent and unjust and impious, one needs to keep

it back from its desires and not trust it to do any other things than those as a result of which it will be better, do you assert this or not?

*Callicles*: I assert it.

*Socrates*: Because presumably that's the way that's better for the soul itself?

*Callicles*: Quite so.

*Socrates*: And keeping it back from things it desires is disciplining it?

*Callicles*: Yes.

*Socrates*: Therefore being disciplined is better for the soul than a lack of discipline, which you imagined was better a little while ago.

*Callicles*: I don't know what you're talking about, *Socrates*; just ask someone else.

*Socrates*: This man can't stand to be benefited or to undergo himself what our speech is about: accepting discipline.

*Callicles*: And nothing you say is of any concern to me either; I've been giving you these answers to please Gorgias.

*Socrates*: Okay. So what should we do? Do we break off the speech in the middle?

*Callicles*: Decide for yourself.

*Socrates*: But they say it's not right even to leave off stories in the middle; they should have heads put on them so they don't go around without a head. So answer the questions that are left too, so that our speech will get a head.

*Callicles*: How forceful you are, *Socrates*. But if you're persuaded by me, you'll tell this speech goodbye, or else have the conversation with someone else.

*Socrates*: But who else is willing? Surely we can't abandon the speech incomplete.

*Callicles*: Couldn't you go through the speech on your own, either speaking by yourself or answering your own questions?

*Socrates*: So the words of Epicharmus<sup>41</sup> would come true for me, "what

two men were saying before this," I must become sufficient for, though I'm only one. Well, it's probably unavoidable. But we'll do it in the following way. I think all of us need to be in eager rivalry for knowing what the truth is about the things we're speaking of, and what's false, since it's a good thing for everyone in common for it to become evident. So in the speech, I'll go through the way it seems to me to be, but if it seems to any of you that the things I'm agreeing with myself about are not so, you need to grab hold of them and refute them. Because I'm certainly not saying the things I'm saying with any complete knowledge, but I'm inquiring in common with you folks; so if, when someone disputes me,

506A

D

E

<sup>41</sup> An early comic poet, possibly the first to write dialogue for actors rather than recitations of ridicule. Only fragments of his work survive.

there's manifestly something in what he says, I'll be the first one to go along with it. But I say these things assuming it seems right to bring the speech to completion; if you folks don't want that, let's tell it goodbye right now and go away.

**B** *Gorgias*: But it doesn't seem right to me to go away yet, Socrates, but instead for you to go on through the speech, and it appears to me to seem that way to the others as well. I myself certainly want to hear you go through the things that are left yourself.

*Socrates*: Well, Gorgias, I myself would have been pleased to be still conversing with Callicles here, until I'd given him back an address by Amphion in return for that of Zethus. But since you, Callicles, aren't willing to join in bringing the speech to completion, at least, as you listen to me, interrupt if I seem to you not to be speaking in a beautiful manner. And if you refuse me, I won't be annoyed with you the way you were with me, but you'll be engraved in my memory as my greatest benefactor.

*Callicles*: Speak, good fellow, yourself, and get it over with.

*Socrates*: Then listen as I take up the speech again from the beginning.

Are the pleasant and the good the same thing? Not the same, as Callicles and I agreed. Is what's pleasant to be done for the sake of the good, or what's good for the sake of the pleasant? What's pleasant for the sake of the good. And the pleasant is that at the coming of which we're pleased, and the good is that by the presence of which we're good? Of course. But we and everything else that's good are good because some virtue has come to be present?

That seems necessary to me at any rate, Callicles. But surely the virtue of each thing, of a piece of equipment or a body, or also of a soul and of any living thing, doesn't come to be present most beautifully just at random, but by an arrangement and a rightness and by whichever art is given over to each of them; is that so? I say it is. Therefore, the virtue of each thing is something arranged in an arrangement and made orderly? I'd surely say so. Therefore a certain orderliness that's native to each thing, when it comes to be present in it, is what makes each of the things there are good? If certainly seems that way to me. Therefore in the case of a soul too, one that has the orderliness that belongs to it is better than a disorderly one? Necessarily. But surely the one that has an orderliness is an orderly soul? How could it fail to be? And an orderly soul is moderate? That's a great necessity. Therefore a moderate soul is good. I have no other things to say counter to these, Callicles my friend, but if you do, instruct us.

*Callicles*: Speak on, good fellow.

*Socrates*: Well, I say that, if a moderate soul is good, one with an experience opposite to a moderate one is bad, and that would be

an unreasonable<sup>42</sup> and self-indulgent one. Of course. And surely a moderate person would do what's appropriate in regard to both gods and human beings, since he wouldn't be moderate if he did inappropriate things. It's a necessity that these things be so. And if he does what's appropriate in regard to human beings, surely he'd be doing just things, and pious things in regard to gods, and someone who does just and pious things is necessarily a just and pious person. That's so. And in fact it's a necessity that he be manly as well, because it's characteristic of a moderate man not to pursue or avoid things that are inappropriate but to pursue or avoid what one should, actions and people as well as pleasures and pains, and to be steadfast in enduring whatever one should; so it's a great necessity<sup>43</sup> Callicles, for this one who's moderate, since he is, as we've gone over, just and manly and pious, to be a completely good man, and for this one who's good to do what he does well and beautifully, and for this one who does well to be blessed and happy, while someone who's worthless and does badly is miserable, and that would be someone in the opposite condition to a moderate person, namely the self-indulgent person whom you were praising.

So I set these things down in this way, and I claim that they're true. And if they *are* true, it looks like the thing someone who wants to be happy needs to pursue and make a practice of is moderation, and the thing each of us needs to run from as fast as his feet can go is self-indulgence; at best one needs to manage things so as to have no need for discipline to be imposed, but if he himself or any other private person close to him, or his city, does need it, a just penalty needs to be enforced and discipline needs to be imposed, if they're going to be happy. This seems to me to be the target one ought to live with his eye on, bending all his own efforts and those of his city toward this, toward acting in such a way that justice and moderation will be present for a person who's going to be blessedly happy, not toward letting his desires be undisciplined and trying

<sup>42</sup> The word "moderate" (*sophrōn*), used for someone who recognizes and does what is appropriate, particularly between the extremes of self-indulgence and self-denial, has the literal meaning "maintaining good sense," or "reasonable," and is precisely negated by *aphrōn*, "lacking good sense."

<sup>43</sup> Throughout this paragraph, the necessities asserted are necessary implications of the conventional language used for qualities conventionally praised. The very name for moderation implies courage, and its name is *andreia*, the manliness Callicles admires. Moderation, justice, courage and piety were often regarded as constituting the whole of virtue, so to act in accordance with all four would be to do everything rightly and well, and doing well is a conventional way to speak of being happy. None of this is proof of anything. Socrates is doing what he has repeatedly said he is doing, following the *logos*. Callicles has made a rhetorically vivid speech rejecting moderation and endorsing manliness. Socrates is challenging him to think that through, and see whether he can give a consistent and intelligible speech to the same effect. If not, he will have choices to face.

508A

to give them their fill, a trouble that has no end, while he lives the life of a plunderer. For that sort of person would not be dearly loved by any other human being or god, since he's incapable of sharing anything, and where no single thing is shared there can be no friendship. Those who are wise declare, Callicles, that heaven and earth and gods and humans are held together by the shared bond of friendship, and by orderliness, moderation, and justice; and for this reason, my comrade, they call this whole a *kosmos*,<sup>44</sup> not a disorder or a dissipation. But as for you, Callicles, even though you're smart about these things, you don't seem to me to pay attention to them, and it's escaped your notice that geometrical equality has great power among gods and human beings; you imagine one ought to make a practice of getting more because you neglect geometry.<sup>45</sup> Okay. Either this speech has to be refuted by us, and it's not by the possession of justice and moderation that the happy are happy; and by the possession of vice that the miserable are miserable, or else, if this speech is true, we need to examine what its consequences are. Those earlier consequences all follow, Callicles, the ones you asked me if I was serious about when I stated them, saying there would be a need to accuse oneself, or one's son or comrade, if he committed any injustice, and to make use of rhetoric for that. And the things you imagined Polus was going along with out of shame is an uglier thing than suffering it, to that extent it's worse, and that someone who's going to be a rhetorician in the right way will need

44 The Greek word *kosmos*, the root of all the words translated here as order, ordering, orderly, and so on, was used by various earlier writers as a name for the ordered whole of all things. The word *taxis*, translated here as arrangement, was more neutral, while *kosmos* carried the sense of something deserving admiration and praise. The latter is the first word of Gorgias's *Encomium of Helen* (see note to 483E), which begins: "Kosmos in a city is manliness, in a body beauty, in a soul wisdom, in an action virtue, and in a speech truth." In 503D, Socrates began following the *logos* from artfulness to arrangement to the rhetorically overpowering array of meanings gathered in the word *kosmos*.

45 Geometrical equality can mean proportionality, equality of ratios. Commentators generally point to Aristotle's discussion of distributive justice in Bk. V, Chap. 3 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, but the issue here is not the relative distribution of common resources but the choices of each human being that lead to maximum satisfaction. More to the point here is the discussion of the mean that begins in Bk. II, Chap. 6 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In all things that vary in quantity, Aristotle says, there is a greater, a less, and an equal, where equality is determined not by matching some other quantity but by matching up with the qualitative nature of the thing that has the quantity. In 503E above, Socrates had said that artful work is never random, but looks to an end in order to bring an appropriate form to its result. Proportionate equality is called geometrical because it is present in every aspect of similar figures, those that are the same in form. Socrates is both playful and serious in suggesting that the recognition of form that governs geometry is the antidote to the blind quantitative principle of always wanting more. Human happiness may be recognizable in one's own experience and in the lives of others as a geometrical magnitude, as suggested at 509C below.

to be just, and knowledgeable about what's just, after all, which Polus in turn said Gorgias had agreed to on account of shame.

Now since that's how these things are, let's consider what if anything there is in the criticisms you made of me, whether it is or isn't beautifully said that I'm unable to come to the aid of myself or of any of my friends or relations, or to save them from the greatest dangers, that like the dregs of society I'm at the mercy of anyone who so chooses if he wants—in that brash phrase of yours—to give me a slap upside the head, or to take away my possessions or expel me from the city, or in the extreme case to kill me. And to be in that condition is the most shameful of all things, as your speech has it. What mine is has been said repeatedly already, but nothing prevents its being said yet again: I claim, Callicles, that being unjustly slapped upside the head is not the most shameful thing, and neither is having either my body or my pocket cut open, but hitting and cutting me or what's mine is both more shameful and worse, and by the same token stealing, enslaving, housebreaking, and in short, committing any injustice whatever upon me or what's mine is both worse and more shameful for the one who commits the injustice than for me who suffers it. The fact that these things are the way I say, back there in the previous speeches, was plainly fastened down and locked up, if it may be put rather crudely, in ironclad and diamond-hard arguments—at least that's the way it would seem—and if you, or someone more brash than you, doesn't unfasten them, it won't be possible for anyone who says otherwise than what I'm now saying to be speaking beautifully. Because as for me, what I say is always the same, that I don't know how these things are, but that none of the people I've run across, present company included, is able to say otherwise without being completely ridiculous. So I for my part hold these things to be this way, and if they are this way, and injustice is the greatest of evils for the person who commits it, and a still greater evil than this one that's the greatest, if that's possible, is for someone to commit injustice without paying the just penalty, then what sort of help would it truly be ridiculous for a human being not to have the power to give himself? Wouldn't it be whatever sort of help would turn the greatest harm away from us? And it's a great necessity that this would be the most shameful sort of help *not* to have the power to give oneself and one's friends and relations, second would be the sort of help that turns away the second greatest evil, third the third, and so on with the rest. As the magnitude of each sort of evil is by nature, so is the beauty of being powerful enough to help against each, and the shamefulness of not being powerful enough. Is it otherwise, Callicles, or is it that way?

Callicles: Not otherwise.

509A

B

C

D

E

F

D *Socrates*: So out of this pair, committing injustice and suffering it, we claim committing injustice is a greater evil and suffering it is a lesser one. What preparations, then, should a human being make so he can help himself, in order to have both these benefits, that of not committing injustice and that of not suffering it? Is it a matter of power or of wanting it? I mean this: will someone not suffer injustice because he doesn't *want* to suffer it, or because he prepared himself with a power to avoid suffering it?

*Callicles*: That's obvious; because of a power.

E *Socrates*: And what about committing injustice? If someone doesn't *want* to commit injustice, is that sufficient—since he won't commit it—or in this case too does one need to prepare oneself with some power and art, on the grounds that he will commit injustice if he doesn't learn and practice certain things? Why don't you answer me just this point, *Callicles*, whether it seems to you that we, *Polus* and I, were rightly compelled or not to agree in the earlier speeches, when we agreed that no one commits injustice because he wants to, but all those who commit injustice do so unwillingly?<sup>46</sup>

510A *Callicles*: Have it your way, *Socrates*; let this be that way so you can finish off the speech.

*Socrates*: For this too, therefore, it looks like there's a need to prepare oneself with some power and art so that we don't commit injustice.

*Callicles*: Quite so.

*Socrates*: So what art might there be for the preparation for suffering no injustice, or the least possible amount? See whether it seems to you the same way it does to me, because to me it seems like this: one ought to be a ruler in the city oneself, or even be a tyrant, or else be a comrade of the regime that's already there.

B *Callicles*: Do you see, *Socrates*, how ready I am to praise you when you speak beautifully in any way? On this point you seem to me to have spoken very beautifully.

*Socrates*: Then see whether I seem to you to be speaking well on this point too: it seems to me that each with each is a friend to the greatest possible degree in the way the wise people of ancient times said, like with like. Don't you think so too?

*Callicles*: I do.

C *Socrates*: So where the ruler is a savage, uneducated tyrant, if there were anyone in the city who was much better than he, the tyrant would presumably be afraid of him and would never be capable of becoming his friend with all his heart?

*Callicles*: That's how it is.

*Socrates*: And if there were someone much worse, he couldn't be a friend either, since the tyrant would despise him and could never look at him seriously as a friend.

*Callicles*: That's true too.

*Socrates*: So the only one left worth mentioning as a friend to such a person is someone similar to him in character, who blames and praises the same things, and is willing to be ruled and be subordinate to the ruler. He'll have great power in that city; no one will get any joy out of doing *him* an injustice. Isn't that how it is?

*Callicles*: Yes.

*Socrates*: Therefore, if any of the young people in that city were to reflect, "What's the way I could get great power and have no one do me any injustice?" it looks like this would be the path for him: to get accustomed straight from youth to being delighted and annoyed by the same things himself as his boss, and prepare himself to be as much like that person as possible. Isn't that so?

*Callicles*: Yes.

*Socrates*: So for him, not suffering injustice and having great power, in the sense you people speak of it, will have been attained in his city.

*Callicles*: Entirely so.

*Socrates*: And not committing injustice either? Or far from it, if he's going to be like a ruler who's unjust, and have great power at his side? I imagine his preparation will be all in the opposite direction, toward being able to commit the greatest possible number of injustices and not pay the just penalty for committing them, won't it?

*Callicles*: So it appears.

*Socrates*: So the greatest evil will befall him when he's deprived in soul and maimed by imitation of his boss and by his power.

*Callicles*: I don't know how you manage to turn the speeches upside down every time, *Socrates*; or else you're unaware that this imitator will put that non-imitator to death if he wants to, and take away his property.

*Socrates*: I know it, good *Callicles*, if I'm not deaf, from listening to both you and *Polus* just now, over and over, and to little short of everyone else in the city; but you listen to me too, saying that he will put him to death if he wants to, but it will be someone who's worthless taking a beautiful and good life.

*Callicles*: And isn't that exactly what makes it so galling?

*Socrates*: Not to anyone with any sense; that's what our speech implies. Or do you imagine that this is what a human being ought to prepare himself for, to live as long as possible a time, and study those arts that save us from dangers in every situation, like the one you're exhorting me to study, the sort of rhetoric that gets people off safely in the lawcourts?

46 What *Polus* agreed to at 468D was that injustice is always committed as a means to an end, and is done unwillingly if its result is in fact harmful to the one who commits it. *Socrates* has just claimed that the "if" has now been removed, unless and until *Callicles* can show otherwise. That no one does evil willingly was a paradox often asserted by *Socrates*; see for example *Plato's Meno*, 77B-77B.

*Callides*: Yes, by Zeus! And I'm giving you the right advice.

*Socrates*: What about swimming; then, most excellent fellow? Does it seem to you the knowledge of swimming is anything awe-inspiring?

*Callides*: By Zeus, not to me.

*Socrates*: And yet that saves human beings from death, whenever they've fallen into any situation of the sort that requires that knowledge. But if that seems to be a petty thing, I'll tell you one greater than that, helmsmanship, which saves not only our souls but also our bodies and our possessions from the most extreme dangers, the same way rhetoric does. And this one is self-effacing and orderly, and doesn't have an exalted air about it as though it were accomplishing some high and mighty feat; but when it does accomplish the same things as lawyering, if it gets someone here safely from Aegina, I think it charges a couple of cents, or if it's from Egypt or from the Black Sea, for this great benefit of saving the things I was just speaking of—oneself and one's children, possessions, and women—when it lands them in the harbor it charges, at the very most, a couple of dollars.<sup>47</sup> And the one himself who has the art and has accomplished these things steps off at the seaside and stretches his legs; next to the ship with a modest air about him; I imagine that's because he knows that it's an unclear thing to figure out which of the passengers he's done a favor to by not letting them sink under the sea, and which ones he's done harm, since he knows that he's put them off the ship no better sorts of people than they were when he took them on, in either body or soul. So he reasons that, if someone afflicted in body with great and incurable diseases hasn't drowned, and that person is miserable because he hasn't died, and isn't benefited at all by him, it's therefore not the case when someone has many incurable diseases in something more valuable than his body, his soul, that his life is worth living and he'll be doing him a favor if he saves him either from the sea or the lawcourt or from anything else whatever. He knows that it's not better for a deprived person to live, since it's a necessity that he'll live a bad life.

That's why it's not the custom for a helmsman to exalt himself, even though he saves our lives, or you amazing fellow, for a maker of war machines either, and he sometimes has the power to save no fewer lives than a general, much less a helmsman or anyone else, since there are times when he saves whole cities. He doesn't seem to you to rank with a lawyer, does he? Yet if he wanted to speak the way you people do, *Callides*, making something exalted

out of his concerns, he could deluge you with speeches, speaking in exhortation about how people need to become war-machine makers, since nothing else is any big deal, because he'd have enough to say. But you look down on him and on that art of his nonetheless, and would toss the name "mechanic" at him as if in reproach, and wouldn't be willing to let your daughter marry his son or accept his daughter for your own son. Yet on the basis of the things you praise your own specialty for, what reason do you have with any justice to it for looking down on the war-machine maker or the others I was just speaking of? I know you'd claim to be better and to come from better stock. But if better isn't what I say it is, and virtue is just this saving of oneself and one's things, whatever sort of person one happens to be, your fault-finding becomes ridiculous when applied to a war-machine maker, to a doctor, or to any of the other arts that have been devised for the sake of saving people. But you blessedly happy fellow, see whether what's high-born and good isn't something other than saving and being saved. Because *that*, just living for some length of time, is something to be disdained by anyone who's truly a *man*, being in love with life on any terms is not for him. He turns over concern for those things to the god instead, and believes what the women say, that no single person can escape what's allotted; on that view, the thing that needs to be considered is in what manner he can live this time he's going to live in the best possible way. Is it by turning himself into a likeness of that regime in which he happens to have his home? Therefore in the present instance you'd need to become exactly like the Athenian populace if you're going to be loved by it and have great power in the city. See if this is profitable for you and for me, you strange fellow, so that we don't suffer the same fate they say the Thessalian women do when they pull down the moon: our choice of that power in the city will be in exchange for the things we love most.<sup>48</sup> If you imagine that any human being whatsoever is going to hand over to you any kind of art that will make you have great power here in this city while you're *unlike* its regime, for better and for worse, then the way it seems to me, *Callides*, is that you're not being given the right advice. Because you can't be an imitator, you have to be like them in your very nature, if you're going to work your way into any genuine friendship with the Athenian populace, and yes, with *Pyriampes'* son too, by Zeus!<sup>49</sup> So whoever is going to turn you into the most complete likeness of these is the one who'll make you a politician in the way you want to be a politician, and a rhetorician, because people of each type take

512A

B

C

513A

B

C

<sup>47</sup> The words translated "dollars" and "cents" are literally drachmas and obols. In purchasing power they were more substantial sums than the translation would suggest, but they were the smallest named divisions of the currency, and the translation is intended to convey something of *Socrates'* tone.

<sup>48</sup> Witches were thought to gain their powers, such as that of causing eclipses, at the price of losing loved ones, their own sight, or something else precious to them.

<sup>49</sup> See 481D and footnote.